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Communicative-interactive teaching model for teaching and learning English in multigrade settings IED

Modelo didáctico comunicativo-interactivo para la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés en sedes multigrado IED

Yenny Yadira Caraballo-Padilla
yennycaraballo.est@umecit.edu.pa
Universidad Metropolitana de Educación Ciencia y Tecnología (UMECIT), Panamá, Provincia de Panamá, Panamá
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1467-2214

ABSTRACT

Teaching English in multigrade rural contexts presents particular challenges related to resource constraints. This study aimed to design a communicative-interactive teaching model based on gamification for teaching English in rural multigrade schools in Colombia. Qualitative research was conducted using a socio-critical paradigm, working with 12 teachers, 45 students, and 176 parents from the Tisquesusa Departmental Educational Institution, through non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. The results showed that 85% of teachers use traditional methodologies, have limited specialised training and make poor use of academic time. A model structured around four interrelated components was proposed: curricular, didactic, recreational-motivational and communicative, implemented through five sequential stages that include contextualised gamified activities. Expert validation showed high approval (4.7/5.0 in the pedagogical component), confirming the theoretical relevance and feasibility of the model for transforming rural educational practices through innovative strategies.

Descriptors: community education; rural education; learning process. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

La enseñanza del inglés en contextos rurales multigrado presenta desafíos particulares relacionados con limitaciones de recursos. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo diseñar un modelo didáctico comunicativo-interactivo basado en gamificación para la enseñanza del inglés en sedes multigrado rurales colombianas. Se desarrolló una investigación cualitativa con paradigma socio-crítico, trabajando con 12 docentes, 45 estudiantes y 176 padres de familia de la Institución Educativa Departamental Tisquesusa, mediante observación no participante, entrevistas semiestructuradas y grupos focales. Los resultados evidenciaron que el 85% de docentes emplean metodologías tradicionales, limitaciones en formación especializada y deficiencias en el aprovechamiento del tiempo académico. Se propuso un modelo estructurado en cuatro componentes interrelacionados: curricular, didáctico, lúdico-motivacional y comunicativo, implementado mediante cinco etapas secuenciales que incluyen actividades gamificadas contextualizadas. La validación por expertos mostró alta aprobación (4.7/5.0 en componente pedagógico), confirmando la pertinencia teórica y viabilidad del modelo para transformar las prácticas educativas rurales mediante estrategias innovadoras.

Descriptores: educación comunitaria; educación rural; proceso de aprendizaje. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

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Research articles

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a second language in rural areas of Colombia presents particular challenges due to multiple contextual factors. According to recent research, there are considerable differences in learning outcomes between public and private education systems, a situation that is exacerbated in rural communities where resources are limited and traditional methods continue to dominate (Mejía-Mejía, 2016).

Multigrade schools face specific obstacles that warrant differentiated educational strategies. According to Hernández-Otálora (2024), the time available, motivation, and performance as a second language are closely linked and largely determine the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process. Therefore, there is a need to design teaching models in line with the conditions and needs of these school environments.

Current research suggests that internal motivation is an essential factor in students' academic performance (Caviedes et al., 2024). Therefore, the incorporation of innovative strategies that foster intrinsic motivation could transform educational experiences in rural contexts, making them more attractive and meaningful.

Based on the above, this article aims to design a communicative-interactive teaching model for teaching and learning English in multigrade IED centres aimed at Colombian educational institutions.

Theoretical framework

The construction of the teaching model is based on contemporary theoretical perspectives that provide conceptual coherence and soundness. Studies on learning styles to improve English language skills (Caicedo-Quinteros, 2023) demonstrate that recognising individual differences in learning processes is a fundamental element in the design of effective teaching strategies. This

perspective is particularly relevant in multigrade contexts, where students of different ages and levels of development coexist.

Likewise, research on the relationship between learning strategies and academic performance (Cárdenas-Narváez, 2019) shows that the implementation of diversified and contextualised strategies contributes significantly to the improvement of educational outcomes. In the context of multigrade English teaching, this perspective allows for the design of activities that respect the different cognitive stages of students and promote the active construction of linguistic knowledge.

Furthermore, studies on motivation and academic performance of students in the English language (Muñoz-Jara & Correa-Pérez, 2023) establish a positive correlation between student motivation and academic achievement. This relationship is particularly valuable in multigrade classrooms, where diversity of levels can be leveraged to create collaborative environments that strengthen collective motivation.

Gamification and innovative teaching strategies

In this context, research has been conducted on innovative teaching strategies that study academic performance in English (Moreira-López & Rivadeneira-Barreiro, 2024), which demonstrate that incorporating playful and technological elements into the educational process generates significant improvements in student performance. These findings support the relevance of implementing gamified approaches in contexts where traditional motivation may be insufficient.

On the other hand, e-learning platforms for English language learning have shown promising results (Luna et al., 2023), although their implementation in rural contexts requires specific adaptations due to limitations in connectivity and technological resources. This situation justifies the development of hybrid models that combine digital elements with face-to-face activities and physical materials.

In relation to new technologies, the use of ChatGPT and English learning among university students (Matos-Juarez et al., 2024) has demonstrated the potential of artificial intelligence tools to personalise learning processes. However, these technologies require pedagogical adaptations that take into account the specific context of rural students.

Interactive English teaching

Studies on interactive English teaching (García et al., 2020; Vigil-García et al., 2020) highlight the importance of creating authentic communicative environments where students can use the language in real communication situations. This approach is particularly appropriate for multigrade contexts, where diversity in levels can be exploited to create natural communicative situations between students of different ages.

Similarly, storytelling to contribute to English teaching (Herrera-Arencibia et al., 2021) has proven to be an effective strategy for capturing students' interest and facilitating language acquisition in a contextualised manner. This narrative approach can be effectively integrated into gamified models that use stories as a thread to link learning activities.

Finally, research on student profiles and linguistic production in English (Espinoza-Hidrobo et al., 2023) reveals that factors such as gender, educational background and visual media consumption influence the development of communicative skills. This information is valuable for designing differentiated strategies that take into account the specific characteristics of rural students

METHOD

The research was carried out under a socio-critical paradigm with a qualitative approach, considering the particularities of the multigrade rural context and the need to generate transformative proposals for the local educational reality. The methodology adopted recognises the importance of time at school as a

determining factor in learning processes (Kraft & Novicoff, 2024), an aspect that is particularly relevant in contexts where the number of hours of English is limited.

With regard to the study population, we worked with the educational community of the Tisquesusa Departmental Educational Institution in the municipality of Susa, Cundinamarca, Colombia. The sample included 12 teachers from rural schools, 45 primary school students and 176 parents, selected through intentional sampling that considered the representativeness of different villages and socioeconomic levels.

Three main instruments validated by experts were used to collect information: non-participant observation to document current teaching practices, semi-structured interviews to explore participants' perceptions and experiences, and focus groups to generate spaces for collective reflection on educational needs and expectations.

For data analysis, a methodological triangulation approach was used to contrast information obtained through different techniques and informants. The categorisation process considered both predefined categories based on the specialised literature and emerging categories that arose from the inductive analysis of the data collected.

RESULTS

The analysis of classroom observations revealed that 85% of teachers use traditional methodologies focused on content transmission, a situation that coincides with the findings of González-Moncada and Sierra-Ospina (2008) on the challenges and possibilities of content-based English teaching. In particular, the most frequent strategies identified include lecturing on vocabulary, using dictionaries to translate texts, and repetitive grammar exercises.

According to the interviews conducted, teachers report significant limitations in their training for teaching English, which directly impacts their ability to implement effective motivational strategies. One participating teacher said: "Ideally, there

should be a specialist for English. I do my best, but there are people who are more proficient because they have had more training."

Similarly, it was evident that the use of classroom time (Razo-Pérez, 2016) was significantly deficient, with frequent interruptions and inadequate distribution of time among the different multigrade levels. This situation affects the continuity of the learning process and limits opportunities for communicative practice.

The results of the analysis confirmed the importance of motivational levels in academic performance (Fernández-Suárez et al., 2012). On the one hand, students report significant difficulties in developing communication skills, especially in pronunciation (78% of cases) and listening comprehension (65% of cases), situations that are directly associated with low levels of intrinsic motivation.

On the other hand, the research revealed that motivation and its influence on academic performance (Soledispa-Rivera et al., 2020) are affected by multiple contextual factors. One participating student commented, "I get confused with pronunciation and don't understand when they speak English," evidencing the frustration they experience with the difficulties of traditional learning.

Additionally, significant differences in motivational levels were identified according to the gender and age of the students, a finding that coincides with studies on student profiles and linguistic production (Espinoza-Hidrobo et al., 2023). Female students showed a greater willingness to participate in narrative and collaborative activities, while male students preferred competitive and technological activities.

The assessment revealed significant limitations in infrastructure and technological resources that affect the implementation of innovative strategies. Seventy-five per cent of rural schools lack adequate internet connectivity, and 60% do not have sufficient technological equipment for all students, a situation that contrasts with the successful experiences of e-learning platforms reported in urban contexts (Luna et al., 2023).

In addition, it was found that excessive use of social media (Mendoza-Lipa, 2018) does not correlate positively with academic performance in English, suggesting that access to technology alone does not guarantee better educational outcomes without appropriate pedagogical mediation.

However, research on the relationship between time and school learning (Martinic, 2015) suggests that optimising the time available can partially compensate for resource limitations, which is the basis for the proposal of gamified activities that maximise the use of each class session.

PROPOSED TEACHING MODEL

The communicative-interactive teaching model is structured around four interrelated components that respond to the needs identified in the diagnosis and are based on contemporary scientific evidence. The curricular component is based on the premise that external factors in academic performance (Cabeza et al., 2020) can be mitigated through contextualised curricular adaptations that take into account the particularities of the multigrade rural environment.

For its part, the teaching component integrates innovative strategies that have proven effective in improving academic performance (Moreira-López & Rivadeneira-Barreiro, 2024). These strategies include contextualised gamification, intergenerational collaborative learning and continuous formative assessment that leverages diversity of levels as a pedagogical strength.

Meanwhile, the recreational-motivational component is based on research demonstrating the positive relationship between motivation and academic performance in English (Muñoz-Jara & Correa-Pérez, 2023). This component incorporates specific elements such as thematic narratives, progression systems, collaborative recognition, and adaptive challenges that maintain student interest.

Similarly, the communicative component focuses on interactive English teaching (García et al., 2020), prioritising authentic communicative situations that allow students to use the language in meaningful and culturally relevant contexts.

Contextualised Implementation Methodology

The implementation of the model is structured in five sequential stages that consider the particularities of the rural context and the limitations identified in the diagnosis. The first stage corresponds to the contextualised diagnosis, where not only prior language skills are assessed, but also the predominant learning styles (Caicedo-Quinteros, 2023) and the specific motivational factors of each site.

During the second stage of differentiated curriculum adaptation, the content is organised considering the most effective learning strategies for each context (Cárdenas-Narváez, 2019). This organisation respects individual learning rhythms and takes advantage of the peer tutoring opportunities offered by the multigrade context.

The third stage of contextual gamified planning includes the design of activities that do not depend exclusively on technological resources, considering the identified connectivity limitations. The activities integrate elements of local culture and use easily accessible materials that can be produced by the educational community.

In the fourth stage of collaborative implementation, the planned activities are carried out, prioritising collaborative work that leverages the diversity of ages and levels as a pedagogical strength. This stage includes specific strategies to maintain motivation throughout the educational process.

The fifth stage of comprehensive formative assessment includes continuous monitoring not only of academic progress but also of motivation levels and student satisfaction. This assessment uses multiple sources of evidence and considers both individual and collective achievements.

Contextualised gamified activities

The model includes a bank of gamified activities designed specifically for multigrade rural contexts, considering resource constraints and diversity of levels. For the first academic period, the unit "My Body, a Magical Treasure" incorporates activities such as "The Race of Shapes and Colours," which uses elements from the local natural environment and promotes collaboration between students of different ages.

Similarly, the activity "The Mysterious Family Robot" combines body vocabulary learning with the recognition of rural family diversity, using recycled materials and elements of local culture. This activity demonstrates how storytelling (Herrera-Arencibia et al., 2021) can be effectively integrated into gamified strategies.

For the second period, the unit "Learning to Be and Live Together" includes "The Traffic Light of Emotions," an activity that helps students express their feelings in English while developing social-emotional skills. This activity considers the gender differences identified in the diagnosis and offers alternative ways to participate that respect diverse learning styles.

During the third period, "The Animal and Nature Safari" connects English learning with knowledge of the local natural environment, allowing students to use their previous experiences as a basis for building new vocabulary. This activity demonstrates how natural resources in rural contexts can be used as teaching materials.

In the fourth period, activities such as "Culture and Family Bingo" and "The Hobby Race" integrate English learning with recognition of local and regional cultural diversity, strengthening cultural identity while developing communication skills in the foreign language.

Validation and evaluation of the model

The model validation process was carried out using a mixed methodology that included both the judgement of academic experts and social validation by the local educational community. Academic evaluators analysed the theoretical coherence of the model based on contemporary scientific literature, while the educational community evaluated the relevance and feasibility of implementation in the specific context.

The results of the academic validation show a high level of approval in all components of the model. In the pedagogical component, the experts highlighted the coherent integration of contemporary theories on motivation and learning (Justiniano-Flores & Cancino-Cotrina, 2024), giving an average rating of 4.7/5.0. Regarding the didactic component, the incorporation of innovative strategies that have proven effective in similar contexts (Moreira-López & Rivadeneira-

Barreiro, 2024) was positively evaluated, with an average rating of 4.6/5.0. The evaluators particularly highlighted the adaptation of activities to technological resource constraints.

Social validation by the educational community revealed high acceptance of the proposal, especially among students who expressed greater interest in contextualised gamified activities. Parents positively valued the incorporation of local cultural elements that strengthen regional identity while learning the foreign language.

Differentiated assessment tools

To facilitate the systematic evaluation of the model during its implementation, specific instruments were designed that consider the diversity of learning levels and styles identified in the diagnosis. The instruments include differentiated rubrics that assess both individual and collaborative progress, recognising that in multigrade contexts, collaborative learning is a specific strength.

Student performance assessment incorporates multiple forms of evidence that go beyond traditional assessments, including digital portfolios when possible or physical portfolios when there is no access to technology, systematic observations of participation in gamified activities, and self-assessments that strengthen student metacognition.

At the same time, instruments for the continuous assessment of motivational levels are proposed, based on recent research on motivation in learning (Justiniano-Flores & Cancino-Cotrina, 2024). These instruments allow for the early identification of situations that may affect student engagement and enable timely adjustments to the strategies implemented.

Therefore, evaluation criteria for the model were established that consider both academic results and the impact on student motivation and the satisfaction of the educational community. This comprehensive evaluation allows for the documentation of not only academic achievements but also attitudinal changes towards English language learning.

Expected impact and projections

The implementation of the communicative-interactive teaching model has the potential to significantly transform teaching practices in rural multigrade contexts, especially considering time as a critical factor in educational processes (Kraft & Novicoff, 2024). In terms of communication skills, students are expected to develop greater oral fluency and improve their listening comprehension through contextualised gamified activities.

With regard to student motivation, the model seeks to generate sustainable changes in attitudes towards English language learning, transforming the perception of difficulty into opportunities for discovery and personal growth. Contextualised gamification strategies are designed to maintain long-term interest and develop autonomy in learning.

In relation to teaching practices, the model provides methodological tools that allow teachers to take advantage of the specific strengths of the multigrade context, such as age diversity and the possibility of peer tutoring. These tools empower teachers to optimise their teaching regardless of their level of specialisation in English.

Furthermore, it is hoped that the relationship between the school and the community will be strengthened by valuing local knowledge and incorporating cultural elements into the English learning process. This approach can help reduce the perception that learning foreign languages means abandoning one's local cultural identity.

Scalability and sustainability of the model

The model's design considers scalability aspects that facilitate its implementation in other similar rural contexts, taking advantage of lessons learned about the complexity of teachers' time (Thompson et al., 2024). The proposed activities use low-cost materials and methodologies that can be adapted to different regional realities without losing their pedagogical effectiveness.

Consequently, the modular structure of the model allows for gradual implementation that respects institutional rhythms and local capacities for change. This flexibility is an important strength for its sustainable adoption in

different rural regions of the country, considering that each context has its own specific characteristics.

The sustainability of the model is strengthened by involving the educational community in the design and validation process, ensuring that the proposed strategies respond to real needs and can be maintained in the long term with locally available resources.

In addition, the model includes continuous teacher training strategies that can be developed through collaborative networks between rural institutions, optimising resources and facilitating the exchange of successful experiences between similar contexts.

Contextual implementation challenges

The implementation of the teaching model faces several challenges that must be considered to ensure its success in specific rural contexts. First, research on the complexity of teacher time use (Thompson et al., 2024) shows that the incorporation of new methodologies requires training and support processes that can be challenging in contexts where teachers have multiple responsibilities.

Second, although the model has been designed to minimise technological dependence, connectivity and digital resource limitations may restrict some activities that could significantly enrich the learning experience. This situation requires constant pedagogical creativity to adapt strategies that have been successful in other contexts.

Thirdly, the financial sustainability of the model may be affected by budgetary instability in rural educational institutions. However, the focus on low-cost materials and training in the development of local teaching resources partially mitigates this challenge.

Fourth, resistance to change on the part of some members of the educational community may constitute a barrier to successful implementation. This resistance is often based on traditional conceptions of English language teaching that prioritise grammar and translation over communication skills.

Methodological limitations of the study

This study has some methodological limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results and planning future research. In this context, the research was conducted in a specific rural context in Cundinamarca, Colombia, which may limit the direct generalisation of the results to other rural contexts with different geographical, cultural or socio-economic characteristics.

Furthermore, the proposed model was not fully implemented during the research period, so the results are based on the theoretical design, expert validation and acceptance by the educational community, but not on empirical evidence of its effectiveness in terms of measurable academic performance improvement.

Therefore, although methodological triangulation was used to strengthen the validity of the results, the absence of quantitative measurements of academic progress before and after implementation constitutes a limitation in establishing definitive causal relationships between the proposed model and learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The development of this communicative-interactive teaching model based on gamification represents a significant contribution to addressing the contemporary challenges of English language teaching in multigrade rural contexts. The research revealed that limitations in current teaching practices are directly related to motivational factors, resource constraints, and a lack of knowledge of innovative teaching strategies that have proven effective in other contexts.

The proposed model responds comprehensively to these issues by integrating four interrelated components that consider both the technical aspects of teaching and the motivational and contextual factors that influence student learning. This holistic approach recognises that educational success in rural contexts requires strategies that leverage the specific strengths of these environments.

Expert validation and acceptance by the educational community confirm the theoretical and social relevance of the model, highlighting its potential to transform learning experiences in contexts where resources are limited but the possibilities for pedagogical innovation are vast.

The model contributes to the field of rural pedagogy by demonstrating that it is possible to develop innovative proposals that respond to specific needs without requiring massive technological investments. Its focus on contextualised gamification and intergenerational collaborative learning offers new perspectives for optimising educational processes in multigrade classrooms.

For future research, it is recommended that the model be implemented in real contexts to evaluate its empirical effectiveness through experimental or quasi-experimental designs that allow causal relationships to be established between the strategies implemented and the learning outcomes. Similarly, it would be valuable to develop comparative studies with other teaching methodologies and explore its adaptability to different rural regions of the country.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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