

Integrating English for Tourism Purposes: A Mixed-Methods Study on Communicative Competence Development in Coastal Destinations**Integrando el inglés para fines turísticos: un estudio de métodos mixtos sobre el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa en destinos costeros**

Mg. Raul Pinela Cardenas, Mónica Paola López Garcés & Roger Iván Ronquillo Panchana

PUNTO CIENCIA.

Julio - diciembre, V°6 - N°2; 2025

Recibido: 10-11-2025

Aceptado: 19-11-2025

Publicado: 21-11-2025

PAIS

- Ecuador, Milagro
- Ecuador, Milagro
- Ecuador, Milagro

INSTITUCION

- Universidad Estatal de Milagro
- Universidad Estatal de Milagro
- Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil

CORREO:

- ✉ rpinelac@unemi.edu.ec
- ✉ mlopezg10@unemi.edu.ec
- ✉ roger.ronquillo@cu.ucsq.edu.ec

ORCID:

- 🌐 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3470-8270>
- 🌐 <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3132-4459>
- 🌐 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-7245-9449>

FORMATO DE CITA APA.

Pinela, R., López, M. & Ronquillo, R. (2025). Integrating English for Tourism Purposes: A Mixed-Methods Study on Communicative Competence Development in Coastal Destinations. *Revista G-ner@ndo*, V°6 (N°2). Pág. 2980 – 2992.

Abstract

This study explores the key factors that influence learning outcomes in higher education through a comprehensive mixed-methods approach. The research focuses on the interaction between instructional practices, student engagement, and contextual conditions that shape academic performance. Quantitative data were gathered from standardized assessments to identify performance patterns, while qualitative insights were obtained through semi-structured interviews and systematic classroom observations. The integrated analysis reveals that interactive, well-structured, and context-responsive pedagogical strategies are strongly associated with higher levels of student achievement. Participants emphasized the importance of clear learning objectives, meaningful task design, and supportive teacher guidance in fostering motivation and persistence. Findings also highlight the value of providing learners with opportunities for autonomy, collaboration, and reflective engagement. By combining numerical trends with detailed narrative accounts, the study offers a multidimensional understanding of how instructional decisions influence students' learning trajectories. The results contribute to ongoing discussions on pedagogical innovation and provide practical recommendations for educators seeking to strengthen instructional quality, enhance student participation, and create more inclusive learning environments aligned with contemporary educational demands.

Keywords: Instructional Strategies, Student Engagement, Learning Outcomes, Mixed-Methods Research, Inclusive Education.

Resumen

Este estudio explora los factores clave que influyen en los resultados de aprendizaje en la educación superior mediante un enfoque de métodos mixtos. La investigación se centra en la interacción entre las prácticas de enseñanza, el compromiso estudiantil y las condiciones contextuales que configuran el rendimiento académico. Los datos cuantitativos se recopilaban a través de evaluaciones estandarizadas para identificar patrones de desempeño, mientras que la información cualitativa se obtuvo mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas y observaciones sistemáticas en el aula. El análisis integrado revela que las estrategias pedagógicas interactivas, bien estructuradas y sensibles al contexto están fuertemente asociadas con niveles más altos de logro estudiantil. Los participantes destacaron la importancia de objetivos de aprendizaje claros, actividades significativas y una orientación docente que fomente la motivación y la perseverancia. Los resultados también evidencian el valor de ofrecer a los estudiantes oportunidades de autonomía, colaboración y reflexión. Al combinar tendencias numéricas con descripciones detalladas, el estudio proporciona una comprensión multidimensional de cómo las decisiones instruccionales influyen en las trayectorias de aprendizaje. Los hallazgos contribuyen a las discusiones actuales sobre innovación pedagógica y ofrecen recomendaciones prácticas para fortalecer la calidad educativa y promover ambientes de aprendizaje inclusivos.

Palabras clave: Estrategias de instrucción, participación estudiantil, resultados de aprendizaje, investigación de métodos mixtos, educación inclusiva.

Introduction

In contemporary higher education, the design of instructional strategies plays a crucial role in shaping student engagement and learning outcomes. As educational environments continue to evolve, traditional teacher-centered approaches have proven insufficient to meet the diverse academic and motivational needs of learners. Recent studies emphasize the necessity of integrating interactive, student-centered, and context-responsive pedagogies that stimulate deeper cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement. For instance, although digital learning environments generate extensive data on observable behaviors, current research indicates that engagement is often reduced to surface-level metrics, overlooking broader emotional and cognitive dimensions that significantly influence learning (Bergdahl, 2024).

At the same time, inclusive and equitable teaching practices are gaining increasing attention as essential frameworks for fostering meaningful learning experiences. Evidence shows that when instructional practices intentionally address diversity—whether linguistic, cultural, or experiential—students demonstrate stronger participation, motivation, and academic progress. Mixed-methods research has been particularly effective in examining how inclusive pedagogies operate at multiple institutional levels, offering deeper insights into factors that support student belonging and persistence (Soicher et al., 2024).

Another relevant trend is the rapid expansion of hybrid and blended learning modalities. These approaches have reconfigured the relationship between pedagogy, technology, and learner agency, urging educators to redesign instructional practices that maintain student engagement across modalities. Studies indicate that well-planned hybrid models enhance learning outcomes when they incorporate active learning, structured interaction, and opportunities for autonomy (Gudoniene et al., 2025).

Furthermore, research grounded in mixed-methods designs has highlighted the interconnected roles of motivation, engagement, and performance. Findings demonstrate that student motivation directly influences engagement, which in turn contributes to stronger academic outcomes, reinforcing the importance of understanding learning processes through both quantitative and qualitative lenses (Guo, 2023).

Collectively, these perspectives underscore the importance of pedagogical approaches that are interactive, inclusive, and responsive to learners' contexts. In the field of English language education, especially when connected to tourism-related themes, such approaches become even more relevant. The present study examines how instructional strategies influence student engagement and learning outcomes in English language learning that incorporates tourism-based content. Through a mixed-methods lens, it seeks to understand how students develop communicative competence when exposed to pedagogical practices that integrate real-world, tourism-oriented contexts.

Literature Review

The evolution of instructional strategies in higher education has been shaped by growing demands for more student-centered, interactive, and context-responsive learning environments. Research over the past decade has consistently demonstrated that traditional lecture-based approaches, while efficient for content transmission, are insufficient for promoting deep learning, critical thinking, and sustained engagement. Active learning has emerged as one of the most influential instructional paradigms, supported by a robust evidence base showing its effectiveness across disciplines. Deslauriers et al. (2019) demonstrated that students learn more effectively when engaged in active instructional practices, even when they incorrectly perceive passive lectures as more beneficial. This discrepancy underscores the importance of designing learning experiences that extend beyond student preferences to prioritize cognitive gains.

Complementing these findings, Koenen, Dochy and Berghmans (2015) argued that learner-centered instructional strategies support the development of higher-order thinking skills by fostering autonomy, collaboration, and reflective engagement. Such approaches shift the role of the instructor from a knowledge transmitter to a facilitator who guides students through structured yet flexible learning pathways. However, the variability with which these strategies are implemented across institutions remains a concern. Stains et al. (2018) found that although active learning is widely promoted, adoption rates vary significantly, and many implementations lack the systematic planning necessary for maximizing impact. These findings highlight the need for pedagogical models that adapt to the contextual realities of specific learning environments.

Digitalization has further influenced instructional practices. Zawacki-Richter and Latchem (2018) emphasized that digital tools can enhance learner engagement and accessibility when integrated through intentional pedagogical design. Rather than simply adding technology, effective digital pedagogies require alignment with instructional goals, interaction patterns, and assessment strategies. As higher education increasingly incorporates hybrid and blended formats, the alignment between pedagogy and technological mediation has become essential. Gudoniene et al. (2025) noted that hybrid learning environments can significantly enhance engagement when they incorporate structured interaction, meaningful activities, and opportunities for personalization.

Parallel to pedagogical innovation, research on student engagement has expanded considerably. Engagement is now understood as a multidimensional construct encompassing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions. Bergdahl (2024) argued that many current assessments of engagement rely heavily on observable metrics—such as log-ins or time-on-task—while underrepresenting deeper emotional and cognitive processes that more accurately reflect meaningful learning. This gap illustrates the need for holistic approaches that capture the full range of student engagement experiences. Similarly, Fredricks, Filsecker and Lawson (2016) emphasized that engagement is

dynamic and context-dependent, shaped by instructional design, learner characteristics, and classroom climate. Their model highlights the interdependence of emotional involvement, cognitive investment, and behavioral participation.

Motivation also plays a central role in fostering engagement. Guo (2023) demonstrated that motivation serves as a primary driver of student engagement, which in turn predicts academic achievement. Instructors must therefore design learning environments that not only activate cognitive processes but also nurture students' interest, self-efficacy, and sense of belonging. These findings align with broader calls to integrate motivational design into pedagogical planning, particularly in contexts where learners may have varied linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

Recent educational research has also underscored the importance of inclusive teaching practices. Inclusive education goes beyond accommodation; it involves designing learning environments that proactively address diversity in linguistic, cultural, cognitive, and socio-emotional dimensions. Soicher et al. (2024) proposed a comprehensive framework for assessing inclusive and equitable teaching across institutional levels, revealing that inclusivity strengthens student participation, satisfaction, and academic persistence. Their work demonstrates that inclusive pedagogies must be systematically embedded into course design, instructional interactions, and assessment practices to be fully effective.

Additionally, inclusive teaching holds particular relevance in language education. English language learners often navigate multiple layers of difference—linguistic proficiency, cultural identity, prior educational experiences—which requires instructors to adopt flexible and responsive pedagogical approaches. Teng and Wang (2021) argued that supportive instructional environments that integrate opportunities for authentic communication enhance learners' confidence and communicative competence. This emphasis on meaningful interaction aligns with communicative

language teaching principles and is especially important in applied language contexts such as tourism.

Tourism-based English instruction has gained attention due to its potential to create authentic, context-rich language learning opportunities. Using tourism-related scenarios, materials, and tasks provides students with meaningful contexts in which to develop vocabulary, speaking fluency, and pragmatic competence. Richards (2015) highlighted the importance of situating language instruction within real-world communicative needs, noting that learners demonstrate stronger motivation when they perceive content as relevant and applicable. In the case of English for tourism, authenticity is particularly important, as the field requires not only linguistic accuracy but also interpersonal skills, intercultural sensitivity, and service-oriented communication.

Hybrid and experiential learning further strengthen this approach. Students exposed to virtual tourism simulations, field-based interactions, or role-play tasks demonstrate higher levels of engagement and communicative performance. According to O'Dowd (2020), technology-mediated intercultural exchanges can enhance language development by offering learners opportunities to communicate with authentic audiences, expanding both linguistic and cultural competence. Such interactions align with the real-world communicative demands of tourism settings, making them highly valuable for English for Tourism Purposes (ETP) curricula.

Mixed-methods research has played an important role in advancing understanding of how instructional strategies, engagement, and inclusivity intersect in language learning environments. By integrating quantitative performance indicators with qualitative insights from interviews, observations, or reflective journals, scholars can capture the complexity of learners' experiences. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) argued that mixed-methods designs are particularly effective in educational research because they allow researchers to explore not only outcomes but also processes—how learners

perceive instruction, how engagement fluctuates, and how contextual variables influence learning trajectories. This methodological approach is especially relevant for tourism-oriented English instruction, where diverse learner backgrounds and real-world communicative demands require nuanced and multidimensional analysis.

Methods and Materials

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods design, which allows quantitative and qualitative data to be collected, analyzed, and merged to obtain a comprehensive understanding of how instructional strategies influence student engagement and learning outcomes in English language education with tourism-related content. This design was selected because it provides a multidimensional view of both the effectiveness of instructional practices and the subjective experiences of learners. Quantitative and qualitative strands were conducted concurrently and integrated during the interpretation phase to enhance the validity and depth of the findings.

Participants were undergraduate students enrolled in an English for Tourism course offered at a coastal higher-education institution characterized by a diverse student population and strong links to the local tourism industry. In total, 68 students participated in the quantitative phase, providing a sufficiently large sample to examine patterns of engagement, proficiency development, and perceptions of instructional strategies. For the qualitative phase, a subset of 20 students was selected to provide more in-depth insights into their learning experiences, supplemented by the participation of 3 instructors who had direct teaching responsibilities in the tourism-oriented English curriculum.

Participants varied widely in terms of linguistic backgrounds, prior exposure to English, cultural heritage, and socioeconomic conditions, reflecting the heterogeneity commonly found in tourism-focused academic programs. This diversity offered a rich context for examining how instructional strategies function across learners with different

needs and skill levels. Convenience sampling was adopted due to the accessibility of the participants and the feasibility of conducting repeated data collection throughout the instructional period. Despite the use of convenience sampling, measures were taken to ensure ethical rigor, including obtaining informed consent, explaining the purpose and procedures of the study, and guaranteeing confidentiality and voluntary participation. Additionally, participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any moment without academic consequence, thereby ensuring compliance with institutional research ethics standards.

Research Instruments & Tools

To ensure a rigorous and multidimensional analysis, the study employs a variety of data collection tools:

Quantitative Instruments

The quantitative phase utilized three structured instruments designed to measure changes in language proficiency, engagement, and perceptions of instructional practices within tourism-oriented English learning. First, a standardized Language Proficiency Test targeting tourism-related vocabulary, listening comprehension, and spoken interaction was administered at the beginning and end of the academic term to assess measurable learning gains. Second, the Student Engagement Scale, a validated Likert-type instrument, captured behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions of engagement, allowing for the identification of patterns connected to instructional strategies. Third, an Instructional Strategy Perception Survey consisting of 25 items evaluated students' views regarding clarity of explanations, authenticity of tasks, opportunities for communication, and inclusivity within the classroom. These quantitative tools provided numerical indicators of student progress and perceptions, enabling statistical comparisons across time and relationships between variables associated with instructional design and tourism-based English learning.

Qualitative Instruments:

The qualitative phase incorporated multiple sources of rich, contextualized data to explore learners' and instructors' experiences with tourism-integrated English instruction. Semi-structured interviews with both students and instructors were conducted to elicit detailed perspectives on engagement, motivation, perceived challenges, and the authenticity of tourism-related activities. Additionally, systematic classroom observations were carried out using a structured rubric to document interaction patterns, teacher scaffolding, use of authentic tourism materials, and the overall communicative atmosphere of the classroom. Complementing these sources, students completed weekly reflective journals in which they described their evolving attitudes, learning strategies, and emotional responses to the pedagogical approaches employed throughout the course. Together, these qualitative instruments provided a nuanced understanding of how instructional strategies shaped learners' engagement, sense of relevance, and development of communicative competence in tourism-focused English contexts.

Results analysis

Quantitative analyses revealed significant improvements in students' language proficiency and engagement across the instructional period. Scores from the standardized Language Proficiency Test demonstrated notable gains, particularly in tourism-related vocabulary and listening comprehension, suggesting that the integration of authentic, context-based tasks effectively supported linguistic development. Paired analyses also indicated a positive shift in overall engagement, with increases in behavioral participation, emotional involvement, and cognitive investment. These findings were further supported by the Instructional Strategy Perception Survey, where students rated interactive activities, real-world simulations, and tourism-themed role-plays as highly effective in enhancing understanding and retention. Correlational

analyses showed strong relationships between perceived instructional clarity, opportunities for communication, and improvements in proficiency scores, indicating that well-structured, tourism-oriented pedagogies contributed directly to measurable learning outcomes.

Qualitative data echoed and expanded upon the quantitative trends. Semi-structured interviews revealed that students perceived tourism-based instructional activities as more relevant, engaging, and motivating compared to traditional textbook-based lessons. Many participants described feeling more confident when practicing English through authentic scenarios such as hotel check-ins, guided tours, or customer service interactions, noting that these activities reduced anxiety and increased willingness to communicate. Classroom observations further confirmed high levels of interaction and participation during experiential tasks, with students demonstrating greater spontaneity, peer collaboration, and use of target vocabulary. Reflective journals also highlighted a progressive shift in students' self-awareness, with recurring themes of improved confidence, stronger connections to local tourism contexts, and a heightened sense of purpose in learning English for real-world communication.

When integrating quantitative and qualitative findings, a clear convergence emerged between measurable progress and students' subjective experiences. The statistical improvements in engagement and proficiency aligned closely with students' narratives describing greater motivation and perceived authenticity in learning activities. Both data strands indicated that instructional strategies emphasizing real-world relevance—particularly those grounded in tourism scenarios—contributed to deeper engagement and more substantial communicative development. The mixed-methods analysis also highlighted the role of inclusive teaching practices, as students from diverse linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds reported feeling supported and valued through interactive, context-responsive pedagogies. Taken together, the results suggest that integrating tourism content into English instruction not only enhances learning outcomes but also fosters meaningful learner involvement, demonstrating the

effectiveness of an instructional approach that is authentic, inclusive, and grounded in local real-world contexts.

Conclusions

The integration of tourism-oriented instructional strategies significantly enhanced students' communicative competence and overall engagement in the English learning process. Quantitative improvements in vocabulary, listening comprehension, and participation were consistent with students' positive perceptions of authentic, context-based activities. These results indicate that aligning pedagogical practices with real-world professional scenarios creates more meaningful opportunities for language development, leading to measurable gains in performance.

Students not only benefited cognitively from tourism-related tasks but also experienced increased motivation, confidence, and willingness to communicate. The consistent themes emerging from interviews, observations, and reflective journals suggest that authentic learning environments reduce anxiety and foster deeper emotional and social engagement. This highlights the importance of affective factors in language learning and supports the use of experiential strategies to strengthen learners' communicative readiness in practical contexts.

The convergence of quantitative and qualitative findings confirms that instruction grounded in authenticity, inclusivity, and interaction is particularly effective for diverse learner populations. The study demonstrates that tourism-integrated English instruction supports equitable participation and meaningful progress among students with varied linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. These outcomes underscore the value of a mixed-methods approach in capturing the complexity of the learning process and reinforce the need for pedagogical designs that are responsive to real-world demands and local community contexts.

Referencias bibliográficas

- Bergdahl, N. (2024). Student engagement in higher education: A systematic review of measurement approaches. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 21(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-024-00493-y>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689818781631>
- Deslauriers, L., McCarty, L., Miller, K., Callaghan, K., & Kestin, G. (2019). Measuring actual learning versus feeling of learning in response to being actively engaged in the classroom. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(39), 19251–19257. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1821936116>
- Fredricks, J. A., Filsecker, M., & Lawson, M. A. (2016). Student engagement, context, and adjustment: A review of research. *Learning and Instruction*, 43, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2016.02.002>
- Gudoniene, D., Volungeviciene, A., Hug, T., & Tereseviciene, M. (2025). Hybrid learning design in higher education: A systematic review of research trends. *Sustainability*, 17(2), 756. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su17020756>
- Guo, W. (2023). Understanding the relationships between undergraduate students' motivation, engagement, and learning outcomes: A mixed-methods approach. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 48(5), 725–739. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2023.2214345>
- Koenen, A. K., Dochy, F., & Berghmans, I. (2015). Affective, cognitive and behavioral student engagement: A review of self-report instruments and their usage. *Educational Research Review*, 17, 62–74. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2015.01.002>
- O'Dowd, R. (2020). A transnational model of virtual exchange for global citizenship education. *Language Learning & Technology*, 24(3), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.10125/44744>
- Richards, J. C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781009024543>
- Soicher, R. N., Baker, Z., & Thomas, C. L. (2024). A mixed-methods approach to measuring inclusive and equitable teaching in higher education. *Journal of Faculty Development*, 38(2), 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-024-09741-5>
- Stains, M., Harshman, J., Barker, M., Chasteen, S., Cole, R., DeChenne-Peters, S., ... & Young, A. (2018). Anatomy of STEM teaching in North American universities. *Science*, 359(6383), 1468–1470. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aar8555>
- Teng, F., & Wang, C. (2021). Reciprocal relationships between teacher support, student engagement, and English language learners' achievement. *TESOL Quarterly*, 55(1), 183–209. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.586>
-

Zawacki-Richter, O., & Latchem, C. (2018). Exploring four decades of research in Computers & Education. *Computers & Education*, 122, 136–152. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2017.09.017>.