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## **TEFL Community Service: Classroom Intervention in Public Education to Improve University Degree Programs and Academic Performance of Primary School Children**

Servicio comunitario TEFL: intervención en el aula de la educación pública para mejorar los programas de títulos universitarios y el rendimiento académico de los niños de la escuela primaria

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### **Abstract**


This study analyzes the impact of TEFL Community Service / Service Learning on university practice teachers' professional development in public schools, focusing on lesson planning, and assessment design using the PDP, ECRIF, and The Writing Process approaches. The exploratory action research (EAR) methodology was employed, involving pre- and post-diagnostic tests to evaluate student progress in vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The findings demonstrate that the practice teacher faced initial challenges, including managing large classes, creating engaging didactic materials, and adapting lesson plans to students' diverse needs. However, significant improvements in grammar, listening, speaking, and writing skills among students highlight the effectiveness of tailored strategies. Despite resource limitations, innovative solutions such as physical activities, adapted social media content, and teacher-created materials facilitated engagement and learning. Additionally, the TEFL Community Service experience provided the practice teacher with a deeper understanding of lesson planning frameworks, enhanced creativity, and strengthened essential skills such as leadership and adaptability. The results of the pre- and post-diagnostic assessments showed notable growth in students' language abilities, affirming the value of the applied approaches. This study underscores the importance of equipping practice teachers with tools and strategies to overcome public school challenges, thereby improving teaching quality and student outcomes. Recommendations include revising TEFL curricula, incorporating internships that reflect public education realities, conducting larger-scale comparative research, and designing better textbooks for public school use.

*Keywords:* tefl community service, service learning, exploratory action research, lesson planning, pdp approach

## Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto del Servicio Comunitario TEFL / Aprendizaje-Servicio en el desarrollo profesional de los profesores en formación en escuelas públicas, centrándose en la planificación de lecciones y el diseño de evaluaciones utilizando los enfoques PDP, ECRIF y The Writing Process. Se empleó la metodología de investigación-acción exploratoria (EAR), incluyendo pruebas diagnósticas iniciales y finales para evaluar el progreso de los estudiantes en vocabulario, gramática, lectura, escritura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral. Los hallazgos demuestran que los profesores en formación enfrentaron desafíos iniciales, como manejar clases numerosas, crear materiales didácticos atractivos y adaptar las lecciones a las diversas necesidades de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, las mejoras significativas en las habilidades de gramática, comprensión auditiva, expresión oral y escritura entre los estudiantes resaltan la efectividad de las estrategias adaptadas. A pesar de las limitaciones de recursos, soluciones innovadoras como actividades físicas, contenido adaptado de redes sociales y materiales creados por el docente facilitaron el compromiso y el aprendizaje. Además, la experiencia de Servicio Comunitario TEFL brindó al profesor en formación una comprensión más profunda de los marcos de planificación de lecciones, mayor creatividad y el fortalecimiento de habilidades esenciales como liderazgo y adaptabilidad. Los resultados de las evaluaciones diagnósticas iniciales y finales mostraron un notable crecimiento en las habilidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes, reafirmando el valor de los enfoques aplicados. Este estudio subraya la importancia de dotar a los profesores en formación con herramientas y estrategias para superar los desafíos del sistema público, mejorando así la calidad de la enseñanza y los resultados de los estudiantes. Las recomendaciones incluyen la revisión de los planes de estudio de TEFL, la incorporación de pasantías que reflejen las realidades de la educación pública, la realización de investigaciones comparativas a mayor escala y el diseño de mejores libros de texto para las escuelas públicas.

*Palabras clave:* servicio comunitario tefl, aprendizaje-servicio, investigación-acción exploratoria, planificación de lecciones, enfoque pdp

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## **INTRODUCTION**

To bridge the skills gap in English language proficiency in elementary basic education, especially in public institutions in Ecuador, since the national curriculum of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC for its acronym in Spanish) does not establish English as a mandatory subject, the Laica Eloy Alfaro University of Manabí (ULEAM for its acronym in Spanish) introduced in 2023 the degree modality "TEFL in Community Service" (Service-Learning) as part of the Curricular Integration Work for candidates pursuing a bachelor's degree in English language teaching as a foreign language in 2023 in the Faculty of Education. This modality was considered because, although English is not mandatory, several public institutions in the region want their students to be proficient in the language. However, a limitation is that the individuals hired directly by the state to teach this subject often lack both the required language proficiency and pedagogical training. For this reason, ULEAM offers its students the option of TEFL in Community Service, which allows them to obtain their bachelor's degree and gain real teaching experience in schools or high schools for one academic year.

It is important to emphasize the challenge that this option represents for ULEAM students, considering that it would be their first time as the primary individuals responsible for the academic performance of the students in the classrooms assigned to them. Additionally, school administrators expect children and/or adolescents to understand and produce spoken and written discourse in English spontaneously rather than out of obligation.

To ease practice teachers' burden of constantly reviewing and considering the appropriate pedagogical method or approach, the Pedagogy of National or Foreign Languages (PINE for its acronym in Spanish) program established that the strategies to be used are ECRIF, PDP, and The Writing process. These strategies are taught throughout their academic training in several courses, which also facilitates making the best decisions for curriculum adjustments and subsequently studying their effectiveness in teaching English as a foreign language.

The purpose of the article, as stated in the introduction, is to address the skills gap in English language proficiency within Ecuador's public elementary education system by proposing a service-learning intervention. Specifically, it focuses on the initiative by the Laica Eloy Alfaro University of Manabí (ULEAM) to implement the "TEFL in Community Service" degree modality. This program aims to equip English language teaching students with hands-on teaching experience in underserved schools while simultaneously benefiting local communities by improving English instruction and addressing educational inequities.

### **Background of the Use of ECRIF and PDP Approaches in Academic Subjects and Degree Modalities**

University students participating in this study, who can choose the TEFL in Community Service modality, are acquainted with the ECRIF, PDP and The Writing Process approaches because they took the TEFL for Planning and Designing and TEFL for Secondary Instruction courses in their fifth and sixth semesters, respectively. However, a drawback is that in the first course mentioned, they only have one or two chances to design lesson plans for each approach, usually in groups, due to the large number of students per class and the need to receive feedback from their instructor. Meanwhile, in TEFL for Secondary Instruction, they must implement the lessons they created, using their classmates as their student audience.

Although they receive feedback on their work based on a rubric set by their instructors, in neither case do they have actual primary or secondary school students to gain hands-on experience with. They must wait until their internship and Community Outreach Program periods (in the last semesters) to work with school-age learners.

Additionally, there is a degree modality called Curricular Integration Work: TEFL Application Process through Systematization of Experiences, in which students must design one lesson plan for each skill—Grammar, Writing, Speaking, Reading, and Listening (FMU, ECRIF, PDP and The Writing Process)—and apply them to lower-level students within their program. Again, the limitation here is that they do not gain experience teaching school-aged learners. Consequently, they miss the opportunity to design a greater sample of lesson plans and teaching materials for an entire academic year. Furthermore, they do not experience the necessity of adapting methodologies and activities for students of different ages, English proficiency levels, behaviors, and educational needs.

It is important to emphasize that both in the TEFL Application Process through Systematization of Experiences and in the TEFL in Community Service modality, students are guided by an expert TEFL tutor in planning, instruction, and assessment to review their lesson plans, assessment resources, and provide recommendations regarding their teaching performance in practice.

The existing literature provides substantial evidence of service-learning in the field of medicine in Ecuador. In fact, the rural health year is mandatory for physicians intending to practice in the institutions of the Ministry of Public Health (MSP for its acronym in Spanish) in the country. There is also evidence of other rural interventions aimed at teaching values and developing social and ethical competencies. However, there are notable gaps in the literature regarding English language instruction delivered by university students for the benefit of the community. This underscores the necessity of the proposed intervention.

### **METHODOLOGY**

This study aligns with the postmodern paradigm and employs a mixed-methods approach. It incorporates an experimental design to evaluate participants' English proficiency by administering a pretest and posttest to compare their language development. An educational intervention was implemented immediately after the pretest, focusing on the design and application of lesson plans based on the TEFL methodologies PDP, ECRIF, and The Writing Process.

The sample included 24 students, comprising 15 girls and 9 boys between the ages of 8 and 9, all from low-income families. These students attended "Pedro Fermín Cevallos" Elementary and High School, an educational institution situated in an urban area of Manta, Ecuador. Among the available resources, there are the Internet, the classrooms, and open spaces such as soccer fields.

The instruments used to collect data in the study are:

The Pre-Post Tests: To evaluate students' knowledge of vocabulary recognition, grammar, writing, listening for specific details, and speaking, assessments were conducted before and after the implementation of the TEFL lesson plans. These tests included interviews to gauge speaking proficiency on A1 topics and exercises in other language skills chosen by the practice teacher for the academic year. The analysis of scores revealed key areas of difficulty, particularly in responding to interviews based on picture prompts, identifying specific details in audio recordings, and applying grammar in context. These insights informed the development, selection, and adaptation of lesson plans, materials, and strategies, ensuring targeted interventions to enhance student performance.

An Open-Ended Interview for the Practice Teacher in TEFL Community Service, which aims to explore the experience of a practice teacher who worked in the TEFL Community Service modality with Primary students, focusing on lesson planning, assessment material development, tutor guidance, and potential improvements for future practice teachers.

## Description of the intervention proposal

### Main objective

To analyze how TEFL Community Service enhances university practice teachers' expertise in public schools by improving their skills in lesson planning, as well as the design and application of assessment using the PDP, ECRIF and The Writing Process approaches.

### Sub-objectives

To evaluate the impact of TEFL Community Service on practice teachers' ability to create structured and effective lesson plans.

To examine how practice teachers design and implement assessments aligned with the PDP (Pre, During, Post) and ECRIF (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, Fluency) frameworks.

To assess the effectiveness of these approaches in improving students' learning outcomes in public school settings.

### Method of action research

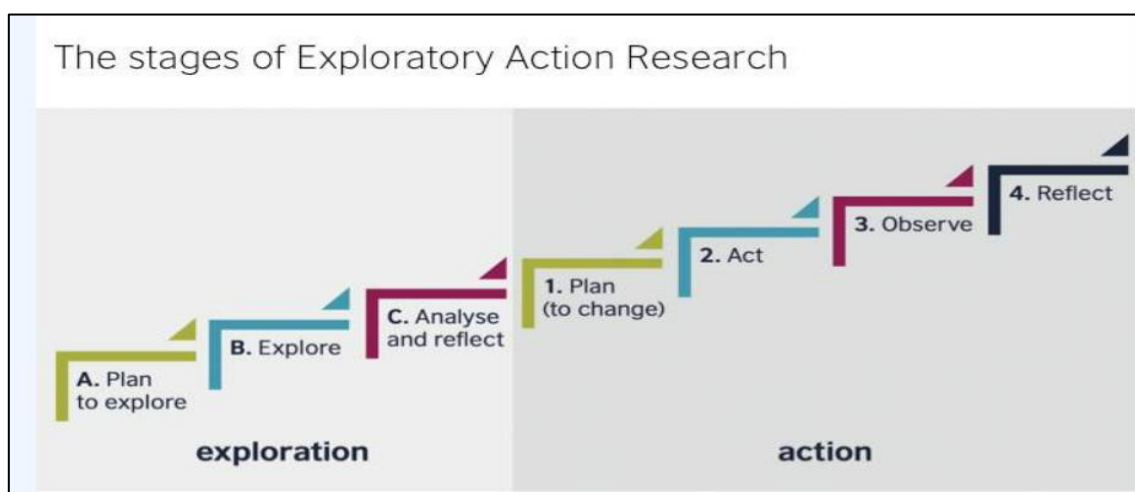
In this study, researchers implemented Exploratory Action Research (EAR), a methodology introduced in 2013 through the British Council's Champion Teachers initiative in Chile. Specifically designed to support English educators in public schools, EAR aims to enhance continuous professional development (CPD) by addressing the difficulties faced in challenging teaching environments (British Council, 2019).

### Design of action research

"There are seven ascending steps from the left to the right...divided into two halves: exploration on the left and action on the right. Each step leads to the next step in the process from exploration to action." (British Council, n.d.)

### Figure 1

*Handbook for Exploratory Action Research*



**Note:** Smith, R & Rebolledo, P. (2018).

## **Stage 1: Exploration**

The exploration stage aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of a situation by thoroughly analyzing its various aspects. The practice teacher and the TEFL tutor at the university wanted to know the fourth graders' competence in English grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening and speaking to design the lesson planning and instruction in PDP, ECRIF and The Writing Process approaches of TEFL accordingly.

Previously, the TEFL tutor also wanted to know the knowledge and abilities of the practice teacher as an assessment designer to help him reflect on those aspects not only for the elaboration of the diagnostic tests (pre and post), but also for the practice teacher to be able to design formative class materials and evaluation instruments during the months he was going to be assigned to teach that group of students.

### **Main research problem**

University practice teachers in TEFL programs may face challenges in effectively planning lessons and designing assessments that align with communicative language teaching methodologies, such as the PDP, ECRIF and The Writing Process approaches, when working in public school settings. There is a need to explore how the TEFL Community Service experience contributes to their professional development in these areas.

### **Plan to explore**

To know the practice teacher's skills as an assessment designer, the TEFL tutor asked him to elaborate a diagnostic ten-question test that evaluated the fourth graders' competence in English. This task will also be useful to check the validity and practicality of the test before being applied to students.

### **Explore**

A paper-based diagnostic assessment was conducted with a group of 24 fourth-grade elementary students to evaluate their initial English proficiency. The primary objective was to identify their competencies and areas for improvement across the four core language skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This evaluation aimed to inform instructional planning, ensuring that the curriculum aligns with students' current abilities while supporting their future learning objectives and providing pedagogical recommendations.

The assessment was administered over a total duration of 180 minutes, divided into two segments: a 90-minute written component—covering writing, grammar, listening, vocabulary, and reading—integrated within the regular lesson schedule, followed by an additional 90-minute speaking test conducted on a one-on-one basis. A range of tasks was designed to assess each linguistic skill. The reading section required students to comprehend a short text and respond to multiple-choice questions. In the writing task, students completed cards with essential details such as location, date, time, and signature. The speaking evaluation consisted of an interview in which students answered approximately five questions related to visual prompts, with pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary assessed against a rubric. Listening comprehension was evaluated through audio recordings, followed by multiple-choice and matching exercises.

### **Analyze and reflect**

By revising the test elaborated by the practice teacher, the tutor could find errors that could affect students' performance in the quiz, not necessarily for their lack of knowledge, but for inconveniences in the validity and practicality of the test more related to the practice teacher's inexperience as an

assessor. Some examples of questions and/or instructions that the practice teacher needed to correct are described below.

**Figure 2**

*Randall's ESL Cyber Listening. (2021, June 13). Happy birthday. Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab*

What is the boy's name?

Mitchell

Matthew

Michael

How old is the boy turning in the conversation?

nine

eight

seven

What does he want to do first?

open presents

eat cake and ice cream

play outdoor games

In the game, you have to \_\_\_\_.

hide from others

catch a ball

touch another person

Although the audio selected from Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab was very good for the students' interest and level, most of the questions available on the website to test the comprehension of that resource were not appropriate considering their English level, A1. Moreover, it required students to develop complex Listening skills they had not been trained for yet, such as detecting signposts in the question "What does he want to do first?" Also, the questions from the original source demanded from the students, knowledge of and familiarity with the present continuous tense as well as the modal 'have to'.

Therefore, the university tutor suggested playing just a part of the audio recording and including these questions instead to test their ability of listening for detail:

### Figure 3

Source pretest in the research

6. Listen to the recording and underline the correct answer (a-d) (0.25 \* 3 = 0.75 pts.)
- What is the boy's name?
    - a) Michael
    - b) Matthew
    - c) Mitchell
    - d) Daniel
  - How old is the boy?
    - a) nine
    - b) eight
    - c) seven
    - d) Ten
  - How many people are speaking?
    - a) 3
    - b) 4
    - c) 1
    - d) 2

In addition, one video from the website Ello included conversations related to the seasons and the weather (desired topics), but to vary the type of question used for Listening, the original questions from the figure 2 were replaced by the ones on figure 4.

**Figure 3**

*Answer these questions about the interview.*

1) Who lives in New Zealand?

- a) He does.  
 b) She does.

2) When is summer in his country?

- a) July  
 b) December

3) What is her favorite month?

- a) September  
 b) February

4) What month is wet?

- a) March  
 b) August

**Note:** <https://www.ello.org/class/A1/A1-13-Months.html>.

**Figure 4**

*Source pretest in the research*

7. Listen and write a letter (a-c) on each space to match the information to the corresponding months. (0.25 \* 3 = 0.75 pts.)

- A. Fall in America                    \_\_\_\_\_ June, July, August and September.
- B. Summer in America                \_\_\_\_\_ July and February
- C. Their favorite months              \_\_\_\_\_ September, October, November  
and December.

In the Speaking test, the practice teacher suggested figure 1 for students to look at the picture and describe it. However, due to the limited time available to train students to this strategy of picture description with little or no equal chance for every student to get detailed feedback about their performance and repetition of the practice sessions, the tutor recommended a direct interview to students. For this, the practice teacher had to elaborate about 40 short-answer questions, from which he asked four to each pupil. Each question asked had to be different from the other in terms of verb tense and vocabulary topic and have visual prompts like numbers above each person for pupils to know the age. For this, another image from the Internet had to be chosen and adapted to meet the contents that the teacher planned to teach between the taking of the pre and the post-diagnostic test, having as a result figure 5.

Figure 5

DaYs EyE Kids. (2024, February 28)



**Note:** Picture 2 Arancibia, M. (2019, April 9)

By diagnosing students' strengths and weaknesses, educators can refine instructional strategies to enhance proficiency across all language domains. The pre-assessment results are presented on the table below.

**Table 1**

*Initial diagnosis of students' English language proficiency in research*

<b>Skill Component</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Score</b>	<b>Average score obtained</b>
<b>1. Vocabulary Recognition</b>	Months of the years.	1.80 pts	1.23 pts
<b>2. Grammar (Present Simple)</b>	Simple present of verb to be.	0.70 pts	0.31 pts
<b>3. Vocabulary Recognition</b>	Transportation.	0.90 pts	0.82 pts
<b>4. Vocabulary Spelling</b>	Transportation.	0.60 pts	0.51 pts
<b>5. Reading For Specific Information</b>	Amy's passage.	0.80 pts	0.32 pts
<b>6. Listening For Specific Information (Personal Information)</b>	Michael's birthday.	0.75 pts	0.52 pts
<b>7. Listening For Specific Information (Months)</b>	Months of the years	0.75 pts	0.55 pts
<b>8. Grammar (Present Simple)</b>	Simple present of verb to be.	0.60 pts	0.26 pts
<b>9. Writing: Fill In Invitation Cards</b>	Halloween invitation.	0.60 pts	0.07 pts
<b>10. Interview For Getting Information from Picture</b>	Interview.	2.50 pts	1.12 pts

## Stage 2: Action

### Plan change

The intervention involved two stages:

The design and application of lessons based on the TEFL instructional approach required in the degree modality, which asks practice teachers to incorporate the four key frameworks to enhance language learning. The first, FMU (Form, Meaning, and Use), focuses on teaching grammar by explaining both its theoretical concepts and practical applications. The second, ECRIF (Encounter, Clarify, Remember, Internalize, and Fluency), guides students through learning phrases, practicing structured conversation models, and developing the ability to speak fluently and spontaneously. The third, PDP (Pre, During, and Post stages), engages learners in listening and reading activities, gradually enabling them to express themselves through speaking or writing—either independently or collaboratively—by the end of the lesson. Lastly, the Writing Process (Preparation, Writing, Review, Editing, and Expansion) replaces traditional rote-writing methods, encouraging students to generate ideas, organize content, and refine their writing through scaffolded activities, ultimately fostering coherence and meaningful expression.

The application of the post diagnosis test based on the corrections advised by the TEFL tutor to contrast students' progress in relation to the results obtained in the pre diagnostic test.

### **Main question**

The central inquiry at this stage is: How do the changes I implement impact the outcome?

### **Act**

Practice teachers were asked to design lesson plans following the formats given by the TEFL tutor, including the creation or adaptation of classroom materials for each.

### **Observe**

The objective of this stage is to gather data on the impact of the applied changes, evaluating both during and after their implementation, to assess their effects on student performance and language development.

### **Reflect**

These two procedures contributed to the gathering of information in this phase:

The administration of an Open-Ended Interview for the Practice Teacher in TEFL Community Service. This twelve-question interview aimed to allow the practice teacher to reflect deeply on his experiences after working in the TEFL Community Service modality with Primary students, focusing on lesson planning, assessment material development, tutor guidance.

The analysis/contrast between the results of the pre and posttests.

## **DEVELOPMENT**

### **Service-Learning**

Service-Learning (SL) has been employed across various fields as a pedagogical approach, including methodology, teaching, and learning strategies, with the goal of fostering stronger connections between universities and local communities. As outlined by Campus Compact, a prominent national organization, SL is recognized as an important and widespread practice that facilitates mutually beneficial partnerships between students and communities (Jacoby, 2014). This connection between students and diverse settings is vital for a holistic education, with experiential learning serving as a crucial component of college students' academic growth. SL projects allow students to apply their academic knowledge in real-world scenarios, making them more than just cultural encounters. It is essential to focus on collaboration and shared goals to make a meaningful impact, distinguishing SL from other methods through active participation, critical thinking, and assessment.

Carpentier (2016) explores the concept of participation in SL by comparing it to two closely related ideas: access and interaction. He asserts that access refers to mere presence, while interaction involves forming social and communicative relationships. Participation, however, goes deeper, linking to decision-making and power dynamics. In community-based SL projects, the first stage is access, where students and communities meet and recognize each other's context. Next, interaction occurs as participants communicate, but this alone does not lead to substantial change. True participation—transforming both individual and community experiences—is the core of SL, ensuring that students gain meaningful learning outcomes.

According to Jacoby (2014), SL focuses on moving from charitable service to one rooted in justice, seeking to eliminate need and promote equality. The hyphen in "service-learning" highlights the interconnectedness of service and learning, where students gain knowledge through service and, in turn, serve through learning (Welch, 2016). This process benefits both students, who gain field experience, and communities, which receive technical support and knowledge. As noted by Fung (2017), SL is built on developing evaluation criteria that help participants learn from both successes and challenges.

SL also promotes a deeper understanding of different cultural systems. It challenges participants to move beyond static views of their own and others' cultures, especially when social, economic, and linguistic barriers exist (Otten, 2003). When all parties are committed to SL, both students and communities experience growth and achieve sustainable results. Without such commitment, SL efforts may fail to make a meaningful impact or even reinforce stereotypes.

Jacoby (2014) emphasizes the challenges and complexities involved in SL, especially in addressing resistance or biases among participants. To overcome these hurdles, it is essential to prepare both students and communities in advance to set realistic expectations and foster a productive collaboration. SL projects typically unfold in four stages: preparation, action, reflection, and evaluation. The preparation phase is vital, ensuring that all participants understand the significance of their involvement and are ready for meaningful engagement. The core of SL lies in critical reflection, where participants analyze and question their experiences within a broader context of issues and knowledge, ultimately promoting social justice (Jacoby, 2014; Welch, 2016).

Evaluation is a critical aspect of SL, as it assesses the effectiveness of the process and its outcomes, including the learning experiences of all participants. This feedback is essential for understanding the impacts of SL and measuring progress toward the desired goals. Reflection remains central throughout the cycle, providing students, faculty, and community members with opportunities to examine their actions and learn from them. The article builds on this reflective process, using transcendental phenomenology to capture the essence of these lived experiences.

## **RESULTS**

### **Expected outcomes**

Enhancement in the children's proficiency in English was anticipated, given that they had not had access to professional guidance in recent years. Following the implementation of lessons designed with TEFL methodologies, a modest improvement in their comprehension of content was expected, as the instruction was adjusted to align with the students' proficiency levels.

A notable advancement in speaking skills was particularly anticipated. However, the development in listening skills was likely to be limited due to the lack of adequate instructional materials and restricted availability of online resources. Considering the underperformance observed in speaking proficiency, this area became the primary focus of lesson planning, with the intention of fostering substantial improvement.

Hypothesis: Applying TEFL-based teaching methods will strengthen children's English abilities, with a particular focus on developing speaking skills. However, progress in listening comprehension may be hindered by scarce learning resources and minimal exposure to digital tools.

## **DISCUSSION**

As previously noted, the current body of literature lacks evidence regarding the application of service-learning in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, making comparisons unavailable.

### **Interpretation of the results**

Practice teacher's answers to the Open-Ended Interview

#### **Background and Teaching Experience**

**Can you briefly describe your experience teaching English to primary students in the TEFL Community Service modality?**

Managing the learning process was particularly challenging, given that children are easily distracted and may quickly lose interest in planned activities. Maintaining group control in large classes proved to be difficult; however, with the children whose attention I was able to sustain, the learning outcomes were exceptional. These students not only retained vocabulary effectively but also applied their knowledge outside the classroom. Understanding the students' interests and incorporating them into lessons was instrumental in capturing their attention and enhancing their engagement. Despite the obstacles, the experience was highly rewarding, filled with challenges that were progressively overcome over time. About activities for improving the English skills I had to use the visual prompts from books of other subjects to practice speaking activities, activities related with listening were mostly skipped because the lack of resources such as a speaker made it difficult to practice this kind of activities once a week. This fact can influence negatively in the students' performance.

**What were the biggest challenges you faced when working with primary students?**

The use of didactic and visual materials for children is essential; however, their creation often requires significant time and financial resources, making them infrequently utilized. Additionally, capturing students' attention without visual aids or engaging dynamics proved to be nearly impossible. This necessitated a continuous search for appropriate materials and subsequent testing to determine their effectiveness in facilitating the learning process.

#### **Lesson Planning and Assessment Development**

**How did the process of designing lesson plans contribute to your professional development as a teacher?**

Designing lesson plans helped me realize that my personal interests for the classes should never take precedence over the interests of the students. This understanding highlighted that achieving an effective learning process requires time, patience, and, in many cases, the development of activities involving teacher-created materials. This process often demands a high level of creativity, which ultimately serves to enhance the students' learning experience.

What strategies or resources did you find most useful when planning your lessons? Employing physical activities to introduce class topics, combined with creating drawings during the lesson, was highly effective in enabling students to recognize vocabulary without relying on pre-made materials. Additionally, I integrated social media references to engage students' attention, whether for teaching vocabulary, explaining grammar, or maintaining classroom discipline.

**How did you ensure that your lesson plans met the needs of young learners?**

When introducing basic topics, it became evident that the students had no prior knowledge of foundational concepts such as the alphabet, numbers from 10 to 20 (including their written forms), or basic verbs like eat, run, jump, walk, have, and drink. Additionally, they lacked familiarity with the months of the year and the days of the week. Considering these gaps, content review sessions were conducted either at the end of each lesson or at the beginning of the next. This approach enabled students to answer questions with ease. Furthermore, autonomous activities were assigned at the end of each class. Students were able to complete them successfully.

**What aspects of lesson planning did you find most challenging, and how did you overcome them?**

The initial challenge I encountered was identifying engaging activities for the students, particularly those introduced at the beginning of the lessons. This difficulty was addressed through a process of trial and error, testing various activities to determine their effectiveness within specific courses. Subsequently, the activities were categorized based on their suitability and effectiveness for each course. The second challenge involved designing autonomous work activities to serve as the final task of the class. The difficulty arose from the varying proficiency levels among students. To address this, I often developed activities from scratch, tailoring them to align with the students' interests and ensuring they were adaptable to different skill levels.

**How did you approach the creation of assessment materials for primary students?**

Initially, the evaluations focused solely on vocabulary learned during the lessons, neglecting grammar and listening activities. This limitation significantly constrained the creation of questions, as much of the content became repetitive. To address this issue, I reduced the total number of questions from ten to five, concentrating exclusively on vocabulary identification and spelling review.

**In what ways did developing assessment materials enhance your understanding of student learning and evaluation?**

By reducing repetitive instructions and incorporating a variety of question types throughout the lessons, students became more familiar with different question formats. This approach allowed for greater diversity in the types of questions during evaluations, eliminating the need to limit the number of questions as a solution. As a result, students were able to quickly understand how to approach each question.

**Were there any tools, web sources or assessment strategies that you discovered and considered innovative and useful during this period?**

Indeed, video trends were often invaluable in maintaining control of the class, with careful adaptations made to suit the students' age group. Additionally, ideas generated by AI were useful in creating materials, while short stories on blogs played a significant role in implementing listening activities. These activities helped students identify words, recognize them, and incorporate them into the final task.

**Guidance from an Experienced Tutor**

**How would you describe the support and feedback provided by your tutor during this experience?**

The feedback from the tutor was precisely what my classes required. Many of the tutor's suggestions aligned perfectly with the needs of my lessons, from the opening activity to the conclusion of the class. The resources provided by the tutor were invaluable in aiding me to create materials and enhance my exams.

### What specific aspects of their guidance were most valuable for you?

The guidelines for incorporating various types of questions and adapting the same question format for exams, with different content, were highly beneficial. Additionally, the instructions on utilizing web resources and their adaptation to different student levels were invaluable. In cases where necessary, the guidance on creating these resources from scratch, including what to include and how to design them for specific activities, was particularly helpful.

**Table 2**

*Analysis/contrast between the results of the pre and posttests in the research*

Skill Component	Pre-diagnostic test		Post-diagnostic test	
	Score assigned to the questions	Average score obtained	Score assigned to the questions	Average score obtained
Vocabulary recognition Months of the year	1.80 pts	1.23 pts (68.33%)	0.60 pts	0.51 pts (85%)
Grammar (Simple present)	0.70 pts	0.31 pts (44.29%)	1 pts	0.91 pts (91%)
Vocabulary recognition (transportation)	0.90 pts	0.82 pts (91.11%)	0.50 pts	0.43 pts (86%)
Reading for specific information	0.80 pts	0.32 pts (40%)	1.20 pts	1.10 pts (91.67%)
Listening for specific information	0.75 pts	0.52 pts (69.33%)	0.80 pts	0.65 pts (81.25%)
Listening for specific information	0.75 pts	0.55 pts (73.33%)	0.80 pts	0.67 pts (83.75%)
Grammar (Present simple)	0.60 pts	0.26 pts (43.33%)	1.20 pts	1.05 pts (87.5%)
Writing	0.60 pts	0.07 pts (11.67%)	1 pts	0.93 pts (0.93%)
Speaking: Interview For Getting Information from Picture	2.50 pts	1.12 pts (93.75%)	2.50 pts	2.06 pts (82.4%)

Here's an interpretation of the results based on the contrast between the pre-diagnostic and post-diagnostic tests for English knowledge among children:

#### Vocabulary Recognition (Months of the Year)

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Students achieved an average score of 1.23 points (68.33%), demonstrating moderate performance.

**Post-diagnostic test:** Scores decreased to 0.51 points (85%). While the percentage of correctness increased, the decrease in absolute scores may indicate fewer or simplified questions.

#### **Grammar (Simple Present)**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** A low average score of 0.31 points (44.29%) reflects significant struggles.

**Post-diagnostic test:** A marked improvement to 0.91 points (91%) shows a substantial enhancement in grammatical understanding after intervention.

#### **Vocabulary Recognition (Transportation)**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Students performed well with 0.82 points (91.11%).

**Post-diagnostic test:** A slight decrease to 0.43 points (86%) suggests stable performance, though slight variations may be due to question difficulty or scope.

#### **Reading for Specific Information**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** An average score of 0.32 points (40%) indicates strong initial proficiency.

**Post-diagnostic test:** An increase to 1.10 points (91.67%) shows noticeable improvement in reading skills.

#### **Listening for Specific Information**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Scores were 0.52 points (69.33%), revealing significant challenges in this skill.

**Post-diagnostic test:** Scores improved to 0.65 points (81.25%), demonstrating progress in listening comprehension.

#### **Listening for Specific Information (Second Component)**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** 0.55 points (73.33%) indicates fair initial performance.

**Post-diagnostic test:** A slight increase to 0.67 points (83.75%) reflects improved accuracy.

#### **Grammar (Present Simple - Second Instance)**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Students scored 0.26 points (43.33%), showing moderate understanding.

**Post-diagnostic test:** Scores rose to 1.05 points (83.75%), indicating progress in grammatical usage.

#### **Writing**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Students struggled with a score of 0.07 points (11.67%).

**Post-diagnostic test:** A significant increase to 0.93 points (93%) demonstrates considerable improvement in written expression.

#### **Speaking (Interview for Getting Information from a Picture)**

**Pre-diagnostic test:** Scores were very low at 1.12 points (93.75%), indicating severe challenges in speaking skills.

**Post-diagnostic test:** A substantial improvement to 2.06 points (82.4%) reflects major progress in speaking and interpreting visual information.

### Overall Trends

**Areas of Significant Improvement:** Grammar, writing, speaking, and listening for specific information showed notable progress, likely due to targeted instruction and practice.

**Consistent Strengths:** Reading and vocabulary recognition (transportation) maintained strong performance, though the latter showed a slight dip in absolute scores.

**Challenges Addressed:** The intervention appears to have effectively addressed major areas of weakness, particularly in grammar, listening, and speaking skills.

**Remaining Issues:** While improvements were seen across all areas, some components, such as vocabulary recognition for months and transportation, require further examination to sustain or enhance performance.

### CONCLUSIONS

Participating in TEFL community service offered an incredibly valuable opportunity for student-teachers. It contributes to the refinement of the teachers' language skills while instilling a strong sense of social responsibility, allowing them to adapt to various contexts and better understand the challenges students face, apart from opening the door to connecting with students and parents, listening to their concerns, and assisting in finding practical solutions.

The next point refers to lesson plan frameworks. These frameworks offer an effective process for planning and executing English language classes, as they provide a clear structure for activities, which in some cases need to be created from scratch, while others can be adapted. However, the strategies and structures are highly flexible, allowing teachers to adjust them as needed.

The lack of resources, such as technology, posed significant challenges in the English classroom. However, this limitation encouraged the practice teacher to discover alternative teaching methods; for instance, making use of the school yard and adjusting lesson plans to ensure the learning process remained effective and uninterrupted. Consequently, it is evident that using different tools can promote students' engagement and learning, leading to the inclusion of techniques such as collaborative work and gamification to provide valuable support when teaching grammar and improving English skills. In this way, they help create a more enjoyable and effective learning environment. As a result of comparing the pre and post diagnostic assessments, students exhibited significant growth in various language skills. They demonstrated enhanced abilities to articulate ideas concisely, construct simple sentences, locate specific information within texts, comprehend spoken language through audio clips, and identify basic grammatical structures. This positive shift suggests that the strategies for reading, listening, speaking, and writing implemented after the initial diagnostic were effective in addressing the students' specific needs.

### Recommendations for future research

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Analyze and adapt the academic curriculum of the degree of Pedagogy of English as a Foreign Language in different universities within Ecuador to add subjects focused on diversity by joining efforts with professionals of special education.

Incorporate in the demonstration classes of subjects related to TEFL, internships at schools and community centers, situations that reflect the reality of the public education sector: students with disabilities, technological limitations, no access to standardized textbooks or appropriate size classrooms.

Apply similar research with a control group and an experimental group using a larger sample to compare the pretest and posttest results of students receiving lessons with the TEFL methodology to those who do not.

The last recommendation is focused on the design of books for the use of public-school students with the help of TEFL professionals, practice teachers, and students of the career to contribute to the development of student learning, considering that the books used in the public education sector have many errors in the organization of learning topics.

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