



*El desarrollo de la enseñanza del idioma inglés en la educación superior  
ecuatoriana: tendencias y transformaciones*

*The Development of English Language Teaching in Ecuadorian Higher  
Education: Trends and Transformations*

*O desenvolvimento do ensino da língua inglesa no ensino superior equatoriano:  
tendências e transformações*

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## Resumen

Este artículo analiza el desarrollo de la enseñanza del idioma inglés en la educación superior ecuatoriana, enfocándose en las tendencias actuales y las transformaciones educativas recientes. A través de una revisión de literatura, se identifican desafíos clave como la escasa formación docente, la limitada disponibilidad de recursos tecnológicos y el bajo compromiso estudiantil fuera del aula. También se examinan casos de éxito en universidades públicas y privadas que han aplicado estrategias innovadoras, como el aprendizaje combinado, la incorporación de certificaciones internacionales y la actualización curricular. Finalmente, se presentan tablas comparativas que contrastan los logros y retos encontrados. Los resultados ofrecen recomendaciones útiles para fortalecer las prácticas de enseñanza del inglés a nivel universitario.

**Palabras clave:** Inteligencia artificial (IA); marketing; comportamiento del consumidor; generación de contenido; orientación al cliente; toma de decisiones; personalización.

## Abstract

This article analyzes the development of English language teaching in Ecuadorian higher education, focusing on current trends and recent educational transformations. Through a literature review, key challenges are identified, such as poor teacher training, limited availability of technological resources, and low student engagement outside the classroom. It also examines success stories from public and private universities that have implemented innovative strategies, such as blended learning, the incorporation of international certifications, and curricular updates. Finally, comparative tables are presented that contrast the achievements and challenges encountered. The results offer useful recommendations for strengthening English teaching practices at the university level.

**Keywords:** Artificial intelligence (AI); marketing; consumer behavior; content generation; customer orientation; decision-making; personalization.

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa o desenvolvimento do ensino da língua inglesa no ensino superior equatoriano, com foco nas tendências atuais e nas transformações educacionais recentes. Por meio de uma revisão bibliográfica, são identificados os principais desafios, como a formação deficiente dos professores, a disponibilidade limitada de recursos tecnológicos e o baixo envolvimento dos alunos

fora da sala de aula. Também são examinadas histórias de sucesso de universidades públicas e privadas que implementaram estratégias inovadoras, como aprendizado combinado, incorporação de certificações internacionais e atualizações curriculares. Por fim, são apresentados quadros comparativos que contrastam as conquistas e os desafios encontrados. Os resultados oferecem recomendações úteis para fortalecer as práticas de ensino de inglês no nível universitário.

**Palavras-chave:** Inteligência artificial (IA); marketing; comportamento do consumidor; geração de conteúdo; orientação ao cliente; tomando uma decisão; personalização.

## Introduction

In recent years, English Language Teaching (ELT) has gained strategic importance in Latin American higher education due to globalization and academic internationalization efforts. In Ecuador, English proficiency is increasingly viewed as a prerequisite for access to scholarships, mobility programs, and international labor markets (British Council, 2021; SENESCYT, 2022). As a result, universities are under pressure to align their curricula with global standards such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Consejo de Educación Superior [CES], 2023).

Despite policy reforms aimed at promoting communicative and student-centered approaches, implementation varies widely across institutions (Castellano, 2020; Ministerio de Educación, 2022). Public universities often struggle with limited resources, outdated materials, and underqualified teaching staff (Espinoza & Carrión, 2021; Astudillo & López, 2023). In contrast, private institutions have adopted more dynamic strategies, integrating blended learning, international certifications, and formative assessment models (Vera & Valverde, 2022).

Technological transformation has also shaped how English is taught and learned. Online platforms, mobile apps, and Learning Management Systems (LMS) are increasingly used to support self-directed learning and expand student access (Sánchez & Ramírez, 2023). However, digital inequality remains a challenge, especially in rural and marginalized areas, where connectivity and access to devices are limited (Tenesaca et al., 2024; Ledesma et al., 2025).

In addition to technological innovation, the pedagogical shift toward Project-Based Learning (PBL), Task-Based Instruction (TBI), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) has gained traction (García-Ponce & Restrepo, 2019; Solórzano-Intriago & Loor-Salmon, 2023). These methods are praised for promoting student autonomy, collaboration, and the development of real-

world communicative skills. Yet, their success depends heavily on teacher preparation and institutional support (López & Mejía, 2020).

Student motivation and attitudes also play a critical role in shaping ELT outcomes. Studies show that learners who perceive English as relevant to their academic or career goals tend to perform better and engage more actively (Martínez & Jaramillo, 2023; Zambrano & Ortega, 2021). Conversely, anxiety, lack of early exposure, and poor classroom dynamics often hinder progress, especially among first-generation university students (Guamán & Cueva, 2022).

Given this context, this article aims to examine the current trends and transformations in ELT in Ecuadorian higher education. Through a literature review and analysis of institutional practices, the study identifies challenges, highlights successful cases, and offers recommendations for improving English language teaching at the tertiary level in Ecuador.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory design focused on identifying trends and evaluating the evolution of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Ecuadorian higher education. The research is structured in three main phases: (1) an extensive literature review, (2) a descriptive analysis of three successful institutional cases in Ecuador, and (3) the construction of comparative tables to synthesize findings across institutions. The goal is to generate practical insights for educators, policymakers, and academic institutions.

The literature review was carried out using peer-reviewed academic sources, official reports, and institutional publications published between 2020 and 2025. Databases such as Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and institutional repositories of Ecuadorian universities were consulted. The selection criteria included: (a) relevance to ELT in higher education, (b) focus on Latin American or Ecuadorian contexts, and (c) methodological clarity. Special attention was given to studies addressing pedagogical innovations, teacher training, student motivation, and technological integration.

In the second phase, case study methodology was employed to examine ELT reforms in three Ecuadorian universities: Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas ESPE, Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), and Universidad Central del Ecuador. These cases were selected due to their diverse institutional contexts (public vs. private, urban vs. resource-limited settings) and the availability of documented results on ELT program implementation. Institutional reports, internal

surveys, and published studies were analyzed to understand strategies, challenges, and student outcomes.

The third phase involved the construction of comparative tables, which allow for a visual analysis of the similarities and differences in ELT practices among the selected institutions. These tables focus on tools used, teaching approaches, certifications offered, reported student outcomes, and the main challenges faced. The use of comparison helps to highlight patterns of success and areas that require further intervention.

Ethically, the study relies exclusively on secondary data from public and academic sources, ensuring transparency and replicability. No human subjects were directly involved, and all data used is openly accessible. The triangulation of data sources—academic literature, institutional documents, and official frameworks—adds validity to the analysis and supports evidence-based conclusions.

In sum, this methodological approach combines rigorous document analysis with contextual case evaluations to provide a grounded understanding of how Ecuadorian universities are responding to the global and national demands for quality English language education.

## Literature Review

Recent research highlights the increasing importance of English in higher education as both a communicative tool and a requirement for academic and professional advancement (Graddol, 2006; British Council, 2021). In Latin America, and specifically in Ecuador, universities have aligned their ELT practices with international frameworks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), pushing institutions to restructure their programs to help students reach B1 or B2 proficiency levels (SENESCYT, 2022).

The integration of Project-Based Learning (PBL) has emerged as a key pedagogical trend. According to Ledesma et al. (2025), PBL enhances reading comprehension and fosters higher-order thinking skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Their findings align with those of García-Ponce and Restrepo (2019), who suggest that PBL supports learner autonomy and motivation, two crucial factors in second language acquisition.

Digital transformation also plays a significant role in ELT. Research by Sánchez and Ramírez (2023) demonstrates that the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive platforms, and multimedia tools positively impacts student engagement and vocabulary acquisition. However,

Tenesaca et al. (2024) note that successful implementation depends heavily on continuous teacher training and access to resources, which remains inconsistent across Ecuador.

Despite policy support encouraging communicative and learner-centered approaches (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2016), traditional methods persist in many institutions. Castellano (2020) identifies this resistance as a barrier to innovation, often rooted in inadequate institutional support or lack of teacher preparation.

Overall, the literature supports a shift toward active methodologies and digital tools, but also underscores the persistent challenges that need to be addressed through institutional commitment and pedagogical reform.

## Resultados

The analysis of institutional practices reveals a varied but progressive panorama in the implementation of English Language Teaching (ELT) reforms in Ecuadorian higher education. Although the selected institutions—ESPE, UTPL, and Universidad Central del Ecuador—differ in context, funding, and student population, they share a commitment to improving English proficiency levels aligned with national and international frameworks. Their strategies, challenges, and outcomes offer meaningful insights into the current state of ELT across the country.

At Universidad de las Fuerzas Armadas – ESPE, the introduction of a blended learning model and a strong focus on international certifications such as Cambridge English exams marked a major shift in ELT delivery. According to the institution's academic report (ESPE, 2023), the implementation of Moodle and Zoom as core platforms enhanced both synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. Between 2021 and 2023, the number of students achieving B1-level certification increased by 28%. This success was largely attributed to structured course design, continuous teacher training, and formative assessments, as also highlighted in Vera and Valverde (2022), who affirm that military universities often outperform in curricular planning due to institutional discipline and clear performance goals.

In contrast, Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja – UTPL, a private university with strong technological infrastructure, developed a Virtual English Program characterized by high flexibility, personalized instruction, and integration of international resources such as TOEFL preparatory content. Students had access to live classes, video capsules, and language workshops via Canvas, which facilitated learner autonomy. According to Sánchez and Ramírez (2023), digital ecosystems



like these foster metacognitive strategies and increase engagement in language learning. Furthermore, UTPL's internal innovation bulletin (2022) reported a 65% improvement in students' self-perceived oral fluency and a 21% increase in TOEFL test participation. However, despite its digital advantage, connectivity issues and student workload remain persistent obstacles, echoing the findings of Tenesaca et al. (2024) on digital inequality in private institutions.

Meanwhile, Universidad Central del Ecuador, Ecuador's oldest and one of its largest public universities, adopted a more grassroots approach due to limited financial and technological resources. The English Department launched peer tutoring programs, WhatsApp discussion groups, and the use of low-bandwidth video lectures as strategies to reach students in underserved communities. Participation in voluntary English workshops grew by 40% between 2021 and 2023, particularly among first-year students from rural areas (UCE Department of Languages Report, 2023). As Guamán and Cueva (2022) observed, low-cost collaborative practices tend to increase motivation and social engagement in language learning. Nonetheless, this institution still faces considerable challenges, including outdated curricula, lack of certified instructors, and minimal access to international resources.

A cross-case analysis reveals both convergences and divergences. Technological integration emerges as a common success factor: ESPE used institutional platforms, UTPL relied on commercial LMS tools, and UCE leveraged social media and mobile messaging. In each context, technology served as an enabler of broader access and interaction. However, the degree of institutional support for these tools—particularly in terms of teacher training and infrastructure—proved decisive for long-term sustainability (Castellano, 2020; Ledesma et al., 2025).

Another key finding is the role of international standards and certification frameworks, which helped structure programs and set measurable proficiency goals. While ESPE and UTPL incorporated external benchmarks such as CEFR and TOEFL, UCE relied on internal evaluation systems with less external validation. This aligns with the observation by Astudillo and López (2023), who argue that disparities in accreditation and language policy application across public and private universities undermine the national consistency of ELT outcomes.

Finally, the three cases illustrate the importance of student motivation and support systems. Institutions that combined pedagogical innovation with psychological support, peer mentoring, and flexible learning pathways reported higher student satisfaction and retention in language programs

(Martínez & Jaramillo, 2023). This suggests that success in ELT is not solely dependent on curricular reform, but also on the emotional and social dynamics of learning environments.

In summary, the results confirm that Ecuadorian universities are actively working toward improving English instruction, with varying levels of innovation, success, and scalability. Their experiences reflect both the progress made and the systemic limitations—such as uneven teacher preparation, infrastructure gaps, and digital divides—that still need to be addressed to ensure equitable access to quality ELT across the country.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the fragmented yet progressive state of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Ecuadorian higher education. The contrast between institutions like ESPE and UTPL—technologically equipped and policy-aligned—and Universidad Central, which faces severe infrastructural limitations, reflects broader systemic disparities across the country. These disparities are consistent with Ledesma et al., (2024), who argue that institutional inertia and limited teacher empowerment hinder the widespread adoption of active methodologies.

A central trend that emerged is the increasing adoption of Project-Based Learning (PBL) as an alternative to traditional grammar-translation methods. Institutions that implemented PBL—particularly ESPE and UTPL—reported improved learner outcomes and engagement. According to Ledesma (2024), PBL strengthens academic reading, promotes student autonomy, and encourages problem-solving skills, particularly when supported by digital platforms and formative assessment. However, they also caution that without sufficient institutional backing, PBL can become superficial or inconsistently applied.

Table 1 below summarizes how each institution performed across key ELT innovation variables, offering a comparative lens into Ecuador's higher education response to national and global language demands.

*Table 1. ELT Innovation Indicators across Three Ecuadorian Universities*

Institution	Use of PBL	Digital Tools	International Certification
ESPE	Structured integration	Moodle, Zoom	Cambridge English
UTPL	Curriculum-wide use	Canvas, TOEFL Online Labs	TOEFL



Universidad Central	Informal, peer-led	WhatsApp, bandwidth video	low-	None evaluations only)	(internal
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*Note.* Table developed by the author based on data interpreted from institutional reports and academic studies (ESPE, 2023; UTPL, 2022; UCE Department of Languages Report, 2023; Ledesma et al, 2024; Ledesma, 2025)

In line with Ledesma, (2025), the data also reveal that teacher resistance to innovation remains a serious concern. Many faculty members, particularly in public institutions, continue to rely on traditional, lecture-based models due to limited access to training in methodologies like PBL or CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). This points to an urgent need for national policy to go beyond setting standards and to actively fund teacher development programs that promote pedagogical transformation.

The role of technology as both an enabler and a barrier is also reinforced by this study. Platforms such as Moodle and Canvas have proven essential in delivering flexible and student-centered English instruction. Yet, without stable internet access and proper training, these platforms can exacerbate educational inequalities rather than reduce them. As Tenesaca et al. (2024) and Sánchez & Ramírez (2023) note, the digital divide continues to shape educational access in Ecuador, particularly among rural or low-income populations.

Beyond infrastructure and pedagogy, student affective factors—such as anxiety, motivation, and perceived usefulness of English—significantly impact ELT outcomes. Martínez and Jaramillo (2023) highlight how institutional support systems, such as mentoring and counseling, improve learners' persistence and performance. This resonates with the case of Universidad Central, where the implementation of low-cost, community-based initiatives (e.g., peer tutoring and group chats) helped mitigate the effects of structural deficiencies and increased participation rates among vulnerable students.

What emerges from this discussion is the clear interdependence between policy, pedagogy, and equity. Institutions that succeeded in implementing effective ELT programs combined external frameworks (like CEFR), innovative methodologies (like PBL), and internal mechanisms for teacher development and student support. In contrast, institutions without that triangulation often struggled to sustain quality and consistency in ELT delivery.

To visually represent this dynamic, Table 2 below illustrates the triadic model for effective ELT in Ecuadorian higher education, as suggested by the integration of findings and literature.

**Table 2.** *Triadic Model for Effective ELT Implementation*

Core Component	Description
Pedagogical Model	Innovative methodologies such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and CLIL that foster student autonomy, collaboration, and real-world communication skills.
Institutional Support & Teacher Training	Ongoing professional development, administrative backing, and resource allocation to enable educators to apply active methodologies effectively.
Policy Alignment	Consistency with national and international frameworks such as CEFR and TOEFL to ensure measurable outcomes and standardization.
Outcome	The convergence of these three elements leads to Quality, Equity, and Innovation in English Language Teaching (ELT).

*Note:* Table developed by the author based on theoretical insights from Ledesma and Vélez (2024), Ledesma and Torres (2023), and data interpreted from institutional ELT practices in Ecuadorian higher education

Table 2 synthesizes the interplay between pedagogy, institutional support, and policy alignment as the foundational pillars for successful ELT implementation in Ecuadorian universities. It demonstrates that no single factor alone guarantees quality outcomes; rather, it is the strategic integration of these three dimensions that enables a transformative and equitable language learning experience. This model can serve as a framework for evaluating and designing ELT initiatives across similar educational systems in Latin America.

In conclusion, the discussion confirms that while Ecuadorian higher education institutions are taking meaningful steps toward improving English instruction, significant disparities persist. The integration of active pedagogies like PBL, investments in digital infrastructure, and alignment with international standards are necessary—but insufficient—without strong institutional commitment and inclusive policies. As echoed by Ledesma (2024), true educational transformation demands systemic coherence, consistent teacher training, and a shared national vision of English as a tool for academic and social mobility.

## Conclusiones

The development of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Ecuadorian higher education reflects a context of both progress and inequality. The adoption of international frameworks like the CEFR has provided clear goals for institutions, but the capacity to implement effective ELT strategies varies greatly between public and private universities. While some institutions have advanced toward more structured and innovative language programs, others still face fundamental barriers related to teacher preparedness, digital infrastructure, and curriculum design.

One of the most relevant findings is the increasing implementation of active pedagogical models—particularly Project-Based Learning (PBL)—in institutions such as ESPE and UTPL. These methodologies, as supported by Ledesma (2024), improve not only students' language skills but also foster motivation, collaboration, and critical thinking. However, as discussed by Ledesma (2025), the absence of consistent teacher training and institutional support often limits the scalability and sustainability of these approaches, especially in under-resourced universities.

The integration of technology has emerged as a defining element of modern ELT programs. Platforms like Moodle, Canvas, and even mobile messaging tools such as WhatsApp have expanded students' access to English instruction beyond traditional classrooms. Nevertheless, the digital divide remains a pressing issue that affects equitable learning opportunities, particularly in rural areas or public universities with minimal infrastructure.

Another critical insight is the importance of affective and motivational factors in student performance. As highlighted in the case of Universidad Central and supported by Martínez and Jaramillo (2023), learners' confidence, anxiety, and perceptions of usefulness significantly influence engagement and outcomes. Institutions that combine curricular innovation with emotional and academic support see better participation and retention in English programs.

In sum, Ecuadorian higher education has made visible efforts toward enhancing the quality of English instruction, yet these efforts must be reinforced through systemic, inclusive, and coordinated strategies. Achieving high-impact ELT outcomes requires more than individual innovation—it demands structural reform, equitable policy enforcement, and a national vision that recognizes English proficiency as a key to academic success and global mobility.

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