

Collaborative learning and challenging tasks implementation: A research study in a group of students at a public university in the north of Santander.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the progress in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) of elementary students at a public university in North Santander, Colombia, through the implementation of collaborative learning and challenging tasks. The research focuses on a group of university students facing difficulties in language learning, compounded by the tension between standardization and local realities, including a lack of engagement and interest in the subject. To address these challenges, the study integrates collaborative work and Challenge-Based Learning (CBL), a pedagogical approach designed to encourage critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork. The methodology employed combines direct student participation with the design of challenging tasks that require real-world problem-solving and peer interaction, aligning with current educational needs. Preliminary findings suggest that students who engaged in collaborative activities and faced cognitive challenges showed notable improvement in their linguistic competence, as well as increased autonomy and motivation. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on enhancing EFL learning in Colombia, highlighting the importance of active student involvement and the adaptation of educational practices to local contexts. Through these pedagogical strategies, the research anticipates fostering a more engaging and effective EFL learning environment.

Key words

Collaborative learning, Challenging tasks, higher-education students, EFL.

RESUMEN

Este estudio tiene como objetivo determinar el progreso en el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE) de estudiantes de nivel elemental en una universidad pública en el Norte de Santander, Colombia, a través de la implementación de aprendizaje colaborativo y tareas desafiantes. La investigación se centra en un grupo de estudiantes universitarios que enfrentan dificultades en el aprendizaje del idioma, exacerbadas por la tensión entre la estandarización y las realidades locales, incluidas la falta de compromiso e interés por la asignatura. Para abordar estos desafíos, el estudio integra el trabajo colaborativo y el Aprendizaje Basado en Desafíos (ABD), un enfoque pedagógico diseñado para fomentar el pensamiento crítico, la creatividad y el trabajo en equipo. La metodología empleada combina la participación directa de los estudiantes con el diseño de tareas desafiantes que requieren la resolución de problemas reales e interacción entre pares, alineándose con las necesidades educativas actuales. Los hallazgos preliminares sugieren que los estudiantes que participaron en actividades colaborativas y enfrentaron desafíos cognitivos mostraron una mejora notable en su competencia lingüística, así como mayor autonomía y motivación. Este estudio contribuye al discurso continuo sobre el fortalecimiento del aprendizaje del ILE en Colombia, destacando la importancia de la participación activa de los estudiantes y la adaptación de las prácticas educativas a los contextos locales. A través de estas estrategias pedagógicas, la investigación espera fomentar un entorno de aprendizaje de ILE más atractivo y eficaz.

Palabras clave

Aprendizaje colaborativo, tareas desafiantes, estudiantes de educación superior, ILE.

INTRODUCTION

In Colombia, educational policies such as the National Bilingualism Plan (2006) have established clear objectives to improve English proficiency among students. However, the effective implementation of these policies requires pedagogical approaches that encourage active student participation, such as collaborative work and the use of challenging tasks. Collaborative learning not only promotes interaction among students but also aligns with the critical perspective of educational policies advocating for the inclusion of the voices of educational stakeholders. This approach enables students to actively engage in their learning process, which is fundamental for the success of language education policies (Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2021).

The implementation of innovative strategies in foreign language learning has become a growing topic of interest in educational research, particularly in contexts where acquiring a foreign language presents significant challenges. In this regard, the approach based on collaborative work and the use of challenging tasks emerges as a pedagogical alternative aimed not only at strengthening the teaching-learning process but also at fostering key 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023).

The educational context of the public university in North Santander, where this study takes place, presents specific challenges regarding students' difficulties in terms of language learning achievements from the teacher and the learners' side. It is a struggle between standardization and the learning environment reality plus the student's lack of interest and situated practices. Rodríguez and Araque Torres (2020) emphasize on current needs to promote educational and pedagogical practices that may involve a multicultural approach regarding principles around diversity and the reduction of barriers in contrast with policy formulation and the local realities and contexts where it is evident inequality at educational and societal levels

and conditions in the national context. The OECD report *Education at a Glance 2024* complements Rodríguez and Araque Torres' (2020) call for multicultural educational practices by addressing diversity and reducing barriers. Both highlight the impact of social and economic inequalities on educational outcomes and stress the need for inclusive policies that adapt to local contexts. The OECD provides data-driven insights into disparities and strategies for equity, while Rodríguez and Araque Torres offer a theoretical framework for implementing multicultural approaches. Together, they emphasize the importance of reducing barriers, promoting diversity, and evaluating the effectiveness of educational policies to ensure equitable outcomes.

Moreover, there is increasing recognition of the importance of improving progress in English as a foreign language, particularly in a globalized context where mastering English becomes an essential tool for academic and professional development (Rao, 2019) and the academic and educational pressure that stakeholders tackle when implementing foreign language programs in Colombia. Nevertheless, the project aims to propose and inquire about a pedagogical implementation that may consider current conditions about language learning needs. That is why one of the research group members carried out the pedagogical exercise as a direct participant in the higher-education community.

It is also identified the relevance of collaborative work, defined as an approach in which students work together toward a common goal, has demonstrated significant benefits in developing communication and social interaction, particularly in language learning (Warsah et al., 2021). Rather than focusing solely on content transmission, this approach fosters peer interaction, allowing students to learn not only from the teacher but also from their peers. According to Warsah et al. (2021), collaboration among students improves academic performance and facilitates greater engagement and motivation toward learning tasks, which is a

key factor for success in EFL contexts. Suárez Ramírez & Rodríguez, S. M. (2018, p. 96) state that fostering interaction allows participants to “create a scenario” that may address differently the students’ positions and active their learning interest.

Furthermore, the design and implementation of challenging tasks within the framework of Challenge-Based Learning (CHBL) immerse students in real-world problem situations that require creative and collaborative solutions (Perna et al., 2023). These tasks encourage students to apply their prior knowledge and develop new competencies while addressing complex problems, which aligns with current educational needs that demand students capable of navigating unpredictable scenarios and adapting efficiently. In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, this approach offers opportunities for students to practice the language in authentic settings and integrates metacognitive skills and critical reflection on the learning process itself (Ellis, 2021).

Qureshi et al., (2021) assert that students participating in challenging activities within a collaborative environment not only show significant improvements in their linguistic competence but also develop greater autonomy and confidence in their abilities. This is especially relevant in contexts such as the public university in North Santander, where students often face emotional and cognitive barriers that hinder their progress in learning English. By creating a learning environment where students feel supported by their peers and intellectually challenged, a conducive space for continuous improvement can be fostered. According to Rodríguez and Araque Torres (2020), a learning environment embraces “an educational context, which contributes from the recognition of social, human and cultural heterogeneity, in accordance with the theoretical approach of the learning environment construct,” (p.6). Currently, further pedagogical approaches have emerged such as challenging based learning, which does not result

an easy pedagogical practice for educators. For example, a learning process through challenges is complex and due to several factors, including possibilities and facilities in the learning environment make it feasible for teachers to initiate a new, innovative or disruptive pedagogical exercise.

Another factor is that pedagogical implementations require careful task and artifacts' design to ensure an appropriate balance between the level of difficulty and the students' prior skills. According to Qureshi et al., (2021), one of the major obstacles in implementing collaborative and challenge-based learning is the lack of teacher preparation to manage complex group dynamics and foster genuine cooperation among students.

Guerrero-Nieto and Quintero-Polo, (2021) emphasize the need for educational policies to recognize and address these difficulties to facilitate the implementation of approaches such as collaborative work. Therefore, teacher training becomes a key factor for the success of these pedagogical interventions. Contrasting students and teachers' needs in learning environments, this study addresses the following research question: How does the implementation of collaborative learning and challenging tasks strengthen the advancement of EFL progress in a group of students at a public university in the north of Santander?

In conclusion, this work aims to contribute to the growing body of research on active and collaborative methodologies in foreign language teaching, with a particular focus on the Colombian context. Through the implementation of challenging tasks and the promotion of collaborative work, some advances are expected in the process of learning English, while also contributing to the development of more autonomous, creative, and engaged learners committed to their own learning. The following section will address the literature review by addressing the key concepts.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Addressing EFL in the 21st Century from a bilingual perspective

In the twenty-first century, the idea of bilingualism in education has changed significantly, particularly in countries like Colombia where the importance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is becoming more closely linked to the need to compete globally. Baker (2017) asserts that bilingual education promotes cognitive and cultural development in addition to language proficiency, both of which are essential for success in the connected world of today. His study demonstrates how bilingualism can be an effective instrument for social and intellectual mobility, which is a concept that is extremely pertinent to EFL instruction in globalized settings.

Furthermore, García and Lin (2017) claim that a crucial pedagogical technique in bilingual education is translanguaging, which is the dynamic and fluid practice of using more than one language. They highlight that by empowering students to use all their linguistic resources, translanguaging can foster deeper understanding, which is particularly important in settings where English is being taught as a foreign language. This is further supported by Menken and García (2015), who point out that inclusive classroom methods that consider students' varied linguistic backgrounds should be in line with multilingual policies.

Also, Rodríguez and Araque Torres (2020) established that “bilingualism implies considering, from its definition, the recognition of socio-educational heterogeneity, variations, cultural and linguistic differences between communities,” (p. 59). These viewpoints are crucial for developing EFL tactics that promote students' entire development in multilingual cultures in addition to concentrating on language acquisition.

According to García and Wei (2019), bilingualism provides learners with enhanced

cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills, which are crucial in an interconnected world.

This approach not only enhances language understanding but also serves as a valuable foundation for engaging students in Challenge-Based Learning contexts. (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Translanguaging: Using Multiple Languages to Enhance Foreign Language Acquisition



Nota. The image represents García and Lin's (2017) point of view about translanguaging.

Despite Colombia's efforts to establish bilingual guidelines, such as the National Bilingualism Plan, students still face many obstacles that hinder their ability to learn English (Guerrero-Nieto & Quintero-Polo, 2021). The prevalent monolingual approach in many classes, which emphasizes learning just in English without using students' native language proficiency to aid in the acquisition of the new language, is one of the primary problems (Menken & García, 2015). Furthermore, pedagogical resources and materials are limited, particularly in public institutions that do not have access to sufficient technology and instruments (Ospina Giraldo & Muñoz Fandiño, 2023).

These restrictions lead to disparities in access to high-quality bilingual education in addition to limiting the growth of English proficiency (García & Lin, 2017). Analyzing these challenges is crucial to understanding the real context in which these policies are implemented and to proposing strategies that promote an inclusive and contextualized approach to bilingualism (Baker, 2017).

As educators continue to adapt to the needs of a globalized society, it is crucial to understand that bilingualism is not merely a language skill; it is a pathway to cognitive and cultural growth. Such advancements naturally lead to innovative frameworks like Challenge-Based Learning that emphasize real-world application and social development.

1.2 Challenge-Based Learning as a Pathway to Enhanced Bilingual Education

Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) emerges as a relevant pedagogical approach that aligns well with the goals of 21st-century education. It encourages students to engage with real-world problems through inquiry and collaborative efforts, fostering deeper learning and critical thinking skills (Perna et al., 2023). ChBL provides a framework for students to apply their knowledge and skills in meaningful ways, promoting not only academic growth but also personal development and social responsibility (Perna et al., 2022; Leijon et al., 2021).

This approach is also an effective learning framework that encourages collaboration among students, teachers, families, and community members to identify big ideas, address challenges, acquire knowledge, cultivate 21st-century skills, and communicate their ideas. It emphasizes global themes, teamwork, technology, flexibility, multidisciplinary, creativity, and challenge definition. Even though ChBL can be applied in a variety of settings and scales, and it may help both small and large student populations, authors in the literature noticed that, until recently, it was primarily used as a complement to establish frameworks rather than as an

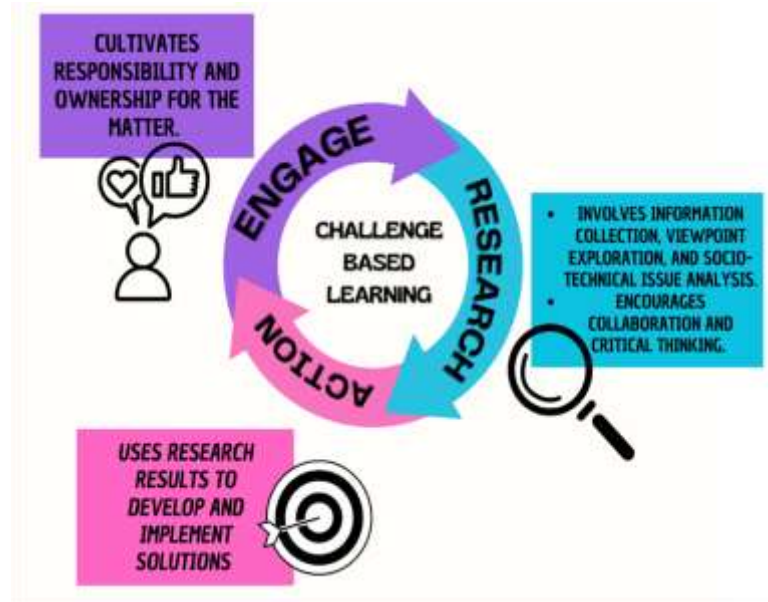
integrated curriculum practice. (Perna et al., 2022).

The ChBL approach is particularly beneficial in EFL contexts, where students often grapple with language barriers and the pressure of achieving proficiency. By presenting challenges that require them to use English in authentic contexts, students are motivated to communicate effectively and collaboratively (Warsah et al., 2021). According to Thornhill Miller et al., (2023), ChBL not only enhances language acquisition but also cultivates essential 21st-century skills, such as creativity, teamwork, and adaptability, which are increasingly necessary in today's rapidly changing job market.

According to Gallagher & Savage (2020), the three main components of challenge-based learning (CBL) are engagement, research, and action. Presenting a pertinent real-world problem to students in order to attract their attention and encourage them to take part in the learning process. This stage cultivates a feeling of responsibility and ownership for the matter at hand. Research entails information collection, viewpoint exploration, and socio technical issue analysis. Students are encouraged to collaborate and think critically throughout this phase. Action is using research results to develop and put into practice a solution, frequently in conjunction with business partners or community stakeholders. (Figure 2). These stages are crucial to the CBL framework because they encourage active learning and build the skills necessary to handle challenging societal issues.

Figure 2

The three main components in Challenge based learning (CBL)



Note. The picture depicts how Gallagher & Savage (2020), describe the CBL process.

1.3 Students' Needs Regarding Education in the 21st Century

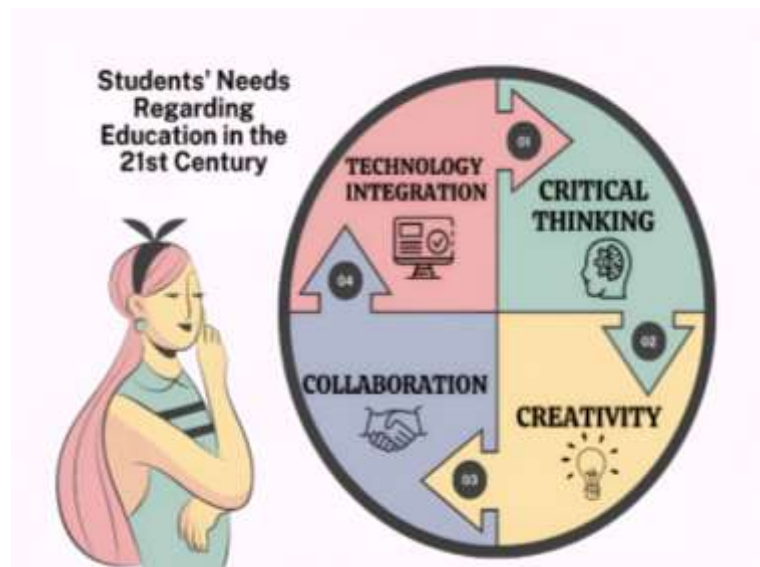
In the 21st century, students' needs have shifted from traditional rote learning to more dynamic and interactive forms of education. A significant emphasis has been placed on the development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). In EFL contexts, this shift underscores the necessity for pedagogical strategies that empower students to take ownership of their learning processes and engage with content meaningfully (Warsah et al., 2021).

Some studies indicate that students desire educational experiences that are relevant to their lives and future careers. For instance, research by Perna et al., (2023) highlights that student's benefit from learning environments that incorporate real-life applications and opportunities for peer collaboration. Additionally, the integration of technology in learning processes has become crucial, as students seek to utilize digital tools that enhance their language skills and facilitate collaboration (Su & Zou, 2020).

Furthermore, students in EFL settings often report a need for more supportive learning

environments that reduce anxiety and foster confidence in using the language (Lau, 2023). This indicates that educators must consider emotional and social factors when designing learning experiences, ensuring that students feel empowered to participate and collaborate effectively. This shift in educational requirements emphasizes the importance of collaborative learning experiences that not only satisfy these requirements but also encourage student engagement and a sense of community. By integrating CBL into EFL education, a conducive environment is created for students to develop critical skills that respond to the needs of a globalized world, which is crucial for 21st-century education. (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Key Needs of 21st-Century EFL Students.



Note. The image illustrates how, according to Thornhill-Miller et al.,(2023). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in modern educational settings must develop specific skills and competencies to meet the demands of the 21st century.

1.4 Collaborative Learning Tasks

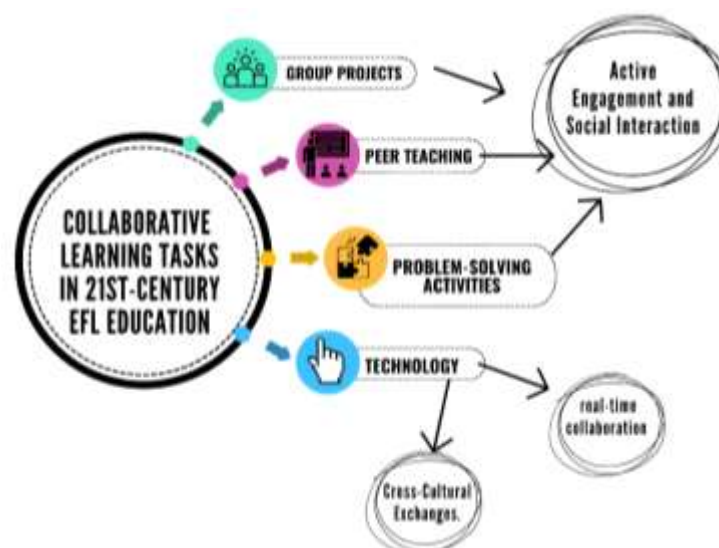
Collaborative learning tasks are fundamental to meeting the educational needs of students in the 21st century. This approach not only aligns with the principles of CBL but also promotes active engagement and social interaction among students (Warsah et al., 2021). Collaborative learning provides students with opportunities to share their knowledge, develop communication

skills, and engage in peer-to-peer learning, which enhances overall language proficiency (Thornill-Miller et al., 2023).

In EFL and bilingual education, collaborative tasks can take various forms, including group projects, peer teaching, and problem-solving activities. (Ellis, 2021) claims that these assignments help students feel like they belong and may practice their English in relevant situations. According to research, students who participate in collaborative learning experiences report feeling more motivated and satisfied, which improves their academic performance.

Furthermore, integrating technology into collaborative tasks improves the educational process by enabling real-time communication and cooperation across geographic boundaries. According to Su & Zou (2020), digital platforms can support collaborative learning by allowing students to interact with peers from around the world and participate in cross-cultural interactions that improve their comprehension of language and context. As a result, including collaborative tasks into the Challenge-Based Learning framework becomes an important strategy to meet the educational requirements of EFL students as well as to get future citizens ready for a multicultural society. (Figure 4).

Figure 4 *Collaborative learning tasks in the 21st century.*



Note. The graphic illustrates collaborative learning tasks in the 21st century, highlighting how these activities promote essential skills such as communication, cooperation, and problem-solving in modern educational settings. Own elaboration.

2. METHOD

2.1. Action research

This research came from direct and participant observation through action research from a qualitative perspective. According to Ferrance, (2020) action research is described as a methodical, analytical process in which educators study their own methods to enhance what they teach and address issues in their learning environments. Teachers can use a method of inquiry to better understand and enhance their teaching methods. The author also emphasizes action research as a collaborative process for professional development and enhancing the learning environment, fostering improvements in educators' practices and student outcomes.

2.1.1 Steps in action research

Figure 5 Steps in action research according to Ferrance, (2000).



Note. The graphic illustrates the six steps regarding action research. Own design

To start the inquiry of this research project, students at a public university in the North of Santander were provided with access to an online questionnaire that inquired about their favorite learning tactics, areas for enhancement, and challenges they have faced regarding bilingual education.

Furthermore, with this method, the project aims to gather comprehensive information to adapt innovative pedagogies and practices that effectively enhance students' proficiency and confidence in facing bilingual education challenges. Nevertheless, action research allows participants to function as co-researchers since the research process is shaped by their lived experiences (Tegan, 2024). For this research, these are the objectives proposed:

- **General objective:**

To determine the EFL progress in a group of elementary students at a public university in the North of Santander through collaborative learning and challenging tasks.

- **Specific objectives:**

1. To implement the adaptation and design collaborative learning and challenging tasks in a group of elementary EFL students at a public university in the North of Santander.

2. To establish the EFL results in a group of students at a public university in the North of Santander through a pedagogical implementation based on collaborative challenged based learning (C& ChBL).

3. To interpret the students' and teacher's positioning regarding collaborative and challenging based learning, and the implementation scope.

2.2 Instructional design through action research

Coherently with the approach of challenge-based learning, three challenging tasks were developed in the classroom to evaluate students' ability to apply strategies that they have learned

in real life situations, measure their confidence levels, and determine their EFL progress through the approaches of challenge based learning and collaborative work. Each challenging task design implied (a) lesson planning elaboration; (b) artifacts design and implementation; (c) five direct observation instruments and a final assessment reflection on the students' perception about their learning process, and current challenges as could be seen in [Appendix 3](#). The instructional design is explained in-detail in the table below:

Table. 1

2.1 Pedagogical implementation (instructional design)

Lessons	Pedagogical artifacts synthesis to explain how CBL and collaborative work were implemented. Links to see the artifacts' design	Data collection instruments, include the reference and purpose
Lesson 1: Creating real-life scenarios	Lesson plan 1.docx	The purpose of the data collection method, through the implementation of three lesson plans, is to determine students' progress in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) by applying collaborative work and Challenge-Based Learning (ChBL) approaches. Specifically, it seeks to assess how these strategies enhance linguistic and social competencies while addressing motivation and emotional barriers (Perna et al., 2023; Thornhill-Miller et al., 2023). Furthermore, the data collection aims to measure the development of 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, teamwork, and problem-solving in real-world contexts, aligning with evidence that collaborative work promotes social interaction, shared learning, academic performance, and task engagement (Gallagher & Savage, 2020). (Figure 5). Evidencias Actas de Observación
Lesson 2: Careers stories: Navigating the path to success	Lesson plan 2.docx	
Lesson 3: Dubbing as a tool for language and cultural exploration	Lesson plan 3.docx	
Artifact: Reflexión y Desafío	Artifact 2 Reflexión y desafío.docx	

Figure 6

Pedagogical Intervention Integrating Collaborative Work and Challenge-Based Learning (CBL)



Note. The image depicts an innovative pedagogical intervention developed through the integration of collaborative work components and the Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) approach.

Finally, the artifact: “Reflexión y desafío”, allowed students to share not only their perceptions regarding the previous tasks but also how these collaborative challenging tasks helped them to enhance their English processes. Furthermore, within the implementation and as part of the pedagogical intervention and action research cycles, thirteen podcasts, twelve dubbing scenes and nine real-life scenarios videos were gathered through the five challenging tasks.

Table N. 2

Creating real-life scenarios: Articulation of Challenge-Based Learning considering different everyday situations and making use of conditionals in English.

Everyday situations
Pet Care
Healthy Habits
Household Economics
Transportation and Travel
Friendship and Personal Relationships
Environmental Impact
Technology and social media

Note. In order to promote creativity and teamwork, the first exercise suggested was "Creating Real-Life Scenarios," in which students collaborated in groups to produce videos that use the zero and first conditionals in authentic settings.

The table above presents everyday situations used in *Challenge-Based Learning* to help students apply conditionals in real-life contexts. Topics such as pet care, healthy habits, household economics, and environmental impact were explored. The first exercise encouraged creativity and teamwork, where students worked in groups to create videos using zero and first conditionals in authentic scenarios.

Table N. 3

Podcasts: Articulation of Challenge Based Learning Considering the B.A Programs Core Curriculum

Academic program	Podcast
Physics	Sons of newton
Engineering	Tag speaker AI society Engineering links with music
Psychology	With our own voice Rethink
Spanish language	Schoolastic
Economics	Politics, economics and reform. Daily podcast
Law	FemEforce
Philosophy	Eternal sunshine of a spotlight mind
Childhood education	Kids Zone Mindfulmagic

Note. The "Developing a Podcast" activity encouraged students to explore and discuss career-related issues in English, promoting language skills, critical thinking, and teamwork.

The table outlines podcasts created as part of the *Challenge-Based Learning* approach, designed to align with the core curriculum of various B.A. programs. Each podcast title corresponds to an academic field, offering students the opportunity to explore and discuss career-related topics in English. The "Developing a Podcast" activity fostered critical thinking, language skills, and teamwork as students worked collaboratively to create content relevant to their future

careers. This activity not only enhanced their English proficiency but also deepened their understanding of key issues within their fields of study.

Table. N. 4

Dubbing: Articulation of Challenge Based Learning Considering the B.A Programs Core Curriculum

B. A Programs	Social issues addressed	Name of the project
Childhood education	Emotional intelligence Self-confidence Managing emotions	Inside out Princess Diary
Spanish language and communication	Identity crisis Human mind	The office Family guy.
Law	Racial discrimination Critique of American society Gender stereotypes Work environment	The interview White chicks The help
Psychology	Emotional intelligence Self-love Facing internal demons Mental illnesses	Coraline Joker Over the garden wall
Environmental engineering.	Global warming Environment Work environment	Recycling Ice age.

Note. Through the interpretation and dubbing of scenes from movies or TV series, the "Dubbing as a Tool for Language and Cultural Exploration" activity helped students become more proficient in English while tackling societal concerns and focusing on language and cultural awareness.

The table above presents *Dubbing as a Tool for Language and Cultural Exploration* activity, which is part of the *Challenge-Based Learning* approach and tailored to align with the core curriculum of various B.A. programs. The activity encouraged students to explore social issues relevant to their fields of study, such as emotional intelligence, racial discrimination, and global warming, by dubbing scenes from movies and TV series. This process not only enhanced

students' English proficiency but also fostered a deeper understanding of societal concerns and cultural awareness, while promoting critical thinking and language skills in a creative context.

Participants.

The table lists the number of students, their ages, and important characteristics as well as the learning challenges they experienced, including low motivation, emotional barriers, and weak basic English competency. A fundamental combination of the challenge-based learning method with the investigative process was made possible by action research. In order to help students, overcome these difficulties and improve their abilities, challenging and engaging tasks were developed. Through ongoing reflection on students' challenges, the approach guided pedagogical changes, resulting in a dynamic and adaptable learning environment.

Table N° 5 Participants' selection criteria

Number of Students	Age rank	Main characteristics	Female/ Male	Learning difficulties considering the 30
Student 30	19-21	The participants were 30 higher education learners enrolled in a third-level English course, representing a variety of academic programs within the university. These courses are offered by the Department of Foreign Languages as extension courses. The participants were between first and third semesters of their respective academic programs.	17 women 13 men	The main challenges observed among the students included a lack of motivation toward the subject, emotional barriers such as anxiety, low self-confidence, and fear of mistakes, as well as insufficient foundational English skills. These issues hindered their ability to fully engage in the course and express themselves effectively, either orally or in writing.

The table below outlines the instruments used in the research project, each serving a specific purpose within the *action research* cycle. The inquiry questionnaire identified students'

perceptions of foreign language learning and the limitations of traditional methods. The observation format evaluated how students engaged with the challenging tasks and their impact on language learning. Finally, artifacts from the *C & ChBA* provided evidence of student progress, which was analyzed to assess the effectiveness of the pedagogical strategies applied throughout the project.

Table. 6 Instruments

Instrument	Purpose within the action research cycle	Link to see the appendix
1. Inquiry questionnaire	To identify the problem regarding students' perceptions related to foreign language and how some EFL learning traditional methods are not effective.	Appendix 2
2. Observation format	To evaluate the results regarding the implementation of four challenging tasks during the whole project. The direct researcher evidenced through the observation format the way the students developed all activities and how the approaches enabled them to improve their EFL learning.	Appendix 8
3. Artifacts from the C & ChBA	To gather and interpret data collection through the evidence of each challenging task.	Appendix 4 Appendix 5 Appendix 6 Appendix 7

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The type of research on this project was action research due to it is defined as a kind of research that looks at a problem and attempts to find a solution at the same time argued otherwise, action research does exactly what its name implies it simultaneously does study and takes action. (Tegan, 2024). The research is related to an inductive content analysis (ICA) that is a data analysis method used for text-based data, such as transcripts or written documents. It aims to summarize the content of individual texts in a data set inductively rather than searching for predetermined content items. ICA is a qualitative analysis, pointing to understand the meaning of the content without counting instances or finding statistical correlations. It can also be used for images, but primarily for textual data. Vears, D. F., & Gillam, L. (2022).

The project's general objective was to determine the EFL progress in a group of higher education students at a public university in the North of Santander through collaborative work and challenging tasks. Challenge-based learning and collaborative work approaches were implemented in a group of basic English-level students.

Figure 7 *Inductive content analysis stages according to Vears, D. F., & Gillam, L. (2022). See the [Appendix 9](#).*

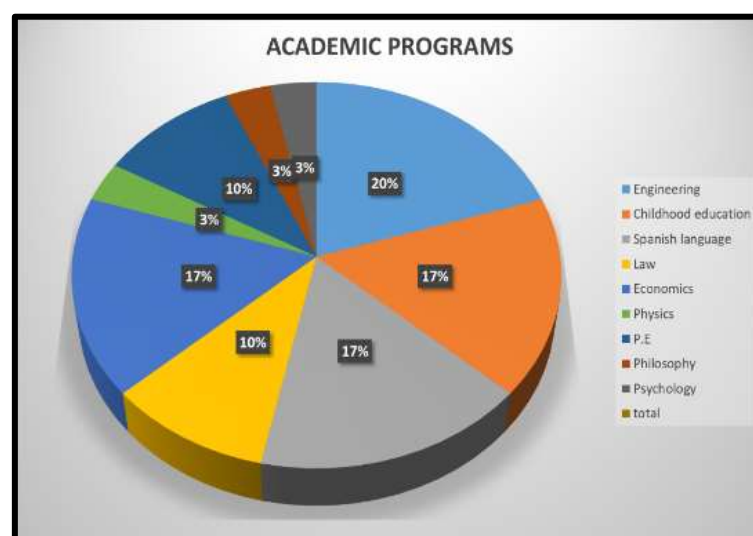


Data collection from a qualitative perspective and inductive way emerging from data, a content analysis was carried out allowing the researchers to find out three based categories related to the codes identified during the observation and implementation of the research project Haque, (2022).

This study was implemented in a group of thirty students between first and third semesters from different programs of the university, taking the English class level three as part of the curriculum at a public university located in the North of Santander, Colombia. Their age range was between nineteen and twenty-one years old and their social background was between two and three.

As it is established in the program curriculum, these learners must study English for three semesters, these classes are offered by the foreign languages program of the university, which is a department attached to the Education department. Classes are given two days a week and they last 2 hours each day. The academic semester lasts sixteen weeks, divided into three terms; each term consists of five or 6 weeks.

Figure 8 *Academic Programs Represented in the Study Population*



Note. The image illustrates the diverse academic programs undertaken by the student population selected for this study. The data collection and challenged activities were divided into five parts where the instruments applied were designed to foster the approach of challenge-based learning and collaborative work from May 12th to July 24th.

The first step on this research, as it was mentioned previously, was related to an online questionnaire where the students shared their perceptions regarding their experiences in their English classes [Appendix 2](#). In real terms, the use of questionnaires in surveys makes it possible to generate data using the most efficient and successful method. These surveys enable the instruments to be readily piloted, implemented, data analyzed, and conclusions disseminated with stakeholders in specific situations (Bihu, 2022).

According to the data collection provided by thirty students from the first instrument that was applied in Spanish (their mother tongue), allowing the students a better comprehension of each question, (Vallejo, 2018). Nevertheless, the results indicated their previous perceptions regarding the importance of collaborative learning in facilitating real-world bilingual communication skills, if they had participated in challenging tasks in other opportunities, what role collaboration plays in the enhancement of bilingual communication, and how motivated they were to engage in collaborative learning activities for bilingual education skills.

Meanwhile, regarding the three open questions, students underlined the value of collaborative work in providing authentic practice opportunities, boosting confidence, and facilitating peer feedback and learning. They also emphasized the practical benefits of challenge-based learning, which promotes creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork by allowing students to apply communication skills in real-world situations. Furthermore, the results emphasized the importance of incorporating pedagogical approaches like challenge-based learning and collaborative work to enhance bilingual communication abilities and determine their EFL progress.

Table N. 7 Examples of some students' answers regarding the three open questions

Pregunta 5: En su opinión, ¿Qué papel desempeña la colaboración en la mejora de las habilidades de comunicación en inglés?	Pregunta 6: ¿Cómo cree que el aprendizaje basado en desafíos puede contribuir a las habilidades de comunicación en inglés?	Pregunta 7: ¿Cómo cree que el aprendizaje colaborativo puede abordar las complejidades de la comunicación en inglés en el mundo real?
S1: “El detectar las debilidades de mis compañeros o propias, nos ayuda a mejorar positivamente.” S2: “Fomenta la habilidad oral y de escucha, ya que algo fundamental de la colaboración es la comunicación, si es en inglés tiene como resultado familiarizarse más con este idioma.” S3: “Un papel importante porque de esta manera se hace un intercambio de información que ayuda al mejoramiento.” S4: “Desempeña un papel muy importante ya que, de esta manera, en conjunto reforzamos las habilidades en inglés.” S5: “La colaboración es muy importante porque se despejan dudas o inquietudes.”	S1: “Puede ser muy efectivo para mejorar las habilidades de comunicación en inglés.” S2: “Contribuye al momento de intervenir con los demás y tener un aprendizaje colaborativo.” S3: “Puede contribuir a fortalecer las habilidades ya que se coloca en práctica lo aprendido.” S4: “Incentivar a querer adquirir conocimiento y el sentido de desafío lo hace más llamativo.” S5: “El aprendizaje basado en desafíos contribuye a la familiarización efectiva con el inglés, los desafíos logran que el aprendizaje sea realmente significativo y que sea construido realmente por cada estudiante.”	S1: “El enfrentarse a compañeros con un nivel de inglés diferente al nuestro, nos ayuda a entender que situaciones similares.” S2: “Por medio de actividades orales según el tema que se enseñe, se pueden corregir más fácil los errores y así también aprender de los demás.” S3: “Al ser un desarrollo colaborativo, se resolvería de mejor manera las dudas e inquietudes y se obtendría una mejor experiencia en cuando a dialecto y pronunciación.” S4: “De manera en que aprendemos un poco más a comunicarnos con el otro e ir soltando ese miedo al habla en grupo.” S5: “Puede abordar de manera satisfactoria ya que en equipo se puede practicar y corregir con mayor entusiasmo las dificultades.”

Note. Survey Results on Perceptions of Foreign Language Learning Using Challenging Activities and Collaborative Work. [Appendix 2.](#)

Emerging category: Bilingual learning enhancement; Social interaction in the bilingual learning environments BLE; Students' needs and emotional engagement. (Table 4). The coding process started with the inquiry of students' perceptions and needs that the researchers identified through the online questionnaire finding out how students were demotivated due to some bad and expressed feelings such as demotivation, dislikes, apathy, fears and disinterest in English that they faced during their learning processes and how they were interested in facing some challenging tasks with their peers promoting the collaborative work in order to enhance their foreign language acquisition. However, the project allowed the researchers to focus on the need for the implementation of an approach that not only challenges the students but also promotes the collaborative work that inspires them to engage, dedicate and focus on their process (Qureshi M, et al., 2021). The following table explains the triangulation of information regarding the initial categories, the identification of codes and the grouping exercise visible in the matrix [Appendix 9](#) and finally, the determination of emerging categories. The figure synthesizes the process of data collection organization for carrying out the analysis.

Table. 8 Categories and Subcategories Triangulation

Research question: How does the implementation of collaborative learning and challenging tasks strengthen the advancement of EFL progress in a group of students at a public university in the north of Santander?				
Objectives	Initial categories	Sample of coding from data collection	Emerging categorization	Links to see sample of evidence
General objective: To determine the EFL progress in a group of elementary students at a public university in the North of Santander through collaborative learning and challenging tasks.	1. EFL in the 21st century: Bilingualism perspective	Team work Increased confident	Once each text in the category is addressed, the reader will find its sub-categories. Emerging category: Bilingual	Triangulation Matrix.xlsx
	2. Challenge-Based Learning as a Pathway to Enhanced Bilingual Education	Insecurities Meaningful learning		

Specific objectives:			
1. To implement the adaptation and design collaborative learning and challenging tasks in a group of elementary EFL students at a public university in the North of Santander.	3. Students needs regarding education in the 21st century.	Pronunciati on	learning enhancement
	4. Collaborative learning tasks	Overcomin g fears	Social interaction in the Bilingual Learning Environment (BLE)
2. To establish the EFL results in a group of students at a public university in the North of Santander through a pedagogical implementation based on collaborative challenged based learning (C&ChBL).		Challenge	
		<u>Actas de Observaci ón</u>	Students' needs and emotional engagement.
3. To interpret the students' and teacher's positioning regarding collaborative and challenging based learning, and the implementation scope.			

Note. This table illustrates the structure of categories and subcategories that emerge from the data analysis in our research on collaborative learning and challenging tasks in English language teaching along with the theoretical frameworks that support them. It effectively highlights the key concepts and their interrelationships, enhancing our understanding of the central themes explored in this study and the process of analysis carried out by the two researchers as it is evidenced in the triangulation matrix. [Appendix 9.](#)

3.1 Discussion of findings

3.1.1 Emerging Category: Bilingual Learning Enhancement

According to the coding from data collection, from the emerging category Bilingual Learning enhancement, challenge-based learning, as an emerging bilingual learning enhancement method, emphasizes real-world problem-solving and collaboration among students,

fostering critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork, fostering deeper understanding and practical skills. (Perna, et al.,2023). Taking into account the implementation and findings in this action research demonstrated that challenging tasks such as creating videos related to real life scenarios, podcast and dubbing allowed the students to develop not only their abilities in English, but also their creativity, innovation and face new strategies creating innovating ideas and demonstrate a better comprehension of the topics, thus, the progress regarding their knowledge and engagement was enhancing while they were doing the tasks. The study also evidenced that this approach was pertinent for the enhancement of the pedagogical practices during the bilingual teaching- learning process.

- **Sub-category Challenging tasks: Challenged** Involving students in specific tasks aligned with the content they are learning is essential for developing 21st-century skills such as creativity, collaborative work, and critical thinking (Shakya, 2020). The data collected in the study showed that these tasks effectively fostered these skills among higher education students. Activities like creating videos based on real-life situations, producing podcasts, and performing dubbing exercises highlighted both the value of teamwork and the students' ability to approach challenges creatively and innovatively. Moreover, participants noted that engaging in these activities for the first time not only captured their interest but also significantly enhanced their English language skills.

Student 1: *"La actividad de doblaje era algo que nunca había hecho antes, y fue realmente innovadora. Requirió que prestáramos atención a la pronunciación y la entonación, lo cual nos ayudó a mejorar nuestras habilidades de habla. También nos hizo pensar críticamente sobre el idioma que estábamos usando y cómo hacerlo sonar natural."*

The transcription showed that the challenging tasks in the project provided a significant experience for students, as suggested by Shakya (2020). Activities like podcasts and dubbing not only required creativity and innovation but also fostered collaborative work and language skills improvement. The emphasis on "thinking outside the box" and collective effort in these tasks demonstrates that they effectively fulfill their pedagogical purpose. The students highlighted the innovative nature of the tasks, indicating an opportunity for practical application of their skills.

- **Sub-category meaningful learning:** According to Vargas, et. al., (2022), meaningful learning promotes student autonomy and quality education by prioritizing context-specific content and community activities. It involves identifying knowledge and experiences related to actions, images, and objects, generating significant learning. Regarding the research project, the implementation of the tasks enabled students to identify the previous knowledge that could be articulated to the new contents worked in class for example, the students created videos related to real life situations, taking into account previous knowledge about zero and first conditionals, for recording the podcasts associated to discuss real-world issues relating to a topic in their professional careers, and the dubbing activity where they selected different societal challenges, were possible due to they identified some previous vocabulary and grammar in English through the direct observation by one of the researchers. These tasks evidenced a better comprehension of the contents and the enhancement of English language learning as the students mentioned in the last instrument "Reflexión y Desafío". [Appendix 7.](#)

Student 2: *"Mientras creaba el video sobre escenarios de la vida real, me di cuenta de que estaba usando conceptos gramaticales como los condicionales cero y primero sin*

pensar demasiado en ello. Me hizo ver cómo esta gramática es realmente útil en las conversaciones cotidianas. No se trataba solo de memorizar reglas, sino de aplicarlas a algo relevante."

Transcript. Group N.4

Technology and social media.

- *Of course. If you buy one of our latest models, you get access to all the popular social media apps. Which one are you interested in?*
- *I think I want the latest model. What features does it have?*
- *If you choose this model, you can use apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, seamlessly. The camera is also excellent for taking photos.*
- *That sounds perfect. I use social media a lot. Can I start using these apps immediately after purchasing?*
- *Yes, if you set up your phone and download the apps, you can start using them right away.*

The transcribed comments showed that the proposed activities allowed students to connect prior knowledge with the new content covered in class, which aligned with the concept of meaningful learning described by Vargas et al. (2022). The tasks of creating videos, podcasts, and dubbing helped students identify and apply prior knowledge, such as conditionals and specific vocabulary, in contexts relevant to them, which facilitates deeper and more lasting learning.

- **Sub- category EFL learning through real-life situations :** One of the purposes of challenge-based learning is that it encourages learners to engage with complex challenges by developing solutions that are applicable outside the classroom, that is, real-world problem-solving (Perna, 2023). Data collection allowed the researchers to see better

outcomes due to the contextualization of different problems and how the students improved their English skills through the articulation of specific challenging tasks with real-life situations related to social topics and issues that caught their attention.

According to M.E.N., the Bilingual National Plan aims to strengthen the foreign language teaching-learning processes; thus, it is possible to incorporate approaches that foster the enhancement of English-level proficiency. Moreover, challenging tasks enable students to strengthen their foreign language skills.

Student 3: *"Hacer el podcast en inglés me hizo pensar en cuánto usamos el idioma en nuestra vida diaria, no solo en el aula. Me ayudó a darme cuenta de que aprender un idioma no se trata solo de hablar o escribir, sino también de entender cómo se conecta con otras materias y desafíos de la vida real."*

PODCAST: SCHOLASTIC

BY. humanities and Spanish language program.

- *Hello everyone and welcome to another episode of our educational podcast. Today we will discuss a very relevant topic for many students, the incompatibility between class schedules and practices. To address these issues, we have a panel of four students, from the humanities and Spanish language. Well, let's get started.*
- *We'll start with Ángeles, a third-year student. Ángeles, can you share with us your experience working in schedules incompatibility?*
- *Of course, Adriana. One of the biggest challenges that we as students of humanities and Spanish language face is coordinating our class schedule with our internships.*

The transcript evidenced how the students applied English in a real context (discussing pedagogical topics and their impact on students' academic performance) while exploring complex and real-life problems. The fact that the students felt engaged and able to articulate their ideas on educational topics in English, relating this knowledge to other areas of study, reflects how challenging tasks (like the

podcast) not only improve their language skills but also allow them to connect their learning with real-world situations.

- **Sub- category Understanding through translanguaging:** This approach highlights how multilingual people use their whole linguistic repertoire to communicate and create meaning. It is a dynamic and fluid approach to language use. This approach entails a deliberate and planned use of languages to navigate various contexts and audiences, going beyond simple code-switching or language mixing. (García, 2017).

During the whole research project, the instruments and the implementation of the challenging tasks, the use of both languages, their mother language (Spanish) and the foreign language (English), were relevant and demonstrated that García's theory was pertinent and relevant because not only the teacher but also the students made the process of code switching for understanding different directions in terms of identifying the students' perceptions of their English learning applying the tasks, and determining the students' progress and their final outcomes.

Researcher 1: *“Durante la implementación del proyecto, utilicé la estrategia de translanguaging de manera intencionada en todas las actividades. Esto permitió a los estudiantes utilizar tanto el español como el inglés de forma flexible para construir significado, acceder a su conocimiento previo y expresar sus ideas con mayor claridad. El objetivo principal fue reducir la ansiedad lingüística y facilitar una transición gradual hacia el uso del inglés en contextos académicos y comunicativos.”*

Teacher: *Okay, everyone, today we're going to work on the podcast activity. Ahora, quiero que se reúnan en grupos y piensen en un tema interesante relacionado con sus carreras. You can discuss the topic in Spanish first to brainstorm ideas, and then we'll*

switch to English for the actual script writing. ¿Está claro? Si tienen dudas, pregúntenme en inglés o en español, como prefieran.

3.1.2. Emerging Social Interaction in the BLE -Bilingual Learning Environment

As stated by Van Dijk, T. A. (2000) , interaction plays a crucial role in communication and learning across various contexts. The author examines the role of social interaction in learning environments, emphasizing its critical role in facilitating language practice, creating shared meanings, and fostering meaningful, contextualized learning. The author highlights how the diversity of perspectives within students promotes the exchange of ideas and experiences, enriching the learning process. Additionally, Van Dijk underscores the importance of structured interaction, such as the “initiative-response-feedback” model, in creating a collaborative learning environment. This structured sequence is regarded as fundamental to the organization and effectiveness of classroom interaction.

Regarding peer learning, social support and teamwork, collaborative work is defined as a process in which individuals or groups actively engage in shared tasks, influencing their diverse skills and perspectives to achieve common goals. This approach fosters innovation, enhances problem-solving and encourages effective communication, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes in various contexts. (Warsah, et al., 2021).

According to the implementation of the research project, it evidenced that peer interaction fostered and strengthened collaborative work through the three tasks, taking an important part in their bilingual learning. Students demonstrated in the videos, podcast and dubbing exercise how to achieve their goals, for example, after the students

showed the class their dubbed videos, there was a discussion about the problem and the impact of the message.

Students conclude with a reflection session when they talk about their language proficiency, collaboration advantages, and lessons learned. Students' requirements have changed in the 21st century, moving away from traditional repetition learning and toward more dynamic and participatory educational approaches. The emergence of critical thinking, creativity, and teamwork has received a lot of attention. (Johnson & Johnson, 2019). The project that was carried out enabled the researchers to identify the following sub-categories that emerged from the second category:

- **Sub – category Collaborative learning strengths:** According to Warsah, et. al., (2021), several strengths of collaborative work include: enhanced Learning Outcomes, critical thinking and problem-solving, social skills development, motivation and engagement, shared responsibility, exposes individuals to diverse perspectives and cultural backgrounds, enriching the overall learning experience, collaborative projects prepare students for future professional teamwork. The design and implementation of the challenging tasks emerged from the results of instrument 1. However, the lesson plans were designed to promote collaborative work and those tasks enabled to motivate students, promoted social interaction, changed their perspectives while facing the activities that improve their social skills evidenced in the videos, podcast, dubbing activities and final feedback.

Table 9. Students' progress in their EFL learning through the implementation of the challenging tasks.

Activity	EFL learning progress evidenced	Appendixes links
Creating real-life scenarios	The Creating Real-Life Scenarios activity aimed to teach students how to use conditionals in English in everyday situations. Students worked in groups to design and present real-life scenarios, focusing on topics like pet care, healthy habits, and transportation. This approach boosted their critical thinking and practical language use, enabling them to apply grammar structures in real-life communication. The collaborative nature of the task enhanced teamwork and peer learning, making language learning more relevant and engaging by linking it to daily life situations.	Appendix 4
Podcast	The Podcast activity involved students working in groups to create podcasts on career-related topics, enhancing both their English language skills and critical thinking. Through this process, students demonstrated improved ability to communicate complex ideas clearly and collaborate effectively. The activity also deepened their understanding of key concepts in their academic fields while fostering teamwork and problem-solving. Overall, the podcast project was an effective way to combine language learning with the exploration of real-world issues within their disciplines.	Appendix 5
Dubbing	The <i>Dubbing as a Tool for Language and Cultural Exploration</i> activity involved students dubbing scenes from movies and TV shows that addressed social issues like emotional intelligence, racial discrimination, and environmental concerns. This process helped students improve their English skills while deepening their understanding of complex topics. It was evident that students not only enhanced their linguistic abilities but also developed greater cultural awareness and empathy by engaging with diverse societal themes. The collaborative nature of the activity fostered teamwork and critical discussions, making it an effective tool for both language learning and exploring real-world issues.	Appendix 6

Student 4: *“En la actividad de doblaje, tuvimos que colaborar estrechamente para asegurarnos de que nuestras voces coincidieran con los personajes y el mensaje que estábamos tratando de transmitir. No se trataba solo de traducir las palabras, sino de asegurarse de que el mensaje fuera claro y efectivo en inglés. Tuvimos que escucharnos y dar retroalimentación para asegurarnos de que todo funcionara”.*

DUBBING.

By: Environmental engineering program.

RECYCLING

- *For reasons unknown to me, I ended up inside this garbage bag after my cousin Reynaldo's birthday party. I woke up far from Santiago, in the foreign region where they deposit all the garbage from La Serena and Coquimbo.*
- *Thank God! The friends of the Coquimbo landfill saved my life.*
- *Also, on the truck trip, I will learn a couple of things that would be good to tell you about.*
- *Hey, hey! Careful with that trash! Nothing well!*
- *Belisario Muletas is the administrator of this landfill.*
- *Believe it or not, half of this garbage can be recovered. That brings with it a benefit.*

One, we pollute less, and two, we conserve natural resources.

These pieces of evidence supported the idea that challenging activities not only promoted the improvement of language skills but also allowed students to work effectively as a team, enhancing both their social skills and their ability to solve problems collaboratively.

- **Sub- category Positive experiences of peer work:** Collaborative learning scenarios make classrooms more dynamic by significantly improving student engagement and

motivation for learning (Li, M. et al., 2019). The students shared through the second instrument, their perceptions regarding the whole project and those were significant. They highlighted how the experiences working during the implementation of the challenging tasks articulated with collaborative work motivated them to improve not only their learning processes but also their positive perceptions that made them to increase their creativity and dismissed their bad experiences they had in other scenarios. The author's concept demonstrated that peer work has encouraged outcomes and enriched their learning foreign language processes.

Student A: *“Al principio no me sentía seguro de mi inglés, pero cuando comenzamos a trabajar en equipo, empecé a sentirme más cómodo. Mis compañeros me ayudaron con las ideas y corregían mis errores. Fue chévere cómo todos aportamos algo diferente.”*

Student B: *“Sí, fue lo mismo para mí. Trabajar en grupo me motivó mucho. Antes pensaba que mis ideas no eran buenas, pero ahora me doy cuenta de que entre todos se puede hacer un mejor trabajo. La tarea nos desafió, pero eso nos hizo más creativos y aprendimos mucho.”*

This comment and written transcript reflected how collaborative work experiences directly influenced students' motivation and perception of their learning. According to Li et al. (2019), collaborative learning can transform the classroom environment, making students more actively engaged, feeling supported, and developing essential skills such as creativity and problem-solving. The activity also demonstrated that teamwork not only improved their language proficiency but also boosts students' confidence, minimizing previous negative experiences and enhancing their attitude towards learning English.

3.1.3 Students' needs and emotional engagement

This third category emerged from data analysis started with the inquiry through the online questionnaire, where the students' perceptions regarding their experiences facing some English tasks were negative. This observation enabled the researchers to identify the real needs of this group, and taking into account the findings, the challenging tasks were pertinent not only regarding the integration of knowledge but also attending to these real needs. Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) fosters a more engaging and individualized learning experience, which makes it especially successful at fulfilling students' needs (Perna, et al.,2023).

The implementation of the lesson plans was attractive and interesting for the learners. While the researcher was explaining each task, the way in which the students developed them demonstrated engagement, responsibility, innovation, and high quality [Appendix 8](#). The evidence regarding how the students' needs were supplied and their emotional engagement was perceived not only through the final outcomes with their EFL progress but also the final task where they shared their new learning experience's perceptions fulfilling the main objective of this research project. Two subcategories emerged from this third category:

- **Sub - category Progress in 21st century skills:** García, (2009) mentioned that students who acquire 21st century abilities have the advantage to participate in a diverse and interconnected global society in addition to strengthening their language ability. The development of a diverse set of abilities that becomes more and more valuable in the twenty-first century can be facilitated by bilingual education. Students' progress during the whole process during the implementation regarding 21st century skills such as, critical thinking, collaborative work, and creativity has been articulated with their English language proficiency and communication skills. Adaptability in diverse scenarios for

developing their tasks fostered the advancement in strengthening bilingual education skills in the 21st century. For instance, during the dubbing exercise, it was noted by the observant teacher "Students participated enthusiastically in the process, demonstrating exceptional imaginative thinking in adapting dialogues to reflect various social issues. Addressing linguistic and technological challenges led to a noticeable improvement in their collaboration and problem-solving abilities". [Appendix 7](#)

- **Sub- category Perception of EFL learning:** At the beginning of the process, students mentioned some negative perceptions regarding the EFL learning through the instrument applied as part of the inquiry of the research project. However, collaborative settings increase students' intrinsic motivation by providing them a stronger sense of engagement and peer support. By assessing how collaborative learning promotes student motivation and engagement, emotional perspectives are significant. (Li et al., 2019). The challenging tasks significantly changed their perceptions, and students expressed in the second instrument how they faced those tasks and their opinions changed. Even though they had some fears by the time they started the learning acquisition, the new approach enabled students to develop positive emotions, social support, increase their confidence, and reduce their fears; besides, they feel more comfortable and secure, demonstrating better outcomes.

Student 5: *"Mejoré mi pronunciación y conocí nuevo vocabulario, perdí el miedo a hablar en inglés pese a saber que aun cometo varios errores y nunca me sentí juzgado o criticado".*

Student 6: *"Las estrategias orales implementadas en las clases de inglés fueron excelentes ya que nos ayudaron mucho a mejorar nuestras habilidades de comunicación*

y nos dieron más confianza para hablar en inglés.”

Table. 10 Students’ positive perceptions regarding the implementation of the challenging tasks through the evaluation “Reflexión y Desafío”.

Student	Excerpts	Link and instrument the evidence comes from
Student 1	<i>“ Fue una experiencia muy motivadora, creo que logré vencer mis miedos a hablar en inglés durante las clases, las tres actividades me gustaron mucho y aprendí por medio de situaciones cotidianas”</i>	Appendix 7
Student 2	<i>“Cada clase tenía algo nuevo por hacer y eso era agradable”</i>	
Student 3	<i>“Considero que, al ser las clases muy dinámicas, esto es que se realizaron a través de juegos y dinámicas, pude mejorar y recordar muchas cosas del idioma mientras me divertía”</i>	
Student 4	<i>“ Con las presentaciones orales aprendí pronunciación y perderles el miedo a las presentaciones”</i>	
Student 5	<i>“La experiencia fue demasiado significativa ya que prevalecía el trabajo en equipo, las actividades muy didácticas al punto de llegar a ser divertidas y muy dinámicas, excelentes actividades”</i>	
Student 6	<i>“ este semestre fue muy gratificante para mí, me agradó mucho la metodología que utilizó la profe, fue dinámica y no aburrida”</i>	
Student 7	<i>“ Ya soy capaz de decir unas oraciones en inglés y las entiendo”</i>	
Student 8	<i>“ Mejoré mi pronunciación, conocí nuevo vocabulario, perdí el miedo a hablar en inglés pese a saber que aún cometo varios errores y nunca me sentí juzgado o criticado”</i>	
Student 9	<i>“ La forma como la profe nos puso a enfrentarnos a desafíos de la vida real fue muy chévere. La verdad no habíamos trabajado con esta metodología y es muy divertida y se aprende mucho. Gracias profe”.</i>	
Student 10	<i>“ Throughout this course we learned many didactic and easy ways to learn English, and I think the teacher emphasis on practical skills and evaluating us orally is very good”.</i>	

The project aligns with Li et al. (2019), as collaborative learning improved students' motivation and engagement. Initially anxious and lacking confidence, students became more positive and confident after engaging in supportive collaborative tasks. This shift in attitude and increased comfort supports the effectiveness of C & ChBL and collaborative work.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Regarding the research question, this project evidenced that the implementation of the approaches challenged-based learning and collaborative work strengthened the advancement of EFL progress because the students enhanced not only their learning perceptions but also the way they are acquiring the foreign language, facing challenging tasks that allowed for meaningful learning. The approaches applied during the research projects, enabled the teachers and students to foster innovation, creativity and better perception regarding the pedagogical practices. The research project demonstrated that the integration of Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) and collaborative tasks addressed the main challenges faced by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, such as low motivation, lack of participation, and emotional barriers. By placing students in authentic real-world problem-solving contexts, the pedagogical approach not only improved their language skills but also fostered the development of essential interpersonal and communication skills.

This project demonstrated a notable shift in the English learning results and the students' viewpoint on bilingualism within the context of the pedagogical implementation conducted with basic-level English students at a public university in the North of Santander. In order to create a more dynamic, contextualized learning environment that was in line with the actual needs of the students, Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) and collaborative work were essential.

The Challenge-Based Learning model brought classroom learning into real-world contexts by allowing students to face up to real-world scenarios. The acquisition of linguistic abilities, especially in productive skills, significantly improved as a result. The challenging projects, which included making videos, recording podcasts, and dubbing, gave students the chance to practice the language in authentic situations while strengthening their creativity and

problem-solving skills.

On the other hand, collaborative tasks created a common learning environment where students could benefit from the knowledge of both their teacher and their peers. The results of the study demonstrated collaboration not only made it easier to share knowledge but also encouraged the growth of social and interpersonal skills, which are essential for learning a language. According to the data gathered, an important percentage of students believe that teamwork is crucial to enhancing communication abilities in a bilingual setting, demonstrating a favorable change in their perception of studying English as a means of international communication.

By shifting from a traditional grammar-centered perspective to a practical and interactive understanding of the language, the implemented learning strategy allowed students to rethink their conception of bilingualism. The challenging tasks were created to motivate students to use what they had learned in real-world contexts, which boosted their self-esteem and lowered psychological barriers like anxiety about speaking English or fear of making mistakes.

The first survey findings and the qualitative analysis that followed show the shift in the students' viewpoint. Many students reported feeling demotivated, afraid, and uninterested in English prior to the implementation, which affected their progress. But after engaging in activities that required them to work together with peers and overcome actual challenges, students became more enthusiastic and proactive in learning the language and realized how useful English is as a tool for overcoming both personal and professional challenges.

The project had a good impact on the university's educational community outside of the classroom. A more inclusive and participatory learning environment was established by emphasizing student-centered and active pedagogies, allowing all students to participate and

engage in the learning process regardless of their starting English proficiency. Additionally, the students' motivation was raised by making classroom activities more relevant to and connected to their interests and career objectives by incorporating issues from their respective fields of study.

Last but not least, this project has caused a significant shift in my personal position as an English teacher. Witnessing the transformation of students from early demotivation to active engagement in demanding activities has driven us to reflect on our teaching methodology. We've come to appreciate the teacher's position as a learning facilitator who gives students the opportunity to experiment, investigate, and build their own knowledge through teamwork and problem-solving.

The implementation of these active methodologies has reinforced our belief in the necessity of using pedagogical approaches that go beyond mere knowledge transmission. We have improved our teaching practice and advanced our career by using challenge-based learning and encouraging teamwork to create an atmosphere where students feel inspired, encouraged, and empowered to learn.

To sum up, this project has not only raised students' academic achievement but also transformed their perspectives on bilingualism and strengthened the abilities required to cope with the demands of today's society. A successful pedagogical implementation was made possible by incorporating challenging tasks and fostering collaborative work, which gave the students and us as the teacher a meaningful and life-changing learning experience.

- **Limitations**

The focus on a particular set of EFL students at a public university in North Santander at the basic level limits the study's generalizability to other contexts, educational levels, or locations. Furthermore, group dynamics are crucial to the effectiveness of Challenge-Based

Learning (CBL), and problems like unequal commitment or conflict among participants might hinder advancement. Collaboration may be less successful for certain students due to disparities in student motivation and language skills within groups. The application of CBL may be further complicated by time constraints within rigorous academic schedules and a lack of teacher familiarity. Lastly, the approach's viability in places with limited resources may be limited by its reliance on resources like technology or outside materials.

- **Further research**

The long-term impacts of collaborative tasks and Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) on language proficiency, motivation, and confidence could be investigated further, as well as their efficacy in comparison to other pedagogical approaches such as Task-Based or Project-Based Learning. Examining cross-cultural applications, adaptations for intermediate or advanced learners, and different age groups may shed light on its wider relevance. Studies might also focus on maximizing teacher preparation for CBL implementation, successfully integrating technology while removing constraints to access, and investigating methods to meet the varied needs of students with regard to motivation, skill levels, and learning preferences.

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6. APPENDIXES

[Appendix 1](#): Formato(s) de consentimiento informado diligenciado por los participantes y aval institucional

[Appendix 2](#): Formato descripción instrumento 1 y evidencias de aplicación y resultados: Indagación de la investigación.

[Appendix 3](#): Formato descripción Artefactos

[Appendix 4](#): Evidencias Lesson plan 1

[Appendix 5](#): Evidencias Lesson plan 2

[Appendix 6](#): Evidencias Lesson plan 3

[Appendix 7](#): Evidencias Instrumento 2 Reflexión y Desafío

[Appendix 8](#): Actas de observación

[Appendix 9](#): Triangulation matrix