



The impact of minimizing the use of Spanish during the English-language teaching process

El impacto de minimizar el uso del español durante el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje del inglés

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Abstract

This present research paper explores the impact of minimizing the use of Spanish during the English-language teaching process, to generate a significant learning environment that enhances the language acquisition process and proficiency achievement. The literature review presents a deep analysis of communicative language teaching principles and the positive impact and benefits that immersion provides especially on cultural integration and language competencies. In addition, it also presents some worldwide-known strategies that are used by teachers to minimize the use of the native language in the classroom, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), visual aids, and the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Finally, the research provides some recommendations for future studies, encouraging further research on different educational levels, as well as the exploration of teacher training programs considering the significance of minimizing the use of the student's native language, in this

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specific case Spanish, lies in its enormous transforming potential to encourage dynamic English language learning environments, preparing students to succeed in a globalized world.

Keywords: Language, English learning-teaching process, approach

Resumen

El presente trabajo de investigación explora el impacto de minimizar el uso del español durante el proceso de enseñanza del idioma inglés, con el propósito de generar un ambiente de aprendizaje significativo que mejore el proceso de adquisición del idioma y el logro de competencias. La revisión bibliográfica presenta un análisis profundo sobre los principios comunicativos de la enseñanza de idiomas, y el impacto positivo y los beneficios que la inmersión proporciona especialmente en la integración cultural y las competencias lingüísticas. Además, también presenta algunas estrategias mundialmente conocidas que son utilizadas por los profesores para minimizar el uso de la lengua materna en el aula, como la Enseñanza Comunicativa de Lenguas (CLT), las ayudas visuales y la integración de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TICs). Finalmente, esta investigación ofrece algunas recomendaciones para estudios en el futuro, alentando a que se realicen más investigaciones en diferentes niveles educativos, así como la exploración de programas de formación docente considerando que la importancia de minimizar el uso de la lengua materna de los estudiantes, en este caso específico el español, radica en su enorme potencial transformador para fomentar ambientes dinámicos de aprendizaje del idioma inglés, preparando a los estudiantes para tener éxito en un mundo globalizado.

Palabras clave: Idioma, Proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, Enfoque



Introduction

The English language teaching process has evolved over the years as an immediate response to the growing global importance of English as a lingua franca. With English working as an axial language in international communication, the demand for English speakers who can show proficiency has increased exponentially. This fact has led to the establishment of English Language Teaching (ELT) as a crucial component in educational systems worldwide.

In the English Language Teaching process, the question of how to effectively minimize the use of students' native language, in this case, Spanish, has risen to discussion and considerable attention. This global demand for English proficiency has led educators to explore and implement innovative strategies that may allow their students to immerse in the language, fostering a classroom environment where English becomes the main means of communication. As argued by Krashen (1981), the Input Hypothesis establishes that language acquisition occurs in a more effective way when learners are exposed to a language approach that is slightly beyond their current proficiency level, which means that students are encouraged in some way to interact and participate in an immersive environment in the classroom. In this sense, minimizing the use of the native language aligns with this hypothesis, emphasizing the importance of generating enriching and collaborative English language spaces that facilitate optimal language development.

To complement this, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) highlights the significance of language as a tool for interaction rather than a mere subject of study (Savignon, 2002). In this ELT context, adopting CLT principles involves creating opportunities for learners to use English in real-life situations, encouraging interaction and authentic and meaningful communication. Therefore, minimizing the use of Spanish serves as a practical application of CLT, emphasizing



the active use of English for meaningful communication within the classroom. This affirmation agrees with the research led by Long (1996) in which it has been stated that the Interaction Hypothesis supports the notion that language is best acquired through interaction, emphasizing the need for students to engage in communicative activities exclusively in the target language.

Apart from that, the implications of minimizing the use of Spanish extend beyond language acquisition to encompass cultural integration and cross-cultural communication skills. Therefore, by allowing students to immerse in the target language, educators aim not only to enhance linguistic proficiency but also to provide a holistic understanding of the specific cultural distinctions that are present in every language. For instance, Cummins (2000) emphasizes the connection between language and culture, suggesting that language learning is most effective when it incorporates elements of the target culture. Minimizing the use of Spanish aligns with this idea, promoting an experience that goes beyond linguistic competence to motivate a deeper cultural connection.

As far as educators struggle with the challenge of preparing students for success in a globalized society, it is important to identify and determine strategies to minimize the use of Spanish during the English Language Teaching process to foster the acquisition of vocabulary and the development of skills, so that learners might achieve the stated goal by effectively using English.

Objectives of the research

General Objective:

- To investigate the impact of minimizing the use of Spanish in English Language Teaching on acquisition, proficiency, and cultural integration in a classroom.



Specific objectives:

- To examine the strategies employed by teachers in different environments to minimize the use of Spanish in English language classrooms, exploring variations in implementation and effectiveness.
- To assess the language learning outcomes, including proficiency levels and communicative skills, of students exposed to language-minimization strategies compared to those in traditional language teaching settings.
- To investigate the influence of minimizing the use of Spanish on cultural integration within the English language learning process, exploring how students' understanding of English-speaking cultures is affected by language immersion practices.

Literature Review

The struggle to minimize the use of students' native language, such as Spanish, during the English language teaching process is rooted in the broader goal of creating immersive learning environments. In the current educational landscape, technology plays a pivotal role in language teaching. Studies such as those by Peterson (2010), and Levy & Stockwell (2013) emphasize the positive impact of technology on language acquisition, offering engaging and authentic contexts for language use and practice. For instance, Virtual Reality (VR) and language-learning applications are increasingly being integrated into classrooms to create dynamic and interactive language immersion experiences.

Furthermore, minimizing the use of Spanish in English language teaching extends beyond linguistic outcomes to encompass cultural integration. So, by immersing students in English and minimizing the use of their native language, educators aim to cultivate cultural sensitivity and a



deeper connection to the English-speaking world. Pica (1994) highlights the positive correlation between language immersion practices and enhanced language acquisition. Students immersed in an English-speaking environment, with minimized use of their native language, tend to demonstrate a faster language proficiency development. Studies exploring language outcomes, such as those by Swain (1985), and Holobow et al. (1987), support that active use of the target language results in more robust language development.

Taking this into consideration, understanding students' perspectives is crucial in the implementation of native language-minimization strategies. Students may have varied reactions to the reduced use of their native language. For instance, Macaro (2001), and Schweers (1999) examine learners' preferences and attitudes toward language immersion practices, underscoring the psychological and affective dimensions of language learning in environments that minimize the use of the native language. In addition, while language minimization strategies hold promise, educators face several challenges in their implementation. Wong & Nunan (2011) discusses potential barriers, such as student resistance and the need for effective communication.

As can be seen, minimizing the use of the native language also addresses the issue of mother tongue interference, where its elements influence the target language production. The exploration of the impact of reducing linguistic interference (Cook, 2003) is essential to understanding how language immersion practices contribute to more accurate pronunciation, grammar usage, and vocabulary acquisition in English. Beyond linguistic and cultural outcomes, language minimization in English language teaching has been linked to cognitive benefits. Regarding, Bialystok's research (2001) on bilingualism suggests that the cognitive advantages of language

immersion extend beyond language proficiency, enhancing cognitive flexibility and executive functions among language learners.

Methodology

As mentioned before, the present study aims to analyze the impact of minimizing the use of Spanish during the English-language teaching process. To this purpose, both quantitative and qualitative data will be applied. According to Given (2008, as cited in Ma, 2015), quantitative research refers to the systematic investigation using mathematical and statistical techniques to collect numerical data such as percentages and scores. For this reason, a survey was applied to the students and English staff at Universidad Agraria del Ecuador. This will allow tabulating of the statistical data through tables and graphs of frequency distribution and interpreting of the results obtained.

Besides this, qualitative study was also considered since it helps understand and explain the results obtained in the surveys. Similarly, it was stated that:

Qualitative research is a type of research that explores and provides deeper insights into real-world problems. Instead of collecting numerical data points or intervening or introducing treatments just like in quantitative research, qualitative research helps generate hypotheses as well as further investigate and understand quantitative data.”
(Tenny et al., 2017, p. 2)

Therefore, classroom observations were applied to assess the actual implementation of the minimized use of Spanish as well as to record specific behaviors, interactions, and teaching

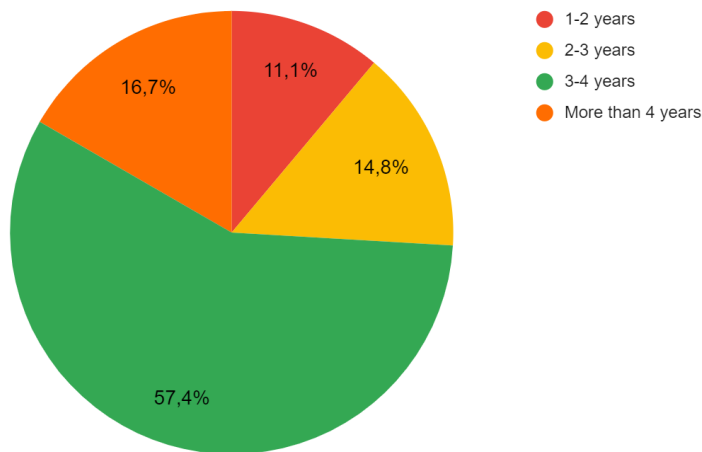
strategies, and to explore personal experiences, challenges, and perspectives on the language teaching approach.

The data was collected from a sample of 108 students from the sixth level (six semesters) from different careers, and 15 English language teachers at Universidad Agraria del Ecuador.

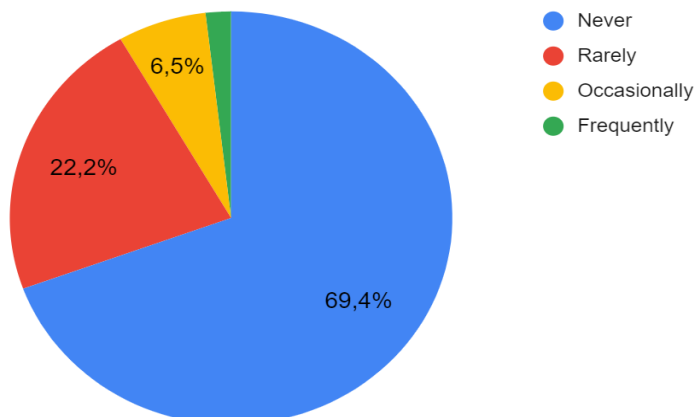
Data Analysis

Students' survey

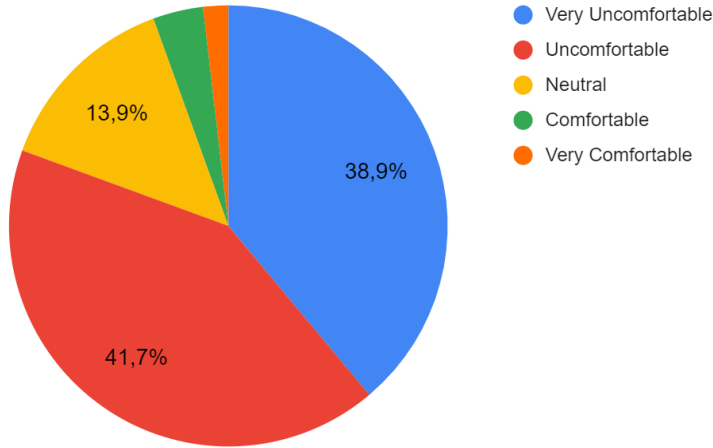
Graph No. 1. How long have you been learning English?



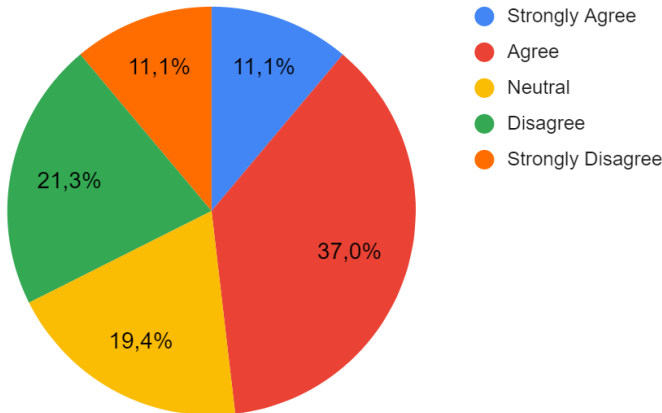
Graph No. 2. How often do you use English outside of the classroom setting?



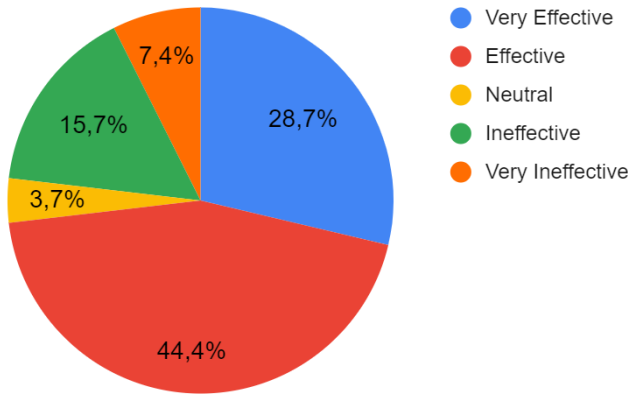
Graph No. 3. How comfortable are you with using English in various communication situations?



Graph No. 4. Have you noticed a change in your English language skills since the minimization of Spanish in the classroom?

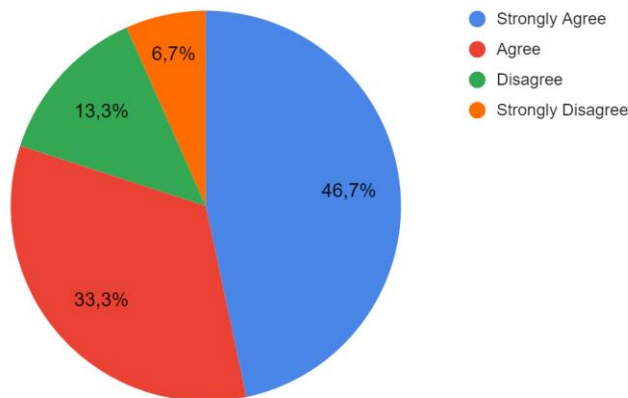


Graph No. 5. In your opinion, how effective is the minimized use of Spanish in improving your English language skills?

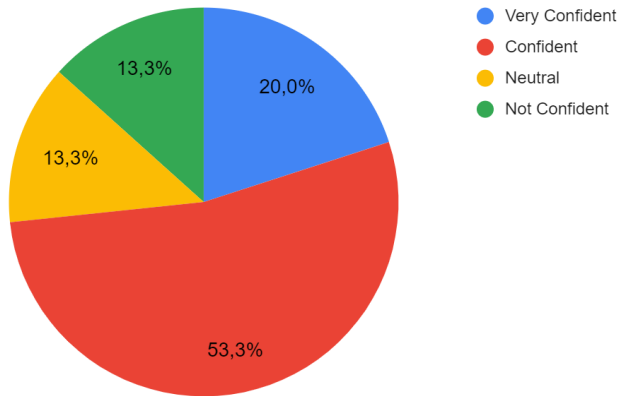


Teacher's survey

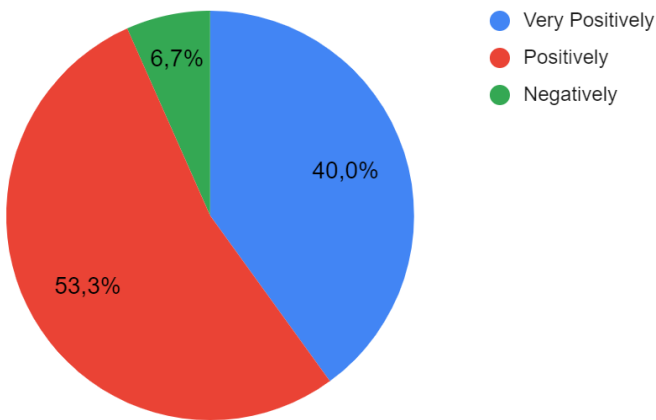
Graph No. 6. To what extent do you believe that minimizing the use of Spanish in English-language teaching is important for promoting language proficiency?



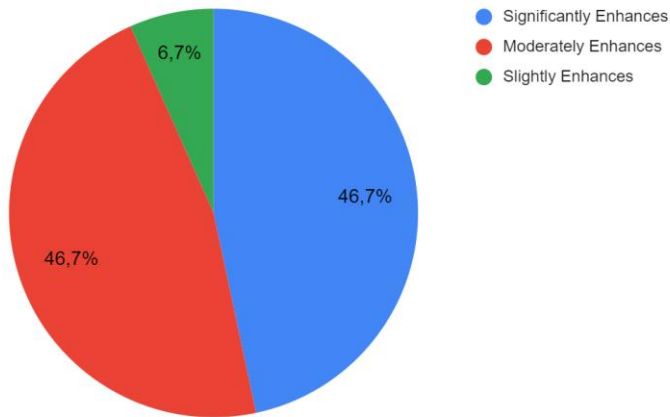
Graph No. 7. How confident do you feel in implementing a teaching approach that minimizes the use of Spanish in your English-language classes?



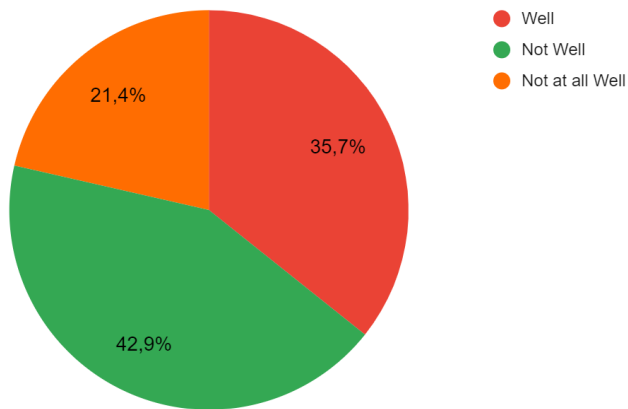
Graph No. 8. In your opinion, to what extent has the minimized use of Spanish positively impacted students' overall engagement in English-language learning?



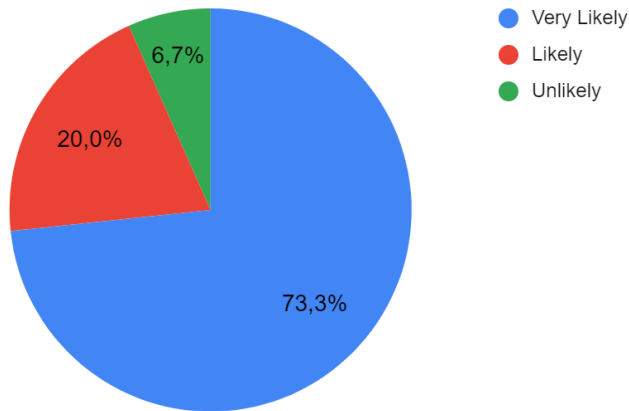
Graph No. 9. To what degree do you believe that the minimized use of Spanish enhances students' ability to communicate effectively in English?



Graph No. 10. How well do you think students have adapted to the minimized use of Spanish in your English-language classes?



Graph No. 11. How likely are you to recommend the approach of minimizing the use of Spanish in English-language teaching to other educators?



Discussion

From the students' survey it can be deduced that even though 57,4% of students have been learning English for about 3 to 4 years, most of them (41,7%) still feel uncomfortable using the language in various communication situations, as well as the fact that a 69,4% of them have never used the English language outside the classroom. However, it can also be noticed that the majority of the sample (37%) agree that they have noticed a change in their language skills since the minimization of Spanish in the classroom. In addition, 44,4% of the participants consider that the minimized use of Spanish during their English language classes is effective.

In the same way, as analyzed from the teachers' survey, 46,7% of them agree that minimizing the use of Spanish in English-language teaching is important for promoting language proficiency and that this aspect has positively impacted students' overall engagement in English-language learning (53,3%). Although 53,3% of teachers feel confident in implementing this teaching approach, there is also a majority of educators (42,9%) who consider that students' adaptation to



the minimized use of Spanish in their language classes has been difficult. Nevertheless, the survey shows that 73,3% of the sample are likely to recommend the approach of minimizing the use of Spanish in English-language teaching to other educators.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the present study has highlighted several diverse perspectives from both students and teachers. From the students' perception, the results show many challenges. However, the acknowledgment of changes in language skills and the minimized use of Spanish in the classroom might indicate potential benefits that may result from the application of this approach.

Besides this, according to the teachers' point of view, it could be considered that reducing the mother tongue use within the English learning-teaching process might result in a positive impact on students' engagement with the language. Yet, it is also important to keep in mind the struggles in students' adaptation which evidences the complexity when implementing this approach. This suggests the need for doing a deeper exploration, adapting teaching methodologies, and continuing collaborative efforts to address the various dynamics surrounding the minimized use of Spanish in English-language classes.

In summary, as educators continue to find difficulties with language teaching methodologies, ongoing research, professional development, and collaborative efforts will be essential to improve and optimize the approach of minimizing the use of Spanish, ensuring it contributes positively to students' English language learning experiences.



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