



# Effect of TBL on college students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo

*Efecto del ABT en estudiantes universitarios de la Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo*

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## RESUMEN

Este estudio explora el efecto del aprendizaje basado en tareas (ABT) en estudiantes universitarios de la Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo (UTB), centrándose en su impacto en el rendimiento académico, el compromiso de los estudiantes y el desarrollo de habilidades críticas como la resolución de problemas y la colaboración. En los últimos años, ha habido un cambio hacia pedagogías centradas en el estudiante que fomentan el aprendizaje activo, y el TBL ha surgido como un enfoque prometedor para mejorar la experiencia educativa. Utilizando un enfoque de métodos mixtos, la investigación involucró a 120 estudiantes del segundo nivel del Centro de Idiomas de la UTB. El componente cuantitativo consistió en evaluaciones del rendimiento académico antes y después de la intervención, mientras que el componente cualitativo recopiló datos del grupo experimental y encuestas a los estudiantes para medir el compromiso, la motivación y el desarrollo de habilidades auto informadas. Los estudiantes participaron en módulos de TBL que hacían hincapié en la resolución colaborativa de problemas, el pensamiento crítico y la aplicación de conocimientos a situaciones del mundo real. Los resultados indican que los estudiantes que participaron en el aprendizaje basado en tareas mostraron mejoras significativas en el rendimiento académico. Además, la mayoría de los participantes manifestaron una mayor motivación y un mayor interés por la asignatura. Las entrevistas con los grupos experimentales revelaron que los estudiantes encontraban las tareas de aprendizaje tanto desafiantes como gratificantes. Sin embargo, algunos estudiantes expresaron que existen algunas limitaciones a tener en cuenta para futuras investigaciones. Estos resultados sugieren que el TBL es una estrategia pedagógica muy eficaz para mejorar los resultados tanto cognitivos como afectivos. El estudio destaca la importancia de incorporar enfoques orientados a tareas para preparar mejor a los estudiantes para los retos de la vida académica y profesional.

**Palabras clave:** *ABP, comprometerse, efecto, pensamiento crítico, colaboración.*

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the effect of task-based learning (TBL) on college students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo (UTB), focusing on its impact on academic performance, student engagement, and the development of critical skills such as problem-solving and



collaboration. In recent years, there has been a shift toward student-centered pedagogies that encourage active learning, and TBL has emerged as a promising approach to enhance the educational experience. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research involved 120 students of the second level of the Language Center at the UTB. The quantitative component consisted of pre- and post-intervention academic performance assessments, while the qualitative component gathered data from experimental group and student surveys to measure engagement, motivation, and self-reported skills development. Students participated in TBL modules that emphasized collaborative problem-solving, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge to real-world situations. The findings indicate that students who engaged in task-based learning showed significant improvements in academic performance. Additionally, most of the participants reported increased motivation and a greater interest in the subject matter. Experimental group interviews revealed that students found the learning tasks both challenging and rewarding. However, some students expressed that there are some limitations to consider for future research. These results suggest that TBL is a highly effective pedagogical strategy for enhancing both cognitive and affective outcomes. The study highlights the importance of incorporating task-oriented approaches to better prepare students for the challenges of both academic and professional life.

**Keywords:** *TBL, engage, effect, critical thinking, collaboration.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years, teachers of higher education institutions worldwide have been seeking innovative teaching methods to enhance student engagement, critical thinking, and collaborative skills. One such approach gaining traction in universities is Task-Based Learning (TBL), it is a pedagogical approach that has gained considerable attention in recent years for its effectiveness in language acquisition. Unlike traditional language teaching methods, which often focus primarily on grammar drills, vocabulary memorization, and rote learning, TBL shifts the focus to the completion of meaningful tasks using the target language.

TBL has been widely recognized as an effective pedagogical approach for language acquisition. By focusing on meaningful tasks rather than rote memorization or explicit



grammar instruction, TBL aims to promote real-world language use and communicative competence. The approach has been applied in various educational contexts globally, but limited research exists on its implementation in Ecuadorian higher education.

The effect of TBL on college students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo can be explored from several perspectives, including its impact on language acquisition, student engagement, and overall academic performance. Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo is an institution serving a diverse student population, presents a unique opportunity to explore the effects of TBL on language learning in a Latin American context. This study seeks to determine whether TBL enhances language proficiency, increases student engagement, and fosters collaborative learning among college students.

Task-Based Learning is an instructional strategy that focuses on the completion of meaningful tasks using language as a medium for communication. This approach contrasts with traditional methods that prioritize grammatical structures or vocabulary in isolation. These tasks are designed to simulate real-world communication, where language is used as a tool to achieve specific goals or solve problems, making the learning process more relevant and practical for students.

Students acquire the knowledge they need to complete the task, and this makes students realize an active learning process. By prioritizing authentic language use, TBL encourages students to engage actively with the language in contexts that mirror real-life situations, such as conducting interviews, planning projects, or solving practical problems.

In an era of rapidly evolving educational needs, higher education institutions around the world are increasingly recognizing the importance of adopting teaching strategies that go beyond traditional, passive forms of instruction. Task-Based Learning is structured around three main stages: the pre-task, during which students are introduced to the topic and task; the task cycle, where students engage in the task itself, often in pairs or groups; and the post-task, in which students reflect on their performance, receive feedback, and improve their understanding of the language used (Willis, 2021). This approach emphasizes communication and interaction rather than the mere memorization of language rules, leading to more dynamic and student-centered learning experiences.



The growing interest in TBL stems from its effectiveness in fostering both language proficiency and higher levels of student engagement. According to Nasimova and Buranova (2023), TBL can improve various language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as well as contribute to higher motivation and better retention of knowledge. The use of the knowledge applied in specific tasks, contribute to students meaningful learning acquisition.

These outcomes are especially important in language learning environments, where students often struggle with the challenge of transitioning from theoretical knowledge to practical communication. Moreover, TBL aligns well with the communicative approach to language teaching, which values authentic language use in context over formalized instruction.

In the context of higher education, the shift towards communicative and task-based approaches reflects broader educational trends emphasizing critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaborative learning. Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo (UTB), a major institution in the region of Babahoyo, Ecuador, serves a diverse student body that will eventually enter the professional world, where English language proficiency is an increasingly valuable asset.

Given the global demands of English in professional and academic contexts, it is crucial for students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo to develop strong communicative skills that go beyond textbook knowledge. In this regard, TBL presents a promising approach to enhancing English language proficiency and ensuring that students are better prepared for both academic and professional challenges.

This study aims to explore the effects of Task-Based Learning on college students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo, focusing on its influence on language acquisition, student engagement, and academic performance; this study seeks to contribute to the growing body of research on task-based teaching and its potential for improving language outcomes in Latin American higher education institutions.

Additionally, the study examines how TBL can address some of the common challenges faced by students at UTB, such as the lack of practical language use in traditional teaching methods and the limited opportunities for authentic communication. The study also considers



the role of teachers in implementing TBL, including the training and resources required to ensure its success.

Through this investigation, the study also aims to contribute to the broader discourse on task-based learning in higher education, particularly in the context of language acquisition. The results will offer insights into how this pedagogical approach can be adapted and implemented to meet the specific needs of students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo, and how this improve the academic performance of students of the third level of studies in the Language Center of the university.

### **Language Acquisition**

Language acquisition is a complex and multifaceted process that involves the development of various linguistic skills, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. In the context of language learning in higher education, the goal is not only to help students acquire knowledge of language structures but also to enable them to use the language effectively for communication in real-life situations (Berrocal & Cantillo, 2024).

TBL emphasizes using language for real communication rather than just practicing isolated grammar rules. Tasks are designed around real-life scenarios, such as giving a presentation, writing a report, or negotiating a deal. According to Chen, Hung and Yeh (2021) “This context helps students to understand how language is used in actual situations. Students use language as a tool to accomplish tasks, which fosters more authentic language use compared to traditional exercises, where language might be practiced out of context”.

### **Collaboration and Communication Skills**

TBL places a strong emphasis on teamwork and group discussions. As students normally work in groups, they improve their collaboration and communication skills. These skills are valuable not only for academic success but also for their future careers. The collaborative aspect of TBL fosters a sense of responsibility within teams, motivating students to contribute actively to the learning process.

Collaborative learning is part of the use of TBL techniques, by completing tasks in pairs or groups, students have more opportunities to speak, listen, and interact in the target language. Yuliansyah and Ayu (2021) expressed that “assignments that incorporate student input, with



content deriving from real second language use through extensive contact with either native speakers or native texts, integrating language skills and extending over several weeks or more”, This make students improve communication and the collaboration between members of the group enhance their meaningful learning.

### **Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving**

Critical thinking and problem-solving are essential skills for college students, especially in the modern world where complex issues require thoughtful analysis and innovative solutions. TBL provides a robust framework for enhancing these skills by placing students in real-world contexts that demand the application of knowledge and reasoning. Tasks are designed to be meaningful, addressing topics that students can relate to or encounter in their future careers. This relevance ensures that students are invested in solving the problems at hand and are more motivated to think deeply about the issues they face.

TBL often revolves around tasks that replicate real-world challenges. For example, students might work on projects like designing a sustainable city plan, solving a business case, or planning a marketing strategy. Razak et al. (2022), expressed that these tasks require them to analyze problems, weigh different solutions, and make decisions based on available data. This approach is crucial in developing the ability to think critically about practical issues and apply theoretical knowledge in real situations.

### **Motivation and Engagement**

Motivation and engagement are key components of effective learning, as they directly influence students' willingness to participate, invest effort, and persist through challenges. TBL has the ability to increase student motivation and engagement by providing a dynamic and interactive learning environment. By centering the learning process around practical, real-world tasks, TBL fosters a sense of purpose and relevance for students.

TBL involves tasks that are closely aligned with real-world problems or situations. For example, students may be tasked with preparing a business proposal, solving a local community issue, or creating a marketing campaign for a product. These tasks allow students to see the direct relevance of their studies to their future careers or everyday life, making learning more meaningful.





When students understand that the knowledge and skills they are acquiring are directly applicable to real-life scenarios, they are more likely to be motivated to engage in the task. They can see how their learning will translate into practical skills, which makes the process more purposeful and goal-oriented.

Rashov (2024), said that TBL often allows students to choose from different types of tasks or projects based on their interests. When students are able to select tasks that align with their personal interests or career aspirations, they are more likely to feel motivated and engaged. For instance, a student with an interest in technology may be more motivated to engage in a task involving the development of an app or software solution. (p.160)

One of the main features of TBL is that it is student-centered. Students have more autonomy in the learning process, as they are responsible for completing tasks, solving problems, and managing their learning. This sense of ownership increases motivation because students feel empowered and in control of their progress.

### **Cultural and Contextual Considerations for TBL**

The success of TBL is heavily influenced by cultural considerations. Educational methods that work well in one cultural context may not necessarily translate to another, especially in regions with different social and educational norms. In Latin American countries, including Ecuador, the traditional educational system tends to be more teacher-centered, with a focus on rote memorization and formal assessments. This can be in stark contrast to the collaborative, communicative nature of TBL, which encourages student autonomy and active engagement. (Alam & Mohanty, 2023)

In higher education, particularly in universities like Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo, the context of learning plays a significant role in determining how effectively TBL can be implemented. University students in Ecuador may have varied educational backgrounds, some of which may not be conducive to the active, collaborative nature of TBL. For instance, students accustomed to lecture-based, passive learning might initially struggle with the independence required in task-based activities. This necessitates careful planning and adaptation of tasks to suit different levels of readiness and prior experience with active learning methods.





## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of TBL on the language acquisition and engagement of college students at the Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo. The rationale for using a mixed-methods design lies in its ability to offer a well-rounded analysis, combining numerical data to establish general trends with qualitative insights to explore students' personal experiences and perceptions.

The quantitative aspect of the research aimed to measure the impact of TBL on students' language proficiency, specifically their speaking and writing skills. This was done through pre- and post-tests, which allowed for the comparison of language performance before and after the intervention.

The pre-test was administered to both the experimental and control groups at the start of the semester. This test served as a baseline measurement, ensuring that any observed changes in performance could be attributed to the TBL intervention rather than pre-existing differences between the groups.

The post-test was administered at the end of the semester, following the completion of the intervention. The same test format was used in both the pre- and post-tests to ensure consistency and reliability. The test included a combination of multiple-choice questions, short-answer responses, and a speaking task to assess the students' progress in both receptive and productive language skills.

The test scores from both the experimental and control groups were analyzed using paired t-tests to evaluate any statistically significant differences in language proficiency. This approach allowed for the comparison of language skills within each group over time, as well as between the two groups at the end of the study.

The qualitative component sought to explore the subjective experiences of students in the experimental group, gaining deeper insights into their perceptions of Task-Based Learning. By using open-ended questions, surveys, and semi-structured interviews, the study aimed to gather rich, descriptive data about how students engaged with the TBL activities, how they perceived their own learning, and how they felt about the effectiveness of the tasks in enhancing their language skills.



After completing the intervention, a survey with Likert-scale questions was distributed to all students in the experimental group to measure their attitudes toward the TBL approach. The survey assessed factors such as: Engagement, Perceived Learning and Satisfaction. Additionally, the survey included a set of open-ended questions where students could describe their overall experience with TBL, any challenges they faced, and suggestions for improving the methodology.

To supplement the survey data, students from the experimental group made a semi-structured interview. These interviews were designed to delve deeper into the participants' personal experiences with TBL. The interviews were conducted in Spanish to ensure that participants could fully express themselves without language barriers, allowing for more nuanced insights. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, and responses were recorded with the participants' consent for later transcription and analysis.

The participants in this study consisted of 120 college students enrolled in two courses of the second level at the Language Center of the Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo. The students were selected through a non-random convenience sampling method, with all participants voluntarily agreeing to participate in the study, like they are all adults, they did not need parents' permissions. The sample included both male and female students aged 18-25, and they had varying levels of proficiency in English. Participants of the first course were selected as the experimental group, and the students of the second course were selected as the control group. The control group has 60 students, which continued with traditional teaching methods, and the experimental group also has 60 students.

Students in the experimental group participated in a series of Task-Based Learning activities designed to promote communicative competence. Each session included real-world tasks such as role-playing, problem-solving activities, collaborative projects, and discussions, all aimed at encouraging active language use. TBL activities were integrated into regular class sessions, with each task lasting between 40 and 60 minutes. The teacher provided support as needed, but the focus was on student collaboration and autonomous problem-solving.

Students in the control group followed traditional language instruction, which consisted primarily of grammar exercises, vocabulary drills, and textbook-based lessons. These students did not engage in task-based activities during the study period. Pre-tests were

administered in the first week of the semester, and post-tests were given in the final week after the completion of the intervention. Surveys and interviews were administered at the conclusion of the study, following the post-test.

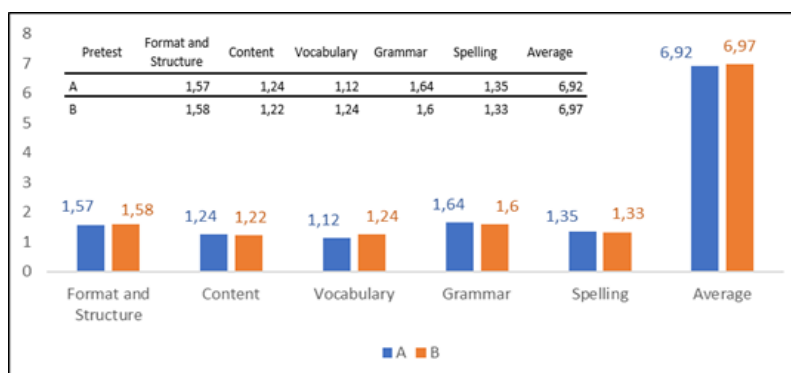
## DEVELOPMENT

The results of this study are presented in two parts: quantitative analysis of the pre- and post-test scores, and qualitative analysis of student surveys and semi-structured interviews. Both sets of results provide insights into the impact of Task-Based Learning (TBL) on language proficiency and student engagement.

A total of 120 students participated in the study, divided into an experimental group and a control group. Pretest and post-test results were analyzed to assess improvements in language proficiency, specifically in speaking and writing skills. The pre-test scores indicated that both the experimental and control groups had similar baseline language proficiency levels at the start of the study.

### Pretest Scores

The average of the experimental course was 6.92 over 10, the maximum grade was 9, and the minimum grade was 4.5. In this case, the median was 7. The pretest results of the control group were very similar to the results of the experimental group, the average of the course was 6.97 over 10, the maximum grade was 8.5, and the minimum grade was 4.

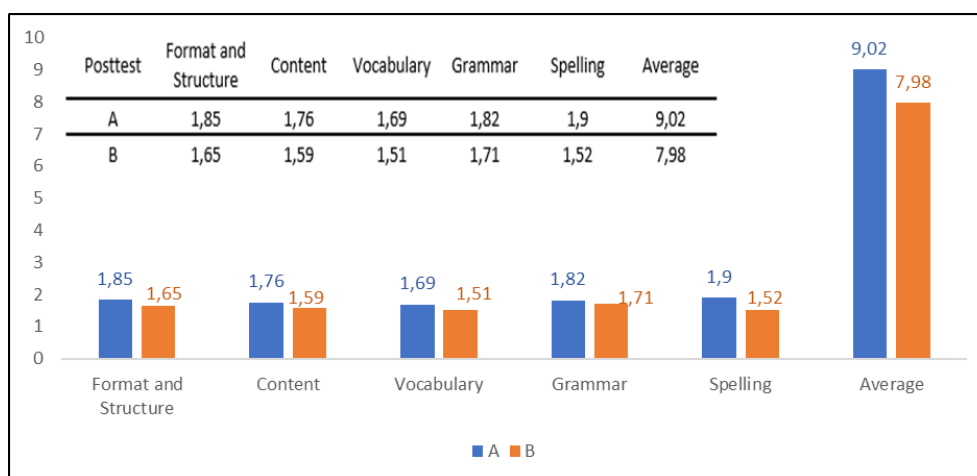


**Figure 1.** Pretest courses scores

**Note:** Pretest scores were very similar in both courses, each component and the average are alike

## Posttest Scores

The results of the experimental group after the innovation were very satisfactory, the mean was 9.02, an increase of 2.1 points. The maximum grade was 10, and the minimum 8.25. The mode was 9, similar to the mean, and the same as the median. The results in the posttest of the control group were very similar to the statistics results of previous years, the average increase to 7.98, which means an increase of 1 point. The maximum grade was 9.5, and the minimum 7.75. In this test the mode was 7.75, slightly lower than the mean and median.



**Figure 2.** Posttest courses scores

**Note:** The posttest shows a marked difference between both courses, the control group average is 13% below the average of the experimental group

## Statistical Comparison of

A t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal variances was used to measure the influence TBL in second level college students compared to students of the same level who were not taught using TBL. The null hypothesis is that “There is no difference between the use of TBL against teaching using traditional methodology.” And the alternative hypothesis is that “The use of TBL improve academic performance.”

The t-test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal variances identified a statistically significant difference between the posttest scores of both Courses. It was taken the posttest of the control group like variable 1, and the posttest results of the experimental group like variable 2. The



$t$  stat value was -11.22, and  $p$  is smaller than 0.001; establishing a null hypothesis of 0, consequently, the test results support the alternative hypothesis.

	Variable 1	Variable 2
Mean	7.980769231	9.019230769
Variance	0.134426848	0.310897436
observations	52	52
Pooled Variance	0.222662142	
Hypothesized Mean	0	
$f$	102	
T Stat	-11.2215771	
$P(T \leq t)$ one tail	8.17338E-20	
$t$ Critical one tail	1.659929976	
$P(T \leq t)$ two-tail	1.63468E-19	
$t$ Critical two-tail	1.983495259	

**Table 1.**  $t$ -test: Two-Sample Assuming Equal variances

The Value of  $t$  is -11.22; it was rejected the null hypothesis, consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted. The use of self-assessment and a technological tool, improve writing skills in college students of the higher educational institution.

### Qualitative Results

The qualitative data, collected through surveys and semi-structured interviews, provided insights into students' experiences with Task-Based Learning. The following themes emerged from the analysis of these data:

### Engagement and Motivation

A majority of students in the experimental group reported feeling more engaged and motivated in the TBL classroom. In the survey, 85% of students agreed or strongly agreed that TBL activities made learning more interactive and enjoyable. Additionally, 75% of participants expressed that TBL encouraged them to take more responsibility for their



learning. Many students appreciated the collaborative nature of the tasks, as they were able to interact with peers and learn through discussion and problem-solving.

### **Perceived Improvement in Language Skills**

When asked about their perceived improvement in language skills, 80% of the experimental group students felt that TBL helped them improve their speaking and writing skills. However, students also reported that the improvement in speaking skills was more pronounced than in writing skills. This was echoed in the interviews, where several students mentioned that although they found writing tasks useful, they felt that speaking tasks were more impactful in helping them communicate more naturally.

### **Satisfaction with TBL**

Overall, students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the TBL approach. In the survey, 78% of participants reported that they would prefer TBL activities over traditional grammar-based lessons. But, some students indicated challenges with the complexity of certain tasks. For instance, 15% of the respondents mentioned that some tasks were too difficult or unclear, especially when working in groups where language proficiency levels varied

### **Challenges in Task Execution**

While the majority of students felt positive about the TBL approach, a small number (approximately 12%) voiced concerns about the time management and task complexity. These students indicated that some tasks were too time-consuming or complex to complete effectively within the given class time. Nonetheless, these challenges were often seen as opportunities for improvement and adaptation of the tasks in future implementations.

Finally, the quantitative data showed that the experimental group, which participated in Task-Based Learning, demonstrated significantly greater improvements in language proficiency compared to the control group. The pre- and post-test scores showed that students who engaged in TBL performed better, than those who received traditional instruction.

The qualitative data supported these findings, with students reporting increased engagement, motivation, and confidence in their language abilities. They also expressed a preference for TBL over traditional methods, citing the relevance and interactivity of the tasks.



While the results were largely positive, the qualitative data also highlighted some challenges related to task complexity and time constraints, which may require adjustments in future implementations of TBL.

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the effects of TBL on the language proficiency and engagement of college students at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo. The results indicate that TBL had a positive impact on students' language skills, particularly in speaking and writing, and contributed to increased student engagement and motivation. The findings of this research highlight the potential benefits of incorporating TBL into higher education language teaching.

The quantitative data revealed significant improvements in language proficiency for students in the experimental group who participated in Task-Based Learning activities. Compared to the control group, which continued with traditional teaching methods, the experimental group showed a larger increase in test scores. These findings align with previous studies suggesting that TBL, by emphasizing real-world tasks and communicative competence, helps students improve their ability to use language in practical situations.

The qualitative data gathered from surveys and interviews revealed that students in the experimental group experienced higher levels of engagement and motivation. The interactive nature of TBL activities, which involved collaborative problem-solving, role-plays, and real-world tasks, helped students feel more involved in their learning process. Many students reported that these activities were more enjoyable and relevant than traditional grammar exercises, leading to greater participation in class. The high levels of satisfaction expressed by the experimental group students suggest that TBL could be a more engaging and effective teaching method than conventional instructional approaches.

Despite the positive outcomes, the study also identified certain challenges. A small number of students indicated that some tasks were too complex or time-consuming, particularly when working in groups with varying language proficiency levels. This feedback suggests that TBL activities should be adapted to the diverse needs of students. Additionally, while students reported improvements, some expressed that tasks were not as impactful. Future studies





could explore how some tasks could be enhanced within the TBL framework to ensure more balanced skill development.

In conclusion, Task Based Learning has shown significant promise as a teaching methodology for improving language proficiency and enhancing student engagement in college settings. This study's findings indicate that TBL can be a highly effective approach for fostering communicative competence, particularly in speaking and writing. By integrating TBL into language courses at Universidad Técnica de Babahoyo and similar institutions, educators can provide students with meaningful, real-world learning experiences that promote both language acquisition and active participation in the learning process.

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