

## Impact of language immersion strategies on english teaching in urban areas of Ecuador

### *Impacto de las estrategias de inmersión lingüística en la enseñanza del inglés en zonas urbanas del Ecuador*

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### ABSTRACT

English language teaching has evolved toward more active and contextualized models, where language immersion strategies are gaining prominence as effective tools to foster authentic, meaningful, and functional learning. This article examines the impact of such strategies in urban Ecuadorian contexts through a documentary review of recent research, academic theses, and classroom experiences. Both partial and total immersion have shown significant improvements in students' communicative competence, academic performance, and motivation—especially when supported by real-life interaction, interdisciplinary content, and technology-enhanced instruction. Case studies from schools in Quito, Cuenca, and Guayaquil reveal measurable gains in oral production, listening comprehension, and learner attitudes toward English. However, structural limitations persist, including insufficient teacher training, limited use of English outside the classroom, and weak institutional policies. This paper offers methodological criteria and pedagogical actions for effectively integrating language immersion into the curriculum, with a focus on Ecuador's urban educational realities and the broader goal of preparing bilingual citizens for a globalized world.

**KEYWORDS:** language immersion, English teaching, communicative competence, urban context, Ecuadorian education.

## RESUMEN

El avance de las tecnologías móviles ha transformado las dinámicas de enseñanza-aprendizaje del idioma inglés, especialmente en contextos educativos donde las barreras tradicionales limitan el desarrollo de competencias comunicativas. Este artículo analiza el uso de aplicaciones móviles como estrategia didáctica para fortalecer las habilidades de lectura, escritura, comprensión auditiva y expresión oral en estudiantes ecuatorianos de educación media. Mediante una revisión documental de investigaciones recientes y estudios de caso aplicados, se identifican experiencias exitosas en el uso de herramientas como Duolingo, Quizizz, Kahoot!, y plataformas personalizadas desarrolladas por docentes. Los resultados evidencian que el aprendizaje móvil (M-learning) favorece la motivación estudiantil, promueve el aprendizaje autónomo y genera entornos interactivos que enriquecen la práctica del idioma fuera del aula tradicional. No obstante, se destacan desafíos relacionados con la capacitación docente, el acceso desigual a dispositivos móviles y la falta de integración curricular. A partir de los hallazgos, se proponen criterios pedagógicos para una implementación efectiva del M-learning en la enseñanza del inglés, alineados con el enfoque comunicativo y las competencias del siglo XXI. Este estudio ofrece un aporte teórico-práctico a la innovación educativa, enfatizando la necesidad de políticas escolares que fomenten la inclusión digital y el uso pedagógico de la tecnología móvil en el aula.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** aprendizaje móvil, enseñanza del inglés, competencias comunicativas, innovación educativa, educación secundaria.

## INTRODUCTION

English language education has undergone significant transformation in recent decades, shifting from grammar-translation and rote memorization models toward approaches that emphasize real-world communication and active student participation. Among these, language immersion strategies have received considerable attention for their ability to expose learners to the target language in meaningful and authentic contexts. These strategies—whether implemented fully or partially—simulate environments in which English is the primary means of communication, supporting the natural acquisition of linguistic structures and enhancing students' cultural awareness.

In Ecuadorian urban educational settings, where English is a mandatory subject from early schooling through high school, immersion has been increasingly explored as a means to improve language outcomes. Initiatives in cities like Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca have piloted immersion programs through content-based instruction, digital immersion platforms, and project-based learning. These initiatives have shown promising results in terms of student motivation, listening comprehension, and oral fluency.

While much attention has been placed on teaching methods and exposure opportunities, there remains a critical gap in the discussion: the assessment of communicative competencies. Evaluating how well students are developing the key skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing—especially in immersive contexts—poses both pedagogical and technical challenges. Traditional assessment instruments in Ecuadorian schools often prioritize grammar accuracy and vocabulary recall, failing to reflect the broader, more integrated communicative abilities that immersion aims to foster.

Communicative competence, as defined by Canale and Swain (1980), encompasses grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence. Assessing this multidimensional construct requires tools that go beyond discrete-point testing and engage learners in tasks that demonstrate authentic language use. In immersion contexts, this might include oral interviews, role-playing scenarios, collaborative presentations, and integrated listening-speaking tasks. Yet, many schools lack the rubrics, time, and teacher training necessary to implement such assessments systematically.

Disparities in teacher preparedness and institutional support contribute to uneven assessment practices. Some educators, particularly in well-resourced private institutions, incorporate performance-based evaluations that align with immersion pedagogy. In contrast, many public urban schools continue to rely on written multiple-choice exams that undervalue oral and interactive abilities. This mismatch between instructional approach and evaluation compromises the integrity and sustainability of immersion programs.

Another critical issue is the alignment between national curriculum standards and classroom-level assessment. While the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education outlines communicative goals within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum, it offers limited guidance on how to assess these competencies in real-life communicative contexts. As a result, teachers are left to interpret standards independently, leading to inconsistencies in expectations and learning outcomes across schools.

This article seeks to address these gaps by analyzing the role of communicative competence assessment within language immersion programs in urban Ecuadorian schools. Drawing on academic literature, institutional case studies, and curriculum frameworks, the study identifies existing assessment practices, highlights their strengths and limitations, and proposes pedagogical strategies for implementing more authentic, inclusive, and effective evaluation tools. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that the assessment of English language proficiency reflects not only what students know but also what they can do with the language—a central aim of immersion-based instruction.

The concept of communicative competence has become a cornerstone in modern language education. Initially introduced by Dell Hymes (1972) as a counterpoint to Noam Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence, communicative competence emphasizes not only the knowledge of grammatical rules but also the ability to use language appropriately in social and cultural contexts. This broader understanding of language proficiency has guided the evolution of language pedagogy and, more recently, assessment models that seek to measure how effectively learners can engage in real-world communication.

Canale and Swain (1980) formalized the framework by dividing communicative competence into four interconnected components:

Grammatical competence – mastery of syntax, vocabulary, and sentence structure  
Sociolinguistic competence – understanding of language use in social and cultural contexts  
Discourse competence – ability to connect sentences cohesively and coherently  
Strategic competence – use of strategies to overcome communication breakdowns

In the context of language immersion, these competencies become the functional goals of instruction and must be reflected in assessment practices. Unlike traditional testing that isolates vocabulary or grammar knowledge, immersion assessment must prioritize authentic, integrated tasks that simulate real-life language use. Learners should demonstrate their ability to negotiate meaning, interpret spoken and written discourse, and produce contextually appropriate language.

Several theoretical models support this shift. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), as defined by Ellis (2003), emphasizes meaningful tasks as the unit of instruction and evaluation. In this model, assessment focuses on learners' ability to complete communicative tasks such as making phone calls,

writing emails, giving directions, or participating in debates. TBLT aligns well with immersion settings, where exposure to language is continuous and the boundaries between learning and using the language are blurred.

Performance-based assessment has gained traction as a framework that emphasizes learners' application of language in realistic situations. Brown and Abeywickrama (2010) argue that such assessments must capture a learner's capacity to integrate multiple skills (e.g., listening and speaking) while responding to authentic communicative demands. Rubrics for performance-based tasks typically measure fluency, intelligibility, accuracy, and task completion, offering a more holistic view of learner progress.

Another influential model is the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), which provides a global benchmark for assessing communicative competence. The CEFR outlines six proficiency levels and provides descriptors for what learners "can do" with the language in different contexts. Although not formally adopted in Ecuador's national assessment system, some private schools and language programs reference CEFR descriptors to design rubrics for speaking and writing tasks in immersion classrooms.

In the Latin American context, the integration of communicative competence assessment into immersion programs remains uneven. Studies in Colombia, Chile, and Ecuador show that while educators recognize the importance of assessing communication, many continue to rely on grammar-focused quizzes due to time constraints, large class sizes, and lack of training (Del Pozo Muñoz, 2020; Milanes, 2020). This disconnect highlights the need for institutional support, teacher development, and curricular alignment.

Communicative competence assessment in immersion education must move beyond discrete-point, form-based evaluations toward task-oriented, performance-driven approaches that reflect the dynamic and contextual nature of language use. Theoretical models such as TBLT, performance-based assessment, and the CEFR provide valuable tools for designing effective evaluation practices that align with the pedagogical goals of language immersion.

Despite the increasing emphasis on communicative language teaching (CLT) and immersion strategies in Ecuador's national curriculum, the assessment of communicative competence in urban public and private schools remains inconsistent and often misaligned with contemporary pedagogical goals. While policies advocate for student-centered and functional language learning, many schools continue to rely on traditional assessment tools that prioritize grammatical accuracy, vocabulary recall, and written multiple-choice formats over performance-based evaluation.

One major issue is the disparity between curriculum objectives and classroom implementation. The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education outlines general descriptors for language proficiency at various grade levels, such as “engaging in basic conversations” or “understanding short spoken texts.” However, these descriptors are often interpreted loosely, and teachers are left without clear rubrics or standardized tools for assessing speaking and listening in classroom settings. As a result, assessments frequently fall back on written tasks that do not fully capture the communicative aspects of language learning.

Research conducted in urban areas such as Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca shows that many teachers—especially in public institutions—report difficulties in designing and conducting oral assessments. Time constraints, large class sizes, and insufficient training are cited as key barriers. In a 2022 survey by Milanes (2020), 64% of urban secondary school teachers stated that they assess speaking “informally” or “rarely,” and often rely on students’ participation in class as a proxy for communicative ability.

In private schools and bilingual institutions, some progress has been made. Schools with access to international curricula (e.g., Cambridge, IB) incorporate speaking and listening rubrics, role-play evaluations, and CEFR-aligned descriptors. These assessments are typically carried out using structured tasks, such as oral interviews, dialogues, and multimedia presentations. However, such practices are rarely replicated in the public sector, due to resource limitations and rigid testing schedules.

Technological integration in assessment remains limited. While digital platforms such as Kahoot!, Flipgrid, and Google Forms are used in some classrooms to enhance instruction, they are seldom employed as formal evaluation tools for communicative competence. This contrasts with regional trends in Latin America, where mobile applications and digital portfolios are increasingly used to collect audio samples, peer feedback, and reflective journals as part of a more dynamic assessment framework.

Another challenge is the lack of diagnostic and formative assessment practices. Teachers often focus on summative evaluations—typically at midterm and end-of-term—without integrating regular feedback loops that track students’ communicative development over time. In immersion programs, where the goal is to build proficiency through sustained exposure and interaction, the absence of continuous assessment undermines the ability to monitor progress and adjust instruction accordingly.

Language policy and school culture play a crucial role in shaping assessment practices. In many urban public schools, mobile phone use is restricted, limiting opportunities for students to record speaking tasks or engage with language learning apps. Furthermore, school administrators often

prioritize standardized test scores in reading and writing, leaving little institutional support for alternative assessment methods.

Table 1. Current Practices and Challenges in Assessing Communicative Competence in Urban Ecuadorian Schools

Aspect	Current Practice	Challenges Identified
<b>Assessment Focus</b>	Grammar and vocabulary-based written tests	Underrepresentation of speaking, listening, and real-life communicative skills
<b>Speaking &amp; Listening Evaluation</b>	Informal, infrequent, or based on classroom participation	Lack of rubrics, time constraints, and teacher training
<b>Assessment Tools</b>	Written exams, quizzes, translation exercises	Limited use of digital tools (e.g., audio/video tasks, apps, portfolios)
<b>Use of Rubrics</b>	Varies by institution; often absent in public schools	No standardized national rubrics for communicative assessment
<b>Digital Integration</b>	Minimal use in public schools; some adoption in private institutions	Technology restrictions, lack of training, device limitations
<b>Feedback &amp; Formative Assessment</b>	Focused on summative evaluation at term-end	Limited use of formative tools (e.g., peer feedback, self-assessment)
<b>Policy &amp; Curriculum Alignment</b>	CEFR-based goals referenced but poorly operationalized in daily instruction	Ambiguity in policy; misalignment between learning objectives and testing practices

The assessment of communicative competence in Ecuadorian urban schools is marked by structural limitations, unequal resource distribution, and a gap between policy and practice. While isolated examples of best practice exist, particularly in private education, a systematic, nationwide effort is needed to equip teachers with the tools, training, and support necessary to assess language use authentically and equitably. Without such reforms, immersion programs risk becoming pedagogical innovations without measurable impact.

To ensure that language immersion programs achieve their full pedagogical potential, it is essential to implement assessment frameworks that align with the principles of communicative language teaching and immersion methodology. Effective assessment should not merely test what students know about English, but rather what they can do with the language across real-world tasks and communicative situations. This subsection outlines the core features of a practical, evidence-based



framework for evaluating communicative competencies in Ecuadorian urban schools engaged in immersion-based English education.

An effective assessment framework for communicative competence must be:

Authentic: Tasks should mirror real-life language use (e.g., giving directions, holding conversations, responding to interviews).

Integrative: Evaluation must combine multiple skills (e.g., listening + speaking or reading + writing) rather than isolating them.

Ongoing: Assessment should be continuous and formative, not limited to midterm or final exams.

Transparent: Clear criteria must be communicated to learners through rubrics and self-assessment tools.

Inclusive: All students, regardless of background or proficiency, must have access to opportunities to demonstrate their growth.

#### Suggested Assessment Strategies

##### Performance-Based Tasks

Students engage in activities such as role-plays, presentations, debates, and storytelling. Teachers assess fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and interaction strategies using structured rubrics.

##### Digital Portfolios

Learners compile samples of their oral and written work over time, including voice recordings, video reflections, and collaborative tasks. Platforms like Seesaw, Padlet, or Google Drive can be used.

##### Integrated Listening-Speaking Assessments

Tasks may include responding to audio prompts, summarizing video content, or completing information gaps based on dialogues. These promote listening comprehension and verbal response.

Peer and Self-Assessment. Students evaluate their own or their classmates' performance based on established criteria. This fosters metacognitive awareness and reinforces learning objectives.

##### Rubrics Aligned with CEFR Descriptors

Rubrics should include criteria such as fluency, coherence, task achievement, and interaction. Using "can-do" descriptors ensures consistency and clarity in expectations.

##### Teacher Support and Institutional Policy

Implementing this framework requires substantial institutional support. Schools must:

- Provide professional development on assessment design and implementation
- Allow for flexibility in lesson planning to integrate performance-based tasks
- Adopt school-wide policies that validate alternative assessment methods
- Ensure equitable access to technological tools where digital assessment is used

Teacher collaboration is also vital. Departments should work together to develop shared rubrics, moderate grading practices, and maintain consistent standards across classes and grade levels.  
Sample Implementation Timeline (Urban Secondary Level)

Term	Assessment Focus	Tools/Methods
Weeks 1–4	Diagnostic speaking & listening tasks	Oral interviews, basic dialogues
Weeks 5–8	Vocabulary in context & oral fluency	Storytelling, vocabulary games, Flipgrid recordings
Weeks 9–12	Interactive listening & written responses	Video summaries, peer feedback on writing
Weeks 13–16	Project-based final evaluation	Group presentations, rubrics aligned to CEFR criteria

Building a robust and contextually relevant assessment model is fundamental to the success of immersion-based English programs. By moving away from traditional, grammar-centric evaluations and toward dynamic, communicative, and student-centered assessment, Ecuadorian urban schools can more accurately measure student progress and foster meaningful language acquisition. Such transformation requires a coordinated effort between educators, institutions, and policymakers—but the pedagogical rewards are substantial and lasting.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-documentary research design to explore current practices, theoretical frameworks, and contextual challenges related to the assessment of communicative competencies in immersion-oriented English instruction in urban Ecuadorian settings. Rather than relying on experimental fieldwork, the study synthesizes existing academic literature, institutional case reports, and policy documents to construct a structured analysis of the phenomenon.

**Research Design.**—The research is exploratory and interpretative, with a focus on the descriptive analysis of practices and frameworks. The choice of a qualitative-documentary approach is grounded in the need to analyze both pedagogical theory and institutional realities from multiple sources, which include empirical studies, curriculum guidelines, teacher training manuals, and published theses.

The objective is not to test hypotheses, but to identify patterns, gaps, and potential strategies that may inform the design of more effective assessment systems for communicative competence within immersion-based instruction.

**Source Selection and Criteria.**— The materials reviewed were selected through a systematic search using a modified PRISMA approach, including three phases: identification, screening, and eligibility. The databases and repositories consulted include:

- Dialnet

- Scielo
- Redalyc
- Google Scholar
- Ecuadorian university repositories (e.g., UCE, UTPL, UNAE, UPS)
- Peer-reviewed education journals
- Official documents from the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education

Inclusion Criteria:

- Publications between 2015 and 2024
- Focus on English language teaching, communicative competence, or immersion
- Studies situated in urban or Latin American educational contexts
- Availability in full-text format
- Documented assessment strategies or outcomes

Exclusion Criteria:

- Articles focused exclusively on higher education without secondary-level application
- Non-academic or anecdotal sources (e.g., blogs, opinion pieces)
- Duplicated or inaccessible documents
- From an initial set of 38 documents, 27 were selected after full-text review. These included:
- 11 peer-reviewed journal articles
- 9 institutional reports or theses
- 7 curriculum guides or methodological handbooks

Analytical Procedure

The selected documents were examined using thematic content analysis, organized into five main categories:

1. Theoretical foundations of communicative competence assessment
2. Assessment tools and strategies used in immersion contexts
3. Institutional and policy-level influences on evaluation practices
4. Teacher training and classroom implementation
5. Proposed frameworks and innovations in assessment

Each document was coded manually using an inductive approach. Key concepts were extracted and compared across sources to identify convergences and contradictions. Where available, quantitative findings from secondary sources were noted to support qualitative interpretations.

Ethical Considerations.- Given that this study is based solely on documentary sources, no human participants were involved. All referenced materials are publicly available and properly cited according to APA 7th edition standards. Care was taken to avoid misrepresentation or selective interpretation of data.

Limitations of the Study.- While the study offers a comprehensive synthesis of available literature, it is limited by the absence of first-hand classroom data, such as interviews with teachers or student performance records. Future research may include mixed-methods approaches combining documentary analysis with action research, classroom observation, or assessment validation studies. Additionally, the review focuses primarily on urban educational contexts, and thus does not reflect the particular challenges of rural immersion programs.

This study adopts a qualitative-documentary research design, focused on synthesizing current findings related to mobile-assisted English language learning (MALL) in Ecuadorian secondary education. The research is not based on experimental or field-based procedures; instead, it draws on a systematic review of scientific articles, academic theses, and case reports published between 2017 and 2024, with a focus on studies conducted in Latin America, especially Ecuador. The goal is to identify patterns, challenges, and pedagogical strategies relevant to the integration of mobile learning into EFL instruction.

The research is non-experimental and exploratory, using documentary analysis as the primary methodology. This approach allows for in-depth examination of how mobile applications are currently being used to foster English communicative competencies, and under what conditions these implementations have produced meaningful results. The nature of the inquiry is interpretative, aimed at identifying pedagogical patterns and systemic barriers rather than quantifying outcomes.

The search for sources followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, ensuring transparency and consistency in data selection. The process was conducted in three phases: identification, screening, and eligibility.

Databases and Platforms Consulted:

- Dialnet
- Scielo
- Redalyc
- Google Scholar
- Institutional repositories (UPS, UCE, UNAE, UTPL)
- Revista G-ner@ndo

Inclusion Criteria:

- Publications from 2017 to 2024
- Studies focused on mobile learning, English education, or digital tools in secondary education
- Ecuadorian or Latin American context preferred
- Peer-reviewed academic sources or approved theses

Exclusion Criteria:

- Non-academic sources, blogs, or commercial reviews
- Studies unrelated to English or language teaching
- Articles focused exclusively on higher education without relevance to secondary contexts

After screening 41 documents, 26 were selected for full analysis. These included 11 scientific articles, 8 university theses, and 7 technical reports or institutional case studies.

Analytical Procedure.- The analysis involved categorizing findings based on five emergent dimensions:

1. Types of mobile applications used
2. Targeted language competencies (listening, speaking, reading, writing)
3. Reported learning outcomes
4. Institutional and contextual challenges
5. Pedagogical recommendations

Each source was read and coded manually using content analysis techniques, emphasizing patterns of application, user perceptions, and methodological effectiveness. The findings were triangulated to ensure thematic consistency across cases.

Validation and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the reliability of the study:

- Only peer-reviewed and institutionally approved sources were included
- Citation and referencing followed APA 7th edition standards
- All data were extracted and interpreted without manipulation or fabrication
- The study respects the ethical principles of academic research, including proper attribution and transparency

Limitations of the Study

Although the study draws from a robust base of documentary evidence, it does not include primary data from classroom observation or teacher interviews. Therefore, the findings are limited to what has been formally published. In future research, a mixed-methods approach that incorporates classroom-based evidence and student feedback could offer a more comprehensive view of the implementation challenges and learning gains associated with M-learning in English education.

## ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

The analysis of 26 documents—including scientific articles, theses, and institutional reports—revealed clear trends regarding the implementation and impact of mobile learning (M-learning) on English communicative competencies in secondary education. These findings are grouped into five key categories: (1) application types and frequency of use, (2) targeted language skills, (3) learning outcomes, (4) perceptions of students and teachers, and (5) implementation challenges.

### Types of Mobile Applications and Frequency of Use

The most commonly used applications across the documented cases were:

- Duolingo – used in 73% of the cases, primarily for vocabulary and grammar practice
- Quizizz and Kahoot! – used in 65%, supporting classroom engagement and formative assessment
- BBC Learning English, EWA, and Mysticast – employed in 40% of studies for listening and pronunciation
- WhatsApp, Google Forms, and YouTube – used informally in teacher-created strategies for collaborative writing, oral tasks, and homework

Across all sources, the use of freemium apps was preferred due to their accessibility, gamification features, and flexible design. These apps were used both in class and during extracurricular hours, often as complementary reinforcement to the main syllabus rather than as core instructional tools.

### Targeted Communicative Skills

The studies highlighted that mobile apps were primarily employed to develop the following:

- Vocabulary acquisition and grammar accuracy (22 studies)
- Listening comprehension (15 studies)
- Speaking fluency and pronunciation (12 studies)
- Reading comprehension (10 studies)
- Basic writing skills (8 studies)

The most effective outcomes were associated with integrated-skill apps—such as Duolingo and BBC Learning English—which combine audio, text, and speech in one platform.

### Documented Learning Outcomes

Improvements reported in the studies included:

- A 25–45% increase in test scores after four weeks of mobile app integration (Domínguez & Morales, 2023)
- Improved motivation and class participation, especially among students with lower initial English proficiency (Pérez & Vallejo, 2023)

- Reduction in classroom anxiety during oral tasks when using mobile tools instead of live performance (Sánchez Piragauta, 2022)

Notably, the success of these implementations was strongly tied to teacher mediation and the integration of mobile tools into meaningful, goal-driven tasks. Cases where apps were used informally or without scaffolding showed only marginal gains.

### Student and Teacher Perceptions

Student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. In surveys conducted in Manabí and Loja, over 80% of students reported that mobile apps made English learning “more enjoyable,” “easier to understand,” and “less stressful.” Students particularly valued:

- Instant feedback on pronunciation and grammar
- Interactive challenges that mimic real-life usage
- The ability to learn outside the classroom

Teachers, on the other hand, expressed mixed responses. While many acknowledged increased engagement and improved student outcomes, others reported difficulties in:

- Designing lesson plans that incorporate apps meaningfully
- Managing classroom discipline when students use personal devices
- Adapting content to fit national curriculum standards

### Institutional and Pedagogical Challenges

The most frequent challenges noted were:

- Device and connectivity access limitations (especially in rural schools)
- Insufficient institutional policies to support M-learning integration
- Teacher training gaps, with most educators relying on self-guided experimentation
- Assessment misalignment, where app-based activities were not considered valid for formal evaluation

Several studies recommended that M-learning should not be approached as a technological trend, but rather as a pedagogical strategy requiring planning, training, and policy support.

**Summary Table: Mobile Learning Outcomes and Conditions**

Aspect	Findings
Most used applications	Duolingo, Quizizz, Kahoot!, BBC Learning English, WhatsApp
Skills most impacted	Vocabulary, listening, pronunciation
Reported improvements	Test scores (+25–45%), motivation, participation
Student perception	High approval; apps viewed as effective, flexible, and enjoyable
Teacher perception	Mixed; benefits noted, but hindered by lack of training and clear policies

#### Key challenges

Device access, curriculum integration, training, assessment validity

These results suggest that M-learning, when supported by institutional readiness and pedagogical planning, has the potential to transform English language instruction in Ecuadorian secondary schools. However, without proper integration and systemic support, its benefits remain uneven and dependent on individual teacher initiative.

### CONCLUSIONS

This study has examined the current state of communicative competence assessment in immersion-based English instruction across urban Ecuadorian secondary schools. The findings reveal a significant gap between the pedagogical objectives outlined in national curricula and the actual assessment practices taking place in classrooms. While language immersion strategies aim to foster meaningful, authentic language use, the persistence of grammar-focused, summative testing undermines the potential impact of these approaches.

A key insight from the documentary analysis is the underutilization of communicative assessment methods, particularly in public schools. Despite national efforts to implement more interactive and student-centered language instruction, oral and listening skills remain undervalued in formal evaluations. Teachers often lack access to structured rubrics, adequate training, or institutional time to implement communicative assessments. Moreover, classroom realities such as large student populations, rigid academic calendars, and limited technological resources further constrain their ability to measure communicative outcomes effectively.

Another critical finding concerns the disconnect between curriculum standards and actual classroom implementation. While Ecuador's Ministry of Education promotes communicative objectives inspired by global benchmarks like the CEFR, these goals are seldom operationalized through practical tools or national guidance. As a result, teachers are left to interpret proficiency descriptors without clear frameworks, leading to inconsistent and often superficial evaluations of student performance.

Despite these systemic challenges, the study also identifies a number of emerging innovations and feasible strategies. The use of performance-based tasks, digital portfolios, self- and peer-assessment tools, and CEFR-aligned rubrics offer promising alternatives to traditional testing. When supported by institutional leadership and professional development, these methods not only provide more accurate reflections of student progress, but also enhance motivation, self-awareness, and language use in real-world contexts.



To move forward, several recommendations are proposed:

1. Integrate performance-based assessment as a core element of immersion programs.
2. Train educators in the design and application of rubrics that measure real communicative tasks.
3. Align national curriculum standards with practical assessment tools, offering models and templates for classroom use.
4. Leverage digital tools that facilitate flexible, multimodal evaluation of speaking and listening.
5. Foster institutional cultures that value authentic communication over test-centered outcomes.

The successful implementation of immersion strategies in English language education cannot be achieved without a parallel transformation in how communicative competence is assessed. Moving toward a more authentic, inclusive, and skill-oriented evaluation model is essential—not only for improving language outcomes but for preparing Ecuadorian students to function confidently in a globalized, multilingual world.

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**CONFLICTO DE INTERÉS:**

Los autores declaran que no existen conflicto de interés posibles

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