

## FOSTERING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH TARGETED MICRO-CURRICULAR RESOURCES

### *PROMOVIENDO LA IDENTIDAD CULTURAL EN EL APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLÉS MEDIANTE RECURSOS MICROCURRICULARES ESPECÍFICOS*

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#### ABSTRACT

This study explores the design of micro-curricular resources that integrate socioeconomic, cultural, and tourism elements of the rural parish *San José del Chazo*, aiming to strengthen cultural identity and promote contextual relevant and multicultural English language teaching and learning. Guided by interpretative and social critical paradigms, the research employed a qualitative-descriptive approach. Data was collected and analyzed from official parish documents, scientific literature, and Ministry of Education sources with the help of a bibliographic matrix which contemplated reference metadata, research characteristics, conceptual and theoretical insights, and relevant contextual information. Initially 53 documents were identified then only 20 were intentionally selected, constituting the non-probabilistic sample of the study. Findings indicate that incorporating elements such as local flora, fauna, gastronomy, festivities, traditional games, and agriculture practices into educational materials enhances the meaningfulness and contextualization of learning, while reinforcing students' sense of belonging and appreciation of cultural heritage. Furthermore, theoretical frameworks, including culturally relevant pedagogy, ethnopedagogy, place-based learning, and symbolic interactionism, provided a solid foundation for language instruction with learners' cultural identity. The study concludes that the designed micro curricular resources are contextually pertinent, accessible, and adaptable, offering a replicable model for rural context that supports both English language learning and the preservation of cultural heritage.

**KEYWORDS:** Identity, culture, language teaching, second language, teaching materials

#### RESUMEN

*Este estudio explora el diseño de recursos micro curriculares que integran elementos socioeconómicos, culturales y turísticos de la parroquia rural San José del Chazo, con el objetivo de fortalecer la identidad cultural y promover la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés contextualmente relevante y multicultural. Guiada por paradigmas interpretativos y sociocríticos, la investigación empleó un enfoque cualitativo-descriptivo. Se recopiló y analizaron datos de documentos oficiales de la parroquia, literatura científica y fuentes del Ministerio de Educación mediante una matriz bibliográfica que contemplaba metadatos de referencia, características de la investigación, perspectivas conceptuales y teóricas, e información contextual relevante. Inicialmente se identificaron 53 documentos, de los cuales solo se seleccionaron intencionalmente 20, que constituyeron la muestra no probabilística del estudio. Los hallazgos indican que la incorporación de elementos como la flora, la fauna, la gastronomía, las festividades, los juegos tradicionales y las prácticas agrícolas locales en los materiales educativos mejora la significatividad y la contextualización del aprendizaje, a la vez que refuerza el sentido de pertenencia y la apreciación del patrimonio cultural de los estudiantes. Además, el marco teórico,*

*que incluyó la pedagogía culturalmente relevante, la etnopedagogía, el aprendizaje contextualizado y el interaccionismo simbólico, proporcionó una base sólida para la enseñanza del inglés con la identidad cultural de los estudiantes. El estudio concluye que los recursos micro curriculares diseñados son contextualmente pertinentes, accesibles y adaptables, ofreciendo un modelo replicable para el contexto rural que apoya tanto el aprendizaje del inglés como la preservación del patrimonio cultural.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Identidad, cultura, enseñanza de idiomas, lenguas extranjeras, material de enseñanza*

Recibido: (12/09/2025)

Aceptado: (07/12/2025)

## INTRODUCTION

The advance of digital technology and the greater ease of access to online resources have notably increased cultural exchange, triggering important opportunities for language learning, but at the same time, generating challenges to protect about conservation of local cultural identities (Bonet, 2021). In rural Ecuadorian communities, for example, access to social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, has enabled individuals to participate in a “Globalized World”. However, this engagement often fosters the adoption of external cultural references that gradually weaken local practices, customs, and linguistic expressions. The phenomenon deepens when hegemonic languages such as English are taught through decontextualized materials and content that remain detached from learners’ sociocultural reality (Porto, 2022).

In this regard, Howard (2010) claims that the process of teaching and learning a second or foreign language should not only be focused on the development and improvement of the student's linguistic abilities, but also focus on fostering intercultural connections that recognize, appreciate and respect local heritage. In the same way, the authors Uicab and Eslava (2025) also highlight that the acquisition of a foreign language requires understanding not only grammar and vocabulary, but also social norms, traditions and values that support it, which strengthens intercultural communication. For this, different teaching approaches and methods such as Placed-Based Learning, Meaningful Learning, and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy highlight the need to combine academic content with the student's sociocultural experiences, thus contributing to educational practices that are more appropriate to the context and generate transformative change. Along the lines, Morales (2020) argues that a contextualized curriculum must be built from the sociocultural environment of the learners, respecting and strengthening their identity, to achieve more significant learning.

That is why this research proposed an alternative teaching of English for rural contexts where the sociocultural reality and aspects of its environment are integrated, which permit students in the area to appreciate their cultural heritage and integrate into their community. This teaching alternative, different from traditional methods, is created on a theoretical basis which allows the design of micro-curricular resources of the history, customs, and traditions of the parish of San José del Chazo.

It is important to highlight that this research is not only a proposal to teach English as a foreign language in rural contexts; but also values the customs and culture of the students under their own history and identity. In this way, inclusive educational tools are specifically adapted to rural contexts in the Ecuadorian Andes.

The San José del Chazo parish, located in the Guano canton within the Chimborazo province, is characterized by a strong Andean cultural identity, sustained by traditional agricultural practices, religious festivals, and community activities. Its economy is primarily based on corn production, complemented by a nascent tourism sector that, although limited, presents significant potential for sustainable development. However, access to educational resources and opportunities for learning

foreign languages, such as English, remains limited, hindering the community's connection to English.

English language teaching in rural Ecuador is constrained by a scarcity of contextually adapted materials, the persistence of non-participatory methodologies, and the insufficient integration of local knowledge into the curriculum (Sevy-Biloon et al., 2020). At the national level, the Ministry of Education has introduced policies aimed at strengthening foreign language learning however, their implementation in rural contexts has yielded mixed and often limited results.

In this regard, López and San Martín (2022) demonstrated that contextualized and culturally relevant education not only enhances students' motivation but also contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. These findings aligning with theoretical perspectives such as Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by Gay and Symbolic Interactionism by Blumer, both of which highlight the need to connect academic learning with learners' sociocultural realities.

The most prominent theoretical frameworks that support the teaching and learning of foreign languages and cultural identity are explicated as follows. Vygotsky's Social Constructivism theory emphasizes the pivotal role of social and cultural context in learning, asserting that knowledge is actively constructed through collaborative social interaction (Do et al., 2023). Symbolic Interactionism that also highlights the importance of active participation and interaction in the educational process (Blumer, 2020). Likewise, critical education indicates that students question themselves and be participatory (Garzón & Bedoya-Ríos, 2024; Giroux, 2016).

The approach to intersectionality in the country does not recognize the diversity of students' sociocultural conditions, which affects the teaching and learning process (Yepes-Cardona & Giraldo-Gil, 2024). The community approach, on the other hand, rescues the contexts in which the student develops for language teaching (Freire and Barral, 2020). Meaningful Learning, which is an active educational method that allows the student to develop new skills and ideas to interpret, synthesize, and conceptualize a new language such as English (Parra & Mejia, 2022).

In addition, David Kolb's Experiential Learning from Learning is based on the teaching process based on local prior knowledge with the direct participation of the student (Espinara & Vigueras, 2020). Finally, Existential Learning, which places students at the center of the teaching process so that they acquire knowledge consciously and responsibly under their personal identity (Castillo et al., 2023). In the same way, it is important that teachers understand and value the linguistic identity of students because this affects their educational practice (Montero, 2024). In this context, the teaching and learning process of a new language allows students to acquire new knowledge in their real contexts.

## METHODOLOGY

This article is framed within the qualitative approach, based on the understanding of social phenomena linked to cultural identity and their relationship with English language teaching in rural contexts. Thus, the paradigm adopted is interpretive/social-critical, as it seeks to describe and understand social reality based on cultural meanings, experiences, and practices (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

The study entitled "*Por una (hiper)pedagogía crítica, intercultural y multisensorial en el aprendizaje de español como lengua extranjera (ELE)*" proposed by Domingues et al. (2013), constituted the epistemological and methodological basis for this research, leading the integration of critical pedagogy, interculturality, and multisensoriality as pillars of language learning. Domingues et al. demonstrated that the use of physical and digital resources fosters active participation and critical cultural awareness, principles that guided the design of the micro curricular resources presented in this article.

Given its objective and scope, the research owns the characteristics of a qualitative descriptive study, as it aims to systematically detail and characterize the process of designing didactic material that are grounded in the socioeconomic, cultural, and tourism realities of the San José del Chazo

parish, while examining their integration into the English teaching and learning process. This methodological approach, as outlined by Hernández et al. (2014), facilitates in-depth contextualization of complex educational phenomena allowing researchers to capture the nuances and particularities of the local setting.

In terms of research methodology, the study ascribes bibliographic models where it was analyzed official documentary sources of the parish such as the Development and Territorial Plan (PDOT in Spanish), Social Networks, Tourism Magazines of the parish, these supplies made it possible to identify the cultural values, identity practices, and heritage resources that form the foundation for designing the micro curricular resources here exposed.

Furthermore, public information from the Ministry of Education was reviewed, principally the National Curriculum Guideline and the English as a Foreign Language Curriculum to align the research proposal within the national educational framework. These documents were fundamental due to their emphasis on the development of Cultural Awareness through innovative and culturally sensitive practices such as those under the principles of Language through the Arts methodology. Finally, scientific literature selected from high-impact and regional databases such as Google Scholar, SciELO, Dialnet, Redalyc, and Latindex were also analyzed.

An initial exploration was applied considering the including and excluding criterion stated by Yin (2015):

- Publication date from 2010 to 2025
- Research related keywords (cultural identity, interculturality, curriculum design, micro curricular resources, intercultural education, critical pedagogy, EFL teaching and learning) these keywords were combined in the light of Boolean operators (“AND”, “OR”) to refine and enrich the results in each database accessed.
- Thematic pertinence
- Document Type (scientific articles, academic theses, peer-reviewed books)
- Language of publication (English or Spanish)
- Geographic contexts (primarily in Latin America)
- Access Availability (open access and free available publications)

Excluding criteria constituted the not accomplishment of any of the beforementioned factors. Initially 53 sources were identified, then after a deeper review of titles, abstracts, and content, only 20 articles which fulfill the inclusion criterion were used. These documents, platforms, and scientific articles constituted the intentional non-probabilistic sample used in this study.

The information collected was divided into two components:

1. data on the territorial profile (socioeconomic, cultural and tourism)
2. theoretical framework (theories, concepts and approaches).

For this phase, the process began with the review of official documents from the parish Decentralized Autonomous Government, particularly the Development and Territorial Planning Plan (PDOT) of the parish of Chazo, which provided essential data for constructing the territorial profile (socioeconomic, cultural and tourism aspects). Subsequently, official information from the Ministry of Education and scientific literature from high-impact journals was analyzed to establish the theoretical framework for the designing of contextualized micro curricular materials.

The academic potential of linking English teaching with the strengthening of cultural identity can be accomplished in the way it enhances students’ engagement, critical thinking, and sense of belonging (Pardal-Refoyo, & Pardal-Peláez, 2020).

Categories of the territorial profile of the parish of San José del Chazo and the approaches to the process of learning English with cultural identity were created. The categorization of data allowed the organization and classification of the information by specific topics, which facilitated the analysis and understanding of the relationships or trends of the data of the parish according to the objectives of this research. These are entitled as follows:

1. Flora and fauna, a natural and cultural socioeconomic heritage
2. Cultivating heritage, the socioeconomic role of agriculture

3. The role of traditional games in cultural identity
4. Festivities as catalysts for cultural tourism
5. Traditional food as an expression of cultural identity

Data for this study was primarily collected using a bibliographic matrix where key information from the reviewed sources, including reference metadata (authors, year, title, journal, DOI), research characteristics (study type, methodology, population, and context), conceptual and theoretical insights (core concepts, frameworks, findings, and pedagogical implications), and relevant contextual data (socioeconomic, cultural, and tourism information) were methodically recorded.

Bibliometric mapping was applied to analyze publication tendencies, theoretical bunches, and significant studies, providing a rigorous overview of the field. The gathered information was comprehensively evaluated and integrated to construct the epistemological basis for constructing micro curricular materials tailored to the San José del Chazo rural parish, guaranteeing a contextually grounded and methodologically robust approach.

Based on the established theoretical framework, the collected information was analyzed by counteracting local information to identify gaps and opportunities for new content. This data was validated by parish residents, especially by those with the greatest influence and social presence in the area. Their knowledge of local context confirmed the cultural representativeness of the materials and ensured that they accurately reflect the community's practices, values, and identifying symbols.

Subsequently, micro-curricular material for English teaching, adapted to the specific realities of San José del Chazo parish, were designed. Finally, the materials underwent validation by four subject-matter experts to ensure their pedagogical relevance, cultural appropriateness, and methodological rigor throughout the application of a rubric which include notions regarding cultural pertinence, methodological approach, clarity and consistency of the design, feasibility and applicability, and potential impact on cultural identity.

The instrument also included a space for the experts to suggest or introduce factors not considered in the rubric. These professionals were chosen considering their professional training (EFL professors), teaching experience (10 years and so far), and qualified degrees (Master and PhD).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section displays the results gathered from the research, highlighting the validation and design of micro curricular resources that incorporate the teaching and learning process of the English language with the socioeconomic, cultural, and tourist realities of the rural parish of San José del Chazo. For a better understanding, the results are systematically organized in line with the key stages of the study. Emphasis is placed on how these materials represent the local environment, encourage student participation, and fit into the theoretical frameworks previously explained, which demonstrate its pertinence, relevance, effectiveness, and the potential impact of promoting cultural identity through language learning.

### **FLORA AND FAUNA, A NATURAL AND CULTURAL SOCIOECONOMIC HERITAGE**

Studying the biodiversity of the flora and fauna of San José del Chazo parish represented more than just a natural resource but also a symbol of identity in the community that influences economic, social, and educational activities. The connection of the inhabitants with their natural territory, for Toledo and Barrera-Bassols (2008), fosters the maintenance of cultural customs. This premise is manifested in the way in which the inhabitants share their knowledge about the care of

the land, the medicinal properties of the different local plants and the identification of the native species of the region.

Additionally, including biodiversity in the English teaching and learning process is presented as a key component to reinforce cultural identity and, at the same time, promote awareness about environmental care. In this terms, Orr (1994) affirms that learning should focus on understanding the connection between natural and human ecosystems, which coincides with the principles of Gadotti's ecopedagogy (2008), which supports education being oriented towards sustainability. From a pedagogical approach, the English teaching and learning process benefit from relating to topics such as the flora and fauna of the region. According to Banks (2016), intercultural education promotes not only appreciation and respect for different cultures, but also the reinforcement of their own roots, offering students the opportunity to present their cultural heritage to the world through a foreign language. In this context, the proposal is linked to the biocultural model exposes by Maffi (2005), which emphasizes the intimate connection between cultural and biological diversity, recognizing both as aspects that cannot be divided in the life of the community.

To operationalize this integration, micro curricular resources were designed to allow students interact with knowledge through active and situated learning. Among them, the cardboard puzzle of local fauna stands out (Figure 1), a recreational tool based on Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning Theory. The activity stimulates cognitive processes of observation, analysis, and synthesis, while enhancing multisensory learning (Shams & Seitz, 2008), in which the manipulation of pieces favors visual and kinesthetic memory.



**Figure 1:** Cardboard Puzzle designed based on the representative fauna of the parish.

In addition, a 3D model of endemic flora was implemented, the purpose of which is to physically represent the parish's plant species. This material responds to the logic of Place-Based Learning (Gruenewald, 2003), as it connects students with their immediate surroundings and promotes appropriation of their natural heritage. It also stimulates various intelligences proposed by Gardner (1983): naturalistic, by working with elements of the environment; spatial, by designing and placing the components of the model; and bodily-kinesthetic, through the manipulation of three-dimensional materials, as depicted in Figure 2.

**Source:** (Rivera, 2024)



**Figure 2:** 3D Model of the endemic Flora of the parish

## **CULTIVATING HERITAGE, THE SOCIOECONOMIC ROLE OF AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture, and particularly the cultivation of corn, constitutes one of the central findings of this study, as it constitutes an economic, social, and symbolic axis in San José de Chazo. The data collected show that this product is not only associated with daily nutrition but is also closely linked to festivities, religious practices, and agricultural traditions inherited from previous generations. Recent research highlights that Andean agricultural production continues to be a symbol of cultural identity and community sustainability, combining ancestral knowledge with contemporary practices (Gómez & Gómez, 2006).

In the case of corn, its relevance transcended the economic dimension, as it became a symbol that reflects the community's connection to the land, reinforcing the Andean principle of reciprocity with nature. As Cuji (2023) argues, traditional agricultural products play an identity role by being carriers of collective memory and cultural practices that are reaffirmed in each agricultural cycle. This is reflected in the use of the lunar calendar, yoke plowing, and community “*mingas*”, which are still practiced in the parish.

Considering pedagogical principles, corn cultivation can be integrated as an educational resource into various areas of the curriculum. For example, in natural sciences, its growth cycle can be studied, in mathematics, yields and harvest proportions can be analyzed, and in a foreign language (English), vocabulary and narratives linked to local agriculture can be developed. In this way, agricultural knowledge is transformed into a teaching resource to strengthen interdisciplinary learning and, at the same time, reinforce students' cultural identity, in line with the proposals for intercultural and contextualized education (UNESCO, 2019).

In line with these findings, a micro curricular resource called the Educational Garden was designed, aimed at integrating agricultural practice with the teaching and learning process. In line with these findings, a micro curricular resource called Educational Garden was designed, whose objective is to integrate agricultural practices into the teaching and learning process and which was developed under the educational approach of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2018). This educational resource may not only allow students to learn English as a new language under local contexts and with cultural identity; but also, it may allow the care of Andean crops of the parish.

In the Educational Garden, students learn new vocabulary related to the processes of planting, crop management, and harvesting of the Andean crops of the parish, with emphasis on the representative cultivation of their area. This educational experience reinforces the appreciation of corn as a symbol of the parish's identity and strengthens the connection between the school and the community. This is visualized in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Educational Garden representative crops of the parish.

## **THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL GAMES IN CULTURAL IDENTITY**

In this segment it is evidenced that the traditional games of the San José de Chazo parish are practices deep-rooted in the way of living, feeling, and developing of their inhabitants. Among the more standing out games are donkey races, greased stick, enchanted pots, and buried roosters which are not only considered recreational activities of the inhabitants but also constitute cultural meeting spaces that preserve and transmit the culture of a community.

From Piaget's perspective, play is an essential means of learning in childhood because it facilitates the assimilation of social norms, since it allows learning about the social environment and developing cognitive skills. Similarly, Huizinga (1955) argues that play is a cultural manifestation that transcends generations and reinforces collective identity. In this sense, traditional games are vehicles of cultural transmission that strengthen the sense of belonging and pride in local roots, while stimulating social and motor skills.

Under this perspective, Racetrack Models were designed to teach the English language in a didactic way through traditional games. The design of this pedagogical resource emphasizes the learning process through social interaction and its cultural context as proposed by Vygotsky's social constructivism. The use of these resources allows pupils to learn the English language under the dynamics of games, but at the same time reconstruct its historical and symbolic meaning. The multiple intelligence theory proposed by Howard Gardner, who supports the design of effective and inclusive educational strategies that adapt to different educational needs and learning styles. In addition, it allows for meaningful and emotional learning by activating multiple intelligences. For a pictorial reference, go to Figure 4.



**Figure 4:** Baby Marathon that represents a traditional game of parish

The use of playful learning and gamification constitutes a highly effective pedagogical strategy for transmitting values, cultural knowledge, and community traditions (Ashar et al., 2024). Through play, students not only feel motivated but also develop commitment, autonomy, and enjoyment in the educational process (Fonseca et al., 2023). In this sense, methodologies such as Multisensory Learning and the consideration of learning styles allow traditional games to activate multiple sensory channels visual, auditory, and kinesthetic facilitating a more meaningful and personalized educational experience (Shams & Seitz, 2008).

Furthermore, their implementation can be articulated within an interdisciplinary approach, integrating areas such as Physical Education, History, Language, and Social Sciences to address the practice of the game, its symbolism, its history, and the values it conveys. Besides, this strategy activates the bodily-kinesthetic intelligence proposed by Gardner, allowing students to learn through movement and manipulation (Gökhan & Omer, 2010).

Thus, learning transcends the merely cognitive to integrate emotional, motor, and cultural dimensions, consolidating the relationship between cultural identity and pedagogical practice. In this sense, traditional games are no longer viewed as simple recreational activities but rather as educational resources that enhance the appreciation of local culture and its projection toward globalized learning with an intercultural meaning (Morejón et al., 2024).

## **FESTIVITIES AS CATALYSTS FOR CULTURAL TOURISM**

Ancestral festivals constitute spaces where memory, identity, and the transmission of knowledge converge, functioning not only as religious or community celebrations but also as pedagogical instances that teach history, worldview, and collective values (Giménez, 2009). In San José de Chazo, the Easter Captaincy, the Day of the Dead, and the Patron Saint Festival in honor of Saint Joseph are manifestations that combine Indigenous and Catholic heritages, reflecting the characteristic syncretism of Andean cultural identity. In this sense, Romero (2015) already pointed out that collective rituals serve to unite the community, strengthen social solidarity, and reaffirm shared values.

The elements, part of these festivals, such as dances, “*chamizas*”, bullfights, fireworks, and marching bands, are not mere recreational acts, but symbols laden with meaning that convey historical and cultural narratives. Endere and Mariano (2021) highlight that festive celebrations in Latin America constitute a vehicle for non-formal education and cultural revitalization, as they preserve intergenerational knowledge and reinforce local identity. This can be used in learning spaces, where students analyze real events as living sources of knowledge, connecting what they learn with everyday experiences.

From Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, it becomes relevant because learning processes occur through social interaction and cultural context. For this reason, integrating the festivities of the San José del Chazo parish into the didactic resources favors an inclusive and contextualized education; since these collective spaces allow students to build knowledge in an active way, social skills, and reinforce the sense of belonging. Furthermore, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy allows students to recognize themselves in what they learn, strengthening cultural pride and avoiding the fragmentation between school and community (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

In the view of Wences (2021) intercultural education maintains that holiday-based teaching fosters communication skills, symbolic thinking, and intercultural awareness in students, which is key in a globalized world. Therefore, the San José de Chazo festivities not only preserve cultural heritage but are also projected as pedagogical resources that connect identity and learning.

In this framework, a Memory Game was designed as a didactic material for students to learn English by relating the images with the names of festive elements or cultural symbols of the parish. Following the Cognitive Load theory, less is more; that is, if the student receives a lot of information, the learning process becomes difficult and complex (Paas and Sweller, 2014). That

is why the information must be strategically presented, organized and with a reduction in cognitive overload. This allows students learning a new language to remember more effectively. For graphic details, go to Figure 5.



**Figure 5:** Memory Matching Game Festivities based on the parish

From the perspective of Symbolic Interactionism, festive symbols images, dances, and music are fundamental to the construction of social identity (Blumer, 1969). By working with visual representations, students not only memorize data but also internalize the collective meanings associated with these practices. In this way, the teaching resource strengthens both the cognitive and cultural dimensions of learning, enabling the school to act as a bridge between academic knowledge and community wisdom.

## **TRADITIONAL FOOD AS AN EXPRESSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY**

The learning of the typical food of San José del Chazo parish becomes prominent in the construction of their inhabitants' cultural identity, due to through gastronomy commoners share customs, knowledge and memories between generations; as well as intergenerational practices. That is why it can be avowed that traditional dishes such as potatoes with guinea pig, sweet corn with cheese, and “*hornado*” strengthen community cohesion. Cuisine becomes a cultural language, where each preparation tells stories linked to the territory, the adaptation of local resources, and the ancestral heritage that remains alive in families.

Montanari (2006) affirms that food is an essential expression of culture, as it synthesizes historical evolution, available resources, and social dynamics. From a perspective of symbolic anthropology, by Geertz, points out that the methods of preparation and rituals surrounding food contain profound meanings that contribute to defining collective identity.

The concepts of *habitus* and capital reflect customs, tastes and memories, which allow people to feel part of a community (Cordero, 2020). These perspectives extrapolated to pedagogy allow students to learn in a practical and meaningful way. An example of this occurs when students ask about recipes from elders and then prepare them. Under this, students not only do learn new vocabulary and language; but they also think and reflect on their culture. Likewise, Kramsch in 1998 emphasizes that language and culture are inseparable, so including local cuisine in English teaching allows for contextualizing learning, bringing the language closer to the student's reality (Ling et al., 2022). In addition to its culture value, the authors Espejo et al. (2022) point out that gastronomy also plays an educational role from the perspective of food and nutrition education, reinforcing learning about healthy habits, motivation, and sustainable practices.

To translate these findings into the educational setting, an Interactive Teaching Book was designed, in which students assemble representations of the parish's traditional dishes. This resource is based on multisensory learning, which integrates tactile, visual, and cognitive channels to promote retention and comprehension (Shams & Seitz, 2008). This pedagogical proposal is based on Task-Based Learning, where students carry out specific activities such as listing the

ingredients, ordering the preparation steps, preparing them, and finally, explaining everything in a new language such as English (Sholeh et al., 2020). This way they have a greater understanding of their culture and at the same time improve the learning of a new language, as highlighted in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** Educational Didactic Book showing the parish's traditional food.

The incorporation of local gastronomy as a didactic resource to the curriculum, promotes students to know and value their culture and in turn learn English with different dynamics and relating local history, science and values. Thus, the practice of preparing food ceases to be a household activity and becomes an educational tool that strengthens cultural identity. This allows students to feel proud of their roots by improving their relationships with other rural Andean cultures.

In this research, it was proved that biodiversity (flora and fauna), agricultural production systems, local festivals, traditional games, and typical Andean food, are inner part of local culture. But, in turn, they can be used as tools to design micro curricular materials in the English teaching process. In this way, learning is significantly developed under school activities, close to their local and rural reality, and valuing their cultural identity.

These findings are aligned with Blumer's symbolic interactionism, in that agricultural, festive, and gastronomic practices are not merely functional acts, but rather scenarios of interaction where collective identity is constructed and redefined (Da Silva, 2023). They also confirm Freire's proposal, according to which learning becomes meaningful when it is grounded in the student's experience and reality; in this case, by situating English in relation to local practices, it becomes a liberating tool that validates community knowledge (Alvarez et al., 2024).

From the perspective of place-based learning (Gruenewald, 2003), the designed materials demonstrated how schools can and should engage with their immediate surroundings, integrating biodiversity, agricultural practices, and community celebrations into a more contextualized and meaningful curriculum. In the same context, the author Castillo (2024) underlines that cultural differences in educational environments influence in a decisive way the learning of English, which makes it essential design materials based on culture and contextualized pedagogical strategies.

The literature review carried out also reflects similarities with recent research in Latin America. Ortega and Aucchahuallpa (2017) demonstrated that in rural Peruvian contexts, the use of cultural elements in English language teaching allowed students to perceive the foreign language as part of their daily lives, fostering their motivation. Agricultural processes such as soil preparation, planting, crop management, and harvesting used in the practical process of teaching English in rural contexts generated positive impacts (Hurtado et al., 2023). In other words, the ancestral

knowledge that students use in their daily lives used in teaching processes allowed them to acquire English language vocabulary more easily (Basto et al., 2017). Even the use of the Kichwa indigenous language in the learning process generated a retention of new sustainable knowledge (Guevara, 2023). In the same way, other studies show the relevance of Andean knowledge in educational processes, which leads to the construction of egalitarian relationships (Mendoza, 2021; Salgado et al., 2018).

Despite the existence of several studies that highlight the importance of cultural identity in the teaching of a new language in the country and in the region, there is no proposal at the level of the competent ministries or national police; as well as technological resources and teacher training for their implementation. The findings of this research underscore the need to consider the cultural diversity of students as the central axis of the teaching process. But it also considers the proposal of a micro-curriculum based on the cultural knowledge of the parish, which can be innovative, sustainable and low-cost, and implemented with cultural identity for the empowerment of the student in their learning process. In Table 1, a synthesis of the proposal is presented.

**Table 1:** Summary table of the relationship between theory, educational resources, and promoted competence

Micro-curricular Resource	Supporting Theoretical Framework	Theoretical Contribution	Promoted Educational Competency
<b>Cardboard Puzzle (Fauna)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984)</li> <li>• Multisensory Learning (Shams &amp; Seitz, 2008)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning occurs through active, hands-on experience with local fauna.</li> <li>• Visual-kinesthetic input enhances retention and recognition of species.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive association of images and concepts.</li> <li>• Strengthening cultural environmental awareness.</li> </ul>
<b>3D Flora Model</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place-Based Learning (Gruenewald, 2003)</li> <li>• Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1993)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses local environment as the context for constructing meaning and identity.</li> <li>• Activates naturalistic, spatial, and kinesthetic intelligences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spatial reasoning and environmental awareness.</li> <li>• Inclusive learning through multiple intelligences.</li> </ul>
<b>Educational Garden (Agriculture)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Gay, 2010)</li> <li>• Hands-on Learning (Boud et al., 1993)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connects learners' cultural background (agricultural traditions) with academic content.</li> <li>• Real-life manipulation of crops deepens understanding.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural identity and community connection.</li> <li>• Knowledge of traditional crops.</li> </ul>
<b>Memory Matching Game (Cultural Holidays)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, 1988)</li> <li>• Symbolic Interactionism (Blumer, 1969)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized visual input reduces cognitive burden and enhances memory.</li> <li>• Cultural symbols (images) build shared meaning and identity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory and classification skills.</li> <li>• Recognition of cultural celebrations.</li> <li>• Strengthening symbolic-cultural understanding.</li> </ul>
<b>Racetrack Models (Traditional Games)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978)</li> <li>• Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence (Gardner, 1993)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning mediated through social interaction and cultural context.</li> <li>• Movement and manipulation deepen emotional-cognitive engagement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social cooperation and teamwork.</li> <li>• Understanding traditional games as cultural heritage.</li> </ul>

*Note.* Adapted by the author based on the theoretical and methodological principles discussed in the study.

## CONCLUSIONS

The principal findings of this study show that designing micro-curricular resources based on the cultural, social, and economic realities of San José del Chazo makes it possible to link English teaching with students lived experiences in a meaningful way. Drawing on parish documents and on the theoretical perspectives discussed throughout the research, it was feasible to identify locally significant topics, such as flora and fauna, festivities, traditional games, agriculture, gastronomy, and tourism, that can serve as authentic content for language learning.

The results suggest that when contextual information and pedagogical theory are organized carefully, it becomes easier to develop materials that are coherent, interdisciplinary, and culturally attuned. Bringing together educational principles with community knowledge within an

intercultural framework also proved valuable, as it helped ensure that the proposed resources were conceptually sound and genuinely connected to the local environment.

From a practical standpoint, this work points to the importance of incorporating materials that resonate with students' cultural backgrounds. Teachers may find that these resources contribute to higher levels of engagement and support learning experiences in which students can both strengthen their English skills and recognize the value of their own cultural identity. Encouraging collaborative material design, where teachers, students, and community members, can further enhance the authenticity and pedagogical relevance of the resources.

It is important to acknowledge certain limitations. Although the study established a solid conceptual foundation for the materials, they were not tested in real classroom settings, which limits the ability to determine their direct impact on learning outcomes. Moreover, the focus on a single rural community means that caution is needed when considering the applicability of the findings to other contexts.

Future work should include classroom implementation, monitoring how students respond to these materials over time, and assessing their contribution to language development, motivation, and identity-building. Comparative analyses with other rural or intercultural settings would also help clarify the extent to which this micro-curricular approach can be transferred and adapted.

Overall, the study reinforces the idea that grounding English instruction in students' cultural contexts is not only feasible but also pedagogically valuable. By doing so, teachers can foster more inclusive and identity-affirming learning environments, while offering students opportunities to use English as a tool to interpret and communicate the richness of their own heritage.

**CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT:** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. All stages of the study were conducted with academic independence and integrity.

**AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:** The contribution of each author is listed using the CRediT Taxonomy below.

- Grissel Mariela Aguagallo Cali: Lead author, Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing - original draft, Writing - review, and editing.
- César Augusto Narváez Vilema: Conceptualización, Análisis formal, Metodología, Redacción-revisión y edición.

The authors thank the UNACH, Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages, research project "Teaching English for the construction of cultural identity". Special thanks are extended to all the rural parish presidents of the Guano canton and the parish inhabitants for their valuable contribution throughout the research process and for critically reviewing and validating the results. Their contributions, notwithstanding, they bear no responsibility for the content of this article.

**DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT:** The authors declare that the data is available upon request. Formal e-mail to the Director of Research: [cesar.narvaez@unach.edu.ec](mailto:cesar.narvaez@unach.edu.ec). The data is not publicly available because the project is currently being implemented, and unrestricted access could compromise ongoing research activities. Access is granted to qualified researchers under appropriate conditions to ensure the integrity and confidentiality of the study.

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