



Learning english as a strategy for recreation and tourism development in vulnerable populations of Valdivia and San Pedro

Aprendizaje del inglés como estrategia de recreación y desarrollo turístico en poblaciones vulnerables de Valdivia y San Pedro

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Abstract

Introduction: Tourism constitutes one of the main economic and social activities worldwide, with a direct impact on job creation, cultural strengthening, and the local development of historically marginalized communities.

Objective: To analyze how learning the English language, incorporated into recreational strategies, can strengthen tourism development in the vulnerable populations of Valdivia and San Pedro, Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province.

Methodology: This study was framed within a quantitative approach. The type of research was applied in nature, and regarding its scope, the study was classified as correlational-explanatory. **Results:** The communities of Valdivia and San Pedro present a marked need for linguistic training, particularly in functional vocabulary related to tourism. The recreational activities implemented constituted an effective strategy for learning English, increasing both motivation and participation of community members.

Discussion: The results of this study are consistent with existing literature and enrich it by showing how the combination of English learning and recreation enhances tourism development processes in vulnerable contexts.

Conclusions: It was concluded that teaching English through recreational activities constitutes a replicable model in other localities with similar characteristics, as long as it is adapted to the needs and cultural particularities of each community.

Keywords

Community development; english learning; recreation; tourism; vulnerability.

Resumen

Introducción: El turismo constituye una de las principales actividades económicas y sociales a nivel mundial, con un impacto directo en la generación de empleo, en el fortalecimiento cultural y en el desarrollo local de comunidades históricamente marginadas.

Objetivo: Analizar cómo el aprendizaje del idioma inglés, incorporado en estrategias de recreación, puede fortalecer el desarrollo turístico en las poblaciones vulnerables de Valdivia y San Pedro, parroquia Manglaralto, provincia de Santa Elena

Metodología: El presente estudio se enmarcó dentro del enfoque cuantitativo, el tipo de investigación fue de carácter aplicado y en cuanto al alcance, la investigación se clasificó como correlacional-explicativa.

Resultados: Las comunidades de Valdivia y San Pedro presentan una marcada necesidad de formación lingüística, particularmente en vocabulario funcional vinculado al turismo. Las actividades recreativas implementadas constituyen una estrategia efectiva para el aprendizaje del inglés, incrementando la motivación y participación de los actores comunitarios.

Discusión: Los resultados de este estudio dialogan de manera coherente con la literatura existente y la enriquecen al mostrar cómo la combinación de aprendizaje del inglés y recreación potencia los procesos de desarrollo turístico en contextos vulnerables.

Conclusiones: Se concluyó que la enseñanza del inglés mediante actividades recreativas constituye un modelo replicable en otras localidades con características similares, siempre que se adapte a las necesidades y particularidades culturales de cada comunidad.

Palabras clave

Aprendizaje del inglés; desarrollo comunitario; recreación; turismo; vulnerabilidad.



Introduction

Tourism is one of the most significant economic and social activities worldwide, with a direct impact on job creation, cultural strengthening, and the local development of historically marginalized communities (Azmain et al., 2024; Basri et al., 2022). In Latin America, community-based tourism has emerged as a strategy for social integration and economic diversification, providing vulnerable populations with new opportunities for active participation in the global economy. Within this context, proficiency in English becomes a fundamental resource, as it is considered the lingua franca of international tourism and a strategic tool for communication between host communities and visitors from different parts of the world (Hajar et al., 2024; Zalil et al., 2022).

In the Manglaralto parish, specifically in the communities of Valdivia and San Pedro, located in the province of Santa Elena, Ecuador, tourism represents a potential source of income and cultural identity reinforcement. However, language barriers hinder residents' interaction with foreign tourists, limiting the quality of services provided and reducing opportunities for local economic expansion. Despite their high cultural and natural value, these communities' capacity to position themselves in the international tourism market largely depends on English language training and the development of innovative strategies for recreation and service.

Research shows that learning English applied to tourism not only improves communication but also enhances community empowerment and social inclusion. Language training programs implemented in tourist communities in Asia and Africa have demonstrated positive impacts on residents' self-esteem, social cohesion, and economic participation (Resmayasari et al., 2024; Widianingsih et al., 2021). In particular, English learning programs targeted at tour guides and local entrepreneurs foster more authentic experiences for visitors and promote the sustainable development of community-based tourism (Laksana & Rahmanu, 2023; Suprina et al., 2023).

The theoretical foundation of this study draws upon several perspectives. First, Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory posits that individuals acquire new knowledge and behaviors through observation, imitation, and social interaction. This theory is essential for understanding how English learning in vulnerable communities can be reinforced through collective practices, workshops, and collaborative dynamics, where the group functions as a space of motivation and positive modeling.

Similarly, Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and cultural mediation. From this perspective, English, when introduced into communities such as Valdivia and San Pedro, is not perceived merely as a set of grammatical structures, but rather as a tool that articulates cultural and social processes, allowing residents to reconfigure their relationships with visitors, the environment, and their own economic practices.

In the field of recreation, Dumazedier's (1964) Theory of Recreation establishes that recreational activities contribute to individuals' integral development by fostering creativity, socialization, and cultural identity. In the context of community-based tourism, recreation relates to the communities' ability to generate experiences that carry not only economic but also educational and cultural value. Integrating English learning into community recreational activities facilitates language acquisition through practical, playful, and meaningful approaches.

Moreover, Scheyvens' (1999) Community-Based Tourism framework highlights the importance of empowering local communities in tourism development processes, ensuring that economic, social, and cultural benefits are distributed equitably. From this standpoint, English learning is not an end in itself but a means for the inhabitants of Valdivia and San Pedro to exercise greater control over their participation in the tourism value chain, strengthen their negotiation skills, and improve the quality of the services they provide.

Recent studies confirm that English language training in tourist communities is closely linked to the creation of new employment opportunities and the improvement of the competitiveness of emerging destinations. For instance, research conducted in Indonesia shows that English for Tourism (EFT) programs grounded in local wisdom strengthen both cultural identity and communication with foreign visitors (Suprina et al., 2023; Yosintha et al., 2023). Likewise, Basri et al. (2023) demonstrate that English-based educational tourism contributes to the economic growth of rural communities, consolidating language learning as a driver of development.



In the same vein, Resmayasari et al. (2024) highlight that English training in tourist villages empowers residents and enhances their ability to provide quality services. Similarly, Wahyuningtyas (2024) shows that community-based interventions focused on developing English-speaking skills improve interactions between tourists and hosts, creating more authentic and satisfying experiences. These findings suggest that integrating English into community recreation strategies not only enhances tourism competitiveness but also improves residents' social well-being.

The literature review further underscores that English learning functions as a tool of inclusion in vulnerable populations, as it enables them to broaden their employment horizons and establish intercultural connections. Ahmed (2024), in a study on Socotra Island, demonstrates that the lack of English proficiency limits the participation of island communities in the global tourism market, reinforcing the need for training programs adapted to local contexts. Complementarily, studies on community-based tourism emphasize that these initiatives should not be restricted to the economic dimension but should integrate social and cultural components that strengthen community cohesion and foster sustainability (Quang et al., 2023; Suyatna et al., 2024).

In Ecuador, despite the cultural and natural richness of the province of Santa Elena, coastal communities continue to face significant gaps in English training, which restricts opportunities for international tourism growth. This research seeks to address this gap by proposing English learning as a strategy for recreation and tourism development in the communities of Valdivia and San Pedro. The innovative approach lies in teaching English not solely as an academic subject but as an integral part of recreational, cultural, and community activities, generating meaningful and practical learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this study aligns with the field of health and quality of life, as recreational activities for English learning are conceived not only as educational strategies but also as forms of active participation that foster psychosocial well-being, reduce social isolation, and promote mental health through cooperative and movement-based dynamics. The integration of recreational methodologies involving expressive play, dramatizations, and role-playing contributes to participants' emotional regulation, self-confidence, and social connectedness (dimensions closely linked to holistic health within the field of Physical Activity and Sport Sciences). By framing language learning as an experiential and participatory process, this research highlights the relevance of recreation as a determinant of quality of life and community health.

The justification of this study rests on three dimensions. First, the social dimension, since it strengthens self-esteem and community cohesion by providing residents with a communication tool that connects them with the world. Second, the economic dimension, as English proficiency enhances these communities' ability to deliver higher-quality tourism services and attract international visitors. Finally, the cultural dimension, as it allows local identity to be projected through more fluid exchanges with tourists, who, in turn, gain access to authentic and enriching experiences.

Accordingly, this study addresses a concrete problem: the lack of English proficiency in the vulnerable tourist communities of Valdivia and San Pedro, which limits their full participation in the tourism sector. At the same time, it proposes an innovative, context-sensitive solution that combines learning, recreation, and community development.

The general objective of this study is to analyze how English learning, when integrated into recreational strategies, can strengthen tourism development in the vulnerable populations of Valdivia and San Pedro, Manglaralto parish, province of Santa Elena. Specifically, it aims to: a) identify the linguistic needs of the communities in relation to tourism; b) implement recreational activities as a medium for teaching English; and c) evaluate the impact of English learning on the quality of tourism services and community empowerment.

In conclusion, this study is part of a line of research that recognizes English learning as a driver of social, economic, and cultural transformation in vulnerable communities engaged in tourism. By integrating the language into recreational spaces, it seeks to enhance local development and position Valdivia and San Pedro as benchmarks of sustainable community-based tourism on Ecuador's coastal region.

Method

This study was framed within a quantitative approach, as it was based on the collection and analysis of numerical data with the purpose of addressing the stated objectives and establishing objective relationships between the variables of interest. According to Hernández et al. (2014), the quantitative approach allows researchers to measure phenomena, test hypotheses, and employ statistical procedures to obtain replicable and generalizable results. In this regard, the study adopted a quantitative approach since it aimed to identify the linguistic needs of the communities of Valdivia and San Pedro, implement English teaching strategies in recreational contexts, and quantitatively evaluate their impact on tourism development.

The type of research was applied in nature, as it sought to solve a concrete problem within a real-world context: the lack of English language competencies among the vulnerable populations of the Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province. Accordingly, the research design was non-experimental and cross-sectional, given that data collection was conducted at a single point in time and the independent variables were not deliberately manipulated. As Bisquerra (2009) points out, non-experimental designs are appropriate when phenomena are studied in their natural context without direct intervention by the researcher.

Regarding scope, the study was classified as correlational-explanatory. First, correlational, because it aimed to establish the relationship between English learning (implemented through recreational activities) and the strengthening of community-based tourism development. Second, explanatory, because it sought to address the underlying reasons for this relationship, providing theoretical foundations to understand the effects of language training on the social and economic dynamics of the studied communities (Hernández et al., 2014).

The choice of this methodological design was justified by the fact that the general objective focused on analyzing how English learning can become a strategy for recreation and tourism development, which required a quantitative, structured approach supported by statistical techniques to describe and explain the phenomenon under study.

Although this research employed a non-probability convenience sampling method, which constitutes a methodological limitation compared to probabilistic designs, measures were taken to mitigate its potential bias. These included proportional representation of both communities, balanced gender distribution, and the inclusion of diverse occupational profiles related to tourism. This approach sought to enhance the internal validity of the results and ensure that the findings reflected the heterogeneity of the population studied. Furthermore, while the analysis relied on descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation, and paired-samples t-tests, multivariate analyses were not incorporated due to the exploratory and contextual nature of the study. The statistical strategy was designed to align with the objectives and the size of the available sample, prioritizing interpretability and the robustness of the relationships observed within the specific community context.

Participants

The study population consisted of residents from the communities of Valdivia and San Pedro, located in the Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province, who were directly or indirectly involved in tourism-related activities (service providers, artisans, community guides, potters, and members of local associations). According to community records and local sources, the estimated population was approximately 450 individuals.

The sample was determined through non-probability convenience sampling, selecting participants who met the defined inclusion criteria and voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. The final sample size consisted of 120 participants, proportionally distributed between the two communities.

Inclusion Criteria

- Being over 18 years of age.
- Permanent residence in Valdivia or San Pedro.
- Involvement in community tourism or recreational activities.



- Expressed interest in participating in English learning activities.

Exclusion Criteria

- Individuals under 18 years of age.
- Non-permanent residents of the communities.
- Residents with no connection to tourism or recreational activities.
- Individuals undergoing basic literacy processes in Spanish, as the project required minimum reading and writing competencies.

The distribution of the sample is presented in the following table:

Table 1. Sample distribution by community and gender

Community	Men	Women	Total
Valdivia	32	28	60
San Pedro	30	30	60
Total	62	58	120

Note. Author's elaboration.

The balanced selection of participants ensured a representative sample of community dynamics and guaranteed diversity in terms of age, gender, and occupation.

Procedure

The research procedure was carried out in three main phases: diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation.

Phase 1. Diagnosis

In the initial phase, a diagnostic questionnaire was administered to identify participants' linguistic needs in relation to tourism. This instrument included items organized into three dimensions: a) level of basic English skills (comprehension, oral and written expression), b) communicative needs in tourism contexts (interaction with visitors, customer service, guiding, and service provision), and c) expectations regarding language learning.

The questionnaire was validated through expert judgment, involving three specialists in foreign language teaching and community-based tourism. Its reliability was verified using Cronbach's Alpha, which reached a value of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency.

Phase 2. Intervention

In the second phase, recreational English learning activities were implemented, designed to integrate linguistic content with meaningful community experiences. The strategies applied included:

- Role-playing activities simulating tourist service interactions.
- Group dynamics focused on basic English dialogues.
- Practical guided tours, where participants practiced communication with volunteers acting as foreign tourists.
- Songs, dramatizations, and cultural storytelling in English as playful and participatory learning methods.

These activities were conducted over a three-month period, with weekly 90-minute sessions facilitated by English instructors with experience in community-based tourism.

These recreational and participatory strategies were also aligned with the health and quality of life research field, as they encouraged active engagement, cooperation, and emotional expression through movement-based and interactive dynamics. The inclusion of dramatizations, role-playing, and expressive group activities fostered psychosocial well-being, self-confidence, and social interaction (dimensions recognized within the Physical Activity and Sport Sciences as essential to promoting holistic health and community development).



Phase 3. Evaluation

In the final stage, a post-intervention instrument was administered to assess the impact of English learning on the quality of tourism services and community empowerment. This questionnaire included items related to perceived improvement in communication skills, confidence in tourist interactions, and participation in local tourism activities.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the statistical software SPSS, version 25. First, descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, measures of central tendency, and dispersion) were applied to characterize participants' initial level of English proficiency and their linguistic needs.

Subsequently, inferential statistical tests were implemented. To determine the relationship between English learning and tourism development, Spearman's correlation test was applied, given that the variables were not normally distributed. This test made it possible to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between participation in recreational learning activities and the perceived levels of community empowerment and quality of tourism services.

In addition, paired-samples mean difference tests (Student's t-test for paired data) were conducted to compare participants' performance before and after the intervention. This enabled the evaluation of whether the training produced statistically significant improvements in communicative competencies.

The data analysis was carried out in alignment with the research objectives:

For the first objective (identifying linguistic needs), descriptive analyses of the diagnostic questionnaires were applied.

For the second objective (implementing recreational activities), the observed results from the sessions were described and changes in participants' perceptions were analyzed.

For the third objective (evaluating the impact on service and empowerment), correlational and inferential tests were conducted, which demonstrated the influence of English learning on the quality of tourist service provision and community self-esteem.

Results

This section presents the findings of the research aimed at analyzing how English language learning, incorporated into recreational strategies, strengthens tourism development in the vulnerable communities of Valdivia and San Pedro, Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province. The results are organized in accordance with the specific objectives established and are supported by the statistical analysis conducted using SPSS software, version 25.

Identification of the linguistic needs of the communities in relation to tourism

As a first step, a diagnostic questionnaire was administered to 120 participants from the communities of Valdivia and San Pedro. The instrument was designed to explore their levels of English proficiency, the frequency of interaction with foreign tourists, and their perceived communicative needs.

Table 2. Initial level of English language proficiency of participants (n=120)

Level of proficiency	Frequency	Percentage (%)
None	58	48.3
Basic	42	35.0
Intermediate	18	15.0
Advanced	2	1.7

Note. Author's elaboration.

The results reveal that nearly half of the participants (48.3%) reported having no English proficiency, while 35% were at a basic level. This highlights a limited capacity for interaction with foreign visitors. Only 1.7% reported advanced proficiency, underscoring the insufficient linguistic preparation in these communities.



Furthermore, when analyzing the main linguistic needs, it was found that participants prioritized learning specific vocabulary related to tourist service provision, such as greetings, directions, information about basic services, gastronomy, and natural attractions.

Table 3. Priority linguistic needs for tourism activities (n=120)

Area of need	Percentage of mentions (%)
Greetings and courtesy	82.5
Explanations of routes/sites	76.7
Gastronomic information	65.8
Safety and first aid	54.2
Pricing and payment handling	48.3

Note. Author's elaboration.

The findings indicate that participants prioritize the acquisition of functional and communicative skills that can be applied immediately in interactions with tourists.

Implementation of recreational activities as a means of teaching English

In response to the identified needs, a program of recreational activities was developed with a communicative approach. These activities included group dynamics, dramatizations, role-playing, and cultural practices that integrated English vocabulary into traditional community practices.

The effectiveness of the activities was assessed through satisfaction surveys and systematic observations. A total of 91.7% of participants stated that recreational activities facilitated their learning by creating a motivating environment that was less rigid than conventional teaching.

Table 4. Participants' perception of recreational activities (n=120)

Evaluation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very satisfactory	78	65.0
Satisfactory	32	26.7
Somewhat unsatisfactory	9	7.5
Not satisfactory at all	1	0.8

Note. Author's elaboration.

The interpretation of these data shows that recreational strategies significantly enhanced motivation and community participation. Observation records also revealed a progressive increase in the fluency of basic English expressions during the sessions, particularly in simulated tourist interaction contexts.

Evaluation of the impact of English learning on tourism service quality and community empowerment

To evaluate the impact of the intervention, paired-sample mean comparison tests were conducted before and after the training sessions. The paired-samples Student's t-test revealed statistically significant differences in language proficiency ($p < 0.001$).

Table 5. Differences in language performance before and after the intervention (n=120)

Measurement time	Mean (M)	Standard deviation (SD)	t	p
Pre-test	2.15	0.84		
Post-test	3.72	0.91	12.84	0.000

Note. Author's elaboration.

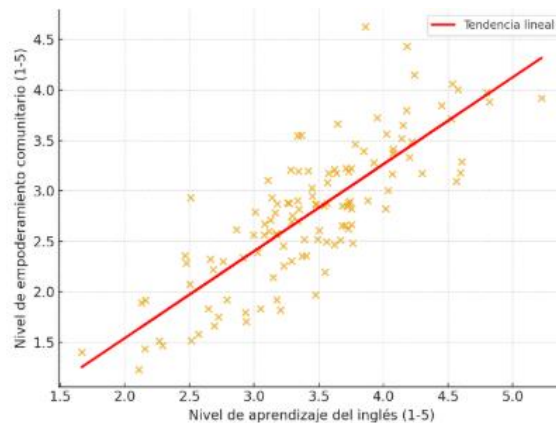
The results demonstrate a significant improvement in participants' communicative competencies, supporting the effectiveness of the recreational program.

With regard to tourism service quality, a questionnaire was administered to tourists who visited the communities during the study period. A total of 74.2% reported perceiving improvements in the service compared with previous visits, particularly in areas related to courtesy, clarity of information, and willingness to respond to inquiries in basic English.



Additionally, Spearman's correlation test was applied to determine the relationship between English learning and community empowerment. The results indicated a positive and significant correlation ($\rho = 0.684$; $p < 0.01$), suggesting that the strengthening of language skills is linked to increased confidence and autonomy among community members.

Figure 1. Relationship between English learning and community empowerment



Note. Author's elaboration.

The interpretation of these findings confirms that English instruction, when integrated into recreational activities, not only enhances the quality of tourism services but also fosters processes of self-esteem and social cohesion.

In line with the established objectives, the results allow the formulation of the following partial conclusions:

- The communities of Valdivia and San Pedro show a marked need for language training, particularly in functional vocabulary related to tourism.
- The implemented recreational activities constitute an effective strategy for learning English, enhancing both motivation and community participation.
- The intervention generated significant improvements in communicative competencies, directly impacting the quality of service perceived by tourists.
- There is a positive relationship between English learning and community empowerment, reinforcing the idea that language training is a key factor for social and economic development.

Discussion

The results of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of how English language instruction, mediated through recreational activities, strengthens both the quality of tourism services and processes of community empowerment in the vulnerable populations of Valdivia and San Pedro, Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province. The findings confirm the existence of a clear linguistic need in these communities, as the majority of participants reported either no proficiency in English or only a basic level. This initial situation is consistent with Suprina et al. (2023), who point out that in tourist villages in Indonesia, local communities exhibit communicative limitations that affect service quality and restrict their capacity to interact with international visitors.

The diagnostic stage in Valdivia and San Pedro revealed that the most frequently demanded linguistic domains were courtesy phrases, directions, gastronomic information, and guidance on basic services. These results are in line with those of Hajar et al. (2024), who, when designing English materials for tourist communities on Buru Island, identified the acquisition of practical vocabulary to facilitate visitor

interaction as a priority. Thus, the data from this research reinforce the importance of training communities in functional communicative competencies that address real-life situations of tourist interaction.

Regarding methodology, the implementation of recreational activities as a pedagogical strategy received highly positive evaluations. More than 90% of participants reported that this approach enabled them to learn in a more enjoyable and meaningful way. This finding is consistent with Laksana and Dian (2023), who demonstrated that English training for community tourism groups in Bali was more effective when practical and collaborative dynamics were integrated, as opposed to traditional methods centered on mechanical repetition. Similarly, Widianingsih et al. (2020) argue that active methodologies increase motivation and promote greater knowledge retention in communities with limited prior experience in foreign language learning.

The effectiveness of recreational activities was also reflected in the significant improvement in participants' language performance. The paired-samples Student's t-test confirmed statistically significant improvements in communicative competencies after the intervention. This outcome resonates with the findings of Resmayasari et al. (2024), who showed that English workshops in the tourist village of Mulyaharja enhanced participants' confidence and ability to express themselves in tourism-related daily situations. Likewise, Wahyuningtyas et al. (2024) found that bilingual guide interventions in tourist communities produced measurable positive effects on language acquisition when pedagogical designs were tailored to local needs.

Another relevant contribution lies in the improvement of tourism service quality as perceived by visitors. According to the results, more than 70% of tourists who interacted with community members during the intervention period positively evaluated the increased courtesy, clarity of information, and willingness to communicate in basic English. This aligns with Ahmed et al. (2024), who highlight that the presence of basic linguistic competencies in the Socotra communities enhances visitor satisfaction and contributes to consolidating the image of the destination. Similarly, Zalil et al. (2022) argue that English has become an indispensable resource in the contemporary tourism industry, not only as a means of communication but also as a factor that directly influences the competitiveness of destinations.

The link between English learning and community empowerment, evidenced through the positive and significant correlation between the two variables, represents an essential finding. Results show that the development of communicative skills contributes to strengthening confidence, self-esteem, and a sense of autonomy among community members. This finding is consistent with Basri et al. (2022), who, in analyzing communal attitudes toward educational tourism in Indonesia, emphasized that English learning fosters social cohesion and reinforces community participation processes. Similarly, Suyatna et al. (2024) suggest that community-based tourism enhances social well-being by enabling communities to manage their resources more effectively and develop the skills needed for the self-management of tourism projects.

The correlation analysis confirms that English instruction is not only an academic resource but also a strategic element for the social and economic development of vulnerable populations. Basri et al. (2023) reinforce this notion by arguing that educational tourism based on English instruction stimulates local economies, as it expands employment opportunities and diversifies income sources. In the case of Valdivia and San Pedro, language learning translates into greater capacity to interact with tourists, promote local products, and provide more competitive services, which in turn strengthens the community's economic fabric.

These findings also connect with the arguments of Quang et al. (2023), who assert that sustainable community-based tourism requires the active and skilled participation of local communities. In this sense, English learning becomes a tool that facilitates such participation, equipping residents with the necessary resources to communicate and negotiate with external stakeholders. In parallel, Azmain et al. (2024) emphasize that the management of tourism resources for educational and community development purposes yields lasting effects when accompanied by training processes that enhance local capacities.

An additional aspect worth highlighting is the cultural impact of language interventions. Yosintha et al. (2023), in developing a digital English module for tourism based on local wisdom values, underscore the importance of contextualizing language teaching within the community's cultural framework. In the

case of Valdivia and San Pedro, recreational activities incorporated elements of local traditions, reinforcing cultural identity while simultaneously fostering openness to international visitors. This articulation between the local and the global contributes to a more inclusive and respectful form of tourism.

The evidence collected allows us to conclude that English teaching through recreational activities not only addresses linguistic needs but also generates tangible social transformations. The increase in motivation, community cohesion, and confidence in engaging with tourists indicates that such programs can be scaled and replicated in other similar contexts. Indeed, these findings are consistent with Widianingsih et al. (2020), who highlight the replicability of language training programs across diverse tourist destinations in Indonesia.

Furthermore, the results obtained reveal a positive connection between recreational English learning and variables traditionally associated with health and quality of life. Participants reported increased self-esteem, reduced social isolation, and improved emotional well-being as a result of engaging in cooperative and movement-based activities such as dramatizations, role-playing, and expressive group dynamics. These psychosocial outcomes align with the principles of the Physical Activity and Sport Sciences, which emphasize recreation as a means to foster holistic well-being and strengthen social cohesion within communities. Therefore, this study not only contributes to the field of educational tourism but also extends its relevance to the broader domain of community health promotion.

Despite the robustness of the results, certain methodological limitations should be acknowledged. The use of non-probability convenience sampling restricts the generalization of findings beyond the studied communities, as participant selection depended on voluntary participation and accessibility. Additionally, the short three-month intervention period may have limited the observation of long-term effects on linguistic retention and community empowerment. Future studies could incorporate probabilistic sampling methods, longitudinal designs, and multivariate analyses to enhance external validity and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships identified. Recognizing these limitations allows for a balanced interpretation of the findings while reaffirming the practical and social value of the intervention.

Conclusions

This study made it possible to analyze how learning the English language, incorporated into recreational strategies, strengthened tourism development in the vulnerable populations of Valdivia and San Pedro, Manglaralto parish, Santa Elena province. The findings confirmed that the design and implementation of playful and participatory activities not only facilitated the acquisition of basic English language skills, but also significantly contributed to community empowerment and the improvement of the quality of tourism services offered in these localities.

In relation to the first specific objective, the linguistic needs of the communities were clearly identified, highlighting the urgency of acquiring basic English knowledge oriented toward the tourism sector. Most participants stated that the language represented a barrier in interacting with foreign visitors, which limited opportunities for economic and social growth. This diagnosis coincided with findings from previous studies that highlight the importance of English as a key tool for sustainable tourism.

Regarding the second objective, the implementation of recreational activities as a means of teaching English proved to be highly effective. Participatory dynamics such as role-playing, tourist guide simulations, and cultural activities created an environment of trust and motivation that favored learning. These playful practices strengthened participants' self-esteem and fostered a sense of belonging to their culture, aligning with Vygotsky's sociocultural perspective and the theory of recreation as a space for social and community development.

Concerning the third objective, the evaluation of the impact of English learning showed a positive effect both on the quality of tourism services and on community empowerment. Participants gained greater confidence when interacting with international visitors, which improved the perception of professionalism and hospitality. In addition, the community expressed increased collective confidence to manage its tourism resources, which translated into a stronger commitment to the sustainable development of the area.



Overall, this work represented progress in the integration of educational and recreational strategies to strengthen community-based tourism. The incorporation of English as a communication tool was not limited to the linguistic sphere but also had an impact on social and economic dimensions.

As for practical contributions, it was concluded that teaching English through recreational activities constitutes a replicable model in other localities with similar characteristics, provided it is adapted to the needs and cultural particularities of each community. This approach favored the sustainability of learning and ensured the active participation of local actors.

Finally, it is considered necessary for future studies to broaden the scope of this proposal by incorporating longitudinal follow-up to assess the permanence of the skills acquired and their long-term impact on tourism development. Likewise, it is suggested to deepen the creation of specific educational materials for community tourism, integrating cultural values and local traditions as central elements of the teaching-learning process.

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