Teaching English through Active Methodologies in Virtual and Face-to-Face Environments

Enseñanza del inglés mediante metodologías activas en entornos virtuales y presenciales

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Abstract

Introduction: The teaching of English as a foreign language has evolved toward active approaches that place the learner at the center of the learning process. Methodology: A literature review was conducted on the implementation of active methodologies in both virtual and face-to-face settings, considering their advantages, disadvantages, and application conditions. Results: Active methodologies such as project-based learning, task-based learning, flipped classroom, and gamified learning promote student autonomy, motivation, and communicative development. In face-to-face classrooms, direct communication enhances learning, while virtual environments offer flexible and personalized experiences, albeit requiring digital skills and self-discipline. Discussion: Both environments present benefits and limitations. The success of active methodologies lies in their adaptation to the educational context. Previous studies confirm their effectiveness in both face-to-face and virtual modalities. Conclusions: Active methodologies enhance the teaching of English as a foreign language when supported by appropriate planning, teacher mediation, and ongoing professional development.

Keywords: active methodologies; English; virtuality; eaching

Resumen

Introducción: La enseñanza de inglés de lengua extranjera ha ido evolucionando hacia enfoques activos que ubican al aprendiz en el centro del proceso de aprendizaje. Metodología: Se realizó una revisión bibliográfica sobre la aplicación de metodologías activas en entornos sobre de carácter virtual y presencial, teniendo en cuenta ventajas y desventajas, así como condiciones de aplicación. Resultados: Las metodologías activas como el aprendizaje basado en proyectos, por tareas, la clase invertida, el aprendizaje gamificada favorecen la autonomía de los alumnos, la motivación y el desarrollo comunicativo de los alumnos. En el aula presencial, la comunicación directa favorece el aprendizaje, pero en el entorno virtual la flexibilidad y recursos digitales permiten experiencias personalizadas, aunque requieren destrezas digitales y autodisciplina. Discusión: Ambos entornos ofrecen ventajas y desventajas. El éxito de las metodologías activas radica en su adaptación al contexto educativo donde se implementan. Estudios anteriores corroboran la eficacia de las metodologías activas tanto en modalidades de forma presencial como en formato virtual. Conclusiones: Las metodologías activas favorecen la enseñanza de inglés de lengua extranjera siempre que exista una planificación adecuada, mediación del profesorado y formación continua del profesorado.

Palabras clave: metodologías activa ; inglés; virtualidad; enseñanza

Introducción

At present, the teaching of English as a foreign language is emerging as a strategic international priority, driven by the growing need for communication within multicultural and globally connected societies. This contemporary context necessitates the implementation of pedagogical innovations that move beyond traditional lecture-based models. Various experts highlight the importance of transforming conventional teaching practices in favor of more dynamic ones. In fact, current English language instruction "requires a transformation of the traditional model," demanding the "use of active methodologies" aligned with the demands of today's society (Laurente-Cárdenas et al., 2020). Simultaneously, the advancement of digital technologies has led to increasingly specialized learning environments. The last decade, particularly shaped by the educational experience during the COVID-19 pandemic, solidified online education as both a complement and alternative to face-to-face learning, with virtual education becoming normalized and hybrid or blended modalities gaining popularity. This shift toward virtuality underscores the relevance of the topic: understanding how English language teaching can be enhanced through active methodologies, whether in traditional classrooms or digital platforms (Barrrios & Jurado, 2024).

The use of active methodologies in language education has gained significant importance due to their well-documented pedagogical benefits. These approaches place the learner at the center of the educational process, fostering active participation in constructing new knowledge and promoting learner autonomy, in contrast to the passive role encouraged by transmissive teaching methods. A growing body of research has demonstrated increased intrinsic motivation, improved academic performance, and stronger competence in applying knowledge learned in the classroom when active learning strategies are implemented (Molina-Garzón & Palma-Villavicencio, 2022).

Active methodologies serve to transform students into protagonists of their own learning process, while teachers function as facilitators, thus replacing the traditional instructional model rooted in early 20th-century pedagogical movements such as the New School. These methodologies align with today's educational demands to form critical, autonomous learners capable of learning how to learn (Espinosa-Rodríguez, 2022). Accordingly, in English language education, strategies such as project-based learning, collaborative problem-solving, debates, role-playing, and flipped classrooms are increasingly recognized as "effective responses to the growing demands" of a constantly evolving and adaptive world. The significance of these active methods lies in their ability to enhance communicative and cognitive skills relevant to second language acquisition, thus equipping students for a more competent and meaningful English learning experience (González-Urgilés et al., 2024).

However, both virtual and face-to-face learning environments present specific challenges and opportunities for implementing active methodologies in language education. In virtual formats, student engagement often becomes a challenge due to the absence of physical contact and the potential distractions of the home environment. Indeed, maintaining student engagement is a notable challenge in both in-person and online courses (de-la-Peña et al., 2024).

Conversely, virtual education offers circumstantial advantages: it removes temporal and spatial barriers, allows participation from the comfort of home, and reduces mobility costs. These features facilitate access to English language instruction for learners from various geographic locations (Silva & Figueiredo, 2024b). The challenge in this context is to work creatively with digital tools that promote interaction and collaboration, given the lack of physical proximity. Recent research highlights the limited effectiveness of content delivery via videoconferencing alone, yielding "unsatisfactory results" unless supplemented with active and interactive pedagogical elements online (Romero & Moreira, 2019).

Therefore, English teachers in virtual environments must develop both digital and pedagogical skills that enable them to utilize discussion forums, breakout rooms, interactive quizzes, educational role-playing games, and other participatory activities that keep students engaged in their learning process. Moreover, face-to-face instruction remains an effective setting for implementing active methodologies, leveraging the richness of unmediated communication that defines this format (Silva & Figueiredo, 2024a). In physical classrooms, teachers and students can interact more immediately, which enables real-time feedback on pronunciation or grammar, along with communication that includes nonverbal cues such as gestures and expressions.

Face-to-face learning also allows for group dynamics such as theatrical performances, role-playing, debates, and simulations that facilitate natural communicative practice in English. However, it also has logistical limitations (fixed schedules, commuting requirements, limited capacity) and does not guarantee active student participation if classes remain teacher centered. In short, both online and in-person education offers distinct scenarios for enriching language learning through active methodologies, while presenting challenges that require strategies to ensure a high-quality learning experience in each educational modality (Galván et al., 2021).

Considering the increased relevance of active pedagogies in Teaching English, and the array of educational contexts associated with the teaching, this literature review provides a critical review of the literature in the field. In this sense, this article aims to critically analyze the active methodologies found in the literature and used in the teaching of English as a foreign language in virtual and in-

person formats, while summarizing existing findings on their benefits, limitations, and conditions associated with their use (Vélez et al., 2020).

For this reason, the article intends to present a glance at current pedagogies, highlight challenges and opportunities in each modality of education, and offer research-based recommendations for teaching practices. Therefore, this introduction includes the context and theoretical framework to justify a comparative examination of active pedagogies as they relate to various teaching contexts while presenting a purpose and overview of the review to be completed without reiterating what will be discussed in the subsequent sections (Chaves, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical framework explores active methodologies as applied to the teaching of English as a foreign language, addressing their pedagogical foundations and their implementation in both traditional face-to-face and online classrooms. It outlines the theoretical basis and key scholars supporting active methodologies, their specificity in English language didactics, the characteristics of virtual and in-person classrooms, and concludes with a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of both modalities. From this basis, each of these components is developed in an organized and articulated manner, in third person and with academic rigor.

Foundations of Active Methodologies

Active methodologies are predicated on the concept that students develop their own knowledge through reflection, action, and participation, as opposed to traditional passive methods that are predicated on memorization and receipt of content. Active methodologies have a theoretical history with progressive education movements in the late 19th century and the early 20th century when educators (e.g., John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Maria Montessori, and Ovide Decroly) challenged the use of memorization and authoritarian instruction (Aza et al., 2024). These education professors held a perspective of the classroom as a place for exploration, critical thought, and interaction with the teacher as a facilitator of learning, rather than a transmitter of learning. Dewey advocated for "learning by doing," emphasizing the role of experience in education. Likewise, Piaget offered cognitive constructivism proposing that real learning occurs when students construct meaning from their own experiences (Vergara, 2023).

Vygotsky, through his sociocultural theory, argued that social interaction is central to cognitive development, particularly through the concept of the zone of proximal development. He emphasized that students learn more effectively when collaborating with others and being guided by facilitators,

rather than simply being exposed to content passively (Lascano, 2024). Building on this foundation, active methodologies are defined in contrast to traditional approaches and are characterized by three core elements: activity, participation, and autonomy. First, they require learners to be actively engaged in their learning processes through tasks, experiments, discussions, or projects, instead of merely listening. Second, they promote participation and interaction, viewing learning as a collaborative process that involves communication among students and between students and teachers, often within learning communities where knowledge is co-constructed. Third, they foster self-direction and responsibility, encouraging learners to develop the ability to learn how to learn, which includes metacognitive skills to evaluate their own learning, conduct independent research, choose appropriate strategies for specific tasks, and self-regulate their progress (Hernández et al., 2020).

In short, unlike passive methods, project-based learning positions students at the center of the learning process (student-centered learning), while the teacher assumes the roles of facilitator, guide, and analytical observer of classroom practices. Every active methodology rests on various theoretical pillars. One of the main pillars is Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning, which posits that added content is better learned when the student can connect it to prior knowledge and apply it to practical situations (Lara & Gómez, 2020).

Active teaching strategies are specifically designed to build such connections and avoid rote memorization of isolated facts. Additionally, practical experience plays a crucial role, as experiential learning theory—represented by authors like David Kolb and supported by Dewey—suggests that the learning cycle must include concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Villalobos-López, 2022). Active methodologies often place students in everyday or real-world problem situations, allowing them to apply their knowledge in practical contexts. This contextualized approach aligns with the idea that teaching must be connected to students' realities to be meaningful and foster a higher-level teaching-learning model (León-Díaz et al., 2020).

The pedagogical principles of active methodologies blend constructivist approaches (knowledge is constructed, not passively received), socio-constructivist approaches (learning is socially and culturally mediated), and humanistic approaches that emphasize intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy. Within this theoretical framework, several key scholars can be highlighted: Piaget and Vygotsky (for focusing on knowledge construction and social interaction), Dewey (for linking education with experience and real-life problem-solving), Ausubel (for promoting meaningful learning through cognitive anchoring), and contemporary pedagogues such as Johnson & Johnson,

who advocate for collaborative and cooperative learning and have contributed significantly to research on positive interdependence in the classroom. From these theoretical roots arise many of the innovative didactic proposals—project-based learning, problem-based learning, flipped classrooms, gamification, among others—that share a common spirit: actively motivating the learner. Before delving into these specific instructional strategies, it is necessary to understand how these principles are planned and applied within the specific field of English as a foreign language learning (Palacios, 2023).

Application of Active Methodologies in the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

In language didactics, and specifically in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), active methodologies have marked a change in thinking from models focused on grammar and translation toward models centered on communication and action. Traditional approaches such as the grammar-translation method or the audiolingual method, which promoted a passive and receptive student attitude, have gradually been replaced since the second half of the twentieth century by approaches that are unquestionably more communicative and active. This transition has occurred in parallel with the growing influence of communicative and humanistic trends in education (Freire & Barral, 2020). One influential perspective in English language teaching is the Communicative Approach, which holds that the main objective is to develop students' communicative competence—that is, their ability to use the language effectively and appropriately in various social contexts. Communicative competence is fostered through the active practice of the four main language skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing (Fernández et al., 2020). As a result, English classrooms have incorporated activities that focus on authentic language use, such as debates, dialogues, simulations, role plays, interviews, storytelling, and more. Thus, the language classroom has become a more dynamic environment, where English is used as the vehicle for meaningful activities rather than being treated solely as a theoretical subject. Several approaches and teaching techniques exemplify how active methodologies are implemented in EFL instruction (Dovzhenko et al., 2023).

One such practice is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), which organizes instruction around specific communicative tasks that students must conduct using the target language. For example, students might be asked to plan a trip, handle bill payments, describe a daily routine, or create a small project in English. Through the process of completing a practical task, students learn by doing, negotiating meaning with peers in communicative contexts, and apply linguistic structures functionally.

This approach contrasts with traditional grammar instruction in which grammar and vocabulary are taught in isolation. Here, these elements are acquired implicitly through task completion. Similarly, Project-Based Learning (PBL) has also made its way into language classrooms. Students can engage in medium-term projects (e.g., producing a school newspaper in English, creating a video, or researching the culture of an English-speaking country) that involve planning, research, collaboration, and a final presentation—all conducted in the target language. Such projects foster deep, multidisciplinary learning and enhance student motivation by culminating in a polished final product that reflects their effort (Sánchez et al., 2022).

The flipped classroom is another active strategy used in English teaching. In this model, foundational content—such as grammar explanations or new vocabulary—is reviewed by students independently, typically through videos, readings, or interactive online lessons. Classroom time is then reserved for practical activities, doubt resolution, and communicative exercises that allow students to apply their knowledge. This model aligns with active learning principles, as it shifts the initial responsibility for acquiring information onto the learner (self-study), while classroom time is devoted to action and interaction in English. Here, the teacher becomes a facilitator of higher-order cognitive tasks (analyzing, creating, communicating), rather than a lecturer (Curipoma et al., 2023).

In language classrooms, the flipped model empowers students to arrive with prior exposure to new expressions or structures and use class time to practice speaking, writing, or solving communicative tasks with peers under the teacher's guidance. This significantly increases individual participation and ownership of the learning process. At the same time, active methodologies in EFL place strong emphasis on oral interaction and group work. Techniques such as Think-Pair-Share, small group debates, learning station rotations, and collaborative group projects encourage students to use the language in social and meaningful ways. When working with others, learners are required to express ideas in English, negotiate meaning when misunderstandings arise, and support one another—thereby reinforcing both language skills and soft skills like communication and teamwork (Miranda, 2023).

This collaborative model aligns with Vygotsky's concept of socially mediated learning. Peer collaboration allows those with more advanced skills to scaffold the learning of others, expanding everyone's zone of proximal development as they work together on moderately challenging language tasks. Playful and participatory techniques also hold a vital place in active English instruction (Macancela et al., 2022). For instance, gamification involves integrating game elements—points, challenges, rewards—into learning activities to boost student engagement. In a gamified English class, students may participate in vocabulary competitions, interactive quizzes, or competitive and

cooperative role plays, which keep them motivated and focused while practicing the language in fun and engaging ways.

A classic example of active instruction is Total Physical Response (TPR), especially common at beginner levels. In TPR, the teacher gives commands in English that students must physically perform in the classroom (e.g., "Stand up and touch the door"), thereby linking language to action (Hernández-Ortega et al., 2021). This approach, introduced by James Asher, is based on the premise that physical response supports comprehension and, especially, memory, allowing students to internalize language through action rather than mental translation. While TPR is used with young or beginner learners, it is a powerful example of how to experience language actively in the classroom (Navarrete & Bolaños, 2022).

In summary, the use of active methodologies in EFL fosters student-centered classrooms where English ceases to be merely a subject of study and becomes a means of communication and discovery. Instruction should revolve around meaningful activities (real tasks, projects, discussions, simulations) that require authentic language use and, at the same time, enable students to develop not only language proficiency, but also autonomy, creativity, and collaboration (Guasp et al., 2020).

In this context, the teacher is viewed as a facilitator, a designer of learning experiences, and a cultural mediator who provides both support and feedback as students learn by doing. At this point, it is important to detail how learning dynamics vary depending on the educational context—whether in a traditional classroom where physical space is a factor or in an online environment mediated by digital platforms. Each setting presents specific opportunities and challenges for implementing active methodologies, as will be addressed in the next section (Alegre-Alvarado, 2021).

Characteristics of the Face-to-Face Environment in Language Teaching

The term "face-to-face environment" refers to a setting in which teachers and students share the same physical space and simultaneously engage in the teaching-learning process. In language education, this environment corresponds to the conventional classroom, where the teacher and students interact in person. This face-to-face context possesses specific characteristics that influence the implementation of active methodologies. One key feature is the direct, multimodal communication it allows. Face-to-face interaction enables not only verbal exchanges in English but also nonverbal communication through gestures, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Macancela et al., 2022).

In an English class conducted in a face-to-face modality, both students and the teacher can rely on these nonverbal cues to better interpret meaning and intent. For instance, when practicing a

conversational sequence, students become more aware of intonation patterns and the gestures used by the speaker, thereby enhancing their communicative competence. For the teacher, observing students' body language (e.g., expressions of confusion or enthusiasm) provides immediate feedback on their level of understanding or emotional state, allowing for real-time adjustment of strategies and explanations. This kind of instant feedback is easier to manage in proximity: the teacher can immediately notice when a student needs extra help, and students can ask for clarification as soon as they struggle to understand a word or instruction (Vergara, 2023).

Face-to-face settings also enable the use of physical teaching resources and kinesthetic activities. Classrooms typically contain tools such as blackboards or digital boards, posters, worksheets, flashcards, realia, and printed books—resources that can be manipulated during instruction. Active methodologies make use of these through techniques like learning stations (in which small groups rotate among tables with different tasks), educational board games to practice vocabulary, dramatizations and role plays that place students in real-life situations (e.g., shopping at a store or participating in a job interview), or fair-style activities that involve students moving around the classroom to interview peers (de-la-Peña et al., 2024).

The ability to move and to change group configurations in a physical space helps reduce monotony and accommodates different learning styles (auditory, visual, kinesthetic). For example, a student might walk around the classroom conducting interviews in English with ten classmates in a one-on-one interaction format, offering a natural and practical use of the language. These dynamics are specific to the face-to-face context, where the physical classroom can easily be rearranged for pair work, triads, or circular discussion groups, thereby supporting collaborative strategies. Importantly, face-to-face instruction fosters a keen sense of community and group commitment. Students who regularly attend the same classroom develop familiarity and trust, strengthening group cohesion—an essential condition for successful active methodologies, as cooperation and participation thrive in socially close settings (Palacios, 2023).

For example, when students work on a group project, being physically present allows them to speak spontaneously, take initiative on tasks, and motivate each other through direct interaction, creating a momentum that encourages individual participation. The teacher also plays a motivating role by using charisma, voice modulation, and physical presence to generate interests, something that can be diminished through a screen in virtual settings. Being in a dedicated learning environment, such as a classroom separated from outside distractions, also helps students "switch gears" and concentrate on academic tasks (Miranda, 2023).

Most schools decorate classrooms with cultural motifs, English-language posters, reading corners, and more, providing a contextual backdrop that enhances learning—an atmosphere that students are unlikely to replicate at home. Another important characteristic of the face-to-face environment is its fixed schedule and synchronicity. Face-to-face classes occur at predetermined times with set durations (e.g., 50-minute or two-hour sessions several times a week). This consistency supports students in developing discipline and work habits. During these scheduled sessions, all participants are engaged simultaneously, meaning active methodologies must be planned to make the most of this shared time. A typical example would be a lesson that begins with a brief introduction, followed by 30 minutes of group work, and concludes with oral presentations—allowing the teacher to coordinate each phase precisely (Aza et al., 2024).

However, the same rigid scheduling that enables active learning in person also limits it to class hours. Once the session ends, students leave the controlled environment, and the teacher cannot monitor continued engagement until the next class unless supplementary assignments are provided. This contrasts with virtual environments, where access to activities can be more flexible and ongoing, as will be discussed later. Regarding formative assessment in face-to-face settings, teachers have many opportunities to observe student performance in real-time and can walk around the classroom while students work collaboratively, listening to conversations in English and noting common difficulties (e.g., frequent grammatical errors) to provide targeted feedback (Espinosa-Rodríguez, 2022).

Oral skills can also be directly assessed through presentations or interviews, allowing teachers to offer immediate impressions and corrections. Once again, the strength of face-to-face education lies in the speed and personalization of formative assessment, with oral feedback often resolving misunderstandings in the moment and guiding students more effectively. In sum, language teaching in a face-to-face environment is characterized by direct human interactions, rich verbal and nonverbal communication, diverse opportunities for direct activities, and a socially contextualized setting that enhances motivation and group identification. These features create a favorable context for implementing active methodologies, as the teacher has immediate control over the educational setting and students have a dedicated space for learning. However, face-to-face learning also has its inherent limitations: it requires specific time and location commitments (which may exclude some students due to geographic or scheduling constraints) and may limit personalized pacing (since all students progress collectively according to a fixed plan, even if some need more time) (Lascano, 2024).

Characteristics of the Virtual Environment in Language Teaching

The dynamics of the virtual space for language teaching refer to instructional modalities in which the teaching and learning process is mediated by digital technologies, without the physical co-presence of students and/or the teacher. In this virtual environment, formats may range from fully online education (e-learning) to blended learning (b-learning), where part of the process takes place via the internet. Within the synchronous virtual setting, interaction may occur in real time through videoconferencing tools such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, while asynchronous formats allow learners to access materials, forums, and tasks at their own pace, without live sessions. The virtual environment has specific characteristics that shape the way active methodologies are implemented in language instruction. A key feature is the technological mediation of communication (Sánchez et al., 2022).

Unlike face-to-face dialogue, virtual interaction relies on various technological tools: video, audio, written chat, forums, email, etc. Social presence in the virtual classroom depends on the quality of the technology and the design of interactions. In synchronous English classes via videoconferencing, students and teachers can see and hear each other in real time, allowing for conversational practice and instant Q&A. However, this comes with limitations: audio latency, background noise, or connection issues may disrupt the flow of communication. Nonverbal cues are limited to what the webcam captures—typically the face and upper body (Veloz & Rodríguez, 2022).

Some gestures and expressions are visible, but full body language, direct eye contact, and the shared experience of physical presence are reduced or lost, which can diminish the natural feel of communication in a foreign language. However, the virtual context allows for alternative forms of participation. For instance, shy students may express themselves more easily via chat, sharing ideas they might not dare to say aloud. A well-managed virtual classroom can integrate voice, video, and text to actively involve all students. Additionally, virtual platforms often offer instant feedback tools (e.g., raise hand, live polls, emoji reactions), which replicate classroom participation and enhance interaction in innovative ways (Veloz & Rodríguez, 2022).

The virtual classroom also offers greater spatial and temporal flexibility. Since participants are not physically co-located, geographic barriers disappear. A student can attend an English class from any city or country, while the teacher may deliver the lesson from another location. This opens opportunities for diverse and multicultural groups that might not otherwise form. For example, an online ESL course might include learners from different countries, allowing them to practice English across multiple native language backgrounds and share cultural perspectives (Aguilar Gordón, 2020). In terms of time, while synchronous sessions follow a set schedule, asynchronous activities give learners control over their time management. Many online language courses provide 24/7 access to

materials (videos, readings, self-correcting exercises), enabling learners to progress at their own pace and according to their availability. This flexibility is one of the virtual environment's most important advantages for personalizing learning. Advanced learners can move quickly through familiar content, while those needing reinforcement can spend more time reviewing materials, watching videos multiple times, or completing extra exercises (Carmona & Mancero, 2020).

From the standpoint of active methodologies, this learner-managed pacing supports autonomy and self-regulation. However, it also requires strong self-discipline and time management skills, as the lack of a structured physical environment places the responsibility for engagement on the student. Another defining feature of virtual environments is the abundance of digital resources and interactive tools available for language teaching (Gómez-Gómez, 2021).

The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in pedagogy facilitates the inclusion of multimedia materials: authentic English videos (film clips, TED talks, news segments), audio for listening practice (podcasts, songs, dialogues), infographics, simulators, and educational online games. On a virtual platform, teachers can share these resources with a simple click—whereas in physical classrooms, doing so may require specific equipment (e.g., projector, speakers) or may not be feasible at all (Martínez & Candia, 2023).

There are also tools designed specifically for active online participation. Applications like Kahoot!, Quizlet, or Socrative allow teachers to create interactive quizzes students can complete on their devices, adding a gamified and competitive element that supports vocabulary or reading comprehension practice. Breakout rooms in video conferencing apps let students work in small groups, simulating in-person team tasks. Teachers can move between rooms to monitor progress and later reconvene the full class for reflection or synthesis (Montoya et al., 2023).

Collaborative cloud-based tools (e.g., Google Docs) also enable multiple students to write in English simultaneously and peer-review each other's work—an active learning activity that combines writing and technologically mediated collaboration. Asynchronous discussion forums allow for reflective interaction: teachers pose questions (e.g., "What do you think global English will look like in the future and why?"), and students respond at different times, read each other's replies, and reply in turn, generating rich written debate beyond class time. This format encourages thoughtful engagement and is particularly valuable for practicing argumentative writing in English. In virtual settings, assessment and learning monitoring take on distinct characteristics as well (Amón-Abad et al., n.d.).

Many online platforms automatically track student activity: what materials they accessed, how long they spent on tasks, how many quiz attempts they made, and their scores. This data provides the teacher with a comprehensive view of individual progress, enabling personalized support (e.g.,

reminding a student who never watched the pronunciation videos to review them). For formative assessment, virtual environments allow for automatic quizzes with instant feedback—students receive immediate corrections and explanations without having to wait for the next class (Carmona & Mancero, 2020).

Oral assessment in virtual environments can present technical challenges (e.g., audio latency, quality issues), but also opportunities: students can record and submit audio or video assignments in English, and teachers can review them carefully at their convenience, listen more than once, and provide either written or recorded feedback. This allows for more thorough tracking of oral production, which in face-to-face settings can be fleeting. Likewise, learning analytics in virtual platforms offer objective data on participation patterns—such as who engages most in forums or synchronous sessions and who remains silent—enabling tutors to act (e.g., encouraging quieter students to participate or checking in privately to see if they are facing challenges) (Montoya et al., 2023).

Naturally, the virtual environment also presents limitations and challenges. The absence of physical contact can lead some students to feel emotionally disconnected from the group or the teacher, which may affect motivation. The digital divide is another concern—not all students have access to suitable devices or stable internet connections. Any technological breakdown can interrupt learning. Furthermore, the level of self-organization required in virtual environments can be particularly difficult for those unaccustomed to independent study, as distractions and procrastination are more common at home than in a focused classroom setting. From the teacher's perspective, implementing active methodologies online requires an additional set of techno-pedagogical skills. Teachers must plan activities carefully to ensure interactivity across screens, navigate digital tools fluently, and vary media to maintain engagement, often switching between presentations, videos, interactive questions, and debates more frequently than in face-to-face classrooms (Veloz & Rodríguez, 2022).

Nonetheless, with proper training and sound pedagogical attention, it is entirely possible to conduct highly participatory and effective English classes online. Indeed, many core principles of active methodologies—learner-centeredness, collaborative learning, and the focus on authentic tasks—are not bound to any single medium. They can be implemented in both traditional physical classrooms and digital environments, provided the teacher is able to leverage the available resources and is aware of each context's advantages and limitations. A direct comparison of both contexts—face-to-face and virtual—regarding the implementation of active methodologies in English language learning will be discussed in the following section (Tejedor et al., 2020).

Comparison of Advantages and Challenges in Both Learning Environments

Both face-to-face and virtual environments offer distinct advantages for active English language learning, while also presenting specific challenges. The following comparison addresses the strengths each modality provides, as well as the inherent difficulties involved in their implementation.

Advantages of the Face-to-Face Environment:

The most evident advantage of face-to-face instruction is direct human interaction, which enhances immediacy in communication, an essential element in language learning. Students can practice pronunciation or engage in conversations and receive immediate feedback from either the teacher or peers. Physical presence also allows for nonverbal communication (gestures, body language, facial expressions), which aids in understanding and supports the teaching of language features, such as expressing emotions or intentions. Another significant benefit is the controlled, distraction-free setting of the classroom, which tends to foster higher levels of focus and engagement during lessons (Galán et al., 2021).

Teachers in face-to-face settings can adapt their sessions in real time based on students' reactions— for example, if confusion is observed, they can dedicate more time to difficult topics. This immediacy is not possible in asynchronous formats. In-person classes also facilitate the building of social bonds among students, creating a sense of trust and community that encourages active participation. Learners are more likely to engage and prepare when they feel they are part of a cohesive group (Cáceres-Piñaloza, 2020).

Additionally, teachers have easy access to physical materials and can arrange group activities without logistical constraints, making it easier to implement communicative dynamics. The face-to-face setting stands out for its immediate communicative value, familiar operational framework, and the possibility of combining verbal and nonverbal interaction—elements that enhance comprehensive and multifaceted learning.

Advantages of the Virtual Environment:

Virtual English instruction offers flexibility and broader accessibility as its primary strengths. Students can access classes and materials from various locations, eliminating the need for travel. This facilitates participation for those with professional responsibilities or those living in remote areas, who would otherwise be excluded (Sánchez et al., 2022).

Temporal flexibility is also a key advantage: many activities can be completed asynchronously, allowing students to manage their time according to their learning pace. Materials can be revisited as often as necessary—particularly useful for mastering complex grammar or vocabulary. The digital

environment also enables easy integration of multimedia resources: audio, video, interactive exercises, digital dictionaries, translators, educational programs, etc. This diversity enriches exposure to the language and caters to multiple learning styles (visual, auditory, textual, interactive) (Aza et al., 2024).

Digital records of student activity further enable self-reflection and self-assessment. Learners can revisit their contributions, review class recordings, and compare their progress over time—something rarely possible in traditional classrooms. Furthermore, virtual environments promote intercultural exchange: students from different countries can practice English together, gaining exposure to various accents and cultural perspectives, which enhances their intercultural communicative competence (Vincenzi, 2020).

Virtual learning environments also foster autonomy: students must manage their time, complete assignments without reminders, and solve technical issues independently. These habits build self-discipline and digital literacy—skills with long-term academic and professional value.

Challenges of the Face-to-Face Environment:

Despite its strengths, the in-person classroom has limitations. One is logistical rigidity: students must be present at specific times and locations, which can result in missed lessons due to illness, transportation issues, or other constraints. Missing a session may mean missing the opportunity for active practice, which cannot always be replicated through supplementary materials. Another challenge is the heterogeneity of learning paces: in large classes, teachers often move at a uniform pace, potentially leaving slower learners behind and boring more advanced students. While teachers may try to differentiate instruction, individualization is limited during whole-group activities (Ramírez et al., 2020).

Resource constraints can also hinder active learning. For example, implementing a resource-heavy project may be unfeasible due to lack of institutional support, and conducting dynamic discussions with 40 students in a small classroom is logistically difficult. Monitoring individual performance is challenging in large groups, where the teacher may not have enough time to assess each student's language skills in depth. Moreover, while the classroom eliminates many external distractions, it introduces internal ones—off-topic interruptions, background noise, or disruptive behavior—that the teacher must manage (Almenara & Valencia, 2021).

Additionally, the traditional classroom can lead to pedagogical routine: without ongoing professional development, teachers may revert to lecture-based formats out of convenience, thus missing the

opportunity to implement active strategies. Physical presence alone does not guarantee active learning; intentional, innovative pedagogy is essential.

Challenges of the Virtual Environment:

In virtual language teaching, one of the main challenges is maintaining student motivation and promoting active engagement from a distance. The screen can be a source of distraction— notifications, web browsing, or digital fatigue can cause students to lose focus (Bautista et al., 2020). To counter this, teachers must design highly dynamic and varied online sessions, which require careful planning and proficiency with digital tools. Another challenge is the reduction of spontaneous interaction: casual conversations and spontaneous feedback are limited, and interaction is more structured—one person speaks while others listen with muted microphones. This can diminish conversational fluency and increase the risk of isolation, as students may "hide" behind turned-off cameras. Teachers must make extra effort to engage all students through directed questions, chat participation, or small-group activities (Aguilar Gordón, 2020).

Technical issues also pose significant barriers: unstable internet connections, poor audio, or unfamiliarity with software can interrupt classes and cause frustration. There is also a digital skills gap: teachers with strong pedagogical knowledge but limited tech experience may struggle to deliver engaging virtual lessons, while students unfamiliar with platforms may fail to access or use resources effectively. Therefore, both student and teacher training are essential (Carmona & Mancero, 2020).

From an assessment perspective, ensuring academic integrity in online exams is challenging, as students may consult external resources or receive outside help. For this reason, project-based or qualitative assessments are often preferred, though they require more time and individualized feedback. Finally, one of the most complex challenges is fostering empathy and trust through a screen. In language learning, the confidence to speak and make mistakes is critical, and building this trust without face-to-face interaction requires significant effort. Teachers must employ frequent group work, personalized communication, and engaging introductions to create a sense of presence and accompaniment despite physical distance (Garzozi-Pincay et al., 2020).

Discussion

Comparative Analysis of Previous Findings

The outcomes of this research delineate the favorable ramifications of implementing active methodologies in the teaching of English as a foreign language, consistent with recent literature. Several studies concur that collaborative methodologies engage students actively and contribute

positively to language learning (Rodríguez et al., 2020). In other words, active in-person methodologies, like literature circles, yielded both increase in motivation and better preparation for class discussion, yet it is also more effective in enhancing reading skills and oral expression. In other words, utilizing active methodologies when applying blended learning, students experience more favorable emotional and academic experiences in active online learning compared to those in traditional learning. The future results emphasized that putting the students at the center of the process, as active learning suggests, promotes learning which is both meaningful and results in more autonomous learning (Peralta, 2023).

Likewise, the indicated evidence supports that virtual environments also pose evident advantages. The news and evidence indicated that participation barriers were common in the first massive educational shift to online education. However, some recent findings suggest an active methodology could be better than a traditional learning model when appropriately applied. For example, one study found that English learners who engaged in active instruction virtually exhibited increased levels of listening comprehension relative to those who received English instruction face-to-face (Romero-García et al., 2020). The teachers found advantages of active learning virtually, as they cited benefits of such virtual learning environments such as flexibility, actual resources, individual progress monitoring, opportunities for interactivity, and collaboration. However, disadvantages were noted as well such as: sustaining motivation without face-face contact and dependency on technological infrastructure (Carrera et al., 2024).

The differences between contexts imply that active methodology, regardless of learning modality, depends on how it is adapted to the respective contexts. Face-to-face the advantage is appropriate feedback and non-verbal communication, and virtual modalities necessitate intentional pedagogy which responds to the lack of proximity effect through purposeful interaction patterns, interaction structure, or teacher mediation (Guasp et al., 2020). More generally, the research suggests that in terms of active participation, these methodologies can also be initiated in virtual contexts, but the interaction may be less spontaneous when compared to a classroom environment. The results from this study align with the idea that active methodologies can be adequate for both modalities, if they are used appropriately (Pimentel Pereira & Ramos Gomes, 2022).

Pedagogical Proposals for Effective Use of Active Methodologies

Based on the critical analysis of the current results and prior research, the following pedagogical recommendations are proposed to guide teachers in the effective implementation of active methodologies across diverse contexts:

Use student-centered strategies: Techniques such as the flipped classroom have been shown to increase student responsibility, motivation, and self-directed learning. By highlighting students' active role in the learning process, this method allows for class time—either virtual or in-person—to focus on practical and collaborative activities, while theoretical content is reviewed independently beforehand. Virtual environments can add a level of dynamism and personalization to active learning (Miranda, 2023).

Incorporate cooperative learning and project-based tasks: Design group or pair activities based on real-world problems, such as debates, role plays, literature circles, or partner projects, which require students to interact in English. Studies have shown that literature circles activate all four language skills simultaneously through discussions driven by student-generated questions (González-Urgilés et al., 2024). Collaborative writing—whether online or in person—not only reinforces grammar and vocabulary but also encourages critical thinking and digital skills, contributing to elevated levels of student satisfaction. Therefore, teachers should promote collaboration and knowledge co-construction, assuming the role of facilitator rather than transmitter (Zea et al., 2023).

Adapt techniques to context and technology: Teachers should tailor active methodologies to their students' characteristics, learning objectives, and instructional environment. In face-to-face classrooms, this may involve arranging desks for group work or using physical games that require movement. In virtual classrooms, teachers should utilize platforms to implement breakout rooms, live polls, discussion forums, or collaborative apps like Padlet or Mentimeter (Lasluisa et al., 2024). Evidence shows that creative use of digital tools (e.g., interactive videos, real-time surveys, multimedia projects) can maintain elevated levels of participation and interest in online settings. Whatever tools are chosen, teachers must provide clear instructions, ensure all students understand their role, and encourage participation from reluctant learners. One of the most critical pedagogical proposals is to train teachers in the pedagogical use of ICT and in designing active learning experiences. Only with strong technical and methodological proficiency can they conduct such activities effectively, regardless of modality (Lasluisa et al., 2024).

Practical Implications for Lesson Planning and Teaching Execution

These insights have several practical implications for lesson planning and day-to-day teaching activities. First, applying active methodologies requires rethinking lesson plans: less time should be allocated to lectures and more to interaction, guided practice, and immediate feedback. Teachers must design teaching sequences where active learning tasks take center stage and align with learning objectives. For example, if planning a debate or group project, teachers need to prepare the necessary

materials in advance, define student roles, set evaluation criteria, and determine how to monitor group progress. In this context, formative assessment becomes especially relevant, as it enables continuous monitoring of student participation and understanding, allowing for real-time adjustments (Molina-Garzón & Palma-Villavicencio, 2022).

In virtual environments, lesson planning must also consider factors such as ensuring students have access to connectivity and learning platforms and preparing contingency plans for potential technical issues or disconnections. The recent pandemic experience highlighted that many teachers initially lacked the digital competencies to effectively adapt their active learning strategies to the virtual space. As such, educational institutions and teacher training programs should implement professional development initiatives that include not only active methodology training but also educational technology training. Only through such comprehensive preparation can teachers design and deliver online activities that maintain motivation and reduce dropout rates (Zea et al., 2023).

Likewise, teachers must consider the additional workload involved in preparing supplementary materials (videos, online quizzes, collaborative guides) and offering more individualized support. Institutions should allocate adequate time and resources to support this intensive planning process, recognizing that high-quality active teaching requires more preparation than traditional methods (Espinosa-Rodríguez, 2022).

Moreover, the teacher's role shifts significantly with active methodologies. Instead of serving as the primary source of information, the teacher becomes a mediator of learning—facilitating discussions, providing scaffolding when needed, and creating a safe environment where mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process. Previous research shows that giving students greater autonomy requires teachers to relinquish some control and offer opportunities for student exploration (Gómez-Hurtado et al., 2020).

This requires a different skill set, such as managing multiple groups simultaneously, listening carefully to student contributions, and asking meaningful questions to deepen learning. Practically speaking, teachers must plan their role in each active learning activity (e.g., when to intervene and when to let students find solutions on their own) and anticipate a certain degree of unpredictability during the lesson. Rather than following a rigid script, active teaching demands flexibility and constant attentiveness to make sound pedagogical decisions in the moment. All of this reinforces the notion that implementing active methodologies is not only about selecting the right strategy, but also about comprehensive lesson planning and teacher preparation to foster participatory learning in any context (Aza et al., 2024).

Conclusions

It can be concluded from the applied proposals conducted that active methodologies implemented in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class are both an effective teaching method for the purposes of meaningful learning, developing student engagement, and promoting learner autonomy. These methodologies stem from the active, constructivist, and sociocultural approaches, thereby offering possibilities beyond traditional transfer models (knowledge-based) as a method of teaching and learning.

Active methodologies can be applied within a face-to-face, meaning physically present formats, which allows for interactions, multichannel communication, and collaborative work to facilitate the co-construction of knowledge in real time. Nevertheless, active methodologies need to be professionally designed and implemented with the plan to create instructional practicalities that are meaningful, cooperative, and that acknowledge authentic engagement with the English language tasked with addressing the pedagogical method of teaching during the more recent unprecedented challenges of physical distance and technological consideration. Although physical distances and technology presents their own set of challenges, virtual spaces are also appropriate formats to implement active methodologies, particularly if the use of digital tools are done appropriately. Virtual spaces afford for temporal flexibility, and access to a variety of resources highlighted by Aguirre et al. (2010) and Ramos, Guía, and Ramos (2010) make it a flexible instructional possibility for an English language learning experience when it includes appropriate instructional mediation.

 Successful implementation of active methodologies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context will not rest merely on pedagogically selecting to use it, but correctly adjusting them to the contextual educational conditions, the learners, and their characteristics. To this end, all EFL teachers must possess a reflective/applied/creative/facilitator mindset, to align the educational intentions with the appropriate pedagogical and methodological tools.

To close this review, further studies are essential on the applicable methodologies active at various educational strata and sociocultural contexts in teacher education that provide both initial and ongoing support. It is only where there are methodical instructional designs that produce pedagogically relevant practice, as pedagogically the didactic, that will teachers facilitate the progressive development of reach the intended objectives.

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