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Innovative Approaches and Skill Development in English Language

DRA. CLAUDIA ANDREA DURAN MONTENEGRO
DRA. DIANA GUADALUPE DE LA LUZ CASTILLO

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Innovative Approaches and Skill Development in English Language

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Diana Guadalupe de La Luz Castillo

| Revision:

The autor

| Layout:

Nataly Gayde

| Cover:

Yago Raphael Massuqueto Rocha

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This publication is a heartfelt testament to the power of international collaboration in applied linguistics. We warmly thank the academic bodies: UDG-CA-1156 Transformación Digital y Nuevas Tecnologías para la Educación y la Gestión; UDG-CA-1197 Sociedad Global y Procesos de Enseñanza Aprendizaje de Idiomas; UV-CA 582 Fortalezas Humanas, Investigación e Innovación Educativa; and all the contributors whose passion and dedication made this book a reality. Their collective knowledge has deeply enriched English language teaching around the world. We are also truly grateful to all the students who participated and contributed their energy to this journey.

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE



language education.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that we present the third volume published by RED CIILA (the International Network for Innovation, Research, and Applied Linguistics). This book embodies the ongoing commitment of a vibrant and dedicated collaborative community devoted to advancing language teaching through innovative research and practical applications. The Network's work brings together distinguished academic groups from across the globe, fostering a space where cutting-edge ideas and pedagogical strategies converge to shape the future of

The chapters in this volume cover a variety of important topics reflecting current trends and challenges in English instruction. It begins with a look at transformative approaches to teaching English, encouraging educators to explore learner-centered and dynamic methods. The following chapters focus on improving foundational skills in beginner learners, such as writing and speaking.

Notable contributions include the exploration of the FRESH technique to enhance descriptive paragraph writing and the use of gratitude journals as a tool to boost writing skills through positive psychological strategies. These chapters highlight the Network's commitment to integrating emotional well-being with language learning.

The book also addresses the use of gamification in online teaching settings, demonstrating how digital methods can increase engagement and improve speaking accuracy for basic learners. Such research is especially relevant today, as technology plays an increasingly important role in language teaching and learning process.

Project-based learning is featured as a powerful way to promote speaking skills, supporting communicative competence in real-life contexts. Additionally, focused studies on pronunciation—covering regular past tense verbs and initial /s/ consonant clusters—offer practical strategies informed by ongoing research.

This publication is a testament to the value of international collaboration in applied linguistics. We extend our sincere gratitude to all academic bodies: UDG-CA-1156 Transformación Digital y Nuevas Tecnologías para la Educación y la

Gestión; UDG-CA-1197 Sociedad Global y Procesos de Enseñanza Aprendizaje de Idiomas; UV-CA 582 Fortalezas Humanas, Investigación e Innovación Educativa; and contributors whose expertise and dedication made this book possible. Their shared knowledge enriches English language teaching worldwide.

We sincerely hope our readers find inspiration and useful tools in these chapters to apply in their own teaching contexts. This book stands as an invitation to continue innovating and collaborating globally, to improve English learning for all.

Dra. Claudia Andrea Durán Montenegro
Coordinadora

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CHAPTER 1

TRANSFORMING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING - A PROPOSAL IMPLEMENTING COOPERATIVE, INDUCTIVE, AND AGILE APPROACHES IN ENGLISH I

Celerina Chagala Ocelot

ORCID: 0009-0003-6264-7082

Asunción Coutiño Clemente

ORCID: 0000-0002-0014-4798

Renata Capi Bustamante

ORCID:0009 0005 4955 2644

Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT: In recent decades, the teaching-learning process has undergone profound changes, driven by the need to respond to contemporary challenges. Active methodologies and models of educational innovation have consolidated as essential strategies to transform teaching practices, allowing for greater adaptation and dynamism in the classroom. This advancement has been made possible by the intensive use of information technologies, which facilitate interaction, access to resources, and the personalization of learning. In this context, an eclectic method (methodology/approach) is proposed because it combines cooperative learning, inductive methodology, and flipped classroom. Cooperative learning fosters collaboration and teamwork, allowing students to build knowledge together. The inductive methodology, for its part, promotes discovery and reflection based on concrete situations, encouraging critical thinking. The flipped classroom model facilitates students' access to theoretical content outside the classroom, dedicating in-person time to practical application and resolving doubts. Additionally, two models of educational innovation are integrated: Brain Gym and Agile. Brain Gym uses physical exercises to stimulate the brain and improve concentration, while Agile introduces flexible and adaptive dynamics that favor efficient learning management. The combination of these strategies is proposed to address topic 4, "Everyday Activities," of the Language I Program (English I) at the Universidad Veracruzana, promoting active, meaningful learning tailored to the current needs of students.

KEYWORDS: Teaching, learning, English, language, experiential.

RESUMEN: En las últimas décadas, el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje ha experimentado cambios profundos, impulsados por la necesidad de responder a los desafíos contemporáneos. Las metodologías activas y los modelos de innovación educativa se han consolidado como estrategias esenciales para transformar las prácticas docentes, permitiendo una mayor adaptación y dinamismo en el aula. Este avance ha sido posible gracias al uso intensivo de tecnologías de la información, que facilitan la interacción, el acceso a recursos y la personalización del aprendizaje. En este contexto, se propone un método ecléctico (metodología/enfoque) porque combina el aprendizaje cooperativo, la metodología inductiva y el aula invertida. El aprendizaje cooperativo fomenta la colaboración y el trabajo en equipo, permitiendo que los estudiantes construyan el conocimiento juntos. La metodología inductiva, por su parte, promueve el descubrimiento y la reflexión basados en situaciones concretas, favoreciendo el pensamiento crítico. El modelo de aula invertida facilita el acceso de los estudiantes al contenido teórico fuera del aula, dedicando el tiempo presencial a la aplicación práctica y la resolución de dudas. Además, se integran dos modelos de innovación educativa: Brain Gym y Agile. Brain Gym utiliza ejercicios físicos para estimular el cerebro y mejorar la concentración, mientras que Agile introduce dinámicas flexibles y adaptativas que favorecen la gestión eficiente del aprendizaje. La combinación de estas estrategias se propone para abordar el tema 4, "Actividades cotidianas," del Programa de Lengua I (Inglés I) en la Universidad Veracruzana, promoviendo un aprendizaje activo y significativo, acorde con las necesidades actuales de los estudiantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza, aprendizaje, inglés, idioma, experiencial.

In the educational field, the teaching-learning process has undergone different changes over the years. Currently, active methodologies and models of innovation have emerged as fundamental strategies to redirect teaching-learning practices by adjusting them to current requirements current. All of the above strongly supported by information technologies.

This essay presents a proposal for the integration of an eclectic methodology (cooperative learning, inductive methodology, and flipped classroom) and two models of educational innovation (Brain Gym and Agile) for the development of topic 4 titled Everyday Activities, of the Language I Program (English I), of the General Basic Training Area of the Universidad Veracruzana.

In this section, what is meant by active methodology and model of educational innovation is defined. According to Arieta, Gómez, Hernández, Rodríguez, Nájera & Soto (2025), active methodology is that form of teaching that focuses on "the dynamic participation of students in their own learning" promotes "the exploration, problem-

solving, and collaboration.” On the other hand, an educational innovation model is an educational innovation is a “theoretical framework that guides the effective integration of technology in teaching and learning, fostering the transformation of educational practices.”

From this perspective of the E-A process, the support of technological tools is crucial because they enable access to vast, updated, and extensive information.

In this way, students will be able to research from different sources of information, analyze, compare, and create their own opinion of the reality of the problem they need to solve.

By combining these three factors: active methodology, teaching models, innovative activities, and the use of information technologies, the role of the student is transformed from being a passive agent, or collaborator, to being directly involved in the learning process; the role of the teacher also transforms from being a “facilitator, guide, mediator, to being a “data analyst and designer of learning experience of learning.” (Arieta et al., 2025).

The above is intended to be integrated into topic 4: Daily Activities, within the educational experience (EE) English I (language I) for which an eclectic methodology would be used, which is a combination of the methodologies “cooperative learning, inductive methodology, and the flipped classroom”; and regarding educational innovation models, the agile model would be used, as well as the E-A brain gym strategy.

The eclectic method according to Kumar (2013 as cited in David Sani 2017) is “a combination of different teaching-learning approaches.” learning.” Gali (2009 as cited in David Sani 2017) comments that teachers must have the freedom to choose the best methods and techniques according to the “needs and situations” of the students. Cooperative learning promotes students working in teams so that each one collaborates on the assigned task and at the same time can socialize with the other members. The methodology inductive seeks to solve problems through “observation and experimentation.”

The flipped classroom or “flipped room” is an approach in which students review previously and on their own, the content of the classes through “videos, readings, or digital materials” (Arieta et al., 2025). In this way, class time is used for “practical activities, problem-solving, discussions, or collaborative projects” (chat GTP, 2025). The agile model is a “flexible and collaborative approach based on the incremental and continuous delivery of results promoting the adaptation and continuous improvement of the educational project” (Arieta et al., 2025); moreover, it urges the development of adaptability and resilience, preparing students for this changing world. Students receive feedback continuously within their own teams as well as from the teacher to

demonstrate their knowledge in practice (Domínguez, 2023). Brain gym is defined as “a method ... to reinforce concentration and improve attention by using both brain hemispheres. It consists of making movements with the body to improve skills, perfect abilities, and resolve blockages, thus creating new neural connections that activate areas of the brain” CCH Gazette of the UNAM.

Topic 4 of the educational program of Language I (English I) contains a considerable amount of vocabulary concerning verbs, food, expressions of time, etc. as well as grammatical structures of the simple present. The flipped classroom approach and the deductive approach could be used as follows: prior to class, students would watch some videos about daily activities and grammatical explanations. They would have to observe and take notes on the content, grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary. They would be required to research and read information to learn about daily activities in spring and/or summer of the people of a certain country (Brazil, for example). At this stage of their work, they could support themselves with ICTs for research, synthesis, etc. to achieve a better understanding.

In class, they could work in teams to share knowledge; for example, the meaning of words, groups of words that have syllables whose pronunciation is the same or very similar, grammatical rules (verb conjugation, formulation of questions), and phrases used to indicate the typical activities of people.

Subsequently, the students would put the shared knowledge into practice by writing the routine of a famous character. In this way, it would use the cooperative approach. It is considered important that all members of the team are involved in each of the activities with responsibility in the preparation and review of the work for feedback. For their part, it is expected that the teacher constantly monitors to identify situations where it is required his intervention to guide the search for the correction of possible errors by the students themselves. At a second moment, already with a better understanding, it would require students to work on developing paragraphs of their own routine and those of family members applying the revised grammar, but using the content of their program. The individual work would again be reviewed by the team members, without neglecting the approval of the teacher. The brain gym would be applied before starting each class to activate both brain hemispheres and maximize attention, resulting in better development of students' cognitive skills. In addition to the written practice, it is considered very important the oral dissertation, which would be carried out through presentations only with supporting images. This type of practice is of great value because the student demonstrates mastery of vocabulary, grammar, the pronunciation, and coherence to communicate. For their part, the group is urged to be attentive to the presentation to ask questions to the presenting students, delving into the content.

In this work, the implementation of an active methodology is promoted that is characterized by focusing the process of linguistic acquisition on the participation dynamic of the student, promoting exploration, problem-solving, and collaboration. For its part, an educational innovation model is a theoretical framework that guides the effective integration of technology in teaching, fostering the transformation of educational practices. (Arieta et al., 2025).

The use of technological tools is essential, as it facilitates access to updated and diverse information, allowing students to research, analyze, compare, and build well-founded opinions on the problems to be solved. The combination of active methodologies, innovative models, and technologies of the information transforms the role of the student, who goes from being a passive receiver to the protagonist of their learning; the teacher, in turn, evolves from facilitator to designer of experiences and analyst of educational data (Arieta et al., 2025).

CONTEXT

Students at the Universidad Veracruzana studying English I generally do it within the General Basic Training Area; which is a department of academic administration and is organizationally located in the Academic Secretariat of the Universidad Veracruzana (UV), with the purpose of achieving comprehensive and harmonious development of the students. Its origin in 1999 with the educational model: New Educational Model Educational, which would later become: Comprehensive and Flexible Educational Model (MEIF) and which is currently referred to as: Institutional Educational Model (IEM). The educational experiences of Language I and II are part of the Basic Training Area (BFA) and/or initial of the study programs of the University. Within these experiences, it is expected that students develop the four language skills: listening comprehension, expressive oral comprehension; reading comprehension and expressive written comprehension, as well as self-learning strategies. The Language I students can attend the language center and/or go to the classrooms assigned for the delivery of these experiences in their faculties. The young people, mostly aged 18-22, form groups of 20-35 students and each group has an English language teacher and the possibility of reinforcing

their knowledge in the Self-Access Centers and/or with online activities, either through the institutional platform (EMINUS) or with assignments from the teacher in charge.

METHODOLOGY

For the development of the topic “Daily Activities”, an eclectic methodology is proposed, eclectic, defined as the combination of various teaching-learning approaches (Kumar, 2013, cited in Mwanza, 2017). This flexibility allows teachers to select the most appropriate strategies according to the needs and contexts of the students (Gali, 2009, cited in Mwanza, 2017). Therefore, the following active methodologies and innovation models have been considered:

Collaborative learning: It promotes teamwork and shared responsibility. shared, allowing for socialization and collaborative learning. It is important to consider, on the other hand, the importance of using Collaborative Learning in the development of macro skills in the area of Language and Literature. “Collaborative learning has proven to be effective in the development of macro skills in the area of Language and Literature, allowing students to improve their skills in reading, writing, comprehension, and oral expression” (González, 2020). Furthermore, collaborative learning supports or fosters neurolinguistic learning where the socialization of knowledge is of utmost importance.

Inductive methodology: It promotes problem-solving based on observation and experimentation. Divided into two parts; the first: presupposes the appropriate presentation of the content by the teacher, who must know when preparing his class must select those contents, vocabulary, and examples suitable that can lead the student to a better understanding of the topic. During the second phase; the student must take responsibility for his own learning, by making appropriate notes, elaborating on their own observations of grammar, through: cards, notes, and/or any other material additional that may support their learning.

Flipped classroom: Students review the content beforehand using digital materials, reserving class time for practical activities, discussion, and collaborative projects (Arieta et al., 2025) Thus, students are urged to prepare for their classes, to consider a prior reading related to what will be seen in class and/or seek observations, questions that they can express in class and thus improve their understanding and comprehension skills in the different language acquisition. skills.

Agile: A flexible and collaborative approach that promotes the delivery incremental of results, continuous adaptation, and resilience, preparing students for changing environments (Arieta et al., 2025; Domínguez, 2023). Generally used for corporate and technical projects, it has been applied in educational fields with the main characteristics that focused on flexibility support students to improve in the academic projects. In addition to fostering learning autonomy, the students must:

- Define clear objectives: Set clear and measurable goals from the beginning will guide the process and provide a framework for decision-making.
- Divide the content: the content should be broken down into manageable modules or units manageable. Therefore, at the end of each module, an adaptation, a review and/or evaluation which provides genuine interest and is controlled through feedback.
- Foster collaboration: agile learning is inherently collaborative. It is essential to create spaces for group discussions, collaborative projects, and mutual feedback.
- Adapt and adjust: adaptability is key in agile learning. The educators and facilitators must be willing to make adjustments based on the feedback and progress of the students, ensuring that learning is always relevant and up-to-date. In addition to ensuring a steady progress and safe at every step of the process, during each module the teacher will be able to continue supporting the weaker students, while they themselves can gain confidence by recognizing their skills and/or talents, which may vary from module to module.
- Incorporate technology: technology plays a crucial role in learning agile. Digital tools, such as the learning management platform (LMS) of Open Webinars and collaboration applications, facilitate access to resources, promote interaction, and support autonomous learning.

Brain gym: (Brain Gym) consists of physical exercises that stimulate both brain hemispheres, improving concentration, attention, and skills cognitive (CCH UNAM Gazette, n.d.). This type of activities or dynamics have proven to work with students from the Universidad Veracruzana during language courses. Therefore, it should be considered to continue with this type of actions that provide students with a space for attention, training and/or stimulation cerebral.

The integration of diverse methodologies in English language teaching offers a comprehensive framework that addresses various learning styles and cognitive skills. Collaborative Learning enhances communication and social interaction, fostering essential macro skills such as reading, writing, and oral expression. The Inductive Methodology encourages students' active engagement through observation and experimentation, promoting deeper understanding and learner autonomy. Meanwhile, the Flipped Classroom maximizes classroom interaction by encouraging prior content review, supporting critical thinking and practical application. Agile methodology adds flexibility and continuous adaptation, cultivating resilience and collaboration through incremental learning cycles. Additionally, Brain Gym exercises stimulate cognitive functions, improving concentration and attention essential for

language acquisition. Together, these methodologies complement each other, enabling educators to tailor their teaching strategies effectively. Consequently, employing an eclectic method that thoughtfully combines these approaches can best satisfy the diverse needs of students, optimizing their language learning experience and outcomes.

(Haskell, 1978) who defined the eclectic approach as one *which utilizes the best (most appropriate and/or useful) parts of existing methods*. and emphasizing in the use of the communicative characteristics of all methodologies that have existed to emphasize in this proposal essay; making use of the eclectic methodology and some others strategies including the flipped classroom which consists in getting the instruction out of the classroom mainly with technological resources and practice in the classroom. However, some more tools could work in this proposal including some others strategies which narrow the link between academic training and the real labor world through existing tools such as Experiential Learning, Situated Learning, Challenge-Based Learning, micro-degrees among others that our university already uses. In this way, the quality of student training is worked on as well as the experience received through a school-real/labor world.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GRAPHIC

There some other opportunities that professors can also observe with the Linkage, *Vinculación*, for example, UV establishes a comprehensive and articulated bridge between academia and employment through formal programs (Labor Linkage, Experimenta, Empléate), practical experiences (BUE, internships), direct support (Job Bank), institutional infrastructure (UV Companies Fund), and an active network of employers. All this guarantees that students not only learn theory but also acquire experience, skills, and real opportunities in the labor market, thus achieving job placement.

Students are exposed to an international educational context where they experience cultural exchanges, language, customs, educational methods, and often schedules. Even through mobility via technology, achieving an internationalization of the curriculum through distance collaboration projects.

The fact of studying micro degrees as a continuing education course, for example, which allows them to acquire the knowledge that enables them to meet that need or limitation, which is a necessary and brief specialty.

Finally, the integration of technology as a fundamental part for the development of this globalized world. From these activities, students can see in terms of language areas that the foreign language exists, it is real, and is a real means of communication not only a subject in a situated learning, knowing the needs of the community and real work life, learning from field activities to information in classrooms.

CONCLUSION

It is believed that the implementation of active methodologies, models of educational innovation, and the use of technological tools could transform the traditional approach to the teaching-learning process. In this context, the student would cease to be a passive agent and would become the protagonist of their own learning, while the teacher would take on the role of guide, mediator, and designer of meaningful experiences. In summary, through this comprehensive approach, it is expected to achieve meaningful learning, where students develop not only linguistic competencies, but also life skills, such as adaptability, teamwork, and the ability to learn autonomously and continuously.

In addition to this, to expose the students to a real world, to the real context, to the real language and to a real communication in a foreign language is essential. Enriching our academic instruction with real experience can help them become a quality professional.

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CHAPTER 2

THE IMPACT OF THE FRESH TECHNIQUE ON DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS ON A BASIC LEVEL

Diana Guadalupe De La Luz Castillo
ORCID 0000-0002-8539-5317

Edwin Andrés García Mariscal

Cristian Alexis Alcala Padilla

Ricardo Said Gómez García

Diego Noé Mendoza Chavez
Universidad De Guadalajara

ABSTRACT: The FRESH technique introduces a structured approach to teaching descriptive paragraph writing by focusing on Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift. This method helps students better organize their ideas and improve coherence in writing. Its use at Universidad de Guadalajara, where English is a required subject, highlights its significance in academic settings. Besides enhancing descriptive writing, the technique promotes critical thinking and logical organization—vital skills for academic success. This research targets adult ESL learners who struggle to write effectively in English. By strengthening their writing, FRESH empowers students to communicate more clearly, supporting their academic and professional development, while also offering educators a valuable instructional tool.

KEYWORDS: FRESH technique, descriptive writing, ESL education, academic development, critical thinking

RESUMEN: La técnica FRESH presenta un enfoque estructurado para enseñar la redacción de párrafos descriptivos, centrado en Hecho, Razón, Elaboración y Cambio. Este método ayuda a los estudiantes a organizar mejor sus ideas y mejorar la coherencia en la escritura. Su uso en la Universidad de Guadalajara, donde el inglés es una materia obligatoria, destaca su importancia en contextos académicos. Además de mejorar la escritura descriptiva, la técnica fomenta el pensamiento crítico y la organización lógica, habilidades esenciales para el éxito académico. Esta investigación

está dirigida a estudiantes adultos de inglés como segunda lengua que tienen dificultades para escribir eficazmente. Al fortalecer su escritura, FRESH empodera a los estudiantes para comunicarse con mayor claridad, apoyando su desarrollo académico y profesional, además de ofrecer a los docentes una herramienta valiosa.

PALABRAS CLAVE: técnica FRESH, escritura descriptiva, educación ESL, desarrollo académico, pensamiento crítico

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Even with the availability of various methods and techniques to improve writing skills, many adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Mexico continue having important difficulties in organizing their ideas coherently in written form. Historically, writing has been one of the most challenging skills for language learners due to its cognitive and linguistic complexity (Hyland, 2016). In recent years, the demand for proficient writing skills in academic and professional settings has increased, exacerbating this issue (National Institute for Adult Education [INEA], 2022). However, existing teaching methodologies often fail to address the specific needs of adult learners in Mexico, resulting in a persistent gap in their ability to produce well-structured and coherent descriptive paragraphs.

This problem is further compounded by several factors, including a lack of appropriate instructional materials, varying levels of prior education, and the diverse cultural backgrounds of learners (Secretaría de Educación Pública [SEP], 2023). According to recent data, only 38% of Mexican adults aged 25–64 have gotten an upper secondary education level, which directly impacts their ability to develop advanced writing skills (OECD, 2022). Additionally, 62% of adult EFL learners in Mexico report difficulties in constructing descriptive paragraphs, which makes emphasis on a critical need for targeted writing instruction (British Council Mexico, 2021).

The ability to write descriptive paragraphs is essential for adult learners in Mexico, as it improves their academic performance, employability, and communication skills in an increasingly globalized world. Proficient writing allows people to articulate ideas clearly, participate in higher education, and access better job opportunities (Graham & Perin, 2007). Furthermore, improving descriptive writing skills promotes critical thinking and strengthens language competence, which is crucial for adults navigating professional and academic environments (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014). Addressing this gap is therefore not only a pedagogical necessity but also a means of empowering Mexican adults to succeed in an English-dominant world.

CONTEXT

This research is carried out in Universidad de Guadalajara (UDG) is one of the largest public universities in Mexico with 339,508 students (Numeralia UDG 2025A): UDG has 17 sites to offer Bachelor's degrees, master programs and PHD programs. It also offers classes at a highschool level. One of the sites is called Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (CUCSH). This site has 10,406 (Numeral IA UDG, 2024A). The B.S In English Languages Teaching as a Foreign Language (LIDILE, In Spanish) is part of such a site. 147 students are enrolled in the program learning how to teach (Numeralia UDG 2025A). They are asked to get into groups of 4 people (micro-teaching group) to teach basic English classes in 6 levels. Each micro-teaching plans and performs class from 7 to 8 am or from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday through Thursday. LIDILE students are exposed to a teaching program called Programa Abierto de Lenguas (PAL- Ingles) during 4 semesters (third, forth, fifth and sixth semesters in LIDILE). The last two semesters in LIDILE, they coordinate PAL by administering students to observe microteaching groups and giving academic feedback. Teachers from LIDILE are also involved as observers to evaluate micro-teaching groups. Currently, groups were formed in 2025A. 6 groups of level 1, 2 groups in level 2, 1 group in level 3, 3 groups in level 4, 2 groups in level 5, and 2 groups in level 6.

JUSTIFICATION

The FRESH technique represents an innovative technique for teaching descriptive paragraph writing, offering a structured method for organizing ideas and improving coherence. This technique, which stands for Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift, provides a clear framework that helps students organize their thoughts more effectively. Its application in the Universidad de Guadalajara, where English is a mandatory requirement, is particularly important. The FRESH technique not only improves students' ability to write descriptively but also increases critical thinking and logical organization, key components of academic writing.

The beneficiaries of this research are adult students who often struggle with writing in English as a second language. If this technique improves their writing skills, this will empower them to communicate in written form more effectively, thereby contributing to their overall academic and professional growth. The potential benefits of this technique extend beyond individual students, as it also provides educators with a new tool to enhance their teaching practices, ultimately improving the quality of English language education in Mexico.

First of all, The research paper of Permatasari and Kamaruddin (2024) was taken into consideration due to its similarities on the characteristics of the investigation. It conducted a study to find out if the Applying Fact Reason Elaboration Shift (FRESH)

technique can develop the student's skill to write descriptive text. This research applied a quasi-experimental research design that involved experimental group and control group. The sample of this research was 48 students. The results of this study showed that the writing skill of the eleventh grade students of SMAN Model Terpadu Madani Palu could be improved by applying Fact-Reason Elaboration-Shift (FRESH) technique.

5 years previous Permatasari and Kamaruddin's paper, Somsai and Buttapeng (2020) executed a study aimed to determine whether there are any significant differences in descriptive paragraph writing competence before and after practicing "FRESH" of students majoring in English. The methodology used is a quantitative design that included 54 students studying English at the Department of Liberal Arts. The results showed that the students' descriptive paragraph writing competence improved after practicing FRESH technique.

Then, Ria and Novtapianti (2019) performed a quasi-experimental study at SMP PGRI Sukamoro, involving 212 eighth-grade students. The study aimed to investigate the impact of the FRESH technique on writing achievement in descriptive text. The result revealed a significant difference in writing achievement between the experimental group (taught using FRESH) and the controlled group.

Next, Achmad and Fitriani (2019) implemented a study in a highschool in Banda Aceh to examine whether the FRESH technique improves students' writing ability. Using a quantitative pre-experimental method, they tested first-year students with pretests and posttests. The results showed an increase in mean scores across all writing aspects.

Andriani (2017) administered a study to know the effectiveness of the use of Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift technique (FRESH) in the SMPN 1 college in Kasihan. It used a quasi-experimental design and a technique of sampling using simple random sampling. The population of the research was 8th grade students.

Finally, Anggaraini Latifah (2016) undertook a study to discover if there was one difference in descriptive writing achievement in English Language teaching (ELF). The population (56 students) were taught towards using the FRESH technique (Fact, Reason, Elaboration and Shift). The design used was a quantitative study using a Pre-test and a Post-test. There was a significant improvement.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The first term to be understood is English Language Teaching (ELT). As HarperCollins (2011) explains, ELT is "the instruction of English to non-native speakers, encompassing not just language transmission but also cultural and communicative

competence” (p. 45). However, ELT is not as simple as that definition suggests. It includes a variety of methods, techniques, approaches, and objectives. For example, some key objectives are helping students understand spoken and written English and teaching functional language for real-world use. Common methods include the communicative approach and the direct method, while techniques may focus on pronunciation, listening skills, or reading comprehension.

Building upon these foundations, ELT focuses on developing learners’ communicative competence through structured skill acquisition. As House and Scott (2023) assert, “ELT skills encompass the integrated abilities required to process and produce English effectively, forming the foundation for meaningful communication” (p. 12). These skills are traditionally categorized into four core domains: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Mastery of these skills is interdependent; for instance, reading enhances vocabulary acquisition, which in turn supports writing fluency (Nation, 2020). Proficiency across all four skills is often regarded as indicative of advanced English competence, as they enable learners to engage in academic, professional, and social contexts seamlessly.

Among these skills, writing involves effectively communicating ideas through written text, including the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and organization. It is a complex cognitive activity that needs control over various elements simultaneously. As Nunan (1999) states, “Writing is potentially the most difficult skill for Foreign Language (FL) learners to master.” Proficiency in writing is essential for learners because it not only makes academic success easier but also improves critical thinking and the ability to organize and analyze information. Gautam (2019) emphasizes that “writing skill possesses an invaluable importance for the sake of enabling students to understand how the distinct components of a language harmoniously act together.”

A specialized form of writing, academic writing is a formal style used in universities and scholarly publications. It is characterized by a formal tone, precise word choice, and a clear focus on the research problem under investigation. According to Swales and Feak (2012), “Academic writing is a formal and structured mode of communication that adheres to the conventions of a specific discipline. It is characterized by clarity, precision, and a focus on presenting evidence to support claims.” This style of writing uses evidence-based arguments and logical reasoning to guide a reader’s understanding of a subject. Lillis and Scott (2007) mention, “Academic writing is not merely about conveying information but about constructing knowledge through a formalized process of inquiry, argumentation, and critical engagement with sources” (p. 12). Writers use this format to identify and analyze concepts, propose theories, or draw rational conclusions.

To achieve clarity in writing, organizational patterns are essential—different ways writers arrange their ideas to make them clear and easy to follow. According to Graham and Perin (2018), “Effective writing organization provides readers with clear pathways through complex information” (p. 112). Some common patterns include braided organization that mixes related ideas together, modular organization with separate sections that connect like puzzle pieces, circular organization that ends where it began but with deeper meaning, and collage organization that combines different writing styles like quotes and facts. These patterns help writers present information in the way that works best for their topic and audience.

Closely related to organization, cohesive writing requires careful attention to how ideas connect throughout a text. Brown (2019) identifies lexical cohesion as fundamental, stating it “is achieved through the repetition of key words or the use of synonyms, ensuring that ideas flow smoothly and logically” (p. 67). This technique works in tandem with other cohesive devices. As Lee (2021) explains, “Referential cohesion involves the use of pronouns or demonstratives to refer back to previously mentioned ideas, maintaining clarity and continuity in writing” (p. 34). Together, these cohesion patterns create texts that are coherent and easy for readers to follow, which is particularly important in academic and professional contexts where clarity is paramount.

Within well-structured texts, paragraphs serve distinct purposes depending on their type. As Smith (2020) explains, “Paragraphs can be descriptive, narrative, expository, or persuasive, each serving a unique purpose in writing, from painting vivid images to telling stories, explaining ideas, or convincing readers” (p. 45). This variety allows writers to adapt their communication style to different contexts. Taylor (2019) further clarifies this distinction by noting that “Descriptive paragraphs focus on details, narrative paragraphs tell a story, expository paragraphs explain concepts, and persuasive paragraphs aim to influence the reader’s opinion” (p. 23). Understanding these paragraph types is essential for effective written communication across various genres and disciplines.

One particularly important type, the descriptive paragraph, vividly portrays a person, place, object, or experience, allowing the reader to visualize it clearly. As Zemach and Islam (2016) define it, “A descriptive paragraph uses sensory details and precise language to create a mental image, engaging the reader’s senses of sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell” (p. 72). Unlike simple explanations, effective description goes beyond basic adjectives because it selects striking, unusual words that make the subject come alive. For example, instead of saying “The flower is pretty,” a strong descriptive paragraph might say “The crimson petals curled delicately, releasing a sweet, honey-like fragrance.” The writer must use concrete, tangible details so that the reader can almost feel the texture, see the colors, or imagine the sounds being described.

To facilitate the teaching of descriptive writing, the **FRESH technique provides learners with a clear structural framework. As Reynolds (2019) explains, “Scaffolded writing techniques like FRESH offer students a systematic approach to developing both content and organization in their descriptive writing” (p. 15). This acronym-based method breaks down the writing process into four key components: Fact (F) establishes the central observation or concrete detail; Reason (R) explains why this fact is significant; Elaboration (E) develops the description through sensory details and examples; and Shift (SH) provides a thoughtful conclusion by changing perspective or linking to broader ideas. Particularly effective for EFL learners, this technique helps writers move beyond basic descriptions to create vivid, well-structured paragraphs that engage readers.

Underlying this technique is rhetorical structure, which refers to how writers arrange their ideas to communicate clearly with their readers. As Hyland (2016) explains, “Rhetorical structure provides the framework that allows writers to shape their texts to meet disciplinary conventions and reader needs” (p. 89). When writing descriptive paragraphs, this means putting information in the best order, focusing on important points, and using words that help readers follow the ideas. The FRESH technique helps with this by giving writers a clear way to: 1) choose a main idea (focus), 2) add good details (rich details), and 3) use words that appeal to the senses (sensory language). This structure is especially helpful for English learners who need to write for school or work.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

Determine how to teach writing at a basic level using the FRESH technique.

- I **Objective 1:** To understand how the writing process works referring to coherence.
- I **Objective 2:** To analyze how Ss write and think in English.
- I **Objective 3:** To test and evaluate the effectiveness of the FRESH technique to organize the information in descriptive paragraphs.
- I **Question 1:** What are the issues in ELT when teaching a basic level?
- I **Question 2:** How do students write with and without training?
- I **Question 3:** How does the “FRESH technique” work to improve SS writing coherence at a basic level?

HYPOTHESIS

This study has the objective to prove if the FRESH technique helps EFL beginning adult learners to improve their organization when writing descriptive paragraphs. The hypothesis of this study is that students who have been taught with the FRESH technique have better organization skills when writing a descriptive paragraph than the students who have not.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can FRESH technique help EFL beginning learners to improve the organization of the information in writing when performing descriptive paragraphs?

METHODOLOGY

The study's research design is qualitative, since it has the goal of exploring and understanding how the FRESH technique can help EFL adult learners improve their organizational writing skills. Qualitative research is ideal for this study because it focuses on participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections on their writing process. The approach that has been used in the research paper is a quasi-experimental method. It was opted to use this method because there is already an existing group which fits the characteristics of the research. However, it's important to be careful about arriving at strong conclusions because there may be level, the duration and method of instruction, and other contextual factors like the classroom environment and participants' demographic characteristics, all of which may influence the observed outcomes.

INSTRUMENTS

Based on the research paper, the pre-test will be an instrument used to assess students' first descriptive writing abilities. For this activity, students will be presented with four different pictures. The instructions will require them to select one of the four pictures, analyze it, and then write a descriptive paragraph about its main characteristics. They will be specifically asked to use a variety of adjectives and details, and the paragraph will need to be between 60 and 80 words long. You can revise the worksheet of the activity in the Appendix section. (Image 1.1)

The research paper indicates that a post-test will also be administered as part of the methodology, typically used after the instructional period to measure any changes or improvements in writing skills, specifically related to the FRESH technique. However, the provided text from the research paper details the instructions for the pre-test but does not explicitly state the specific instructions given for the post-test

activity within its description of instruments. The paper's methodology implies a similar task will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the technique after the teaching intervention. You can revise the worksheet of the activity in the Appendix section. (Image 1.2)

ANALYSIS OF THE COLLECTED DATA

Before learning the FRESH technique, the students' writing samples in the pre-test showed some common problems. Many paragraphs felt disorganized, like a list of ideas rather than a smooth description. Students often used simple words and sentences, and didn't include many details to make the picture come alive for the reader. Their writing wasn't always easy to follow.

The research paper explains the FRESH technique, which stands for Fact, Reason, Elaboration, and Shift. This method gives students a clear plan to follow when writing descriptions. It helps them start with a main point (Fact), explain why it's important (Reason), add details and examples (Elaboration), and then wrap it up nicely (Shift). The goal is to make their paragraphs better organized and more detailed.

After the students learned the FRESH technique, their writing in the post-test looked different. The paragraphs seemed better planned and easier to understand. Students included more specific details, and their ideas flowed more smoothly from one sentence to the next. This improvement matches what the students themselves said in the survey since most of them felt the FRESH technique helped make their writing clearer and better connected.

RESULTS

After class the students were asked 4 questions, two questions were close and two were closed.

The first question was closed-ended, in this question was considered 4 possible answers, option one "Muy util", option two "Algo util", option three "Poco util" and option four "No estoy seguro/a". And three students answered "Muy util" and three "Algo util". You can see the image 2.1

¿Qué tan útil fue la técnica FRESH para organizar tus ideas antes de escribir un párrafo descriptivo?

6 respuestas

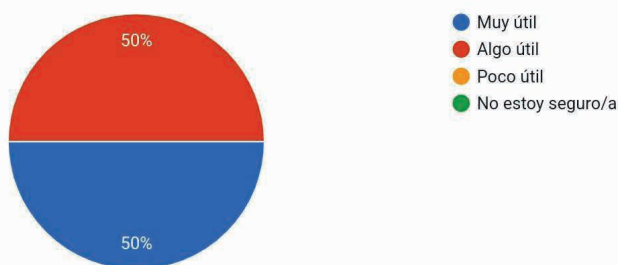


Image 2.1

The second question was closed-ended and offered four possible responses: option one “Totalmente de acuerdo”, option two “De acuerdo”, option three “En desacuerdo”, and option four “Totalmente en desacuerdo”. Three students selected “Totalmente de acuerdo” and three chose “De acuerdo”. You can see the image 2.2

¿El uso de la técnica FRESH facilitó estructurar tu párrafo descriptivo de manera clara y efectiva?

6 respuestas

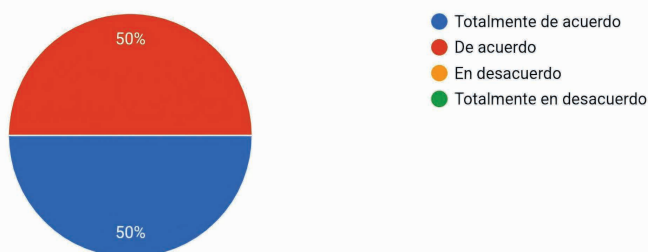


Image 2.2

The third question was open-ended and asked students to specify which part of the FRESH technique helped them the most when writing their paragraph. The six responses varied: some students mentioned that the technique helped them express ideas more clearly or structure their texts better, one highlighted the elaboration step, and another pointed out the usefulness of all the steps for maintaining order in writing. One answer was unclear (“S”), and another student referred to the expression of how the image makes one feel. You can see the image 2.3

¿Qué parte de la técnica FRESH te ayudó más al escribir tu párrafo?

6 respuestas

- Si me ayudó a estructurar mejor la forma de darme a entender
- En todo sentido pero si es algo complicado para formular bien los párrafos
- S
- Elaboración
- How la parte de expresar como no hace sentir la imagen
- Todos los pasos de la técnica ya que me ayudó a tener un orden en la estructura del texto

Image 2.3

The fourth question was open-ended and asked students to mention any difficulties they encountered while using the FRESH technique. Responses varied: one student mentioned that the time was too short, another struggled with describing according to the sections, and one pointed out vocabulary as a challenge. Two students reported no difficulties, and one student indicated that the only challenge was memorizing the steps of the technique for future use. You can see the image 2.4

¿Qué dificultades (si tuviste alguna) encontraste al usar la técnica FRESH?

6 respuestas

- El tiempo. Es muy poco tiempo 1 hora es poco.
- Al describir por las secciones
- Ninguna
- El vocabulario
- ninguna me parece una esstructura facil de entender
- Solamente aprenderse el orden de la técnica para futuras ocasiones

Image 2.4

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APPENDIX



Descriptive paragraph Pre-test



Instructions:

Select 1 of the 4 pictures. Analyse it and write a paragraph describing its main characteristics. Use a variety of adjectives and details. Your paragraph must contain between 60-80 words.

Image 1.1 (Pre-writing activity)



Descriptive paragraph

Post-test



Instructions:

Select the same picture. Analyse it and write a paragraph describing its main characteristics. Use a variety of adjectives and details. Your paragraph must contain between 60-80 words.

Image 1.2 (Post-writing activity)



CHAPTER 3

GRATITUDE JOURNAL AS A TOOL FOR ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS IN BASIC ENGLISH LEARNERS

Claudia Andrea Durán Montenegro
ORCID: 0000 0002 0230 6383

Indira Santiago León
ORCID: 0009-0003-6298-8480

Beatriz Pereyra Cadena
ORCID: 0009 0008 0209 5468
Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT: This study investigates the impact of gratitude on focus and resilience in university students learning English as a second language through the use of a gratitude journal. Data were collected from 23 basic English students at Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, over the course of one semester. Participants maintained a gratitude journal in English, beginning with simple sentences and gradually progressing to longer entries. They also completed a questionnaire assessing their focus and resilience. A control group of students who did not engage in journaling completed the same questionnaire for comparison. Findings indicate that incorporating gratitude journaling supports improved focus, enhanced writing skills, and greater emotional resilience during language learning. These results suggest that gratitude interventions can be a valuable addition to ESL instruction, fostering both academic and emotional development. In today's educational context, teaching English as a second language requires innovative strategies that address not only cognitive but emotional aspects of learning. Incorporating positive psychology practices, such as gratitude journaling, offers a practical approach to deepen students' personal connection with the material and increase their motivation. This study highlights the benefits of integrating such techniques into language education to promote more engaging and effective learning experiences.

KEYWORDS: gratitude, journal, positive psychology, English, learning, teaching languages.

RESUMEN: Este estudio analiza el impacto de la gratitud en la concentración y la resiliencia de estudiantes universitarios que aprenden inglés como segunda lengua, a través del uso de un diario de gratitud. La investigación se realizó con 23 estudiantes de nivel básico de inglés en la Universidad Veracruzana, México, durante un semestre. Los participantes registraron en su diario frases en inglés, comenzando con oraciones simples y avanzando hacia entradas más extensas. Además, completaron un cuestionario para evaluar su concentración y resiliencia. Un grupo control, sin práctica de diario, también respondió el cuestionario para comparación. Los resultados evidencian que el uso del diario de gratitud favorece una mejor concentración, el desarrollo de habilidades de escritura y una mayor resiliencia emocional durante el aprendizaje del idioma. Estos hallazgos sugieren que la incorporación de intervenciones basadas en la gratitud puede ser un valioso recurso en la enseñanza del inglés como segunda lengua, promoviendo tanto el desarrollo académico como el emocional. En el contexto educativo actual, donde es fundamental abordar aspectos cognitivos y emocionales, integrar prácticas de psicología positiva como el diario de gratitud ofrece una estrategia innovadora para fortalecer la motivación y el vínculo personal de los estudiantes con el aprendizaje, contribuyendo a experiencias educativas más efectivas y significativas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Gratitud, diario, psicología positiva, inglés, aprendizaje, enseñanza de lenguas.

INTRODUCTION

The present study aimed to evaluate the impact of gratitude on focus and resilience in university students' classroom learning through the practice of maintaining a gratitude journal. Data were collected from 23 basic English students at Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, over the course of one semester while learning English as a second language (ESL).

Throughout this period, students wrote in a gratitude journal in English, initially using simple and short sentences and gradually progressing to longer, more complex written entries. Passing a final examination was a requisite for continuing their academic studies. Central to this investigation is the importance of written production in language learning. Writing regularly, especially on personally relevant topics such as gratitude, fosters not only language proficiency but also the development of positive writing habits — a critical factor for sustained academic success. Structured writing practice contributes to internalizing vocabulary, improving syntax, and enhancing overall communicative competence in English.

Moreover, the practice of gratitude journaling offers significant emotional and cognitive benefits. Gratitude enhances students' emotional resilience, enabling them to maintain motivation and focus amidst the challenges of acquiring a new

language. By reflecting daily on positive experiences and personal growth, students cultivate a mindset that supports persistence, reduces anxiety, and enriches their learning process.

The findings from this study provide valuable insights into how integrating gratitude-based writing activities can enhance focus, writing skills, and emotional engagement, contributing to a holistic and effective ESL learning experience.

In today's educational context, teaching ESL to university students demands innovative methodologies that address both cognitive and affective dimensions of learning. Many learners face difficulties acquiring vocabulary and grammatical structures due to a lack of personal connection with the content, which undermines motivation and progress. Aligning written production tasks with students' real-life experiences and needs promotes deeper engagement and fosters meaningful language use.

To address these challenges, educators increasingly adopt interdisciplinary approaches, including positive psychology, to enrich language instruction. At the Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Veracruzana, the gratitude journal has been employed for three years as a simple yet powerful daily practice. This technique encourages learners to write reflectively about their lives, reinforcing positive emotions and facilitating authentic written communication. The cultivation of gratitude through writing thus supports both linguistic development and emotional well-being, establishing positive habits that benefit students beyond the classroom.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To evaluate how writing a gratitude journal can help students improve their writing skill.
- To examine the relationship between practicing gratitude and classroom learning at the university level.
- Identify the impact of gratitude journal as a tool to improve Student's way of writing in English

The integration of gratitude journals in language teaching at Universidad Veracruzana draws upon the principles of positive psychology, as outlined by Emmons and McCullough, as well as insights from second language acquisition experts such as Eisenstein and Bodman (1986, 1993). These scholars highlight that expressing gratitude can be particularly challenging for second language learners due to factors such as linguistic limitations, cultural differences, and a lack of established learning habits. Observations at Universidad Veracruzana confirm these challenges among students, emphasizing the need for supportive strategies that nurture both language development and emotional well-being.

Previous studies on gratitude in language learning have explored various dimensions, including written and oral production, academic achievement, and socio-emotional factors. However, the present research focuses specifically on the acquisition of writing skills and the potential role of gratitude journaling in enhancing written expression. The study requires questionnaires and final exam writing samples, randomly selected from participating students, to analyze the impact of this practice.

Positive psychology, as described by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014), emphasizes the cultivation of strengths and virtues that contribute to a meaningful and fulfilling life. This perspective aligns with global health initiatives, such as those advocated by the United Nations and the World Health Organization, which recognize psychological well-being as a critical component of overall health. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) further identifies gratitude as a “super skill,” essential for fostering emotional well-being, self-knowledge, and resilience. Gratitude is closely linked to mental health, life satisfaction, optimism, self-esteem, social relationships, and long-term happiness.

By examining the use of gratitude journals in the context of English language learning, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how emotional and psychological strategies can support academic achievement and personal growth among university students.

THE SCIENCE OF GRATITUDE

The science of gratitude has gained significant prominence thanks to the pioneering work of researchers such as Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough. At the beginning of the 2000s, supported by the John Templeton Foundation (JTF), the *Expanding the Science and Practice of Gratitude Project* (ESPG) was launched, marking the beginning of a surge in rigorous research and scholarly publications on gratitude.

“Gratitude, derived from the Latin word *gratia*, meaning thankfulness or grace, has been identified as a valuable tool in various fields, including second language acquisition. Emmons and McCullough (2001) define gratitude as “a cognitive-affective state resulting from the perception of having been benefited by an external agent in a supportive, disinterested, and free manner.”

According to Watson and Naragon-Gainey (2010), gratitude exerts a protective effect against mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety. It also mitigates negative emotions stemming from social comparison, reducing feelings of envy and resentment (Emmons & Mishra, 2011). As a personal strength, gratitude correlates positively with self-esteem and life satisfaction. Alongside the ability to appreciate, perceive, and savor life experiences, gratitude is considered a key determinant of overall well-being (Martínez, 2006).

McCullough et al. (2002) describe three primary functions of gratitude:

- I **Social Barometer:** It helps individuals recognize when others are willing to offer selfless support.
- I **Motivator:** Observing benevolent actions inspires reciprocal kindness and fosters a chain of gratitude.
- I **Reinforcer:** Expressing thanks generates positive emotions that encourage continued prosocial behavior

The power of gratitude, combined with a commitment to noticing the good around us, promotes numerous health benefits, including enhanced well-being, happiness, and positive affect. It also serves as a buffer against negative emotions (Emmons & Stern, 2013). Research shows that gratitude can alleviate symptoms of depression (Seligman et al., 2005) and is closely linked to optimism, joy, and enthusiasm (Watkins, Cruz, Holben, & Kolts, 2008). Thus, gratitude plays a crucial role in fostering personal life satisfaction.

In recent years, several studies have explored the benefits of gratitude within educational contexts, emphasizing the interactions between students and teachers (Howells, 2014). Contributions from scholars such as Emmons and McCullough (2003), Froh, Sefick, and Emmons (2008), and Froh, Kashdan et al. (2009) have further enriched this field.

A study by Park et al. (2004) examining the relationship between various character strengths and life satisfaction found a strong, consistent correlation between gratitude and other positive traits such as enthusiasm, hope, love, and curiosity. Conversely, traits like creativity, judgement, and love of learning showed weaker associations. Nonetheless, the presence of love of learning remains a significant aspect of students' recognition and appreciation of their educational experiences.

METHODOLOGY

This study involved 23 students from the General Basic Training Area (AFBG) at Universidad Veracruzana. The participants come from various academic disciplines and are all enrolled in basic-level English courses (A1 and A2). This group was assigned to maintain a gratitude journal in English throughout the semester.

PROCEDURE

Students in the gratitude journal group were instructed to write a sentence expressing gratitude in English on each school day from Monday to Thursday during the academic term. At the end of the semester, students shared their gratitude journals with their instructor to be reviewed.

The instructions given to the students were as follows:

- a. Write a sentence in English expressing gratitude for something specific.
- b. Maintain the gratitude journal from Monday to Thursday (class days).
- c. Bring a sentence or thought about gratitude to the professor so she can check it.
- d. Review corrections provided by your professor.
- e. Make additional corrections if necessary.

RATIONALE

Previous research has demonstrated that practicing gratitude offers benefits across multiple areas, including promoting a sense of calm in the present moment and fostering hope for the future when cultivated as a habit. By engaging in gratitude journaling, students are encouraged to identify positive aspects of their lives and articulate these experiences, even in the face of challenges—particularly relevant given the difficulties faced during the first semester, 2025.

The gratitude journal encourages students to focus on positive aspects of their lives, temporarily setting aside their problems. Although commercial gratitude journals are widely available today, students were not required to purchase any materials. Instead, participation was facilitated by asking them to write on their notebooks, rather on their digital devices.

Maintaining a gratitude journal requires only about five minutes of daily attention. However, when writing in a second language, this process demands more time and cognitive effort. Students must reflect on their gratitude, compose their sentences in English, consult dictionaries if needed, review and correct their entries

Research has shown that regularly practicing gratitude offers numerous physical and mental health benefits. By focusing on positive elements in life, individuals

- Reduce negative emotions linked to depression,
 - Gain self-confidence,
 - Improve overall health,
 - Develop greater self-awareness,
 - Eliminate self-pity,
 - Reduce stress and anxiety,
 - Foster empathy by being perceived as kind and approachable, and
 - Experience better sleep quality.
- Moreover, gratitude practice is completely free!

GRATITUDE AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Gratitude also positively influences academic performance in significant ways. García (2015) conducted a comprehensive study involving 145 students to investigate the relationship between experiencing gratitude and second language learning outcomes. The study revealed that gratitude plays a crucial role not only in enhancing interpersonal relationships—such as cooperation and communication with peers and instructors—but also in fostering intrapersonal development, including emotional regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy. These interpersonal and intrapersonal improvements create a supportive and resilient learning environment, which is essential for successful language acquisition. Furthermore, the findings suggest that students who cultivate gratitude tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement and persistence in language learning tasks, ultimately leading to better academic performance. This underlines the importance of integrating gratitude-promoting activities into language education programs as a means of supporting both the emotional well-being and the cognitive advancement of learners.

A SUPER SKILL

Developing gratitude as a “super skill” requires discipline, perseverance, and the consistent habit of journaling. Although forming this habit can be challenging initially, students are motivated by the collective participation of their peers, especially when journals are submitted daily to the teacher. This shared practice encourages students to express positive experiences, gradually improve their writing, and internalize the habit of gratitude. Over time, this positive mindset spreads throughout the group, motivating not only students but also the teacher.

Noticing the positive aspects of life is often difficult, as people tend to focus more on problems, complaints, and criticism. However, grateful individuals tend to be happier, healthier, and more resilient, overcoming stress and improving both physical and emotional well-being.

Student recognition of the teaching-learning process is not instantaneous; it requires time and reflection. Acknowledging the contributions of others in the construction of knowledge involves a degree of humanism and respect for both others’ and one’s own input.

Research by García-Ramírez (2013) and others (Goleman, 2006; Fiorini & García-Ramírez, 2013) has demonstrated a strong connection between gratitude, emotional intelligence, and academic success. These findings underscore the importance of gratitude in education, as it relates to the emotions and attitudes of both students and teachers.

Cultivating Gratitude in Education



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GRATITUDE AND SOCIALIZATION

Socialization plays a fundamental and multifaceted role in language acquisition, encompassing interactions and influences from a broad array of agents such as teachers, peers, technology, media, social networks, family members, and the wider community. This complex social environment shapes not only linguistic competence but also learners' attitudes, motivation, and emotional engagement. Within this context, gratitude emerges as a powerful positive emotion that significantly enhances the learning experience. Gratitude fosters identification with others, deeper understanding, and meaningful discovery during both individual and collective learning processes. It contributes to creating a supportive atmosphere in which students recognize and appreciate the pivotal role of their teachers as facilitators and co-constructors of knowledge.

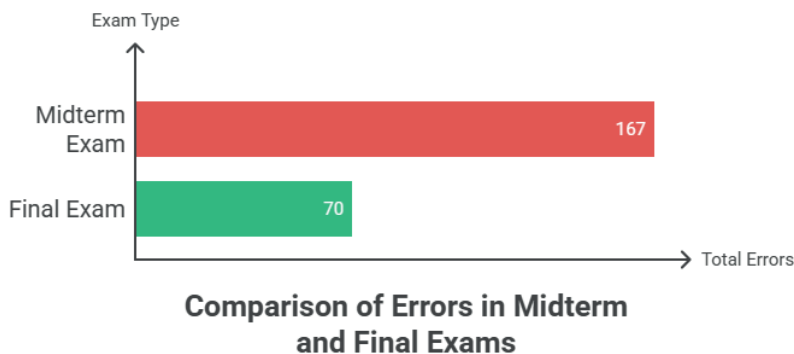
The cultivation of gratitude is therefore a crucial element for achieving success in second language instruction. When intentionally nurtured in the classroom, gratitude encourages students to acknowledge and value their active participation, effort, and progress, as well as the dedication of their instructors. This emotional and relational dimension enriches the learning environment, promoting greater engagement, resilience, and academic growth. The current study offers empirical evidence from the implementation of a gratitude journal in basic English courses at Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, illustrating how deliberate incorporation of gratitude practices can strengthen social bonds and enhance both the cognitive and affective facets of language learning.

RESULTS

This time, the group that completed the Gratitude Journal showed very promising academic results. We would like to share some of these outcomes, but first, we want to highlight a few extraordinary observations.

Firstly, the students made a significant effort to write and practice English, particularly using past tense in contexts different from those requested in the final exam. The final exam scenario did not align with the program's syllabus or the students' regular practice throughout the semester, which was a source of concern for the supervising teacher. Additionally, some students missed the last few days due to commitments for other projects and courses. Nevertheless, the majority continued writing in their Gratitude Journals consistently.

Regarding the results, we observed notable improvements: In the midterm exam, 22 students collectively made 167 errors. For the final exam, 23 students participated and made a total of 70 errors. It is important to mention that the final exam demanded a type of writing that differed from what was practiced during the semester, which could have influenced the error count in the writing section. However, none of the students expressed any complaints. They completed the exam successfully, and remarkably, made very few errors in the written production section.

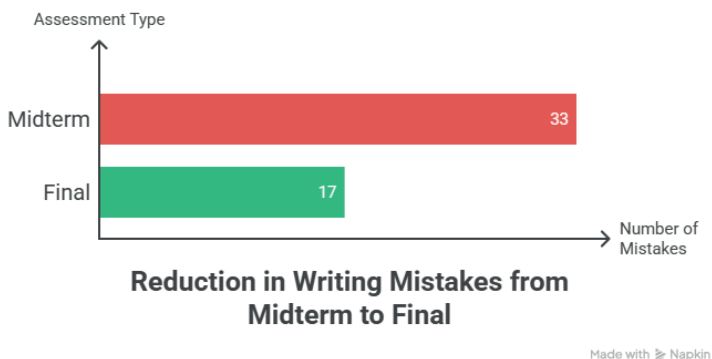


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We also tracked the number of sentences each student wrote to complete the task required in the written exam. Overall, students' writing production showed slight improvement by the end of the English course. It is worth noting that students began writing the Gratitude Journal from the second week of classes, meaning they had already started practicing English writing by the time of the midterm exam. Most students met the exam criteria and wrote enough to pass.

During the final exam, students managed to write slightly more than they did in the midterm exam. Specifically, the total written output increased from 184 sentences in the midterm to 196 sentences in the final exam. It is worth noting that one student was unable to complete the task due to time constraints; nonetheless, overall written production still showed a noticeable increase. Although the improvement is not dramatic, it is important to highlight this positive trend, as reflected in the previous graph.

A crucial section for our study is the writing component of the final exam. In this section, the students' errors were carefully recorded and subsequently compared to the errors they made during the midterm exam. The analysis of these data yielded the following results:



In conclusion, the implementation of the Gratitude Journal demonstrated a positive impact on students' English writing performance and academic engagement. Despite challenges such as mismatched exam scenarios and occasional student absences, most participants maintained consistent writing practice throughout the semester. The notable reduction in errors from the midterm to the final exam, alongside the increased written output, indicates genuine progress in language accuracy and production. Although the final exam required unfamiliar contexts, students adapted effectively with minimal complaints and strong performance. These outcomes underscore the value of integrating reflective and meaningful writing activities, such as gratitude journaling, in ESL instruction to foster improved writing skills, sustained motivation, and enhanced focus. Continued use of such practices holds promise for supporting language development and academic success among university learners.

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CHAPTER 4

GAMIFICATION FOR ENGLISH TEACHING IN ONLINE SETTINGS

Berenice Martínez Álvarez
ORCID: 0009-0009-0646-7502

Calzada Rito Mariana

Jiménez Medina Selma Sofía

Preciado Cueto Dulce Valeria

Rosas García Ariadna Ximena
Universidad De Guadalajara

ABSTRACT: Traditional teaching methods in Mexican classrooms have long provided structure but often limit student engagement and creativity. Recently, gamification has emerged as a promising strategy to enhance motivation, attention, and language skills throughout entire courses rather than isolated activities. This study focuses on improving speaking fluency in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) through gamification in virtual classrooms. However, improper implementation may cause student disengagement, compounded by limited teacher training in Mexico. Therefore, this research aims to develop effective gamification strategies tailored for EFL virtual education in Mexico, considering current educational challenges and the potential of gamification to transform learning experiences.

KEYWORDS: Traditional teaching, gamification, student engagement, motivation, EFL.

RESUMEN: Los métodos tradicionales de enseñanza en las aulas mexicanas han proporcionado durante mucho tiempo estructura, pero a menudo limitan la participación y creatividad de los estudiantes. Recientemente, la gamificación ha emergido como una estrategia prometedora para mejorar la motivación, la atención y las habilidades lingüísticas a lo largo de cursos completos en lugar de actividades aisladas. Este estudio se centra en mejorar la fluidez al hablar en inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) mediante la gamificación en aulas virtuales. Sin embargo, una

implementación inadecuada puede causar desinterés en los estudiantes, agravado por la limitada formación de los docentes en México. Por lo tanto, esta investigación tiene como objetivo desarrollar estrategias efectivas de gamificación adaptadas a la educación virtual de EFL en México, considerando los desafíos educativos actuales y el potencial de la gamificación para transformar las experiencias de aprendizaje.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enseñanza tradicional, gamificación, participación estudiantil, motivación, EFL.

SETTING OF THE PROBLEM

The application of traditional teaching methods within classrooms in Mexico has been a key pillar to shape modern education. This method offers a clear structure and objectives that allows students to understand easily. However, nowadays, “may be inflexible and resistant to change, making it challenging to adapt to evolving educational trends, technological advancements, and diverse student populations” (NET, 2024). Moreover, it often relies on teacher-centered approaches which can limit students’ engagement and creativity, leading at the same time to a passive learning. Therefore, with the purpose of refining teaching methods, multiple strategies have come up in recent years, between those ‘gamification’.

This approach concentrates on game mechanics, and it is not limited to use it one activity but rather throughout the whole course. Additionally, according to Huseinović (as cited in Aldama-Juárez et al. 2024) “it motivates and involves students, increases their attention, and positively influences their behavior, thereby improving their language skills.” This will be our focus of improvement during the research, speaking skills, specifically, fluency abilities. Nevertheless, according to Peñalva et al. (2019), a wrong implementation of gamification could cause students to feel disconnected from the class. Considering that, “in Mexico, to become an English teacher, there are no strong regulations yet” (Millán Librado & Basurto Santos, 2020, p. 130), then it is possible that professors are not familiar with this new concept. For this reason, we are looking forward to providing the best manners to apply gamification within EFL virtual classrooms in Mexico.

CONTEXT

This research is carried out in Universidad de Guadalajara (UDG), which is one of the largest public universities in Mexico with 332.903 students (Numeralia UdG, 2024A). UDG has 17 university centers to offer Bachelor degree programs, Master programs and PhD programs. It also offers classes at a high school level. One of the centers is called Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (CUCSH). This center has 10,406 students (Numeralia UdG, 2024A). The B.A. in English Language

Teaching as a Foreign Language (LIDILE in Spanish) is part of such center. 147 students are enrolled in the program learning how to teach (Numeralia UdG, 2024A). They are asked to get into groups of 4 people (micro-teaching groups) to teach basic English classes in 6 levels. Each microteaching group plans and performs class from 7 to 8 am or from 8 to 9 am Monday through Thursday. LIDILE students are exposed to a teaching program called Programa Abierto de Lenguas (PAL) during four semesters (third, fourth, fifth and sixth semesters in LIDILE). The last two semesters of the BA, they coordinate PAL by managing all the students; observing the micro-teaching groups and providing academic feedback. Teachers from LIDILE are also involved as observers to evaluate micro-teaching groups. Currently, 17 groups were formed in 2025(A). 7 groups of level 1, 2 groups of level 2, 3 groups of level 3, 3 groups of level 4, 2 groups of level 5, 2 groups of level 6. This research will be carried out in an online setting of level 6. Such group has four students, with an age range from 30 to 60.

JUSTIFICATION

In recent years, gamification has gained significant attention in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching due to its potential to enhance student engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes. As online education continues to expand, identifying effective strategies to improve speaking skills in virtual classrooms has become crucial. This research explores the effectiveness of the new trend 'gamification' in improving fluency among advanced EFL students in online settings. It addresses a key challenge in language learning: maintaining active participation and meaningful communication in digital environments.

This study is justified by the increasing reliance on online learning platforms, where students often struggle with confidence and fluency in speaking. Investigating how gamification can enhance speaking skills, specifically fluency, will benefit to the development of innovative teaching strategies that foster more interactive online learning experiences. Additionally, understanding the role of gamification in online EFL classrooms can provide valuable insights into its application by educators, ensuring that gamified activities are implemented effectively to achieve a positive impact on student learning. By identifying the most effective techniques and refining their use, this study aims to offer practical recommendations for teachers, institutions, and curriculum designers seeking to improve language proficiency through engaging and student-centered methodologies.

STATE OF ARTS

In recent years, the amount of people enrolling in virtual courses has increased, and with that English language teachers are seeking strategies to maintain motivation among their groups. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute relevant

information to the field, based on previous studies that have had similar objectives and studied the principle concepts of this paper. In addition to incorporating the best strategies for the proper use of gamification with the aim of strengthening speaking skills.

In 2023, Richard Woodman and Arduino Alexander Mangoni explored the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) into modern healthcare systems. The authors applied these methodologies to assess the predictive accuracy of ML in clinical decision-making. They **come to the conclusion** that while AI offers promising advancements in personalized healthcare and remote patient monitoring, challenges such as ethical considerations, data governance, and clinician and patient confidence must be addressed for successful implementation.

Researchers Kevin Mario Laura-De La Cruz, et al., (2023) published a study titled *Use of Gamification in English Learning in Higher Education: A Systematic Review* in the *Journal of Technology and Science Education*. This study analyzed 18 articles published between 2014 and March 2021 to assess the impact of digital gamification on English learning in higher education settings. The results indicated that gamification enhances the educational experience of university students learning English as a foreign language by fostering qualities such as motivation, enjoyment, and active participation. Additionally, the study found that learning objectives associated with gamification included linguistic content acquisition, increased engagement, and student satisfaction. The study ended with recommendations for designing digital gamification strategies in English learning, considering students' perspectives and academic achievements.

Ahmadpour et al. (2022) studied the impact of gaming techniques on students' oral abilities in EFL online classes using Action Research (AR). AR systematically examines social situations to address problems and enhance outcomes. The study involved intermediate students in two phases: identifying the problem and evaluating gaming techniques' effectiveness. The sentence-expanding game was the primary activity, and a final speaking task assessed progress. Results showed improvements in student engagement and speaking performance.

Researchers Eric Ndayishimiye, et al. (2024) conducted a study in five selected high schools in Kicukiro District, Rwanda, to investigate the effect of gamification on learners' English-speaking skills (Ndayishimiye et al., 2024). The research employed a mixed-method approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data collected from 336 participants out of a target population of 2,100 students. The study applied the Theory of Gamified Learning (Landers, 2014) and used a t-test to analyze the data. Additionally, guided interviews, the Gameful Experience Questionnaire (GAMEFULQUEST), and classroom observations were conducted. Results showed a significant improvement in students' English-speaking performance, with post-

test scores increasing by an average of 38.96 points compared to pre-test scores. The study concluded that gamification effectively enhances students' motivation and engagement, making learning more enjoyable. Based on these findings, the researchers recommended that the Rwandan Ministry of Education and the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) invest in gamified learning platforms and implement extensive teacher training programs to promote effective gamification in classrooms (Ndayishimiye et al., 2024).

Finally, researchers Aida Nurutdinova, et al. presented a study at the 2021 World Engineering Education Forum/Global Engineering Deans Council (WEEF/GEDC) conference, focusing on the use of gamification to enhance students' speech skills and proficiency. The study aimed to develop a methodology incorporating game design elements into language learning to improve vocabulary and grammar skills among students in non-language faculties. The researchers highlighted the importance of modernizing foreign language teaching methods in Russia, noting that traditional approaches often lead to decreased motivation and outdated practices. By integrating gamification, they sought to create engaging, practice-oriented activities utilizing digital technologies to foster better communication skills. The study revealed that applying gamification techniques can effectively enhance the quality and effectiveness of the educational process in language learning.

Some studies have been conducted on the impact of using gamification in English language teaching and learning for digital education. The great majority stands for the enriching advantages that this approach has brought to virtual classrooms and how it has been an essential tool for online classes. However, few researchers have explored the influence of this approach on the improvement of fluency abilities. Which leaves us with the task of providing more information on the matter to contribute to this specific field of education.

HYPOTHESIS

If gamification techniques and rules are used in advanced EFL classrooms in at least one activity during 2 classes, speaking abilities will be increased.

OBJECTIVES

General objective:

To determine how gamification can increase speaking abilities, specifically fluency, in advanced level students.

Specific objectives:

1. To understand the concept and the importance of the use of gamification.
2. To analyze the different procedures teachers, use to apply gamification.
3. To compare the effectiveness of the appropriate use of gamification in EFL classrooms.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is gamification in EFL? (ELT)

How can gamification be applied effectively in ELT to improve speaking?

What type of games can foster speaking at an Intermediate level of English learning?

WORDS OF THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This study explores the impact of gamification on speaking skills in online settings. This approach has been defined by Gillis & Barney (2025) as a strategy that integrates entertaining and immersive gaming elements into nongame contexts to enhance engagement and motivate certain behaviors. In the context of education, this refers to a learning method that applies gaming elements in educational environments. In the article *What is gamification? 10 ways to use this technique in your classroom* by Torres, M. (2022), she suggests that gamification is not only a creative way to approach the design process of class material, but also a strategy to help students develop different competences such as self-management. Its effectiveness can be better understood by analyzing key concepts, such as fluency, engagement, motivation, which will allow instructors to acquire deeper insights into the impact of this approach.

The four macro language skills are fundamental for a successful communication and language acquisition in English Language Teaching (ELT). The first two are known as the receptive skills, 'listening' which "is a communication strategy that calls for the receiver to comprehend, interpret, and assess what is being said" (Moyo, Intja, & Frugintta, 2023). Moreover, 'reading' "is described as having the capacity to understand what is written down and properly interpret it" (Moyo, Intja, & Frugintta, 2023). On the other hand, 'speaking' and 'writing' are referred to as productive skills. The first one occurs when one communicates orally and the second is the action of conveying ideas through paper.

As Chin Yew KIEU explains "The term "foreign language" refers to a language that is non-native to the community of the person who is learning it or that is only used by a small group of people (usually migrants.).". On the other hand, the Cambridge Dictionary defines it as "English as taught to people whose main language is not English and who live in a country where English is not the official or main language".

According to the British council, speaking fluency refers to the flow and efficiency with which a speaker is able to produce coherent and meaningful utterances without having many pauses or hesitation. But, how can we assess our level of fluency? Well, the ICLS has a really interesting suggestion for this; for it, you have to ask yourself some simple questions. The first one is: Do you translate backwards and forwards in your head? If a person has the need to keep translating everything, they most certainly are not fluent in the target language. Another question suggested is, asking oneself how quickly does one speak and catch on what others are saying. Speed of reaction is very important to determine a person's fluency in the target language.

As Cery Jones published in *World of Better English* in Cambridge, fluency is seen as "In day-to-day speech we equate it with being able to communicate comfortably and easily in another language". Also, the British Council defines it as "Fluency in a language means speaking easily, reasonably quickly and without having to stop and pause a lot."

In the book *Digital Games and Gamification in Education* state that digital gamification "Uses game design and mechanics to improve instructional content. Increasing student engagement and learning effectiveness. Gamification in online teaching offers powerful tools to increase student engagement, make learning more fun, and achieve more effective learning outcomes". Si Na says that "is an educational method that incorporates game-like elements into the classroom to increase student engagement, promotes a learning environment with positive motivation, and benefits student performance."

The University of Minnesota defines active learning as any approach to instruction in which all students are asked to engage in the learning process. Meaning that, as long as the students are given the opportunity to participate and engage in their own learning, it is safe to say that the active learning approach is being used. There is a great variety of strategies to be applied in a learning environment which could be considered as active learning. Cambridge gives us a deeper look into the story of this approach, which comes from the constructivism theory. Said theory emphasises the fact that learners construct or build their own understanding, which helps students to become 'lifelong learners' due to the fact that it makes them autonomous in their learning process. This means that students that were in an active learning environment during their school years usually are better at continuing learning once they have left school.

The document 'STUDENTS' ENGAGEMENT IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE' defines engagement as the level of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion shown by students when they are learning or being taught, which can develop into the level of motivation that they must learn and progress in learning."

The Glossary of Education describes it as “refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education.”

In the article, The effects of motivation in Education mention motivation as “Powering people to achieve high levels of performance and overcoming barriers in order to change”. Motivation is the driver of guidance, control, and persistence in human behavior.”. Adding to that Incompassing Education defines motivation as “in education is the driving force behind a student’s desire to learn and grow. It is the intrinsic desire to do well and achieve success in the classroom. Motivation in education can come from a student’s own internal desire to learn and grow or it can come from external factors such as rewards, recognition, and encouragement from teachers and peers.”.

Cambridge says that online learning resources are “Cleverly designed digital resources can encourage participation. They can also open up communication between teacher and student. In turn, this can boost learner autonomy and motivation.” The British Council defines online learning resources as “things that teachers can access to help them do some aspect of their job better as part of the professional development process (either pre-service or in-service). This is important because the quality of teachers has been highlighted as the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of a school system”.

METHODOLOGY (EXPERIMENTAL)

This research will employ a mixed-methods approach to assess the effectiveness of gamification in improving speaking abilities among intermediate EFL students in online settings. The study will consist of two main phases: data collection through surveys and the implementation of gamified activities in a controlled setting.

1. Data Collection

Surveys for Teachers: A set of polls will be administered to EFL teachers who conduct online lessons to identify the gamification techniques they commonly use and their perceived effectiveness in enhancing students’ speaking abilities.

Selection of Techniques: Based on the survey results, the most frequently used and effective gamification techniques will be selected and refined for further application.

2. Implementation of Gamification in Online Classes

Participants: 3 Intermediate-level EFL students in an online learning environment.

Procedure: A selected group of students will participate in two Programa Abierto de Lenguas (PAL) sessions, where at least one gamified activity per session will be implemented.

Activities will be designed using the best-performing gamification techniques identified in the survey phase. These activities will focus on encouraging spontaneous speech, improving fluency, and increasing student engagement.

3. The evaluation of effectiveness will involve pre- and post-activity assessments to measure students' speaking improvements after the four PAL sessions accompanied with a rubric to grade the performance of the students during these tests. One key assessment will be a Picture Description task, where students describe an image in detail, focusing on vocabulary use, fluency, and grammatical accuracy. This task will be applied twice—once as a pre-test and again as a post-test—to track progress. Additionally, student feedback will be collected through surveys or short interviews to gauge their perceptions of the gamified activities and their impact on speaking skills. Finally, a comparison of results based on the final scores of the rubrics will determine which gamification techniques are most effective in enhancing students' speaking abilities. This approach ensures a combination of qualitative and quantitative insights into the role of gamification in online advanced EFL classrooms.

RESULTS

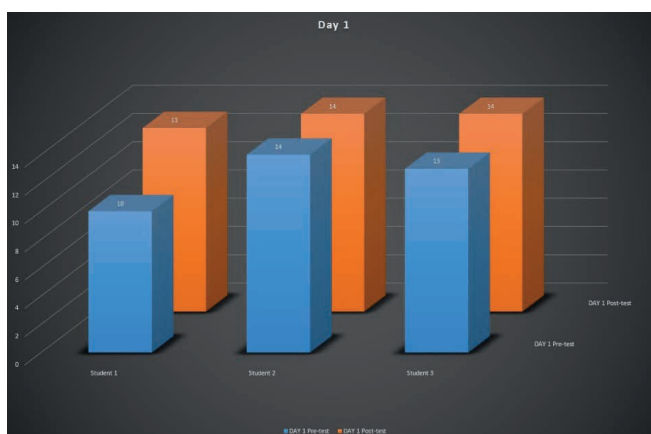
In order to evaluate the improvements, a rubric was designed to measure the changes on fluency before and after using gamification with the purpose of proving its effectiveness. It was designed based on established academic standards for fluency and adapted to specific context and proficiency level of the students involved. The rubric served not only to quantify performance during pre- and post-tests, but also to support qualitative observations of fluency development over time.

The rubric consisted of four key criteria:

1. Speech rate which focuses on the number of words said per minute, "it refers to the speed at which a person speaks." (Fiveable, 2024) It plays a crucial role in how messages are perceived because changes in how quickly someone speaks can affect how well the listener understands them; speaking too quickly might cause confusion, while speaking too slowly can make the listener lose interest.

2. Pauses and hesitation, these involved temporary interruptions in speech or action. However, they may differ in their implications, pauses can be natural breaks when speaking to produce emphasis or to allow the listener to process the information, while hesitations are a sign of nervousness, uncertainty, or difficulty in finding the correct word.
3. Self-correction and repetition, the first one is a process of recognizing mistakes or irregularities and making improvements without help from somebody else. It involves the step of recognizing what needs to get better and then acting to modify the situation. On the other hand, the second one, as its name says it, is about repeating the same word or phrase over and over again. Although sometimes may be used to gain time while thinking, an overuse might cause misunderstandings.
4. Coherence and connected speech, the first one focuses on the logical structure and organization of ideas, allowing the listener to follow the speaker's message and reasoning. Then, connected speech refers to how the speaker links words phonologically, it has to do with pronunciation and sound patterns, such as liaison or assimilation.

Each criterion was rated on a 4-point scale, where 4 means the speaker is fluent, 3 they are mostly fluent, 2 indicates some fluency issues and 1 implies a very limited fluency. The rubric was used for each pre-test and post-test of the two classes that were part of this research, grading each student individually. The fluency scores were then used to carry out a qualitative comparison with the help of graphics and percentages.



Graphic 1.

Student 1:

First score: 62.5%

Second score: 81.25%

Student 2:

First score: 87.5%

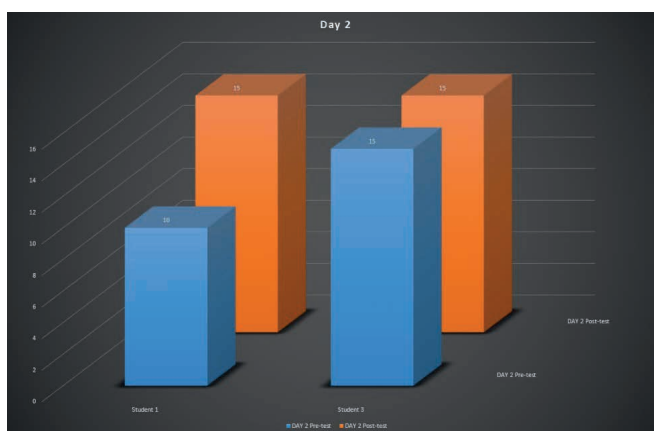
Second score: 87.5%

Student 3:

First score: 81.25%

Second score: 87.5%

As Graphic 1 shows, there was not a striking difference between the pre and post-test results of 2 out of the 3 students. Speaking about the students with little to no improvements, only one of them, student 3, showed a 6.25% increase in fluency; while student 2 stayed at the same level. However, the third student, who was the one with the most fluency issues, showed great progress scoring 18.75% higher after the treatment. Said increase in fluency led to a more balanced level among the 3 students compared to their performance before the treatment.



Graphic 2.

Student 1:

First score: 62.5%

Second score: 93.75%

Student 2:

First score: 93.75%

Second score: 93.75%

As we can see, there is a notable difference between the fluency of the first day and the second. Student number one, who presented more fluency problems, showed a 31.25% improvement. Even when the students with more proficiency in fluency did not show a big improvement, we noticed an increase in their engagement and talking time.

The results of the data analysis demonstrated that the students have improved their fluency in speaking after taking the classes using gamification. Moreover, their level of participation and speaking time significantly increased.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, traditional teaching methods are still the most common in Mexican classrooms, but they often limit students' and teachers' creativity and participation. To improve education, teachers need to try new tools and methods. Gamification is a good option because it uses games to make students more interested and active in class. In this research, we used gamification to help students improve their speaking skills. However, we believe it can also help with other skills if it is used correctly. After giving a pre-test, teaching two classes with gamification, and a post-test, the results showed the improvement we were expecting. Using gamification, students achieved a significant difference in their speaking fluency, coherence, and self-correction. Moreover, we noticed a change in our students' behavior, motivation, and engagement towards the class and activities presented.

These findings suggest that gamification can be a valuable resource in EFL classrooms in Mexico, especially when aiming to increase participation, speaking confidence, and engagement among the students. With proper planning and teacher preparation, this method could be expanded to support long-term improvements in language learning, while innovating in the classroom. Further research could explore its effects on writing, listening, and reading skills, as well as its impact over longer periods.

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CHAPTER 5

APPLYING GAMIFICATION TO IMPROVE ACCURACY IN SPEAKING TO BASIC ENGLISH STUDENTS

Julio Fernando Ortiz Cardel

Vilma Arely Vázquez Morales
Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT: The incorporation of gamification in language teaching has gained increasing attention in many countries and educational levels to make the learning of a second language more enjoyable or not stressful. Other researchers define gamification as the integration of game design aspects in non-game context to promote and motivate the needed manners of individuals or tackling specific subjects of interest (Nilubol, K., & Sitthitikul, P. 2023). In this research, a set of strategies were applied to 14 students at a language center. This research used the digital platform "Games to learn English to conduct speaking practices and the digital platform @ MyClassGame to students learn and practice the language in a gamified environment. With the help of the obtained data of a diagnostic exam, speaking practices in the digital platforms, the use of qualitative information acquired from interviews to the students and notes taking from the observations during the application of the strategies using gamification, the results are going to be analyzed and found if the strategies were helpful for the learners. After the intervention, it is hoped that students improve their oral skill and that they feel that learning English can be carried out as a game.

KEYWORDS: Gamification, accuracy, speaking, MyClassGame.

RESUMEN: La incorporación de la gamificación en la enseñanza de idiomas ha recibido una atención gradual en muchos países y niveles educativos para hacer que el aprendizaje de una segunda lengua sea más agradable o menos estresante. Muchos investigadores definen la gamificación como la integración de aspectos del diseño de juegos en contextos que no son de juegos para promover y motivar los comportamientos necesarios de los individuos o abordar temas específicos de interés (Nilubol, K., & Sitthitikul, P., 2023). En esta investigación, se aplicó un conjunto de

estrategias a 14 estudiantes de un centro de idiomas. Se utilizó la plataforma digital “Games to Learn English” para llevar a cabo prácticas orales, y la plataforma digital @MyClassGame para que los estudiantes aprendan y practiquen el idioma en un entorno gamificado. Con la ayuda de los datos obtenidos a partir de un examen diagnóstico, las prácticas orales en las plataformas digitales, el uso de información cualitativa obtenida mediante entrevistas a los estudiantes y la toma de notas durante las observaciones realizadas durante la aplicación de las estrategias con gamificación, se analizarán los resultados para determinar si tales estrategias resultaron útiles para los estudiantes. Después de la intervención, se espera que los alumnos mejoren su habilidad oral y sientan que aprender inglés puede ser un juego.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Gamificación, precisión, habilidad del habla, MyClassGame.

INTRODUCTION

In the past couple of years, many studies have proved that the integration of gamification into education has gained expanding attention by looking at different ways to present and introduce information in language teaching (Kratochvíl, 2022; Andriamiarisoa, 2018; Castiglione, 2024; Girardelli, 2017). Gamification is the process of incorporating elements of a game like users, task, points, leaderboards, levels and badges into different contexts and has been proved efficient through various studies in diverse areas.

This research aims the application of gamification strategies like the creation of visually attractive designs of activities, make a competition between the students, creating captivating storylines and game-oriented features like completing quest (doing some activities), crafting (planning and working with classmates) and gaining experience (gaining learning) (Sheldon, 2011) to improve speaking accuracy and help students that are taking an English course from the AFBG course of English 2 at the Language Center in the University of Veracruz.

By using gamification strategies, the study aims to find out by doing an intervention and by using games inside and outside the classes if games can pivot oral production inside the classroom in a non-stressful way and to estimate if the use of gamification can help to achieve this; it will explore virtual games that include practice speaking competencies and to help the learners to produce oral output in an easier way.

Although previous studies demonstrate gamification can enhance students' proficiency in speaking and grammar skills (Nurutdinova et al., 2021), one of the main aims in this research is to see if gamification strategies can really motivate and improve students' speaking from a University of Veracruz, Mexico.

Speaking is a vital element in language learning and many learners strive with it for many reasons, one of them is because they lack learning or sometimes, they neglect to speak in another language because they feel anxious or stressed to fail to achieve the correct pronunciation and grammar.

One of the problems that arose the most in the basics level of English classes of the University of Veracruz was that some of the students do not feel confident to speak in another language, mostly because they do not have the knowledge to do it. Therefore, this research focuses on proving if by applying gamification strategies to a group of learners can enhance and improve their speaking skills.

The first part of this investigation contains the aims of the study the context in which the investigation occurred, the involved learners' context, like the backgrounds, characteristics and English level of each one of them. As they were university students supposedly to have an A1+ English level according to the CEFR, the gamification strategies will be focused on oral production for that level, using activities modified from Games to Learn English (www.gamestolearnenglish.com) web page to practice in the classroom. The web page is created by Owen Dwyer since 2010 (English Club, 2019) and offers online games where students can practice their English skills independently at home from their smartphone or PC.

Another tool is the web page MyClassGame. Chiquillo and Macias (2022) used My Class Game digital tool to improve reading comprehension to elementary students in Spanish, and the conclusions were that the learning was active and meaningful. In My Class Game the teacher can create a narrative story and missions (tasks) by writing a story and told orally by uploading the audio created by the teacher, then students will read and listen to the instructions and solve the missions. Also, students can create their profile and their character, gain experience points (inside the game by the competition of tasks) by completing missions. Once students complete the missions, they will be required to upload videos of themselves speaking. Also, the implementation of observations and interviews of the learners to gather more qualitative data.

The second part of this investigation is the methodology that was used in this paper (action research); the description of the data collections instruments (observations, interviews, gamification strategies and exam's results) and the procedures for each one; the description of the implementation, and finally the explanation of the importance of the oral production for university students, the analysis of the results gathered from the examination, observation and interviews.

The last part of the paper is focused on the results and findings, including a well-organized description of them with real evidence and data. Also, the discussion and reflections of the analyzed results to emphasize the answers to the research questions and discuss possible future research with different variables or limitations.

Finally, a proper conclusion about whether the results were as expected and shared the final thoughts of the importance of the oral skills in English classes at university level.

PARTICIPANTS

For this research fourteen students participated from an AFBG English 2 group their age ranged from 18 to 31 years old and all of them are students from the university but from different careers. Some students have some previous English courses, either in private or from the same public school, but also for some of them it was their first English course. The English classes were held in a classroom at the language center.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Most of the students in the language courses have problems with the speaking skill, they struggle to talk in English language inside the classroom, some of them fail their oral exams because they do not achieve the accuracy needed in their grades. In Mexico, higher educational programs demand a minimum level of English due to the necessities of the skills for jobs and the use of its in many fields, like technology and economy (Gaete-Quezada, 2011). After the pandemic, changes were applied to education, and online classes were implemented. As a result, learners only communicated through technology, like smartphones and computers. This has led to some university students not orally produce the language level they are expected for their educational programs; some of them say because they have never taken English classes, or they are nervous to speak (Anugrah et al., 2022). At the language center of the University of Veracruz, learners from the basic English course are not participating orally in classes and thus failing their oral exams.

Objective:

The purpose of this study is to discover if gamification inside and outside the classroom can improve and help basic level English students to participate more and help them gain more confidence at the moment they are required to speak with a certain level of accuracy English either with their classmates or with the teacher.

Research questions

- What is the impact of gamification in the oral production of English in basic level students?

- I What are the students' perceptions about the intervention using gamification?
- I Are there measurable improvements in speaking accuracy due to gamification?

RESEARCH PROBLEM

Speaking is one of the most important skills in university level students, because is the way they must communicate orally what are they thinking about their lives (Anugrah et al., 2022) Nowadays, students at University of Veracruz are failing their oral exams, getting low grades and not participating in oral exercises. Despite students are attending to classes, receiving input in their English classes, they are afraid to practice speaking, or they are not confidently enough.

JUSTIFICATION

The learning of English language has been important and very present in today's global context in many different contexts like social, professional and academic. At the language center of the University of Veracruz students are implemented with oral, writing, listening and reading skills in basic English levels, to develop an effective communication. Every course, many students face difficulties, like anxiety, lack of motivation or even time to achieve the expected knowledge in the language, resulting in making mistakes in their exams and evaluations, getting low grades or even failing the courses and not retaining the knowledge.

In previous courses, most of the students fail their oral exams because they do not feel comfortable talking and because sometimes, they do not know what to say. Also, they struggle to participate in class. Some of them answered when they were asked about the reason because they do not feel secure when speaking English inside the classroom and all their classmates are listening, some of them just said because sometimes they do not know what to answer. This is one of the main reasons this research is focused on speaking skills.

Nowadays, there are a great number of students that suffer from anxiety during their foreign language classes thanks to the lack of social interaction during the pandemic.

Anugrah (2022) mentioned in his study:

Anxiety is a subjective feeling of tension, uncertainty, nervousness, and worry that occurs when the autonomic nervous system is aroused... nervousness in speaking English might impair students' ability to adapt to the target environment and, as a result, their ability to achieve their educational goals (p. 11).

Also, Kratochvíl (2022) found that “gamification design” (challenges and achievements) positively affects students’ performance in university courses” (p. 28), so this research will try another design of gamification with another student.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACCURACY AND GAMIFICATION

Language accuracy cannot be easily measured (Zhang, 2010) even though there have been some studies with different measurement models like the Competing Test theory (CTT). Accuracy should not be only measured with a pure number or grade, but rather with performance and communication. The target of communicating something can be achieved by maybe not following the grammar rules of a language, since there can be different ways of achieving communication.

Ho et al. (2019) study investigated the effects of using games in students’ speaking performances, where they used the methods of P-P-P (presentation, practice and production) with a control group and an experimental group that use games in the learning process. The results revealed that their speaking skills improved amazingly and applied gaming activities as an effective method to improve participation in the learning process.

Reinhardt (2019) explained the contrast between the concept “learning to play” and “playing to learn”; this happens when the learner plays in order to learn a set of rules inside a game, and to transfer this to L2 teaching using the approach of CALL (computer-assisted language learning) the L2 teacher developed ways of using the newest technology for a L2 teaching since the 1970s.

He also proposed three important terms in teaching using gamification:

- game-enhanced: when using the language of games not originally intended for L2TL,
- game-based: when using games intentionally designed for L2TL),
- and game-informed: when using instruction informed by the theoretical principles of play and games.

METHODOLOGY

Type of study (Action research)

Action Research is a model of research that implies doing two activities at the same time: making an action and research. Action means to look for a method or way to improve and transform by making an intervention in a social context, like in a school (administration) or inside a classroom (Burns, A., 2009). Research is the process of observation of the same social context, analyzing its progress and looking for a

space to make an improvement by applying the previous intervention (Burns, 2023). The outcome from the action research can be positive, negative and neutral, but any result would be useful for future references, and they should be documented.

Description of data collection instruments and procedures

The first step was to ask students if they wanted to participate anonymously or not and were informed about the whole process and goal of the intervention. The students signed a paper with all the information about the process and use of their information and all of them agreed to participate without problems. Next, they answered a survey from Google Forms to have more information about their background of the English language. Before the intervention, students did an oral exam that consisted of six open questions with the topics, this was done to measure they level of speaking skill. During the classes of the intervention, the teacher observed and took notes using the Cornell note taking system. After the intervention, the students did the same oral exam they did before the intervention. Finally, they were interviewed to check how their experience was. The interviews were done in Spanish language, and it was performed inside the same classroom the students take their lessons.

After the intervention, a questionnaire was performed to get qualitative data about the students' impressions of the exercise.

Table 1: List of topics per day

Number of topics	Topic	Description
Topic 1	Frequency adverbs	Everyday activities.
Topic 2	Comparative adjectives	Describe and compare how two things are different from each other.
Topic 3	Superlatives adjectives	Describe and compare three or more things and indicate that one item is at the highest or lowest degree of a certain quality.
Topic 4	Should	To indicate obligation, duty, or correctness, typically when criticizing someone's actions.
Topic 5	Regular and irregular verbs in past tense	Describe actions completed in the past, usually with a specific point in time.
Topic 6	Going to	To talk about future actions that are already decided to do.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The length of the intervention will be five to six weeks. The intervention will be made by taking three days of the week of the learners' daily English lessons. In the first week, on the first day, the students are going to do a diagnostic oral exam.

On the second day, the students will answer the questionnaire from Google forms. On the third day, the implementation will start. All the process will take one hour of their daily lessons to apply the intervention steps.

From the second week to the sixth the gamification activities will take place. The students will study and practice in class the topics "adverbs of frequency", "comparatives adjectives", "superlatives adjectives", "should", "regular and irregular verbs in past tense" and "going to". By using the book "Grammar in use" fifth edition by Raymond Murphy, students will study the explanation and do some exercises about the topics. Then, the students will make use of the digital platform "Games to learn English" to practice some speaking activities about the same topics.

At the end of the week, the teacher will introduce to the students the digital platform of "My class game". They will receive a guided tour of the platform; they will create their characters and will be added to the course of the platform. After that, students will receive a task (a recording made by the teacher) explaining the tasks for the weekend. Students will have to record themselves in a video of at least two minutes to complete the task and upload it in a Padlet created for that.

Table 2: Order of activities per topic.

First topic	Second topic	Third topic	Fourth topic	Fifth topic	Sixth topic
<p>In class: Pages 10 and 11 of the book: -Explanation about the "adverbs of frequency" (10 minutes) - Exercises and practice from the book. (15 minutes) Digital game about "Adverbs of frequency" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "adverbs of frequency" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>	<p>In class: Pages 14 and 15 of the book: - Explanation about the "comparatives adjectives" (10 minutes) - Exercise fill the gaps and practice from the book (15 minutes) Digital game of "Comparatives" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "comparatives" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>	<p>In class: Pages 10 and 11 of the book: - Explanation about the "superlatives adjectives" (10 minutes) - Exercises and practice from the book (15 minutes) Digital game about "Superlatives" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "superlatives" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>	<p>In class: Pages 4, 5, 10 and 11 of the book: - Explanation about the use of "should" (10 minutes) - Exercise fill in the gap (digital activity) (15 minutes) -listening conversations from the book (15 minutes) Game about "should" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "should" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>	<p>In class: Pages 14, 15, 26 and 27 of the book: - Explanation about the regular and irregular verbs in past tense (10 minutes) -Exercise matching from the book (15 minutes) Game of "regular and irregular tense (past)" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "regular and irregular tense (past)" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>	<p>In class: Pages 26, 27, 10 and 11 of the book: - Explanation about the future tense using "going to" (10 minutes) - Exercise Reading and answer the questions and practice from the book (15 minutes) Game of "future tense" from the "Games to learn English" web page (15 minutes) - Writing of the script using "future tense" about their character. (20 minutes)</p>
<p>Game practice of the topic "Adverbs of frequency" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions of the task on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves describing their characters and their daily routines. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>	<p>Game practice of the topic "Comparative adjectives" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions of the task on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves comparing their characters with the characters of their classmates using comparatives adjectives. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>	<p>Game practice of the topic "Superlative adjectives" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions of the task on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves comparing their characters with the characters of their classmates using superlatives adjectives. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>	<p>Game practice of the topic "should" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions of the task on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves giving recommendations about how they can defeat a wild monster by using their characters' skills. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>	<p>Game practice of the topic "present perfect" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves explaining actions that their characters have lived in the imaginary world/life. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>	<p>Game practice of the topic "future tense" in smartphone or computer using the web page @MyClassGame (15 minutes) Students will read the instructions on the web page and record a video of approximately 1 or 2 minutes about themselves explaining what their characters will do in the future. Finally, they will upload their video in a Padlet.</p>

After the last topic is presented, an interview will be conducted with four students only. The students selected for the interview will be one who obtained a high grade in the post diagnostic oral exam, two with middle grades and one with low grades.

- a. Data condensation:** The first week of the intervention students are going to answer a questionnaire made in Google forms to obtain some of the current perceptions of the students from topics like previous experiences, language proficiency, and technology. Participants information will be codified so that the information is anonymous. Each student will be named by numbers and codes (e.g. E1, E2, etc.) to have a better organization of the information. During this process, observation and the Cornell note taking system will be applied. Then, personal interviews are done one by one to obtain qualitative information. The interviews are going to be recorded and transcribed for a deeper analysis.
- b. Data display:** With the obtained information, charts, networks and graphics will be used to have a better display of the data. These forms of displays assemble organized information and make it very accessible and compressed. A process that will start from the second week to the fourth.
- c. Conclusion drawing/verification:** At the fifth week, the analyzation and triangulation of the organized data, the implementation, questionnaire and final exam, the conclusions will begin to be written to start the organization of the findings.

Table 3: Schedule of activities of the intervention

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Survey in Google Forms about their information about previous experiences with the English Language and experience using technology.		Diagnostic oral exam (it will not be counted for evaluation)		Students will be informed about their results and be notified about some activities to help them to improve their grades.
Week 2	First activity (digital game). Observation and note taking		Second activity (virtual) Observation and note taking		Third activity (virtual) Observation and note taking
Week 3	Fourth activity (digital game). Observation and note taking		Fifth activity (digital game). Observation and note taking		Sixth activity (digital game). Observation and note taking
Week 4	Questionnaire in order to know their thoughts about the activities		Post diagnostic oral exam		Results will be written by compelling the results of the questionnaires, activities and observation.
Week 5	Analysis of the results, creation of charts.				
Week 6	Writing and analyzing results to reach conclusions and future recommendations				

Pre intervention

Careful planning is going to be undertaken to think about the dates the interventions are going to take place, time allotted and the number of participants. After that, the activities focused on gamification that will be applied to the learners have to be organized and designed. There will be electronic activities (games).

During intervention

At the start of the first week, a diagnostic oral exam will be done for the students. This will be done to identify grades and some students with high, medium and low grades will be chosen to be the participants of the intervention (12 students).

On the second day of the first week, learners will be informed about their results, and they will be notified about some activities to help them to improve their grades. At the end of the first week, a questionnaire will be applied to the selected learners to be able to understand the reasons for their results of the previous exam. On the

second week, the first activity will be done (digital game). Two days later, the second activity with electronic games will be applied and meanwhile, observation and note taking (Cornell note taking system) about the impact and reactions of the activities will be done in the process; in the third week, one last survey will be done to know their thoughts about the activities. Finally, in the fourth week, the results will be written by compiling the results of the questionnaires, activities and observation.

Post intervention

After the end of the last week, results need to be analyzed. They are expected to bring information to light about the reasons they are failing in their oral production activities. Charts are going to be needed to have a better understanding of the results.

After analyzing the results, the next step is to think about how intervention can be improved, and some recommendations for future research.

FINDINGS

Findings attained are based on the data collected from the data collection instruments. This section has been organized according to the order of data received. The first part is the survey before the implementation in Google Forms. The survey was made in Spanish so the students could answer the questions properly.

The students took an average time of 5 minutes to complete the 22 questions of the survey. They did it on their phones and during their class time. Most of them are university students, so they are from 18 to 24 years old, only one student is from 30 to 34 years old. None of them is older than 35 years old. 50% of the students do not have a job, so most of them can focus more on their studies. 25% of students have a part-time job and the other 25% have a full-time job. With this, it is noticeable that some of them can have a difficult time delivering their video activities outside the classroom because they work.

The first question was “at what age did you start studying English?”. Three of them started before age 10, Meaning they have more time studying the language. Most of the students began studying between the ages of 11 and 20 and one of them after the age of 20.

The next question was to find out where they had studied English before. The students could select different options if applicable. Most of them have only studied in their schools like just another subject. Only three of them have studied in private schools like The Institute language school, Global Center and Harmon Hall. Three of them practiced the language with a member of their family who has some knowledge in the language and another three answered they have studied the language by themselves.



Figure 1: Pie chat taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿A qué edad comenzaste a estudiar el idioma inglés?”.

In the question “how would you rate your level of English?” none of them indicated in an advanced level, 50% of them selected beginner and the other 50% selected intermediate. Since they are on a course in A2 level, an advanced level would be too much for them.

According to the answers from the survey, all the students feel motivated learning English. This could be of great help for the intervention, because they could do better in the activities and the results could be positive; if the students lack motivation they might not participate as much in class (Yáñez & Álvarez, 2022). Also, there was only one student that mentioned that did not like the English language; this could mean the student only takes classes because he/she must take them to obtain the degree.



Figure 2: Pie chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿Te sientes motivado de aprender el idioma inglés?”.

The students were asked about how they felt using English in the writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. By using a Likert scale with the options from “very good”, “good”, “neutral” and “bad”, students indicated how they feel in each skill. These were the results:



Figure 3: Chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿Cómo te sientes cuando usas el idioma inglés en las siguientes áreas?”.

As the results indicate, the skill the students feel best using is writing: 16.7% indicated they feel “very good”; 58.3% answered “very good”. The reading skill had almost the same results, but they answered more they feel “very good”; both the writing and reading had the same results in “neutral”, with a 25%. The listening and speaking had similar results too, but the listening had more “very good” answers. Both skills had the same number of answers in the “neutral” and “bad” options. As expected, speaking was the skill the students feel the worst using it.

Another question was to know how they grade their English level in each of the four skills, and the answers were contrasting to the previous question.



Figure 4: Chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿Cómo calificarías tu nivel del idioma inglés en cada habilidad?”.

As the chart shows, the listening and speaking skills had the same number of answers. The same number of students (41.7%) selected they grade their listening skill as an “intermediate” level and the same with the oral skill. Also, for both skills, the same number of students indicated they grade their oral skill as “advanced”. It is a peculiar answer, because in the previous question they indicated they feel “bad” using the listening and speaking skills.



Figure 5: Pie chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question "¿Qué tan seguido usas el idioma inglés en tu vida diaria?".

Most of the students use English in their daily lives. They expressed that in social networks they find some post in English, and they understand most of them, and if not, they look for unknown words and try to make sense by themselves. Only 33% of the students do not use English in their daily lives. A large percentage of the students (88%) answered that they sometimes use English. As mentioned before, they use it mostly by navigating their social networks. Only one student answered that rarely uses the English language.



Figure 6: Pie chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question "¿Qué recursos usas para practicar el idioma inglés?".

Music was selected as the most used resource to practice English. As seen daily, most of the students arrive at the classroom wearing headphones. When they were asked what language they listen to music in, they all answered in English. As Wardhono et al. (2022) expressed about using music to learn English: "*Through songs different language skills and language components can be learned integratedly*" (p. 1). Students may be practicing unconsciously what they have seen in their classes with the music they listen every day and have made improvements in the listening and speaking skills.

- Principiante 2
- Intermedio 6
- Avanzado 4

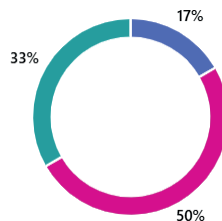


Figure 7: Pie chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿Cómo calificarías tu competencia con la tecnología?”.

The last questions of the survey were about their competence with technology. These questions were important because they were going to use technology almost all the time during the intervention. Half of the students answered they have advanced competence using technology. During the language course, they have been seen using online dictionaries on their phones, meaning they can use technology to help themselves with the course. The last question was about the applications they use frequently to practice English. The most selected was “videos”, and they commented that when they do not understand a topic or have doubts about it, they search for videos in Spanish language that explain the topics.

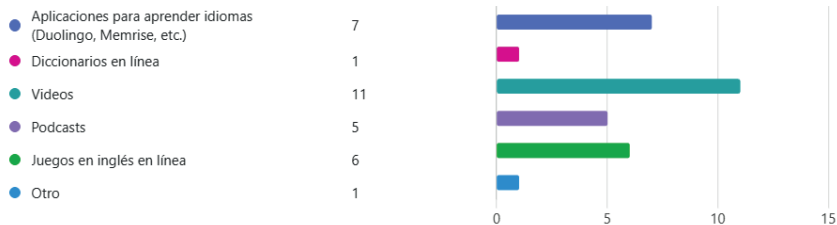


Figure 8: Pie chart taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “Para aprender el idioma inglés, ¿cuál de las siguientes has utilizado?”

Quantitative findings

Survey:

Most of the students answered they would like to use virtual games to learn English. They mentioned that virtual games are more interactive, dynamic and interesting. Likewise, most of the students have used videogames that have helped them to learn and practice the languages. According to Gee (2004), there are many studies that emphasize the educational potential videogames have for vocabulary

learning. Some of the videogames they mention have gameplay mechanics that make people submerge in the game, and that when they can enter in a concentration state (flow theory) and learning without they knowing can happen. One of the videogames the students stated was Minecraft, and it can be a really useful tool for students to learn new vocabulary (Musa, 2015), and that vocabulary can be translated later with speaking.

21. ¿Qué juegos virtuales consideras que has utilizado para aprender inglés? (0 punto)

[Más detalles](#)



Figure 9: Answer taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question “¿Qué juegos virtuales consideras que has utilizado para aprender inglés?”.

Other important question from the survey was if students like to learn English language using virtual games. From the 12 students, 11 answered “yes”.

22. ¿Te gusta aprender inglés con juegos virtuales? ¿Sí? ¿No? ¿Por qué?

12 Respuestas

1	anonymous	Si
2	anonymous	No he jugado a nada
3	anonymous	No
4	anonymous	Si, porque considero que estudie y aprender cosas nuevas con cosas que nos agraden se facilita más
5	anonymous	si, es muy didáctico
6	anonymous	Si
7	anonymous	Si, es más interactivo y llamativo
8	anonymous	Si, por ser dinámico
9	anonymous	Si ,por qué así desarrollaría nuevas habilidades
10	anonymous	Si porque me ayudan mucho

Figure 10: Answer taken from the results of the survey created in Google forms, about the answers to the question "¿Te gusta aprender inglés con juegos virtuales? ¿Sí? ¿No? ¿Por qué?".

This is considered important because they have the willingness to use virtual games to learn. Some of the students mentioned:

"I consider that studying and learning with things that we like becomes easier".

Another student answered:

"Yes, because I will develop new skills"

Diagnostic oral exam

After the survey, the students are going to do a diagnostic oral exam. This is to triangulate the data collected from the diagnostic exam before the intervention.

Table 5: Diagnostic exam scores (pre-intervention)

	Pronunciation (5)	Fluency (5)	Vocabulary (5)	Grammar (5)	Total (20)
AA1	1	1	2	1	5
JC2	1	2	3	3	9
DO3	3	4	5	4	16
OH4	2	2	3	1	8
JC5	5	4	5	4	18
SH6	5	4	5	5	19
AJ7	2	2	3	2	9
JM8	2	1	2	1	6
WM9	5	5	5	4	19
DO10	1	2	2	1	6
KP11	4	4	4	4	16
JP12	4	4	3	3	14
TOTAL:	35	35	42	33	145

The results show that half of the students fail to obtain a grade to pass the oral exam.

Observation/Note taking

During the classes, students reported they were having a great time because "English classes were different and more dynamic than other classes". They showed greater confidence and interest while doing their scripts and decreased anxiety while speaking.

Students showed a very positive reception concerning the use of digital gamified activities.

While writing their scripts, real interest in looking for new vocabulary to write their scripts. Students used online dictionaries (Cambridge, Thesaurus) to look for new vocabulary words.

Interpretation of results:

- I Gamification appears to motivate students, nurturing a more confident and relaxed participation inside classroom.
- I The non-stressful and playful environment may directly contribute to improved oral performance.

Teaching implications:

- I Inspire a broader adoption of gamified approaches in language education.
- I Highlight the need for balanced technology integration to support learning without overwhelming the learners.

CONCLUSION

The integration of gamification strategies can meaningfully change the learning of English language, and using digital platforms like *@MyClassGame* to immerse the learners in their learning, it can make the teaching and language helpful and meaningful not only for improving oral skills, but all other skills as well.

Observations of the students interacting with digital platforms, the students seemed to be working in a natural way, they were not thinking about the things that worried them and looked very motivated looking and asking for new vocabulary words. In addition, they seemed encouraged to participate more and really cared about their writing work.

At the time this paper was written, there was very limited available information about improving English oral skills language by using *@MyClassGame* platform, this paper could help to add information about that. One of the problems with the digital platform is its interface; sometimes it is complicated and needs some time to master it. There is another similar option named "*Classcraft*". Its interface is more accessible; however, it is a paid option considered for future exploration.

It is expected to continue with this investigation, by changing several variables like the digital platforms used, the narrative used for the context for the students, the activities the students were exposed to practice oral skills (those offered by the *Games to learn English* website). For future research, it is considered to explore more games, for example console video games such as *The Legend of Zelda*, *Final Fantasy* and *Mario Bros.* to determine if these can help learners to acquire new vocabulary, enhance writing and oral skills.

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CHAPTER 6

PROMOTING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH PROJECT-BASED LEARNING

Anadel Baltazar Silva

ORCID: 0009-0001-3956-5602

Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT: This article presents an Action Research study designed to enhance English speaking skills among A1-level university students through Project-Based Learning (PBL). Conducted with 32 students at Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico, the intervention took place during the critical transition from face-to-face to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study employed environmental issues as a thematic focus, providing a meaningful context for language use and student engagement. Through systematic implementation of PBL, the research demonstrated notable improvements in students' oral communication abilities, as well as increased learner motivation and active participation. The collaborative nature of PBL encouraged students to engage deeply with real-world problems, enhancing both their speaking proficiency and critical thinking skills. Data were collected via pre- and post-intervention speaking assessments, student reflections, and teacher observations, providing comprehensive insights into the learning process. Findings suggest that PBL is an effective pedagogical approach for developing speaking skills at the beginner level, particularly in an online or hybrid educational environment. Moreover, contextualizing language learning around authentic environmental challenges contributed significantly to student motivation and collaboration. This study offers valuable implications for ESL educators aiming to adapt methodologies to remote instruction while fostering meaningful communication and problem-solving competencies.

KEYWORDS: English, speaking skill, Project-Based Learning (PBL), Languages

RESUMEN: Este artículo presenta un estudio de Investigación-Acción diseñado para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral en inglés entre estudiantes universitarios de nivel A1 mediante el Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (ABP). Realizado con 32 estudiantes de la Universidad Veracruzana, México, la intervención tuvo lugar durante la transición crítica del aprendizaje presencial al en línea debido a la pandemia de COVID-19. El estudio utilizó temas ambientales como enfoque temático, proporcionando un contexto significativo para el uso del idioma y la participación estudiantil. A través de la implementación sistemática del ABP, la investigación demostró mejoras notables en las habilidades de comunicación oral de los estudiantes, así como un aumento en la motivación y participación activa de los aprendices. La naturaleza colaborativa del ABP alentó a los estudiantes a involucrarse profundamente con problemas del mundo real, mejorando tanto su competencia en el habla como sus habilidades de pensamiento crítico. Se recopiló datos mediante evaluaciones orales previas y posteriores a la intervención, reflexiones de los estudiantes y observaciones del profesor, proporcionando una visión comprensiva del proceso de aprendizaje. Los hallazgos sugieren que el ABP es un enfoque pedagógico efectivo para desarrollar habilidades orales en el nivel principiante, especialmente en un entorno educativo en línea o híbrido. Además, contextualizar el aprendizaje del idioma en torno a desafíos ambientales auténticos contribuyó significativamente a la motivación y colaboración de los estudiantes. Este estudio ofrece implicaciones valiosas para los educadores de ESL que buscan adaptar metodologías a la enseñanza remota mientras fomentan una comunicación significativa y competencias para la resolución de problemas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: inglés, habilidad oral, Aprendizaje Basado en Proyectos (ABP), lenguas.

INTRODUCTION

The relevance of the speaking macro skill practice when learning English Language is persistent in the teaching process for most of the English learning institutions, since many of them give an evaluation percentage to the speaking skill ability. Richards & Renandya (2002) frame the speaking skill as a significant element of the language in communicating messages. However, this skill results into difficulties because it involves the ability to use language correctly in social communications. In academic context speaking performance is usually associated with self-confidence; Tuan & Mai (2015) recognize that learners' performance in speaking is affected by preparation time, enthusiasm to speak about the knowledge, teachers' evaluation in speaking activities, listening ability, and the pressure to perform well.

Students have few opportunities to express themselves in class, and when they have spoken interactions, they usually feel insecure or observed. Hence, giving students the opportunity to feel more at ease by being busy thinking about solving a problem or experiencing real life situation. Therefore, having students learn through Project-Based Learning promotes accuracy in the speaking skill practice.

PBL helps students practice accuracy while participating in oral tasks more effectively. Among the notable benefits of Project-based learning are the shift from teacher-centered memorization to student-centered investigation (Grant, 2011), the development of learners' ability to collaborate (Beckett, 2002), and the honing of academic abilities (Ducker, 2013). All these characteristics provide students with an authentic environment of practicing and producing in the language, which is the main objective of PBL in the English as a foreign language context.

The design of the project was motivated to help through Project-based learning the oral skill practice in the oral participations of the students.

The unprecedented shift from traditional classroom settings to online platforms during the COVID-19 pandemic posed unique challenges for language learners worldwide. At Universidad Veracruzana in Veracruz, Mexico, a group of 32 students aged between 20 and 30 years—enrolled in an A1 level English course—experienced such a transition. Despite a generally positive attitude toward learning English, many students demonstrated a wide range of proficiency levels, with some lacking foundational knowledge of the course content.

A preliminary survey revealed a common desire among students to improve their speaking skills, with 16 out of 26 respondents prioritizing oral communication over reading, writing, or listening. This preference underscored the necessity of an instructional approach that could effectively promote speaking accuracy and confidence.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this action research was to enhance the accuracy of speaking skills in English among A1-level college students through a Project-Based Learning framework. According to Cambridge ESOL (2011), an A1 speaker is classified as a Basic User capable of understanding and using simple expressions and phrases pertinent to daily needs, able to introduce themselves, and interact in straightforward communication when interlocutors speak slowly and clearly.

This study aimed not only to elevate these competencies but also to engage students in authentic language use within problem-solving contexts, thereby encouraging both linguistic and critical thinking skills.

PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AND ITS RELEVANCE

Project-Based Learning is an instructional methodology that situates learners as active participants addressing real-world problems. As Cunningham (1993) notes, action research merges theory with practical problem-solving, empowering students as co-researchers rather than mere subjects. Larmer and Mergendoller (2015) emphasize that effective PBL designs integrate significant learning goals encompassing subject knowledge, critical thinking, self-regulation, and collaborative skills.

In this context, the PBL approach was aligned with English language goals and focused particularly on improving speaking accuracy through meaningful, problem-centered projects.

Principles of Project-based Learning

The following paragraphs provide a summary of the design principles of PBL to clarify the meaning of this approach and help readers identify the difference between doing projects and using project-based learning.

Driving questions

The PBL unit must have a question which motivates learning. Krajcik and Shin (2014) refer to the driving questions as the central part of the project-based science design principles. Krajcik and Mamlok-Naaman (2006) explained that a driving question is a well-planned question that students and teachers elaborate, explore, and answer during a project. High-quality driving questions should be: 1) feasible, 2) worthwhile, 3) contextualized, 4) meaningful, and 5) ethical (Krajcik and Mamlok-Naaman, 2006; Krajcik and Shin, 2014). A driving question example for project-based could be: “How do environmental problems affect my community?”

A driving question is a root guide to consult throughout the project process. Parker et al. (2011) suggested that a driving question is critical to reaching the deeper learning goals of the courses. Parker et al. (2011) also indicated that the project cycles are unified by a master question that as students move through the course, they continually reexamine this question and attempt again to answer it, reflecting on what they are learning in each new project cycle.

ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The strategy was to work with students individually or in teams with a topic related to the environment by making them practice the oral skills and using Project-based learning as a tool. Hedge (1993) specifies projects as extended tasks which usually integrate language skills by means of a number of tasks, these tasks are

associate in working towards a settled goal which includes planning, the gathering of information through reading, listening, interviewing, and observing; group discussion of information; problem solving; oral and written reporting; and displaying. The data gathered from the journal notes and the recordings were useful to notice that practicing the speaking skill with PBL approach seemed to help students focus on solving problems and thinking about a creative form to conclude the projects instead of feeling pressure to express themselves orally. Furthermore, after analyzing students speaking performance in their written tasks and recordings, there was evident improvement comparing the excerpts and the interactions and tasks at the beginning of the course; likewise, the interviews showed students improvement talking about accuracy.

The project itself had students develop strategies or giving tips in order to take care of the environment, trying to give the example of measurements they can do at their houses or in their community. Students made videos, they helped themselves with slides presentations, pictograms among other digital programs they preferred to share advice or giving information about how to improve the environmental situation. Learners needed to work on things they could do in their near context and give tips about what others can do to improve the environmental problems.

The final evidence was another video, students worked on a review of their environmental actions, what they had done during the course, including: how to plant, making compost, promoting recycling, giving tips for the environment; they were free to use everything they did.

One of the most important things about using PBL is that students concentrate on solving a problem, or improving a situation; so they are busy planning how to find a solution to a particular problematic while practicing speaking but not focusing on how well they are performing but how to find a solution to a particular situation which creates a state of comfort making students feel at ease without realizing. At the same time, a sense of community and a participation in real life problems are taking part of the students' projects, having a new perspective that goes beyond the classroom.

This course includes topics such as: present simple, imperative, there is/are, modal can, prepositions of place, the use of like and prefer, interrogative questions, yes/no questions among others. Firstly, very mini-task had its own driving question which was using one of the course topics, in addition students made research of a plant, herb or vegetable by using simple present and modal can, after that students explain the process of planting with the plant, herb or vegetable they selected. Students were using the tenses and topics from the program at all times, we reviewed the contents and at the same time we were working on the project tasks.

The intervention spanned six weeks and centered on environmental issues—an area relevant to students’ everyday lives. This thematic choice facilitated engagement and motivated authentic dialogue. The PBL intervention consisted of four sequential tasks, each linked with specific linguistic competencies and real-life problem-solving:

Week	Task	Driving Question	Learning Competency
1	Organic Garden	How can I help the earth by making an organic garden?	Explain planting processes using simple present and modals
2	Habitat Description	How do environmental conditions affect local animals/plants?	Describe habitats and human impact on flora and fauna
3	Recycling and Pollution Reduction	Is recycling important for improving my lifestyle?	Discuss recycling benefits and pollution reduction actions
4	Reviewing Environmental Actions	Do I feel I am contributing to improving the environment?	Summarize environmental contributions and reflect on changes

Image 1

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES

- Organic Garden Creation:** Students planted edible plants at home, documenting growth processes through videos narrated in English. This task was vital in practicing present simple tense, modal verbs like «can,» and building relevant environmental vocabulary.
- Habitat Observation:** Learners studied their local surroundings, focusing on flora and fauna, and completed questionnaires to articulate environmental impacts, thereby encouraging the use of descriptive language.
- Recycling Awareness:** Students researched recycling benefits and pollution mitigation strategies, sharing findings and advice on social media platforms to enhance speaking fluency and persuasive skills.
- Reflective Reporting:** Finally, learners synthesized their experiences and self-assessed progress via oral presentations, consolidating both language and critical thinking abilities.

Throughout the PBL activities, students worked collaboratively and individually, focusing on problem-solving rather than on linguistic perfection, which fostered a relaxed atmosphere conducive to natural language use.

RECORDINGS' SCREENSHOTS

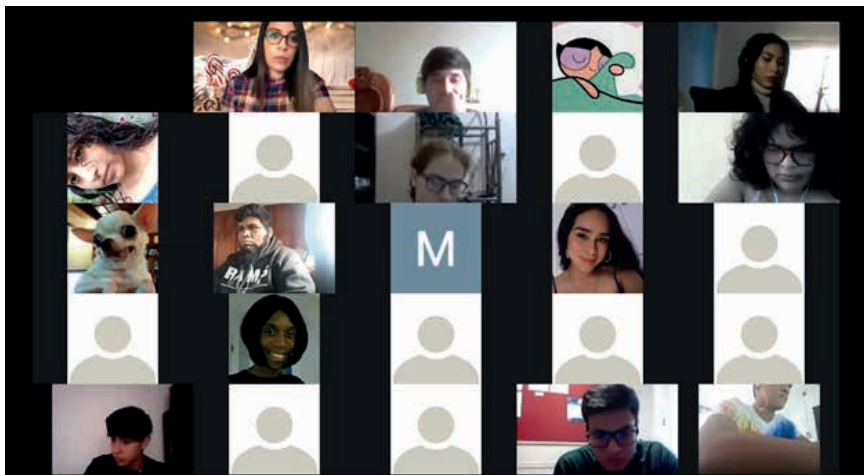


Image 2

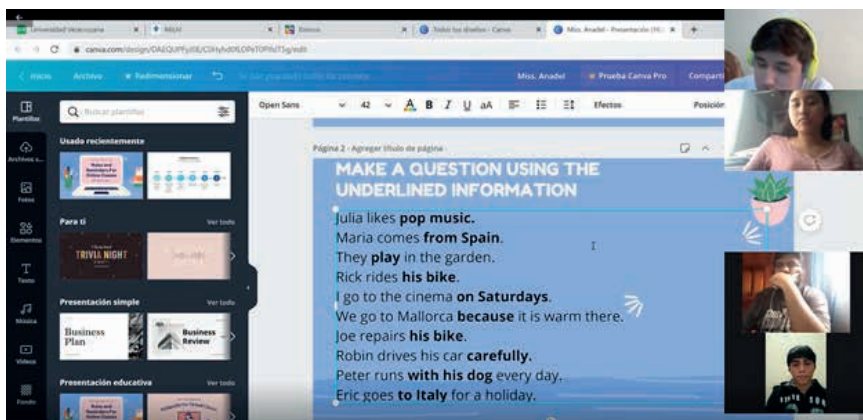


Image 3

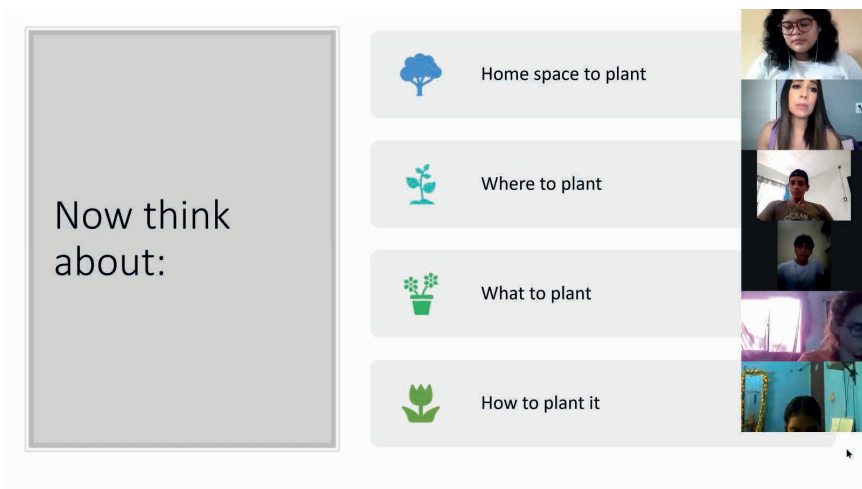


Image 4

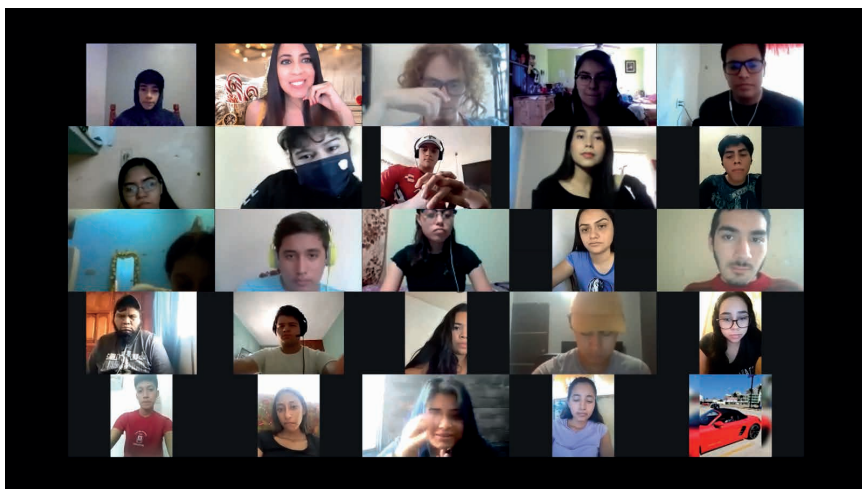


Image 5

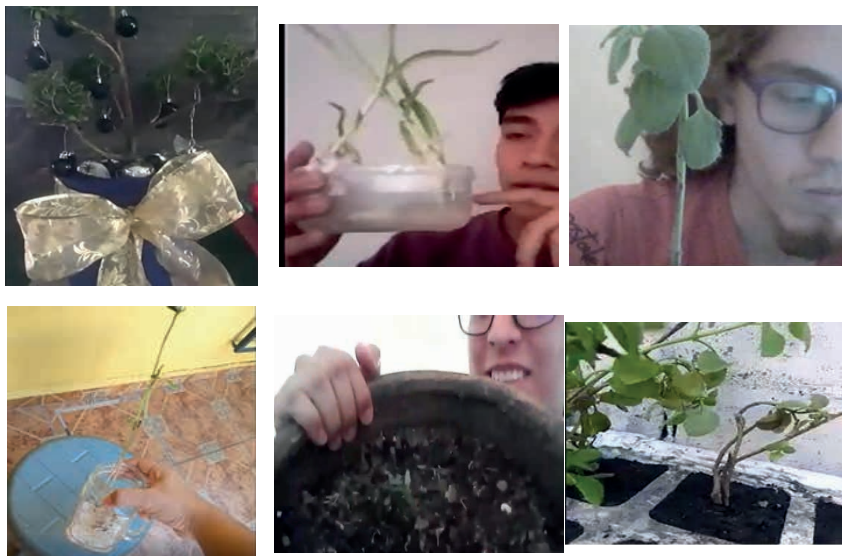


Image 6

OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

To accomplish this, an action plan was designed to get the participants familiar with projects. To keep track of the main objective of this investigation, different activities and tasks were elaborated within the projects. During this process, learners gradually became more accurate at speaking and incorporated new words which were presented in context. Seemingly, most of the participants benefitted from the implementation of PBL, given that they expressed enjoying working with projects. Also, they improved their speaking skills and vocabulary range which is supported by the data collection. During the survey, a student mentioned she believe projects helped improving abilities such as dialogue and writing since video and written tasks were held, videos documented the projects work and during sessions developments were reviewed, which, according to her, helped achieving the a better comprehension of the topics; another student expressed that projects are a good tool to improve vocabulary , which was not the main objective of the AR but some students had increased their vocabulary range during the implementation; the student mentioned hey could also develop their speaking skill ability in a practical fashion, he mentioned that PBL helped to be more confident when expressing themselves and to communicate. Many students mentioned over the course that PBL provided a confidence environment to learn and performed the tasks within the projects.

"I could improve my comprehension abilities, dialogue and writing in English, since writings, videos (documenting the process of the projects) were made and during sessions advances and developing of these were commented. Achieving more understanding of the topics". (s1)Dec. 2020

"I believe they are a good tool to improve and widen our vocabulary, at the same time our abilities of speaking and writing develop in a more practical manner. On the other side it helps us to get more confidence at the time of expressing and communicating ourselves". (s2)Dec. 2020

Students' survey pieces 3

During the course the program was covered first, students had their grammar sections including listening parts, mainly for vocabulary practice and at least one conversation recording, they had space to participate and give ideas related to the topic and a writing practice too.

The behavior and performance development were not completely satisfactory at the beginning, but this changed over the weeks. Recurrent words from the data collection showed the effectiveness of the tasks, some of the students' reactions were related with their confidence throughout the implementation process, for example, in one of the interviews, student 1 answers that she was embarrassed of talking before, but she changed that within time.

¿Crees que un proyecto ayudó a mejorar tu habilidad oral en inglés? *

Si
No

¿Por qué? (usa todas las palabras necesarias para explicar tu respuesta) *

Porque me daba pena y poco a poco fui cambiando eso (s2)

Figure 11. Students' project's work excerpt 1

Some others revealed the improvement they had when performing speaking skill task, fluency, vocabulary words and even confidence.

¿Crees que un proyecto ayudó a mejorar tu habilidad oral en inglés?*

Si

¿Por qué? (usa todas las palabras necesarias para explicar tu respuesta)*

Durante los proyectos se realizaron videos para documentar y explicar el proceso de estos, ayudo a ampliar el vocabulario y sobretudo se aumentó la práctica de la habilidad oral. Dando como resultado una mayor fluidez.

Explica: ¿Cómo te sientes al expresarte en inglés después de trabajar con los proyectos en clase?

Me siento con mayor seguridad.

¿Consideras que los proyectos te ayudaron a mejorar la certeza en la que te comunicabas al hablar en inglés?*

Si, claro que sí

¿Por qué? (usa todas las palabras necesarias para explicar tu respuesta)

Al realizar los videos me daba cuenta de mis errores de pronunciación. Me dió la oportunidad de corregir y mejorar esas pequeñas fallas para lograr un mejor resultado. (s3)

About the activities and students' reactions, some of them were related to the behavior presented during class; although at the beginning, most of them were not favorable, this changed over the days. During the course of the days, it was observed how students developed their social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language skills (Pruitt, 2009; Petty, 2016). With the different activities students had to do in teams, they increased their ability for sharing, they engaged in parallel play, and improved turn taking.

Comparing students' initial speaking performances with those following the six-week PBL intervention revealed marked improvements in accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, and pronunciation. Students demonstrated greater fluency in explaining environmental processes and used newly acquired terminology pertinent to the tasks.

The emphasis on meaningful communication, rather than mechanical language drills, helped reduce anxiety often associated with speaking practice. Students reported feeling more comfortable speaking spontaneously, supported by continuous practice through project activities such as video presentations and peer discussions.

Furthermore, the PBL framework enhanced collaboration and critical thinking, as students negotiated roles, shared ideas, and developed solutions to environmental challenges. This holistic engagement contributed significantly to motivating learners and solidifying their language skills.

CONCLUSION

This action research confirms that Project-Based Learning can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool to enhance speaking skills among beginner-level English learners. By integrating language instruction with real-life environmental problems, students not only improved their linguistic accuracy but also developed essential 21st-century skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, and digital literacy.

For educators navigating similar transitions or seeking more dynamic approaches to language teaching, this study underscores the value of combining content relevance with active learning strategies. The success observed at Universidad Veracruzana encourages the broader adoption of PBL to foster meaningful, confidence-building language acquisition experiences. It would be interesting to apply a similar research trying to use topics related to specific interests of students and not only environmental issues. It would also be stimulating to apply a similar project in a face-to-face environment.

Author's note: This study was conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the adaptability and resilience of both educators and learners in maintaining educational quality through innovation.

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CHAPTER 7

PROMOTING PRONUNCIATION STRATEGIES FOR REGULAR VERBS IN PAST TENSE

Nora Cruz Castillo

ORCID: 0000 0000 4111 0183

Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT: Learning a second language has been an easy task for some people and difficult for others. Speaking specifically about English, we can say that it is a language that differs greatly from Spanish. Spanish has more variety in its conjugations, while English does not. In terms of vocabulary, there are few similarities since they share Latin roots, but most are different. In terms of pronunciation, we can say that both languages have their peculiarities that make them different. As an English teacher, I have had the opportunity to analyze the way my students face problems when they are learning English. One common problem has been the oral production of regular verbs when they are in situations to use the simple past tense; they show difficulties to produce the suffix *-ed*. I worked with a small group of fourteen students in all whose age went from 18 to 50 years old, men and women. This study was carried out at the Center of Languages at Universidad Veracruzana for people who studied the Basic English second level. I planned several activities which were worked during five weeks. Each activity seemed to have been very useful as it allowed me to see the students' progress in each one. At the beginning of the research, students tended to omit the suffix *-ed* in various activities we carried out; after applying different strategies, I was able to observe the students' progress. By the end of the research, most students recognized the suffix's function and tried to produce each verb correctly, although they occasionally produced more /*Id*/ for all three types of endings. This change was evident throughout the activities.

KEYWORDS: Oral production, pronunciation, regular verbs, strategies, communication

RESUMEN: Aprender un segundo idioma ha sido fácil para algunas personas y difícil para otras. En cuanto al inglés, podemos decir que es un idioma muy diferente del español. El español presenta mayor variedad en sus conjugaciones, mientras que el inglés no. En cuanto al vocabulario, existen pocas similitudes, ya que comparten raíces latinas, pero la mayoría son diferentes. En cuanto a la pronunciación, podemos decir que ambos idiomas tienen peculiaridades que los diferencian. Como profesor de inglés, he tenido la oportunidad de analizar cómo mis alumnos enfrentan problemas al aprender el idioma inglés. Un problema común ha sido la producción oral de verbos regulares cuando se encuentran en situaciones donde deben usar el pasado simple; presentan dificultades para producir el sufijo -ed. Trabajé con un grupo pequeño de catorce estudiantes, hombres y mujeres, cuyas edades oscilaban entre los 18 y los 50 años. Este estudio se llevó a cabo en el Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad Veracruzana para personas que cursaban el segundo nivel de inglés básico. Planifiqué varias actividades que se realizaron durante cinco semanas. Cada actividad me resultó muy útil, ya que me permitió observar el progreso de los estudiantes. Al comenzar la investigación, los alumnos tendían a omitir el sufijo **ed** en las diferentes actividades que realizamos; tras aplicar diferentes estrategias, pude observar el progreso en los estudiantes. Al finalizar la investigación, la mayoría de los estudiantes reconocieron la funcionalidad del sufijo y trataron de producir cada verbo correctamente, aunque en ocasiones producían más /ld/ para los tres tipos de terminaciones. En el transcurso de las actividades se pudo ver el cambio.

PALABRAS CLAVES: producción oral, pronunciación, verbos regulares, estrategias, comunicación

INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important and necessary device in our lives. Through communication, people can get into contact with other people all over the world. It is an interesting process by which people exchange information to convey meaning with others with the idea of creating shared understanding. This process becomes successful when people keep certain control of their own communicative skills; this process will let people participate in everyday situations: at home, at work, at school and in other areas.

As we know, language is the perfect vehicle for interacting with others, for building relationships, and for learning new things. Sometimes, communication becomes difficult when languages are different and people want to exchange knowledge and ideas to keep an active communication. When communication is not effective it becomes a negative factor which causes people to lose interest in learning and keep into contact with others. Most of the time, when people are

learning a second language, they prefer the written information rather than the oral one, due to the lack of development they have on pronunciation and the fear of being wrong.

Oral communication skills are mainly based on speaking and listening; pronunciation is the area where people can improve the way they say a word. All these factors are important in the teaching of English as a Second Language. Teachers need to create different activities and mainly to take into account the students' learning. Teachers must draw their attention to these three components of oral communication as they are considered important to any coherent curriculum design. Nowadays, speaking, listening, and pronunciation are characterized as reciprocally interdependent oral language processes.

The main purpose of this paper is to identify those strategies that can help students acquire the correct pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense for language learners' pronunciation in Basic English second Level. After observing the most common pronunciation difficulties, several strategies were selected, which work with students in order to help them improve their pronunciation so that their communication with others can be successful.

As I mentioned above, because of being an international language, English has caused people to decide to learn it for different goals; some people learn English to obtain a better job; others to travel and communicate easily and others just to speak it. Most of the students face problems on pronunciation and this has been one of the factors that have made students stop learning English. As Brown (2007:340) states "At the beginning levels, we want learners to surpass that threshold through which pronunciation detracts them from their ability to communicate"; Brown (ibid) states that one of the most common problems that students face is the oral production. It is necessary to work deeply on this problem and give suitable solutions that make students learn the correct pronunciation for this type of verbs easily through adequate strategies that can be at the same time motivational activities.

I think that teachers should focus on pronunciation and analyze the importance of teaching pronunciation within the ELT (English Language Teaching) curriculum. Sometimes teachers think that pronunciation comes along, that is, that students will learn it through isolated repetition or the times they listen to their teachers. Actually, the teacher must create meaningful activities where students can link pronunciation with what they are learning.

CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Pronunciation is an important area that teachers should include in their daily classes. I think that students should know the most common symbols in phonology and the sounds they produce to start becoming familiar with them. As we know, good pronunciation would help them maintain efficient communication without confusion or misunderstandings. Unfortunately, very few students appreciate the importance of good pronunciation and others think that learning a second language is just based on knowing lists of vocabulary and knowing grammatical rules.

Jones (2008) points out that learning to pronounce a language is a very complex task, and the learning process can become easy or not depending on the learner's "attitude". He also adds that we, as teachers, must help our students by dividing the language into its components, such as sounds and other aspects.

During several semesters, I have had the opportunity to teach in Basic English second level at the Language Center of the University of Veracruz in Orizaba. According to the syllabus, the student must know how to express situations in the simple past tense; the students work on this tense constantly; they learn the grammar structures and interact with other classmates to practice this tense and at the same time to acquire more fluency. Unfortunately, some students fail because of several factors such as lack of study, bad pronunciation for verbs in the simple past tense and confusion to order their ideas. When I teach Basic English second level students, I frequently work with them on the four skills mainly to reinforce the pronunciation for verbs in the simple past tense either regular or irregular. Most of my students have mentioned that pronunciation makes their lives more difficult because it implies to learn symbols that they find difficult to be learnt.

When I hear my students saying that pronunciation is not necessary to learn English, I always tell them that pronunciation is an important aspect to acquire a second language since it helps them to distinguish words, improve their spelling and recognize patterns of pronunciation so that they can maintain a clear conversation with other people. This is the reason that inspires me to research in this common problem in my classes in Basic English second level learners. The main goal of this action research is to identify and apply those pronunciation strategies that can help them improve their pronunciation in the oral production of regular verbs in simple past tense. I worked with a group of twenty students approximately; my students' ages vary from 16 to 50 years old.

RATIONALE

This research was applied for Basic English Second level learners who want to study at the Language Center of the Universidad Veracruzana. People who want to learn English have to study 9 levels in all and to take 5 hours a week, 75 hours approximately per level, where they can choose the days to study. This school has a specific book for each level. The books contain a great diversity of activities where students can put in practice the four skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking, pronunciation considered a sub skill of this last skill. During several semesters I have observed that students face problems when speaking. Several students are good at writing and reading skills but they often have problems with the speaking skill, especially on pronunciation. Most of the students think that pronunciation is difficult and sometimes not necessary.

A big real problem here is that the pronunciation abilities of our students are not equal; a few students have good pronunciation whereas most of them have a poor pronunciation. For this reason, I intended to identify my students' obstacles when they pronounce incorrectly, as well as to implement those activities that can help them improve their pronunciation and make them recognize that pronunciation is as important as speaking, writing, listening and reading skills. This action research aims at

- Identifying the obstacles of pronouncing regular verbs in the simple past tense correctly.
- Identifying strategies to improve their pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

The purpose of my research was to implement those activities that help my students pronounce the regular verbs in the simple past correctly. I wanted my students to have the correct pronunciation of this kind of verbs, which could improve their communication with other people.

For me it was interesting and motivating to find those activities that let my students use this tense correctly and share my research with other coworkers. I think that if all the teachers found solutions to the common teaching and learning problems in our classrooms, our classes would be better and our students would also learn successfully. I wanted to find a solution to those pronunciation problems that I commonly have in classes.

OBJECTIVE

The main objective for this research is the following:

- I To identify and apply pronunciation strategies that can improve students' pronunciation; and also, the effectiveness of the planned focused on improving pronunciation of the simple past forms of the verbs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of teaching pronunciation

As we know, pronunciation is an important part of foreign language learning which should be taught in our daily classes; although students might consider it difficult, we, as teachers, should promote it considering that it is an integral part and it can affect learners' communicative competence as well as performance. Brown (2007:340) states that "Our goal as teachers of English pronunciation should therefore be more realistically focused on clear, comprehensible pronunciation." I have worked with many students and most of them have shown difficulties to pronounce correctly regular verbs in the simple past tense. A major issue is that they do not recognize the importance of learning pronunciation since they consider it difficult to distinguish the different sounds which are not similar to the ones that exist in Spanish, and, also, to assimilate it immediately as an important part of language; this situation can cause students to feel unmotivated and unwilling to interact with other classmates during the activities related to these issues.

In relation to students' attitude on learning pronunciation, Jenkins (2001:67) points out how important it is to make students learn pronunciation since "limited pronunciation skills can decrease learners' self-confidence, restrict social interactions, and affect estimations of students' credibility and abilities." As English is one of the most spoken languages all over the world, it is important and necessary that people can be competent and interact with native or non-native speakers in a natural and effective way. The importance of learning a second language is to be able to communicate with others, either orally or in writing. As we know, each skill has certain advantages and disadvantages: the first one may make communication easier and faster, while the latter requires more time and it cannot be as fast as the oral; however, both can be used in formal and informal situations.

MOTIVATION TO LEARN PRONUNCIATION IN THE CLASSROOM

Jenkins (2001:70) also portrays the common problems identified in the classroom and how to plan strategies that can help teachers solve those problems. For these reasons, we have to identify the problem and start working from there. Also, the author claims that it is important and motivating that either listeners or speakers can keep a good communication so that they can exchange information that should be comprehensible instead of providing an opposite effect for both actors in the transaction. About it, Brown (2007: 341) points out that “The extent to which learners’ intrinsic motivation propels them toward improvement will be perhaps the strongest influence of all six of the factors in this list.” So, we can determine the importance of motivation in the development of pronunciation.

Clear pronunciation is essential in spoken communication. I have observed in my classes that sometimes when learners produce minor mistakes in vocabulary and grammar, they can communicate effectively when they have a good command of pronunciation and intonation. I consider that these points might make learners more self-confident; I also agree that if we analyze the most common pronunciation problems and plan activities related to them, we can help them work on their weaknesses. Nowadays most English books have a great variety of activities which can be useful according to our students’ necessities. Bowler and Cunningham (1992) emphasize the importance on pronunciation aspects to be taught in our classrooms; as the previous authors claim, it is important to detect our key problems in the classrooms and select the most appropriate activities to help them learn in an appropriate way.

The authors I chose to develop this action research mention to make students practice their pronunciation through meaningful activities which may help them improve their pronunciation and at the same time to reinforce the other skills. It is important that students do not practice pronunciation in an isolated way but in a context and in different situations in order to make them useful and communicative for the learners. The suggested activities can be practiced either in the classroom or at home. I have been able to observe that these textbooks contain all of the main pronunciation problems that foreign learners can have and other aspects considered important when trying to master these areas. To this matter, Hewings (2004:186) states that “the activities can be used to test students’ ability to say different features of pronunciation, i.e., to test their productive skills.”

RAISING AWARENESS

After analyzing information on how to increase pronunciation, I thought about including games in this project which would help students improve their pronunciation in an attractive, entertaining way. Hancock (2003) points out the importance of including games in a class since they can be a good opportunity to interact with others, learn socially, and be entertained. Also, the author states the importance of using games, since they can be a good opportunity to have more entertaining, interesting and effective sessions. He also provides information on the importance of pronunciation in classes and offers a variety of activities that facilitate teachers with ways to teach pronunciation and involve students in this area of spoken language in an appealing way. The aim of including games is to avoid oral repetition drills which tend to become boring and insignificant. Harmer (2006) claims that students can learn grammar rules and pronunciation patterns differently pointing out that ‘awareness-raising’ is an important factor when teaching. If we change the way we are used to doing it and we include either songs or games, there will be greater changes in their learning; students will raise their awareness and become more independent; they will also be able to predict sounds and will not need the teacher’s help all the time. In this way, students may overcome their weaknesses and acquire the knowledge they need through this type of activities.

Games are intended for different goals; there is a concise explanation for each game detailing what the teacher has to do, that is, the previous preparations before the lesson. It is important to mention that we can make adjustments or adaptations, depending on the characteristics of each group or the topic that will be worked on in class; the goal is to make the game productive. Regarding this, Nunan (1999:118) states that “activities can be graded according to the cognitive and performance demands made upon the learner.”

STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE PRONUNCIATION

Seidlhofer (2012:56) suggests important issues on pronunciation. She points out that pronunciation has a central role in our lives: “...as individuals, we project our identity through the way we speak, and also indicate our membership of particular communities. At the same time, and sometimes also in conflict with this identity function, our pronunciation is responsible for intelligibility.” As we can observe, it is necessary to help students keep a clear pronunciation to make understandable what they want to say, conveying ‘their meaning’. Most of the times the problem lies at the teacher’s responsibility, when she/he is unaware of the importance of teaching phonetics considering it difficult even though they recognize its relevance. The issue is how to teach it, and how to make students use the correct pronunciation.

As teachers, we have the responsibility to help them improve their pronunciation and make their oral production successfully through strategies that can be adequate to their needs. About that Cohen (2011:17) points out that "...strategies are viewed in terms of their role in operationalizing both the receptive skills of listening and reading, and the productive skills of speaking, and writing."

Seidlhofer (2012) identifies clear areas about pronunciation; she states that pronunciation is not a set of symbols to be taught, pronunciation requires a deep knowledge about itself to be taught by the teacher and learners can understand the importance of conveying 'their meaning' in discourse. Otherwise, when learners feel they have not exchanged information successfully and their communication becomes difficult and little understood, they decide either to become passive in their learning or to quit studying.

When Seidlhofer (2012) talks about pronunciation in *pedagogy*, she refers to the things a teacher should be able to do to teach pronunciation. A teacher should consider that not all students learn in the same way and that is the reason to prepare enough material and consider all possible situations. In class, I have observed that a variety of options can draw their attention; they like to be challenged and prove themselves how much they can do. Sometimes teachers think that games are only for children, but a game can be an interesting way to obtain what we pretend to. As in teaching, the teacher can make students learn something better than make them repeat things that will vanish with time. To teach effectively, it is required to make use of communicative tasks which will help students interact with the language in a real way. This author recommends several useful strategies to be implemented such as: listening and repeating, discrimination practice, cognitive analysis and others.

Jones (2008) makes interesting suggestions about how to teach pronunciation. For him pronunciation should not be taught in an isolated way, it should be practiced in linguistic contexts where students can understand the communicative dimensions, that is, in this part, teachers should design communicative tasks and activities where students can understand the purpose of the activity better and interact more easily. 'Listen and repeat' is a good strategy to teach pronunciation because it implies several activities which can be adapted according to the students' needs, that is, the teacher can design other forms of drilling where students can have the opportunity to interact with the activity so that they can put into practice what the teacher consider necessary to be reinforced. He considers that the use of 'songs' is more productive and meaningful when students are practicing rhythm and sound in a more natural way. When students are making repetitive practice of songs, the activity becomes more interesting since they are trying to 'reproduce' what they are hearing. There are other activities derived from 'listening and repeating', for example, students can practice dialogue readings such as poems, paragraphs, and

others; there are other activities related to discrimination or repetition drills where students can use decontextualised words, sentences or just phrases. He proposes another interesting activity which consists on making students interact with certain information which is transferred by using other words or sentences, where the students practice several activities: reading, listening and speaking.

Jones (2008) points out another interesting strategy which consists on teaching through rules; that is, as we know most of the textbooks gives a variety of 'rules' which invite the student to use them and put them into practice. This type of activity seems to make students just mechanize certain information which can be forgotten in a short time. Jones's proposal is to make students reflect on rules through an 'inductive way' where students can articulate the rules governing. This kind of activity can become more meaningful and as Jones (2008:183) states "It can make rules more memorable to learners in that they are formulated by themselves; it can increase awareness of the communicative aspects of pronunciation: and it can provide an opportunity for communicative practice as learners interact with their peers."

I consider that each author provides relevant ideas; the goal is to select which one suits students' needs. Bucks (2001:64) points out that "the basic idea underlying communicative teaching in that language is used for the purpose of communication, in a particular situation and for a particular purpose, and the important thing is (...) they can actually use it to communicate in (...) the real-world situation in which the language will be used." As we can see, pronunciation is helpful because it is an area of language use that will allow students reinforce other important aspects that at the same time will help them master the language they are learning.

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodology used in this research allowed me to assess the strategies applied in the different activities which helped the students improve their pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense and at the same time analyze which ones were functional and which ones were not. The instruments used are described and the description of the implementation.

It is important to highlight the methods that allowed me to achieve the results obtained. The central idea was to find a method that would let me identify activities that were most meaningful to their learning and avoid isolated, context-free exercises. There are a variety of methods, but the ones I used were the Analytic-Linguistic Approach and the Communicative Approach. Based on the characteristics of each method, they allowed me to address the central point of this research, which is the mastery of the **ed** suffix for the production of regular verbs in students at the *Basic English Second level*. The first method was very helpful as it permitted to focus on

the movements required for producing the **ed** suffix, such as the position of the tongue, teeth, palate, air flow, and being able to produce the three sounds required for regular verbs. The second approach focuses on communicative competence; through real-life situations, it was possible to create spaces that reflect everyday life and make learning more meaningful and active. The analytical linguistic approach allowed us to analyze the phonological composition of this language; This greatly helped the students understand the sounds both singly and in combination. This was reinforced with support material and activities carried out by the teacher.

ANALYTIC-LINGUISTIC APPROACH

This method systematically studies language, that is, it allows us to analyze its grammatical, semantic, and even pragmatic structures. It lets us to observe the composition of language in detail and understand patterns and trends in language use, which is essential for better natural language processing (2011).

Firstly, it was necessary to explain the phonetic alphabet to them and analyze the sounds each letter makes. This led to doubts arising from the similarities that exist in their native language.

To better understand them, exercises were performed involving the vocal organs, such as the lips, tongue, larynx, and others. This also allowed them to identify the sound and the vibration each letter produces. Derived from this exercise, it was necessary to explain in detail how to produce the three sounds for the suffix **ed**.

Memory game: this allowed students to relate sounds to images to better clarify the sound of each letter. This game allowed them to identify more the sounds. Another memory game was created to practice the three sounds involved in the pronunciation of the regular verbs in the Simple Past tense.

Minimal Pair Lists: This activity allowed students to specify the three sounds; that is, material was prepared with three columns where the same verb was represented with all three sounds, and one option was correct.

Minimal Pair Drills: Here, oral production was worked on through a list of regular verbs presented in a base format, which had to be recorded in audio via WhatsApp. Each student received feedback and was asked to resubmit it.

THE COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

This approach was very helpful because its main objective was to help students develop their communication skills through activities, either in groups or in pairs. To achieve this, students worked on various activities designed to put into practice the grammatical structures, vocabulary, and expressions learned through listening,

reading, writing, and speaking activities. It was necessary to work with material based on real-life situations to make it more meaningful to them. They had the opportunity to create similar situations and put them into practice.

It was necessary to use authentic material such as flyers, newspapers, magazines, social media, YouTube, menus, recipes, etc. They also used their English textbooks.

THE STUDY

Action Research is a way to find possible solutions to certain problems given in our daily classes. This action research project was created to solve a problematic situation observed during several years in my daily classes. Most English students show a great difficulty to produce the correct pronunciation for regular verbs in the simple past tense. Some students tend not to pay attention to the pronunciation, ignoring it totally. Others are interested in learning it but sometimes teachers do not increase that knowledge. As a teacher of Basic English second level, I have observed that the production of the suffix **ed** has caused students problems when they speaking because they get confused trying to remember the ending of each verb to produce the correct sound in each one. The main purpose of this action research is to make teachers consider pronunciation an important part when a second language is being learned since otherwise our students will not recognize the importance of learning and considering it important.

THE CONTEXT

This study took place at the Language Center at the Universidad Veracruzana in Orizaba, Veracruz. The English program includes 9 levels divided into three blocks: basic, intermediate and advanced. Each block contains three levels, having 5 hours a week; all these English courses are aimed at people of different ages. The study was applied in the first block, level two. The goal of selecting this level was because most of students face serious difficulties to produce the correct pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense. I had enough time to work with the selected group and observe how the students could work and develop their abilities to acquire the correct pronunciation for these verbs. There were a total of 14 students. I carried out action research during a semester, so I had the opportunity to evaluate a course and use different research methods to obtain the information I needed. I analyzed the difficulties my students faced to pronounce correctly the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

DATA COLLECTION

My Action Research had characteristics of qualitative research since there was a case study where it could be observed and analyzed how the students interacted with different material to make them acquire the correct pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense; Through it, it was possible to detect what situations affected their progress while learning and what strategies were taken not to interrupt the course of the investigation. Merriam (1998:06) states that "Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting."

Narrative analysis is an important tool within the field of the qualitative research since it helped me describe step by step what happened during my action research. This method was fundamental because through it I could organize the activities and have a variety of them to analyze better and deeply what happened during the process of this case study. Through this method I could register interesting information taken from the activities done in the classroom. I specified the teaching material worked in the observed classes as well as the instruments used during this research; the way I explained the activities and whether my instructions were clear or not were registered; it was also specified whether the material used was appropriate to be worked in the classroom or whether it was necessary to make some changes to avoid interrupting the process of the activity. The way they were integrated to interact with others either in pairs, small groups or individually was mentioned.

INSTRUMENTS

To facilitate the way to collect data, I used *checklists*. This was an effective way to obtain certain information because they were created according to the necessities of the group. As I needed to observe different things, I created three checklists. The first one was used at the beginning of the course to analyze their attitude in the activities, their interaction with other classmates, and their participation in class; the second one was used while they were playing with some games done to improve their pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past where I also analyzed their attitude, interaction, and improvement on pronunciation.

Group Discussion was another important way to analyze more and observe how much the students improved their pronunciation for Regular verbs in the simple past tense. The students were encouraged to talk and participate, apart from interacting. They practiced the use of this tense as well as the correct pronunciation for regular verbs with topics related to the simple past tense. *Personal interviews/*

pair work were a way to obtain in-depth and comprehensive information. There were activities where these interviews involved one person interviewing another person for personal or detailed information. Personal interviews were used only when subjects were not likely to respond to other survey methods. I considered important to record the students' answers because through them, I was able to explore and analyze what happened about the activities practiced in the classroom. Through this, I was also able to identify how I guided my class and to analyze aspects such as the tone of my voice, the manner of expressing myself, and the way I solved my students' problems. I invited one partner to observe my class and give me feedback about what happened in my class to reinforce and improve my teaching.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this section is to present findings obtained during several weeks of work where different activities were used to improve students' pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense. Each strategy developed in each activity provides the results obtained. The new data found in this study are presented in tables, and other data are described.

Problems with pronunciation

The activities worked on in this study provided good results. The first activity was very important because I needed to know how the students read in simple past. They showed little knowledge on the pronunciation for the regular verbs in simple past tense. The majority of the students did not pronounce the suffix 'ed,' they just reached the base word, skipping the suffix. After this activity I could confirm their difficulties when pronouncing the regular verbs in the simple past tense.

Deducing information

After making the students exchange information about past events, I could observe the way they interacted with their peers, that is, if they showed either a positive or negative attitude and at the same time to analyze the way they pronounced the past of regular verbs in the simple past tense. Through a checklist I could register their pronunciation and attitude when working the activity. The results show that most of them had a positive attitude and as regards pronunciation most of them had several mistakes when speaking, just four could stand for an appropriate pronunciation.

ATTITUDE	PRONUNCIATION
P= 11	C=4
N=3	I=10

P= Positive attitude

C= correct pronunciation

N= Negative attitude

I= incorrect pronunciation

It was interesting to work on Jones's (2008) suggestion which consists of making students 'discover' the information through inductive activities. I observed it was successful to make them deduce the three pronunciation rules for the regular verbs. I observed that they strived to identify and classify the verbs by using the technique of putting their fingers on their throat and they could feel the vibration each one causes. I noticed that it was more useful and meaningful to have them discover by themselves than to explain them in explicit presentations of rules; I observed they worked very well and were very enthusiastic about the activity.

Listening and Repeating

Another useful activity included in this research was the use of a *song*. When I worked the song with my students, I observed that they did not like the activity so much. It was useful and convenient to make them questions about the song since it let them express what they were feeling; some answers were given in Spanish and others in English. They showed some difficulties to catch the information and fill in the gaps, even though the song was repeated more than twice, four times in all. There was another problem when I asked them to sing, they simply did not want to do it, possibly they felt ashamed of singing in the class. I asked them if the song was boring and they answered that it was not. The main purpose might have not been reached in class because the idea was that they listened and repeated the song. However, just a few students and I sang the song. Nevertheless, the surprise came the next day when most of the students handed in the 'extra activity' the results became more positive on doing the extra activity at home. They identified the total of regular verbs; they mentioned their favorite part of the song and the place described in the song. The most interesting was that they accepted to have sung at home, some mentioned two times and others three times.

Games

The games I used to practice the pronunciation for the regular verbs in simple past tense was not so easy to be worked since it required their attention and the knowledge acquired in the previous activities. I can say that the game gave positive results and these were the more relevant aspects: Some students had problems with the activities since they had missed classes so they could not participate as they should. When the students started playing, they were checking their notebook to verify their answers. Other students asked me solve their doubts. I could also observe some students solving their doubts by putting their index and middle fingers on their throat and verifying the correct sound. Others asked me but I helped them reflect on the sound. The answers were given at the end of the activities so that they could check what they have done.

Post-reading

At the beginning of this action research, I included a pre-reading (see appendix one) where each student read a short paragraph in the simple past tense. The data reflected that most of them had serious problems to produce the simple past tense. To compare the beginning results I considered important to include another reading with the aim to know how much they had improved their pronunciation. In this activity it was necessary to record them and use a checklist which let me register the information carefully. I could observe two situations: the first one happened when I asked them to read a short paragraph in the simple past tense. There were positive changes in their pronunciation since they no longer omitted the suffix 'ed'. They got confused with the sounds corresponding to /t/ and /d/; they most used /d/ for most verbs; although they forgot to pronounce each ending correctly, at least they did not ignore the suffix 'ed'. They seemed to be more aware of it. I consider that the problem of not pronouncing the suffix correctly may have been caused by the fact that in Spanish we are not used to linking and omitting sounds as it is done in English and they seemed to avoid doing this; or maybe they did not try hard to produce it correctly. The second situation happened when I gave them some extra minutes to 'prepare' it; in this second option, students showed noticeable in the simple past tense. I can consider that there were a few mistakes; the checklist shown in Appendix 5 reflects that they did not have problems in pronouncing /d/ (2 of 14 students). A few mistakes (4 of 14) were made with the sound /t/ and there were more mistakes to produce /d/ (5 of 14). I want to emphasize that they are more aware that the simple past tense does not just imply to know how to write them but also to know how to read them progress on pronouncing regular verbs.

Discrimination practice

Discrimination practice was an interesting activity which required the students' attention. When the track was played the students did not understand easily so it was necessary to play it twice. When we were checking the activity, a few students told me not to have understood some of them so I decided to read them and they could identify the correct answer. This type of activities is useful and should be used constantly in class to help them put into practice what they are seeing in class and reinforce it more.

Free activity

The purpose to include this activity was to observe what they could do by themselves without any 'extra- help'. It was satisfactory to see how the students tried to retell the story by producing the simple past tense correctly, that is, producing the most possible each sound. Most of the students had a few mistakes. Sometimes they changed one sound for another. Sometimes they produced /**Id**/ where they must not do it. I consider it was interesting to make them produce information by themselves and they could realize what they could do without the teacher's help.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

This action research has allowed me to find interesting results which can contribute for the development of future educational strategies to help students improve their pronunciation for the regular verbs in the simple past tense. When students start learning the production of past situations, they tend not to produce the suffix **ed** when they speak. The activities mentioned above were useful since helped them understand better this tense and produce the correct pronunciation for each ending.

The results obtained in each activity planned for this action research were satisfactory because they helped the students to improve the pronunciation. Some of them were more meaningful than others, according to the notes in my journal the students participated more in this type of activities and they showed more interest. The purpose was that each one helped them foster and improve their pronunciation for these verbs. Thus, it has shown the importance of promoting pronunciation training in a constant way and of giving it the accurate emphasis on each activity worked in class. Each of the activities worked gave positive results. This suggests that teachers should consider all the possible activities, employing relevant strategies in order to help students dominate 'the knowledge' which is being practiced in class and avoid students' poor learning. The activities I made use of in this research were truly useful but I do not want to state that they are the only ones to be used. Each

teacher should analyze their students' needs as a starting point. I consider important to take into account the learning styles and create a variety of activities based on the strategies that make them learn in a more meaningful way.

Another important fact was that the students finally realized the importance of pronouncing the suffix **'ed'** when expressing themselves in past simple. When I started this study, I could observe certain negative attitude to produce the suffix **'ed'**. I could also register interesting comments the students made when working. One of the first activities was to ask them to read a short paragraph in past simple and what they did was skipping the suffix when reading, they ignored it totally. I remember a comment made by a student who told me, when I was explaining to them the importance to produce the correct sound for this ending, "teacher... nobody realizes if we pronounce it or not". When I heard this, I helped them reflect and compare a similar situation in their mother language which, I am sure, made them understand the importance of producing the correct sound when speaking in past. This reflection was very useful, as Seidlhofer (2001) states, we, as teachers, have the responsibility to help them understand and assimilate what we need them to understand; one way to do it is by comparing the mother language sound system with the second language sound system, which in this study, was very useful and functional. When they observed the comparison, they seemed to be more interested in understanding and assimilating the difference in both languages to get the same effectiveness when speaking.

When they understood what ending sound should be added at the end of each regular verb, another problem was *what to do to produce the suffix 'ed' when speaking?* Through the strategies used and recommended by several authors, I started developing different activities which tried to help them produce the three endings. Richard's (2008) suggestion, it was practical to make them think and 'discover' by themselves the three ending rules for the regular verbs in the simple past tense; but when they started practicing the three sounds for those verbs, they insisted on producing the same sound **/ld/** for all the verbs. They showed a great difficulty to produce the **/t/** and **/d/** sounds. I was able to notice that the production for the suffix **'ed'** and for the last two sounds became difficult due to their native language interference and the phonetic references that there are in both languages. Despite the fact I made them work on several activities they continued showing the same problem; they tended to add **/t/** when **/d/** should have been used and vice versa. By taking into account the notes I wrote, I concluded that the game used in the class was useful although it reinforced more the visual area. This part was enjoyable for them, but when it was time to produce the sound for each verb, they seemed to be worried because they were afraid of making mistakes. One student said, "teacher, ... I can't...it's difficult to produce them". I always tried to motivate them to work more enthusiastically.

I considered it would be interesting they could practice their pronunciation by singing. It was not easy to find a song that they liked it since most of them prefer popular songs and to select one where verbs in past were included. I observed that they did not like the activity very much but they did their best to work in class. The idea to include a song was because I did not want to make them repeat words in an isolated way. I also consider that something becomes more meaningful when that person is doing something he/she likes since he/she enjoys it more. It is important to use our creativity and make any activity successful. It would be interesting to have asked the students how they would have liked to work with the song and thus share responsibilities with them. It is also important to plan an alternating activity when it is suspected that one may not be functional because of students' attitude or perhaps because we did not plan it well. The alternating activity I had when I observed that some of them did not show interest in singing was positive. It was a good idea they could evaluate themselves and took responsibility about their own learning.

Among the other activities, the students were asked to read another paragraph in past. I could notice that they became aware of the differences in pronouncing **-ed** and the importance of trying to pronounce it correctly. They continued making mistakes regarding the three sounds but at least they did not avoid pronouncing the suffix **'ed'** or skip it as they did at the beginning of this action research. I could observe that they felt more confident when they had 'extra time' to prepare their reading in past since their pronunciation was adequate and marked the ending sound very well.

I consider that having worked with activities, where listening, reading and writing were included, helped them increase their pronunciation for the regular verbs and the most important they became aware of the importance of producing the ending sound for these verbs.

Motivation and patience were helpful to increase their self-confidence and they could continue working with other activities. I considered important and relevant to include a final activity whose strategy focused on making them face a situation which had to be solved with their own knowledge and skills on the language. This one let me see what each student could do to communicate and interact with others. I observed they talked slowly possibly because they tried to pronounce. It was interesting to see how much they could do by themselves; they seemed to be more self-confident although they were afraid to speak. Now they seemed to be aware when they speak since they already know that 'something extra' must be added at the end of the verb.

I consider that it is necessary to include more activities where they could reinforce the three ending sounds. It was not enough to have worked on just these strategies and activities since others could be used as well. It is important to mention that the students could perform better in class but there were other factors such as attitude, time and class absences which did not let them have a better performance. I think it could be a good idea to have created an activity bank where the students could have worked more the pronunciation at home, for the three ending sounds, and practice it to feel more self-confident when speaking.

I think that having done action research on an important issue, helped me understand what I can do to improve my students' learning and what not to do in class. This is an excellent way to balance what we do in class and to change methodology, strategies and activities that can affect our students' learning. The most important thing is to raise awareness in our students when learning. This is also a good opportunity to improve our teaching and grow as teachers.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

During several years of teaching English, pronunciation has called my attention seriously. That is the reason this study was focused on helping students improve their pronunciation for regular verbs in the simple past tense. Most students have a lot of difficulties to produce the three endings for the suffix **'ed'** when speaking. My experience as an English teacher helped me plan some strategies that were useful for this action research project. I want to mention that some activities were more meaningful than others but finally all of them made them work and practice the ending sound.

It is important to analyze the students we have each semester and depending on that we can start planning what strategies carry out. We should remember that all students have different needs and learning styles. We should avoid the traditional teaching in our classrooms and make changes when we teach. There is no doubt that when we make our students 'discover' new things they do it better and with a positive attitude since it becomes more interesting and meaningful for them.

This action research helped me understand that when I want to make a change, I need to define and organize what I intend to change in my teaching. To make changes I need to observe and analyze students' needs, taking into account their preferences, likes, learning styles and all those factors that can help design a list of strategies and activities to be developed in the classroom. It is important to change our methodology and through it we can have new insights on how to teach English in order to improve 'situations' which have not been functional in our classrooms. For example, regarding games, I could include at least other two games and have a variety of games. Possibly the students who showed a negative attitude could have worked better with other games.

This action research can hopefully help other teachers improve their classes when they want to teach the suffix ‘**ed**’. In class, I suggest working on improving pronunciation every day, it is important for teachers to remind students to correct their pronunciation every day and avoid fossilizations in the future. The problem is when teachers avoid explaining pronunciation in class. If the teacher has problems to understand the phonetic symbols, he/she should ask for help to understand used them in class.

Now I have learned that action research is a great opportunity to find solutions to everyday problems. I think a teacher would not work with the same problems; he/she should try hard to find solutions by doing action research constantly. A teacher must do his/her best every day and be concerned about his/ her students’ learning. As it is known doing action requires time and sometimes, we are pressured by different circumstances but we should do it to become more creative in our classes and mainly make our students learn and enjoy their classes.

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CHAPTER 8

TEACHING ENGLISH INITIAL /S/ CONSONANT CLUSTERS PRONUNCIATION USING TONGUE TWISTERS: A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Verónica Pimienta Rosales
ORCID: 0000-0002-0937-5656

Samantha Dean Sánchez Avilés

Sergio Joel Barrera Ortega
Universidad De Guadalajara

ABSTRACT: This study aims to evaluate the efficacy of tongue twisters in teaching initial English consonant clusters to Mexican Spanish-speaking learners. The research employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate how this phonological practice can improve learners' pronunciation and fluency in English. Data collection focuses on recordings of student oral production and a survey designed to gather learners' perceptions and experiences with the intervention. The treatment consists of a one-class session complemented by homework exercises that utilize tongue twisters targeting initial consonant clusters. Quantitative analysis of the recordings measures improvements in accuracy and articulation, while qualitative survey data provide insights into learner attitudes and challenges. The findings contribute to understanding the role of phonetic exercises in second language acquisition, particularly for Spanish speakers facing difficulties with English consonant combinations that do not occur in their native language. The study supports the integration of tongue twisters as a motivating and effective tool in the English pronunciation curriculum, highlighting its potential to enhance phonological awareness and learner confidence. Recommendations for teachers include incorporating similar phonological drills in classroom settings to target specific pronunciation issues among beginner and intermediate English learners. This research addresses a gap in pedagogical strategies for L2 phonetics and offers practical implications for English language teaching in Mexican contexts.

KEYWORDS: tongue twisters, consonant clusters, English language teaching, Spanish speakers

RESUMEN: Este estudio tiene como objetivo evaluar la eficacia de los trabalenguas en la enseñanza de los grupos consonánticos iniciales del inglés a estudiantes hispanohablantes mexicanos. La investigación utiliza un enfoque metodológico mixto para analizar cómo esta práctica fonológica puede mejorar la pronunciación y fluidez en inglés de los aprendices. La recolección de datos se basa en grabaciones de la producción oral de los estudiantes y una encuesta diseñada para conocer las percepciones y experiencias de los alumnos con la intervención. El tratamiento consta de una sesión en clase y ejercicios para tarea que emplean trabalenguas enfocados en grupos consonánticos iniciales. El análisis cuantitativo de las grabaciones mide mejoras en la precisión y articulación, mientras que los datos cualitativos de la encuesta aportan información sobre las actitudes y dificultades de los estudiantes. Los resultados contribuyen a comprender el papel de los ejercicios fonéticos en la adquisición de una segunda lengua, especialmente para hablantes de español que enfrentan desafíos con combinaciones consonánticas del inglés que no existen en su lengua materna. Este estudio respalda la integración de trabalenguas como una herramienta motivadora y eficaz en la enseñanza de la pronunciación inglesa, destacando su potencial para mejorar la conciencia fonológica y la confianza de los aprendices. Se recomienda a los docentes incluir ejercicios similares para atender problemas específicos de pronunciación en aprendices de niveles inicial e intermedio. La investigación aporta estrategias pedagógicas y aplicaciones prácticas en el contexto mexicano.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Trabalenguas, grupos consonánticos, enseñanza del idioma inglés, hablantes de español

INTRODUCTION

English is an important and global language present in the daily life of most people in Mexico. It is taught from primary up to higher educational levels in some cases, where the need to attain a certain level of language proficiency is required in some undergraduate degree programs. Despite its prevalence in education and daily life, there are aspects of the way it is taught that can be improved. Namely, pronunciation, which is a type of linguistic knowledge that is neglected. Because of this, common pronunciation problems among Spanish speakers are not solved. For example, adding an /ɛ/ sound to the beginning of consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme. This research proposal aims to tackle this phonological problem by evaluating the efficacy of tongue twisters in the teaching of English initial consonant clusters to Mexican Spanish speakers.

The pronunciation of English is an element of student's linguistic knowledge that is often overlooked in the teaching of English as a foreign language (Afonso Funke, 2021). Its development is central to help students carry effective communicative

transactions. In addition, when students realized that they succeed in realizing intelligible and comprehensive speech, their motivation increases. Therefore, this research will zero in on the opinion students have on activities focused solely on practicing the pronunciation of words with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme using tongue twisters.

Findings on the literature suggest that Spanish speakers, specifically, struggle with the pronunciation of consonant clusters that start with /s/ that are not present in their native language. They tend to simplify them by adding the /e/ sound at the beginning of these words (Shemesh, 2018; Gómez-González & Sánchez-Roura, 2016). According to Moore (2020), this occurs because words in Spanish do not normally start with a consonant cluster. Therefore, sounds like /sp/, /st/, /sk/, /sl/, /sm/ do not exist in Spanish, and they will always have a vowel sound before. Further proving this point, Rauber and Baptista's study (2002) showed that Spanish speakers added the /e/ vowel from 12.67% to 63.50% of the time. For that reason, this paper focuses on these consonant clusters.

In addition to this, in a study performed by Calvo Benzie (2013) advanced Spanish speakers committed a total of 209 mistakes in the pronunciation of vowels. This shows that there is not enough emphasis on pronunciation, as difficulties persist even in experienced learners.

The objectives of this proposal are to identify the efficacy of tongue twisters in the teaching of English initial consonant clusters to Mexican Spanish speakers, to understand students' perspectives towards the usage of tongue twisters, and to improve the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme, finally, to analyze common mistakes among Mexican students living in Guadalajara participating in PAL with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme, and to analyze common mistakes among Mexican students living in Guadalajara participating in PAL with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme. To achieve the goals aforementioned, this paper will be guided by the following research questions. What are students' perspectives towards the usage of tongue twisters to improve the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?, What are common mistakes among Mexican students living in Guadalajara participating in PAL with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?, What is the effectiveness of tongue twisters to the teaching of phonetic accuracy of consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?

This research aims to discover whether the use of tongue twisters can help Mexican students overcome the pronunciation problems Spanish speakers face with consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme. Moreover, their perspective on the activities would also be collected and analyzed. The results of this research could impact students by improving their speaking fluency, intelligibility, and confidence when using the language. Hopefully, this study could also inspire educators to use different strategies when teaching pronunciation in their classes.

Regarding what benefits could come out of this research, there is one which is of the utmost importance. Namely, to increase the students' phonological accuracy and the educators' awareness of pronunciation problems that could be solved with the incorporation of tongue twisters in the teaching practice. Of course, the main beneficiaries would be the students who would be the recipients of the pronunciation activities. On the other hand, the teachers can implement new strategies for teaching pronunciation and their students would see the benefits first-hand in their own production.

In this section, five different research findings on the teaching of pronunciation to Spanish speakers will be introduced. Some are experimental and others analyze previous papers. However, each of them deal with the pronunciation of English by Spanish speakers. Additionally, the last three focus specifically on consonant clusters.

Tapia, J. et al. (2017) conducted a research at the State University of Guayaquil in which the aim was to analyze and investigate the teaching English pronunciation to Spanish speakers. The study was focused on the qualitative analysis of observations. Results suggest that a few students showed signs of little interest based on their assumptions of English as a tough language. Also, they were motivated to understand English words and its pronunciation.

Additionally, Funke (2021), conducted a study in Spain to analyze recordings of online classes to find out the difficulties students had in the pronunciation of specific phonemes. Through this closer look at student speech, Funke concluded that there is a clear lack of focus on pronunciation coming from the teachers and the instructional material.

Moreover, Corralejo-Rodríguez (2017), carried out a research at an English course in Educación Secundaria Obligatoria (ESO). This study aims to design a methodology, adaptable and applicable to 1st of ESO students and other ESO and Bachillerato years and test the methodology as a tool for improving perception and production of teenage EFL learners acquisition of word final clusters /st/ / ft/ /tft/. Twenty students from a 1st ESO class participated in the study. Pre- and Post-tests were designed, and the results show a positive effect from employing the methodology between the students' pre and post test scores.

In addition to the above, Gómez-Martínez (2011) conducted an analysis of their experiences as a teacher in the University of Valladolid regarding student mispronunciations. Through his study, Gómez-Martínez found that, in everyday classes, students add an e before the pre-initial consonants to make words pronounceable according to the pronunciation rules of Spanish.

Furthermore, Rauber and Baptista's (2002) research applied in the University of Montoya and the Universidad de Federal de Santa Catarina focused on analyzing the production of initial /s/ clusters by Portuguese and Spanish EFL speakers. The subjects were nine Spanish speakers and ten Portuguese speakers. The data was acquired through the participants' reading of 180 sentences. One of the results was that Spanish speakers added the /e/ vowel from 12.67% to 63.50% of the time.

OBJECTIVES

This research would attempt to achieve the following general and specific objectives:

General objective: To identify the efficacy of tongue twisters in the teaching of English initial consonant clusters to Mexican Spanish speakers

Specific objective 1: To understand students' perspectives towards the usage of tongue twisters to improve the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme.

Specific objective 2: To analyze common mistakes among Mexican students living in Guadalajara participating in PAL with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme.

Specific objective 3: To evaluate the effectiveness of tongue twisters to the teaching of phonetic accuracy of consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme.

HYPOTHESIS

If tongue twisters are used during the teaching of consonant clusters, students' pronunciation will improve, and they will have a positive perception of the activities and the learning of initial consonant clusters starting with /s/

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The decisions taken throughout the creation of this paper were guided by the following research questions:

1. What are students' perspectives towards the usage of tongue twisters to improve the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?
2. What are common mistakes among Mexican students living in Guadalajara participating in PAL with initial consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?

3. What is the effectiveness of tongue twisters to the teaching of phonetic accuracy of consonant clusters starting with the /s/ phoneme?

METHODOLOGY

This research would be carried out in Universidad de Guadalajara (UdeG). It is one of the largest public universities in Mexico with 339,508 students (Numeralia UdeG, 2025). The UdeG is comprised by a network of 19 campuses distributed in different regions of the city. These offer Bachelor's Degrees (B.A.), Master programs, and PhD programs. It also offers classes at highschool level. One of the campuses is called Centro Universitario de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades (CUCSH). This site has 12,486 students (Numeralia UdeG, 2025). It offers the undergraduate program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (LIDILE in Spanish) is part of such site. This program has an average enrollment of 147 students who want to obtain a degree in teaching English (Numeralia UdeG, 2025). As part of school curriculum, in one of the class subjects, students at LIDILE are required to coordinate, observe, and teach extracurricular English classes from the third to the eight semester in a program that offers English classes to the school community and general public in a program called PAL (Spanish acronym for Programa Abierto en Lenguas Extranjeras). For this program, students are asked to do micro-teaching practices, a task in which LIDILE students are asked to get in groups of 4 students to teach basic general classes of English in PAL. This program has an academic offer of six levels, each with a duration of a one semester. The present study would be carried out in one of the previously mentioned groups.

In order to identify the effectiveness of the use of tongue twisters in the teaching of initial consonant clusters with the /s/ phoneme, an action research study was conducted following a mixed method for data collection and analysis. According to Bradbury (2015) an action research is a process that "brings together action and reflection, as well as theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern". Since one of the objectives of the study is to analyze students' opinion, a survey was elaborated with open-ended questions and a section of four rating scale options (see Appendix A). It would take place after the implementation and practice of tongue twisters to improve the pronunciation of initial consonant clusters with the /s/ phoneme. The results would be analyzed by comparing the answers of all the participants. This is to obtain a clear picture of their experience and performance.

For this study, the quantitative method would also be used to measure the students' outcome after the instrument. This would be done by asking students to provide an audio pronouncing the words with consonant clusters beginning with /s/ before and after the treatment. The audios can be later analyzed by doing a phonetic transcription and counting the mistakes. With this measure, it is possible to know if the students' pronunciation really improved after the tongue twisters.

The study follows a quasi-experimental design. The main reason for the usage of such design are the limitations of the context. The tested group would be the only available one, and comparing it to a control group would not be plausible. Therefore, this design would allow us to conduct the experiment despite the mentioned constraints. In short, using a quasi-experimental design is the most appropriate choice for this study.

The research also has a phenomenological aspect to it. In the aforementioned survey, the participants would be able to express their perspective and experiences. However, in the recordings, the only focus is performance. In other words, the survey would bring insights which the recordings cannot. Thus, they can complement the quantitative results.

In this last section, a rough outline of the treatment will be presented. The lesson is divided in 3 parts: pre-speaking, while-speaking, and post-speaking. In the first part, the consonant cluster pattern would be introduced. In the second part, two activities working with tongue twisters would be applied. In the third and last part, the students would continue working with the tongue twisters in a relay race; a competition in which members of a team take turns completing an action. An in-depth description of the lesson can be found in the appendix section (see Appendix B). After the class, the students would be given homework. They would be tasked with practicing new tongue twisters and, once they are finished, sending a recording in which they say them.

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APPENDIX A

Survey

Trabalenguas

Encuesta para investigación.

¡Gracias por contestar!

Las actividades con trabalenguas son ____.

☐ Muy divertidas

☐ Divertidas

☐ Poco divertidas

☐ Nada divertidas

Las actividades con trabalenguas fueron ____ para mejorar mi pronunciación.

☐ Muy útiles

☐ Útiles

☐ Poco útiles

☐ Nada útiles

Explica por qué.

Your answer

Las actividades con trabalenguas fueron ____.

☐ Muy difíciles

☐ Difíciles

☐ Poco difíciles

☐ Nada difíciles

Explica por qué.

Your answer

Aprender pronunciación en inglés es ____.

☐ Muy importante

☐ Importante

☐ Poco importante

☐ Nada importante

APPENDIX B

Lesson Plan

LESSON PLAN				
Date: 03/04/2025	Classroom: H34	Level: 1	Class time: 50 minutes	Nº of ss: 5
Context: Tongue twisters		Function: Pronunciation		
Previous teaching point: Verb of preference like in affirmative and negative with gerunds		Teaching point: Speaking		
Framework: Skill class				
Language Item: Consonant clusters starting with /s/: strange, students, speak, Spanish, splendid, schools, Stacy, Steven, stay, Spain, study, small, skinned, straight, stop		Names: Aolani Belegui Hernández Sánchez, Diego Noé Mendoza Chávez, Sergio Joel Barrera Ortega, Samantha Dean Sánchez Avilés		
Aim: By the end of the class, SS will be able to correctly pronounce words with initial consonant clusters starting with /s/				

Warm up			
Time: 8:00-8:10	Teacher: Diego Noe Mendoza Chavez.	Skills: All and any	Interaction: T-SS
Material: Flashcards.			
Objective: SS will recognize the /s/ + consonant pattern in the following words: strange, students, speak, Spanish, splendid, schools, Stacy, Steven, stay, Spain, study, small, skinned, straight, stop.			
Procedure			
Lead-in: "Do you know what tongue twister means?"			
Steps: 1. SS will be greeted. 2. SS will be asked. 3. SS will be presented the vocabulary with flashcards. 4. SS will be asked to analyze the flashcards. 5. SS will be asked "what do you notice?" 6. SS will answer the question. 7. SS will be asked to do choral repetition. 8. T will do error correction with the pronunciation.			
Possible problems: SS may not arrive on time.		Possible solution: T will take some minutes of the next stage.	
Link: "Do you know the tongue twister "camarón, caramelo"?"			

While-speaking task 1			
Time: 8:10-8:20	Teacher: Samantha Dean Sánchez Avilés	Skills: Speaking	Interaction: T-SS
Material: 6 pieces of cardboard of each word, adhesive tape			
Objective: SS will learn the correct pronunciation of words with initial consonant clusters starting with /s/			
Procedure			
Lead-in: “Yes, I do. It’s so difficult for me.”			
Steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. T will paste the words “Student School Spanish” on the whiteboard.2. SS will be asked to read them out loud.<ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1. SS will be asked to do individual repetition.3. SS will be elicited to say more combinations.4. T will paste the combinations as SS say them.<ul style="list-style-type: none">4.1. SS will be asked to read them out loud as they say.5. SS will be asked to read all the combinations in a row.<ul style="list-style-type: none">5.1. Each SS will be asked to read them out loud individually.5.2. SS will be corrected if necessary.			
Possible problems: I SS might not be able to say another combination.		Possible solutions: I T will give an example.	
Link: “Do you know a tongue twister in English?”			

While-speaking task 2			
Time: 8:20-8:35	Teacher: Sergio Joel Barrera Ortega	Skills: Speaking	Interaction: SS-SS
Material: Presentation, roulette, printed tongue twisters			
Objective: SS will learn the correct pronunciation of words with initial consonant clusters starting with /s/			
Procedure			
Lead-in: "Yes, I do."			
Steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SS will be given instructions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. Listen to me 1.2. Write what I say 2. SS will listen and write the tongue twisters 3. SS will be asked to read what they wrote 4. SS will see a presentation with the tongue twisters 5. SS will be given instructions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1. Repeat after me 6. SS will repeat all the tongue twisters using back-chaining 7. SS will be given instructions <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1. Get in pairs 7.2. Practice the tongue twisters 7.3. You have 5 minutes 8. SS will be given the printed tongue twisters 9. ICQs <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9.1. Do you write or speak? 9.2. How much time do you have? 10. One teacher will monitor each group 11. After 5 minutes have passed, SS will be asked to volunteer to say each tongue twister 			

Possible problems: I SS might have problems pronouncing the words correctly I SS might not want to volunteer for step 7 I Only three SS might come I Only one SS might come	Possible solutions: I T will model the words by extending the /s/ I T will encourage them. I T will ask them to work together. I T will model and ask the student to say the tongue twister in different manners: sad, happy, whispering, shouting.
Link: "Do you like tongue twisters? Are they difficult for you?"	

Production			
Time: 8:35-8:50	Teacher: Aolani	Skills: speaking	Interaction: SS-SS
Material: Slide with instructions			
Objective: SS will pronounce the complete tongue twisters correctly.			
Procedure			
Lead-in: "I like them, but they are a bit difficult without practice"			
Steps: In teams, students must say a tongue twister correctly before passing it to the next teammate. The fastest team with clear pronunciation wins 1. SS will see instructions on a slide: 1.1. Get in pairs 1.2. Classmate 1 try to say tongue twister correctly 1.3. If you do it right, pass it to classmate 2 1.4. The team who says the 3 tongue twisters correct the fastest, WINS!! *T will show an example with other T* 2. T will check instructions: 2.1. When can you pass the tongue twister? 2.2. How you win? 3. T will have another T time one of the teams. 4. The winners will be announced.			
Wrap up 1. That was great, did you have fun? 2. Do you like tongue twisters? 3. What tongue twister was your favorite?			
Possible problems: I SS may get stuck too much in the first tongue twisters. I Only two or three SS might come. I Only one SS might come.	Possible solutions: I If the impediment is just one repeated pronunciation mistake, T will correct the pronunciation to avoid fossilization. I T will have SS compete against each other. I T will change the activity: SS will be asked to record themselves and compare their recording with another one with proper pronunciation.		

ABOUT THE COORDINATORS

Claudia Andrea Durán Montenegro, PhD (Universidad Veracruzana), and Diana Guadalupe de la Luz Castillo, PhD (Universidad de Guadalajara), are the coordinators in this publication. Both are founding members of RED CIILA (International Network for Collaboration, Innovation, Research, and Applied Linguistics), which fosters research and innovation through a variety of academic events, including the CIILA Research Seminar at the University of Guadalajara, as well as sports, cultural, and artistic activities, in addition to the International CIILA Congress.

This publication represents the culmination of a collaborative effort and the integration of faculty from diverse academic groups, reaffirming the importance of training and the active engagement of both professors and students in the creation of knowledge.

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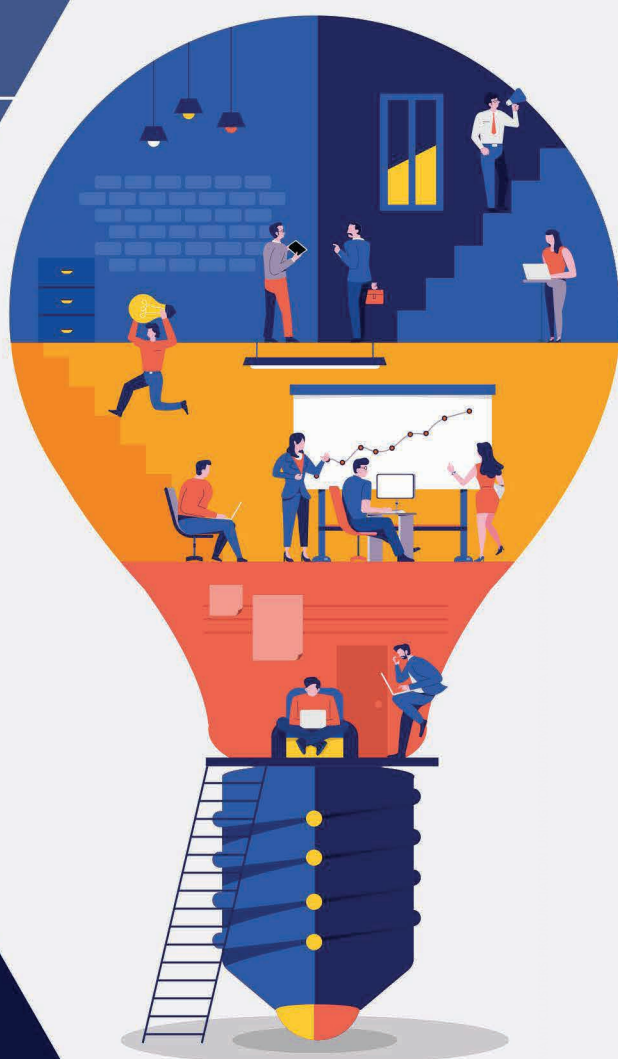
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