



Peer Feedback to Improve Speaking Facilitated with Mobile Devices

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Proyectos de Investigación

Certifico que Emanuel Saúl Morales Cedeño ha cumplido satisfactoriamente su investigación acción como pre-requisito de graduación de Magíster en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros con Mención en la Enseñanza de Inglés.

Su investigación es parte del proyecto PEER FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE SPEAKING cuyo objetivo general es mejorar la producción oral a través de la evaluación de pares.

El proyecto se implementa en diez contextos y niveles de eficiencia en inglés diferentes.

En este proyecto, cada participante desarrolla la investigación-acción en un contexto educativo diferente. Las secciones de literatura y metodología (instrumentos y análisis de datos) son las mismas.

Particular que comunico para los fines consiguientes.

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Abstract

This action research took place in a private school in Milagro, Guayas, Ecuador. The sample that participated in this study were 9th grade students, and their average age was 13. This innovation was implemented during the online classes in the school year 2020-2021. During this innovation it was mandatory for the students to have internet access and electronic devices that allow them to study. According to the mock diagnostic test the school asked the students to take, students' English level was A1 level. The qualitative and quantitative data obtained from surveys and tests demonstrated that the participants enhanced their oral production during this learning process. As a result, they became more active and participated in their online classes. At the end of this study, the students manifested and demonstrated how this action research helped them to improve their speaking skill and their will to learn the target language.

Keywords: Peer feedback, oral production, mobile devices, EFL.

Resumen

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en una escuela privada en Milagro, Guayas, Ecuador. La población que participó en este estudio fueron estudiantes de 9 ° grado, y su edad promedio era de 13 años. Esta innovación se implementó durante las clases en línea en el año escolar 2020 - 2021. Durante esta innovación era obligatorio que los estudiantes tuvieran acceso a internet y dispositivos electrónicos que les permitieran estudiar. Según la prueba de diagnóstico que la escuela aplicó a los estudiantes, se reflejó que todos los participantes tenían un nivel A1 en la asignatura de inglés. Los datos cualitativos y cuantitativos obtenidos por medio de encuestas y pruebas, se analizaron usando el programa SPSS y fueron tabulados. El resultado demostró que los participantes mejoraron su producción oral durante este proceso de aprendizaje. Como resultado de ello, se volvieron más participativos en sus clases en línea. Al final de este estudio, los estudiantes manifestaron y demostraron cómo esta investigación les ayudó a mejorar su habilidad para hablar y su voluntad para aprender el idioma inglés.

Palabras clave: retroalimentación entre compañeros, producción oral, teléfonos celulares, inglés como idioma extranjero.

Peer Feedback to Improve Speaking Facilitated with Mobile Devices

The British Council (2015) highlighted that there is a strong correlation between English and better income. Participants of this study held an A1 level, according to a proficiency test taken online. Therefore, reaching standard levels of oral fluency for communication is essential for these language learners.

Roeders (1997) mentioned that in order to improve education, active learning techniques should be applied. He encourages creativity and active participation of students. They are sometimes included in lesson plans to train autonomous and critical human beings. This study proposes active learning through the use of dialogues in an EFL class. There have been 14,443 studies that have used dialogues to improve fluency

Studies report that students have many reasons for not developing speaking skills (Al-Eiadeh et al., 2016; Derakhshan, et al., 2016). Some of those are: confusion, embarrassment, deficiencies of English learning in prior educational levels, difficulties in pronunciation, limited vocabulary, fossilization, lack of confidence, anxiety due to inaccurate utterances, and misunderstanding questions, among others.

Rashtchi and Khoshnevisan (2008) added to also know how native speakers manage the language in context. The Council of Europe (2018) also considers conversation as a macro-functional basis of the Common European Framework of References. It is within the interaction component that shows transactional language use for information exchanges to obtain goods and services. Therefore, oral practice is better in dialogues to promote communication. If the practice is authentic or simulates

real situations, students become engaged.

In addition to that, the use of technology in education is considered motivating to students. This study involved the use of mobile devices as a resource for students to record their dialogues and practices speaking exercises on technological apps.

The ministry of education of Ecuador has set standards for students taken from the Common European Framework as reference. Thus, this study included the ones from the spoken production which served two objectives: students to start conversations, and the pair to understand an interlocutor. The standard describes that students “can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 84). During the practices, dialogues included a variety of contexts from daily routine to work-simulated conversations.

All in all, the effect of dialogues was tested to improve oral skills in a private school. Due to students’ low oral participation, it was expected that students gain more confidence by working in pairs and recording their conversations on a mobile application. Next section introduces the literature review that supported this innovation.

Literature Review

This section is a review of theories and similar research that has been conducted to explore the efficiency of dialogues to improve oral skills. Besides, the pedagogical practices included the Communicative Language Teaching approach, so there is some description of this approach and the principles that were applied in the innovation.

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in its core has communicative competences as a priority rather than grammar (Richards, 2006). It asks teachers to re-think classroom practices, the type of materials they use for specific activities as well as the design of the lesson plan (Thornbury, 2016). According to Humphries and Burns

(2015), CLT puts learners at the center. It focuses on meaning rather than form.

Students are expected to negotiate meaning with almost no control from the teacher.

This innovation was based on the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. Jacobs and Farrell (2003) made a list of this approach components and remarked the following:

- Focusing on the role of the learner as a key component in the process.
- Teaching is based on process rather than product.
- Connecting the school to the context of the world.
- Considering individual differences of learners and the importance of social nature of learning.
- Emphasizing in meaning and lifelong process.

Considering the context of English in Ecuadorian Nacional Curriculum, the Communicative Language teaching (CLT) was used in the development of the lesson because it focuses on the acquisition of communicative competences and not on language translation (Alamri, 2018). Harmer (2010) acknowledged that CLT provides enough exposure and opportunities for language learning. It means, the knowledge exchange among the participants will provide a learning atmosphere where meaningful communication and real-life situations are the fundamental pillars.

Speaking

Speaking involves fluency and accuracy. The first refers to the ability to speak spontaneously and without many pauses. The later to construct grammatically correct ideas, phrases, or chunks (Derakhshan, et. al, 2015). For authors like Bygate, speaking also involves interaction and production. Bygate defined production as the ability to speak without time limitations; and, interaction is produced when pairs negotiate the conversation (as cited in Derakhshan, et. al, 2015). Burns and Joyce (as cited in Al-

Eiadeh, et al, 2016) shared similar points of view. They considered speaking involves interaction to construct meaning. This interaction means not only receiving and processing information but also producing it.

Hence, students require extended, authentic, and meaningful practice (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Jacobs & Farrel, 2003). Celce-Murcia (2001) added that speaking tasks need structure and planning. This author suggested to use short dialogues, and a structure of question-answers to start with. However, students' proficiency level required that the structure and planning were preceded by vocabulary introduction.

Dialogues

To improve speaking, there are many research studies in the context of EFL that have investigated teacher's and students' perspectives of role plays (Krebt, 2017; Kusnierek, 2015); the use of improvisation techniques for transactional and interpersonal conversation (Hadeli, 2017); self-recording videos (Rojas & Arteaga, 2019); and, audiotaped dialogue journal (Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan, 2008). In the last study, students interacted with the teacher talking about a variety of topics. The purpose of the teacher, as in a regular dialogue, was to be an active interlocutor who responded to students' written work. Ho (as cited in Rashtchi & Khoshnevisan, 2008) reported that dialogue journals are excellent resources of input to ease appropriate output.

This study proposed dialogues after a topic has been introduced. When recording the dialogues, students may demonstrate difficulties like one of the pair trying to dominate the conversation, speaking very low and not clearly, ignoring the pair, or making constant interruptions (Backlund as cited in Al-Eiadeh, et al., 2016).

Peer Feedback

Regarding learning theory, peer feedback has its bases in constructivism. It is characterized for focusing on learning assistance and the capacity of each student's experiences to foster a clear understanding of the topic (Zajda, 2018).

For William (2016), peer feedback is a constant cycle in instruction. It is a process of observing, revising, taking notes, and reflecting before writing comments. It is expected that the receiver improves the work with the comments received. However, significant feedback cannot occur spontaneously, it is necessary to follow a structure. Allen, et al. (2018) suggested the ladder of feedback protocol which is a procedure to build peer feedback among students. It includes four easy steps: asking clarification questions, stating strengths of the work, raising any concerns, and finally making suggestions. Aligned with the structure, students need instructions, guidance, scaffolding, and monitoring. In this regard, Lantolf, et al. (2015) sustained that when teachers train students in the Zone of Proximal Development, they are likely to become autonomous in the future.

Peer feedback has been implemented in online settings (Yeh, et al., 2019; Yopez, 2019), with mobile devices (Abad, 2020; Wu & Miller, 2020), and social media (Zambrano, 2019), among others. These studies reported positive results and were conducted in different settings like university students, high school, and a language school. Other studies that have used peer feedback with positive results were conducted by Gielen (2010); Ngar-Fun and Carless (2006); Patri (2002); Topping (2009). They concluded that peer feedback promotes reflection in givers and receivers.

Technology

Technology is constantly evolving, becoming an important tool in the development of several fields. It has provided meaningful benefits to society. In the case

of education, technology has provided many ways to try to change old paradigms to directed actions. The use of technology in the classroom engages students to become autonomous since they are used to self-directed tasks. Through technology, they get opportunities to interact, and provide feedback (Bahadorfar & Omidvar, 2014). Students can also self- establish a new environment for more efficient learning. Technology can be a supporting tool to learn a second language. It can simulate real life practices. Richards (2006) added that technological tools provide learners opportunities to practice authentic language in the classroom.

Having identified students' poor oral participation in classes due to several reasons, this study implemented the use of peer feedback of student's dialogues where students had to plan and organize their ideas before interacting. After this literature review, this study explored the following research questions:

1. To what extent does peer feedback improve speaking?
2. What are students' perspectives towards the innovation?

Innovation

During this process, the participants were studying a unit about the 2.0 community, technology, and common routines during a day. Besides, the participants were told about the things they would be evaluated: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and interaction (Appendix A). One week before applying the innovation the students reviewed the use of rubric, and they practiced some exercises using them.

Once they recorded themselves, they sent the videos to the partner who was assigned randomly by the teacher, they should get as well as give feedback to their peers. After that, they had to record themselves again taking into consideration all the comments gotten and upload the final video to be assessed by the teacher. (pre-test)

The lesson plan was designed for 6 weeks. The students conducted interviews (Appendix B) in which they had the opportunity to practice their speaking skills and give their comments about how the innovation was helping them to improve the speaking skill mentioned before. For the post-test, the participants had to create a Live Show situation in which they had to interview a famous YouTuber (Appendix B). They wrote the dialog applying the vocabulary learned during the unit, designed the scenario, and practiced.

It is important to mention that between the pre and the post-test, students were sent to do some speaking tasks related to the previous vocabulary they had in which they also got feedback from their peers. Besides, students had the opportunity to create dialogs or speaking scenarios using common situations that people of the 2.0 community would have.

The main standard used to evaluate learners describes that students “can understand everyday expressions aimed at the satisfaction of simple needs” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 84). Also, there were times where students recorded videos talking about random topics they felt comfortable with or practice dialogs between each other with the use of technology.

Methodology

This was an action research. It is described by Ravid (2015) as a cycle that starts with the identification of problems that need to be improved, search for research-based practices, implement them, and report the results. This action research included quantitative instruments to answer the research questions. Data were collected at the beginning, during, and at the end of the innovation for a period of six weeks.

The first task students did was to take a survey in which they expressed the activities they liked doing in class, what skills they had, and how clear they were

about the content they were studying within the unit. As a part of their pre-test, the students were asked to record themselves talking about the things they do during a normal day, what their favorite social pages are, and what technological gadgets they use at home. After that, they had to send the video to a peer, get feedback, and record them again applying their peers' comments, and send it to the teacher.

When students finished sending the video, they took another pre-survey (Appendix D) in which they claimed how peer feedback had helped them to improve their speaking skills, some common problems they had while doing the activity, and how they felt about working with a peer while recording themselves speaking in English

At the end of the process, the students took a post-survey (Appendix E), in which they mentioned how this process was beneficial for them. The survey provided information about how peer feedback and technology increased their motivation to learn and to improve their speaking skill. Once they had recorded themselves, they had the videos to the partner who was assigned randomly by the teacher, they should get as well as give feedback to their peers. After that, they had to record themselves again taking into consideration all the comments gotten and upload the final video to be assessed by the teacher.

Participants Description

The sample used for this research was a group of 15 students, 9 of them were male and 6 females. The study was conducted in a private school in Milagro, Ecuador. The participants' English proficiency was A1 according to the test they took in their textbooks. Their ages ranged from 13 to 14 years old, and they were in ninth grade. Due to the pandemic, 1 participant was living in another city, but it was not a problem because all the process was online.

According to the demographic survey, All of them have been studying this language since they were in 2nd grade. In addition, 3 students were studying English at academies. One of the participants reported that he likes to practice speaking every time he has an opportunity. All the students agreed that they had internet connection at home and manage technology at an intermediate level.

Instruments

Demographic survey: The students took the surveys by an online platform in which they had to download it, printed it, solved it, and the teacher collected them to analyze the results.

Proficiency test: The participants took a Pearson mock test in the platform they use to study English, and it indicated that they have an A1 level. Also, the coordinator has made the students sent a video in which they had to answers random questions to confirm their English proficiency level.

Speaking survey. This was completed before and after the innovation based on the Likert scale. These surveys were useful to realize how the students developed their speaking skills during the innovation.

Rubric: It was used to grade fluency, accuracy, vocabulary, and interaction. The rubric was modified with an extra criteria which was “Insufficient” which allowed to grade all the process during the innovation

Pre- and posttest: The first video or the first recording (pre-test) was consider to identify the problems they have while speaking in English. The last video or the last recording the participants made was considered as a posttest. They created an interview with the use of technology.

Interview: This process was done during the tutoring classes students had to take as a part of their schedule. The questions were open-ended, and the interview was

recorded by zoom. Using a qualitative technique, all the answers the students claimed during the interview were analyzed and transcribed in there.

Data Analysis

The data was collected using the speaking survey and tabulated on the SPSS program. The main items of the survey were presented in the results. The pre and posttest data were also analyzed using descriptive statistics. The rubric allowed the researcher to obtain the mean, standard deviation, and effect size to consider the impact the innovation had on the participants.

The interview was recorded during all the online sessions the students had with the researcher. All the comments students gave or had about the innovation were considered to answer what was their perspectives toward the innovation. All the extra information or comments the students gave were inside the field notes format used for this study.

Ethical Standards

The institution authorized the innovation through a consent letter. Also, the institution gave all the facilities to conduct the study. The only thing they did not agree was to show the students' grades or personal information.

All the participants in this study were minors, so their parents signed a permission letter to let them be part of this innovation. The parents knew in detail the process followed before, during, and after the action research. However, all the parents conditioned the researcher not to use their children's grades or personal information such as Full names, IDs, or their platforms' passwords.

Results

The data in this innovation were considered to analyze the impact that peer feedback had on improving the speaking skill. The results obtained during the innovation was based on the two research questions used to analyze this action research.

The results to answer the first question

To what extent does peer feedback improve speaking?

Table 1.

Pre-test and Post-test

		Pre-test		Post-test		
	N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Effect size
Fluency	15	2.13	0.743	4.20	0.676	0.98
Accuracy	15	1.93	0.594	4.07	0.594	0.995
Vocabulary	15	2.33	0.617	4.53	0.516	0.997
Interaction	15	2.53	0.743	4.87	0.352	0.998

Rubric

Table 1 evidences that students improved their interaction among themselves, and it made they enhanced their vocabulary and fluency. Likewise, the participants started to create well structured sentences. It means they also improved their accuracy.

Table 2.

Pre-survey and Post-survey

<i>The most important statements from the survey</i>	<i>Pre-survey</i>	<i>Post-survey</i>
Fill in the space with correct grammar	2.13	4.13

Practice specific vocabulary orally of an activity	1.93	4.27
Oral practice with vocabulary of personal interests	1.93	4.07
Oral pair work activities in the classroom	2.00	4.27
Pair work in general outside the classroom	2.13	3.87
You have Created a short speech	2.33	4.07
You have Made an oral presentation	2.13	4.07
You have Commented on a general topic	2.13	4.00
You have Created dialogues to practice with peers	1.87	4.07
You have Practice a dialogue about general ideas	2.13	4.20
Pair work is useful to practice speaking	2.33	3.80

Table 2 shows that students improved their speaking through peer feedback and acquiring vocabulary that allow them to have a better English communication. Also, the students practiced specific vocabulary activities in order to develop their oral communication.

The results to answer the second question

What are students' perspectives towards the innovation?

Table 3.

The pre-survey and post-survey results

<i>The most important statements from the survey</i>	<i>Pre-survey</i>	<i>Post-survey</i>
Feel confused about the topic	4.20	2.07
Feel confused for not knowing what to say	4.07	1.93
Feel anxious trying to look for words to respond correctly	4.20	2.13

Feel afraid of making mistakes in pronunciation	4.07	2.07
Can not structure a sentence	2.00	4.00
Can not continue the conversation because of lack of vocabulary	2.20	4.07
Feel embarrassed of making mistakes	2.00	4.00
Can interact with the interlocutor	1.93	4.60

Table 3 shows a clear reducing of confused or anxious to communicate. So, students felt comfortable while speaking. Also, the students had the opportunity to improve their interaction with others and intrinsic motivation to speak.

Table 4.

Interview

Questions	Answers
1. What problems did you have with speaking?	Two students mentioned that they had pronunciation and intonation problems. Four students said that they felt shy to talk in front of others. Five students claimed that they did not have enough vocabulary to engage speaking tasks. Some students felt confused to express their ideas.
2. Did you improve them? To what extent? What helped you improve?	The students mentioned that they would be able to increase their speaking skills. They increased their speaking confidence by practicing in small groups. Also, they build a strong oral

	production through online resources and social media on internet. They had learned to give a correct peer feedback regarding videos and recordings.
3. Have you used peer feedback before? What are the advantages of peer feedback? Are there disadvantages?	All the students have used peer feedback in writing activities. However, they have never worked in speaking task and in a virtual environment. The big advantage of peer feedback was the students were more actively giving and receiving feedback. They developed their listening skills to intent to listen to their pair. They connected more with the oral task in dialogues. However, one disadvantage was students spent much time for peer reviewing

Table 4 shows the most common problems that students had while speaking. Students mentioned their speaking improvement, and how familiarized they are with peer feedback.

Discussion

Question 1. To what extent does peer feedback improve speaking?

Peer feedback was fundamental in this study. Even though, the participants were familiarized with this methodology, the researcher explained the purpose of this study. While doing this action research, the students were studying online. Peer feedback has been implemented in online settings (Yeh, Tseng, & Chen, 2019; Yepez, 2019), with mobile devices (Abad, 2020; Wu & Miller, 2020), and social media (Zambrano, 2019),

among others. The participants had the opportunity to work in pairs with the use their technological gadgets. Also they had fun because they were attracted to work online. Some of them use social media to get and give feedback because some videos they recorded themselves speaking in English were posting in their social media pages.

Working with a peer also helped the students to acquire more vocabulary together. For Mahraj (2018), vocabulary raises students' proficiency in the four skills of the language. Even though, this study did not focus in students' grades, there was a clear improvement in them because students started to gain more vocabulary, they started to speak more in their English classes. Besides, they collaborated in peers to participate in class. Peer assessment is a process where groups of individuals rate their peers' work or performance (Falchikov, 1995). Even during classes there were times when they corrected themselves before the teacher did it.

Jacobs and Farrell (2003) suggested that while teaching speaking teachers should focus on the role of the learner as a key component in the process. The researcher advised the teacher to create students-center activities using a content they would be attracted to.

Students require extended, authentic, and meaningful practice (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Jacobs & Farrel, 2003). All the speaking activities the students had to do in pairs during classes such as dialogs, videos, interviews were fundamental to enhanced their speaking because they did not have to memorize anything, they created the exercises based on their reality. In addition, these activities helped the participants use the target language in a real-world context.

Question 2. What are students' perspectives towards the innovation?

One concern the participants had was the change of the methodology they were used to. When the researcher commented them about using a communicate approach in

classes, they agreed with the idea because they were interested in enhance their speaking. The Communicative Language teaching (CLT) was used in the development of the lesson because it focuses on the acquisition of communicative competences and not on language translation (Alamri, 2018). Due to the activities created using the CLT approach, the participants said they acquired a lot of vocabulary to be used in their real life, and it let them communicate with English speakers in their social media which they found interesting

Another important aspect the students mentioned was about the activities created. They mentioned that working with dialogs or interviews allowed them not only to improve their accuracy and vocabulary, they also built relationships between them. The use of technology was the key during this study because this research was applied while students were studying online. Richards (2006) commented that technological tools provide learners opportunities to practice authentic language in the classroom. Even though, students were not in classrooms, technology gave them the opportunity to practice their speaking while having fun from their places. In addition, the sample used technology to find and learn new English words that were helpful during their learning process.

Conclusions

When students work in pairs, they build relationships that are beneficial in their learning process. They improved their interaction by working together that allowed them to learn from each other.

Another conclusion is that peer work helped students to acquire more vocabulary together because as they researched for new English words to create their dialogs, they

learned how to pronounce them correctly. Also, they improved their accuracy by using the words in the correct tense.

To conclude, technology played an important role in this study because the participants enjoy learning by using technological tools such as smartphones, e-books, and laptops. In addition, the Internet provided them opportunities to practice and learn a lot of English words. It increased their intrinsic motivation to learn the target language.

Limitations

During the implementation of this innovation there were some limitations that must be analyzed for future research. One of the problems were the poor internet access students had. Some students used internet connection that was not very fast in order to connect to class. In addition, it caused students problems to download or upload documents to present to the teacher. In many cases students could not attend to class on the time schedule by the teacher nor the reprogrammed classes.

The second problem that happened in class was that students got distracted easily since students are at home and they are friends, they started to chat in class because they cannot see each other in person due to the virus Covid-19. This was a difficult aspect to deal with because the teacher had to call the students' names so, they got back on track in class.

Recommendations

While working in this innovation, the researcher recommends that students and teacher should be given more time to improve appropriately the skill given in this innovation. Especially, the speaking skill which takes longer time to develop Following this recommendation, with more time the participants will be in better conditions to

improve the process of speaking. By doing this, students will have more chances to practice more and they will become more fluent in the target language.

Another aspect to be taken into account would be to have a good internet connection because this will facilitate the working experience for the students. This is crucial for the implementation to work because students will be able to practice their speaking skill. Also the participants will connect to class on time and would not miss any important information given by the teacher. Besides, the students will be participating in all the speaking exercises in classes. It will be a nice idea to disable the chat room because this will maintain the students focused in class and will force them to speak in English all the time.

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Appendix A

Rubric

Available upon request.

Appendix B
Design from Your Goals

Available upon request.

Appendix C
Demographic Survey
Students' Demographics

Available upon request.

Appendix D

Student's Demographic Information (Pre-survey)

Available upon request.

Appendix E

Student's Perspectives (post-survey)

Available upon request.

Appendix F

INTERVIEW

Available upon request.