Universidad Casa Grande

Peer-Assessment of Students' Speaking Skills Facilitated by Avatars in an

EFL Virtual Environment

Byron Xavier Falcones Reinoso

Guide: Prof. María Rossana Ramírez Avila, MSc.

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It is worth saying that learning English cannot be denied or ignored, not just because it is the most significant common language spoken universally but because it is the mainstream in medicine, science, and education. (Nishanthi, 2018). When English takes part in Classroom Teaching (CRT), the educator's main aim is to develop an interest in the language and reinforce students' four skills to make learners excel in communication (Archana & Kumbakonam, 2016). Mastering speaking skills by no means is an essential path to acquiring and learning a foreign language, even though its importance has become undervalued among teachers (Parupalli, 2019).

At the beginning of a course, a speaking task where pupils must say their names, ages, and some other information about themselves is always expected. For some teachers, it is a mandatory activity; for others, it is optional. The question among educators is how they should introduce this speaking task to the learners. Riddell (2014) implied that to get successful speaking tasks, they should have meticulous planning and proper execution in which the main goal is to make the learner gain fluency rather than practice specific language. Also, Harmer (2007) suggested that when leading students to speak, they could use the language at their own pace and perform some oral tasks. He also suggested engagement, rehearsal, and feedback as guidelines to make well-conducted speaking tasks.

All of the theories suggested above seem to be not applied in the Ecuadorian education system since Ecuador is ranked as having the lowest level of English proficiency in Latin America. Education First (2021) indicated that Ecuador ranks 90th out of 120 countries.

The situation is identical at the university, where students must finish six levels to receive a B2. Consequently, students find it challenging to communicate clearly. In general, they make standard grammar errors and do not feel comfortable speaking. Because of this, using technology may be a method to improve oral competency. The use of technology also encompasses a wide range of elements, including pedagogical design, digital skills, tactics, and methodologies.

Alzaid (2017) studied the effect of peer assessment on the evaluation process of students. The author demonstrated that an important step in the direction of more interactive learning is peer assessment. During this research, 50 participants were exposed to a great variety of tasks where they needed to evaluate other students by taking into account validity and reliability based on a template. Given that it is more flexible to accommodate contemporary innovations in the assessment of learning outcomes, it must be used in our schools and universities. Additionally, this study persuaded instructors to discuss the use of peer assessment as a method of student evaluation, as well as the necessity for more applications and experimental studies in the future.

Moreira (2020) conducted an action research study about how to improve the speaking ability of young learners through peer assessment. The researcher had positive results in lowering students' speaking anxiety by using the peer assessment technique. The communicative approach assisted students in developing oral abilities necessary for A2 CEFR levels. The students' perceptions following participation in collaborative activities with feedback and interaction were another result that was investigated. Students demonstrated their interest in using peer assessment in speaking tasks. These exercises required teamwork as participants evaluated one another, communicated whether they understood one another or not, and identified areas for improvement.

Educators must guarantee and provide a variety of meaningful experiences in order to improve speaking skills according to the target students since their interests might differ based on their age, background, and gender, among other aspects. Each learner is from a different world, with other interests, abilities, and circumstances. It is ambitious to want to design a single class that meets the needs of each of them; however, there are many things teachers can do to make the classroom a friendly space. For example, Biography Driven Instruction (BDI) strategies, and getting to know the learners better, is the first step.

The main goal of this study is to investigate the use of ICT resources to create a stress-free environment for students when they introduce themselves in a welcoming and relaxed manner. The study hypothesizes that students will be more likely to use the target language when they can create an avatar or representation of themselves. Avatars can provide a sense of anonymity and safety, which can help students feel more confident when speaking.

Literature Review

The main subjects of this article are covered in this section. It includes theoretical justification for studies involving the independent variable of peer assessment and the dependent variable of speaking ability.

Speaking

The most significant way to develop other language acquisition abilities is through speech. A natural method of learning a foreign language is by producing the target language orally (Rao, 2018). Kürüm (2016) indicated that speaking is seen as the most desired skill for someone to be acknowledged as literate in a foreign language. Speaking encompasses a wide range of mechanics, functions, pragmatics, and social interaction rather than just forming grammatically acceptable phrases. Speaking skills

are also necessary for oral language to exist. As a result, every person gives the language its own style. Speaking assertions must transfer or make sense after methodically creating them (Nunan, 2005).

Accent

Accent is defined by the Oxford Learner`s Dictionary (2023, para. 1), as "a way of pronouncing the words of a language that shows which country, area or social class a person comes from; how well somebody pronounces a particular language". According to the Linguistic Society of America (2023), accent is the way the individual sounds when speaking. The first kind of accent occurs at the moment the individual speaks and uses the rules and sounds of another individual, and this is called foreign accent.   The second kind occurs when a particular group speaks their own language or native language.

In accordance with the definition provided by Encyclopedia.com (2018), an accent can be described as a distinctive manner of speaking that sets apart individuals from various regions. People can identify the main accent and, in this way, determine if people are foreigners by the way they speak the language. All this is related to personal opinions and feelings that people have in relation to the different ways of speech. Accent is an aspect of language that is studied by linguists in depth by structuring detailed lists of features organized by particular accents.

Grammar

Grammar is the system of rules that dictates the arrangement, and the way words relate in a sentence. Words or morphemes are composed of ther smaller elements like prefixes, suffixes, roots, verbs and noun endings that form an integral part of grammar. The level that grammar performs is the sentence level and not the way sentences are connected or related. The relationship among sentences is a field studied by "discourse"

which has a direct relationship with learning a new language and the instruction or teaching. Grammar competence has a relevant role in the communicative competence (Brown, H., 2001)

Vocabulary

Vocabulary is generally defined as the knowledge of words and word meanings. Vocabulary is associated with those previous words that students need or must know in order to read and comprehend complex texts. Vocabulary tends to expand over time, usually with practice and new knowledge, and this is one of the most important components of reading comprehension. This element of language plays a key role in learning and therefore, in school performance (Butler et al., 2010).

The vision of vocabulary has changed over time. The traditional teaching methods made prominent use of lists, definitions, and written and oral drills. In the middle of the XX century, communicative methods that looked at a more natural and authentic approach to teaching the use of vocabulary were undervalued. After the XXI century, there was a revival in different levels and contexts regarding the use of vocabulary (Brown, H., 2001)

Fluency

It is defined as the capacity that someone has to effortlessly string words in a given language. It is commonly used for testing and evaluating language proficiency. According to Hedge (2000), fluency is the ability to connect speech units without stress or needless pauses. The notion of fluency has so far been divided into two major areas. One is referred to as the limited approach (Lennon, 2000, as cited in Yang, 2013), which concerns the language delivery's speaking rate and fluidity. The other is the board approach (Kopenen & Riggenback, 2000 as cited in Yang, 2013), which considers a more extensive range of factors, such as semantic density, appropriateness of

expression, and the language user's capacity for creativity, and other sociolinguistic concerns.

Pronunciation

It is known as the articulation of sounds to convey a message (Dalton & Seidlhofer, 1994 as cited in Tlazalo & Basurto, 2014). Knowing how to pronounce the words and chunks of language correctly is essential to getting a clear FL speech which is fundamental for oral communication. Moreover, Vidhyalaya et al. (2018, p. 16) indicated that "Pronunciation is the production of sounds that we use to make meaning". Furthermore, it frequently relates to using certain words and sounds properly. Speaking or pronouncing words in a way that they are easily understood is referred to as being articulate. Everyone will be able to correctly pronounce words while speaking in English thanks to their pronunciation skill, and they will all be able to speak English more confidently. The ability to reproduce language sounds in a way that clarifies the intended meaning might be referred to as proper pronunciation.

Accuracy

Firman and Ul (2012) stated that accuracy includes correct pronunciation, clear syntax, and proper word choice. It depends on appropriate grammar (how words and their components are integrated), good diction (intonation and accent), and the choice of the correct phrase (vocabulary). Furthermore, Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) defined accuracy as the ability to talk without making mistakes, showing a stronger mastery of the target language. The development of conversational correctness is represented by: "the proper use of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar" (Wang, 2014, p. 110)

Avatars

They are defined as virtual expressions of the self that are used online to facilitate interaction in a virtual domain (Peterson, 2006). Additionally, they allow users

to engage in surreal and imagined experiences that transcend the actual world in which they live within a virtual environment and play a vital role as agents in e-learning programs (Deuchar, 2003, as cited in Falloon, 2009).

According to a study conducted by Blake and Moseley (2010), using avatars in e-learning environments offers several advantages, such as increased student engagement and opportunities for meaningful online connections. Therefore, educators should carefully consider and apply effective style principles and criteria when incorporating avatars into the design and development of their courses. Aikina and Zubkova (2015) suggested that using avatars during the learning process brings a lot of perks to learners, such as motivation, individual responsibility, and creativity since students come up with original work on their own.

Assessment

As stated by Yambi (2018), assessment is a process where the instructor provides feedback to improve the student's performance in the future. This process involves collecting data related to work products or specific performances. The goals of assessment include identifying students' weaknesses, measuring improvement, evaluating teaching methods, and comparing students with their peers. The importance of assessment lies in its ability to enhance the learning process when instructors promote creative problem-solving. Assessment is of a diagnostic nature, primarily serving to identify areas of improvement. Its purpose is formative, viewing learning as an ongoing process rather than a final product.

Brown, G. (2001) found out that "Assessment defines what students regard as important, how they spend their time and how they come to see themselves as students and then as graduates" (p.4). As a result, assessment is considered an essential aspect of

the learning process since it provides not only information on students' knowledge but also self-image that learners have about themselves.

Furthermore, the author specified how beneficial is assessment when evaluating curriculum and for having evidence of the progress of students to classify their performance in rank order since one the main goals of assessment is to improve students' learning (Brown, G., 2001). Additionally, Lahrichi (2019) concluded that assessment is a fundamental tool in the educational system that must be aligned with students' and curriculum needs, not focusing only on the summative part since formative assessment is of great significance.

Peer Assessment

Collaborative learning through pair work or group work is one of the features of the curriculum in Ecuador related to English Language (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). In this regard, Syafrizal and Rohmawati (2017) recommended avoiding interruptions and refraining from pointing out specific faults since students need to focus on the interaction they have with their peers. As defined by Zheng et al. (2019), peer evaluation is a technique used by students to appraise many facets of their classmates' assignments.

Another definition is provided by George (2022) who described peer assessment as a methodology based on a dynamic where a student or group of students comments on another student's or group of students' written work. This feedback is typically based on some evaluation criteria. Students then offer encouraging remarks, compliments, helpful criticism, or pointers to help students polish or improve their work. From another perspective, peer assessment is considered a strategy that encourages collaborative learning by having students seek information, investigate it, give comments, foster more

social connections, and push each other to learn more about the subject at hand (Alzaid, 2017).

Peer assessment and peer feedback are related concepts, though they are not the same. In the case of peer feedback, students provide constructive comments and suggestions to their peers' work. On the other hand, peer assessment entails students evaluating and grading the work of their peers. When combined with technology, both methodologies can contribute to enhancing the active role of students in the learning process.

Several studies, including Ebadijalal and Yousofi`s research in 2021, underscore the significance of peer feedback and its impact on EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners by employing technology to reduce anxiety levels. The researchers compared the use of first and second languages L1, and L2 respectively. They verified the importance of peer feedback and the way the native language and the use of technology can help in the process by improving students` self-confidence and risk-taking. Also, Mortaji (2022) found after a qualitative analysis that online peer feedback improved learning outcomes and positive perception in the case of a blended learning model. This research was carried out on a course of public speaking and was limited to one face-to-face encounter besides online interaction. There was an improvement in peer revision skills, and this process also helped students to learn from their mistakes, they compared their performance with other peers, and this at the end motivated them to set new goals.

Lastly, peer assessment has some limitations in addition to its benefits, as George (2022) explained peer assessment has some restrictions that should be considered. The first is called "Reviewer bias", and it refers to the shortcomings of double-blind system that can result in some degree of bias in the evaluation process. For

instance, it is frequently criticized in academic papers is that a new researcher`s excellent work might be rejected, while an objectively lower-quality submission by an established researcher would be accepted. The possibility of "Risk of human error" is another restriction because peer review entails a risk of human subjectivity by its very nature.

Virtual Learning Environment

It is critical to remain current in the world and comprehend how increasingly involved students are with technology. Using Information Communication Technology (ICT) in education gives them a head start in the future by staying on top of technology. Using technology, learners obtain information and get relevant results in seconds. They learn how to collaborate with partners, receive instant feedback, and work from their homes according to their schedules (Nwokeafor & Okeke, 2015).

Introducing learners to virtual environments referred to provide learners the experience of being surrounded by a computer-synthesized environment (Loomis et al. 1999). Additionally, Information Communication Technology does not only involve using devices such as desktop computers, laptops, speakers, or the internet or instructional purposes. It refers to the use of technology that must be prepared, ready for delivery, and has sense to become a learning tool for students (Inan & Lowther, 2009). Furthermore, virtual learning environments are based on technology utilization and digital resources as mediators in the learning process. The reason for this is that they encourage interaction and interrelation within a continuous communication process, which enhances the construction and reconstruction of knowledge and meanings as well as the formation of habits and attitudes (Alves et al., 2017).

Innovation

This innovation achieved the objective of enhancing students' speaking skills while using avatars through peer assessment after students listen to each other recordings. This study lasted two weeks, and its development consisted of two lessons per each week.

The class sessions took place at a public educational institution located in the province of Cañar-Ecuador. The researcher explained the instruments used for the innovation to students from the first day of classes. Students performed a variety of activities, alone and in pairs. They completed with the teacher's assistance to become acquainted with the techniques and criteria for the speaking exercises.

The teacher implemented a detailed plan (Appendix 1) using the Backwards design. The teacher's role consisted of providing the necessary reinforcement on grammar, vocabulary, and spelling through games and activities to upgrade students' language skills. There was also a short formative session where students peer assessed once in which they had a criterion related to the rubrics used and the fundamental principle of assessment.

Research Methodology

The goal of this study was to assess students' speaking skills in an EFL virtual environment. This study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative instruments to conduct action research. Therefore, the data analysis provided answers to the following questions:

1) To what extent does using avatars and peer-assessment improve the students' speaking skills in virtual learning environments?

2) What are students' views on the challenges they face with speaking and technology?

Participants

The innovation was conducted during the 2021 term. After a demographic survey made by the researcher, the following information was gathered: In this research, participants consisted of 20 students from a public university in Ecuador-Azuay. They were students of 1st and 2nd term, ranging from 18- to 24 years old. Related to gender, 11 females and nine males. All students were Ecuadorian, and most were Catholic. Students` mother tongue was Spanish, and their English proficiency after the Pretest was applied was considered as A2.

Instruments

A speaking rubric (Appendix 2) was applied to obtain student data so that the researcher could analyze the students' performance in speaking skills. In order to answer the research question, - To what extent does using avatars and Peer assessment improve the students' speaking skills in virtual learning environments? The assessment with an oral pre (Appendix 3) and posttest (Appendix 4) was carried out.

At the end of the innovation and to answer the second question: "What are students' views on the challenges they face with speaking and technology?" A structured interview (see Appendix 5) was conducted to explore students' views on the challenges they face with speaking and technology. The interview questions were designed to elicit students' feelings and opinions about speaking, the use of avatars, and peer assessment. The questions were asked of all participants daily for each session. The interview data was analyzed using a Backward Design lesson plan framework.

At the end of each session, at least two students were interviewed with the idea of getting new information and improving the plans if it were the case. Besides this, a speaking skills development rubric was applied. This evaluation instrument was adapted from the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE) indicators, which are part of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Data Analysis

Interpreting the results of the pretest and posttest, including the mean, median, standard deviation, and Cohen`s d for the group of 20 students, requires considering both the numerical changes and the context of the study of the same group of 20 students who underwent an English pretest and posttest. The tests assessed fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and details in their oral skills.

The interviews were transcribed and reviewed for general themes regarding how using avatars and Peer assessment may motivate learners to develop speaking skills free of stress. During the observation and data collection, six themes emerged:

- Avatar experience.

- Difficulties in speaking English.

- The future use of this tool to practice Challenges in using avatars.

- The role of avatars in facilitating English speaking.

- English.

- The importance of Peer assessment.

The researcher then reviewed themes to check for the accuracy of the categories. Next, the researcher conducted a coding process. During this step, each theme was reviewed and defined. The difficulty of speaking English and the difficulty of using avatars were combined because they were both challenging to develop.

The themes were then coded into four broader categories (Speaking motivation, difficulties in speaking production, use of virtual tools during the learning process, and peer/self-assessment). These categories were selected due to their frequent occurrence. The researcher then reviewed the categories and how well each theme fit into its corresponding category.

Ethical Considerations

This research focused on the dialogue, considering the establishment of symmetrical relationships often observed in studies involving human groups. Within this perspective, the existence of heterogeneity among members and their different roles was recognized. Following a similar line of thought, Govil (2013) emphasized that the most relevant aspects of ethical considerations are those related to participants, for example, right to maintain privacy, guaranteed anonymity, confidentiality, and avoiding harm or betrayal.

In this innovation there were some other elements always present, like, for example, volunteered participation, a good relationship researcher-participants, and academic honesty. Taking into account the aspects mentioned earlier, Viebrock (2022) emphasized that ethical considerations are not only related to the research process and its rules but also to the accountability after this is carried out. It is advisable that the rules of good conduct must also be included. Some elements, such as volunteered participation, withdrawal from the study, and informed consent as an integral part of the process may be also considered. All these elements are included on the scope of ethical dimensions. There are two main levels to take into account, a Microethical level, or the relationship researcher -participants may have harmful effects if not handled with care, and the Macroethical level, which includes academic honesty, scientific rigor and outcome accountability.

Results

Analyzing the individual descriptors—fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and details—can provide further insights. The notable increase in the mean, median, and reduction in standard deviation scores suggests improvement in all these areas, indicating that Peer assessment and the use of avatars have contributed to

enhancing different dimensions of oral proficiency. The fact that all aspects have experienced improvement implies that the methodology has achieved a comprehensive development of oral skills.

The first research question can be answered by interpreting the results of the pre and posttest. First, the pretest mean score of 13.15 indicates the initial performance level of the students before the intervention. On the other hand, the posttest mean score of 19.4 reflects their performance after engaging with peer assessment and the use of an avatars-based methodology. The considerable increase in the mean scores from pretest to posttest highlights a significant improvement in the students' oral skills. This shift of approximately 6.25 points indicates a noteworthy enhancement in their overall proficiency.

Table 1

Results for pre and posttest

	Pretest	Posttest
Minimun	3	9
Maximun	22	25
Mean	13.15	19.25
Median	13	19
Standard. Dev	4.782368935	4.063638504

Second, the substantial increase in median scores from 13 in the pretest to 19 in the posttest is an indication of the effectiveness of the methodology utilizing avatars to enhance English oral skills. The median is a measure that represents the middle value of a dataset, suggesting that approximately half of the students scored below 19 in the posttest, while the other half scored above. The shift from a pretest median of 13 to a posttest median of 19 signifies an enhancement in the students' overall English oral skills.

Third, the standard deviation results indicate a change in the variability of scores from the pretest to the posttest for the group. The pretest standard deviation was 4.782368935, while the posttest standard deviation decreased to 4.063638504. This change suggests that the application of the methodology has led to a reduction in the variability of students' performance. The decrease in standard deviation is indicative of a more focused and consistent improvement in the students' English oral skills because the standard deviation measures the dispersion or spread of data points around the mean.

Table 2

Data for Cohen`s d

Cohen`s d	
N1	20
N2	20
M1-M2	-5.75
Pooled SD	4.437578761
Cohen`d	-1.29575165
	1.30

Finally, for the first research question Cohen`s d statistic was analyzed. Cohen (1988) stated that a *d*=8 is large effect size, and this research had a *d*= 1.30. This value confirmed that the application of Peer assessment and the use of avatars had an effect on speaking skills.

In order to answer the second research question, a structured interview was conducted with a group of participants. The qualitative results showed that two themes emerged as the main sources the lack of perception of difficulties including Difficulties in speaking English and Difficulties in using avatars. The theme Difficulties in speaking English referred to the fact that participants reported that it was sometimes hard for them to pronounce English words. Student 1 illustrated this when she said:

> *Based on my personal experience, the most difficult aspect of*
> *speaking English is pronunciation. I sometimes do not*
> *pronounce the words so well. Then, I lose what I was about to*
> *say, and I do it wrong.*

Additionally, the theme of *Challenges in using avatars* refers to the psychological or technical obstacles faced by students while trying to utilize the tool to improving their English-speaking skills. To illustrate this point, student 2 expressed:

> *It is totally easy to use, but sometimes the tool gets slow due*
> *to the internet.*

Furthermore, the theme of *Avatar experience* referred to how the tool can be beneficial in creating a meaningful environment for learners. A good example is when student 7 said:

> *I do not feel nervous, because I can express myself without*
> *showing my face. It is fantastic! It's like I were another person.*

In addition, the Theme of *Role of avatars in facilitating English speaking is* related to how the use of the tool can increase speaking skills. Participants agreed on the fact that is easy and enjoyable to speak in English when using avatars.

Finally, the theme of *the future use of this tool to practice English* referred to the long-term use of the tool to improving the speaking skill. To illustrate this, the fifteen (15) participants responded to the question: *Would you use this tool again to speak English?*

> *Yes, I will use the tool.*

The oral communication skills measured before and after the innovation and the whole process of Peer assessment with the criteria of fluency, pronunciation-accent, vocabulary, and grammar showed that students improved continuously during the

process. Furthermore, the constant feedback given by the researcher and other students and the constant group reflection helped to overcome the individual and group difficulties.

Discussion

In the learning process attitudes and emotions are related. This combination assisted the researcher in identifying difficulties during the process and taking action to overcome them. Students pointed out that there are some evident difficulties in speaking, specifically in pronunciation. This aspect is considered the most frequent by the students and has also been noticed frequently by the researcher. To clarify this concept, Brown, H. (2001) considered that pronunciation is key to achieving full communicative competence. Furthermore, he argued that correct pronunciation should not be an isolated goal but rather a means to convey meaning effectively. It is also important to consider various factors, including students` native language, age, exposure to language, phonetic ability, language ego, and motivation.

It can be asserted that speaking skills improved when avatars and peer assessment were implemented. Therefore, the first research question: *To what extent does using avatars and peer-assessment improve students' speaking skills in virtual environments?* can be satisfactorily answered based on the positive outcomes of this innovation. After the posttest, the results showed a consistent improvement in the students' English oral skills. Moreover, the results related to the median scores, which increased from 13 in the pretest to 19 in the posttest, indicating the effectiveness of the methodology.

For the second research question: *What are students' views on the challenges they face with speaking and technology?* The selected website contributed to an increase in motivation and engagement, and helped raise motivation and

engagement. The results based on the interviews reinforced the statement that students generally showed a positive attitude and motivation towards speaking as a product of the reflection and use of this technological tool. The structured interviews yielded results regarding the long-term use of the tool because most of the students agreed on its future use, as well as for the creation of a meaningful environment for learners, making them feel confident as they were represented by an avatar.

Conclusions

The research study focused on investigating peer-assessment of students' speaking skills facilitated by avatars in virtual learning environments. The study utilized a speaking rubric and oral pre and posttests to measure students' performance in speaking skills. Additionally, a structured interview was conducted to explore students' views on the challenges they faced with speaking and technology. The data analysis revealed six main themes: Avatar Experience, Difficulties in Speaking English, Challenges in Using avatars, The Role of Avatars in Facilitating English Speaking, the Future Use of this Tool to Practice English, and The Importance of Peer Assessment.

The findings indicated that the use of peer assessment facilitated by avatars had a positive influence on students' speaking skills development. Throughout the innovation process, students continuously improved in fluency, pronunciation-accent, vocabulary, and grammar by leveraging the available technological tools. Moreover, the constant feedback from the researcher and peers, along with regular group reflection, helps students overcome individual and group difficulties.

The substantial increase in mean scores suggests that the employment of Peer assessment and avatars for improving English oral skills has yielded significant benefits. Also, the significant increase in median scores from 13 in the pretest to 19 in

the posttest indicates improvement in English oral skills among the students. This outcome reinforces the efficacy of the avatar-based methodology and underscores its potential as an engaging and effective approach for enhancing students' oral communication abilities in various linguistic dimensions.

The research emphasized the importance of addressing both micro ethical and macro ethical considerations when involving human participants in studies. The establishment of symmetrical relationships and the assurance of participants' privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality were prioritized. Furthermore, the research process demonstrated academic honesty, scientific rigor, and outcome accountability.

Overall, the study contributes to the understanding of how avatars and peer-assessment can motivate learners to develop speaking skills without stress in virtual learning environments. The positive attitudes and motivation exhibited by the students, along with their continuous improvement, highlight the potential of technology-enhanced language learning approaches. As a result, these findings can serve as insights for educators and researchers seeking other methods to enhance speaking skills in language learning settings.

Limitations

The most relevant limitation of this research resides in the fact that students are not familiar with the Peer assessment method and the use of a rubric during the process. Even until the end, the researcher had to clarify and guide students during the assessment. Another important limitation was the use of technologies, although students were motivated and eager to use technologies some of them had difficulties using the tools, this is the reason why research monitoring is so important.

Recommendations

      This innovation addresses the following recommendations for future improvement. Firstly, at the beginning of this methodology, it is crucial to acquaint students with the fundamental concepts of Peer assessment, enabling them to apply this tool more effectively. Secondly, given the relatively short duration of this innovation, extending the timeframe by a few additional weeks can provide students with the opportunity to look into the subject matter more comprehensively and to master the skills they are expected to develop. Lastly, it is advisable to consider implementing other software related to avatars, allowing for a comparison of their effectiveness."

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Appendix 1

Lesson Plan

Available upon request.

Appendix 2

Rubric

Available upon request.

Appendix 3

Pre-test (Oral Skills)

Available upon request.

Appendix 4

Post-test (Oral Skills)

Available upon request.

Appendix 5

Interview for student's perspectives.

Available upon request.

Appendix 6

Summative Assessment Speaking task.

Available upon request.

Appendix 7

Interview for student's perspectives in Spanish (see Appendix 5).

Available upon request.

Appendix 8

Byron Xavier Falcones Reinoso e-portfolio

Available upon request.