

Developing students' ability to speak English by means of visual prompts, including describing, narrating, and interpreting picture-based situations

Desarrollando la capacidad de los alumnos para hablar inglés mediante estímulos visuales, incluyendo la descripción, narración e interpretación de situaciones basadas en imágenes

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Abstract

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to assess the effectiveness of interactional speaking strategies, specifically those involving picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities, derived from the Communicative Language Teaching method. These speaking activities were taught to Ecuadorian students who were learning English as a foreign language (EFL) at an English Institute in Quito, Ecuador. During the research, 44 Ecuadorian learners from two intermediate classes were selected. They were between 17-65 years old. The selected groups were intact. The two classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group and the control group by flipping a coin. The participants took a pre-test on speaking tasks. After that, the experimental group students were intervened for an academic semester. They worked on picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities to develop their speaking fluency and accuracy, while the control group worked on speaking using textbook activities. Following the intervention, a post-test was administered to both groups, and data were collected. They were analyzed using a mean difference of 0.62, a standard deviation of 1.78, a variance of 3.16, a t-reason of 7.20, etc. The t-test was used to reject the null hypothesis. The study's findings revealed a significant increase in the experimental group students' speaking ability.

Keywords: Interactional speaking; motivation; speaking skill; fluency; accuracy

Resumen

El propósito de este estudio cuasi-experimental fue evaluar la efectividad de las estrategias de interacción mediante descripción de la imagen, narración de la imagen y situaciones en imágenes las cuales se basan en la enseñanza del método comunicativo del lenguaje. Estas actividades de hablar fueron enseñadas a estudiantes ecuatorianos que estaban aprendiendo Inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en un Instituto de inglés en Quito-Ecuador. Al hacer la investigación, se seleccionaron 44 estudiantes ecuatorianos en dos clases de nivel intermedio. Los alumnos tenían entre 17-65 años de edad. Los grupos seleccionados eran intactos. Las dos clases fueron clasificadas al azar como grupo experimental y grupo de control con el aventar de una moneda. Los participantes tomaron un pre-test en actividades en las que tenían que hablar.

Luego de esto, los estudiantes del grupo experimental recibieron el tratamiento durante un semestre académico. Ellos trabajaron describiendo imágenes, narrando historias y hablando sobre situaciones en imágenes para desarrollar su fluidez y precisión al hablar. Mientras que el grupo de control trabajó en las actividades de sus libros para mejorar la destreza de hablar. Después de la intervención un post-test fue administrado a los dos grupos y se obtuvieron los datos.

Mismos que fueron analizados a través de la desviación estándar 1.78, la diferencia de medias 0.62, la razón-t ± 7.20 , varianza 3.16 etcétera.

La prueba t se utilizó para rechazar la hipótesis nula. Los resultados del estudio revelaron un aumento significativo en la capacidad de habla de los estudiantes del grupo experimental.

Palabras clave: Interactuar hablando; motivación; habilidad de hablar; fluidez; precisión

Introduction

There is ample evidence that an increasing number of Ecuadorian students are learning English for several reasons. First, students claim that learning English allows them to communicate with new people around the world. They see things from a different angle. They get a deeper understanding of the English culture and it makes them broaden their minds. Second, pupils are aware that English is the official language of 53 countries; consequently, it is the most widely spoken language in the world (universal language). So, English makes it easier to travel, and it is the language of the media (<https://bit.ly/2LLBYWi>). Third, by speaking English, learners obtain better jobs. Likewise, it is undeniable that English has become a "lingua franca" among speakers of languages that are not mutually intelligible (Willis, 1996, a and Coury & Carlos, 2001). In addition, if we talk about health benefits, some studies have shown that people who speak two or more languages have more active minds later in life.

The Ecuadorian government aware of all the benefits that English provides its learners, has implemented new actions to reinforce the English teaching. For instance: three years ago English teachers were evaluated on their English proficiency level. The results were not the best, Therefore, the Ecuadorian government began with the process of training teachers abroad. 500 teachers studied at the University of Kansas and are working in the public education system. Currently, 200 teachers attend this training. The goal is to reach 5,000 trained teachers. Similarly, through the program "I want to become a teacher". 3550 teachers are registered for TOEFL, to be evaluated, and obtain the B2 level. By having that certification teachers would be able to have a position with the State as Public English teachers.

Likewise, the government reformulated the curriculum, being English compulsory in primary and secondary schools in public and private sectors. These actions are clear signs that the Ecuadorian government wants to transform and reach excellence in the Ecuadorian system (<https://bit.ly/2AhBXbt>).

According to the Ecuadorian government the basic principles of the proposed curriculum can be summarized in this statement: The English language is learned best as a mean to interact and communicate, not as knowledge stored in learners' memory



(<https://bit.ly/2uMTIdq>). In other words, the aim of teaching English in primary and secondary schools is to enable students to communicate in English, so they can cope with the challenges of higher education.

It is also a commonly recognized fact that speaking is the skill through which learners can communicate with others to express their opinions, expectations, intentions, hopes and viewpoints (<https://bit.ly/2LElQcf>). However, despite the importance of developing speaking skills among ESL/ EFL learners, instruction of these speaking skills has received the least attention, for several reasons. First, as we mentioned before some Ecuadorian English teachers do not have a good English level which hinder the interest to develop speaking techniques in class. Second, achieving proficiency in a foreign language speaking in classroom conditions is not an easy task (Aleksandra, 2011) because learning English in a country like Ecuador where learners are not exposed to the language on a daily basis is challenging for them. Third, in most primary and secondary schools there are a lot of students between 40 or 50 students in each classroom which makes speaking teaching impossible and time-consuming, so many English teachers still spend the majority of class time in reading and writing practice almost ignoring speaking skills (Scarcella & Oxford, 1994: 165; El Menoufy, 1997: 12 and Miller, 2001: 25). Last, but not least, it is imperative to take into account the students' personalities and attitudes towards participating in speaking activities since it defines if they participate or not in speaking activities. Ur, 1995 defines these issues as inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation, mother tongue use, among the most important.

The Ecuadorian government has the best of the intentions trying to improve their English teachers' English level to improve at the same time student's speaking skills; however, it is a long-term process which requires time to reach its objective. So, at the present time, there is the need to train English language learners with effective speaking techniques to get they interact, communicate and express their points of view through English. They need to have the ability to understand and use language appropriately to communicate in authentic (rather than simulated) social and school environments (Communicative Competence) (<https://bit.ly/2LCAaCa>). The present study has examined description, picture strip stories

and collages as ways to increase students' communicative competence and their participation in speaking activities.

Theoretical framework of research

The definition of speaking

There are several definitions of speaking. Among the most important, Nunan (2006) defines speaking as the use of language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. Speaking is the productive aural/oral skill. It consists of producing systematic verbal utterances to convey meaning. It means that speaking is how to make meaningful sounds to communicate one another (Nunan, 2003)

Harmer (2007:284) defines speaking as the ability to speak fluently and presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to process information and language “on the spot”. While Chaney (1998:13) states speaking is the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols in a variety of contexts. Likewise, Quianthy (1990:7) gives a practical definition of speaking saying that it is the process of transmitting ideas and information orally in different situations.

Speaking is also defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997).

Lado (1977) argues that speaking is the ability to express oneself in life situations, or the ability to report acts of situations or phrase words, or the ability to express a sequence of ideas fluently.

According to Haynes and Jacarian (2010:149), speaking is to retell, summarize, discuss, share, tell, persuade, argue, report, recite, describe, comment, explain, sing, echo, repeat, read aloud, present, talk, say, whisper, chant, announce, ask and answer. They imply that the language is produced by sounds in order to express ideas and feelings to other people, to inform news, report, etc. and to do something relating to the sound.

Brown and Yule (1983) described that interactional speech refers to conversation and it has a social function. The focus is more on the speakers and how they wish to present themselves to each other and transactional speech pays attention to what is said or done. The main focus

is on making oneself understood. Interactional language is language for maintaining social relationship and transactional language is message-oriented.

Speaking is defined operationally in this study as the ability to communicate with others, express feelings, inform news, report, orally, coherently, fluently and appropriately for interactional and transactional purposes in different contexts using an adequate grammar, an ample range of vocabulary and a standardized pronunciation.

1.2.2. The importance of Speaking

Speaking is the most important of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). People use speaking to describe things, to complain about people's behavior, to make polite requests, or to entertain people with jokes." (Richards and Renandya 2002). In other words speaking is the *modus operandi* of any language. For example, when a traveler travels to a country where English is spoken, the main skill that the traveler will use is speaking. The person will speak in the information counter at the airport to print the ticket and to know details about his flight. That is, if the information about his flight when it was said through the microphones wasn't heard. He or she will ask the customer service for information. Likewise, during the flight the traveler most likely will speak with other passengers, or will ask the flight attendant for food. It is because in almost any setting, speaking is the most frequently used language skill. As Rivers (1981) argues, speaking is used twice as much as reading and writing in our communication. It is the main reason why people who know a language are referred to as 'speakers' of that language.

Developing speaking skills is the key in any English program. Nunan (1999) and Burkart & Sheppard (2004) argue that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language. Therefore, speaking is a priority for most learners of English (Florez, 1999). English learners in Ecuador know it and they make big efforts to improve their speaking. They join conversational English classes. They have e-pals to talk to them. They log in on apps where they can talk to native speakers. With these endeavors they seek to perfect and polish their speaking to study abroad, to find better jobs, and to do business with other English speaking countries.

Speaking problems



In Ecuador, English is not commonly spoken; in other words, it is not our second language. It is a barrier because students do not have a target language environment, and they feel that the lack of involvement in real situations hamper their opportunities to practice speaking.

Therefore, speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while we, teachers of English, have spent all our classroom time trying to teach our students how to write, to read and sometimes even to listen in a L2 because grammar has a long written tradition (Bueno, Madrid and McLaren, 2006: 321). Another big problem is that English teachers in Ecuador are not sufficiently proficient in English to teach speaking. Consequently, in most primary and secondary schools English learners learn to read and write, because it is easier to teach for English teachers and speaking is neglected in spite of being the major component in the learning process.

To these problems we have to add personality and attitude problems. Ur (2000), describe four main problems that hinder students speaking English in the classroom.

- **Inhibition.** Students do not participate in speaking activities because they experience shyness and fear of making mistakes. Ur (2000: 111) states that: “Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom. Worried about, making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.”
- **Nothing to Say.** Students want to participate in debates, or in conversations but the problem is that they do not know anything about the given topic whether in their native language or in English; so, they prefer to keep silent and they just listen what others say (Rivers 1968).
- **Low or Uneven Participation.** This problem takes place when strong speaking students want to participate in all speaking activities and weak speaking students tend to keep silent. The result is that classroom discussions are controlled by few talkative students who diminish or impede weak listening students’ participations.
- **Mother-Tongue Use** it happens in Ecuador because all the students speak Spanish and they want to use it in the English class since they do not have enough vocabulary or they do not have enough knowledge of grammar; so, the solution for them is to use their mother-

tongue. At the end, it is a big problem because English learners will find it difficult to use English correctly if they keep using their mother tongue.

Review of literature

Classification of Speaking

There are two types of speaking monologue and dialogue. Monologue focuses on giving an uninterrupted oral presentation and dialogue on interacting with other speakers (Nunan.1989: 27). In other words, monologue is an extended speech by one person (<https://bit.ly/2vun67C>); on the other hand, dialogue is a two-way communication between persons (<https://bit.ly/2vunxig>). Monologues predominate in the research literature and dialogues offer interactive and natural speech (Guillot, 1999: 32). Likewise, dialogues have the features of speech; for example, turn-taking, interruptions, clarification requests, backchannels, questions and answers, etc. and monologues lack of them. Another difference between monologue and dialogue is that monologues tend to be predictable; conversely dialogues are unpredictable for this reason, there is minimum research about fluency in dialogue (Imane 2014)

Speaking can also serve one of two main functions: transactional (transfer of information) and interactional (maintenance of social relationships) (Brown and Yule, 1983: 3). Examples of interactional talk are small talk and conversation because they serve the purpose of social interaction. According to Richards (2016) small talk consists of short exchanges that usually begin with a greeting, move to back-and-forth exchanges on non-controversial topics, such as work, school, the weekend, the weather, holidays, health, etc. and then often conclude with a fixed expression, such as See you later. Such interactions are at times almost standard and often do not result in a real conversation.

They help to create a positive atmosphere and to create a comfort zone between people who might be total strangers (<https://bit.ly/2Azzp7w>).

In addition, examples of transactional talk are ordering food in a cafeteria, checking into a hotel, getting a haircut, buying something in a supermarket, etc. because the focus is on getting something done, rather than maintaining social interaction. In communicative language teaching, transactions are generally referred to as functions, and include such areas as requests, orders, offers, suggestions, etc.) (<https://bit.ly/2Azzp7w>).



Aspects of Speaking

In this section, we first briefly describe the most important aspects of speaking: fluency and accuracy.

- Fluency To know and understand what fluency is, we need to check some definitions of fluency as the following:

Hughes (2002), argues that fluency is achieved when learners are able to express themselves in a clear and reasonable way in order to be understood without hesitation otherwise the listeners will lose their interest. Likewise, Hedge Tricia (2000: 54) states “The term fluency relates to the production and it is normally reserved for speech. It is the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain or inappropriate slowness, or undue hesitation.” However, Thornbury (2005) did not neglect the idea that speed is an important factor in fluency but he also did not neglect pauses because speakers need to take breath. Native speakers also need pauses to let the listeners get the idea. Therefore, it is clearly understood that in order to be fluent in the target language English learners have to speak smoothly, and with some pauses to be understood by the listeners.

- Accuracy Skehan states (1996 quoted in Ellis and Barkhuizen 2005: 139) that accuracy refers to “to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language.” In other words, accuracy refers to the appropriate use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation to communicate efficiently. Note that if the speaker do not produce well-structured sentences while speaking, he will not be understood by the listener, it does not matter if he has fluency. Therefore, English learners have to pay attention to both fluency and accuracy to be understood and get listeners’ interest.

- Grammar If English learners want to be fluent in the target language, they will need the ability to use appropriately different grammatical structures (simple structures and complex ones) in adequate ways and situations. In other words, English learners must master the grammar of the target language.

- Vocabulary English learners need to know an array of vocabulary to use it when they speak. It is generally recognized that vocabulary is the key to communication. Vocabulary is fundamentally the floor or the solid bedrock upon which English learners will build up the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and grammar. If English learners have

acquired a good vocabulary level, when they talk, they will make use of the acquired vocabulary and they will be more fluent and in the same way they will understand more in conversations and interactions. (<https://bit.ly/1sQfsPw>).

- **Pronunciation** It is essential that English learners use the correct word in the correct context and with the correct pronunciation. A standardized pronunciation is to say words in ways that people can understand. If the pronunciation is good, listeners will understand the message. Otherwise, the message will not be conveyed (Redmond and Vrchota, 2007).

Thus, a good pronunciation is a big problem that English learners have to face when they learn the target language. A poor pronunciation can lead to negative impression, misunderstanding and ineffective communication (<https://bit.ly/1UAT4Vx>).

Negative impression When an English student talks to English speakers, the first thing they notice is his pronunciation. If he has a poor pronunciation and a very strong foreign accent, he will be considered as a bad English speaker. It does not matter if he has a good vocabulary or grammar (<https://bit.ly/1UAT4Vx>).

Misunderstanding Some English students think they know a great amount of words of the target language because they can write them. However, the moment that they pronounce them, listeners cannot understand the pronounced words and it leads to misunderstandings and impedes communication (<https://bit.ly/1UAT4Vx>).

Ineffective communication When English learners have a poor pronunciation and a strong foreign accent, other speakers cannot understand them when they speak. So, they have to ask for repetition several times. It is too difficult for them to communicate with the English learner; hence, they avoid talking to him (<https://bit.ly/1UAT4Vx>).

The teaching of speaking

The teaching of speaking has been evolving through decades. In traditional methodologies teaching speaking was simply repeating after the teacher, memorizing a dialog, or responding to drills. Which are typical techniques of the audiolingual method or other methodologies of the 1970s. With the emergence of Communicative language teaching the teaching of speaking changed significantly, it was not based on grammar-based syllabus anymore. It was based on communicative ones. Methods which focus on notions, functions, skills, tasks and non-grammatical units of organization. They were used and the main goal was oral fluency.

Oral fluency was developed using information gap techniques and other tasks in which the students have involvement in real situations and real communication. We refer to real communication to contexts in which students can apply communication strategies (clarification, repetition) and negotiate meaning which is essential to develop oral skills (<https://bit.ly/2KlsmzT>).

What involves teaching speaking

According to Kayi (2006) today's world needs that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance. Teaching speaking requires that students:

- Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns
- Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called as fluency. (Nunan, 2003)

How to teach speaking

There is a large consensus among linguists and English teachers that students learn to speak in the second language by “interacting”. The best way to help students interact is using Communicative language teaching and collaborative learning. Namely, Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations which require communication (Kayi, 2006); and collaborative learning is an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of students working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product (<https://bit.ly/2KqNhBK>). According to Gerlach, "Collaborative learning is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act in which the participants talk among themselves (Gerlach, 1994). It is through the talk that learning occurs." There are several activities to

promote speaking; for instance, discussions, simulations, information gap, storytelling, interviews, story completion, etc.

Related studies about speaking techniques

There have been several studies concerned about speaking problems whose objective is to get that students become aware of these problems and overcome them or to put more emphasis on the speaking skill from the teachers (Al Hosni, 2014). By the same token, there have been studies in which the priority has been to provide speaking activities to promote speaking in second language. It is the case of Kayi (2006) who presents useful speaking activities; such as, discussion, role play, simulation, information gap, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, story completion, reporting, playing cards, picture narrating, picture describing, and finding the difference. In the same way, Lummettu and Runtuwene (2017), present the impromptu speaking method as a way to develop the students' English speaking ability. Alonso (2013) also contributes with speaking activities and she presents functional-situational drills, information gap activities and games among the most relevant. The research team has examined all these studies and has applied the picture description, picture strip story and picture situation activities to help English students in an institute in Ecuador to improve and develop their speaking skills (fluency and accuracy).

Speaking Activities used in the present study

Picture description

It is a speaking activity in which students are required to describe a picture. They have to say as many well-structured sentences as possible about the picture. For this activity students can form groups and each group is given a different picture to describe. Students discuss the picture with their groups, then a spokesperson for each group describes the picture to the whole class. This activity promotes creativity, imagination, and public speaking skills (Kayi, 2006). Students have to make use of the vocabulary and grammar learned to describe the picture.

Picture Narration

What students need to do in this activity is tell a story based on several sequential pictures by paying attention to the teacher's instructions and the rubric provided. The rubric generally contains the grammatical structures (tense), and vocabulary to be evaluated (Kayi, 2006).



Picture situation

This activity is a variation of picture description and picture narration. Basically, what students need to do is work in pairs. The teacher describes a situation; like this, it's your cousin's birthday and you are planning to buy a present for him. Discuss and decide together which present would be the best one. Students look at the situation picture card which shows a boy and the possible gifts for him. They take turns and talk about the possible present. They keep the conversation going inviting each other to give suggestions and at the end they make a decision about which would be the best present for him. There are a lot of picture situation cards in which students have the possibility to interact with their pairs getting started, inviting their partner to speak, presenting an idea, expressing your opinion, agreeing, disagreeing, and concluding.

Conceptual framework of research and results

Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

Experimental group G1 (intact):	X1 Pre-test	T Treatment (Picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities)	X2 Post-test
Control Group G2 (intact):	X1 Pre-test	O Observation	X2 Post-test

This study was quasi-experimental and consisted of a pre-test and a post-test administered to experimental and control groups. This study was designed with a pretest and posttest to measure experimental group students' improvement in speaking before and after treatment.

The treatment consisted in the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities to develop Experimental group students speaking. The study measured changes in the grades of experimental group students as a result of the treatment. This research design was chosen because it allowed the research team to determine progress in experimental group students and the impact, if any, the treatment had on the subjects. The control group did not receive any treatment. It was also used to compare the grades of the experimental group and control group in order to establish if the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities had been effective. The control group was basically used to observe to what extent control group students had improved their speaking only following the speaking activities from their text book, without developing any extra speaking activity. Without a pretest it would be difficult to measure development and therefore conclusions would not be valid. The chosen instrument for this study was the mean, the standard deviation, the variance, the mean difference, the t-reason and the t-test to reject the null hypothesis. The t-test and the t distribution were developed in 1908 by William Sealy Gosset, an Englishman publishing under the pseudonym Student to reject the null hypothesis. (<https://bit.ly/2b0IHLN>).

Research hypotheses

Alternative Hypothesis: the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities (treatment) develops the speaking of the experimental group students.

Null Hypothesis: There is no correlation between the application of the treatment (the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities) and the experimental group students' improvement in speaking.

Research Methodology

This investigation is a quasi-experimental research in terms of nature and method. The statistical population are the students of an English Institute in the north of Quito city in Ecuador within an academic semester. The research team carried out a Quasi-experimental method (Intact groups single-control) to measure experimental group students' improvement in speaking before and after treatment. The research team used intact groups because it is well-known that an "intact group" is assembled by any process other than by random assignment by the researcher Examples: school, class, section, etc. (<https://bit.ly/2Ktqr0q>).



Likewise, quasi-experimental methods calculate approximately how the treatment affects the treated group (the experimental group). Nevertheless, to establish the effectiveness of the treatment (the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities) the experimental group was compared with a control group, which did not receive treatment. The research team must underscore that in this investigation, they worked with intact groups which is appropriate for performing factor analysis. The authors randomly applied the treatment to one of the two groups with the flip of a coin.

Data collection

The data collection in this experimental research was carried out by means of a pre-test and a post-test. These instruments were oral exams which included basically four parts:

- Part 1 Personal questions (3 minutes). Students were interviewed by an examiner about personal questions about familiar topics; such as, home town, family and home, work or study, leisure, future plans, and so on for 3 minutes.
- Part 2 Communication activity (3 minutes). Students interacted with each other. Students were given a picture situation card by the examiner who described a situation to them. They had to talk to each other about different pictures to decide or come to a decision together about what would be best in the situation. Students had to make and respond to suggestions, discuss alternatives, make recommendations, and negotiate agreement.
- Part 3 Photographs (2-3 minutes). In this section students spoke in turns for 3 minutes. The examiner gave to each one a colour photograph and they had to talk about it. Students could talk about the setting, the people, activities, weather, clothes, feelings, etc. The photographs were linked thematically to establish a common starting point to part 4.
- Part 4 Discussion (4 minutes). What students needed to do in this activity was to develop a follow-up discussion with each other about the same topic as the task in part 3. In this section the examiner asked the students to discuss several questions on the topics introduced in part 3. The examiner initiated the discussion but the students were expected to



talk between themselves. They had to be able to talk about their interest and reasons for liking or not liking something. The examiner used prompts if the discussion failed to develop. This part of the test had to be as a natural conversation (<https://bit.ly/2OP0J5F>).

Basically, it was a pet oral exam which threw the data for the pre-test and the post-test, it was necessary to calculate the means, standard deviation, variance, etc. to obtain numerical data for further analysis.

Participants (Sample)

The classrooms selected as a sample for this quasi-experimental research were two intermediate classes of an English Institute at the north of Quito city. The students met English classes two hours from Monday to Thursday. It means 8 hours a week and 36 hours a month. The sample had 44 students. They were separated into the following categories: twenty-nine girls, and fifteen boys. All were native Spanish speakers, between 17 and 67 years old. Observe that the experimental group had 22 students and the control group had 22 students too.

The Treatment (picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities)

Picture description activities

During all the semester students worked with this speaking activity. The teacher projected big pictures or photographs on the LCD and students had to describe them. The teacher explained to them that when they described a picture they had to use the present continuous tense, use the structure there is and there are, and they had to do speculations; for example, she could be rich, because she is in front of that elegant house. Several phrases to begin the description were provided; such as, this picture/photo shows, I can see, etc. Likewise, they were given a list of things about what they had to describe. For instance, the age of the people in the photograph, the weather, what the person was doing, what the person was wearing, the place, the mood of the people in the picture, the environment, etc. The students said negative sentences to complement their descriptions. They were required to say minimum 10 sentences. In addition, the teacher gave them a list of adjectives in order they have an ample range of adjectives to choose when they describe things.

Picture narration activities



This technique was chosen for the research team since students had problems using the past tense. Therefore, the teacher projected them several picture strip stories on the LCD the students narrated the stories using the past tense and the past perfect trying to make up funny stories. The teacher introduced a list of connectors and linkers to keep the story going (<https://bit.ly/2MpH5f9>). Furthermore, ways to start their stories better were provided (<https://bit.ly/1AHFZR5>) and 99 starters were given (<https://bit.ly/2Ok5rrl>) because coming up with a story opening can feel like the hardest part when students tell a story.

Picture situation activities

In this activity students worked in pairs. The teacher projected a picture situation card on the LCD and immediately the teacher described the situation to the students. For example: you and your friend are planning your Saturday evening, but you do not where to go. Discuss and decide together what place would be most interesting for you to spend your evening. The students took turns and spoke about the possible places to go; such as the movie theater, the library, the restaurant, the mall, or the park, and after they made a decision about the best place to go. In order to get that students develop this activity correctly useful language was introduced by the teacher. On the Internet there are a lot of phrases to work in this activity however, the research team chose the most significant. In view of the fact that, students get nervous when are doing this activity. So, it is much better to give them less phrases to get they do better this activity.

	Useful language for picture situation activities (https://bit.ly/2LUoWtD)
Getting started	Well, we have to choose/ talk about..... Why don't we first talk about each before we decide
Presenting an idea / Expressing your opinion	I think we should..... In my opinion,..... Personally, I don't like If you ask me,.....
Inviting your partner to speak	What do you think about Do you like the idea of? How about you?
Agreeing	That's absolutely true Absolutely I couldn't agree more
Disagreeing	Well, I don't think..... I am not sure I agree with you. I think that.....
Concluding	So, if we summarize. We can say that we are choosing ... Ok. Let's make a decision.

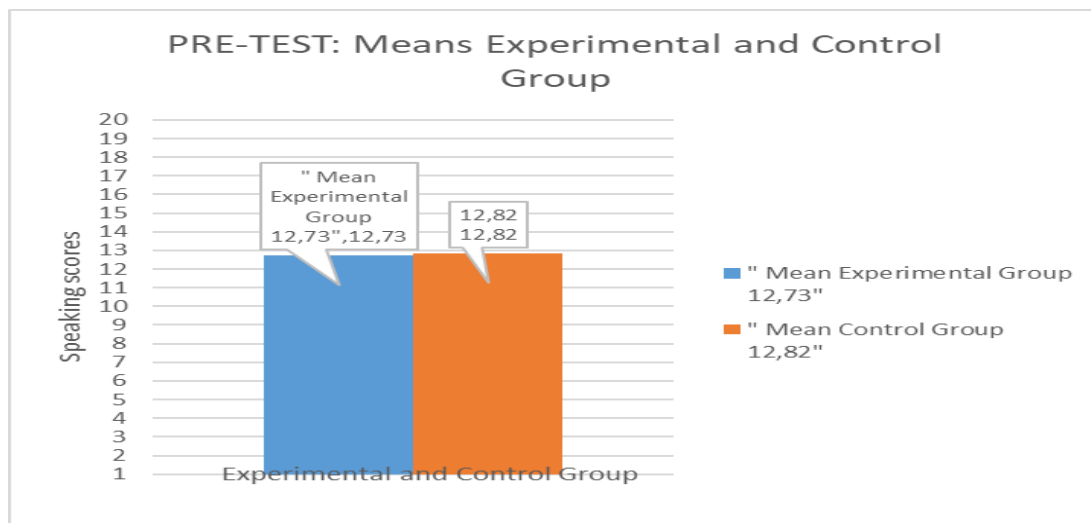
Results

The speaking pre-and-post-test results allowed the research team to analyse the data and reject the null hypothesis as well.

Factor analysis of the experimental and control groups' pre-test results

The pre-test was taken by experimental and control group students at the beginning of the academic semester. On the one hand, the results of the pre-test taken by the experimental group students showed a mean of 12.73 equal to 63.65% of ability to speak. On the other hand, the results of the pre-test taken by the control group students showed a mean of 12.82 equal to 64.10% of ability to speak. Both results were low, considering that students needed to have a good English level. Note that the difference between both means in the pre-test was 0.09 equal to 0.45%, it was not significant, and both groups were in similar conditions. It meant that both groups had the same speaking level. Nevertheless, it was necessary to apply picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities to enhance experimental group's speaking skills

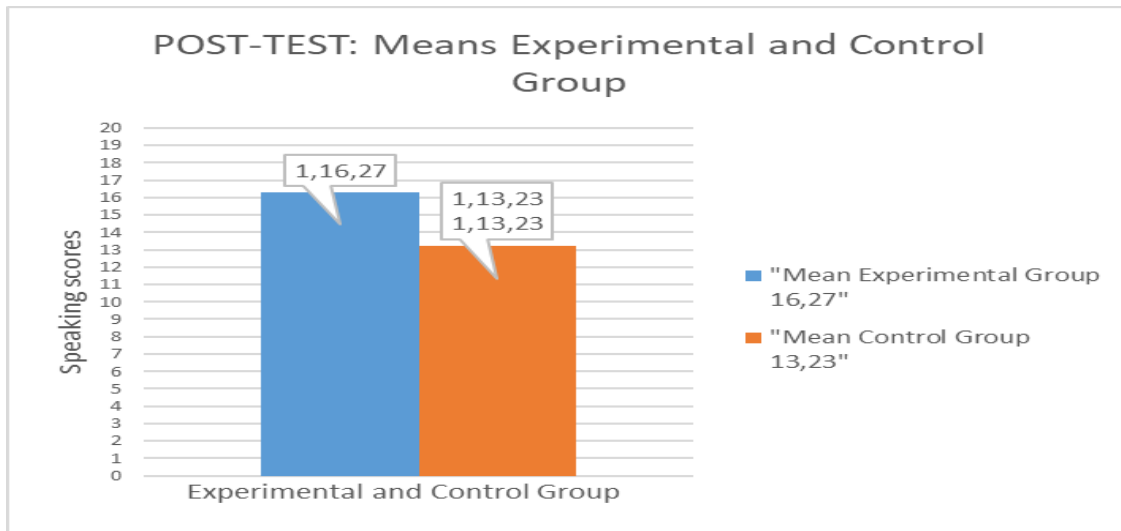
Figure 2. Means pre-test experimental and control groups



Factor analysis of the experimental and control groups' Post-test results

The post-test was taken by control and experimental group students at the end of the academic semester, after that the speaking treatment was applied (picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities) to the experimental group students. On the one hand, the results of the post-test taken by the experimental group students after treatment showed a mean of 16.27 equal to 81.350% of speaking ability. On the other hand, the post-test taken by the control group students showed a mean of 13.23 equal to 66.15% of speaking ability.

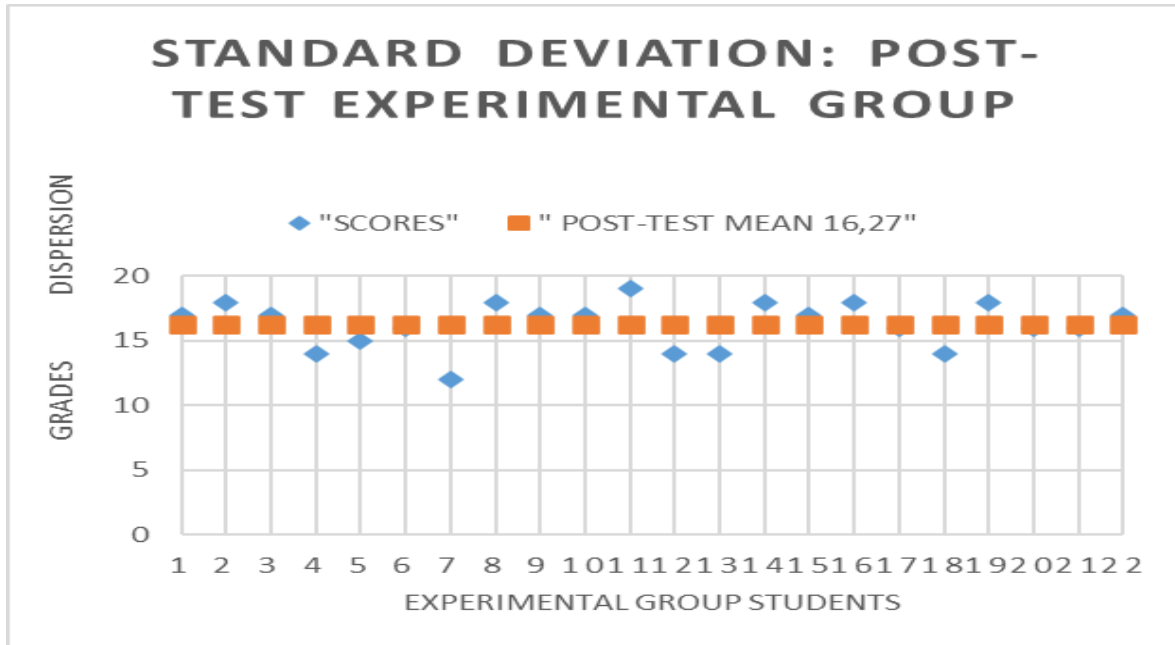
Figure 3. Means post-test experimental and control groups



Factor analysis of the experimental group. Post-test dispersion results

The standard deviation of the experimental group after treatment in the post-test was 1.78, which showed that after treatment, the experimental group was more homogenous than the control group, which had a standard deviation of 2.60. Consequently, the experimental group after treatment showed a lower dispersion than that of the control group (the untreated group). Only one student has a low grade because she did not attend classes.

Figure 4. Dispersion experimental group after treatment.



Testing the research hypothesis

Rejecting the hypothesis:

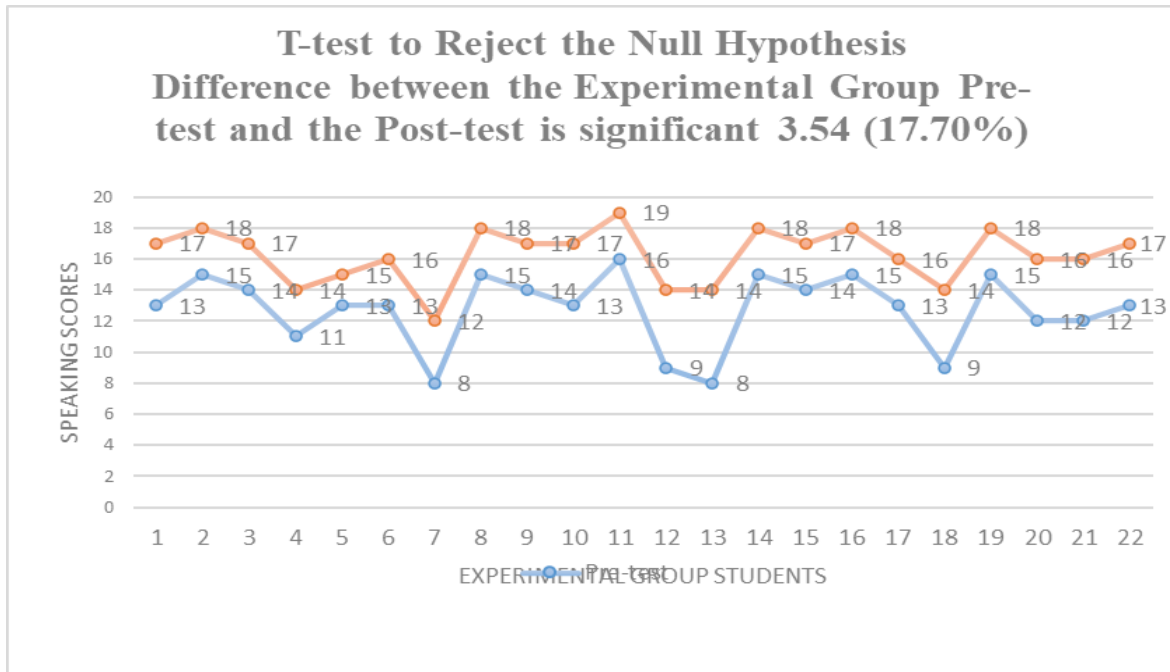
The research team found the critical value using the T distribution Table by John Pezzullo (<https://bit.ly/2vXIuR4>). The body of the table gives two-tailed probabilities. The left-hand marginal column gives the degrees of freedom. The top row gives the confidence intervals. The research team bore in mind that this was a two-tailed hypothesis and that the significance level was 0.10, It is the most appropriate in this case of experiments.

The application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities (treatment) increased the ability of speaking in the experimental group students.

In examining the effects of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities. It was observed a difference of + 3.54 equal to 17.70% between the two means of the experimental group in the pre-test and the post-test. It was necessary to confirm if that difference (3.54) was sufficiently high enough to reject the null hypothesis. The research team proceeded to obtain the t-value with a significance level of 0.10 and calculated the degrees of freedom using the t table. In the level of 0.10 and with 42 degrees of freedom, the research team found a t-reason of +1.6820. This result is lower than the calculated t-reason

of the experimental group +3.54. So, the research team concluded that the difference between the two means is significant; consequently, the alternative hypothesis is accepted and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Figure 5. Difference between the Experimental Group Pre-test and the Post-test is significant 3.54 (17.70%)



Discussion and conclusions

The present research studied the impact of the application of picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities to increase students 'speaking skills. The results showed that these activities increased significantly the experimental group's speaking grades. Furthermore, after treatment on the post-test, the mean was of 16.27 which is higher than the control group's speaking grades, which had a mean of 13.23 in the post-test. The difference between both means in the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group shows an improvement of 3.54 (17.70%) which is significant. The control group did not report a high speaking improvement just 0.41 (2.05%). Similarly, the experimental group standard deviation was 1.78 in the post-test because the treatment helped all the students increase their

speaking skills, especially the weak students, who developed their fluency and accuracy. The obtained result is consistent with some previous studies; such as, Kayi (2006), Zareie, Gorjian, Pazhakh (2014), and Lunettu & Runtuwene (2018). The results also indicates that the null hypothesis was rejected because it was demonstrated obtaining the “t-reason” (7.20) was greater than the critical value ± 1.6820 . In other words, it means that the picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities are an effective way to increase speaking skills.

Recommendations

After applying picture description, picture narration, and picture situation activities, the research team recommends English language teachers:

- Provide a target language environment where students have the opportunity to interact in real situations, working in peers or in a group, using authentic materials and tasks.
- Involve all the students in speaking activities, doing different activities
- Increase students speaking time and monitor students when they are working in pairs or groups to make sure they have understood the task and they do not require help.
- Motivate students with positive phrases to get students to take over of speaking activities and give them feedback.
- Do not correct every single mistake in pronunciation because students cannot concentrate in their speeches. Rather, write mistakes on the side and in the end go over the mistakes with the student.

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