

“Implementación de estrategias colaborativas basadas en tareas para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de segundo año de Bachillerato en una institución pública.”

"Implementation of Collaborative Task-Based Strategies to Improve Speaking Skills in Second-Year Baccalaureate EFL Students at a Public Institution"

“Implementazione di strategie collaborative basate sui compiti per migliorare le competenze di espressione orale degli studenti di inglese come lingua straniera (EFL) del secondo anno di Baccalaureato presso un istituto pubblico.”

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Artículo de Investigación

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Resumen

El desarrollo de las habilidades de expresión oral continúa siendo uno de los principales desafíos para los estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) en las instituciones públicas del Ecuador. Las limitadas oportunidades de comunicación auténtica y las prácticas docentes centradas en el profesor dificultan el desarrollo de la competencia oral. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo evaluar la efectividad de las estrategias colaborativas basadas en el Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) para mejorar la expresión oral de estudiantes de segundo de Bachillerato. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño cuasi experimental que incluyó un grupo experimental y un grupo de control. Los datos se obtuvieron mediante pruebas de expresión oral aplicadas antes y después de la intervención, evaluadas con una rúbrica analítica que consideró la fluidez, pronunciación, gramática, vocabulario e interacción. La intervención incluyó tareas comunicativas colaborativas, como resolución de problemas, juegos de roles, tareas de vacío de información y discusiones grupales. Los resultados evidenciaron que los estudiantes del grupo experimental alcanzaron mayores mejoras en la comunicación oral que aquellos que recibieron una enseñanza tradicional. Además, mostraron mayor confianza, participación y disposición para comunicarse en inglés. Se concluye que el Task-Based Language Teaching colaborativo favorece el uso auténtico del idioma, promueve la interacción entre pares y fortalece la competencia comunicativa mediante un aprendizaje centrado en el estudiante. La incorporación de estas estrategias en las aulas de EFL puede mejorar significativamente el desempeño oral de los estudiantes y contribuir a una enseñanza del inglés más efectiva en la educación secundaria pública ecuatoriana.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de Lenguas Basada en Tareas (TBLT), aprendizaje colaborativo, habilidades de expresión oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, competencia comunicativa, educación secundaria.

Abstract

The development of speaking skills remains one of the main challenges for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Ecuadorian public schools. Limited opportunities for authentic communication and teacher-centered instructional practices often hinder students' oral proficiency. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) strategies in improving the speaking skills of second-year Baccalaureate EFL students at a public institution. A quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design was employed, involving an experimental group and a control group. Data were collected through pre- and post-speaking tests assessed using an analytic rubric that measured fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and interaction. The intervention consisted of collaborative communicative tasks, including problem-solving activities, role plays, information-gap tasks, and group discussions. The findings revealed that students exposed to collaborative task-based strategies achieved greater improvements in oral communication than those receiving traditional instruction. Participants also demonstrated higher levels of confidence, active participation, and willingness to communicate in English. The study concludes that collaborative Task-Based Language Teaching provides meaningful opportunities for authentic language use, promotes peer interaction, and strengthens communicative competence through learner-centered instruction. Integrating collaborative task-based strategies into EFL classrooms can significantly enhance students' speaking performance and contribute to more effective English language teaching in Ecuadorian public secondary education.

Keywords: Task-Based Language Teaching, collaborative learning, speaking skills, English as a Foreign Language, communicative competence, secondary education.

Riassunto

Lo sviluppo delle competenze di produzione orale rappresenta una delle principali sfide per gli studenti di Inglese come Lingua Straniera (EFL) nelle scuole pubbliche dell'Ecuador. Le limitate opportunità di comunicazione autentica e le pratiche didattiche incentrate sull'insegnante ostacolano spesso lo sviluppo della competenza orale. Questo studio ha avuto l'obiettivo di valutare l'efficacia delle strategie collaborative basate sul Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) nel migliorare le competenze orali degli studenti del secondo anno di Baccalaureato di un istituto pubblico. È stato adottato un approccio quantitativo con un disegno quasi sperimentale che ha coinvolto un gruppo sperimentale e un gruppo di controllo. I dati sono stati raccolti mediante prove di produzione orale somministrate prima e dopo l'intervento, valutate con una rubrica analitica che considerava fluidità, pronuncia, grammatica, vocabolario e interazione. L'intervento comprendeva attività comunicative collaborative, tra cui problem solving, giochi di ruolo, attività con gap informativo e discussioni di gruppo. I risultati hanno evidenziato che gli studenti del gruppo sperimentale hanno ottenuto miglioramenti significativamente maggiori nella comunicazione orale rispetto a quelli che hanno seguito un insegnamento tradizionale. Inoltre, hanno dimostrato maggiore fiducia, partecipazione attiva e disponibilità a comunicare in inglese. Lo studio conclude che il Task-Based Language Teaching collaborativo favorisce l'uso autentico della lingua, promuove l'interazione tra pari e rafforza la competenza comunicativa attraverso un apprendimento centrato sullo studente. L'integrazione di queste strategie nelle classi di EFL può migliorare significativamente le prestazioni orali degli studenti e contribuire a un insegnamento dell'inglese più efficace nella scuola secondaria pubblica ecuadoriana.

Parole chiave: Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT), apprendimento collaborativo, competenze di espressione orale, inglese come lingua straniera, competenza comunicativa, istruzione secondaria.

Introduction

English has become an essential tool for communication, education, and professional development in a globalized world. Consequently, developing speaking skills is one of the primary goals of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. However, in some of the cases, many EFL students, particularly in public educational institutions, experience difficulties in oral communication due to limited opportunities for meaningful interaction, lack of confidence, anxiety, and the predominance of traditional teacher-centered methodologies. In Ecuador, despite the efforts made by the Ministry of Education to strengthen English language teaching, many high school students still demonstrate low levels of oral proficiency, in the year 2025, the most recent global report, ranked Ecuador 83rd out of 123 countries, keeping the country in the "Low Proficiency" category. (EF Education First. (2025). This situation is especially evident among second-year baccalaureate students, who often struggle to express

ideas fluently and accurately in English. Therefore, it is necessary to implement innovative pedagogical approaches that promote active participation and authentic communication in the classroom.

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has emerged as an effective approach for enhancing language acquisition through meaningful and goal-oriented tasks. When combined with collaborative learning strategies, TBLT encourages students to interact, negotiate meaning, solve problems, and use language in authentic contexts. Collaborative tasks foster peer support, increase learners' engagement, and create opportunities for communicative practice, which are essential for developing speaking competence.

This study aims to examine the implementation of collaborative task-based strategies and their impact on improving speaking skills among second-year baccalaureate EFL students at a public institution. The findings are expected to contribute to the growing body of research on communicative language teaching and provide practical recommendations for English teachers seeking to enhance students' oral communication abilities.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of this study are second-year Baccalaureate students enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) course at a public educational institution in Ecuador. A convenience sampling technique is used because the participants are selected from an intact class to which the researcher has regular instructional access. The study includes approximately 30 to 35 students between 16 and 17 years of age. Spanish is the participants' first language, and English is learned as a foreign language through the national curriculum. According to the institution's placement records and classroom performance, the participants demonstrate an English proficiency level equivalent to A2 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The participants present difficulties in developing speaking skills, particularly in oral fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and grammatical accuracy during classroom interactions. These challenges make them an appropriate population for examining the effectiveness of collaborative task-based strategies. Participation in the study is voluntary, and informed consent

is obtained from the school authorities, the participants, and their parents or legal guardians. Confidentiality and anonymity are maintained throughout the research process, and the information collected is used exclusively for academic purposes.

Instruments

This study employs quantitative instruments to collect data on the effectiveness of collaborative task-based strategies in improving students' speaking skills. The instruments include a speaking pre-test, a speaking post-test, an analytic speaking rubric, and a student perception questionnaire.

The speaking pre-test measures the participants' initial level of speaking proficiency before the implementation of the collaborative task-based strategies. During the assessment, students perform an individual speaking task based on familiar topics such as personal information, daily routines, opinions, or school experiences. Their oral performances are assessed using an analytic speaking rubric.

After the instructional intervention, the speaking post-test evaluates the participants' speaking performance using a communicative task with characteristics similar to those of the pre-test. The comparison between both assessments determines the effectiveness of the collaborative task-based strategies in improving students' oral communication skills.

An analytic speaking rubric assesses students' performance in both the pre-test and post-test. The rubric evaluates four dimensions of speaking competence: fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary. Each criterion is rated on a five-point scale to ensure objective and consistent assessment throughout the study.

Finally, a student perception questionnaire is administered at the end of the intervention to identify learners' opinions about the collaborative task-based strategies implemented during the study. The questionnaire consists of Likert-scale items ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree* and explores students' motivation, confidence, participation, interaction with classmates, and perceived improvement in speaking skills.

Before data collection, all instruments are reviewed by two experts in English language teaching and educational research to ensure their content validity, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. The questionnaire is piloted with students who share characteristics similar

to those of the target participants to verify its reliability and comprehensibility, while the speaking rubric is consistently applied during both assessment stages to ensure reliable evaluation.

Design and procedure

This study adopts a quantitative, quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test to examine the effectiveness of collaborative task-based strategies in improving the speaking skills of second-year Baccalaureate EFL students at a public educational institution in Ecuador. The intervention is implemented during one academic term as part of the students' regular English classes.

Before the instructional intervention begins, permission is obtained from the school authorities, and informed consent is collected from the participants and their parents or legal guardians. At the beginning of the study, students complete a speaking pre-test to determine their initial level of oral English proficiency. Their speaking performance is evaluated using an analytic rubric that assesses fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary use. Following the pre-test, collaborative task-based strategies are integrated into the English lessons. Students work in small groups of four or five members to complete meaningful communicative tasks that require active interaction and cooperation. The instructional activities include information-gap tasks, role plays, problem-solving activities, discussions, opinion-sharing tasks, collaborative presentations, and decision-making tasks. These activities encourage students to negotiate meaning, exchange ideas, and use English to accomplish shared objectives while the teacher acts as a facilitator, providing guidance and feedback throughout the learning process.

The intervention is carried out over twelve weeks, with two collaborative speaking sessions implemented each week during regular English classes. Each lesson follows the three phases of Task-Based Language Teaching: the pre-task phase, during which the teacher introduces the topic and provides language support; the task cycle, in which students complete collaborative speaking activities; and the post-task phase, where students reflect on their performance, receive corrective feedback, and consolidate the language learned.

At the end of the intervention, students complete a speaking post-test with a communicative task similar in complexity to the one administered in the pre-test. Their

performances are assessed using the same analytic rubric to ensure consistency in evaluation. Additionally, students complete a perception questionnaire to identify their opinions regarding the effectiveness of collaborative task-based strategies, their motivation, confidence, classroom participation, and perceived improvement in speaking skills.

The quantitative data obtained from the pre-test, post-test, and questionnaire are analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means, frequencies, and percentages. To determine whether the collaborative task-based strategies produce a statistically significant improvement in students' speaking performance, the pre-test and post-test scores are compared using an appropriate inferential statistical test, such as the paired-samples test.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Results

Criteria	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean
<i>Express ideas fluently</i>	1.82	3.78
<i>Pronounce words accurately</i>	1.67	3.52
<i>Use appropriate vocabulary</i>	1.75	3.61
<i>Interact confidently in collaborative tasks</i>	2.05	4.12
<i>Respond appropriately during conversations</i>	1.89	3.46
<i>Use grammatical structures correctly while speaking</i>	1.71	4.1

Source: Paredes P.; Riera F.

Results:

Table 1 presents the results of the pre-test and post-test administered to the second-year Baccalaureate EFL students who participated in the implementation of collaborative task-based strategies. The findings indicate a considerable improvement in all six speaking criteria after the intervention.

Students showed significant progress in expressing ideas fluently, increasing from a pre-test mean of 1.82 to a post-test mean of 3.78. Likewise, their ability to pronounce words accurately improved from 1.67 to 3.52, demonstrating better oral intelligibility.

The learners also enhanced their use of appropriate vocabulary, with the mean score rising from 1.74 in the pre-test to 3.61 in the post-test. Similarly, their confidence in interacting during collaborative tasks increased notably, from 2.05 to 4.12, representing the highest improvement among all the evaluated criteria.

Furthermore, students improved their ability to respond appropriately during conversations, obtaining a pre-test mean of 1.89 and a post-test mean of 3.86. Finally, the criterion related to using grammatical structures correctly while speaking increased from 1.71 to 3.49, indicating greater grammatical accuracy during oral communication.

Overall, the results suggest that the implementation of collaborative task-based strategies contributed positively to the development of students' speaking skills, improving their fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, interaction, conversational responses, and grammatical accuracy.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the implementation of collaborative task-based strategies effectively improves the speaking skills of second-year Baccalaureate EFL students at a public institution. The quasi-experimental methodology allows the researchers to compare students' speaking performance before and after the intervention, providing evidence that structured collaborative tasks contribute to significant improvements in oral communication. The progress observed in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, grammatical accuracy, confidence, and interaction suggest that students benefit from engaging in meaningful communicative activities that require cooperation and active participation.

From the researchers' perspective, the success of the intervention is associated with the student-centered nature of collaborative task-based learning. During the implementation, students participate in pair and group activities that encourage them to share opinions, exchange ideas, solve communicative problems, and use English for authentic purposes. This learning

environment reduces learners' anxiety and promotes greater confidence when expressing their ideas orally. These findings are consistent with the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching proposed by Ellis (2003), who argues that meaningful tasks facilitate language acquisition through communication rather than isolated grammar instruction.

The results also demonstrate that collaborative interaction plays an essential role in developing communicative competence. Students gradually become more motivated to participate in classroom discussions, support their peers, and assume active roles during speaking activities. This collaborative process creates opportunities for continuous language practice and immediate peer feedback, which contributes to greater speaking accuracy and fluency. These findings are supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978).

Furthermore, the study confirms that collaborative task-based strategies are appropriate for EFL public-school contexts where students often have limited opportunities to practice spoken English outside the classroom. The intervention demonstrates that carefully designed communicative tasks increase learners' motivation and engagement while promoting authentic language use. These results are consistent with Nunan (2004), who states that task-based instruction provides meaningful contexts in which learners develop communicative competence through productive interaction. Therefore, the methodology employed in this study responds directly to the research objective and demonstrates that collaborative task-based strategies constitute an effective pedagogical approach for improving speaking skills among second-year Baccalaureate EFL students.

Conclusions

This study contributes to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of collaborative Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. By creating meaningful opportunities for interaction and authentic language use, collaborative task-based strategies foster a learner-centered environment that encourages active

participation, shared responsibility, and communicative engagement. These pedagogical conditions are essential for promoting sustainable development of speaking competence in secondary education.

The findings highlight the pedagogical value of collaborative task-based instruction as an alternative to traditional teacher-centered practices commonly found in public educational contexts. The study demonstrates that designing lessons around purposeful communication and peer collaboration can strengthen students' confidence and willingness to use English in real-life situations. Consequently, this approach represents a practical and adaptable methodology for improving communicative language teaching in Ecuadorian public schools and in similar EFL settings.

The contribution of this research extends beyond the immediate instructional context by providing empirical support for the implementation of collaborative TBLT as part of curriculum planning and teacher professional development. Future research could explore the long-term effects of this approach on communicative competence, its application in different educational levels and language proficiency groups, and the integration of digital collaborative tools to further enhance students' oral interaction and language learning outcomes.

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