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TEMA

"BLENDED LEARNING APPROACHES TO IMPROVE NINTH GRADE
STUDENT'S ENGLISH ORAL SKILLS"

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Dedication

With eternal love and gratitude, I dedicate this work to my wife Anabell and my sons Mateo and Dylan, thank you for helping me on this difficult path, giving me strength during those hard moments and filling my life with happiness and patience. I also dedicated this work to my father Marcelo who always has been my stone, showing me that all done sacrifices receive the most beautiful reward. His greatest inspiration, being a constant motivation model in my life. Thanks to all of you for your help during this strict process. Thank you for being part of my life and for helping me to reach this goal.



Gratefulness

With eternal gratitude, I thank God and to my mother's spirit for guiding me through this path. I want to express my appreciation to my family, that always was motivating me for keeping on the route. Furthermore, I want to express my gratitude to Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador, for giving me the opportunity to improve my personal professional profile, to my tutor Dra Lourdes Jaramillo who always was guiding me step by step during this detailed and important stage in my life. To all teachers who patiently contributed during each subject to my professional growth. Thanks to PhD. Reinaldo Bonilla, who successfully guide me during the course. His wisdom and motivation encouraged me to keep on the path. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Unidad Educativa Pilahuin School, for giving me the opportunity to share my experiences and knowledge during this educative process. At the end of the stairs, God always rewards efforts.

Hugo



Abstract

The educational process requires elements that favor its success, among them are teacher preparation, student predisposition, methodology, resources, undeniably the macro-curricular is also important. This paper addresses a relevant topic such as the "Blended learning approaches to improve Ninth Grade student's English oral skills", with the general objective increase speaking skills in the students from 9th grade through the implementation of Blended Learning activities through the use of WhatsApp as an alternative platform. We work in a rural context, in a predominantly Quichua-speaking sector, which provides more important elements to the research work. To achieve the proposed objective, a mixed methodology is used that combines the qualitative and quantitative, that is, it auscultates the characteristics of the study variables, theoretically substantiating their understanding and describing their details, but also carries out a field study, with the use of data collection techniques and instruments such as interview, observation, survey with their respective questionnaires and records. The results show a clear interest of students in the use of dynamic, innovative resources such as those promoted using blended learning to improve oral skills in English. It is concluded that the transition from the traditional to innovations attracts attention, favors learning and achieves the skills with performance criteria and competencies that students require in their gradual learning process.

Keywords: education, blended learning, oral skills, outcomes



Resumen

El proceso educativo requiere elementos que favorezcan su éxito, entre los cuales se encuentran la preparación docente, la predisposición del estudiante, la metodología, los recursos, y sin duda el macro curricular también es importante. Este documento aborda un tema relevante como los "enfoques de aprendizaje combinado para mejorar las habilidades orales en inglés de los estudiantes de Noveno Grado", con el objetivo general de aumentar las habilidades de conversación en los estudiantes de noveno grado a través de la implementación de actividades de Aprendizaje Combinado mediante el uso de WhatsApp como plataforma alternativa. Trabajamos en un contexto rural, en un sector predominantemente de habla quichua, lo que proporciona elementos más importantes para el trabajo de investigación. Para lograr el objetivo propuesto, se utiliza una metodología mixta que combina lo cualitativo y lo cuantitativo, es decir, se auscultan las características de las variables del estudio, fundamentando teóricamente su comprensión y describiendo sus detalles, pero también se realiza un estudio de campo, con el uso de técnicas e instrumentos de recolección de datos como entrevistas, observación, encuestas con sus respectivos cuestionarios y registros. Los resultados muestran un claro interés de los estudiantes en el uso de recursos dinámicos e innovadores, como los promovidos mediante el aprendizaje combinado, para mejorar las habilidades orales en inglés. Se concluye que la transición de lo tradicional a las innovaciones atrae la atención, favorece el aprendizaje y logra las habilidades con criterios de desempeño y competencias que los estudiantes requieren en su proceso de aprendizaje gradual.

Palabras clave: educación, aprendizaje combinado, habilidades orales, resultados.



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Introduction.

In the province of Tungurahua, there is an indigenous community called Pilahuin, which remains relatively isolated from urban centers. Within this community, Unidad Educativa Pilahuin is currently undergoing a process of educational transition. The institution is strategically located next to the main road, which provides students and parents with easier access compared to other schools in surrounding rural areas. However, most indigenous students live in dispersed zones, and their families face multiple cultural and socio-economic challenges. A significant portion of the adult population is illiterate and primarily speaks Kichwa as their mother tongue. Among the older generations, formal schooling was limited to the fifth or seventh grade in bilingual schools that operated decades ago. In comparison with national educational standards, only a small number of adults in Pilahuin completed high school, which restricts their opportunities to pursue stable employment in urban contexts. This situation reflects broader educational inequalities that continue to affect indigenous communities in Ecuador, where limited access to quality education and socio-economic disparities perpetuate cycles of marginalization ((Lopez & Küper, 2002);(Perino, 2022); (UNESCO, 2020).

Rural areas, such as those in the region under investigation, present distinctive characteristics shaped by both internal and external factors. These territories are generally defined by low population density and are predominantly influenced by agricultural and natural landscapes. A common feature of rural communities is their limited access to urban educational facilities and public services, which often places them at a disadvantage compared to urban populations. At the same time, rural populations tend to preserve stronger ties with their natural environment and cultural traditions, while simultaneously confronting structural challenges such as economic instability and insufficient infrastructure development. These conditions significantly impact the educational context, creating particular barriers in the teaching–learning process. Moreover, schools in rural areas remain subordinated to curricular reforms dictated by the Ministry of Education, limiting their autonomy in planning and instructional methodologies. This dynamic often results in a tension between national educational policies



and the specific needs of rural and indigenous communities (Álvarez, 2025; Atchoarena et al., 2003; Valverde, 1999).

During previous evaluation activities, one of the main difficulties identified was related to students' speaking skills. This issue, in some cases, could be described as speech disorders or difficulties in correct pronunciation. Several signs were observed during classroom interactions: some students struggled to articulate certain sounds, producing substitutions or distortions; others stuttered, hesitated excessively, or repeated words while speaking. In addition, a number of students communicated in very short phrases, appeared reluctant to answer questions, or demonstrated a limited vocabulary, which hindered their ability to express ideas clearly. These challenges can stem from various causes, such as developmental stuttering, weakness in the muscles required for speech, insufficient oral practice, or even neurological factors (Bloodstein et al., 2021); (Fissel Brannick et al., 2022); (Levey, 2024).

The researcher identified that ninth-grade students at Pilahuin institution experience significant pronunciation difficulties and struggle to speak fluently during classes. These challenges are primarily attributed to the limited opportunities for speaking practice and the lack of effective methodological resources designed to support the development of their oral skills.

To address the identified problem, the present research seeks to design and implement a methodological strategy aimed at improving students' oral skills. Specifically, this study focuses on the implementation of a *blended learning strategy* for English language learning in rural high schools. Beyond offering a potential solution, the findings of this research are expected to explore opportunities and propose strategies that may help overcome the challenges faced by rural students, while taking into account the uniqueness and specific educational needs of these communities (López, 2021); (UNESCO, 2018).

The problematic situation suggests that the lack of an effective teaching–learning process within the institution has negatively affected students' oral proficiency. It is important to highlight that an educational problem of this nature requires a **methodological approach**,



which can serve as a platform for addressing inconsistencies and inequities in the students' learning process (C. D. Lee, 2017).

Blended learning has gained significant attention in recent years due to its potential to foster active participation and enhance students' output skills, particularly speaking and listening. This approach combines face-to-face classroom instruction with structured online activities, effectively transforming the traditional classroom setting into a more interactive and collaborative learning environment (Graham et al., 2019); Horn & Staker, 2015). By integrating technology, blended learning provides students with flexible opportunities to continue practicing at home or in any other context, thus creating asynchronous learning environments that promote autonomy, self-assessment, and continuous feedback. Previous research has demonstrated that blended learning environments can significantly improve learners' speaking and listening skills by allowing them to manage their time effectively and engage with accessible resources beyond the classroom (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Wang et al., 2015). However, at Unidad Educativa Pilahuin, such strategies have not been implemented before, which makes this study especially relevant.

The general objective of this research is to improve and strengthen students' oral communication skills by combining the advantages of face-to-face instruction with the use of a blended learning methodology.

The study also establishes the following specific objectives:

- ✓ To increase students' confidence and fluency in spoken activities through the application of blended learning strategies that include structured, interactive exercises and continuous feedback.
- ✓ To reinforce students' independent listening skills by implementing blended learning activities that incorporate audio resources for self-assessment and practice.

Finally, the research identifies the key variables:

Independent variable: Blended learning methodology.



Dependent variable: Development of students' oral communication skills (confidence, fluency, and listening comprehension).

Independent Variable: Blended Learning approach.

One of the first structured explanations of what blended learning entails emerged in the early 2000s. The Learning Circuits community, hosted by the American Society for Training & Development (ASTD), now known as Association for Talent Development (ATD), was an influential platform that helped shape professional and academic understandings of blended learning.

Purnima Valiathan provided one significant contribution on Learning Circuits. In it, blended learning was defined as a solution that "combines several different delivery methods, such as collaboration software, Web-based courses ... (Valiathan, 2002)".

The author of this research assumes that the *blended learning approach* is designed to enhance the quality of classroom instruction by offering students multiple opportunities for self-study. Within the framework of this project, the main objective of blended learning is to foster students' autonomy, enabling them to develop independent thinking and express their ideas more effectively.

Justification of the approach implementation at Unidad Educativa Pilahuin.

The implementation of a blended learning approach is particularly relevant for rural educational contexts such as Unidad Educativa Pilahuin. Students in these areas face multiple barriers, including limited exposure to English outside the classroom, scarce educational resources, and socioeconomic conditions that restrict access to private language instruction. By combining face-to-face classes with technology-mediated activities, blended learning provides a flexible and cost-effective methodology that can maximize available classroom time while extending learning opportunities beyond school hours.

One of the key strengths of blended learning lies in its capacity to foster learner autonomy and self-regulated learning, which are essential in environments where direct teacher support may be limited. Students are encouraged to engage in independent practice, reflect on their learning,



and take greater responsibility for their progress, skills that are critical for academic growth and lifelong learning (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008). Additionally, blended learning supports the development of oral communication skills by incorporating multimedia resources and interactive tasks that allow repeated practice, feedback, and exposure to authentic language use (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).

In rural areas, where cultural and linguistic diversity must also be considered, blended learning offers adaptable strategies that can respect students' mother tongue (Kichwa) while gradually integrating English as a foreign language. This dual flexibility—both pedagogical and cultural—positions blended learning as an effective tool for bridging educational gaps and ensuring more equitable access to quality language education (UNESCO, 2020; Wang, Han, & Yang, 2021).

Dependent Variable: English Oral Skills:

The development of *English oral skills* represents the central dependent variable of this research. Oral proficiency is essential for effective communication, yet it remains one of the most challenging areas for students in rural schools. Unlike traditional methods that often emphasize passive learning, active learning strategies encourage critical thinking, autonomy, and consistent practice. Oral skills are best improved through structured activities both inside and outside the classroom, such as guided lectures, interactive tasks, and informal speaking opportunities. The ultimate goal is to enable students not only to perform well in formal assessments but also to communicate fluently in real-life contexts, such as debates, discussions, and everyday interactions (Richards, 2015); (Thornbury & Kerr, 2017).

Blended learning provides a flexible methodological framework that supports the development of these oral skills. By integrating classroom instruction with technology-based activities, students can extend their learning beyond school hours and engage in continuous practice at their own pace. Digital tools, including common mobile applications, videos, and audio-based resources, offer interactive environments that motivate learners and reinforce classroom content. This hybrid model promotes learner autonomy, enhances confidence in speaking, and



provides multiple opportunities for feedback, making it a powerful approach to strengthen oral communication in English (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Wang, Han, & Yang, 2021).

Methodology

To carry out this research, several complementary methods were applied in order to collect, analyze, and interpret data systematically.

Inductive Method: The inductive approach allowed the researcher to acquire information directly from the educational context and to analyze specific problems detected among students. Through this method, patterns were identified and relevant data were collected, providing a basis for formulating hypotheses and designing the appropriate methodological strategy. Inductive reasoning is frequently used in educational research because it moves from specific observations to broader generalizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Deductive Method: The deductive method was used to guide the research process through clearly defined questions based on existing theories. This approach facilitated the validation or rejection of hypotheses and allowed the researcher to examine whether theoretical principles could serve as a solution to the identified problem. Deductive reasoning is essential when researchers aim to test established theories against new contexts (Trochim et al., 2016).

Empirical Method: In educational research, the empirical method relies on direct evidence obtained through surveys, classroom observations, standardized tests, and interviews. In this study, the use of empirical tools ensured that data were grounded in the students' real experiences. The information collected helped to establish cause-and-effect relationships between teaching practices and student outcomes, thus supporting the development of more effective strategies to improve the oral skills of ninth-grade students. Empirical approaches are fundamental in education because they link classroom practices with measurable learning outcomes (Cohen et al., 2018).



Population, sample and sampling

The population of this study corresponds to the students of **Unidad Educativa Pilahuin**, located in the province of Tungurahua, Ecuador. This institution serves a predominantly indigenous community, where students face social and economic challenges that frequently affect school attendance and educational continuity. At the beginning of the academic year, the institution reported an enrollment of 29 ninth-grade students. However, due to migration and economic difficulties, four students withdrew from classes, leaving a total of 25 students who regularly attend school.

For the purposes of this research, the **sample** is composed of these 25 ninth-grade students, who represent the entire population of the grade level. The decision to include all available students responds to the reduced size of the group, which makes it possible to work with the population in its entirety. This ensures greater accuracy in the analysis and avoids the risk of excluding relevant data.

The **sampling method** applied in this study is **probabilistic sampling**. This type of sampling is defined by the principle that every member of the population has an equal probability of being selected (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this case, since the entire group is included, all students have been given the same opportunity to participate, guaranteeing representativeness and minimizing bias. Probabilistic sampling is particularly suitable in small populations because it strengthens the validity of results and allows researchers to generalize findings more confidently within the studied context (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018).

This research contains three chapters, and the final section of conclusions and recommendations. Each part is structured to provide coherence and continuity to the investigation. Chapter I reviews the theoretical foundations that support the research, Chapter II presents the methodology applied in the research. It describes the research design, the population and sample, and the sampling method used, Chapter III introduces the pedagogical proposal designed to address the identified problem, and the section of Conclusions and Recommendations synthesize the findings of the study and reflects on the effectiveness of the proposed strategy.



Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

Research Background

Educational Change and the Evolution of Pedagogical Paradigms

Over the past two decades, the educational landscape has undergone transformative changes driven by technological advances, globalization, and shifting societal needs. The rapid integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) has reshaped the way knowledge is created, accessed, and disseminated. Traditional teacher-centered models, once dominant, are increasingly replaced by learner-centered approaches that emphasize active participation, collaboration, and critical thinking (Zhang et al., 2021). In this context, educators are challenged to adapt their methods to foster the skills required in the 21st century, such as problem-solving, creativity, and digital literacy. Research indicates that institutions adopting innovative pedagogical strategies, including the use of digital tools, tend to produce learners with enhanced autonomy and adaptability (Ghani & Taylor, 2021); Muxtorjonovna, 2020).

Emergence and Rationale of the Blended Learning Approach

Blended learning, often defined as the intentional integration of face-to-face and online instructional methods, has emerged as a leading model in contemporary education. This approach leverages the strengths of both traditional classroom interaction and digital flexibility, enabling a more personalized and engaging learning experience (Halverson & Graham, 2019). The rationale behind blended learning lies in its ability to address diverse learner needs, promote active engagement, and optimize learning resources. Recent studies highlight that blended learning environments encourage higher-order thinking and problem-solving by combining synchronous and asynchronous activities (Rahmani & Khalifesoltani, 2019); (Jaswal & Behera, 2024)). Institutions worldwide have increasingly adopted this approach, recognizing its potential to enhance both academic outcomes and learner satisfaction (Alyoussef & Omer, 2023).

The dizzying advance of science and technology forces education to take precautions and there are changes in educational paradigms and approaches. The traditional is left aside and gives



way to innovations at all moments of the process and in all the actors involved in it. The educational paradigm must respond to the realities of society, since schools are responsible for preparing individuals to function within it. As Erdoğan Coşkun (2022) note, contemporary educational approaches emphasize the importance of guiding learners in the assimilation and critical analysis of the vast amount of information available today. In this context, teachers are called to create spaces for self-training and collaborative study, while modernizing their techniques, resources, and methodologies to improve performance. Likewise, students and their families must be open to these innovations and actively participate in the new modalities of learning, with the goal of achieving meaningful and comprehensive educational outcomes.

In this context, the blended learning approach appears as an educational resource that combines the use of digital tools and resources with face-to-face learning. Students and teachers share experiences and knowledge, both in the classroom and through virtual communication, accessing a variety of mechanisms in virtuality and with the use of the Internet. Undoubtedly, the implementation of innovations requires additional and essential external elements such as devices and internet access, aspects that certain institutions and sectors lack and that must be foreseen before the application of new methodologies based on approaches such as blended learning. The growing interest in blended learning has led to more researchers studying it to understand how well it works in different types of schools. Blended learning has become popular because it combines the good parts of classroom learning with the flexibility of online learning and as Ghani and Taylor (2021) state this makes students more interested and involved in their learning, both in class and when they're not in class.

At the same time, according to Halverson and Graham (2019) the constant progress of educational technology has brought in a new age of lively and engaging learning spaces, shaking up the old ways teachers used to teach and encouraging new ideas and ways of teaching. Blended learning, which mixes traditional teaching with digital learning tools, is leading this change, providing a complete and flexible approach that helps students learn better and appreciate learning throughout their lives.



Furthermore, using web-assisted modeling in science education shows how blended learning can help students think better and solve problems by clearing up misunderstandings. With a mix of different models like analogies and simulations online, teachers can make learning more engaging and practical. This does not just explain hard science ideas but also helps students understand and value how science works and how to think like a scientist (Aldrich, 2009).

Blended Learning and Language Skills Development

In the field of language education, blended learning has been widely explored for its effectiveness in developing core skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. By combining online platforms, interactive multimedia resources, and classroom-based instruction, blended learning offers multiple modalities for practice and feedback (Banditvilai, 2016). This multimodal approach has been shown to improve student motivation, foster independent learning habits, and provide exposure to authentic language use. Studies in English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts reveal that learners benefit from the flexibility of online modules while still engaging in meaningful face-to-face interactions that develop communicative competence (Xin & Zhongbao, 2021). Furthermore, blended learning allows for targeted instruction in specific language skills, making it an adaptable framework for diverse educational settings (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

The idea of blended learning has developed over recent decades, originating in the late 20th century but becoming more prominent in the early 21st century. It entails merging conventional in-person teaching techniques with modern technological methods for learning. This approach has gained significant traction in contemporary higher education settings.

Numerous studies have shown how effective blended learning can be in helping language learners improve their skills. Instead of just using face-to-face teaching or only online methods, blended learning has proven to be great for developing speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities. For example, Xin and Zhongbao (2021) led a study which focused on integrating information technology and education through blended learning, combining online and offline methods. Specifically, it examined the effectiveness of this approach in teaching oral English to first-year senior high school students. Through a one-semester teaching experiment, the



study compares the oral English proficiency of students in an experimental class, which utilizes blended learning, with that of students in a controlled class. The findings suggest that blended learning leads to significant improvements in students' oral English proficiency, particularly in areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and fluency, while grammatical structure sees less significant improvement.

Research in ESL and EFL teaching shows that blended learning is a great way to help students improve their language skills. Mixing traditional and online teaching methods opens up new ways for students to learn reading, writing, speaking, and vocabulary, giving language teachers valuable tools to make learning even better.

Speaking confidently in English is a common aspiration for many ESL learners, but they often face anxiety and discomfort due to fear of making mistakes. However, regular practice and exposure to spoken English can help overcome these challenges, allowing learners to gain confidence in their speaking abilities over time (Putri & Sari, 2021).

According to Behjat et al. (2012) reading is another critical skill in language acquisition, and ESL learners can improve their reading skills by regularly reading English newspapers and other materials. Blended learning environments often provide access to online resources, including newspapers and articles, which can supplement traditional classroom instruction and enhance reading comprehension. In blended learning instruction, students have access to the internet and laptops, enabling them to engage in both online learning activities and face-to-face communication with instructors in the classroom. This combination of digital tools and direct interaction with teachers facilitates a dynamic learning experience that caters to the diverse needs of ESL learners.

The Gap in Ninth-Grade Oral Skills Acquisition

Despite advancements in language teaching methodologies, many ninth-grade students continue to struggle with oral communication skills in English. Oral proficiency—encompassing pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary usage, and coherence—is essential for academic success and global communication (Majumder, 2024); (Sánchez-Narváez &



Chavarro-Vargas, 2017). However, traditional instruction often limits speaking practice to structured classroom activities, offering insufficient opportunities for authentic, spontaneous communication. This gap is further exacerbated by learners' anxiety, lack of confidence, and limited exposure to real-life conversational contexts (Czepula et al., 2018). The integration of blended learning in this context offers a promising avenue to bridge the gap, as it can provide flexible, interactive, and personalized speaking opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. Recent findings from ESL/EFL settings confirm that combining digital tools with guided face-to-face interaction can significantly enhance oral skills acquisition (Haryanti et al., 2023); (Leidl et al., 2020)). This connection between the identified gap and the potential of blended learning forms the basis for the present study's focus on ninth-grade students' oral skills development.

Speaking refers to your ability to communicate and speak fluently in English. Some reasons why speaking is important include:

Effective communication: Speaking allows you to communicate with native and international speakers effectively, which is essential in today's globalized world. Overcoming the language barrier: Speaking English with confidence will help you overcome the language barrier in your cross-cultural travels and experiences; It must be taken into account that learning to express oneself fluently in a language requires a prior understanding of it, acquiring a sufficient vocabulary and understanding both when reading, listening and writing (Sari & Oktaviani, 2021).

As Sánchez-Narváez and Chavarro-Vargas (2017) stated, in academic settings, students with strong oral communication skills can actively participate in class discussions, deliver presentations, and engage in group projects with confidence. Proficient verbal communication is also crucial for success in the college. If we refer to learning English, emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of the ability to express oneself, as a result of the assimilation of other skills, being that moving towards mastery of English as a second language requires adequate guidance and permanent reinforcement that is possible with the use of blended learning



Pronunciation involves correct diction, a wide vocabulary and the teaching guide that provides security when assimilating the skills of a new language. Pronunciation refers to the correct articulation of sounds and words in English, ensuring that the speaker's speech is easily understood by others. Fluency entails the smooth and natural flow of speech, without hesitations or interruptions, allowing the speaker to convey ideas coherently. Vocabulary usage involves the selection and appropriate use of words to express thoughts and convey meaning accurately. Grammar plays a crucial role in ensuring the correctness and clarity of the speaker's language, including the use of proper sentence structure, tense, and syntax. Coherence refers to the logical organization of ideas and information in speech, making it easier for listeners to follow and understand the speaker's message (Handayani et al., 2019).

In the classroom, teachers and students must make use of a variety of strategies to learn and strengthen the ability to express English; It is useful to turn to blended learning to move from traditionalism to the use of innovative methodologies (Czepula et al., 2018). These opportunities provide valuable practice in real-life communication situations and help individuals develop confidence in speaking English. Additionally, practicing pronunciation through exercises such as tongue twisters, shadowing, and mimicking native speakers can improve pronunciation accuracy and fluency.

As Halverson and Graham (2019) mention, using technology resources such as language learning apps, online courses, and speech recognition tools can also be beneficial for improving English oral skills. These resources offer interactive exercises, multimedia content, and personalized feedback that cater to individual learning needs and preferences. Additionally, participating in role-playing scenarios, debates, and discussions provides opportunities to practice English oral skills in simulated real-life situations, enhancing fluency, confidence, and communicative competence.

From the author perspective, Halverson and Graham's (2019) statement is well-founded because it aligns with both current research trends and practical classroom experiences. Technology-based resources like language learning apps, online courses, and speech recognition tools can provide immediate, individualized feedback—something that's difficult



to achieve consistently in traditional classrooms with large groups. They also allow learners to practice at their own pace, which is essential for building confidence, especially in speaking.

Technology-based tools can significantly enhance English oral skills by providing individualized, flexible, and feedback-rich practice. Nonetheless, their impact is maximized when complemented with interactive face-to-face strategies, ensuring that learners develop both linguistic accuracy and the spontaneous communicative competence required in real-life contexts. The real-world interaction element is irreplaceable for developing communicative competence, as it forces learners to manage spontaneous language use, adapt to different interlocutors, and interpret non-verbal cues. The author of this research stresses that technology should complement—not replace—human interaction. The optimal approach is a blended model where digital tools support structured, interactive classroom activities, maximizing both skill acquisition and learner engagement.

Independent Variable – Blended Learning Approach

Blended learning combines face-to-face and online instruction to create a flexible and personalized learning environment (Graham et al., 2014); Halverson & Graham, 2019). It is supported by theories such as constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), connectivism (Siemens, 2005), and cognitive load theory (Sweller et al., 2019) that models include rotation station, lab, flipped classroom, flex, enriched virtual, and self-blend, each suited to different educational needs (Horn & Staker, 2015; Rahmani & Khalifesoltani, 2019).

In language learning, blended models integrate authentic materials, multimedia tools, and real-time communication to enhance skill development (Xin & Zhongbao, 2021). Advantages include greater flexibility, learner autonomy, and resource optimization (Sari et al., 2021). Challenges involve digital inequities, increased teacher workload, and the need for strong self-regulation skills (Wittmann & Oliver, 2021).

Definition and Conceptual Foundations

Blended learning is defined as the purposeful integration of traditional face-to-face instruction with online and digital learning components to create a unified, flexible, and learner-centered



educational experience (Halverson & Graham, 2019). This approach capitalizes on the strengths of both modalities: the interpersonal interaction and immediacy of classroom learning, and the adaptability, scalability, and resource diversity of digital platforms. Over the past two decades, the expansion of information and communication technologies (ICT) has propelled blended learning from a niche experiment to a mainstream pedagogical approach endorsed by organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD. In Ecuador, its adoption aligns with national educational policies aimed at strengthening digital competencies and providing equitable access to quality education across both urban and rural contexts (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2022).

Theoretical Underpinnings of Blended Learning

The effectiveness of blended learning is grounded in several educational theories. Constructivism emphasizes the active construction of knowledge through learner interaction with content, peers, and instructors (Vygotsky, 1978); (Bruner, 1996). The author of this thesis considers that this principle transforms the teacher's role from a sole source of knowledge to a facilitator of learning experiences. In the Ecuadorian secondary school context, this shift is vital because it encourages students to take ownership of their learning, especially in oral communication tasks, where active participation is key.

Connectivism highlights the role of digital networks in accessing, filtering, and applying information in the modern learning landscape (Siemens, 2005). The opinion of the author of this research is that, connectivism highlights the importance of teaching students how to learn, not just what to learn. In the context of oral skills, it means equipping students with the ability to find, evaluate, and use authentic language resources from global networks.

Self-Determination Theory focuses on the role of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in motivating students within blended environments (Ryan & Deci, 2020). From the author perspective, this theory reminds educators that students speak more and learn faster when they feel autonomous, competent, and connected. Designing blended tasks that build confidence in speaking is essential to keep motivation at a high level.



Cognitive Load Theory addresses how instructional design can manage the cognitive demands placed on learners, ensuring that information is presented in a way that maximizes understanding and retention (Sweller et al., 2019). These frameworks collectively inform best practices for designing blended learning environments. This is especially relevant in blended learning because digital environments can overwhelm students with too much information. Careful sequencing and chunking of speaking activities helps prevent overload and ensures steady skill development.

Models of Blended Learning

Blended learning can be implemented through various models, each adapted to specific educational needs, learning objectives, and institutional contexts. The choice of model often depends on factors such as available technological infrastructure, teacher expertise, student readiness for autonomous learning, and the specific skills or competencies targeted in the curriculum. These models range from highly structured approaches, where online and face-to-face components are carefully scheduled, to more flexible formats that allow students to control the pace, time, and place of their learning. In the context of language education, especially in ESL/EFL classrooms, selecting an appropriate model is crucial to ensure that the design fosters meaningful communication opportunities and maximizes student engagement.

Among the most widely recognized models are the **Rotation Model**, where students alternate between classroom instruction and online practice; the **Flex Model**, which prioritizes online learning with teacher support provided as needed; the **Enriched Virtual Model**, which integrates occasional in-person sessions with predominantly online instruction; and the **Flipped Classroom**, which shifts lecture-style content to online platforms and reserves class time for interactive, communicative activities. Each of these models presents unique advantages for language teaching, particularly in strengthening oral skills: rotation provides consistent practice, flex offers autonomy, enriched virtual ensures accessibility, and flipped classroom maximizes opportunities for real communication. The careful adaptation of these models to local contexts, such as rural schools or multilingual classrooms, ensures that blended learning not only supplements traditional instruction but also transforms it into a more student-



centered, participatory, and effective process (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Graham, 2019; Horn & Staker, 2015).

TABLE 1

Comparative Overview of Common Models reviewed for Blended Learning

Model	Description	Strengths	Limitations
Rotation Model	Students rotate between learning modalities (e.g., station, lab, flipped classroom) on a set schedule.	Structured variety; adaptable to many subjects.	Requires infrastructure and scheduling coordination.
Flex Model	Online learning is the primary mode, with face-to-face support as needed.	High flexibility; individualized pacing.	High self-motivation required; risk of isolation.
Enriched Virtual Model	Primarily online learning supplemented by mandatory in-person sessions.	Reduced classroom time; supports independent learning.	Limited face-to-face interaction.
Self-Blend Model	Students take online courses to supplement their traditional schooling.	Customization; access to diverse courses.	Relies on student initiative and discipline.

Note. This table provides a comparative overview of common models, highlighting their core characteristics, advantages, and limitations, thereby serving as a guide for educators and policymakers seeking to adopt or adapt blended learning strategies effectively.

Source: Own elaboration

Pedagogical Applications in Different Contexts

Blended learning has been successfully applied in higher education, vocational training, and K-12 settings. In ESL/EFL contexts, it facilitates the integration of skills through multimedia resources, authentic materials, and interactive tools that promote real-time communication and collaboration (Xin & Zhongbao, 2021). In Latin America, regional programs supported by the Inter-American Development Bank and UNESCO have promoted digital inclusion and the integration of competency-based approaches in national curricula.

Ecuadorian Context

In Ecuador, the Ministry of Education has prioritized ICT integration through initiatives such as the National Plan for Digital Education, aiming to enhance teaching quality and learning outcomes (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2023). Despite progress, disparities persist between urban and rural schools. Table 2 compares Ecuador's ICT and internet access indicators with regional averages, highlighting challenges and opportunities for blended learning adoption.

TABLE 2

Statistics that Compare Ecuador's ICT and Internet Access Indicators with Regional Averages according to UNESCO, INEC, IDB, and EF EPI

Indicator	Ecuador	Latin America Avg.	Source
Schools with internet access	78.2%	82%	UNESCO, 2023
Households with internet access (urban)	62%	-	INEC, 2022
Households with internet access (rural)	35%	-	INEC, 2022
Secondary schools with computer access	82.5%	85%	IDB, 2023
English proficiency (EF EPI ranking)	90/113	-	EF EPI, 2023

Note. Source: Own elaboration



Advantages of Blended Learning

Advantages include increased flexibility, personalized learning, and expanded access to resources (Henríquez & Hilliger, 2024). Blended learning supports active engagement, allows differentiated instruction, and can be especially valuable in rural Ecuador, where it can extend opportunities beyond limited classroom hours. As Xin and Zhongbao (2021) have shown, learning speaking skills through blended learning presents several advantages perceived by students and professionals. Firstly, it enhances confidence in speaking by creating a less intimidating environment for practice, reducing face-to-face pressure, and encouraging participants to overcome the fear of speaking and self-consciousness. Secondly, blended learning promotes independence by granting access to various online resources, empowering students to seek answers autonomously—many learners report using online pronunciation tools and interactive exercises to refine their skills. Thirdly, the flexibility of blended learning enables students to tailor their learning schedules to suit their daily routines, extending learning periods and facilitating repeated practice, ultimately leading to enhanced speaking proficiency.

Additionally, blended learning increases exposure to authentic language input through videos, podcasts, and interactive simulations, which helps students acquire accurate pronunciation models and cultural context for language use (Graham et al., 2014). The integration of learning analytics also allows teachers to monitor student performance in real time, identify gaps, and provide timely, personalized feedback, which is essential for improving oral communication skills (Halverson & Graham, 2019). This approach also encourages collaborative learning by combining in-person group activities with online forums or discussion boards, enabling students to exchange ideas beyond the constraints of classroom time (Palloff & Pratt, 2005). Furthermore, blended learning supports inclusive education, as it offers multiple means of content delivery—text, audio, video, and interactive exercises—accommodating diverse learning styles and needs. This multimodal approach ensures that students with varying levels of proficiency and learning preferences can engage meaningfully with the material.



Challenges and Limitations

Challenges include the digital divide, teacher training gaps, and students' self-regulation skills (Wittmann & Olivier, 2021). In Ecuador, rural infrastructure limitations, such as unreliable internet connectivity, limited availability of digital devices, and insufficient technical support, remain significant barriers to blended learning implementation. These constraints are compounded by disparities in teacher preparation—while some educators are proficient in integrating technology into their pedagogy, others lack formal training in digital tools and online instructional design. This uneven capacity among teachers can lead to inconsistent learning experiences for students.

Moreover, the success of blended learning heavily depends on students' ability to manage their time, stay motivated, and take responsibility for their learning outside the classroom. For many adolescents, especially those in environments without strong parental or institutional support, this level of autonomy can be difficult to sustain. Cultural factors may also play a role, as some educational communities in Ecuador still hold strong preferences for traditional, face-to-face instruction, which can slow the acceptance and full integration of blended learning models.

The author's perspective is that, while these challenges are significant, they are not insurmountable. With targeted investment in infrastructure, comprehensive teacher training programs, and the gradual introduction of self-regulated learning strategies into the curriculum, these obstacles can be addressed. The key lies in adopting a phased approach—starting with hybrid models that use minimal technological requirements and progressively increasing complexity as resources and competencies grow.

Dependent Variable – English Oral Skills in Ninth Grade Students

Definition and Importance of Oral Skills

Oral skills refer to the capacity to communicate effectively through spoken language, encompassing pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence (Handayani et al., 2019). These abilities are essential for expressing ideas clearly, engaging in discussions, and participating actively in academic, professional, and social contexts. In the field of English as



a Foreign Language (EFL), oral skills represent a critical dimension of communicative competence and are often considered a primary indicator of language mastery. For ninth-grade students, strong oral communication skills are essential to meet curriculum goals, prepare for higher education, and interact in a globalized society (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).

Components of Oral Skills

The development of oral skills involves several interrelated components that collectively determine the effectiveness of spoken communication. Pronunciation pertains to the accurate articulation of individual sounds (phonemes), appropriate stress patterns within words, and correct intonation contours across sentences. Clear pronunciation ensures that speech is comprehensible to listeners and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings. In language learning, accurate pronunciation also contributes to building the speaker's confidence, as learners are more willing to participate in conversations when they know they can be understood. This is particularly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, where exposure to native pronunciation models may be limited, making intentional instruction and practice essential.

Fluency refers to the smooth, uninterrupted flow of language, characterized by an appropriate speed of delivery, minimal hesitations, and natural rhythm. Fluency is not solely about speaking quickly but about maintaining a consistent and coherent pace that facilitates understanding. Pauses, when used, should be purposeful—either to emphasize a point or allow the listener to process information—rather than resulting from uncertainty or lack of vocabulary. Developing fluency often requires repeated practice, interaction in authentic communication contexts, and activities that reduce performance anxiety.

Vocabulary usage focuses on selecting words and expressions that are appropriate to the communicative context. A broad and varied vocabulary allows speakers to express ideas precisely, avoid repetition, and adapt their language to different audiences and situations. In oral communication, vocabulary choice can influence the clarity and richness of the message. For example, using domain-specific terminology in academic settings demonstrates subject knowledge, while employing everyday expressions may be more suitable for casual



interactions. In EFL classrooms, targeted vocabulary instruction linked to communicative tasks is essential to ensure that students can retrieve and use relevant words spontaneously during conversation.

Grammar ensures syntactic accuracy and logical structure in speech. While minor grammatical errors are common in spontaneous conversation, consistent inaccuracies can hinder comprehension and affect the credibility of the speaker. Grammar in oral communication is not only about correctness but also about appropriateness—choosing verb tenses, sentence structures, and word order that match the communicative purpose. In spoken discourse, grammar often interacts with intonation and stress to convey meaning, such as distinguishing between a statement and a question.

Coherence involves the logical organization and sequencing of ideas to facilitate comprehension. A coherent message has a clear beginning, development, and conclusion, with smooth transitions between points. Coherence is achieved through the use of discourse markers (e.g., “however,” “on the other hand,” “in addition”), repetition for emphasis, and logical progression of arguments or narratives. In oral interaction, coherence also depends on the speaker’s ability to connect their contributions to what has been said previously, maintaining thematic relevance in a dialogue.

Lastly, non-verbal communication—including gestures, facial expressions, posture, and body language—plays a significant role in reinforcing spoken messages (Mamatkulova, 2025); (Jawaher Al-Rowayeh, 2022a). Non-verbal cues can clarify meaning, signal engagement, and regulate conversational flow. For instance, nodding can indicate understanding or agreement, while hand gestures can illustrate the size or shape of an object being described. In cross-cultural communication, non-verbal behaviors may carry different meanings, making cultural awareness an important aspect of oral skill development. In the EFL classroom, incorporating non-verbal elements into speaking activities can help students convey meaning more effectively and interpret the signals of others.



Oral Skills in ESL/EFL Contexts

In English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, the development of oral skills is a multifaceted process that requires a balance of input, interaction, and output-oriented tasks. Input provides learners with exposure to vocabulary, grammatical structures, and pronunciation patterns through listening and reading. Interaction, on the other hand, involves active exchanges between speakers that foster negotiation of meaning, clarification, and feedback. Output-oriented tasks, such as speaking and writing, allow learners to produce language, test their hypotheses about its use, and consolidate their knowledge through practice and application.

For ninth-grade students in non-English-speaking environments, opportunities for authentic communication are often limited, with classroom instruction serving as the primary source of English exposure. Outside the classroom, the absence of an English-speaking environment restricts practice opportunities, particularly in rural or under-resourced areas where access to supplementary programs or international exchanges is scarce. These limitations slow the natural development of oral proficiency and reduce learners' confidence in using the language in real contexts.

Traditional pedagogical approaches further compound these challenges by prioritizing grammar-focused instruction over communicative competence. While grammatical accuracy remains important, excessive emphasis on form often discourages spontaneous speaking and inhibits fluency. In many classrooms, speaking tasks are limited to controlled drills rather than open-ended communication. Furthermore, the lack of interaction with native or proficient speakers deprives learners of authentic models for pronunciation, intonation, and idiomatic usage, all of which are essential for developing natural, effective oral communication.

Communicative and interactive pedagogical approaches, supported by technology, offer effective alternatives to overcome these challenges. Role-plays, debates, and project-based learning foster authentic language use, critical thinking, and fluency (Saichaie, 2020). Likewise, technology tools—such as language learning applications, video conferencing platforms, and online forums—expand opportunities for practice, provide interactive feedback, and simulate



authentic communication with global speakers (Halverson & Graham, 2019). Importantly, integrating these methods within a blended learning framework ensures that technology complements face-to-face interaction, maximizing exposure to authentic language while supporting guided and autonomous practice. For ninth-grade students in Ecuador and similar contexts, such integration directly addresses the gaps left by traditional methodologies and limited exposure, fostering gradual yet sustainable development of communicative competence.

Challenges in Oral Skills Development

The development of oral skills among ninth-grade EFL learners is often hindered by a range of linguistic, pedagogical, and contextual barriers. A major obstacle is **language anxiety**, which discourages participation and limits fluency due to fear of mistakes or negative evaluation (Czepula et al., 2018). Learners also face **limited exposure to authentic communication**, particularly in rural or under-resourced contexts, reducing opportunities to practice real-time interaction and natural language use. Additionally, **teacher-centered methodologies** that emphasize reading and writing over speaking further restrict oral practice and communicative competence (Sánchez-Narváez & Chavarro-Vargas, 2017).

Other challenges include the **lack of timely feedback**, which prevents students from correcting persistent errors, and **socioeconomic and technological barriers**, such as poor internet access and limited resources in rural Ecuador. These factors confine learners to minimal classroom exposure and restrict self-directed learning opportunities. From this perspective, overcoming these barriers requires pedagogical reform, teacher training in interactive approaches, improved access to technology, and classroom strategies that reduce anxiety and encourage communicative participation. Together, these measures can create more supportive and effective conditions for oral skill development.

Pedagogical Strategies for Oral Skills Enhancement

To overcome these challenges, educators employ a variety of pedagogical strategies. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) prioritizes meaningful interaction to develop fluency and functional language use (Mujammilatul, 2025). Task-Based Learning (TBL) engages students in authentic tasks that require them to use specific language structures (Sholeh



et al., 2020). Content-Based Instruction (CBI) integrates language learning with academic content, allowing students to simultaneously develop linguistic and subject-specific knowledge (M. Wang, 2025). Blended learning models further enhance these strategies by providing extended practice opportunities, enabling differentiated instruction, and giving access to diverse multimedia resources that support oral skill development.

Assessment of Oral Skills

Assessing oral skills requires a multidimensional approach that captures various aspects of spoken communication. Pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence can be evaluated through presentations, interviews, and structured dialogues (Lazaraton, 2002). Rubrics are essential for providing objective, transparent criteria. Self-assessment and peer evaluation encourage learner autonomy and reflective practice. The integration of technology, such as speech recognition software, can provide immediate feedback and track longitudinal progress (Gràcia et al., 2021).

Ecuadorian Context

In Ecuador, the implementation of blended learning is consistent with national educational policies that aim to strengthen digital competencies and guarantee equitable access to quality education across both urban and rural contexts. The **National Educational Model** emphasizes flexibility and the contextualization of the education system (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2023a). Similarly, the **2022 Accountability Report**, published in 2023, highlights significant progress in terms of connectivity, internet access, and the provision of digital resources in schools (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2023b). In addition, the **Competency-Based Curriculum Framework** establishes key competencies—among them digital competencies—as priority areas of the national curriculum (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2023c).

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education emphasizes communicative competence as a core goal in the national English curriculum for secondary education. Oral skills are a central focus, with explicit objectives to develop students' ability to express themselves fluently and accurately in spoken English (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2022). Despite these aims, Ecuador's global ranking in the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) remains low, reflecting persistent



gaps in language instruction. Table 1 compares Ecuador's EF EPI score with selected Latin American countries, illustrating its relative position in the region.

TABLE 3

Proficiency Level in Countries in Latinamerica

Country	EF EPI Score	Proficiency Level	Global Rank
Argentina	562	High	30
Costa Rica	540	High	38
Chile	523	Moderate	45
Peru	512	Moderate	52
Ecuador	496	Low	90
Brazil	491	Low	95

Note. **Source: Own elaboration**

Nature and components of Oral Skills

Oral skills are a fundamental aspect of human communication, enabling individuals to convey ideas, thoughts, and emotions through spoken language. They serve as a primary means of sharing information, building relationships, and fostering collaboration. In educational contexts, once students consolidate their ability to express themselves in English, it becomes essential to organize participatory activities such as oral presentations, conversations, debates, and forums that allow progress to be demonstrated and corrective measures applied (Dakhmouche, 2018). Effective oral communication not only relies on pronunciation and articulation but also incorporates non-verbal cues such as tone, body language, and facial expressions, which enhance clarity and meaning. Strong oral communication is equally important in social and professional settings, where it contributes to empathy, teamwork, persuasion, and leadership (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).



The nature of oral skills also involves interrelated components including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence, all of which contribute to clarity and communicative effectiveness (Cetinkaya, 2017). Teachers play a key role in reinforcing these abilities by incorporating both individual and cooperative activities, supported through blended learning approaches that combine face-to-face and virtual tools. Playful academic challenges and interactive tasks, together with family support or complementary courses, further strengthen oral proficiency (Jawaher Al-Rowayeh, 2022b). Additionally, the integration of technological tools such as speech recognition software, language learning apps, and online platforms can provide students with personalized guidance and extended opportunities to practice. Cultivating these components highlights the central role of oral skills in fostering effective interpersonal interactions and preparing learners for meaningful participation in academic, professional, and social contexts.

Teaching Oral Skills

Teaching oral skills is a vital component of language instruction, as it enables students to develop effective communication for academic, social, and professional contexts. Oral communication also strengthens critical thinking, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills, making it essential for lifelong learning (Saichaie, 2020). Strategies such as role-plays, debates, and presentations create authentic opportunities for practice and peer feedback, while pronunciation drills, contextualized vocabulary use, scaffolded speaking tasks, and authentic materials—like podcasts and current events discussions—further enhance students' oral proficiency and engagement (Salamea-Avila & Fajardo-Dack, 2023).

Assessing oral skills requires attention to multiple dimensions, including pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence (Patri, 2002). To capture these areas, educators employ methods such as oral exams, presentations, performance rubrics, self-assessments, and peer evaluations (Xin & Zhongbao, 2021). Constructive and formative feedback is crucial to help students recognize strengths, address weaknesses, and set realistic goals (Tomlinson, Brian & Whittaker, 2013). By integrating diverse instructional and assessment approaches, educators can guide students toward improved accuracy, fluency, and confidence, preparing



them to succeed as competent communicators in an increasingly interconnected world (Leidl et al., 2020).

Pedagogical Approaches to Oral Skills Instruction

Pedagogical approaches to oral skills instruction are essential for developing communicative competence and language proficiency. *Communicative Language Teaching* (CLT) emphasizes meaningful interaction, using activities such as role-plays, information gap tasks, and collaborative projects to simulate real-life communication and strengthen speaking alongside other language skills. *Task-Based Learning* (TBL) also prioritizes authentic communication by engaging students in problem-solving, decision-making, and role-play activities that require language use to achieve specific goals. This approach fosters oral proficiency, critical thinking, and learner autonomy while promoting active language production (Khabiri & Lavasani, 2012).

Similarly, *Content-Based Instruction* (CBI) integrates language learning with academic subjects, enabling learners to acquire oral skills while engaging with meaningful content through debates, presentations, and discussions. More recently, blended approaches that incorporate technology—such as video conferencing, language apps, and virtual simulations—have expanded opportunities for practice, personalized feedback, and learner engagement in interactive environments (Jawaher Al-Rowayeh, 2022). Together, these approaches provide diverse pathways for fostering oral communication skills, making instruction more relevant, dynamic, and effective across varied educational contexts.

Relevance to the Present Study

This study focuses on the development of ninth-grade students' oral skills, addressing a pressing need in Ecuador's education system. National and international assessments, such as the EF English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2023), consistently place Ecuador in the lower proficiency tiers, revealing persistent gaps in communicative competence despite curriculum reforms. Oral skills are particularly critical, as they directly influence students' ability to succeed academically, engage meaningfully in interactions, and participate in the global labor market. By implementing a blended learning approach, this research aims to bridge these gaps



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by combining the structure and feedback of face-to-face instruction with the flexibility and extended practice opportunities provided by digital tools.



Chapter 2 Methodological Framework

Conceptualization and Operationalization of the Main Categories

This study examines the relationship between the independent variable—implementation of a Blended Learning approach—and the dependent variable—the improvement of ninth-grade students' English-speaking skills.

Independent Variable

Conceptualization. Blended Learning is the integration of traditional face-to-face instruction with online learning experiences, allowing learners to benefit from both synchronous and asynchronous interaction (Niyomves et al., 2024).

Operationalization. Implementation of structured activities both in the classroom and online, including videos, audios, pronunciation exercises, vocabulary drills, and interactive speaking tasks.

Dependent Variable

Conceptualization. English-speaking skills refer to the ability to communicate orally in English with fluency, accuracy, and confidence, aligned with the CEFR descriptors (de l'Europe, C., 2020).

Operationalization. Measured through pre- and post-tests, observational checklists, surveys, and interviews, focusing on pronunciation, vocabulary range, fluency, and communicative confidence.

Statement and Justification of the Research Approach

This research follows a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative techniques to address the research problem comprehensively.

Justification

Quantitative methods provide measurable evidence of changes in speaking skills, enabling statistical analysis of pre- and post-test results.



Qualitative methods capture students' and teachers' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions, offering rich insights into contextual factors (Noble & Heale, 2019).

Combining both approaches facilitates data triangulation, which increases the reliability and validity of results.

Research Methods and Their Purposes

Quantitative Methods

Pre- and post-tests to measure changes in speaking skills.

Descriptive statistics and comparative analysis to determine the extent of improvement.

Qualitative Methods

Structured interviews with teachers to explore perceptions of teaching English within the studied context.

Classroom observations to identify speaking opportunities and teaching practices.

Surveys to gather students' feedback on learning experiences.

Purpose: To obtain objective measurements of progress while understanding the personal and environmental factors influencing learning outcomes.

Instruments Description

Designing correctly instruments for data collecting represents an important pillar during research work. Understanding that they allow gathering information to have a clear idea about the problem. As a primary tool, instruments serve as a guide in the research to collect and analyze data in order to improve educational processes.

The correct design and use of validated instruments can accurately assess variables improvement and in the present work the instruments were focused on improving speaking skills in 9th grade students through the implementation of Blended Learning activities. These instruments provided the quantitative and qualitative evidence necessary to infer into meaningful conclusions.



Observation guide

According to (Reiss, 1971), observation consists of examining the behavior of a subject. It allows deep immersion in social situations and an active role as well as permanent reflection. In other words, it is a technique of simply watching the phenomena until some data is gained. With this, it was possible to obtain information regarding the methodological processes and methods used during English classes with 9th grade Students and determine the speaking problems that took place in the grade. The instrument was an observation guide, a document in which problems were reflected.

Interview guide

An interview in essence is a purposeful interaction or conversation. As this definition implies, interviewers and interviewees will draw on their everyday interactional competencies to do interviewing (Brinkmann, 2023). The main objective of an interview is to get information orally about, the experiences, opinions, and ideas of different individuals to contrast them. The type of interview that will be developed is structured, as questions will be prepared beforehand. The instrument will be an interview guide, with 10 questions to know the teachers' perceptions regarding the English teaching and learning process in their environment with their conditions, and the possible challenges they face on a regular class.

Survey - Questionnaire

It is a technique that is carried out by applying a questionnaire to a sample of people. The surveys provide information from the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of students. In this research, a survey was carried out among the 9th grade students of UEP to give the researcher an idea of how the English classes is being carried out.

Pre- and Post-Test

Measures pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and communicative confidence using a CEFR-based rubric.



Validation of instruments:

Discourse analysis and triangulation were the techniques employed to analyze data. For Taylor (2013) discourse analysis consists in the interpretation of language expressions used by students during class participation, which can be in either text or speech; in the case of this analysis, surrounding influences of the evidence may also be considered. For the purpose of the research, this technique facilitated the interpretation of material and evidence collected in the classroom. Additionally, triangulation assisted in the validation of the information collected; as Noble & Heale (2019) determine, triangulation helps to keep the research from deviating from the balance, this is done by using multiple methods or observers so that the research results are as unbiased and clean as possible.

All instruments were validated through experts' consultation and the triangulation of results (Noble & Heale, 2019) and discourse analysis (Taylor, 2013).

Delimitation of population, sample, and sampling

Population

The population of Unidad Educativa Pilahuin, located in the western are of Tugurahua's Province consisted of 435 students.

Sample

For this study the ninth grade is going to be centered in the investigation project and the group's total is 25 students. According to Britannica.com Dictionary, sample is a small amount of something that gives you information about the thing it was taken from. It is necessary to clarify that small groups are typically designed to be representative samples of a larger population, allowing for in-depth analysis and efficiency.

Ethical considerations:

People involved on the research project were well informed and expressed their consent to participate in the project, being always informed about the purpose and procedures. (Arifin, 2018) explains that when participating in a research study, participants need to be adequately



informed about the research, comprehend the information and have a power of freedom of choice to allow them to decide whether to participate or decline.

Throughout this research actions, the potential participants were approached individually and researcher gave them a complete explanation of the purpose of the study. (Vicars et al., 2015) mention that another critical ethical consideration is honesty and integrity in research. In this particular study, the researcher felt truthful in data collection, analysis, and reporting. The author explained the that fabricating, falsifying, or plagiarizing data undermines the credibility of the research and the academic community as a whole.

Sampling Characteristics

The whole group accurately reflects the detected problem that is going to be treated with the research and according to the diagnostic instruments that were applied their characteristics are:

- 1) The group present an A1 English level.
- 2) The whole group is going to participate as a representative sample.
- 3) The same English contents and subjects were studied by the group.
- 4) According to the national curriculum they study English 3 hours (45min) each week.
- 5) The ages of the students are around 14 to 15 years old.
- 6) The students have received a detailed explanation about the objective of the investigation previously and the benefits that they are going to get at the end.
- 7) There is a provided legal document signed by parents agreeing with their participation in the investigation and all of them have accepted the participation understanding the conditions and the benefits of the study.

Data collection for Initial diagnosis

In the initial diagnosis, data collection was carried out using structured instruments designed to capture information about students' oral skills and perceptions of English learning. A diagnostic survey was administered to ninth-grade students, which included Likert-scale items, open-ended questions, and short speaking tasks aimed at identifying their level of confidence, frequency of practice, and perceived challenges in oral communication. This instrument provided insights into learners' self-assessment of pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary use,



as well as their attitudes toward traditional and blended learning methodologies. Complementing the survey, classroom observations were conducted using a standardized rubric that evaluated student participation, interaction patterns, and the extent to which oral activities were incorporated into lessons. These combined tools ensured that the data reflected both students' self-perceptions and their actual performance within classroom contexts.

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted with teachers, allowing researchers to explore pedagogical practices, instructional priorities, and the difficulties teachers observed in promoting oral proficiency. The triangulation of surveys, observations, and interviews not only strengthened the reliability of the data but also offered a comprehensive picture of the educational reality. Through this multi-instrument approach, researchers identified gaps such as limited opportunities for authentic oral practice, high levels of language anxiety, and reliance on grammar-focused instruction. This systematic collection and cross-validation of data provided the foundation for designing the blended learning proposal, ensuring that the intervention responded directly to the needs detected in the initial diagnosis.

Data Processing of the Diagnostic Stage

Before introducing blended learning approach in English classes, an interview was held to gather students' experiences regarding the new approach used. The author analyzed how students felt about their speaking skills before and after the intervention, the effectiveness of the online and classroom activities, and any challenges they might face along the way. The pre-test data has been analyzed, obtaining some key findings:

Qualitative

Thematic coding in Atlas.ti.

Identification of key themes: confidence, technological challenges, multimedia preferences, and collaborative learning.

Quantitative

Statistical measures (mean, standard deviation, minimum, maximum) calculated for pre-test results.

Visualization through violin plots and comparative graphs.



Analysis of Diagnostic Results

Pre – Test Findings

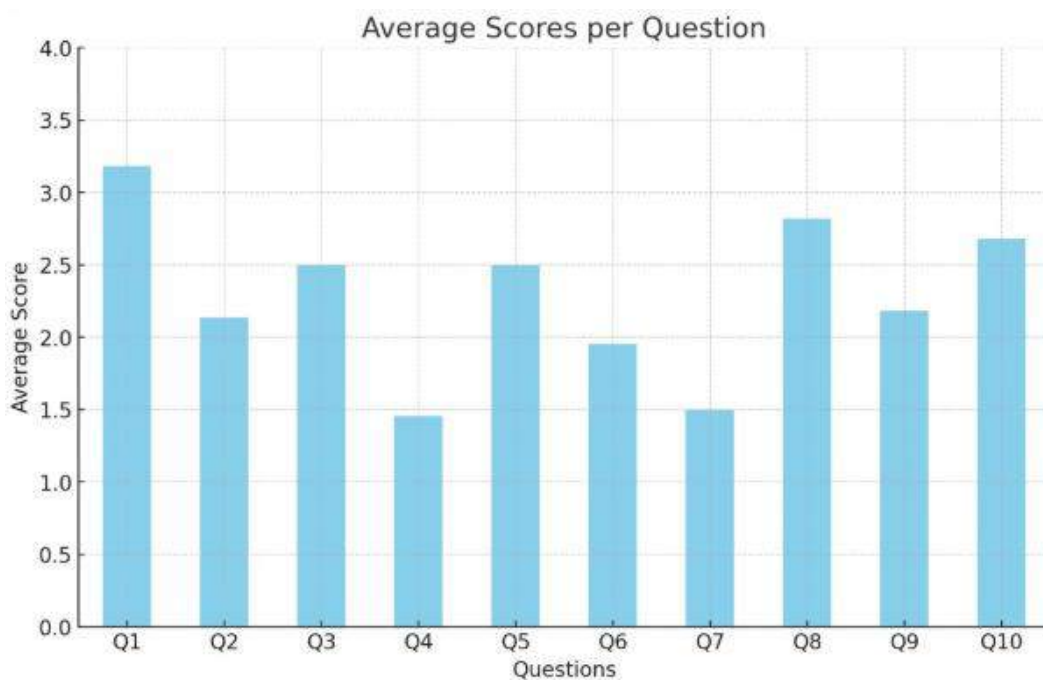
Mean pre-test score: 22.91/40.

Lowest performance: pronunciation and fluency (Q4 = 1.60; Q7 = 1.60).

Highest performance: vocabulary comprehension (Q1 = 3.24; Q8 = 2.88).

GRAPHIC 1

Average Scores per Question:



Note. This analysis provides a clear picture of where students currently stand and which areas need improvement, which will be crucial when comparing these results to the post-test outcomes after the intervention.

Insights:

- **Q4** and **Q7** have the lowest average scores, indicating that these areas might require the most attention.
- **Q1** and **Q8** have the highest average score, suggesting that students generally performed better in this area.



- The total scores vary, with most students scoring between 19.5 and 27, indicating a moderate level of proficiency overall.

Score Ranges per Question:

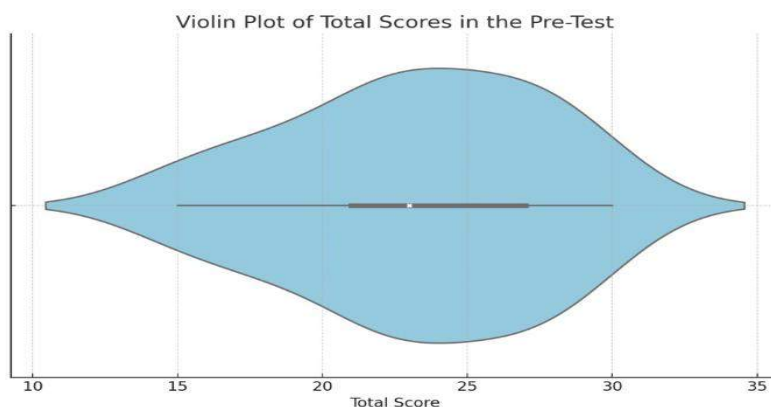
- The scores for each question range from 1 (the lowest) to 4 (the highest).

Descriptive Statistics for Total Scores:

- **Mean Total Score: 22.91**
- **Standard Deviation: 4.35**
- **Minimum Total Score: 15**
- **Maximum Total Score: 29**

GRAPHIC 2

Violin Plot of Total Scores in the Pre - Test



Note. The violin plot provides a comprehensive visual of how students performed on the pre-test. Source: Own elaboration

Analysis of the Violin Plot for the Pre-Test Scores:

Median Score: The median score is visually indicated by the position of the central line within the plot. This shows the middle value of the student's scores.



Density of Scores: The plot reveals that most students' scores are clustered around the median. Specifically, you can see a bulge in the plot around scores of approximately 24 to 26, suggesting that this was a common scoring range. There are visible density concentrations around the scores of 18, 22, and 28 as well, indicating smaller clusters of students who scored in these ranges.

Range of Scores: The overall distribution shows that students' scores range from as low as 14 to as high as 30. The plot tapers off at the lower and upper ends, indicating fewer students scoring at the extremes.

Skewness: While the plot is largely symmetric, indicating a relatively balanced distribution of scores, the distribution seems slightly skewed toward the lower end. This is seen in the longer tail at the lower end of the plot, suggesting a few students scored significantly lower than the median.

This analysis highlighted not just the central tendency and variability, but also the distribution shape, indicating where most students' scores fall and identifying potential outliers or variations in performance. This plot reveals that while a majority of students performed around the median score, there were still notable differences, with some students scoring significantly lower or higher.

The diagnostic stage revealed some strengths and weaknesses as such:

Strengths:

- ✓ High motivation to learn English.
- ✓ Basic vocabulary knowledge.
- ✓ Willingness to engage in new methodologies.

Weaknesses:

- ✓ Low confidence and anxiety when speaking English.
- ✓ Pronunciation and fluency deficits.
- ✓ Limited access to stable internet for some students.
- ✓ Overemphasis on writing-based activities in traditional instruction.
- ✓ General openness to technology-assisted learning when resources allowed.



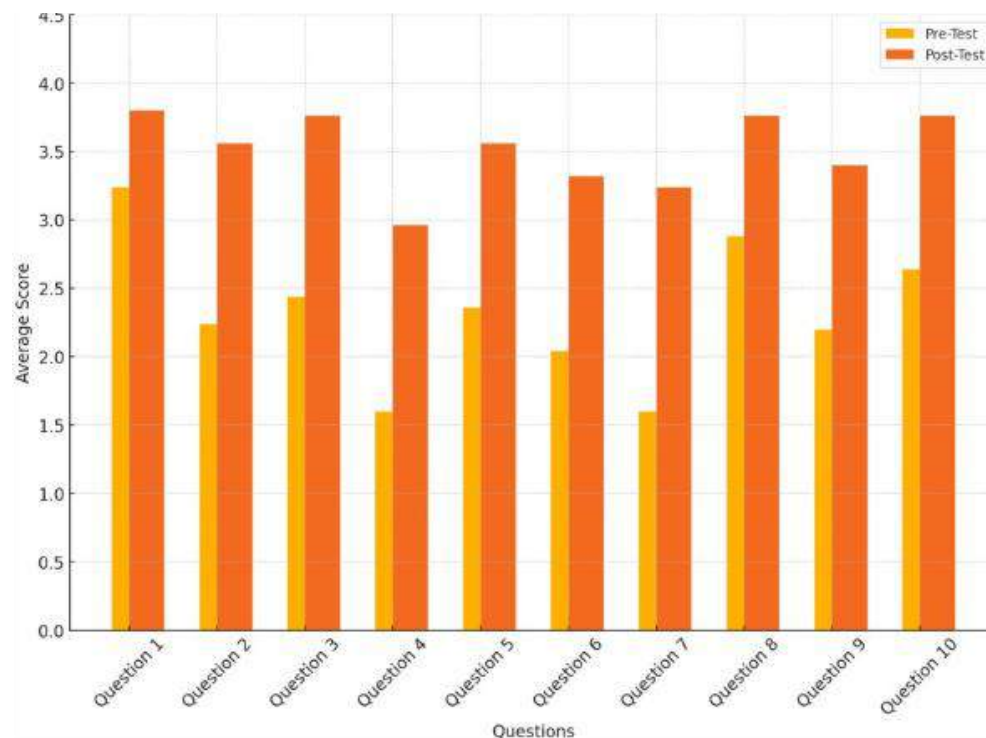
Post-Test Insights

- There was a marked improvement across all questions, with the lowest average score in the post-test being 2.96 (Question 4), which is higher than the highest score from the pre-test.
- The highest average scores were observed in Questions 1, 3, 8, and 10, each having an average score of 3.76, indicating strong performance in post-intervention.

Comparative Analysis

GRAPHIC 3

Pre-Test vs. Post-Test



Note. The comparison between the pre-test and post-test scores reveals significant improvements across all questions: . Source: Own elaboration

Mixed methods combine the numerical results from quantitative data with the human and personal context from qualitative data. As a result of this fusion a new and holistic concept for the investigator emerges. The new concept let to understand the situation in a better way taking



in count all aspects that can be influencing to the participants. It is necessary to mention that qualitative methods offer a detailed scale for results that can be summarized and interpreted while quantitative method refers to mathematical and statistical results. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018) qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other and provide researcher the opportunity to triangulate the obtained data and obtain a clearer point of view. Understanding that educational research involves critical opinions and self-creating contents by students it is necessary to apply the mixed method in the present research.

Methodological/Technological Proposal

It is important to mention that in a research that is conducted in settings where participants are non-native speakers of English some additional ethical conditions can be applied. Munhall (1988) mentioned some categories to consider regarding the use of English in different conditions like: speaking English as a second language (ESL), English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as an additional language (EAL). With those considerations in mind, the author purpose of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of using Blended Learning as an active approach for ninth grade students. The idea of improving speaking skill has to be focused on the application of innovative and interactive methodologies such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Total Physical Response (TRP), Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), Audio-Based Learning. Those methodologies could be employed in conjunction with Blended Learning activities in order to get better results with regards to student's integrity.

The intervention was a Blended Learning program combining these components:

Online Component

1. Multimedia content (videos, audios) for independent pronunciation and vocabulary practice.
2. Interactive exercises enabling repetition and self-paced learning.

Face-to-Face Component:

1. Group work, role-play, and pronunciation feedback sessions.
2. Pedagogical Approaches: Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), Total Physical Response (TPR), and Audio-Based Learning.



Evaluation and Validation of the Proposal

Evaluation

Comparative analysis of pre- and post-test results to determine skill improvement.

Validation

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data sources, ensuring coherence between statistical and thematic findings.

Blended Learning approach utilization will provide students an alternative set of activities that are going to be implemented for improving speaking skills. The stages of these processes are going to be done in regular classes and some others are going to be done online activities combining previous contents with clear directions. This is the reason why mixed method research is going to act as an effective tool. Mixed method let combining quantitative and qualitative methodologies and skipping the limitations of single-method studies. Quantitative research, with its emphasis on numerical data and statistical analysis allows researchers to quantify variables, test hypotheses, and generalize findings. Qualitative research focuses on exploring and understanding individuals or groups experiences provides riches and detailed descriptions.

The power of mixed method for integrating quantitative and qualitative data give researchers the option to triangulate data and uncover the underlying reasons for the proposed investigation. Finally, researchers can analyze and treat the investigation theme from multiple perspectives contributing to the development of evidence for improving the teaching learning process.

Generalized Analysis of Student Responses

The author proceeded to conduct a detailed and exhaustive qualitative analysis. This analysis was based on the Atlas.ti approach, providing an in-depth discussion of the insights derived from the data.

This qualitative analysis provides a clear picture of how the blended learning approach contributed to the improvement of ninth-grade students' English-speaking skills. By combining the strengths of both online tools and face-to-face interactions, students were able to overcome



previous challenges related to speaking English, particularly in areas of pronunciation, vocabulary, and confidence.

Blended Learning Experience

- **Flexibility in Studying from Home**

Many students expressed positive feelings about being able to study at home using blended learning. They highlighted that having access to online tools and learning materials outside the classroom allowed them to practice at their own pace. As one student explained: “I study at home and repeat exercises.”

Another emphasized the value of collaborative practice with peers: “I practice with my friends using WhatsApp.”

These comments demonstrate how the online component of blended learning provided a sense of autonomy and flexibility, which enhanced their overall learning experience.

In addition, students emphasized that practicing independently helped them feel more confident when speaking in class, since they had time to review and repeat activities before sharing their answers. Others valued the opportunity to use videos, audios, and mobile applications as complementary resources, which made learning more dynamic and engaging. For some, collaborative study sessions through online chats or social media also contributed to greater motivation, as they could exchange ideas and practice pronunciation with peers beyond school hours. Nevertheless, there were a few cases where the home environment created challenges, particularly due to internet access issues. One student noted: “The internet is not good in my house.”

Limited availability of devices also hindered participation in certain families where siblings had to share one phone or computer. These barriers show that while online learning offers important benefits, its effectiveness is contingent on the technological resources available. From the researcher’s perspective, this highlights the need for strategies to mitigate inequities, such as providing institutional support, ensuring access to reliable internet, and promoting blended learning designs that can adapt to diverse contexts.



GRAPHIC 4

Blended learning experience among students



Note. The bar chart represents the distribution of students' blended learning experiences.

Source: Own elaboration

Confidence in Speaking Before Blended Learning

Emerging Theme: Lack of Confidence in Traditional Classes

- **Code: Speaking Anxiety and Limited Participation**

Before the implementation of the blended learning approach, many students expressed low confidence in their ability to speak English in traditional classroom settings. Responses like "*I was nervous*" and "*I don't like to speak much*" indicate a general discomfort with speaking in front of others. Some students also mentioned that traditional classes focused heavily on writing and passive learning (e.g., "*English was studied in notebooks*") rather than oral practice. The classroom environment did not foster much interaction, and students had limited opportunities to practice their speaking skills, leading to challenges in pronunciation and fluency.



GRAPHIC 5

Confidence in Speaking before Blended learning



Note. Source: Own elaboration

Improvements through Online Activities

Emerging Theme: Online Tools Supporting Pronunciation and Vocabulary Development

- **Code: Use of Audio and Video Materials for Repetition**

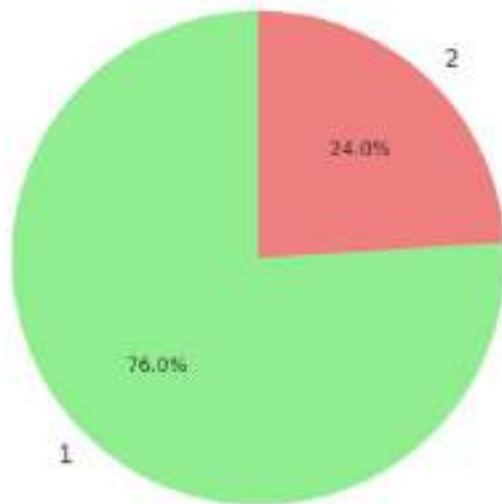
Students reported significant improvements in their pronunciation and vocabulary through the use of online tools like videos, audios, and YouTube. For example, one student mentioned, "*I can repeat audios and practice in my house,*" which reflects the benefit of repetition in online learning. Similarly, using digital platforms allowed students to self-correct their pronunciation and listen to native speakers, which is often not feasible in a time-constrained classroom setting.

In addition, several students highlighted how listening to music and watching videos contributed to their speaking abilities. This indicates that multimedia played an essential role in the blended learning process, making it more engaging and practical.



GRAPHIC 6

Improvement through online activities



Note. Source: Own elaboration

Challenges in the Traditional Classroom

Emerging Theme: Limited Speaking Practice in Class

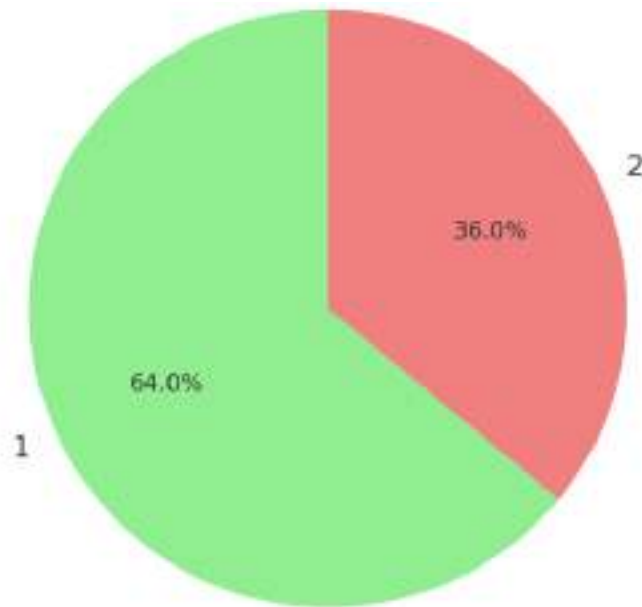
- **Code: Traditional Classroom as Writing Focused**

Before the introduction of the blended learning approach, students pointed out that classroom activities were largely paper-based or involved minimal oral practice. Several students remarked that there was little emphasis on speaking activities, with statements like "*Students only participate in writing*" or "*Speaking was not very studied.*" This aligns with the broader challenge of ensuring that traditional classrooms allow for sufficient time and opportunities to practice speaking skills.



GRAPHIC 7

Traditional classroom as writing focused



Note. Source: Own elaboration

Integration of Online and Face-to-Face Components

Emerging Theme: Face-to-Face Reinforcement of Online Learning

- **Code: Complementary Roles of Online and In-Person Learning**

Blended learning effectively combined online resources with in-person sessions to provide a more comprehensive learning experience. Many students described how in-class activities helped reinforce what they had learned online. For example, one student said, *"I study at home and repeat exercises in class,"* and another mentioned, *"The teacher corrects my pronunciation in class."* These insights show that the face-to-face sessions were crucial for clarifying doubts, receiving personalized feedback from teachers, and applying the knowledge gained through online activities.

Improvement in Speaking Skills After Blended Learning

Emerging Theme: Increased Confidence and Fluency

- **Code: Improved Pronunciation and Confidence**

Students generally reported feeling more confident and capable in their English-speaking abilities after completing the blended learning program. Responses such as *"I can speak more"*



and "*Now I can participate in conversations*" demonstrate that the combination of online and in-person learning activities had a positive impact on their speaking skills. This improvement was particularly noticeable in areas such as pronunciation and listening comprehension, with multiple students noting they could now follow and contribute to conversations more easily.

Specific Activities That Contributed to Improvement

Emerging Theme: Audio, Video, and Group Work as Key Tools

- **Code: Practice through Multimedia and Group Collaboration**

Students highlighted certain activities that they found particularly effective in improving their speaking skills. These included repeating audio clips, watching videos (especially YouTube), and group work during face-to-face sessions. One notable suggestion from the data is the emphasis on listening to music as an enjoyable and effective way to improve both vocabulary and pronunciation.

Additionally, the group work component of in-class activities was frequently mentioned as a beneficial tool for practicing speaking skills. One student suggested, "*More group work would help.*" This indicates that students value the collaborative aspect of learning, which blended learning allows by balancing independent study with social interaction.

Suggestions for Improvement in the Blended Learning Approach

Emerging Theme: Desire for More Multimedia and Group Activities

- **Code: Request for More Interactive and Visual Content**

Several students suggested that more videos and audio materials should be incorporated into the blended learning curriculum to enhance their speaking practice. They found these resources particularly useful for improving their listening and speaking skills. Additionally, students expressed interest in having more interactive group activities both online and in-person, as these help them engage with the content and apply what they've learned in real-life situations.

Barriers to Learning

Emerging Theme: Technology Access and Time Constraints

- **Code: Limited Internet Access and Short Class Time**

A recurring theme in the data was the **unequal access to technology**, particularly in students' homes. Several mentioned that their internet connection was either unreliable or slow, which hindered their ability to fully participate in online activities. Additionally, some students pointed out that the limited time for in-class activities made it difficult to fully engage in



speaking practice, highlighting the need for more structured speaking exercises during face-to-face sessions.

- **Suggestions for Improvement:**

1: More audiovisual or interactive activities (videos, audios).

2: More group work or in-person interaction.

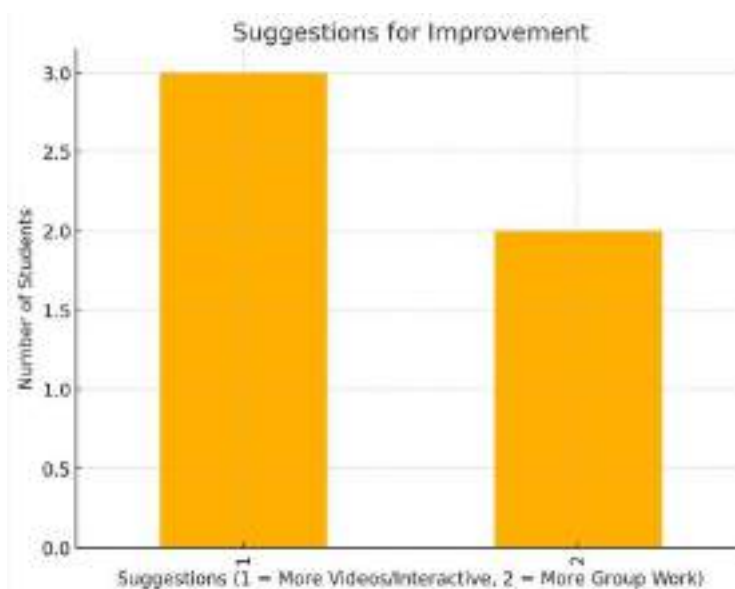
0: Not specified.

GRAPHIC 8

Suggestions for improvements

Note.

The
provide a
of the data
responses



**Source: Own
elaboration**

graphs generated
visual representation
from the coded
of the students:

1. **Blended Learning**

Experience: Most
students had a
positive experience



with blended learning, while a few encountered challenges.

2. **Confidence Before Blended Learning:** Almost all students reported low confidence or anxiety before the introduction of blended learning.
3. **Challenges Before Blended Learning:** The primary challenges were related to pronunciation and vocabulary, followed by issues with participation and time constraints.
4. **Improvements Through Online Activities:** A significant portion of students saw improvements in pronunciation and vocabulary through online tools.
5. **Improvements in Speaking Skills:** Most students felt their speaking skills improved, though a few still experienced persistent challenges.
6. **Suggestions for Improvement:** Students suggested increasing the use of videos and interactive materials, with some also advocating for more group work.

Impact of the Intervention

The intervention clearly had a positive impact on students' performance. The average scores improved significantly in the post-test, with the most notable improvements seen in Questions 4 and 7, which were the weakest areas in the pre-test. These results suggest that the blended learning approach effectively enhanced the students' oral skills.

The improvements across all questions demonstrate that the intervention was successful in achieving the objective of enhancing the students' English oral skills. The data shows that students not only improved in specific areas where they initially struggled but also gained a stronger overall command of the language.

Partial Conclusion - Chapter 2

- **Flexibility and Autonomy:** Blended learning provided students with greater **flexibility** and **autonomy** over their learning process, allowing them to study at their own pace and repeat challenging content as needed.
- **Pronunciation and Vocabulary Gains:** The **multimedia** aspect of blended learning, especially **audio and video tools**, proved to be highly effective in improving students' **pronunciation** and **vocabulary**.



- **Face-to-Face Reinforcement:** The **face-to-face component** played an essential role in reinforcing online learning. In-class corrections and group discussions helped students apply and practice the skills they developed through digital tools.
- **Improvements in Confidence:** Students felt more confident speaking English after the blended learning intervention, particularly when it came to expressing themselves in more formal contexts, such as presentations and expositions.
- **Challenges with Technology:** Despite its benefits, technology-related challenges (such as unreliable internet access) posed barriers for some students, indicating a need for better infrastructure or support.



Chapter 3.

The Proposal: Design of methodological strategies to increase the confidence and fluency of students in listening and speaking the English language.

This proposal arises from the bibliographic review and field research carried out, which highlighted the need to strengthen ninth-grade students' confidence and fluency in listening and speaking English. The observed gaps in oral communication skills revealed the urgency of designing innovative, feasible, and contextually relevant methodological strategies. The proposal integrates face-to-face and virtual (blended learning) modalities, in alignment with Ecuador's national curriculum and international standards, ensuring that it is adaptable to students' realities and accessible with minimal economic investment.

There is access to relevant sources of information that theoretically support the design presented to propose strategies from the theoretical to the practical. The proposal does not require substantial economic expenditures that would make it impossible; on the contrary, the resources available are sufficient for the design.

The application now requires internet access since it is a hybrid application (a combination of in-person and virtual presence). The necessary teaching materials will be self-managed by the parents/representatives of the students, the methodological resources for in-person attendance and the use of the internet will be provided by the teachers, and free versions will be obtained. In addition to everything described, the proposal is related to the curriculum established by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador.

With the elements, it is expected to increase students' confidence and fluency in speaking activities through a combined learning approach that presents structured interactive activities and allow participants in the interlearning process to receive continuous feedback, reinforce integral skills regardless of difficulties, through the use of blended learning activities and audio activities for self-assessment, peer assessment, and hetero assessment.



Objectives

General Objective

To design methodological strategies based on blended learning, to increase students' confidence and fluency in listening and speaking in the English language.

Specific Objectives

- To diagnose the curricular requirements regarding listening and speaking skills in the English language teaching-learning process.
- To justify the resources, methodologies, and activities, both in-person and online, to be used in the proposed design.
- To implement and monitor the proposed strategies from the perspective of the teachers, students, and educational community involved in the study.

Theoretical foundation for the proposal

The proposal is supported by principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)(Qasserras, 2023), Task-Based Learning (TBL)(Burrows, 2008), and Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), which emphasize meaningful communication, authentic tasks, and integration of language with content (Coyle, 2007). Additionally, blended learning is recognized as a key methodology to enhance language learning by combining the benefits of traditional instruction with the flexibility of digital tools (Halverson & Graham, 2019) (Jawaher Al-Rowayeh, 2022a). Research in Ecuador highlights the importance of aligning language instruction with the Ministry of Education curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence, inclusivity, and lifelong learning.

In this context, The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2023c), through the National Curriculum Directorate, considering the educational policy has designed a specific foreign language curriculum that is closely related to the needs of the reality of Ecuador (Ministry of Education of Ecuador, 2023a). This curricular proposal covers students from second to tenth



grade of General Basic Education and from first to third year of Unified General Baccalaureate that do not speak English as their native language.

Given that the inhabitants of Ecuador are diverse in terms of their linguistic and cultural origin, the curriculum design considers that not all students are Spanish speakers and there are varying degrees of bilingualism in the different communities.

In accordance with the requirements of culturally and linguistically diverse populations, the curricular proposal facilitates and recognizes inclusion as a key and independent element of their native language, hence a proposal is designed that is worked out in sublevels, flexible, developed in curricular blocks aligned with the values of innovation, justice, and solidarity that are emphasized in the exit profile of the Ecuadorian Baccalaureate and correlate with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.

The curricular proposal, according to what is stated by the Ministry of Education, is developed based on the following basic principles:

- ✓ International standards: the curriculum is based on internationally recognized levels and teaching processes for language learning.
- ✓ Student-centered approach: teaching methodologies that reflect and respond to the strengths and challenges of students, facilitating their learning process.
- ✓ The communicative language approach: language is learned best to interact and communicate, rather than as a set of knowledge to be memorized.
- ✓ Thinking skills: learning a foreign language boosts the development of thinking, as well as the social and creative skills necessary for lifelong learning and active citizenship.
- ✓ Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL): a model used to integrate language learning with cultural and cognitive aspects, so that the acquisition of this language serves as a driving force for students' development (p.67).

On the other hand, the curriculum proposal specifies that the main objectives of English as a foreign language are:



- Achieve the output profile proposed by the national curriculum for basic general education and high school.
- To generate a love for learning languages from an early age through motivating, positive, and interesting learning experiences to create expectations of continuing to learn.
- Foster the development of the understanding that students have about the environment around them, that of other cultures, and their own context, as well as the ability to communicate their viewpoints using the foreign language.
- Develop individual, intellectual, and social skills that are required to achieve the desired potential and to be a productive part in an increasingly competitive and globalized environment that is conducted in other languages.

It can be evidenced that the proposed curriculum promotes the development of comprehensive learning skills and the handling of a foreign language, thus favoring meaningful learning that allows the student to perform in everyday life using a foreign language.

Strategies in the process of teaching and learning English

Learning a foreign language requires combining diverse elements according to the stage and the skills to be developed, strategies in the process of teaching and learning English, the strategies must be innovative, updated, and in line with the context of the students.

Learning strategies according to Dunlosky et al. (2013) are defined as “a set of techniques and methods that students use to organize and process information effectively. These strategies are deliberate and are implemented to enhance understanding, retention, and application of knowledge” (p.30).

The strategies associated with reading, individual and cooperative work, research, participatory workshops such as dramatizations, dialogues, and creative writing are useful in learning a language, teachers must plan the most appropriate strategies for the moments of the process,



emphasizing the development of the necessary skills for an adequate understanding of knowledge that is reflected in written and spoken performance in the foreign language; they must be the permanent guides for the construction of learning and the development of skills.

The appropriate, personalized, and timely use of strategies allows for capturing the attention and interest of students, participation inside and outside the classroom, the development of everyday skills sets aside memorization and paves the way for meaningful learning. In the context of the current information and communication society, strategies must be supported by technological tools, access to videos, audiovisual resources, blogs, educational games, and artificial intelligence that fosters an environment friendly, familiar, and conducive for students to generate learning.

The type of strategies that require technology is associated with access to the internet, which is a failing in the public education system, but it should be seen as an opportunity to generate autonomous learning experiences connected to modernity and current events; creating strategies that provide access to online educational resources or internet use is a challenge, especially in learning a foreign language where diction and listening practice are reinforced through audiovisual strategies.

An autonomous procedure to establish the most appropriate strategies in the process of inter learning a foreign language includes the following steps:

- Definition of realistic, clear, and contextualized goals
- Establishment of a permanent study routine (inside and outside the classroom)
- Progressive acquisition of vocabulary
- Gradual assimilation of grammar elements
- Ongoing practice of pronunciation and listening
- Daily reading and writing of texts in English• Use of multimedia materials in all steps.



According to what has been described, currently, learning English requires the combination of three main tendencies: an efficient communicative approach, autonomous learning, and the integration of technology. According to Flores-Gallegos et al. (2022) “these strategies focus on providing practical, personalized learning experiences enriched with digital resources. They allow students to effectively improve their language skills, preparing them for communication in real-world situations” (p.40).

Strategies are the set of decisions that the educator makes with the aim of guiding teaching and fostering learning in students. They are general guidelines about the mechanism used to teach a disciplinary content, considering what is desired to be achieved as objectives, what students must understand, why, and for what purpose (Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008).

The development of teaching strategies today is built on the foundation of traditional methods and research conducted in the past; this also implies a look towards the future of teaching and learning. Today, with technological advancements, teaching strategies go beyond a plan in which guidelines are outlined (Rajaram, 2023).

It is undeniable that written plans can be generated with artificial intelligence tools, but the most important thing is the development in the classroom of the activities, methods, evaluation procedures that are applied, and the results that these have on the students' performance.

The current era requires that the educator considers that students have as a fundamental characteristic the development of a virtual mind. "The school and teachers cannot ignore the new ways of reading and interpreting the world with which current students approach content and school tasks" (Rajaram, 2023).

Face-to-face and virtual methodologies applicable to English learning

What has been described in the previous section shows that learning in general, and the teaching of a foreign language in particular, can be carried out in both face-to-face and virtual environments; thus, leading to B-learning methodologies (a combination of both modalities) that promote cooperative and autonomous learning among students; these modalities are effective when there is permanent internet access, a factor that becomes difficult since not all



students have accessibility or individual technological resources to carry out this type of methodological activity.

J.-E. Lee et al. (2025) Identified and explained some characteristics of the modality that combines in-person and virtual learning in the process of learning English. Recent times reflect the presence of students who manage a variety of resources to obtain information: web pages, hard drives, cell phones, virtual communities, etc.; they use and decode different types of language that, moreover, are not presented sequentially, but rather simultaneously, such as animations, photographs, graphics, texts, hypertexts; they create new productions from parts of other products (copy-paste); they are relativists par excellence; on one hand, because the web is constantly updated, and on the other, because all information is considered valid (p.54).

Due to this reality, one must consider the conditions in which the process of interlearning is currently developing. Modern times present new realities for teachers and students; access to knowledge is easier, but discernment and assimilation are more complex tasks, and it becomes even more complicated to demonstrate and apply knowledge in daily life; For this reason, the strategies used to reach students must be in line with reality and employ technology that children and adolescents are accustomed to, always considering the appropriate use and the positive impact it generates to achieve meaningful and holistic learning.

Presence provides conditions for the development of strategic activities such as reading, presentations, dramatizations, writing development, readings that can be constructed individually or cooperatively, shared and feedback can be provided in a experiential manner, if applicable, reinforcement workshops could be conducted between students who have achieved the skills with performance criteria combined with those who need reinforcement; in-person attendance guarantees direct evidence of the achievement of the learning objectives outlined in the previous planning.

In face-to-face settings, the use of relevant teaching materials is essential as it captures students' interest and improves their understanding of the foreign language. Choosing appropriately and diversifying resources facilitates capturing different levels of skill and learning styles at all



levels and sublevels of basic education and high school; this aspect includes the need for curricular adaptations for those students with specific educational needs associated or not with a disability.

The use of textbooks is essential in teaching English; they must provide a concise structural framework, be coherent with the curriculum, and include a variety of dynamic activities to cover key aspects such as basic vocabulary, grammar, regular and irregular verbs, among other relevant topics related to the subject matter. Additionally, resources and strategies such as adapted board games, educational sheets, and word cards provide appeal to classes with children and adolescents.

Everything described is adaptable to both in-person and virtual settings; in the case of the virtual setting, the application and development of activities is asynchronous and it can happen that the student does not complete the activities on their own and turns to strangers who fulfill the requirements of the platforms or websites, but, since he is not the main protagonist, the proper and correct learning is not guaranteed, that's how J.-E. Lee et al. (2025) points out that integrating digital resources into the process of teaching a foreign language strengthens linguistic immersion. 'Videos, interactive applications, and online platforms allow students to improve their listening comprehension and pronunciation through contact with native speakers. Podcasts and oral expression exercises are key to reinforcing oral communication in the classroom (p.44).

Listening and speaking skills in the process of learning English

The learning of a foreign language requires basic and advanced elements that are not limited to the classroom; they are implicit in all the activities that the learner engages in, without a guide, the results are not optimal and significant learning that needs to be demonstrated in everyday life is not achieved; this should respond to a gradual process where one starts from the basics and gradually becomes more complex until the language is fully assimilated, both theoretically and, above all, practically. According to (Flores-Gallegos et al., 2022).



Listening skills in learning English are essential for effectively mastering the language. As students immerse themselves in this process, the ability to understand and retain auditory information becomes a crucial pillar for smooth communication. This article will explore the importance of developing these skills, offering practical strategies and tips that will facilitate learning, improving not only comprehension but also confidence when speaking in English (p.39).

Achieving mastery of listening and speaking skills in the English language is vital, especially considering that English is a basic requirement for access to scientific and technological information in the world; the large-scale competitive professional market considers the mastery of English skills as a relevant and initial aspect; this implies the assimilation of solid management of all essential language skills, namely listening comprehension, oral expression (speaking), and written expression, each of which and their combination are essential for effective interaction in the globalized environment in which we currently live.

The development of listening comprehension helps to understand presentations, instructions, conversations, and very relevant aspects of intercommunication in negotiations and meetings. It provides guidelines for oral expression that is necessary “to communicate ideas clearly and persuasively, helping to build solid academic and work relationships. Both skills are complementary and contribute to effective communication in dynamic environments” (Richards, 2008).

Likewise, reading comprehension, oral and written expression are particularly relevant in the learning of a foreign language; the development of the ability to read and analyze the content of emails, documents, and reports facilitates making informed decisions. This implies the need to develop the skill of writing coherently and clearly, ensuring that ideas are appropriately conveyed. Thus, acquiring skills, practicing them, and using them in academic performance guarantee efficiency in the process of learning English in an increasingly interconnected society.



Fluent dialogue in another language, especially English, allows for contact with people from all over the world in personal, family, professional, academic, and other relationships. This skill can be gradually acquired, with the complexity involved in having a native or mother tongue and the need to generate a second language with its rules, diction, and various other elements that must be assimilated theoretically to later be put into practice. In according to (Richards, 2008).

Listening and speaking skills are fundamental in daily interactions, as it goes beyond simply hearing the words someone expresses. It involves mindful attention and a genuine commitment to understanding the complete message, which includes both the verbal content and the underlying emotions and thoughts. This skill allows the individual to connect more deeply with those around them. By developing listening and speaking skills, a person becomes more receptive and empathetic, which improves personal relationships and leads to individual satisfaction as it creates an environment of self-trust, fostering respect that encourages open communication. This type of connection not only enriches interactions, but also contributes to the useful resolution of conflicts and teamwork collaboration, all due to assimilating and putting into practice the performance of skills in a second language, in this specific case, English.

Structure and dynamics of the components of the proposal

Once the essential aspects of the proposal are established, it aims to present pedagogical and didactic alternatives to be used in the planning and execution of the inter learning process, the list of these aspects is detailed below:

Blended Learning Experience: In-person and virtual integration

The proposal is based on a blended learning framework that combines the advantages of face-to-face instruction with the flexibility of online learning. In-person sessions provide direct interaction, immediate feedback, and structured practice, while virtual sessions extend learning beyond classroom hours through online activities, self-paced practice, and interactive platforms. This integration ensures continuity in the learning process and maximizes student engagement.



Confidence in Speaking: Structured vocabulary and fluency exercises

Developing confidence is central to oral proficiency. The proposal emphasizes systematic vocabulary acquisition and fluency-building activities such as guided dialogues, oral presentations, and scaffolded speaking tasks. These exercises reduce speaking anxiety by providing gradual exposure to communicative contexts, enabling students to become more secure and spontaneous in their oral interactions.

Online Activities: Blogs, educational games, and collaborative wikis

Digital tools play a key role in extending practice outside the classroom. Blogs encourage students to reflect and share their ideas in writing and speaking tasks, while educational games introduce language practice in an engaging and interactive format. Collaborative wikis foster teamwork and co-construction of knowledge, allowing students to interact, edit, and build content together, thereby reinforcing vocabulary, grammar, and communication skills.

Challenges in the Traditional Classroom: Cooperative work and debates

To overcome the limitations of lecture-based teaching, the proposal incorporates dynamic classroom activities such as group discussions, debates, and cooperative problem-solving tasks. These strategies promote active participation, critical thinking, and oral interaction, ensuring that students do not remain passive learners but become active contributors to the learning process.

Integration of Components: Classroom tasks aligned with online reinforcement

Each activity, whether face-to-face or online, is designed to complement and reinforce the other. For example, vocabulary introduced in the classroom is later practiced in online quizzes or speaking forums, and listening exercises completed at home are discussed in class. This cyclical approach creates a coherent and sustainable structure that ensures knowledge retention and progressive skill development.

Listening and Speaking Skills Development: Continuous practice

The core focus of the proposal is on strengthening listening and speaking. Activities such as pronunciation drills, shadowing exercises, listening comprehension with authentic materials,



and peer-to-peer conversations are incorporated consistently throughout the learning cycle. Continuous practice ensures not only linguistic accuracy but also fluency, confidence, and the ability to interact in real-life contexts.

Examples of Activities: Role-plays, pronunciation drills, debates, group projects, podcasts

The methodological design provides varied activities to address different aspects of oral communication. Role-plays simulate authentic scenarios, pronunciation drills refine articulation, and debates stimulate critical thinking and fluency. Group projects encourage collaboration and integrated skill development, while podcasts expose students to authentic language input and serve as models for student-created audio productions. Together, these activities form a diverse, interactive, and student-centered learning environment.

TABLE 4

Components, purposes and expected outcomes

Component	Purpose	Expected Outcomes
Blended Learning Experience	Combine in-person and virtual learning to maximize interaction, flexibility, and engagement.	Students benefit from direct teacher interaction and autonomous digital practice.
Confidence in Speaking	Foster security and spontaneity through structured vocabulary building and fluency exercises.	Increased student confidence in oral communication and reduced speaking anxiety.
Online Activities	Extend practice beyond class using blogs, games, and collaborative platforms.	Enhanced engagement, collaboration, and motivation through interactive digital tasks.
Challenges in the Traditional Classroom	Replace passive learning with active tasks such as debates, teamwork, and discussions.	Improved critical thinking, participation, and oral interaction skills.
Integration of Components	Align classroom learning with online reinforcement for sustained knowledge retention.	Reinforced learning cycle with stronger retention and consistent skill progression.
Listening and Speaking Skills Development	Ensure continuous oral practice through listening, pronunciation, and interaction tasks.	Better pronunciation, fluency, and ability to interact in authentic situations.
Examples of Activities	Provide varied, authentic, and interactive activities to strengthen oral proficiency.	Holistic oral skill development through diverse methods suited to learner needs.

Note. Source: Own elaboration.



Within the structure and dynamics, the characteristics of the proposal are presented, which aims to be a compendium of elements intended to promote the development of listening and speaking skills in the process of learning English.

Characteristics of the proposal

- ✓ Integrates blended learning with face-to-face and online strategies.
- ✓ Feasible to implement with free or low-cost technological tools.
- ✓ Aligns with the Ecuadorian national curriculum and CEFR standards.
- ✓ Promotes active participation, autonomy, and continuous feedback.
- ✓ Incorporates self-assessment, peer assessment, and hetero-assessment practices.

Description of the type of proposal

The present work is a *pedagogical-methodological proposal* that seeks to address the specific educational need of improving ninth-grade students' oral skills, particularly confidence and fluency in listening and speaking English. Unlike a purely theoretical study, this type of proposal is *applied and practice-oriented*, since it originates from both bibliographic research and the results of a field study that revealed gaps in students' oral performance. Thus, the proposal emerges as a direct response to a real educational problem and is constructed to be implemented in the school context.

This type of proposal is characterized by being *educational and formative*, as it focuses on strengthening learning processes in line with Ecuador's national English curriculum and international standards such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is not a general intervention but rather a *specific, structured, and contextualized plan* that provides concrete strategies for teachers and students, ensuring relevance to the realities of Ecuadorian classrooms.

Another feature of this proposal is its *innovative and integrative nature*. It incorporates *blended learning* as the guiding methodology, combining the advantages of face-to-face interaction (direct feedback, collaborative activities, and structured practice) with the opportunities offered by virtual environments (autonomy, flexibility, and access to multimedia resources). This



combination makes the proposal dynamic and adaptable to different learning styles while maximizing the resources available to both teachers and students.

At the same time, the proposal is designed to be *feasible and sustainable*. It does not demand excessive economic investment, since it relies on resources already available in schools, free online platforms, and teacher initiative. Parents and representatives play a complementary role by providing basic materials, while teachers make use of digital resources that are accessible and cost-free. This makes the design *realistic and applicable even in contexts with limited resources*, a key consideration in Ecuador's public education system.

Finally, this is an *inclusive and action-oriented proposal*. It considers the diversity of students in Ecuador, including linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic differences, and emphasizes methodological flexibility to respond to these contexts. Furthermore, it is action-oriented because it not only provides a theoretical framework but also specifies activities, exercises, and evaluation mechanisms that can be directly implemented, monitored, and adapted. In this sense, it serves as both a *research-based solution and a practical teaching guide*.

This proposal can be defined as a *pedagogical-methodological intervention*, with a formative, innovative, feasible, and inclusive character, designed to improve English listening and speaking skills through blended learning. It bridges theory and practice, responding to educational needs with strategies that are both evidence-based and adaptable to the Ecuadorian context.

Steps to Implement the Proposal

Step 1: Planning and Preparation

- Review the *curricular requirements* for listening and speaking outlined by the Ministry of Education of Ecuador.
- Select and adapt *teaching materials* (textbooks, worksheets, audiovisual resources, and online tools such as blogs, wikis, or apps).



- Train teachers in the *use of blended methodologies* and familiarize them with the digital platforms to be used.
- Inform parents and students about the objectives, resources, and expected commitments.

Step 2: Diagnostic Phase

- Apply diagnostic instruments (surveys, speaking rubrics, or observation checklists) to determine the baseline levels of confidence and fluency.
- Identify students' technological access and potential barriers to participation.
- Use this data *to adjust activities* to the realities of the group.

Step 3: Design of Learning Sequences

- Organize content into *weekly modules*, combining in-person and virtual activities.
- Structure tasks so that *classroom activities* (e.g., role-plays, debates) are reinforced with *online activities* (e.g., pronunciation exercises, collaborative blogs).
- Ensure each module integrates *listening and speaking tasks*, supported by vocabulary and grammar practice.

Step 4: Implementation in the Classroom

- Conduct face-to-face lessons focusing on *interaction, feedback, and structured practice*.
- Assign online tasks for *independent or cooperative learning*, allowing students to practice at their own pace.
- Use *free and accessible digital tools* (Zoom, WhatsApp, Padlet, YouTube, Duolingo, etc.) to facilitate participation and interaction.



Step 5: Continuous Feedback and Assessment

- Apply *formative assessments* throughout the process (e.g., short oral tasks, peer reviews, self-assessments).
- Provide immediate, constructive feedback after speaking tasks to boost confidence.
- Encourage students to reflect on their progress and set personal goals for improvement.

Step 6: Monitoring and Support

- Keep *attendance and participation records* for both in-person and online activities.
- Offer additional reinforcement for students who struggle, through tutoring sessions or extra practice activities.
- Address technological or logistical challenges with flexible solutions (offline activities, printed materials).

Step 7: Final Evaluation

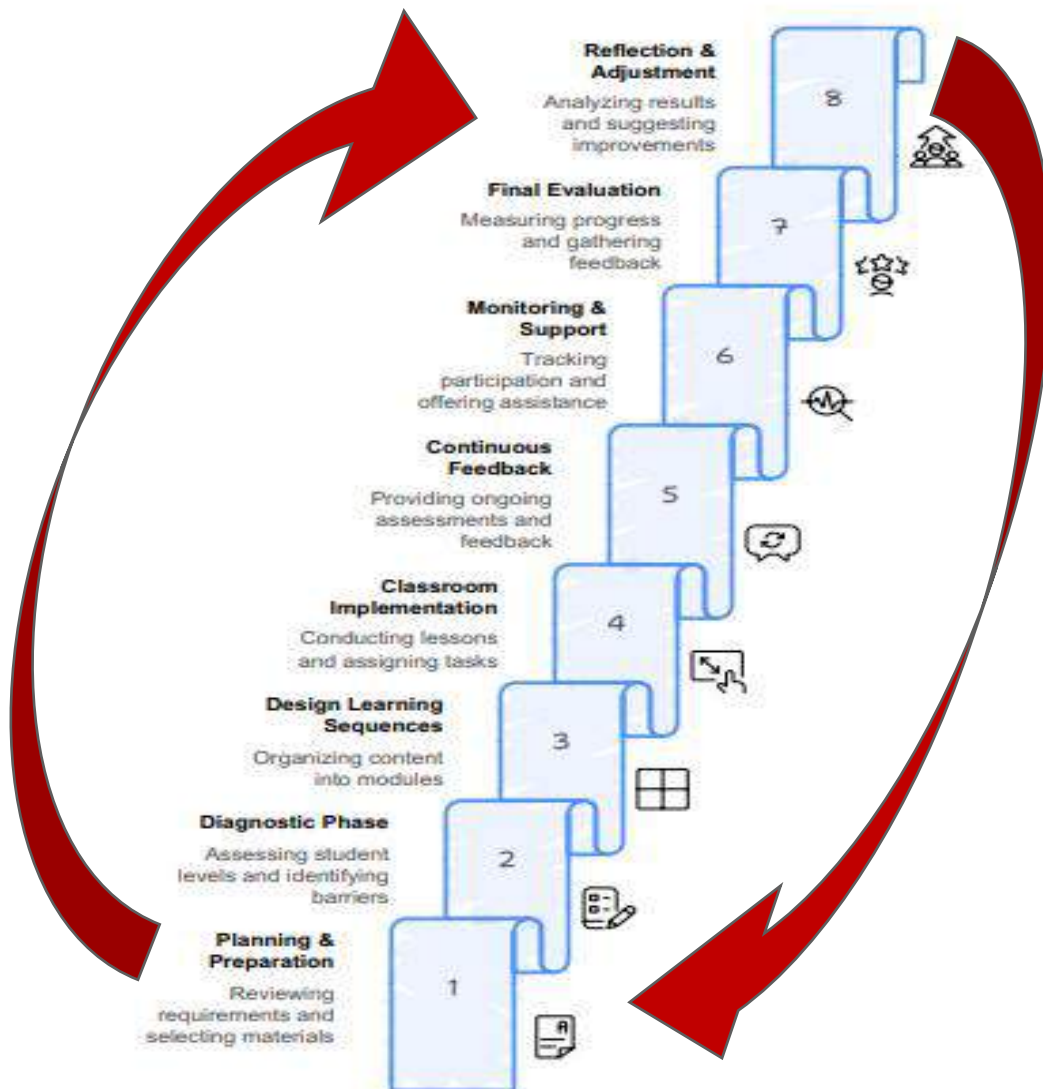
- Reapply the initial diagnostic instruments (surveys, rubrics, interviews) to measure progress in confidence and fluency.
- Compare pre- and post-results to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposal.
- Gather teacher, student, and parent feedback to identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Step 8: Reflection and Adjustment

- Analyze results and document findings.
- Suggest *adjustments or refinements* for future implementations.
- Share outcomes with the educational community to encourage replication in other contexts.

GRAPHIC 9

The Proposal Model

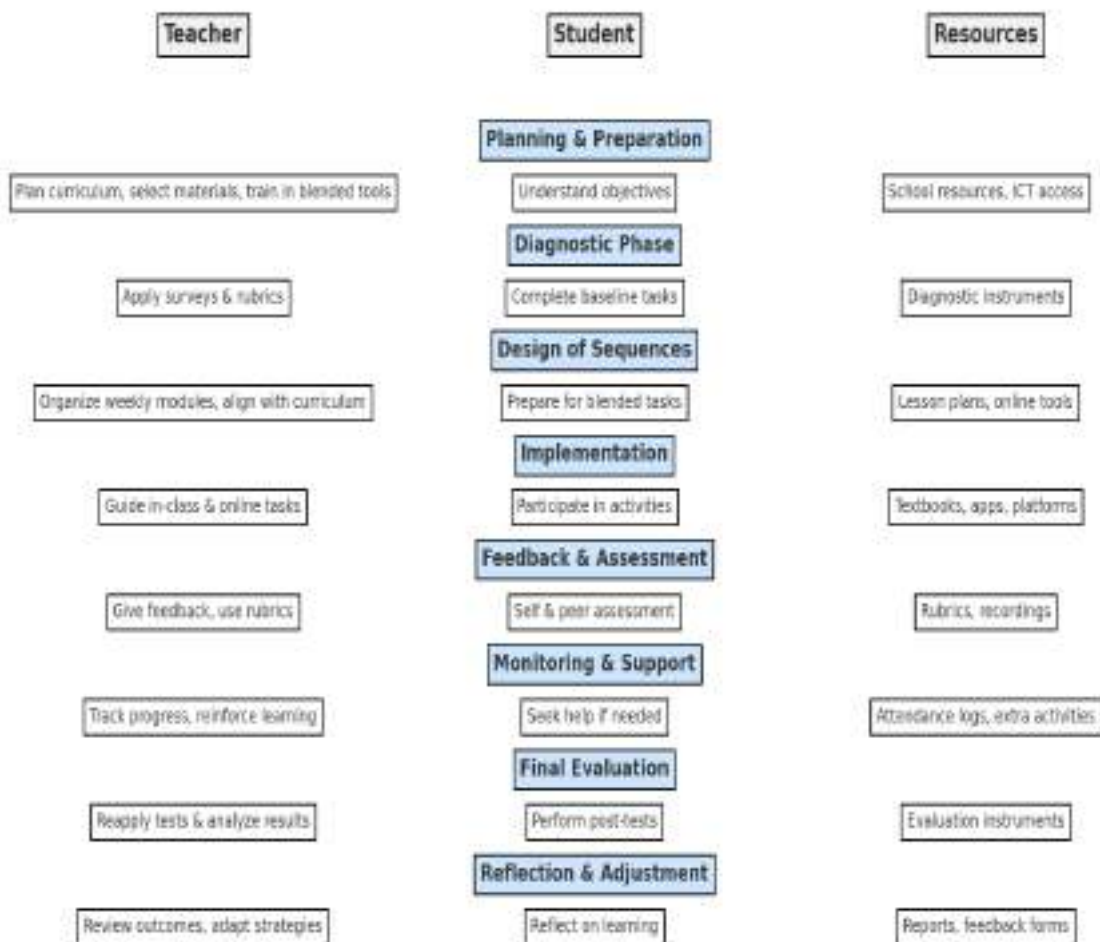


Note. Source: Own elaboration

The following swimlane diagram illustrates the responsibilities of teachers, students, and the resources required at each step of the implementation process. This format clarifies roles and ensures coordinated action in applying the blended learning proposal.

TABLE 5

Swimlane diagram for responsibilities



Note. Source: Own elaboration

Methodological requirements

The implementation of the proposal demands careful consideration of methodological requirements that guarantee its feasibility, validity, and alignment with educational standards. These requirements operate at several levels: curricular, pedagogical, technological, and evaluative.



1. **Curricular Alignment**

The strategies must be integrated into the curricular framework established by the **Ministry of Education of Ecuador** and the institutional curricular plan for English. This ensures that all activities directly contribute to the development of skills with performance criteria, indicators, and competencies outlined at the national level. Lesson plans should reflect the integration of listening and speaking objectives with communicative and interactive tasks.

2. **Teacher Preparation and Training**

Teachers must be adequately prepared in **communicative methodologies** (e.g., CLT, TBL, and CLIL) and trained in the use of technological tools that support blended learning. They need to master digital platforms such as Google Classroom, Zoom, or educational apps, and design scaffolding strategies that promote confidence, fluency, and active participation.

3. **Technological Resources and Infrastructure**

Internet access and digital devices (computers, tablets, or smartphones) are essential for the virtual component. Since public schools may face connectivity limitations, the proposal requires contingency strategies, such as offline resources (downloadable podcasts, printed materials, or low-data applications), to ensure inclusivity. Free or open-source tools should be prioritized to minimize costs.

4. **Pedagogical Resources**

Materials should combine traditional resources (textbooks, worksheets, visual aids) with digital ones (educational games, online quizzes, collaborative blogs/wikis, podcasts). The teacher should provide structured activities both in-person and online, ensuring integration rather than duplication of efforts.



5. **Assessment Instruments**

The evaluation of oral skills must employ clear, reliable instruments. Rubrics for pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence should be consistently applied in pre- and post-intervention assessments. Complementary tools such as self-assessments, peer assessments, and teacher observations are necessary for formative evaluation and continuous feedback.

6. **Monitoring and Feedback**

Ongoing monitoring is required to track progress and adjust strategies. Teachers should maintain records of classroom participation, online engagement, and assessment results. Continuous feedback—both oral and written—ensures students identify strengths, address weaknesses, and gradually build confidence in oral communication.

7. **Ethical Considerations**

Implementation requires informed consent from parents/guardians, respect for students' anonymity in data collection, and equitable participation opportunities. No student should be disadvantaged due to limited access to resources; adaptations must be provided to guarantee inclusivity.

The curricular elements at the level of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador, as well as the Institutional Curricular Plan for the English area, contextualized and adapted to the reality of the Educational Unit and reflected in the annual and class planning, they are the main methodological requirements because they describe the skills with performance criteria, evaluation indicators, strategies to be employed, evaluation processes, reinforcement, feedback, and the evidence of the results obtained from the application of the content.

Additionally, for the design of the proposal, the study and theoretical foundation of the research variables is taken as a requirement, in combination with the analysis of the results from the field study, which allows for the structuring of a set of strategies that promote the acquisition of skills with performance criteria emphasizing listening and speaking, along with a



combination of face-to-face and virtual education, considering the curricular planning according to the group of students and the adaptations that may be required.

Impact

The proposal aims to generate curricular plans that are consistent with the national curriculum and the reality of the educational institution. It aims for English teachers to be trained in planning, dissemination, execution, and evaluation of listening and speaking skills.

It is intended to encourage students' interest in learning and developing skills in the process of learning the English language through access to individual and group activities. The assessment of the impact will depend on the qualitative performance of the students; numerical grades are taken as a reference, but performance in daily aspects will be what determines whether the proposal has been effective.

It is a flexible proposal and is willing to improve, adapt, and include elements that allow for the enhancement of the teaching-learning process, with an emphasis on the development of students' skills, reflected in the performance criteria and the contribution to achieving the exit profile of Ecuadorian high school graduates.

Examples and Exercises

The proposed exercises are designed to foster confidence and fluency in oral communication through meaningful and interactive tasks. **Role-plays** recreate everyday situations such as shopping, asking for directions, or participating in classroom discussions, allowing students to practice authentic dialogues in a safe environment. **Listening comprehension tasks** using podcasts or videos expose learners to authentic input, which is later reinforced through group discussions that promote reflection and active use of new vocabulary and expressions. **Debate sessions** are included to develop fluency, argumentation skills, and critical thinking, requiring students to express opinions coherently under real-time pressure. Similarly, **online collaborative projects** such as digital storytelling or video blogs engage students in creative production, encouraging teamwork and integration of listening, speaking, and digital literacy. Finally, **pronunciation practice with speech recognition tools** provides immediate feedback,



helping learners identify and correct errors in stress, intonation, and articulation, thus contributing to clearer and more confident spoken English. Together, these exercises create a dynamic learning environment that strengthens oral skills through practice, reflection, and continuous feedback.

TABLE 6

Examples and Exercises for the Proposal

Type of Activity	Objective	Expected Outcome
Role-Plays	Simulate real-life communication scenarios (e.g., shopping, asking for help).	Students practice authentic dialogues, improving fluency, pronunciation, and confidence.
Pronunciation Drills	Focus on stress, intonation, and articulation through repetition exercises.	Clearer pronunciation and reduced errors in spoken communication.
Debates	Encourage structured oral interaction on familiar topics.	Enhanced fluency, critical thinking, and ability to express arguments coherently.
Group Projects	Collaborate to prepare and present a topic (e.g., posters, short videos).	Increased teamwork, vocabulary expansion, and improved presentation skills.
Podcasts / Audio Tasks	Listen to authentic audio and record personal reflections or summaries.	Better listening comprehension and improved ability to reproduce language patterns.
Online Games / Apps	Use platforms like Duolingo or Kahoot for vocabulary and pronunciation.	Higher motivation, autonomous learning, and reinforcement of new words and phrases.
Collaborative Blogs/Wikis	Write and discuss short texts online with classmates.	Integration of writing and speaking, fostering



Type of Activity	Objective	Expected Outcome
		confidence and reflective learning.
Music & Videos	Practice pronunciation and vocabulary using songs and video clips.	Improved listening, rhythm of speech, and contextual vocabulary use.
Peer Assessment	Evaluate classmates' oral tasks with a rubric.	Increased self-awareness, feedback exchange, and metacognitive skills.
Self-Recording Tasks	Students record themselves speaking on assigned topics.	Self-monitoring, error correction, and gradual improvement in fluency.

Note. Source: Own elaboration

Forms of Application, Implementation and Evaluation

The **application** of the proposal is conceived as an integral part of the weekly lesson plan, ensuring that the strategies are not isolated activities but embedded within the regular teaching-learning process. Each lesson combines **face-to-face activities**, where students engage in role-plays, debates, or pronunciation practice, with **online reinforcement tasks** such as podcasts, interactive apps, or collaborative projects. This dual approach ensures continuity of learning, maximizes exposure to the target language, and allows students to extend their practice beyond the limited classroom hours.

The **implementation** process requires the active role of the teacher as facilitator and guide. Teacher's design and sequence activities, scaffold learners' participation, and integrate both modalities using accessible technological platforms such as **Google Classroom** for assignment management, **Zoom** for synchronous interaction, and **WhatsApp** for quick communication and collaborative exchanges. This blended framework allows flexibility and inclusivity, adapting to students' technological realities while fostering greater autonomy in the learning process.



The **evaluation** of oral skills is conducted through a combination of **analytical rubrics** and complementary assessment strategies. Rubrics assess key dimensions of oral communication—**pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and coherence**—providing clear performance criteria for both teachers and students. To strengthen reflection and responsibility in learning, the process is complemented by **self-assessment**, where learners critically evaluate their own progress, and **peer assessment**, which encourages collaboration and constructive feedback among classmates. This triangulation of evaluation methods not only measures outcomes but also serves as a continuous formative tool, reinforcing learning and promoting confidence in oral production.

Resources

The successful implementation of the proposal requires the coordinated use of **human, material, and technological resources**, each playing a complementary role in supporting the development of students' oral skills.

Human resources constitute the foundation of the proposal. Teachers act as facilitators and guides, responsible for planning, sequencing, and monitoring activities that combine face-to-face and online learning. Students are the central actors, engaging actively in communicative tasks and collaborative projects that foster confidence and fluency. Parents also play a supporting role, providing encouragement, ensuring access to basic learning materials at home, and helping to reinforce the continuity of the blended learning process beyond school hours.

Material resources include both traditional and modern learning aids. Textbooks and worksheets remain essential for structuring lessons, consolidating grammar and vocabulary, and providing guided practice opportunities. Visual aids such as posters, flashcards, and infographics enrich classroom interaction, making abstract concepts more concrete and engaging for students. In addition, digital devices such as computers, tablets, or smartphones are necessary to bridge classroom instruction with online learning activities, ensuring that students can access practice tools, multimedia content, and collaborative platforms.



Technological resources are indispensable in blended learning environments. Free and widely accessible tools such as **Duolingo**, **YouTube**, **Google Docs**, and **Padlet** support language practice, content creation, and collaborative learning. Video conferencing platforms like **Zoom** or **Google Meet** enable synchronous interaction, allowing for real-time oral communication beyond the classroom. Furthermore, speech recognition applications offer immediate feedback on pronunciation, stress, and intonation, helping students to self-monitor their progress and refine oral accuracy. The reliance on free or low-cost platforms ensures that the proposal remains cost-effective and adaptable to the economic realities of Ecuadorian schools.

The integration of these resources creates a holistic learning ecosystem where human interaction, material supports, and technological innovation converge to strengthen students' oral communication skills. By balancing accessibility, relevance, and pedagogical impact, the proposal ensures that all resources directly contribute to its primary goal: increasing confidence and fluency in listening and speaking English.

Beneficiaries

The proposal identifies both **direct** and **indirect beneficiaries**, as its impact extends beyond the immediate target group of students to the broader educational community.

The **direct beneficiaries** are the ninth-grade students participating in the intervention. Through the implementation of blended learning strategies, these learners are expected to significantly improve their oral communication skills, with a particular emphasis on **confidence, fluency, and listening comprehension**. By engaging in structured in-class activities and online practice, students will develop greater autonomy, reduce speaking anxiety, and acquire the communicative competence necessary to interact effectively in both academic and real-life contexts. The proposal responds to their specific needs, providing a more inclusive and motivating learning environment that equips them with skills aligned to the requirements of the national curriculum and international language standards.

The **indirect beneficiaries** include teachers, parents, and the wider educational community. Teachers gain opportunities for **professional development** by adopting and applying blended methodologies that integrate communicative, technological, and student-centered approaches.



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This enhances their instructional practices and fosters innovation in the classroom. Parents benefit by becoming more engaged in their children's learning process, fostering closer school-home collaboration and contributing to a culture of shared responsibility in education. Finally, the broader educational community, including administrators and policymakers, benefits from the generation of evidence-based practices that can be scaled and adapted to similar contexts across Ecuador and Latin America. The ripple effect of this proposal demonstrates that investing in oral skills not only strengthens individual learners but also enriches the educational ecosystem as a whole.



Conclusions

The findings of the theoretical review and field research confirm that the integration of **blended learning methodologies** represents a viable and effective strategy to strengthen the development of oral communication skills in English. By combining the structured guidance of face-to-face instruction with the flexibility and innovation of digital tools, the proposal addresses the limitations of traditional teaching methods and responds to the contextual needs of students. This dual modality fosters more dynamic, engaging, and participatory learning experiences that stimulate motivation, autonomy, and meaningful language use.

The evidence suggests that the **systematic implementation of blended strategies** contributes directly to the enhancement of students' **confidence and fluency** in speaking activities. Through interactive exercises, structured feedback, and opportunities for continuous practice, learners gradually overcome speaking anxiety, refine pronunciation, and improve their communicative competence. In particular, the emphasis on listening comprehension, reinforced through audiovisual and interactive resources, allows students to internalize authentic language input and apply it in practical oral situations.

A distinctive contribution of this research lies in its sensitivity to the **sociolinguistic reality of the study context**, where Spanish coexists with Quechua and where access to technology is uneven. The proposed methodological strategies demonstrate that it is possible to design inclusive and adaptable learning experiences that respect linguistic diversity, promote equitable access, and strengthen language skills in rural and under-resourced settings. This highlights the importance of contextualizing pedagogical innovation to ensure relevance and sustainability.



Recommendations

For Teachers

1. Incorporate **blended learning methodologies** consistently in lesson planning, ensuring a balance between face-to-face communicative activities and online reinforcement tasks by using free and low-cost **digital tools** (e.g., Duolingo, YouTube, Padlet, Google Classroom) to extend practice beyond classroom hours and motivate students to engage autonomously with English.
2. Prioritize the development of **oral skills** by integrating role-plays, debates, pronunciation drills, and listening comprehension tasks into daily practice, while minimizing exclusive reliance on grammar-focused instruction.
3. Provide **continuous and constructive feedback** using rubrics, self-assessment, and peer-assessment strategies to help students identify strengths and areas for improvement in their oral production.

For Educational Institutions and Policymakers

1. Strengthen **teacher training programs** by including workshops and certifications on blended learning methodologies, communicative approaches, and digital pedagogy.
2. Improve **technological infrastructure** in rural and under-resourced areas by ensuring reliable internet access, access to devices, and technical support for schools.
3. Foster a culture of **inclusivity and contextualization**, recognizing the linguistic diversity of Ecuador (Spanish, Quechua, and other local languages) and adapting English teaching strategies accordingly.

For Future Research

1. Replicate and expand the study in **different educational contexts** (urban, bilingual, private vs. public schools) to validate findings and adapt strategies across diverse populations.
2. Conduct **longitudinal studies** to measure the sustained impact of blended learning on oral proficiency, confidence, and learner autonomy over time.
3. Explore the integration of **emerging technologies**, such as virtual reality (VR) or artificial intelligence (AI)-driven speaking assistants, to further enrich oral practice.



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Annexes

Student	Blended Learning Experience	Confidence Before	Challenges Before	Online Improvements	Improvements in Speaking	Suggestions for Improvement
Student 1	1	2	1	1	1	1
Student 2	1	2	1	1	1	2
Student 3	2	2	2	1	2	1
Student 4	1	2	1	2	1	2
Student 5	1	2	2	1	1	1
Student 6	2	2	1	1	2	1
Student 7	1	2	1	1	1	2
Student 8	1	2	2	2	1	1



Student	Blended Learning Experience	Confidence Before	Challenges Before	Online Improvements	Improvements in Speaking	Suggestions for Improvement
Student 9	2	2	1	1	2	2
Student 10	1	2	1	1	1	1
Student 11	1	2	2	2	1	1
Student 12	2	2	1	1	2	2
Student 13	1	2	1	1	1	1
Student 14	1	2	2	1	1	1
Student 15	1	2	2	2	1	2
Student 16	2	2	1	1	2	1
Student 17	2	2	1	2	1	2
Student 18	1	2	2	1	1	1
Student 19	1	2	1	1	2	2
Student 20	2	2	1	1	1	1



Student	Blended Learning Experience	Confidence Before	Challenges Before	Online Improvements	Improvements in Speaking	Suggestions for Improvement
Student 21	1	2	1	1	1	2
Student 22	2	2	2	2	2	1
Student 23	1	2	1	1	1	2
Student 24	1	2	1	1	1	1
Student 25	1	2	2	1	2	1