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THEME:

"SPEAK & IMPROVE" AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Research Project prior to obtaining the degree of: Master in Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages, with a major in English Language Teaching

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I CERTIFY

That the aforementioned research work has been reviewed in all its parts, and I consider that it meets the necessary requirements and merits to be submitted for public presentation and evaluation by the designated Examination Committee.

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, whose unwavering support, boundless love, and steadfast encouragement have been the cornerstone of my achievements. Their sacrifices, wise counsel, and enduring faith in me have provided the foundation upon which this research stands. To them, I owe my deepest gratitude and respect.

I also dedicate this research to society, with the hope that it will contribute to the advancement of knowledge and serve as a valuable resource for learning and development. May the insights and findings within these pages inspire others to pursue their own quests for understanding and innovation, ultimately fostering a brighter and more enlightened future for all.

Cristina Salinas

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Cristina Salinas.

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UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA INDOAMÉRICA

GRADUATE STUDIES OFFICE

MASTER'S DEGREE IN PEDAGOGY IN NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES WITH A SPECIALIZATION IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

THEME: "SPEAK & IMPROVE" AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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RESUMEN

La falta de desarrollo de la habilidad de expresión oral en estudiantes universitarios de inglés como lengua extranjera constituye un problema frecuente en los niveles iniciales, donde la ausencia de práctica estructurada y retroalimentación inmediata afecta la confianza y el desempeño comunicativo. En este contexto, la presente investigación tuvo como objetivo determinar la efectividad de la plataforma basada en inteligencia artificial Speak & Improve en el desarrollo de la habilidad oral en estudiantes de nivel A1 de un centro de idiomas universitario en Ambato, Ecuador. La hipótesis planteó que la implementación sistemática de esta herramienta mejoraría significativamente el desempeño oral de los participantes. La investigación adoptó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño preexperimental de un solo grupo, utilizando un pretest y un postest. La muestra estuvo conformada por 20 estudiantes. La intervención se llevó a cabo durante diez sesiones académicas, integrando la plataforma como un recurso complementario a la instrucción presencial. La producción oral fue evaluada mediante la rúbrica oficial del examen Cambridge KET, considerando los criterios de gramática, vocabulario, pronunciación e interacción comunicativa. Los resultados evidenciaron una mejora significativa en las puntuaciones obtenidas en el postest en comparación con el pretest, con avances notables en pronunciación y fluidez, así como un incremento en la confianza al expresarse en inglés. En conclusión, el uso de herramientas basadas en inteligencia artificial, como Speak & Improve, constituye una estrategia pedagógica efectiva para fortalecer la competencia comunicativa en contextos de educación superior.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Inteligencia artificial, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación superior, habilidad oral.

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA INDOAMÉRICA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION SCIENCES

MASTER IN PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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THEME

Speak & Improve and its impact on the development of speaking skills in higher education

ABSTRACT

The lack of speaking skills development in university students of English as a foreign language constitutes a frequent problem at beginner levels, where a lack of structured practice and immediate feedback affects confidence and communicative performance. In this context, the present research aimed to determine the effectiveness of the artificial intelligence-based platform Speak & Improve in developing speaking skills in A1-level students at a university language center in Ambato, Ecuador. The hypothesis was that the systematic implementation of this tool would significantly improve participants' oral performance. The research adopted a quantitative approach with a single-group pre-experimental design, using a pre-test and a post-test. The sample consisted of 20 students. The intervention was carried out over ten academic sessions, integrating the platform as a complementary resource to face-to-face instruction. Oral production was assessed using the official Cambridge KET exam rubric, considering the criteria of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and communicative interaction. The results showed a significant improvement in the scores obtained in the post-test compared to the pre-test, with notable advances in pronunciation and fluency, as well as an increase in confidence when expressing oneself in English. In conclusion, the use of artificial intelligence-based tools, such as Speak & Improve, is an effective pedagogical strategy for strengthening communicative competence in higher education contexts.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence, English as a foreign language, higher education, speaking skills

INTRODUCTION

The enhancement of speaking skills has increasingly become one of the primary focuses of English language instruction at the tertiary level. With English functioning as the dominant language of academia as well as the language of the profession and cross-cultural communication, fluent and accurate speaking has become a primary requirement for students in non-English-speaking countries. Graddol (2006) described English as a global lingua franca and noted its potential in globalizing international communication, research circulation, and infrastructural access. For today's university students, the ability to communicate in English spoken form is a prerequisite for becoming a fully engaged member of the speaking society.

However, speaking is the most difficult skill to master since it requires the simultaneous integration of lexicon, grammatical structure, pronunciation, fluency, pragmatics, and an interplay of all as a real-time function (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019). While it is assumed that the skills of reading and listening are passive, speaking is an active and spontaneous form of behavior which is significantly more challenging to learn, especially in contexts of English as a foreign language where the chances for real communicative dialogue are minimal.

Learning to speak a foreign language in EFL contexts can be a challenge because authentic interactions are scarce. Despite speaking being one of the building blocks of communication, several students manage to get by without attaining oral proficiency. Such an experience can be noted in the case of Ecuador, in which large class sizes, the absence of English language contact outside school, and methods focusing predominantly on grammar and written exercises, are all detrimental to the development of oral skills (Cevallos & Soto, 2019).

According to Richards (2008), the absence of meaningful interaction and the absence of feedback within the framework of a lesson are serious impediments to attaining oral proficiency. Timings of feedback correction in relation to lesson shifts and classroom designs discourage active participation, especially of feeling vulnerable and anxious. In the same way, Horwitz (2010) claims that focusing anxiety is one of the principal barriers of practicing a language, therefore stunting potential progress outside of the classroom. Within the Ecuadorian context, the effect of diminished classroom hours, low qualifications of

instructors, and unvaried teaching methods magnifies the existing issues (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2021).

As a result, many university graduates encounter difficulties with oral communication despite the national curriculum stating the importance of communicative competence. Gaps such as these demonstrate the need for expanding students' facilitation of oral practice, personalized feedback, and opportunities for self-study outside of class.

Importance and Relevance

The implementation of integration of the AI system Speak & Improve within the educational system is timely, and long overdue given the need to address the oral communicational skills component of English proficiency. The ability to speak English is critical to the academics, and more so, the larger, more competitive work environment. However, in the traditional language classes, teachers are not able to provide the amount of speaking practice that the students need. More importantly, there is no way to give them personalized feedback. Speak & Improve AI training, practice and feedback are centered to address the needs students develop in the classroom. This fosters autonomous educational development, increased motivation and confidence. It, therefore, is a resource that is best suited to complement real time and delayed instructional interventions. The system also enables students to develop sufficient English skills and communicative competence to participate in activities and real-time interactions with the system also enables utilize students to develop sufficient English skills and communicative competence to participate activities and real time interactions English.

This research focusses on the incorporation of speaking skills resource 'Speak & Improve' Technology in Higher. In this case, the incorporation of Innovations in Language Teaching and Learning and Technological. Resources for the Development of Communicative Competence is the frame of reference for this work. The convergence of these two lines of research shows the growing the integration of innovative and technological resources in higher education and the greater need for competent use of English for academic and professional purposes.

Furthermore, in the context of university studies, the work narrows down to the use of the tool in the domain of public discourse, which directly aligns with the institutional goal

of fostering the capacity for innovative use of speaking skills through the application of innovative pedagogical approaches. This line of research within Innovation in Language Teaching and Learning is vital since it advocates for the seamless integration of technological resources and challenges the educational community to innovate pedagogical practices to meet learners' and society's communication needs. Current innovative practices encourage autonomy, learner-centeredness, and authentic communication in tasks as primary drivers of learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

The emergence of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) began as simple drill-and-practice exercises and has now developed into systems that use generative AI to adapt to learners' needs. These systems include mobile applications, interactive platforms, and advanced AI technologies(Levy & Stockwell, 2013). These systems are particularly helpful for developing learners' speaking skills as they offer risk-free environments, learners can repeat exercises as often as they wish, and they provide immediate adjudication on speaking skills to aid learners in problem areas.

In this sense, digital resources such as Speak & Improve can contribute to the development of communicative competence – the integrated skills and knowledge needed to communicate in context effectively and appropriately – (a) grammatical competence (knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, and phonology); (b) sociolinguistic competence (the rules of use and appropriateness); and (c) discourse competence (cohesion and coherence), as proposed by Canale & Swain (1980). AI-driven learning systems like SAI can integrate the dimensions of communicative competence by stimulating communication situations, strategic feedback prompts, and progress tracking.

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly influencing the transformation of educational technologies. Speak & improve, for example, assesses learners' oral English, evaluates pronunciation, and provides real-time, tailored feedback (Warschauer & Liaw, 2019). Moreover, AI considerably promotes learner autonomy through the self-paced, personalised practice AI systems offer, which goes beyond and reinforces traditional in-class learning. Practising in private, AI-assisted environments reduces anxiety and affects the filter for learners (Krashen, 1985), as they can practice without the fear of evaluation by their peers.

AI platforms also comply with the tenets of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards, 2006), and promote meaningful, learner-centered interaction. AI

instruments promote fluency and accuracy by involving the learners in communicative activities, followed by feedback that centers on self-correction.

International studies have shown the benefits of AI and digital platforms on learners' speaking skills. For example, Sun & Yang (2015) investigated an online speaking workflow that centered on the creation of student short videos and structured peer feedback within a closed-class group in Taiwan. One of the practices mentioned here includes the synthesis, documentation, sharing of presentations, followed by the detailing of the presentations where the learners got the opportunity to participate in feedback rounds and discuss with their peers. This sequence of guided comments and interactions functioning on the level of feedback to the learners provided the opportunity to build fluency and accuracy of the learners in the given task. In the context of Korea, learners are using AI for speaking practice, providing learners with activities to build their self-confidence and improve accuracy of their pronunciation. Some examples incorporate the Speak & Improve, with automated speech-recognition (ASR) trainers, and dialogue chatbots. Standard speaking tasks are read–aloud, and sentence repetition, guided picture description, open roleplay, dialogue with the chatbot, and all these tasks.

Ramírez & Méndez (2021) described the level of motivation and autonomy of the students in Colombia. This improvement is understood to derive from the three features typical to the AI-enabled platforms, namely (a) immediate personalized feedback provided, and progress rendered visible after every attempt; (b) control of the practice time and sequence; (c) practice is self-paced; and (d) learners manage. Progress is self-guided with the establishment and observation of the goal of the learners from their dashboards. The combination of these attributes reduces evaluative anxiety, encourages purposeful engagement, and increases the volume and visibility of practice. Evidence from Chile suggests that well-structured online environments can address the anxiety related to speaking and disengagement common to many bilingual programs. Studies from Mexico show that students tend to overcome the reluctance to make errors in speaking through a high frequency of low-stakes practice.

The data confirms that anxiety and motivation are two affective dimensions, along with the skills of speaking, that platforms such as SAI are designed to enhance. However, the limited evidence on how such platforms can be integrated into the teaching practice of the

teaching goals in mind is somewhat problematic. According to Warschauer & Liaw (2019), it is critical that technology merely augment the interaction and guidance a teacher provides, rather than completely replace it.

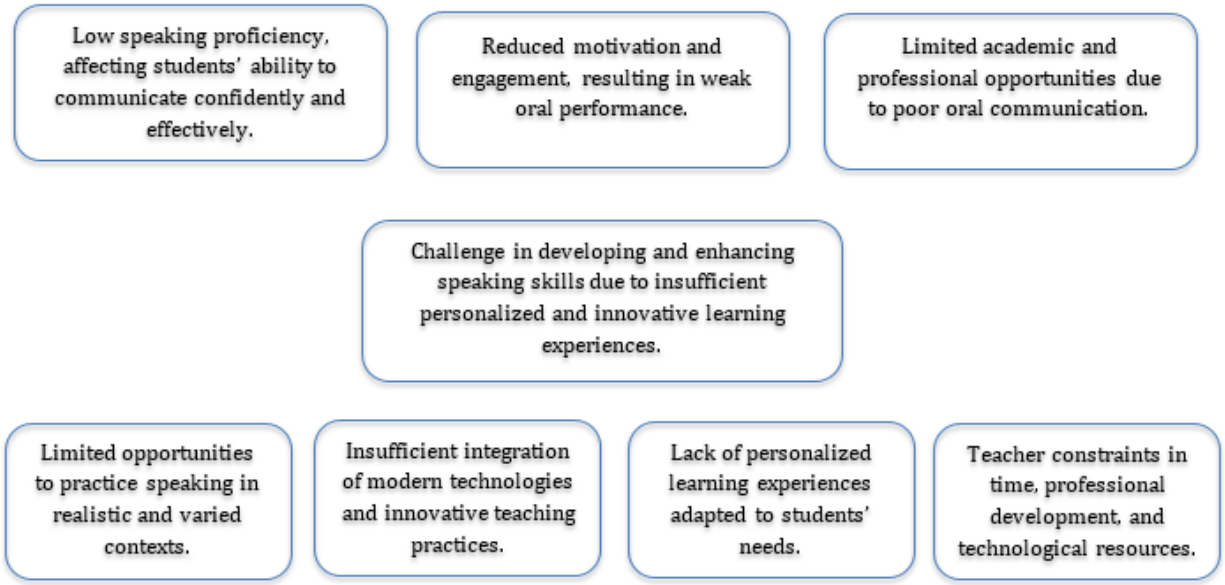
Academia Cevallos & Soto (2019); Véliz & Campoverde (2020) highlight the lack of learner development of oral proficiency in Ecuador since the onset of the Covid-19 blended and online learning implementations and their limited impact on the development of speaking skills. In particular, González & Maldonado (2022) points out the fact that the mobile applications Duolingo and Busuu are used widely by the learners, yet their use remains unexploited in university curricula.

The Ministry of Education (2021) calls for the embedding of digital literacy and the use of technology in pedagogical approaches to facilitate language learning. Nonetheless, there are still unmet needs in teacher training and empty gaps in the pedagogy and resource framework responsive to the local context. Accordingly, the value of the AI-enabled tools, such as Speak & Improve, has not yet been fully realized or studied in the context of Ecuadorian higher education.

This study aims to investigate the effect of SAI on the speaking performance of A1-level students at Universidad Tecnológica Indoamérica. The study is situated within the line of innovation research and the subline of technological resources, addressing the techno-pedagogical priorities in the country. It also adds to the international discourse on the use technology in learning and teaching the English language. Nevertheless, the study has to be regarded within the established limitations of the research. The sample of 20 students is small, and the duration of the study (ten sessions) is insufficient to gauge any real or long-term development in speaking proficiency. The study focused on four evaluative criteria (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and interactive communication) to the exclusion of other determinants of oral performance, like motivation, anxiety, the presence or absence of technological resources, etc. The other factors postulated here and the scope of the current study being as limited as it is, pave the way for more extensive research. The present study, however, is significant as it demonstrates to what extent AI-powered technology can assist in developing oral skills in higher education in Ecuador.

The educational incorporation of Speak & Improve into English language teaching fulfills educational demands in Ecuador and is consistent with worldwide tendencies in

language acquisition. Encompassing the innovation research line and the technological resources subline, this investigation highlights the significance of AI-assisted instruments and the technological resources subline, this investigation highlights the significance of AI-assisted instruments. This work illustrates how technology can enhance speaking skills, especially in higher education, by bridging the gap between theory and practice.



Graphic N°1. Problem Tree
Elaborates by: Lcda. Cristina Alexandra Salinas Tamayo

Problem Statement

There is strong evidence that students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Ecuadorian higher education are likely to have unchallenged speaking skills. While document reforms have prioritized curricula to include skills on communicating effectively, students require significant time to attain desired outcomes of speaking fluency and accuracy. This possibly relates to constraints such as insufficient instructional time, insufficient classroom space, and limited resources, all which obstruct communicative practice. According to Burns & Hinkel (2017), students seem to pass-up opportunities to elevate their proficiency in speech. Furthermore, students in EFL contexts experience communicative situations surprising and real, which delays their progress concerning communicative competence.

There is no doubt that insufficient time for speaking practice is a result of redundant traditional teaching approaches which emphasize and prioritize grammar, and written exercises, an ongoing issue. Additionally, in varying classrooms, accuracy of grammar structures tends to dominate focus, and such, stifles students' real-life communicative attainment as well as their confidence and spontaneity. This also points to a teaching practice imbalanced focus in the locality. Supporting the unbalanced teaching practice, Carless & Boud (2018) noted the continuation of an unbalanced teaching focus on form rather than use, bringing a wider unbalance in curricula, the oral proficiency of learners, and communicatively.

Thus, it is important to explore novel, technologically integrated practices designed to offer learners the possibility to develop skills in real-world, interactive scenarios

Research question

How does the use of the website "Speak & Improve" influence the development of speaking skills in A1-level students at the Language Center at Catholic University in Ambato, Ecuador?

Research Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that integrating the website "Speak & Improve" into English language instruction will enhance the development of speaking skills among A1-level Catholic university students by providing continuous practice, personalized feedback, and increased learner autonomy.

Alternatively, this study proposes the research idea that digital platforms, such as "Speak & Improve," represent effective technological interventions to support the development of speaking skills in higher education.

Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of this research are A1-level students at the Language Center of Catholic University in Ambato, Ecuador. The study involves 20 students (10 women and 10 men) classified at A1 according to the institution's CEFR-aligned placement procedures. In line with Cambridge's CEFR A1 can-do descriptors, learners can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases; introduce themselves and others and ask/answer simple questions about personal details; and interact in a simple way, provided

interlocutors speak slowly and clearly and are prepared to help. These characteristics make them an appropriate population for examining improvements in speaking skills through AI-mediated tools such as Speak & Improve (SAI).

Additionally, indirect beneficiaries include the academic community and institutional authorities, as the findings of this research may inform pedagogical decisions and future curriculum design. the study illustrates the successful use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) applications which help present English language teaching pedagogy that English language teachers can use. This study demonstrates educators how the AI-driven "Speak & Improve" platform can be applied to teaching practices to cultivate students' communication skills, thereby illustrating the sought-after value of AI in pedagogy.

Consequently, the focus of the study benefits the concerned students and expands the educational ecosystem by enhancing teachers' insights and fostering new methodologies in language instruction. Certainly, the small number of students participating in the study (20), as well as the specificity of the university context, make the findings of this study non-generalizable; however, this serves the purpose of a pilot study for future, larger studies. The number of classes (10) is relatively small and may not give a clear picture of long-term improvement; however, it will help define the parameters of the study to show the extent to which visual aids improve communication within a short span of time.

The same applies to the areas of assessment of speaking: grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation, interaction—there were four of them, but in general, they cover the most important elements of speaking and will be of great benefit to the future researcher. Inevitably, such features will be present in the study; elements such as internet accessibility, computer literacy, as well as affective features such as motivation, and anxiety. All these elements will be added to make the study viable, but still the findings provide a basis for the researcher of these elements to start work on them for their incorporation into larger studies. The purpose of such studies is to help master speaking skills in a foreign language in the context of higher education with the help of visual aids.

Objectives: General and specific.

- **General Objective:**

  - To determine the effectiveness of the website platform "Speak & Improve" on the development of speaking skills in A1-level students in higher education.

- **Specific Objectives:**

1. To identify the most common problems students, experience in developing speaking skills through a pre-test evaluation
2. To integrate the Speak & Improve platform into ten classes to enhance students' speaking skills.
3. To assess A1-level students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of the *Speak & Improve* platform to examine the impact of the platform on the students' English-speaking proficiency.
4. To analyze A1-level students' perceptions of using *Speak & Improve* as a tool to enhance their communicative competence.

CHAPTER I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has gained traction in higher education globally as Anglicization occurs in the globalization and digitization of processes. Being able to communicate in English is necessary for a person's academic and professional career and is advantageous for international social relations. In South America, and particularly Ecuador, the teaching of English has been a prioritized in major educational policies as it is perceived as crucial for educational attainment, the enhancement of social strata, and the internationalization of opportunities. Nonetheless, there have been efforts from the government surrounding this policy, but the outcomes are lower compared to other countries which are transition countries, thus the need for new innovative and inclusive technological means to expedite and enhance the EFL teaching and learning processes

As Brown and Abeywickrama (2019) have also observed, speaking should not only be seen as a characteristic of an individual speaking, but as a communicative skill which is the ability to interact in a communicative scenario. Consequently, it is paramount that there be the installation of appropriate EFL methods and technological means to provide the necessary practice and feedback within a given time.

Ecuadorian universities have slowly begun digitizing components of their language programs. However, many institutions still utilize a deep reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methodologies, thus minimizing opportunities for real communicative interaction. Consequently, learners often develop language skills with a predominance of intermediate levels in reading and listening, while their level of speaking remains low (Ministry of Education, 2021, p. 19). Therefore, examining novel instruments such as Speak & Improve is a wonderful start (within a wider technology context) to learn how to foster learner independence and real proficiency in speaking.

This research is located on the borders of EFL pedagogy, the use of technology for language learning, and the context of Ecuadorian university students. This research focuses on the use of Speak & Improve and the local context, thus attempting to foster relationships between theory and practice with respect to speaking skills. The chapter begins with the most recent studies on the integration of technology in language education, both in and out of the country, and ends with the presentation of the theoretical framework guiding the work.

Previous Studies

National Context

Students encounter various issues when trying to learn English, especially when trying to speak. Some researchers discussed that students fail to learn English, despite new methods of teaching in Ecuadorian universities. Curriculum changes especially in pedagogy, focused on communication at the university level, however, students continue to demonstrate A2 level competency of English (Cevallos & Soto, (2019)) Running tests simply demonstrate that students learn, no less, no more. Students learn vocabulary, grammar, and structure, yet measures that motivate students to speak are nonexistent in the classroom. The need for students to exercise their communicative competencies is, arguably, the missing element in communicative competency pedagogy.

Véliz & Campoverde (2020) describes how hybrid classrooms are established in Ecuadorian universities. Class introductions provided students a forum and opportunity to practice english, but students simply didn't speak in these forums. They actively participated in the course doing their assigned readings, and listened to the lectures. Students did the work, and even did the readings for class, yet did not speak. Students had minimal opportunities to practice speaking. As time was limited, students spoke even less. The lack of speaking, was however evident during listening and reading activities. Used classroom time for speaking was limited, so students wanted even less speaking, less.

The Ministry of Education (2021) mentions the necessary digital literacy and technology integration in the teaching of a language. However, insufficient technology integration into the oral practice of a language has resulted from the gaps in teacher training and a lack of relevant resources. As González & Maldonado (2022) noted, language learning applications such as Duolingo and Busuu are used informally by a considerable number of learners, yet their use is seldom integrated into teaching practices in a coherent manner, and their contribution to the development of learners' speaking skills is still unclear.

The use of AI and mobile learning tools in a language classroom in Ecuador has also been of interest to researchers. One such study in Loja using the Smalltalk2Me AI application reported a positive impact on learners' speaking skills in terms of pronunciation and fluency, even though technological and user familiarity challenges existed (Díaz, D. & Bustos Rodríguez, 2025). Similar mobile-assisted language learning enhancements to Quito's

traditional instruction models support speaking skills when mobile applications are integrated as structured additions to conversation practice (Criollo, Luján, & Jaramillo, 2022). Studies conducted on Ecuador polytechnic students acknowledged the advantages of MALL. The students reported improvements in vocabulary acquisition, but they had difficulties on the speaking aspect which was the weakest language skill because of insufficient feedback (Estrella, 2024). Students at the Chimborazo Polytechnic School reported positive shifts in expression due to frequent self-driven practice with the WhatsApp application for speaking (Guacho, Castro, & Viteri, 2020). The results indicate the necessity of using instructional technologies that motivate learners and assist in the development of oral skills. Speak and Improve gives students a safe platform on which they can practice solo using self-improving algorithms and get personalized immediate feedback.

The national research is clear on the importance of purposeful design in educational technology which aims to improve learners' oral communication skills. Of these efforts, Speak & Improve is an AI-based tool which offers personalized feedback on speaking in real time. Although this tool bolsters communication skills, no thorough investigation has been conducted on its use in higher education in Ecuador.

International Context

On a global scale, the reviewed literature on the integration of technology in teaching languages has almost universally claimed the integration of technology helps to enhance the development of learners' speaking skills. For example, in Taiwan, Sun and Yang (2015) found that online speaking platforms improved learners' speaking skills fluency and accuracy if they received immediate individualized feedback. Likewise, in South Korea, Lee and Hwang (2017) noted that learners completing AI-mediated speaking activities developed greater self-confidence and improved their pronunciation compared to learners who participated in the traditional classroom activities and teaching.

Considering Europe, the advocacy and description of AI in providing scalable and individualized language practice in the Cambridge English Digital Framework (Cambridge English, 2019) is insightful. Although it is an established fact that and should never be the case that teaching should be the primary task of AI, the framework describes the benefits of technology in helping learners practice speaking and get formative feedback in the learning process. In the UK, this is the case in the pilot studies using Speak & Improve, where learners

increased their motivation to practice speaking after receiving feedback from the system (Cambridge Assessment English, 2020).

The outcomes of studies from Latin America also appear to be similar. In Colombia, for instance, learning with the use of AI has also been reported to enhance learner motivation and autonomy particularly in the ability to communicate (Ramirez & Mendez, 2021). Students appreciated the possibility of controlling the pace of practice and the neutral feedback by the AI tools, as opposed to what teachers usually provide. Researchers in Brazil, Mexico, and Chile claim that AI tools improve not only oral fluency, but also the participants' awareness of pronunciation and other cultural dimensions of communication. For instance, digital tools in Chilean bilingual programs increased participation and reduced students' speaking anxiety. A similar situation was reported in Mexico, where AI-powered tools helped learners engage more in risky oral tasks, and subsequently, assisted in performance improvement.

Nevertheless, the positive impacts technology offers are predicated on the seamless integration of a well-structured pedagogical framework, something researchers suggest requires caution. Digital technology, as suggested by Warschauer and Liaw (2019), needs to be integrated into teaching methodologies that incorporate interaction, reflection and feedback; otherwise, the impacts will be limited to the teaching methodologies in use and peripheral. The absence of missing teacher training and institutional support/ teacher training and institutional support is crucial because without its students and teachers won't be able to take full advantage of what is offered/ the benefits of the AI.

The research conducted in various educational environments shows that it is possible to use programs such as Speak & Improve to help develop/ Improve is to help develop students' oral competencies/ skills. However, the use of such technology in Ecuadorian higher education needs to be examined in greater detail to determine its usefulness. in the context of higher education, many contextual and socio-cultural elements need to be considered.

Theoretical Framework

Looking at the research, we understand that Speak & Improve type programs work to help develop the oral proficiency of learners. However, given the institutional and

sociocultural factors and variables at play, these programs require further and more specific research to determine the benefits for higher education learners in Ecuador.

Furthermore, in addition to the previous study findings, the introduction of AI-assisted speaking tools in higher education, especially in the Ecuadorian context, needs to take institutional preparedness and local pedagogical approaches into consideration. The integration of digital learning platforms in Ecuadorian education environments is commonly met with inadequate levels of technology access, insufficient training for facilitators, and a persistence of traditional teaching methods. Such sociocultural and infrastructural factors influence the ways in which students can – or are encouraged to – engage with the tool's educational technologies offer. This in turn often diminishes the several benefits, pedagogical and otherwise, tools such as Speak & Improve offer. Hence, a theoretical examination of such a tool is not enough. The system in which the tool is used must also be examined. Learning outcomes are to be determined not only by the available technology, but by the system in which the learning occurs.

Additionally, the growing global presence of AI-powered language tools opens new horizons for higher education institutions to address the balance between classroom teaching and self-directed learning. The situation in Ecuador is, since university students often juggle their studies with a job and/or family. The ability to practice orally in a flexible and repeated manner is a tool that can significantly enable learning beyond lessons. The practice of students autonomously is a process that can be adapted and aligned with various educational innovation trends and aids in the formation of sustainable speaking skills. Consequently, to assess Speak & Improve theoretically, it is important to relate its features to the current understanding of autonomy, self-regulation, and personalization for learning, especially for educational systems in their infancy.

English language proficiency is mandatory for both professional and academic mobility. This has led to a renewed demand for Ecuadorian universities to restructure their approaches to teaching English. University courses must be complemented by the use of speak and improve. This is a classroom-oriented software to assist students prepare for the IELTS and TOEFL tests. Though hypothesis. Sociocultural Theory and CALL must be addressed first. It is the purposes of these approaches that advance and somewhat constrict

the theory of Second Language Acquisition to analyze the software's impact on the oral proficiency of higher education students in Ecuador.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) model focuses on developing communicative competence instead of rote learning of grammar and vocabulary. Richards (2006), illustrates that this is one of the most prominent approaches and has had widespread influence on practicing teaching English as a foreign language. Canale and Swain (1980) outline the necessary competences as linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic dimensions. However, this model places a noticeable emphasis on oral classroom communication, as students are intended to learn and apply the language in real communicative situations and contexts.

The principles of the CLT are evident in Speak and Improve, where students respond in real time to and engage in tasks that require them to partake in real-life communication by answering questions, narrating experiences, and describing scenarios. Speak and Improve patrons can receive feedback instantly which helps them to pinpoint their strengths as well as weaknesses, aiding the self-correction and practice cycle. Furthermore, by centering instruction on the learners as Guided CLT suggests, Speak and Improve, as an AI powered tool, gives students the opportunity to self-regulate their pace and thus promotes full engagement.

The most important feature of CLT is its orientation on the interactivity of the use of language. It positions learning language as a social, meaning making process, emerging from negotiating the complex interplay of intentions, interpretations, and reactions. It views the process of learning and using language as a social, meaning making process. CLT views learning and using language as social process and communication is not the purpose, but rather the primary means through which learning takes place. This is why the use of educational technologies that allow the simulating of real time communicative tasks is useful. It is consistent with CLT educational principles especially when learners can verbalize, take turns, and respond to the tasks of the system spontaneously. Speak & Improve tasks learners are provided with tasks that attempt to replicate real life interaction, demanding a high degree of communicative competence.

Another of CLT's major principles is that learners should engage in the production of language should be provided with the opportunities to carry out extended spans of discourse that encourage recurrent use of syntax and vocabulary. AI driven speaking tools afford this opportunity as learners are prompted to talk about events, share opinions, and tell stories. As learners engage in these activities, they can develop their discourse competence, which is a fundamental dimension of communicative competence. The instant feedback feature built into the interface also supports this reflection principle of CLT, whereby learners are able to analyze their communicative choices after performing tasks and after they access the system to receive feedback on their completed activities.

CLT has to some degree learner-centered orientation. Students decide when and how to engage. Speak & Improve allows students to decide when and how to practice. This helps students internalize the norms of communication and complete tasks at varying degrees of meaningfulness more than once. Modelling of communication tasks helps students regain some of the lost opportunities of speaking in English in real contexts. This has the potential to build confidence for speaking in the real situations. This will also be the case in Ecuador, where students have little unstructured opportunities for speaking English.

The use of technology in teaching also raises some questions regarding the relationship between learner and teacher as it has evolved in the context of CLT. The use of AI as a multi-modal tool changes the context of CLT and replaces the teacher as the primary mediator in the tasks. It also requires a redefinition of communicative competence, as it is the students constructing meaning in these technologically enabled contexts. Devices and systems of AI will work on their behalf to offer conversational engagements, sustaining a dialogue.

Krashen's Input Hypothesis

Based on the work of other writers, Krashen in 1985 said that language acquisition is the result of learners receiving comprehensible input in i + 1 form, which is, input that is just a little above the learners current level of competence. While input alone is not the activator of the development of the learners speaking skills, it prepares the learners for further linguistic development. Speak & Improve provides students with input and output by means of designed prompts, which help students process the input and also produce or speak the language. The platform's flexible design enables activities to be customized to every learner's

ability for optimal advancement and development. Identifiable new structures of language are mastered during interactions within the system of Speak and Improve via the grip of Internalization language. The different language acted upon promotes automaticity.

The foundation of the Input Hypothesis claims that language acquisition alone cannot take place without the learner being given input that is at least at the stage of the learner but contain new structures within to be language to push the learner up a stage. In a mediated digitally environment this dissemination of input with the above components takes on different forms. Speak and Improve does this by giving scenarios and questions that the learner needs to understand to execute the instructions of the task and activating the appropriate prior knowledge. This layered design will offer a variety of benefits for students that struggle to process spoken language to support their comprehension.

Moreover, the system offers learners the same opportunity of repetition from their own education module. Educational repetition will allow learners to automate low-level tasks while they work on more advanced skills. This is similar to Krashens theory of language acquisition being a slow, subconscious process that is formed through over time through meaningful contact rather than through explicit focus on grammar. By hearing a similar question type or a focus of the same field over and over, learners can complete the actions and process the information making it available to them to produce the words fluently.

Equally important is the platforms personalized approach to tasks which allows for the step by step completion of more difficult activities. This is the gradual increase of challenge to tasks that is central to the i+1 theory which underpins Speak and Improve. This theory is crucial to many skills in educational settings and is particularly beneficial in tertiary level education where learners have many varying levels of class. This tailored approach enables learners to work with the level of words that will allow them to sustain a meaningful engagement and continue to promote oral language in education.

The low-anxiety environment provided by the platform also amplifies Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis which states that emotions (anxiety, motivation, confidence, etc.) impact how we process our inputs. Because learners engage in practice solo, which eliminates the presence of peer judgment, their anxiety levels drop which allows for better processing of input. Emotional safety is critical in places such as Ecuador which is well documented for students' high anxiety in relation to public speaking English.

Swain's Output Hypothesis

Building on Krashen's ideas, Swain (1995) further argued that in addition to input, output also plays an important role in the language learning process. They argued that language output pushes learners to process the language at a deeper level, submit their hypotheses, and point out the gaps in their knowledge. So, evidence of output is the presence of learning, but it also serves as a vehicle for learning.

The tool creating opportunities for learners to produce speech is improvement feedback system self directs learners to for improvement. This aligns to noticing function of Swain. Production feedback self corrective loops improves and motivates learners to communicate more. Refinement of learners schemata for new language and accuracy is the essence of Swains Output hypothesis. This is amplified in learning environments that leverage technology. Speak & Improve gives learners opportunities for articulate ideas through speech and self reformulation of responses and structures freely. This process in its entirety is advocacy of Swain that learning and not lingustic output is the end.

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In addition, Speak & Improve alleviates several social and psychological barriers that typically stop learners from producing output in class settings. Students often stay silent in class because they don't want to make mistakes or be judged. However, the platform provides a low-stakes environment in which learners can freely produce output and test the waters. Such an environment upholds the hypothesis that output is most beneficial when learners can take risks and participate in linguistic experimentation.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky presents learning also as a social phenomenon where one can access help within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Although learning on this construct

usually depends on a teacher or a classroom peer, scaffolding by other means such as task design and feedback can also be used on a digital environment.

While Speak & Improve does not offer the social aspect of learning, it does offer some form of scaffolding by providing feedback that is responsive to the individual's ZPD. The activities done in the classroom complement the use of the platform and together create a blended learning environment where students can exercise autonomy and later apply their skills in real-world communicative activities. Moreover, the support offered digitally and face to face means that learners can operate in a low stakes environment which can help mitigate some of the pressure and provide an arena where they can pursue their learning in a more open-ended, innovative, and experimental way.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory states that learning is mediated by interaction. Learning is supported by scaffolding that lifts learner from one level of competence to the next. In digital learning environments, scaffolding is often built into the task design, automated feedback, and adaptive features that help learners. Real-time feedback is individual feedback and scaffolding. Speak & Improve does not replicate human interaction but helps learners within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) by providing cues, corrective feedback, and performance indicators to help learners achieve targeted improvements in their speaking skills.

The absence of interaction and the feedback mechanism still bear the principles of Sociocultural Theory. In the principles of Sociocultural Theory, self-regulation is another important factor. Learners gradually acquire self-monitoring and self-evaluating skill. This is because of practice and engagement with feedback iteratively. This internalization of external guidance that is external to the learner is a process that Vygotsky describes as learning which is the external social input being converted to individual cognitive processes. The design of Speak & Improve where learners are allowed to monitor their learning by providing feedback and revisiting the task helps in self-regulation through self-reflection which is imperative in metacognition.

In blended learning environments, the tool can also enhance collaborative classroom activities. Students can rehearse individually with the platform, and then move on to the group work with greater confidence and expanded linguistic resources for the discussions, debates, or role-plays. This way the tool provides preparatory scaffolding for the social

interactions and shows how the digital and human elements can work together in the ZPD. This is precisely what Ecuadorian universities hoping to combine technology with communicative activities are looking for to modernize their pedagogy while preserving collaborative teaching approaches.

This is also the reduced anxiety that comes with AI-mediated practice, which reflects another of Vygotsky's insights about the emotional dimensions of learning. When learners feel emotionally safe and secure, they are more likely to try out new, unfamiliar forms, they are more likely to address open questions, and they are more likely to take an active role in their own learning. This is how Speak & Improve works in practice: It is a mediational tool that fosters the cognitive dimensions of learning while simultaneously providing the emotional background for successful language learning in the process.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

From simple, computer-based exercises, the domain of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has extended to more advanced, machine-learning systems. With regards to the interaction, how environments tailor to learners, and how environments provide feedback, feedback, Chapelle (2003) CALL advocates. *Speak & Improve* system assesses learners' speech and responds to each learner, providing tailored feedback.

Levy and Stockwell (2013) mention autonomy and motivation as constructive factors of CALL. Learners tend to become more engaged and insistent as they set their objectives, control their pacing, and track their advancement. At the more advanced educational level, CALL more largely describes the transition from an instructor-centered to a learner-centered paradigm whereby technology affords students more control of their learning.

Collectively these perspectives provide a solid base for assessing the impact of Speak & Improve on the development of speaking skills. Each of these perspectives addresses a different aspect of language learning, while also demonstrating the ways in which technology can enhance teaching practice in higher education in Ecuador.

Global evidence also affirms the impact of AI on oral practice. Wang & Liu (2018) showed that university students enhanced their interactional competence through AI tools, particularly when they did online practice prior to the in-person presentations. In Japan, digital self-access labs with automated feedback decreased the anxiety associated with speaking and a higher readiness to communicate.

Hamouda (2020) research on Saudi students in the Middle East, however, illustrates a gradual improvement in confidence, particularly in intercultural communication, as students in Saudi Arabia were prompted and guided through virtually simulated exercises that included a range of intercultural encounters. Within the context, it is reasonable to conclude that the commensurate growth of technology in education aimed at fostering language skills development also enhances the degree of learners' intercultural sensitivity.

Overall, the evidence on the global level is consistent in showing that there is a high level of technology (especially educational technology) and a very low level of educational outcomes, and particularly a low level of educational outcomes in systems characterized by limited access to educational technology, unqualified teachers, and a high degree of underuse of educational technology. Ecuador is characterized by high levels of unqualified and low levels of education, especially in secondary and higher education, English, and low levels of educational outcomes. Ecuador is characterized by low levels of unqualified and low levels of education, especially in secondary and higher education, English.

It is important to consider the confluence, or the interplay, of the concepts discussed in the previous section in the real world, as the theoretical models outlined so far require the practical application of these constructs to be fully realized and understood. For example, in the field of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the importance of interaction is taken to the next level as stimulated conversations/ dialogues are a fundamental feature of AI, allowing a learner to engage in a simulated environment to perform frequent repetitions. Thus, providing a learner paired with an AI reflective corrective feedback system is the optimum condition through which deep fluency and accuracy can be achieved in a short period of time.

Digital environments have provided support Krashen’s Input Hypothesis with learners interacting with not only text and audio but with visual and contextual cues. These elements of the interface are directed towards a learners’ speaking production. The instructional design of the platform in fact embodies the Output Hypothesis as feedback is provided on all produced output which subsequent research shows to facilitate metacognitive self-regulation as well as deep processing. The feedback provided in these platforms imitates classroom environments where peers provide feedback resulting in a high degree of personalization and consistency.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory posits that while technologies can be beneficial for individual use, their advantages are broadened in combination with participatory collaborative learning. Learners can use Speak & Improve as a self-study tool and later apply their abilities in collaborative settings, such as in debates, role-plays, or discussions. This combination of digital scaffolding and social collaboration is the application of ZPD Theory.

Such integration resonates with the current preoccupations of Ecuadorian universities regarding the triad of the and client management, client participation, and the use of technology in the teaching of English as a foreign language. "Speak and improve" AI tool. This study examines "Speak & Improve" (SAI) feature, one of the AI-based tools from the Cambridge University Press & Assessment, which allows users to partake in self-guided speaking exercises, record their speech for instant feedback, and receive AI feedback aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. (CEFR). SAI aims to provide learners with a low-stress environment for speaking practice and encourage them to use the system repeatedly while tracking their progress, through a feedback mechanism with scores (Cambridge Assessment English, 2020).

For large classrooms, it can be hard to provide personalized responses to students. Computer assisted speech technologies like SAI allow students to receive personalized feedback on their speech-related skills such as pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary. This feedback helps learners (and their teachers) to realize where the learners need to focus their energies on improvement. This feedback helps learners close the gap on their deficiencies as well as refine their overall fluency (or competency) in the second language they are attempting to master (Swain, 1985). Additionally, Ecuadorian students with work and family a obligations are likely to benefit from the fact that the SAI program allows students to practice with the program for as long as they'd like. The program also helps reinforce the skills learned in class.

In the early days of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), there was little interactivity. The focus was on learning from technology to learning with technology. CALL has evolved, and researchers focus on user interactivity and responsiveness of technology. Speak and Improve (SAI) is a program that exemplifies this focus on interactivity to foster ongoing personalized learning for each user. Users receive instant feedback which allows for

the user to refine and rethink their responses which results in learning at their skill level plus ongoing improvement. The extent of personalization showcased here is a notable advancement in the design of CALL since it embodies some of the adaptive features of human tutors.

This tool also aids in the development of self-direction on the part of the learners and self-direction has become a priority in many CALLS. Speak and Improve gets learners in the habit of self-directed learning by allowing them to control the frequency, time, and selection of the tasks to work on. Autonomy stands paramount in higher education and is a necessary ingredient in the training of students as responsible adults in their academic learning. In the case of Ecuador, where in-class time is too limited for intensive speaking practice, self-directed digital practice is an essential supplement to formal instruction.

Moreover, CALL research identified motivational facets of learning in digital contexts. The interactivity of the practice and the immediate feedback can stimulate the learners and keep them interested in practicing their speaking skills. The fact that many learners feel that the feedback provided by AI systems is less threatening than that of a teacher is also important as it decreases affective barriers to speaking and can result in higher fluency. In the end, all motivational factors described here can lead to improved performance and increased sustained effort.

Regardless of such issues as speaking practices on Speak & Improve, the biggest challenges of CALL continue to be the reliability of the Internet and the possibility of technical malfunctions, all of which are paramount concerns across Ecuador. On the other hand, instantaneous AI feedback, even on pronominal language, is unable to address some pragmatic issues. For all these reasons, CALL practices should be complemented by some form of teacher supervision, incorporating the necessary sociolinguistic components.

Role of "Speak and Improve" in Language Learning

Speak and Improve helps bridge the gaps in formal teaching and self-study. It lets learners reenact and rehearse classroom speaking activities. Everything is done in accordance with the specifications of communicative and learner centered pedagogy. Speak and Improve helps move the locus of control from the teacher to the learners outside of the classroom and supports the development of the learners' self-direction.

Having the ability to communicate is of great pedagogical value. It is a bridge between the formal and informal contexts of learning; and the informal learning context enhances the formal one. With Speak and Improve, learners can take the learning from the classroom and apply it independently, thereby reinforcing newly learned items (structures and vocab). To avoid learning gaps, it is important to have a seamless flow between learning and practice. This is, especially, true for learners who have little exposure to the target language in a week.

One of the platform's most unique characteristics is its role in making repetitive speaking practice accessible. Due to the anxiety of being judged or the absence of conversation partners, a lot of students do not practice speaking outside the classroom. Speak & Improve provides students the opportunity to practice as often as they desire, thus helping them rehearse in a judgment-free environment. In the long run, repetitive practice not only improves speaking fluency, but also helps in automating speaking processes as well as in building confidence in speaking with real interlocutors.

The platform also acts as a self-assessment tool and enables learners to recognize and appreciate their linguistic profiles. Learners find out aspects of their speech performance even in their self-assessment because the feedback tells them their speech performance in relation to pronunciation, intonation, fluency, and lexical choices. In the diagnostic value facilitates individualized learning paths and helps to design the classroom activities even at the group level to address the most common performance deficits in the students.

Participation in speaking activities during class instruction has a significant impact on the growth of learner`s communicative abilities. Learners must incorporate their knowledge of the language they are learning to speak into their processes during real-life speaking tasks in class. During real-life speaking tasks in class students must perform a vocabulary retrieval act on the part of the students during the speaking task. They must also perform a retrieval of grammatical structures and language. Adaptation of language on the part of the students in class to the given task is also required. This complex cognitive process increases the level of fluency and accuracy. This also helps the students to learn the structures of the language more effectively than practicing with written tasks. Besides, speaking tasks provide opportunities for meaning negotiation, clarification, and feedback. All of which contribute to deeper language acquisition.

One more benefit of speaking activities is the impact on learner`s pragmatic competence which allows students to see the impact of their communication in real-life situations. Students learn to see social cues. They also learn how to Lengthy to their communication, and to the task demands. A learner's ability to control a communication task with a given language in real-life communication situations is often neglected in traditional instruction. As a result, speaking activities integrated in the content of the lesson are more than just a communication skill. They also provide a way to complete learning of the target language.

Benefits and Challenges of Using Speak and Improve in English as a Foreign Language

Speak and Improve offers immediate feedback and a safe environment to practice. Students can practice as often as they would like, and the platform reduces the barriers to developing one's speaking abilities. Some difficulties presented by the program include the reliance on a strong internet connection, the limited interaction a user has apart from the program's feedback system, and the possibility that over practice could take place to the point where the developmental speaking practice has little utility.

The strongest advantage presented by the program is the ability to customize each learner's experience. Since the program modifies and adjusts to each learner's level, Speak and Improve offers prompts and feedback that are appropriate to the user's level. This adjustment in pacing is an important factor to consider in large EFL classrooms where adaptation is essential, even more so in classrooms where a teacher lacks the time and resources needed to provide personalized oral feedback to each individual learner. Speak and Improve can assist as an additional tool to help close the instructional gap and enable customized learning.

Another advantage of the platform is the promotion of learner autonomy, which is important for effective language learning. Students decide when, where and how often they want to practice which allows them to fully control their learning. This autonomy is also a feature of modern teaching strategies that promote self-directed learning and motivate students to practice purposefully outside of the classroom. Engagement with speaking continues to develop as students set their own goals, monitor their progress and are encouraged by their confidence to speak when they notice they are improving.

There is also the advantage of the tool offering a low-stakes, non-judgmental environment. The majority of EFL learners feel extremely anxious when they are required to speak in front of their peers or instructors as this leads to their oral production being inhibited. Speak and Improve allows learners to speak without fear of being evaluated which overcomes this anxiety barrier. Students can take this opportunity to make language related experimentation as they can take vocabulary risks and make mistakes, which is essential for learning a language.

Gaps remain in the educational functionality of the program in spite of the positive outcomes it can offer. Issues of the program include the absence of mutual relational exchanges, and the inability of the program to give feedback as organically as a person could. The nuances of interactivity that accompany voice, the give and take of meaning, impromptu questioning, and socio-pragmatic indicators are all substantially computationally lacking. As a result, learners may acquire and refine their controlled articulations of a task yet remain unable to move beyond those controlled learning parameters and utilize the skill in a real-world scenario in a fluid and fine-tuned manner.

The opportunities the program does provide could lead to an overemphasis of breathing. If students are working with a static prompt, the use of that prompt could lead to a cessation of flexible relational movements in their speech. An excessive amount of practice of a static prompt can lead to a point of stagnation. This point tends to solidify when students rely on basic and repetitive variations of the same structures in a learned mechanistic manner. As a result, the program is best used in addition to rather than instead of, physical classroom interaction and communication activities.

Certain technical constraints also shape the advancements of the platform within the education space. Virtual proctoring for tests requires a stable internet connection, quiet background, and a working device to ensure the voice is captured and saved correctly. If there is background noise disruption, the audio cannot be captured properly, and feedback may be directly irrelevant and misleading. Certain students may be demotivated, or technical constraints may work against them, and the overall evaluation of the student may not accurately represent their skills.

On top of that, feedback is of no use when there is feedback misunderstanding. Linguistic explanations within the automated systems may be a struggle for some students.

Without a teacher's help, users may not figure out how to tackle ongoing issues or how to apply improvements to the free speech practice. However, the Pedagogical value of Speak and Improve is further enhanced and becomes so clear when its value is embedded within a more comprehensive teaching approach with teacher mediation.

In conclusion, even though there is a range of different uses of Speak and Improve in EFL contexts, its distinct limitations also point out the necessity of a more diversified approach to substantially greater incorporation of AI practice in the classroom with more interactive and communicative activities within a lesson. Its usefulness with the right strategy is meant to extend the range of options available and exploit its full potential, though several determining factors pointers to its seamless use in the classroom, its purpose(s) and guidance.

Personalized Learning with Speak and Improve

The achievement of individual learners also works towards ensuring that the learning experience of the participants of the platform is customized. Learners receive specific predictive feedback that is essential for the corrective efforts that are decisive for improvement based on the gaps of the learners in the areas of pronunciation, fluency and grammar, which feedback is working on, at thus own pace. Feedback addresses the self-paced adaptive learning system and fosters the learner’s motivation to practice.

While the advantages of the platform are extensive, it is also necessary to address its limitations in order to present a balanced perspective. One major challenge is the possibility of learners becoming overly dependent on automated feedback. If students rely exclusively on AI-generated corrections, they may not develop the critical interactional strategies needed for spontaneous conversation with human interlocutors. Consequently, classroom activities must be designed to complement AI-based practice by incorporating authentic interaction and fostering real-time communicative negotiation.

Another challenge concerns the potential for repetitive practice to lose pedagogical value if learners perform tasks mechanically without conscious reflection. To mitigate this risk, educators should encourage students to set clear practice goals, monitor their progress, and consciously apply feedback to subsequent attempts. This reflective dimension ensures that digital practice remains purposeful rather than rote.

Technological limitations also pose barriers. Students may face connectivity issues, inadequate audio equipment, or limited digital literacy. These factors can hinder platform

effectiveness and may disproportionately affect learners in rural or lower-income contexts within Ecuador. Institutions adopting AI-based systems must therefore provide adequate technical support and orientation.

The integration of Speak & Improve into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts has reshaped traditional perceptions of language learning by providing an alternative route for continuous oral practice. Unlike conventional classroom settings, where speaking opportunities may be restricted by time, classroom size, or curricular constraints, Speak & Improve offers an open, flexible environment in which learners can experiment with language without fear of social consequences. This reduction of affective barriers is one of the platform's most significant benefits, as students who experience anxiety or inhibition during face-to-face interactions often find it easier to express themselves in digital contexts. The platform becomes, therefore, not only a tool for practicing linguistic forms but also a psychological buffer that fosters confidence in learners who might otherwise remain silent in class.

Another notable benefit lies in the platform's capacity to simulate communicative tasks that approximate real-world situations. While the interaction is not human, Speak & Improve reproduces elements of communicative demand, such as spontaneous responses, topic shifts, and varying levels of task difficulty. These built-in features require learners to engage in rapid processing, lexical retrieval, and grammatical structuring, closely mirroring the cognitive processes involved in authentic communication. As a result, the platform functions as an accessible bridge between controlled classroom activities and real-life communicative challenges, helping learners transition to more complex speaking tasks with increased ease and preparedness.

In addition, the platform's structured scoring system serves as a motivational mechanism for learners who value clear indicators of progress. Many traditional speaking assessments are subjective, brief, and infrequent; in contrast, Speak & Improve allows students to monitor their development continuously. The availability of repeated attempts, each accompanied by specific feedback, transforms assessment from a moment of judgment into a learning opportunity. This shift aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that emphasize formative assessment and learner autonomy. Students can set personal goals, such

as improving fluency scores or reducing pronunciation errors, and track their trajectory over time, which contributes to sustained engagement and a sense of achievement.

The accessibility of the platform also contributes to its utility, particularly in contexts where access to qualified English instructors is limited. In many regions, including parts of Ecuador, students may attend schools where English-speaking teachers are scarce or where teachers have limited time to provide individualized feedback. Speak & Improve compensates for this gap by offering instant feedback that would otherwise be unavailable. Although it cannot replace the nuance of human instruction, it democratizes access to language practice by allowing all learners, regardless of geographical location or classroom environment, to receive targeted feedback tailored to their needs.

Moreover, Speak & Improve can be integrated into blended learning models, which have gained significant relevance in modern language education. When used alongside classroom instruction, it reinforces and extends learning beyond school hours. Students can practice specific speaking tasks at home, previewing or reviewing content covered in class. This extension of practice time increases the frequency of oral production, a crucial factor for the development of speaking proficiency. Teachers also benefit from this arrangement, as they can allocate classroom time to more interactive and communicative activities, knowing that students have opportunities to rehearse and refine their basic speaking skills through the platform.

Nevertheless, the platform also presents challenges that must be acknowledged for a balanced evaluation. One significant limitation relates to the algorithm's ability to interpret diverse accents and speech patterns. While Speak & Improve is designed to accommodate a variety of English accents, it can sometimes misinterpret the speech of learners whose first language influences their pronunciation heavily. This may lead to inaccurate feedback or lower scores that do not reflect the learner's true ability. Such inaccuracies can be demotivating and may prompt students to focus excessively on conforming to a narrow pronunciation model, rather than embracing the diversity of English accents around the world.

Another challenge concerns the platform's limited capability to foster human-like interaction. Even though the tasks require spontaneous speech, they lack the unpredictability,

emotional nuance, and negotiation of meaning that occur in real conversations. Language acquisition research emphasizes that authentic interaction—especially with more proficient speakers—plays a vital role in the development of communicative competence. Learners must navigate misunderstandings, interruptions, clarifications, and other conversational dynamics that AI-generated prompts cannot replicate. While Speak & Improve can strengthen foundational linguistic abilities, it cannot replace the social dimension of communication, which remains essential for fluency development.

Furthermore, the convenience of the platform can inadvertently lead to superficial engagement. Some learners may view the tasks as a game to be completed quickly rather than an opportunity for thoughtful practice. If students focus solely on increasing their scores without analyzing the feedback or reflecting on their performance, the pedagogical value diminishes significantly. This type of mechanical practice undermines the depth of learning and prevents the internalization of communicative strategies. To counteract this, teachers must guide students in interpreting and applying feedback meaningfully, transforming the platform from a mere activity to a structured learning tool.

Dependence on technology also introduces disparities in learner access and outcomes. In under-resourced areas, students may not possess the necessary devices, stable internet connection, or quiet space required for effective use of the platform. These infrastructural limits can exacerbate existing inequalities, especially for students in rural regions or from low-income households. If the platform becomes an essential part of language instruction, students without adequate technological resources may find themselves at a disadvantage, widening the educational gap. Institutions must therefore implement inclusive measures, such as providing school-based access or technological support, to ensure equitable use.

Additionally, the platform's feedback, while immediate, lacks the holistic insights that human instructors can provide. Automated feedback typically focuses on pronunciation, fluency, and grammatical accuracy, but it does not fully capture aspects such as pragmatic appropriateness, register, tone, or cultural nuance. These dimensions are crucial for effective communication and are best learned through interaction with teachers or native speakers. As such, Speak & Improve should be viewed as a complementary tool rather than a

comprehensive solution. Teachers must continue to play an active role in developing the communicative and pragmatic competencies that the platform cannot assess.

Another challenge involves the psychological effect of repeated automated scoring. While the scoring system can motivate some learners, others may become discouraged if their scores do not improve at the rate they expect. Because the platform evaluates performance numerically, students may internalize these scores as reflections of their overall worth as language learners, leading to decreased motivation or increased anxiety. Teachers must therefore emphasize that the platform is a tool for practice, not a definitive measure of proficiency, and encourage learners to interpret their results within a broader context that includes human feedback and self-evaluation.

Finally, the platform's structured tasks may limit creativity in language production. Many speaking assignments follow predictable prompts that guide learners toward specific linguistic forms. Although this can be helpful for practicing grammar or vocabulary, it restricts opportunities for spontaneous, open-ended expression. Language learners need to develop not only accuracy but also the ability to generate original ideas, narrate personal experiences, and adapt language to diverse situations. Teachers must therefore supplement the platform's structured tasks with open-ended activities that promote creative language use, ensuring that students develop a versatile and expressive command of English.

The Importance of Speaking in Language Acquisition

The ability to speak is a fundamental component of communicative competence and serves as a primary manifestation of the ability to acquire a language. Oral language use, in addition to demonstrating mastery of vocabulary and grammar components, also manifests the ability to achieve effective communicative interaction. In the field of research on the acquisition of a second language, the ability to speak is often regarded as the primary objective of teaching, as it concurrently requires the use of comprehension and the ability to produce language.

Personalized learning is a core benefit of AI-mediated speaking tools, as they adjust to learners' proficiency levels and provide individualized pathways for improvement. Through the detailed feedback provided by Speak & Improve, learners become aware of subtle aspects of their performance, such as hesitation patterns, lexical choice, and prosodic

features. This granular information is difficult to obtain in large classroom settings, where instructors may not have sufficient time to provide individualized oral feedback.

The platform's adaptive capabilities also allow learners to revisit tasks at increasing levels of difficulty. This gradual progression fosters a sense of mastery and encourages sustained engagement. The resulting learning trajectories are unique to each individual, reflecting their needs, interests, and pace of development. This alignment with personalized learning principles enhances motivation and supports long-term skill retention.

Developing speaking proficiency is not only central to language mastery but also essential for learners' social, academic, and professional integration. In second language acquisition theory, oral production is considered the skill that most clearly reflects the learner's internalized linguistic system. When learners speak, they reveal their command of syntax, vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic norms simultaneously. This multifaceted nature of speaking makes it a robust indicator of overall communicative competence. Moreover, speaking facilitates interaction, which is believed to trigger essential cognitive processes such as noticing, restructuring, and automatization. Through meaningful exchanges, learners test hypotheses about the language, receive feedback, and refine their linguistic output, all of which accelerate acquisition.

Another crucial aspect of speaking is its strong connection with identity formation and confidence building. Being able to express oneself orally in a foreign language contributes to a sense of belonging and personal empowerment. For many learners, speaking represents the moment when the language becomes actionable and begins to serve practical, social, and emotional purposes. This transformational role of speaking heightens the importance of providing learners with sufficient opportunities to practice in supportive environments that minimize anxiety and foster risk-taking, both of which are essential for oral development.

AI-driven platforms such as Speak & Improve reinforce these conditions by providing an environment that reduces pressure and allows learners to engage in repeated practice. In addition to improving linguistic abilities, the platform supports metacognitive development by helping learners reflect on their strengths and areas for improvement. This reflection is vital, as speaking requires not only knowledge but also strategic competence—the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate oral performance under communicative pressure.

Furthermore, speaking plays a critical role in academic contexts where oral communication skills are indispensable. In university settings, students engage in discussions, presentations, seminars, and collaborative projects that require clarity of expression and the ability to articulate ideas coherently. Strong speaking skills enable learners to negotiate meaning, build arguments, persuade audiences, and participate actively in knowledge construction. When students lack oral proficiency, their academic participation becomes limited, reducing their opportunities for intellectual growth. Consequently, supporting speaking development through tools such as Speak & Improve can meaningfully enhance learners' overall academic engagement.

Finally, speaking supports long-term language maintenance. Learners who regularly engage in oral communication are more likely to retain vocabulary, grammatical structures, and functional language patterns. Speaking reinforces memory through active retrieval and real-time processing, making it one of the most sustainable ways to internalize the target language. Because oral production requires rapid access to linguistic knowledge, frequent speaking practice—supported by adaptive technologies—helps learners transition from controlled usage to automatic, fluent communication.

Speaking Subskills

There are different subskills to take into consideration when developing speaking as a skill: fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, interaction, and discourse management. Speak and Improve focuses on these areas by attending to the learners' need for enhanced pronunciation and fluency through speech generating and feedback in the areas mentioned. It may not provide authentic interaction, but it does build foundational subskills that can be transferred to actual communicative situations in the future.

Speaking has been recognized as one of the most complex skills to develop due to its real-time demands on memory, processing speed, and linguistic retrieval. In second language acquisition research, speaking proficiency is often conceptualized as an integrative skill that synthesizes grammatical competence, lexical range, sociolinguistic awareness, and pragmatic sensitivity. Because the skill involves both productive and receptive processes, learners benefit from environments that require them to comprehend prompts and generate coherent responses. Speak & Improve contributes to this integration by presenting tasks that simulate authentic communicative conditions and require immediate processing.

Furthermore, in higher education contexts, speaking is often the skill most directly linked to academic and professional success. Students must participate in presentations, group discussions, interviews, and collaborative projects, all of which require effective oral communication. Therefore, strengthening oral proficiency through AI-supported practice not only contributes to language acquisition but also enhances broader academic performance.

The development of speaking proficiency involves mastering a set of interrelated subskills. Fluency, for example, requires learners to speak with minimal hesitation and appropriate pausing. Repeated practice on Speak & Improve helps learners reduce processing time and increase automaticity, leading to smoother and more coherent speech. Accuracy, another essential subskill, involves correct grammar, vocabulary usage, and sentence formation. As learners receive feedback on errors, they can refine their linguistic control over time.

Pronunciation and prosody are also critical for intelligibility. AI-mediated platforms can detect pronunciation deviations and alert learners to specific segmental or suprasegmental issues. This makes the tool particularly valuable for learners who lack access to extensive oral feedback in traditional classroom settings.

In addition to pronunciation and prosody, interactional competence constitutes a fundamental component of speaking proficiency. This subskill refers to a learner's ability to manage conversational turns, respond appropriately to interlocutors, initiate topics, and repair misunderstandings when communication breaks down. While Speak & Improve provides limited opportunities for genuine interpersonal exchange, it familiarizes learners with patterns of turn-taking and response timing that are essential for successful communication. By practicing responses under time constraints, learners become more adept at sustaining interaction when placed in real conversational settings.

Discourse management is another key subskill that contributes to the overall coherence and organization of spoken language. Effective speakers must be able to produce extended utterances, connect ideas logically, and employ cohesive devices to structure their discourse. AI-generated prompts often require learners to provide elaborated answers rather than isolated sentences, encouraging them to develop longer stretches of speech. This practice supports the acquisition of discourse markers, such as connectors, sequencing

expressions, and evaluative language, which are crucial for constructing well-organized oral texts.

Moreover, the development of speaking proficiency involves building lexical flexibility, or the ability to retrieve and use vocabulary that is contextually appropriate and semantically precise. Learners frequently struggle to access varied vocabulary in spontaneous speaking situations, which limits the richness of their communication. Repeated exposure to diverse prompts on Speak & Improve helps expand lexical resources by prompting learners to describe, argue, narrate, and explain, thus stimulating active retrieval. Over time, this contributes to greater lexical variety and sophistication, both of which are strongly correlated with higher speaking scores in international proficiency exams.

Another essential subskill is strategic competence, which enables learners to cope with communication difficulties when linguistic resources are insufficient. This includes paraphrasing, circumlocution, using fillers appropriately, and leveraging contextual cues to maintain the flow of interaction. Even though AI tools cannot fully replicate human interlocutors, they train learners to produce extended speech without excessive pauses. This indirectly strengthens strategic competence by requiring learners to fill gaps in real time, drawing upon whatever linguistic resources they have available.

Additionally, monitoring and self-regulation form part of the internal processes that support speaking performance. Skilled speakers continuously evaluate their output, adjust pronunciation, reformulate grammar, and refine word choice while speaking. Speak & Improve contributes to this process by offering detailed performance analytics and immediate feedback, which helps learners identify recurring weaknesses. As learners internalize this feedback, they become more capable of self-monitoring, making adjustments even during spontaneous production. This heightened awareness accelerates long-term oral development and supports learner autonomy.

Finally, the integration of subskills must be understood as a dynamic and interactive process rather than a linear one. Gains in fluency, for instance, often influence accuracy, while improvements in pronunciation may enhance learners' confidence and willingness to speak. By engaging with AI-mediated tools that promote iterative practice, students develop a balanced speaking profile in which each subskill reinforces the others. This synergy is

essential for achieving the level of oral proficiency expected in academic, professional, and everyday communicative contexts.

Strategies to Develop Speaking Skills

While technological tools are beneficial to the development of oral competence, the effective utilization of these tools must be integrated with classroom practices. Role plays, debates, peer feedback, and group discussions are still fundamental to the development of interactive communication, and coupled with Speak and Improve, these strategies provide the learners with the best of both worlds, digital and in-person learning.

Finally, effective speaking development requires strategic integration of digital and classroom-based methodologies. Classroom activities such as role-plays, debates, storytelling, and peer-feedback sessions allow learners to apply digital practice to authentic interaction. When used together, these strategies create a comprehensive speaking curriculum in which AI-supported rehearsal prepares students for more complex communicative challenges in real-world contexts. This blended approach ensures that learners benefit from both the precision of automated feedback and the richness of human interaction.

Developing speaking skills requires the implementation of purposeful and thoughtfully structured techniques that expose learners to meaningful use of English. One effective strategy is the integration of communicative tasks, which allow students to interact authentically while negotiating meaning. Activities such as role-plays, information-gap exchanges, and problem-solving tasks encourage learners to produce language spontaneously and refine their fluency through sustained practice. These tasks create opportunities for students to speak without the pressure of rigid grammatical correction, promoting confidence and natural language use.

Another powerful strategy involves the incorporation of modelling and guided practice. When teachers provide clear examples of target language, students can observe pronunciation, intonation patterns, and appropriate use of structures in context. This modelling phase, followed by controlled and semi-controlled speaking activities, helps learners internalize form and meaning before transitioning to freer production. It also allows students to focus on accuracy while still engaging in communicative work.

Additionally, peer interaction plays a key role in strengthening speaking proficiency. Pair and group activities offer learners a low-anxiety environment where they can experiment

with language, rehearse phrases, and receive immediate feedback from classmates. Such collaborative practices support not only speaking development but also the cultivation of social and communicative competencies essential for real-life interactions.

Finally, the use of task repetition enhances both fluency and complexity. When learners revisit a speaking task, they refine lexical choices, strengthen grammatical accuracy, and deliver ideas more coherently. This iterative process enables students to evaluate their own performance and apply self-correction strategies, which are fundamental for long-term oral development.

Another essential strategy for fostering speaking development is the integration of real-world communicative scenarios. When learners engage in tasks that resemble authentic interactions—such as giving directions, making suggestions, expressing preferences, or participating in short debates—they begin to connect classroom language with practical situations. This connection strengthens their ability to transfer classroom knowledge to real-life communicative contexts, which is a core expectation in contemporary language teaching.

Moreover, scaffolded instruction supports students as they progress from simple utterances to more sophisticated spoken discourse. Scaffolding techniques may include sentence starters, visual prompts, cue cards, and structured dialogue frames. These tools reduce cognitive load during production, allowing learners to focus on clarity and interaction rather than struggling to recall vocabulary or grammar. Over time, scaffolding is gradually removed as learners become more autonomous and confident.

In addition, incorporating listening–speaking cycles enriches oral performance. Exposure to comprehensible input—such as short videos, model dialogues, interviews, or teacher talk—provides linguistic resources that students can later reuse in their own speech. This cycle mirrors natural language acquisition, where listening precedes production and supports the development of more accurate and varied oral structures. By recycling vocabulary and expressions heard in context, learners enhance both fluency and discourse management.

Technological tools also offer valuable support for developing speaking skills. Applications that record students' voices, simulate conversations, or provide pronunciation practice empower learners to practice beyond the classroom and monitor their progress. Digital speaking journals, for instance, allow students to reflect on their oral performance,

notice recurrent errors, and observe improvement over time. This reflective dimension is particularly useful for cultivating metacognitive awareness, an attribute associated with advanced language proficiency.

Finally, the implementation of formative speaking assessments encourages continuous improvement. When teachers evaluate speaking through rubrics focused on fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and interactional competence, students receive clear guidance on which areas require attention. Constructive feedback, delivered consistently and sensitively, motivates learners to refine their speech and adopt more effective communicative strategies. This evaluative process transforms assessment into a learning tool rather than a mere measurement instrument.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

This chapter sets the stage with the methodology that steered the study it's all about how that Speak & Improve AI platform helped shape the oral expression of university students. The initial chapter carefully unveils the research journey like who did what and how outlining the participants, the tools we used the steps we took to gather data and exactly how we broke it all down. The aim here is give a clear roadmap and justify why we picked that the problem to start with.

This section is designed to be clear and flow smoothly, increasing the reliability and trustworthiness of the entire process. For our research, the chosen method focused directly on observing the effect of Speak and Improve on students' speech fluency, primarily focusing on robust results, detailed analysis, and data that guided the entire process.

The following are the central research questions which have guided the study: To what extent will the use of the digital platform "Speak and Improve" affect the improvement in the level of oral skills among A1 students at the Language Center of the Indoamerica University, PUCE Ambato?

The research involved twenty-two university students, equally divided between men and women. All were at the A1 level of English, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. These students were enrolled in the regular English course offered by the Language Center, making them an ideal group to analyze their progress in speaking English as beginners.

Although the validity of the results may be limited by the small number of participants and the short duration of the intervention (ten classes), these same characteristics allow the study to be easily managed and made feasible within an educational context. Consequently, the research has an exploratory approach, and its main goal is to present data that will serve as a basis for future research and guide decisions on how to use AI tools in higher education.

Research approach

By adopting a neutral approach, we can determine progress through traceable metrics while maintaining unbiased data analysis. The students' verbal skills were evaluated before and after the intervention. The study assessed the, yup. A thorough set of criteria evaluated speech elements in both grammar, vocabulary usages, pronunciation, and interaction. The results, they kinda differed. Through the use of Speak and Improve, student levels were compared before and after in these tests.

The key goal is to evaluate the platform's functionality, with a positive outcome. It should be functioning correctly. Nonpartisan perspective suggests that AI tools have an impact on language skills. Statistical and outcome analysis are heavily utilized by it to decrease individual views during data analysis.

Research design

This study was pre-experimental and used a single group pretest-posttest model. The platform offers a perfect means of witnessing the transformations in how students' speech is transformed after using it. This choice was made easier in a classroom as it allows for comparison of skills between subjects before and after Speak& Improve.

There were three rounds:

1. An oral examination was required for all students before the beginning.' A CEFR A1 scale was employed by them. Their oral communication was the starting point, and they were unable to differentiate between their subpar pronunciations, vocabulary, or social interactions.

2. The students employed "Speak and Improve" for ten consecutive sessions while they were developing their program. With this tool, they could self-train on speaking and generate automatic responses while also reflecting on how they were doing.

3. The Final Stage: After the ten courses, improvements were noted through an oral examination that utilized the same scale. A clear pattern of significant changes was observed when comparing the early and later findings with further results, which were influenced by platform usage. This approach was the most feasible given the circumstances, but the conclusions are less reliable because there is no comparable group to test. Through the incorporation of instruction and practice time, it was possible to conduct a thorough examination of interacting with mates in simulated environments.

Description of the sample and the research context

Sample

This study included 22 students, specifically from the Language Center at PUCE Ambato, Ecuador. The group consisted of an equal number of men and women, all undergraduate students. The university placed them at the A1 level, according to its own methods that align with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

In general, A1 students grasp and use common phrases, know how to introduce themselves and talk about other people, and can ask and answer questions about personal information such as where they live or what they like and dislike. They can speak without difficulty if the other person speaks slowly and clearly, and can participate in simple conversations about things they need immediately.

These language skills make A1 students well-suited for analyzing how they improve their speaking skills in the early stages of learning and for observing clear improvements in their pronunciation, fluency, and accuracy through practice with the aid of technology.

A convenience sampling method, which is not probabilistic, was used to select the participants. This method was chosen because this group was easily accessible, as they were already enrolled in a class at the Language Center. Despite the difficulty of applying the results to other groups, this approach guarantees that the study is realistic and accurate by depicting the behavior of classes and learning in real-life scenarios where new ideas are employed.

Research context

The study was conducted at the Language Center of Catholic University in Ambato, a higher-education institution that emphasizes communication abilities and enhances foreign language instruction by means of digital and technological facilities. Speak and improve is a manifestation of the university's eagerness for new teaching methods, college-level student-led learning experiences, and the effective use of artificial intelligence in language learning environments.

At the Language Center, there are several classes of English offered by the CEFR that focus on practical applications and its use in everyday life. But as with most Ecuadorian

programmes, though: Insufficient communicative experiences and limited oral communication. ". These problems exist. The difficulties are tackled by artificial intelligence services like Speak and Improve through the provision of prompt feedback, multiple practice sessions, and exposure to a diverse range of oral scenarios.

Data collection process

a.- Techniques and instruments

Ten training sessions, an initial exam (pre-test), and a final exam were all part of the carefully planned data collection process (post-test). Each section's performance was evaluated utilizing a comprehensive approach using the same speaking check sheet. By utilizing the A1 rules of the Common European Framework of Reference, this sheet provided:

- To what extent is one proficient in grammar and able to manage simple rules?
- How many words do people know and how many are they actually?'.
- The level of comprehensibility and clearness of speech when speaking with someone.
- How proficient is an individual in communicating through short, focused conversations and answering questions? This is important.

Each region was rated on a scale of one to five, providing numbers that could be analyzed and compared. No questions, talks, or surveys were included in the study, as it only looked at visible speaking. The results of speaking tests were based solely on the students' language proficiency and teaching methods. During the study, the individual responsible for the information kept the testing environment unchanged. The results of the first and subsequent tests were compared fairly because they were carried out at the same time and in the identical directions.

b.- Validity and reliability

It was a speaking test under the CEFR A1 rules "the world's standards for assessing one's speech fluency". A proficient English teacher scrutinized the exam to ensure it was fair and accessible to those who are new to learning.

Upon testing the test, we were satisfied that it was uncomplicated, straightforward, and appropriate for certain students. During the study, all participants were provided with an

even understanding of norms and this allowed for some refinement of the guidelines. The study demonstrated that the device could accurately assess English aptitude for beginners, following specific guidelines and after consulting with experts. Moreover, an in-depth inspection they did.

Every test was crafted using the same guidelines by an expert examiner, ensuring data reliability from start to finish. There were few variations in people's opinions when compared with only one assessor.

Data analysis procedures

1. Due to its ability to provide numerical analysis for both pre-test and post-exam data, IBM SPSS Statistics is a widely used tool in school research. The study emphasized two primary factors: 1. A.
2. Using descriptive analysis, we determined the typical scores, their frequency and distribution across all four rubrics. Why were these scored? These calculations allowed us to estimate the students' performance by analyzing their patterns and speaking skills.
3. By analyzing their scores, the students were evaluated on grammar, word usage, and clear speech skills. The evaluation was conducted from the beginning to the end. The data was presented in a clear manner.

Rather than just making small adjustments to the data, the study sought ways of discovering how those changes would be used in teaching. In Chapter III, the results were discussed in relation to the concepts presented in Chapter I, ensuring that the theory, method and results all made sense. The use of a structured data collection, meticulous analysis, and theoretical backing provides optimum evidence for whether AI can aid college students in improving their speaking skills.

CHAPTER III: THE PRODUCT

Proposal Name

Acquire and enhance for authentic communication.

Product type

A practical guide for learning English has been created as an additional tool to enhance English instruction in college. The program is designed to integrate face-to-face speaking with SAI computer software, which can quickly assess students' performance during a speech.

The guide wants to make a true learning space where students can slowly grow their skill in speaking easily, correctly, clearly, with good word choice, and without feeling shy. Like Tomlinson (2011) says, learning tools work best when they help students and the language connect in a real way. With this in mind, Speak and Improve for Real Communication is made to be a tool that links using tech with talking to people, so students can use the language in real situations, not only school ones.

Objective of the proposal

To help new college students (A1 level) get better at speaking, a structured guide is being offered. This guide puts together classroom practice that is led by the teacher and things to do using Speak and Improve.

The purpose is to help students learn on their own, care about the topic, and feel good about talking, all of which are very important for learning a language. Like Nation and Newton said in 2009, we think being able to speak smoothly is key for really talking to people, and being around the language a lot helps you learn it well.

Product structure

This learning resource is structured simply and logically, making it easier for teachers to use while helping students understand and participate more. It's arranged in this manner: The front of the booklet displays the author's name, information about the school, and details about its subject. A compilation of subjects and sections to aid the user in locating information. Preliminary topics include the purpose, audience, method, and significance of the content for learning. A1 level speakers will be able to access ten learning sections that are structured with classroom activities and AI-based exercises.

All sections conform to the standards of level A1 (CEFR), and include general topics such as personal information, family, daily routines, interests, location descriptions, and telling basic stories. By using a technology tool that provides continuous feedback, students can gradually improve their speaking abilities in real-world scenarios with this setup. According to Richards and Rodgers (2014), teaching is most effective when materials are centered on speaking goals and real activities. Likewise, Chapelle (2003) notes that CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) tools should promote involvement and self-reliance, which are key ideas that this booklet focuses on. Additionally, Nunan (2004) states that teaching with tasks encourages real communication, a key idea in making each lesson.

Lesson plan structure

The classes are arranged using the ECRIF plan (see, explain, remember, make your own, and use easily), which helps learning move forward little by little, from understanding with help to making things on your own.

Each class has these parts:

- Simple info: details about the course, teacher, class, and when it meets.
- Aim and goals: certain skills that the class wants to help you build.
- First thing to do: a short activity to get them thinking about what they know and get them talking.
- See and explain part: showing the topic and key words, with the teacher giving examples and showing how it works.
- The first step in remembering and creating your own part is to practice with pictures or sounds, with the aid of assistance.
- Engaging in activities that help students remember and make decisions for their next step can lead to effective communication.
- Engaging in Speak and Improve activities that promote effective communication, students can express themselves through verbal cues, instant feedback, and reflective reflection.
- The tools utilized, such as reading materials, audio files, website access, worksheets, pictures, and other things, are listed.

Table 1. General example of class structure

General example of class structure

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10min	Present an image or question related to the topic.	They respond briefly, activating previous vocabulary.	Images, whiteboard, cards.
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Explain key expressions and basic structures of the topic.	They listen, repeat, and formulate guided examples.	Digital presentation, audio.
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guide to short oral practice exercises in pairs.	They practice mini dialogues or controlled role plays.	Conversation cards.
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	It facilitates question and answer dynamics.	They exchange information more freely.	Booklet, cards.
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Indicates task in Speak & Improve: record and analyze performance.	They practice individually and review AI feedback.	Speak & Improve platform.

Note: This is my own work based on the teaching sequence for the development of oral skills in foreign language students. Developed by Salinas (2025).

Implementation Procedure for Teachers and Students in Speak & Improve

The integration of Speak & Improve into the instructional process required a structured procedure for both teachers and students to ensure effective use of the platform.

First, the teacher introduced the purpose of the tool and demonstrated how to access the official website. Students were guided through the account creation process using their

institutional or personal email addresses. Once registered, learners selected speaking tasks aligned with A1 CEFR descriptors.

During each session, students recorded their responses individually and received automated feedback regarding grammar, vocabulary range, pronunciation, and estimated CEFR level. The teacher monitored performance, encouraged reflection on feedback, and guided students to re-record their responses in order to improve accuracy and fluency.

This structured integration ensured that technology complemented face-to-face instruction while promoting learner autonomy and reflective practice.

Evaluation of the proposal

To evaluate the effectiveness of the lessons, a speaking test was administered using the Cambridge KET rubric, which evaluated their ability to speak with precision, correctness, clarity, and vocabulary. Using only numbers and simple testing techniques, the study did not require any questionnaires or documents; instead, it tested students at the beginning and end of the ten classes.

Burns and Hinkel (2017) show that pupils' ability to speak and understand the language has increased significantly, with improved grades (pictured) in proportion to reference levels. By using more conventional sources, one can enhance their conversational abilities. The importance of frequent and comparable assessments in communications is highlighted by Luoma (2004).

Validation of the proposal

The validation process followed the guidelines established in the Thesis Manual of Universidad Indoamérica (2020). was our next section and we used the same teaching tools. In the ten lessons, students completed activities from the book and Speak and Improve exercises to improve their pronunciation, grammar, and speaking skills. All of these activities were conducted quickly. A review was conducted to determine their level of improvement. The findings indicated substantial advancements in all four areas examined, indicating that incorporating AI with integrated teaching and learning methods is advantageous for teaching. This real-world test backs up what Chapelle said in 2003: that technology in education can make real-life interactions and personal control in learning a language better.

Because of the things said above, the idea "Speak and Improve for Real Communication" shows that mixing focused practice, fast feedback, and always using the language helps college students at the A1 level fully grow their speaking skills.

Complete Didactic Guide: “Speak and Improve for Real Communication”

SPEAK AND IMPROVE FOR REAL COMMUNICATION

interactive educational manual

ÍNDEX

1. Introduction
2. Objectives of the booklet
3. How to use the booklet
4. Summary of the Lesson Plan
5. Lesson plan (10 interventions)
6. Assessment

INTRODUCTION

This material aims to enhance the English-speaking skills of A1 level students by integrating classroom exercises and practice with the Speak and Improve tool. The exercises follow the ECRIF model, facilitating progress from supported comprehension to independent expression.

OBJECTIVES

- To refine the students' diction, accuracy, and fluency when speaking.
- Expand your repertoire of useful words for everyday life.
- To strengthen their confidence and freedom in expressing themselves verbally.
- Encourage real conversations with guided activities and AI.

- Each unit includes: warm-up, guided practice, internalization, and fluent use with Speak & Improve.
- Teachers can adapt activities according to the needs of the group.
- It is recommended to record the oral production on the platform to receive automatic feedback.

Access and Use Guide for Speak & Improve platform

A. Procedure for Teachers	**B. Procedure for Students**
1. Access the official website of Speak & Improve. 2. Create a personal teacher account using an email address. 3. Explore available speaking tasks categorized by CEFR level. 4. Select tasks appropriate for A1 students. 5. Demonstrate the platform live in class using a projector. 6. Model how to record a response and analyze automated feedback. 7. Provide students with the selected task link or topic. 8. Monitor students while they record their responses. 9. Encourage students to compare their first and second recordings. 10. Facilitate reflection and corrective feedback in the classroom.	1. Enter the official Speak & Improve website. 2. Click on “Start Speaking”. 3. Register using an email address and create a password. 4. Confirm account access. 5. Select the assigned speaking task. 6. Read the prompt carefully. 7. Click on the microphone icon to record the response. 8. Submit the recording for automated evaluation. 9. Analyze the feedback provided (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, CEFR estimate). 10. Re-record the response to improve performance.

SUMMARY OF THE LESSON PLAN

Number of the lesson plan	Topic	Content	Speak & Improve tool	Speaking Subskill	Number of hours	Question Strategies	Activities
No.-1	Introducing yourself	Personal information, greetings. Be (am/is/are): my and your	Answer questions about yourself	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	WH-questions (What's your name? Where are you from?)	Speak & Improve introductions, pair interview
N.-2	Family and Friends	Present simple. Have/has, possessive 's; question words.	Answer questions about yourself	Pronunciation	1	Yes/No questions, "How often…?"	Record family talk, peer feedback
N.-3	Celebrations	Question words, focus in, months.	Read Aloud	Pronunciation	1	Checking understanding	Read aloud in tool, peer correction
N.-4	Congratulations and Best wishes	Giving and accepting presents, contractions, and writing messages.	Give your opinion	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Opinion questions ("Do you like…? Why?")	Record short opinions, share results
N.-5	Places and Town	Prepositions of place: this, that, these, those. Time and places in town	Everyday skills	Interactive Communication	1	Role-play prompts	Speak & Improve city dialogue

No.-6	What time is the ferry?	Word focus: at. Time	Everyday skills	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Transactional questions	Record time dialogue, compare scores
N.-7	Tourist attractions	Be+adjective Adjective+noun	Give your opinion	Interactive Communication	1	Predictive and choice questions	Mini-presentation in tool
N.-8	How much is a coffee?	Linking with can, buying snacks	Advanced skills	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Storytelling questions (“What happened next?”)	Café dialogue in tool
N.-9	A day trip	Connectors: and/but.	Everyday skills	Pronunciation	1	Instructional questions	Plan trip orally, record task
N.-10	Where is that?	Tourist information, places in the city.	Advanced skills	Interactive Communication	1	Open-ended questions	Describe your city, final record

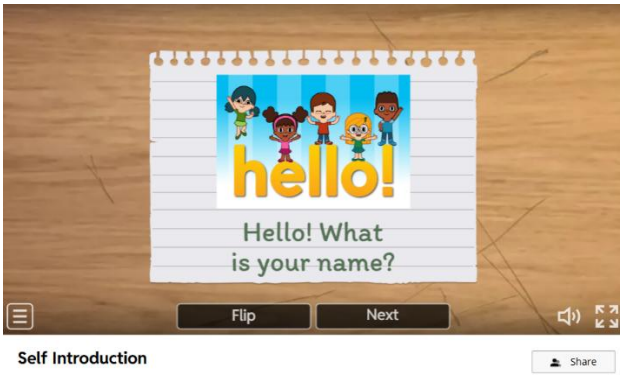
INTERVENTION 1: INTRODUCING MYSELF

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Personal information, greetings (be, my, your)
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Introducing yourself	
Objective: To enable students to introduce themselves using basic personal information and greetings through oral practice and the Speak & Improve tool.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Greet students and introduce the topic, "Introducing yourself".	Respond to greetings and share their names.	Board, markers
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Explains expressions to introduce oneself (I am…, My name is…). Model pronunciation.	Repeat sentences and practice in pairs.	Flashcards
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides students to create short self-introductions.	Write and say short introductions.	Notebooks
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Monitors students practicing short dialogues.	Practice in pairs asking and answering personal questions.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Instructs students to record their introductions.	Record and listen to their introductions using the tool.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Flashcards website: https://wordwall.net/resource/58236712/bahasa-inggris/self-introduction



Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

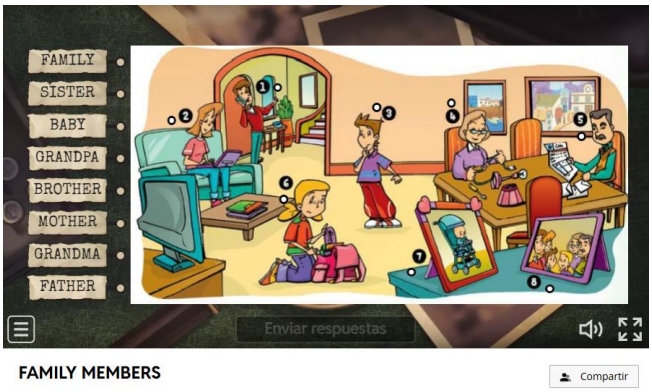
INTERVENTION 2: FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Have/has, possessive 's, routines
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Family and Friends	
Objective: To help students describe their family members and relationships using have/has and possessive 's, enhancing pronunciation and fluency with Speak & Improve.	

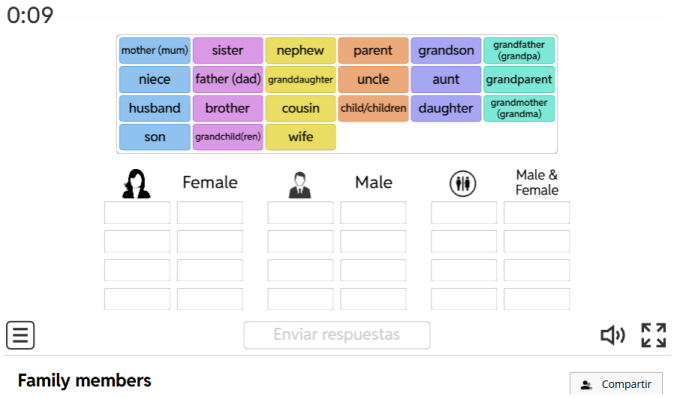
Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows pictures of families and asks simple questions.	Answer basic questions about the pictures.	Pictures, projector
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Reviews *have/has* and possessive 's. Models pronunciation.	Repeat examples and identify forms.	Board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides oral practice describing a family photo.	Describe their families briefly.	Family pictures
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Checks pronunciation and encourages short interactions.	Ask and answer about families.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Guides recording short descriptions in Speak & Improve.	Record their talk about family and listen to AI feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Family member's pictures: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/13875754/family-members



Family members' identification: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/14012750/family-members



Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

INTERVENTION 3: CELEBRATIONS

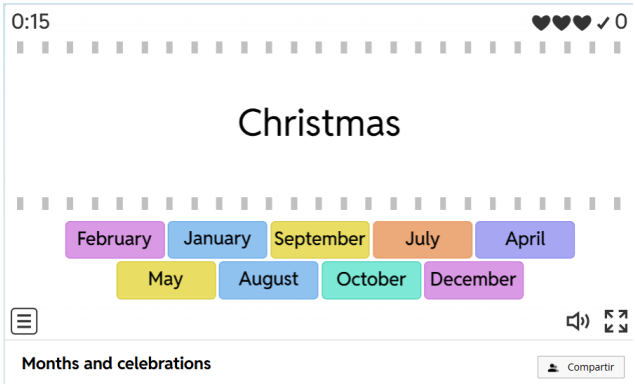
Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Question words, months
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Celebrations	
Objective: To develop students' pronunciation and vocabulary related to celebrations and months by practicing and recording their speech with Speak & Improve.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Asks about favorite celebrations and months.	Answer using short sentences.	Flashcards
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Models pronunciation of celebration vocabulary.	Repeat and practice words.	Audio, board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Gives a short text about celebrations to read.	Read aloud in pairs.	Projector
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Guides reading aloud using Speak & Improve.	Read and compare pronunciation feedback.	Cellphone
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Encourages students to improve pronunciation based on feedback.	Re-record improved version in Speak & Improve.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Months Flashcards: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/6072400/months-and-ordinal-numbers

Months and Celebrations: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/60323786/months-and-celebrations



Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

INTERVENTION 4: CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Giving and accepting presents, contractions
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Congratulations and Best Wishes	
Objective: To encourage students to express congratulations and best wishes using appropriate expressions and contractions, improving fluency through Speak & Improve recordings.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows gift pictures and asks what they like.	Respond and share opinions.	Flashcards
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Teaches expressions for giving and receiving wishes.	Repeat and practice expressions.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Students create short congratulation messages.	Write short messages.	Notebook
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Ask students to say their messages aloud.	Practice pronunciation and intonation.	Notes
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Guide students to record messages in Speak & Improve.	Record and listen to messages with feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Presents and gifts: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/93622134/presents

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

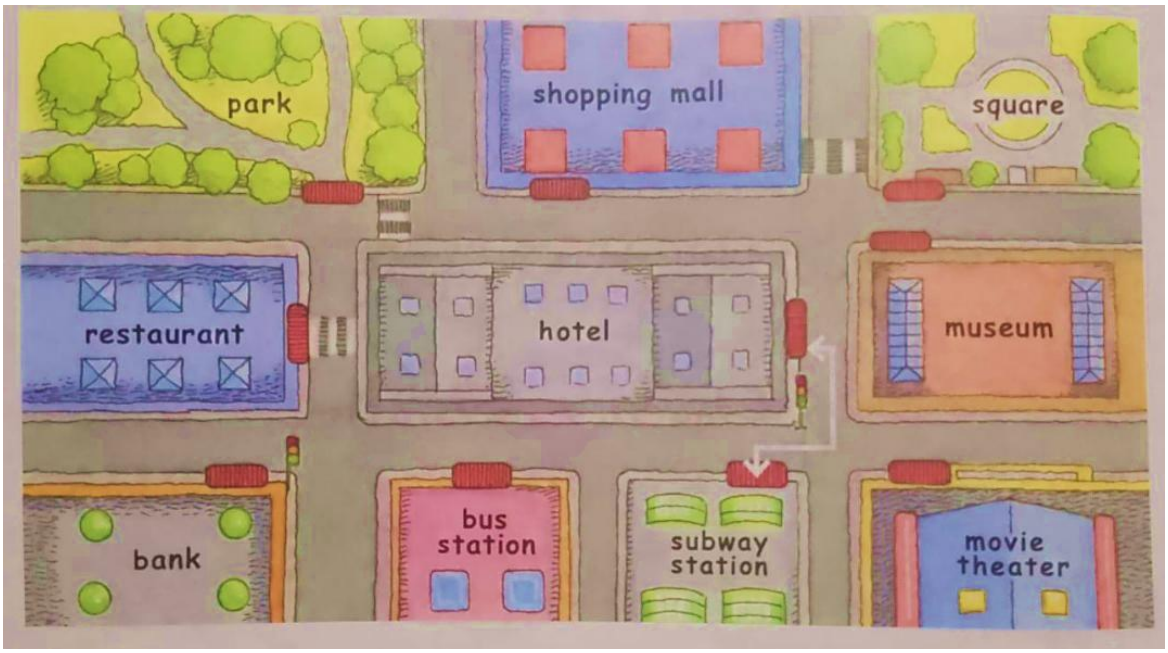
INTERVENTION 5: PLACES AND TOWNS

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Prepositions of place, this/that/these/those
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Places and Town	
Objective: To guide students in describing locations and objects using prepositions of place and demonstratives, fostering speaking accuracy through the use of Speak & Improve.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Displays map and asks about locations.	Identify and name places.	Map
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Explains prepositions of place.	Repeat and practice in context.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides pair practice describing objects in the classroom.	Describe using "this/that/these/those."	Notebook
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Students create short dialogues asking for directions.	Practice in pairs.	Projector and board
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Ask students to record a city dialogue in Speak & Improve.	Record and get AI feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Map



Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

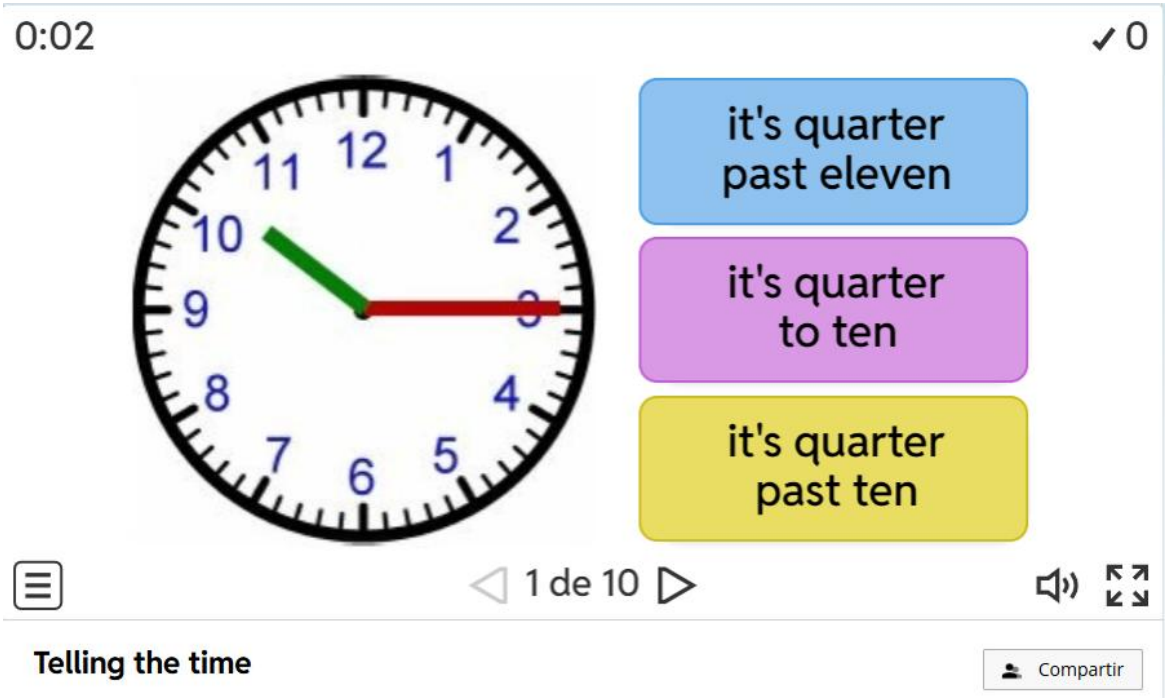
INTERVENTION 6: WHAT TIME IS THE FERRY?

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Word focus: at. Time
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: What time is the ferry?	
Objective: To enable students to ask for and tell the time using prepositions of time, reinforcing their oral communication through interactive recordings in Speak & Improve.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows pictures of clocks and asks the time.	Say the correct time.	Projector
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Teaches asking and telling the time.	Practice questions and answers.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides dialogues about daily routines.	Practice simple conversations.	Notebook
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Students create short dialogues using "at".	Perform in pairs.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Ask students to record time dialogues in Speak & Improve.	Record and check pronunciation.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Flashcards of Time: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/37518428/ingl%c3%a9s/telling-the-time



Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

INTERVENTION 7: TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Be + adjective, adjective + noun
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Tourist attractions	
Objective: To help students describe tourist attractions using be + adjective structures, developing pronunciation and fluency with Speak & Improve practice.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows pictures of tourist sites.	Share opinions.	Projector
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Teaches structure "It is + adjective".	Practice orally.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides group discussion about favorite places.	Participate using the target structure.	Flashcards
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Students prepare short oral descriptions.	Practice mini-presentations.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Students record mini-presentations in Speak & Improve.	Record and reflect on feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Pictures of tourist attractions: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/3790287/tourist-attractions

Places Flashcard: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/17604636/school-places

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

INTERVENTION 8: HOW MUCH IS A COFFEE?

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Can, buying snacks
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: How much is a coffee?	
Objective: To develop students' speaking skills in real-life shopping situations using can and price vocabulary, enhancing interactional competence through Speak & Improve.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows menu and asks prices.	Respond to price questions.	Menu cards
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Models shopping dialogues using "can".	Practice orally.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Students practice short dialogues.	Ask and answer prices.	Notebooks
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Conducts pair role-plays (buyer/seller).	Perform dialogues.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Guide recordings of dialogues in Speak & Improve.	Record and reflect on feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Menu cards: https://wordwall.net/resource/69265305/menu

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

INTERVENTION 9: A DAY TRIP

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Connectors: and/but
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: A day trip	
Objective: To strengthen students' ability to connect ideas using and and but while describing short trips, improving coherence and fluency through Speak & Improve recordings.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Talks about short trips.	Share ideas	board
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Explains connectors *and/but*	Repeat and make examples.	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides students to describe their day trip.	Create simple sentences.	Notebooks
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Monitors pair speaking practice.	Speak about trips using connectors.	Flashcards
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Ask students to record short trip descriptions in Speak & Improve.	Record and reflect on feedback.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

A day trip Flshcards: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/56029096/a-day-trip-

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

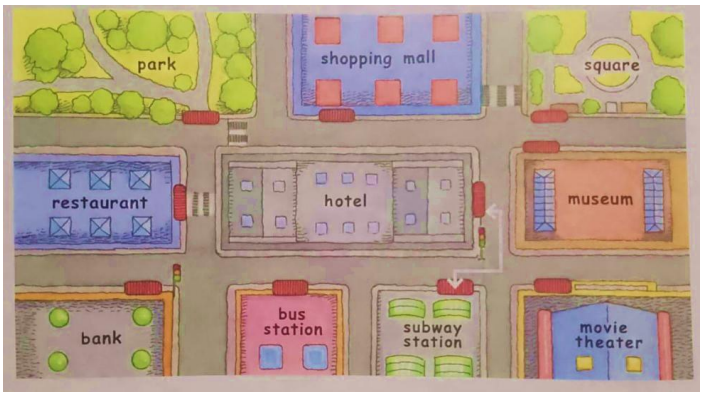
INTERVENTION 10: WHERE IS THAT?

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Tourist information, places in the city
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Where is that?	
Objective: To enable students to give and ask for directions using city and tourist information vocabulary, enhancing their spoken interaction through Speak & Improve practice.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Shows city pictures and asks questions.	Answer using short sentences.	Projector
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Teaches giving directions and tourist info.	Repeat models	board
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Students practice giving short directions.	Practice with partner.	Map
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Encourage role-plays (tourist and guide).	Perform dialogues.	Notebook
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Guide final recording task in Speak & Improve.	Record and reflect on progress.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Map



City pictures: https://wordwall.net/es/resource/26676930/vocabulary-city-tour

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

EVALUATION

- Pre-test and post-test using the KET rubric.
- Speak & Improve feedback on pronunciation, fluency, grammar, and vocabulary.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of a study on the use of the Speak and Improve tool to enhance oral communication skills in A1-level students at the Language Center at Catholic University in Ambato. The main data focuses on the three areas analyzed using the KET rubric: Grammar and Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication. This information was compiled from the scores obtained on the initial test, the ten practice sessions with the platform, and the final test, according to the methodology explained in Chapter II.

Presentation of the results

Table 2

Individual pre-test results

PRE-TEST			
NAMES	**Grammar and Vocabulary**	**Pronunciation**	**Interactive Communication**
Sara Micaela Arias Cisneros	1	2	2
Andino Salazar Marcos Joao	4	3	3
Julian Burbano Valdivieso	1	2	2
Caiza Pena Andrew Matthew	3	4	3
Thais Monserrath's Cross	4	3	3
Eugenio Cunalata Yamileth	3	4	2
Miguel Angel Flores Acosta	3	3	2
Flores Tinajero Martina Rafaela	2	3	2
Galarza Rodriguez Juan	3	4	2
Lopez Lopez Mauricio Sebastian	2	2	2
Nunez Acosta Marco Manuel	3	2	3
Pena Pena Alan Enrique	2	2	2
Ramirez Buenano Domenica	4	4	3
Christher Rodriguez Medina	2	2	2
Salas Robles Danna Paulette	3	2	4
Salazar Aguilar Salome Abigail	3	3	3
Sanchez Peralta Gabriela Lizeth	3	2	3
Boris Sanchez Villafuerte	1	2	1
Sanchez Zapata Emily Valentina	3	3	2
Simbana Pungana Jennifer Pilar	2	2	2
Lizeth Tisalema Agualongo	3	2	2
Vasquez Portero Marco Jeampier	1	2	2

Note: The data reflects the scores obtained by the 22 A1 level university students from the Language Center of Catholic University in Ambato, in the dimensions of *Grammar & Vocabulary , Pronunciation , and Interactive Communication* , evaluated based on the Cambridge exam rubric. Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Table 3

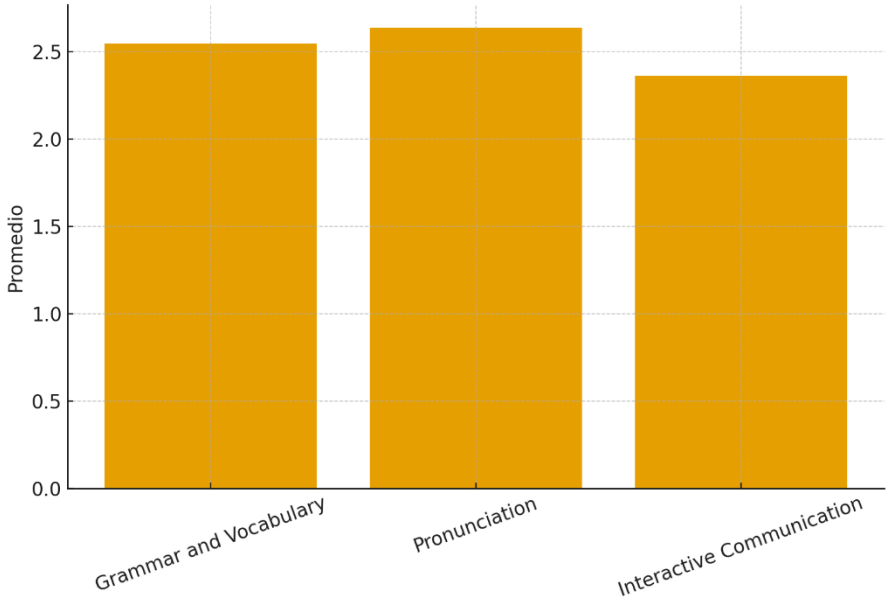
Individual post-test results

POST-TEST			
NAMES	**Grammar and Vocabulary**	**Pronunciation**	**Interactive Communication**
Sara Micaela Arias Cisneros	2	3	3
Andino Salazar Marcos Joao	4	3	4
Julian Burbano Valdivieso	2	3	3
Caiza Pena Andrew Matthew	4	3	4
Thais Monserrath's Cross	4	4	3
Eugenio Cunalata Yamileth	3	4	3
Miguel Angel Flores Acosta	3	3	3
Flores Tinajero Martina Rafaela	3	3	3
Galarza Rodriguez Juan	3	4	3
Lopez Lopez Mauricio Sebastian	2	3	2
Nuñez Acosta Marco Manuel	3	3	3
Alan Enrique Peña Peña	2	3	3
Ramirez Buenano Domenica	4	4	4
Christher Rodriguez Medina	3	3	4
Salas Robles Danna Paulette	3	3	4
Salazar Aguilar Salome Abigail	3	3	4
Sanchez Peralta Gabriela Lizeth	3	2	3
Boris Sanchez Villafuerte	2	2	2
Sanchez Zapata Emily Valentina	3	3	3
Simbaña Pungana Jennifer Pilar	4	4	3
Lizeth Tisalema Agualongo	3	2	3
Vasquez Portero Marco Jeampier	2	2	2

Note: The data presents the scores obtained by the 22 A1-level university students from the Language Center at Catholic University in Ambato after the intervention with the *Speak & Improve platform.* The evaluation was carried out using the same rubric as the Cambridge KET exam, considering the dimensions *Grammar & Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication.* Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Graph 1

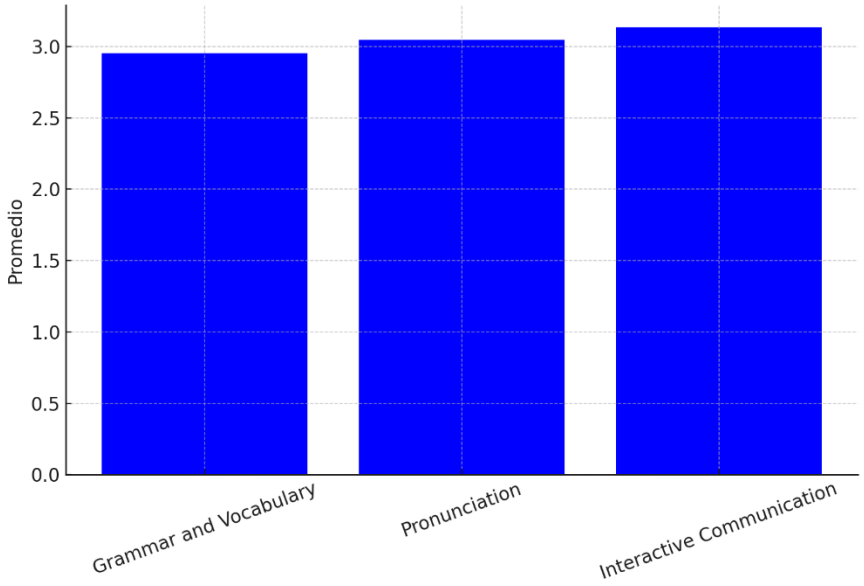
pre-test averages by dimensions



Note: Pre-test averages of the 22 students in Grammar and Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Interactive Communication, the latter being the lowest score (2.36), which indicates difficulties in fluency and discourse coherence before the intervention. Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Graph 2

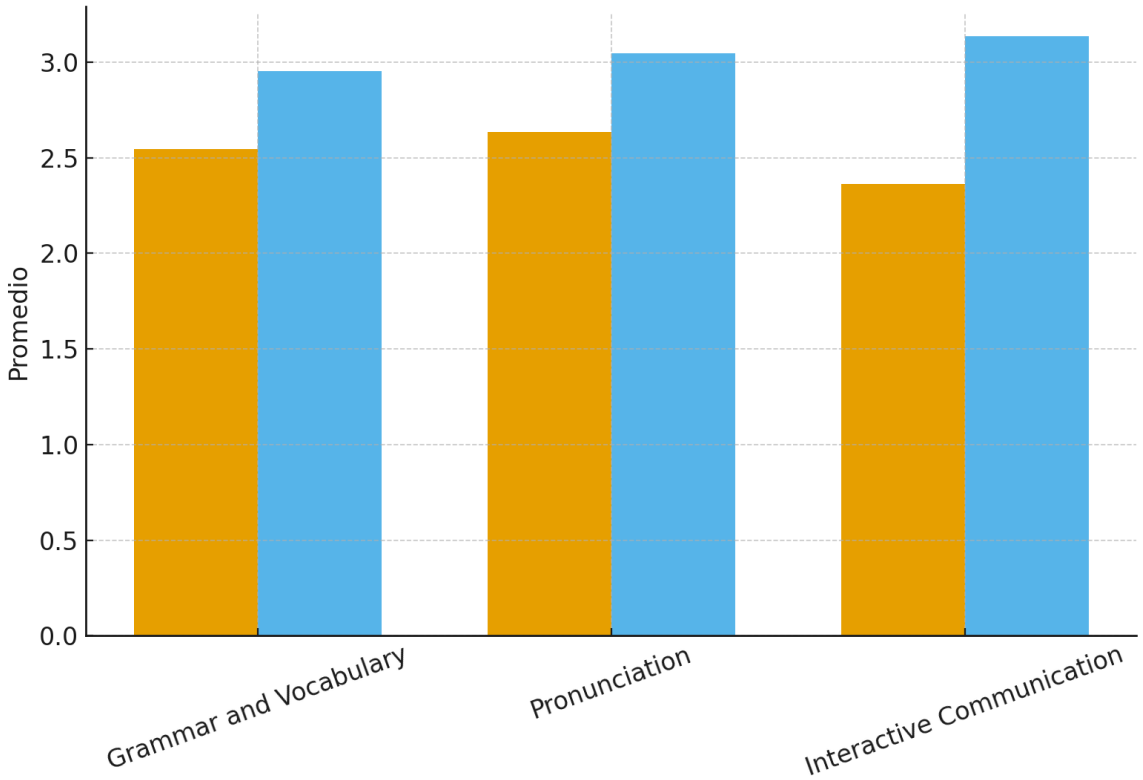
post-test averages by dimensions



Note: Post-test averages of the 22 students, showing improvements in all dimensions, especially in Interactive Communication (3.13), reflecting progress in oral interaction after the use of the Speak & Improve platform**.** Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Graph 3

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Means by Dimensions



Note: The scores reflect the average performance of the 22 A1 level students in the dimensions of *Grammar & Vocabulary*, *Pronunciation, and Interactive Communication*, before and after the implementation of the *Speak & Improve platform*. Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Descriptive analysis of the results

The mean and standard deviation of the scores obtained in the three dimensions evaluated before and after the intervention were calculated in order to identify significant changes in the students' oral performance.

Table 4

Descriptive analysis of the pre-test and post-test results in the three dimensions evaluated.

Dimension	Media Pre-Test	Pre-Test Standard Deviation	Media Post-Test	Post-Test Standard Deviation
Grammar & Vocabulary	2.55	0.96	2.95	0.72
Pronunciation	2.73	0.83	3.05	0.65
Interactive Communication	2.41	0.67	3.14	0.64

Note : The values correspond to the means and standard deviations obtained by the 22 A1 level students of the PUCE Ambato Language Center in the aforementioned dimensions. Prepared by Salinas (2025).

Interpretation of results by dimension

Grammar & Vocabulary:

Before the test, the students achieved an average score of 2.55, indicating a basic command of vocabulary and simple grammatical structures, corresponding to level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This allowed them to write simple sentences, but not the complex ideas they were trying to convey and also made use of a limited vocabulary. The average score was 2.95, taken from Speak and Improve. This development demonstrates progress in the proper application of words and rules, as well an increased confidence boost in communication.'".

Pronunciation:

There was a decrease in speaking from 2.73 to 3.05. This was a noticeable improvement. Through their evaluation of intonation, pronunciation, and speech patterns, Speak and Improve was able to successfully improve students' ability to express themselves clearly without explanation through frequent repetition. The value is significantly lower (0.83).". Each student was able to develop into a better version of spoken English in real life, thanks to an improvement in their pronunciation and intonation. Furthermore, the tasks of this platform prompted students to repeat sentences repeatedly, reduce stress, and correct themselves, leading to deep learning. This was evident in their work on Deep Learning.

Interactive Communication:

The major development came from 2.41 to 3 in the two-way dialogue.? Students would experience a more open dialogue and the opportunity to communicate and reason in response. It boosted confidence and made talking easier for students, encouraging them to interact with others through real-life scenarios. This is especially important because paired oral production is a reliable indicator of language proficiency in both university and community settings, where newcomers may find it challenging to communicate effectively.

Speak and improve was found to have a significant impact on language skills, considering the results. Additionally, it elevated the socio-emotional aspects such as confidence and talking!? According to comparable research on the use of digital resources for education, students reported a positive correlation between improved communication and the presence of supervised learning environments (Brown, 2020; González, 2021). The use of Speak and Improve enables them to improve their speaking skills and feel more confident, which can help them speak in school and beyond.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Multiple standards were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the idea in teaching and science, considering the origin and progression of knowledge.

The Speak & Improve platform has been found to be beneficial for improving the communication skills of A1 university students, as per research. Improvements in grammar, vocabulary usage and speaking skills as well as conversation facilitation are all highlighted in these results.? Employing technology to practice and respond quickly will enable students to articulate their thoughts clearly and positively.

In Grammar & Vocabulary, the group average saw a significant increase from 2.55 to 2.95, which is quite impressive. That essentially means that it suggests students are better at understanding words and basic grammar principles, as well as using the material more effectively and with ease when speaking.' Watching the standard deviation decrease implies that everyone's performances were more uniform and less diverse.

The student's communication skills improved, with a rise in pronunciation from 2.73 to 3.05. The system provided easy feedback through intonation exercises, as well as feedback on accent and articulations, which allowed users to respond independently and consistently correct errors. Also, because there was less dispersion, the results showed that the participants' pronunciation became more similar, which helped them communicate better with their voices. Whether the student is confident in speaking English or not and how the audience understands them, both impact the pronunciation.'

The level of interactive communication dimensions skyrocketed from 2.41 to 3.14. The conversations were arranged and smooth, leading to lively interaction. The research conducted by Littlewood (2011) illustrates how Speak & Improve supports language practice. It also fosters socio-emotional development, confidence in thinking and starting things. The fueling of successful interactions is attributed to this. Students utilized simulations and practiced speaking in real-world scenarios, which enabled them to overcome their fear of language.

The investigation substantiated the arguments made earlier, accomplishing its purposes. Problems with verbal expression in the first test – and thanks to its structured practice and feedback system, it helped immensely. In the second examination, significant progress in every domain was

uncovered. It was a very interesting and useful platform for students who wanted to improve their speaking skills, as it encouraged them to keep improving.

Recommendations

Speak & improve should be taken into account when English departments do lesson planning. This would involve a combination of traditional and online activities with a focus on activities that guide students into getting quick feedback. Create tasks that equally distribute focus on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and conversational skills. Also, include some of the tasks that focus on speaking and the building of confidence for the speakers. It is recommended that students' progress is evaluated on a regular basis, and that their teaching approach is modified based on the collective and individual requirements of the students to make the learning process self-organized and inclusive.

Students are encouraged to utilize their strengths and incorporate feedback in order to improve their professional, comprehensive, and fluent speaking skills. Improvement in students' speaking abilities in turn therefore will require a greater classroom focus on their collaborative speaking practice. Furthermore, students are encouraged to engage in self-assessment of their performances so that they learn to recognize the gaps in their learning and develop learning strategies for improvement which are provided to the students by both the platform and their instructor. Future studies might benefit from a larger sample size and the inclusion of students from higher levels of language proficiency (A2, B1) in order to assess the impact of Speak & Improve effectively.

Taking these things into account, on an institutional scale, there should be a push to fold tech tools into language programs, alongside teacher training and facilities. This makes sure students always have digital learning platforms ready to go. Likewise, we should foster a school culture that values innovative ideas and integrates traditional practices with the digital world.' Students can enhance their language and speech by making this. Improved learning outcomes can aid future students in achieving success on academic subjects.

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ANNEXES

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

- **Pre-test and post-test**

PART 1

Link: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/key/exam-format/

Part 1	
1	What's your name?
	What's your sir name? (family name)
	How do you spell your sir name?
2	How old are you?
3	What nationality are you?
4	Where do you live?
	Are you are a student?
5	Do you work or are you a student in …?
	What do you do/ study?
6	Are you married? Have you got a boyfriend / girlfriend?
7	Can you spell your family name?
8	Do you enjoy studying English? Why? Why not?
9	Do you think that English will be useful for you in the future?
10	Have you got any brothers or sisters?

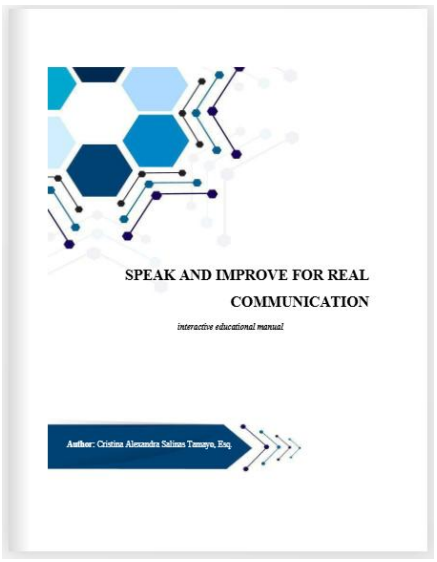
PART 2

Rubric for the Test – Key English Test (KET) from Cambridge

A2	Grammar and Vocabulary	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about everyday situations.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Maintains simple exchanges. Requires very little prompting and support.
4	*Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.*		
3	Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. Uses appropriate vocabulary to talk about everyday situations.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support.
2	*Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.*		
1	Shows only limited control of a few grammatical forms. Uses a vocabulary of isolated words and phrases.	Has very limited control of phonological features and is often unintelligible.	Has considerable difficulty maintaining simple exchanges. Requires additional prompting and support.
0	*Performance below Band 1.*		

Source: https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/563269-a2-key-for-schools-speaking-assessing-speaking-performance.pdf

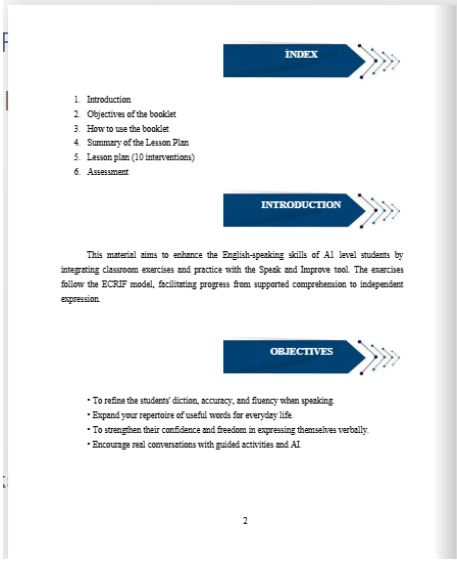
Link of the proposal: https://heyzine.com/flip-book/d2de05c4f5.html



SPEAK AND IMPROVE FOR REAL COMMUNICATION

interactive educational manual

Author: Cristina Alexandra Salinas Tamaye, Esq.



INDEX

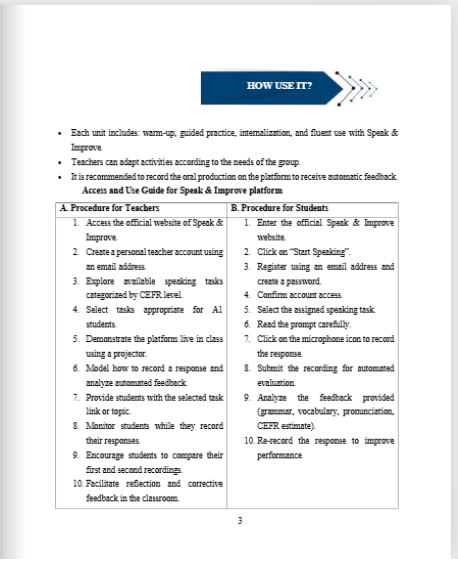
1. Introduction
2. Objectives of the booklet
3. How to use the booklet
4. Summary of the Lesson Plan
5. Lesson plan (10 interventions)
6. Assessment

INTRODUCTION

This material aims to enhance the English-speaking skills of A1 level students by integrating classroom exercises and practice with the Speak and Improve tool. The exercises follow the ECRIF model, facilitating progress from supported comprehension to independent expression.

OBJECTIVES

- To refine the students' diction, accuracy, and fluency when speaking.
- Expand your repertoire of useful words for everyday life.
- To strengthen their confidence and freedom in expressing themselves verbally.
- Encourage real conversations with guided activities and AI.

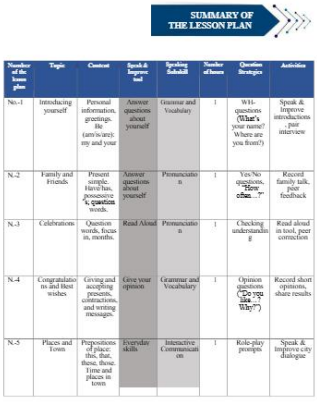


HOW USE IT?

- Each unit includes: warm-up, guided practice, internalization, and fluent use with Speak & Improve.
- Teachers can adapt activities according to the needs of the group.
- It is recommended to record the oral production on the platform to receive automatic feedback.

Access and Use Guide for Speak & Improve platform

A. Procedure for Teachers	B. Procedure for Students
1. Access the official website of Speak & Improve. 2. Create a personal teacher account using an email address. 3. Explore available speaking tasks categorized by CEFR level. 4. Select tasks appropriate for A1 students. 5. Demonstrate the platform live in class using a projector. 6. Model how to record a response and analyze automated feedback. 7. Provide students with the selected task link or topic. 8. Monitor students while they record their responses. 9. Encourage students to compare their first and second recordings. 10. Facilitate reflection and corrective feedback in the classroom.	1. Enter the official Speak & Improve website. 2. Click on "Start Speaking". 3. Register using an email address and create a password. 4. Confirm account access. 5. Select the assigned speaking task. 6. Read the prompt carefully. 7. Click on the microphone icon to record the response. 8. Submit the recording for automated evaluation. 9. Analyze the feedback provided (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, CEFR estimate). 10. Re-record the response to improve performance.



SUMMARY OF THE LESSON PLAN

Number of the lesson plan	Topic	Content	Speak & Improve tool	Speaking Subskill	Number of hours	Question Strategies	Activities
No.-1	Introducing yourself	Personal information, greetings. Be (am/is/are); my and your	Answer questions about yourself	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	WH-questions ("What's your name? Where are you from?)	Speak & improve introductions , pair interview
N.-2	Family and Friends	Present simple, Have/has, possessive 's, question words.	Answer questions about yourself	Pronunciation	1	Yes/No questions, "How often ...?"	Record family talk, peer feedback
N.-3	Celebrations	Question words, focus in, months.	Read Aloud	Pronunciation	1	Checking understanding	Read aloud in tool, peer correction
N.-4	Congratulations and their wishes	Giving and accepting presents, contractions, and writing messages.	Give your opinion	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Opinion questions ("Do you like ...? Why?")	Record short opinions, share results
N.-5	Places and Town	Prepositions of place: this, that, these, those. Time and places in town	Everyday skills	Interactive Communication	1	Role-play prompts	Speak & Improve city dialogue

No.-6	What time is the ferry?	Word focus: at. Time	Everyday skills	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Transactional questions	Record time dialogue, compare scores
N.-7	Tourist attractions	Be+adjective+noun	Give your opinion	Interactive Communication	1	Predictive and choice questions	Mini-presentation in tool
N.-8	How much is a coffee?	Linking with can, buying snacks	Advanced skills	Grammar and Vocabulary	1	Storytelling questions ("What happened next?")	Café dialogue in tool
N.-9	A day trip	Connectors and/but.	Everyday skills	Pronunciation	1	Instructional questions	Plan trip orally, record task
N.-10	Where is that?	Tourist information texts, places in the city.	Advanced skills	Interactive Communication	1	Open-ended questions	Describe your city, final record

LESSON PLAN

INTERVENTION 1: INTRODUCING MYSELF

Area: English as a Foreign Language	**Teacher's Name:** Cristina Salinas
Level: A1	**Time:** 60 minutes
Number of students: 22	**Content:** Personal information, greetings (be, my, your)
Speak & Improve: Answer questions about yourself	**Speaking subskill:** Grammar and Vocabulary
Topic: Introducing yourself	
Objective: To enable students to introduce themselves using basic personal information and greetings through oral practice and the Speak & Improve tool.	

Timing	Teacher's activity	Students' activity	Materials
	Warm-Up activity		
10 min	Greet students and introduce the topic, "Introducing yourself".	Respond to greetings and share their names.	Board, markers
	Encounter and Clarify Stage		
15min	Explains expressions to introduce oneself (I am ..., My name is...). Model pronunciation.	Repeat sentences and practice in pairs.	Flashcards
	Remember and Internalize Stage (early)		
10min	Guides students to create short self-introductions.	Write and say short introductions.	Notebooks
	Remember and Internalize Stage (later)		
10min	Monitors students practicing short dialogues.	Practice in pairs asking and answering personal questions.	Notebooks
	Fluent Use Stage		
15min	Instructs students to record their introductions.	Record and listen to their introductions using the tool.	Speak & Improve tool

Annexes:

Flashcards website: https://wordwall.net/resource/58236712/bahasa-inggris/self-introduction

Speak & Improve tool: https://speakandimprove.com/

Link of the experiment data collection and evidences:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PVcSt1ENO5y1qj_0zIWRqF95zBD_2Vsj?usp=sharing