

Improving Speaking Accuracy through Communicative Drills in A2 EFL Seventh Graders

Mejorando la precisión oral mediante ejercicios comunicativos en estudiantes de séptimo grado A2 de inglés como lengua extranjera

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ABSTRACT

Developing speaking accuracy poses a challenge for students learning English as a foreign language, especially at the early levels. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of communicative drills in improving speaking accuracy among A2 EFL seventh-grade students. A quantitative approach was used with a single-group pre-experimental design, involving the administration of a pre-test and a post-test to 13 students over a six-week period. Speaking accuracy was assessed using an analytical rubric that considered pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, and sentence accuracy and clarity. The results showed an increase in the overall mean score from 3.77 on the pre-test to 7.46 on the post-test. A paired-samples t-test showed that this difference was statistically significant, $t(12) = 25.03$, $p < .001$. The greatest improvement was observed in grammatical accuracy, followed by vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence accuracy and clarity. It is concluded that communicative drills were associated with an improvement in the speaking accuracy of the participating students.

Keywords: speaking accuracy; communicative drills; English language teaching.

RESUMEN

El desarrollo de la precisión oral representa un desafío para los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera, especialmente en niveles iniciales. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo evaluar la efectividad de los ejercicios comunicativos para mejorar la precisión oral de estudiantes de séptimo grado con nivel A2. Se empleó un enfoque cuantitativo con un diseño preexperimental de un solo grupo, mediante la aplicación de un pretest y un postest a 13 estudiantes durante seis semanas. La precisión oral se evaluó mediante una rúbrica analítica que consideró pronunciación, precisión gramatical, vocabulario y precisión y claridad de las oraciones. Los resultados mostraron un incremento de la puntuación media general de 3,77 en el pretest a 7,46 en el postest. La comparación mediante una prueba t de muestras relacionadas mostró que esta diferencia fue estadísticamente significativa, $t(12) = 25,03$, $p < 0,001$. La mayor mejora correspondió a la precisión gramatical, seguida del vocabulario, la pronunciación y la precisión y claridad de las oraciones. Se concluye que los ejercicios comunicativos se asociaron con una mejora en la precisión oral de los estudiantes participantes.

Palabras clave: precisión oral; ejercicios comunicativos; enseñanza del inglés.

INTRODUCTION

Speaking can be challenging for students learning English as a foreign language (EFL), particularly when opportunities to use English outside the classroom are limited. A2 students are supposed to speak using only simple grammatical rules and basic vocabulary. However, producing oral language requires learners to select and combine linguistic forms while communicating, which can be demanding when their knowledge of English is still developing. Speaking accuracy is therefore an important aspect of oral communication because the appropriate use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation contribute to the clarity and comprehensibility of learners' messages (Derakhshan et al., 2016; Housen & Kuiken, 2009).

For young EFL learners, the development of oral skills is closely related to the opportunities they receive to practice speaking in the classroom. Learners at lower proficiency levels may need considerable support when producing English because they have a limited linguistic repertoire and may find it difficult to retrieve language forms while communicating. Thus, structured speaking activities support the development of second language learners by allowing them to practice and rehearse language for eventual independent use. The emphasis on denoting active engagement in the classroom corresponds to recent directions for educational practice that promote the use of innovative approaches to learning and a learner-centred approach. The primary education research has shown that it's important for teachers to focus on teaching methods that are relevant to the students and their own preferred way of learning (León-Ruiz et al., 2024). Also, several studies conducted on Foreign Language Education (Guerrero Carrera et al., 2024; Mora Villamar et al., 2024) have found that learners should have a role in shaping their education through the implementation of new instructional techniques as well as an engaging environment. Trends in language education are therefore relevant to the field of English as a Foreign Language because developing speaking skills requires students to be actively engaged in the physical production of the target language, i.e., students must produce the target language rather than merely receive it.

In addition to developing speaking skills, the teaching of speaking skills provides students with the opportunity to develop skills in using English properly to effectively communicate with others. Effective communication is achieved when students are able to use language accurately. Through the repeating of specific verbal tasks or phrases, starting to enjoy and become comfortable in using a new language, is one technique used to achieve this goal for new EFL learners. Research done on EFL learners has found that through repetition of particular tasks, students show improvement in both their oral production and their ability to speak fluently (Aaj et al., 2024). Developing fluency and accuracy in spoken communication requires learners to learn and practise the target language, using it within an authentic and relevant context (Wang et al., 2024). Recent research in English language education also emphasizes the use of diverse teaching methods and learner-centered strategies to support the development of speaking skills (Isnaini & Fauzia, 2024). Gamification has been proposed as an approach to motivate students in English learning (Jara Chiriboga et al., 2025), while research in secondary EFL education has linked gamification-based learning with motivation and communicative competence (Rodríguez López et al., 2026).

Traditionally, language drills are associated with repetitive, controlled practice of language. The traditional idea of training for success in the language classroom has not been limited to mechanical or skillful practice. Communicative language drills can enable students to practice specific forms of language, while also providing opportunities for them to produce meaningful messages or to interact with other speakers.

Communicative drills are considered to be oral communication activities in which students are directed to produce responses to prompts or to interact with other speakers using the English language.

In studying EFL in primary education, Arniatika (2023) illustrated how both structure-based and communicative drills develop different elements of the oral language. Similarly, Khetaguri and Albay (2016) emphasized the importance of the repeated oral practice of the same information in supporting the speaking skills of the future speakers. Both studies imply that controlled practice and communicative uses of language can coexist as complementary components of the same stage of instruction in the development of speaking.

Communicative drills have the potential to be used to give students an opportunity to practice specific language forms, while at the same time using English for meaningful communication (Arniatika, 2023). Serfaty (2026) compared communicative drills with meaningful drills and concluded that students who participated in a communicative drill improved their oral performance in a subsequent communicative activity more than did students who used a meaningful drill. The findings of this study suggest that repeated practice will yield a higher return on investment if the learner has a reason to communicate and that the message produced by the learner will have value to the recipient. This perspective is valuable in integrating controlled practice with other communicative language activities.

Research into the benefits of task repetition supports implementing oral practice with younger students. Aaj, et al. (2024) studied how well immediate (doing the task right away) and delayed (doing the task after some time has passed) repetitions work for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students who were 10 to 12 year old. Overall, both types of repetitions (immediate and delayed) led to improved oral production in EFL students. The immediate repetition led to improvements in accuracy, fluency and complexity; whereas, the delayed repetition had a lower impact on accuracy and fluency. Because of the multiple chances to speak, students had improved oral performance in all of these areas through their repeated opportunities to perform the task.

The findings from these studies coincide with the broader research base regarding task repetition and oral production for EFL learners. For instance, Ahmadian and Tavakoli (2011) found that when students performed the same task multiple times and utilized an online planning strategy during that task, the repeated performances enhanced the accuracy, complexity and fluency of their oral production. Similarly, Sun and Révész (2021) demonstrated that EFL children also profited from repeatedly performing oral tasks as it related to their accuracy and fluency. Therefore, the overall findings show that providing students with multiple chances to speak has pedagogical value; however, there may be differences based upon the individual characteristics of students, as well as the characteristics of the tasks performed.

In the same way, Newton and Nguyen (2019) found that the linguistic issues identified by linguists during the rehearsals of their students contributed to their correct use of linguistic forms during later performances. These results suggest that repeated oral practice can help learners perceive, retrieve, and use linguistic forms more accurately as they prepare for communicative performance.

Despite these results, further classroom research is needed to examine how different types of drills can be combined with communicative activities to address specific aspects of accuracy in oral expression among young learners of English as a foreign language. This section examines the design of interventions employing various combinations of repetition and substitution drills, information gap activities, and short

role-play activities, Each type of intervention provides learners with a different opportunity to build on their oral expressions, as well as to develop their confidence as speakers, over time through consistent practice and support.

Role plays provide learners with simulated experiences of interacting in real events and challenges encountered in day-to-day life, thus creating an environment of experiential learning that fosters creativity, collaboration, and connections to the real world (Bernal Párraga et al., 2024). They also offer a unique opportunity for learners to be actively involved in the learning process while simultaneously creating their own learning experiences.

This aspect of the use of role plays and the benefits that accrue to instructors and learners is important because it impacts the use of English as a language in Ecuador.

At the location where this study is being conducted, English is part of the curriculum and is required for all students, and students only receive about three hours of English classes per week. Outside of the classroom, the students have limited language use opportunities. According to the national English curriculum published for Ecuador, seventh grade English language learners should attain an A2 level on the Common European Framework for Languages.

The pre-test results indicated that several participating seventh-grade students experienced difficulties with basic sentence structures, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary during oral production. These difficulties suggested a need for additional classroom opportunities to practice speaking accuracy.

The purpose of the present study was to examine changes in speaking accuracy among A2 EFL seventh-grade learners following the implementation of communicative drills. Specifically, the study compared pre-test and post-test speaking accuracy scores and examined changes in pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary accuracy, and sentence accuracy and clarity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research methods refer to the tools, processes, and techniques used to collect and analyze information in order to answer a specific research question (Hitchman & Chetter, 2023). This study employed a quantitative research approach because changes in students' speaking accuracy were examined using numerical data obtained from their speaking tests. Quantitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to investigate research questions and examine changes through appropriate analytical procedures (Lim, 2025).

The study followed a pre-experimental one-group pre-test and post-test design. This type of design has also been used in previous research examining the effects of oral drills and role-play on students' speaking achievement (Sinambela & Simanjuntak, 2017). In the present study, students' speaking accuracy was measured before and after the implementation of communicative drills to determine whether changes occurred following the intervention.

The study was conducted in a rural public educational institution in Ecuador, where English is taught as a compulsory subject for approximately three hours per week. According to the national English curriculum, seventh-grade students are expected to achieve an A2 level of proficiency. However, the pre-test results showed difficulties in speaking accuracy, particularly in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary use, and sentence construction.

The participants were 13 seventh-grade students, aged 10 to 11 years. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used because the participants belonged to the researcher's assigned class and were readily accessible during the intervention period. This sampling method was considered appropriate due to the limited number of available participants and the educational nature of the study.

For the purpose of assessing students' speaking accuracy prior to and following the intervention, data were obtained using a speaking test developed for this purpose. Students were evaluated on their speaking accuracy using an analytical rubric that encompassed four items: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and sentence accuracy/clarity. Each of these four categories was evaluated using a four-point evaluation scale. The educational intervention took place over a six-week period, with students attending two 40-minute learning sessions each week. The sessions included interactive drills, repetition drills, substitution drills, information gap exercises and simulations of short role-playing exercises, all designed to support students' practice of grammar while simultaneously allowing students to produce spoken English in a communicative environment.

The research procedure consisted of three main stages. First, the pre-test was administered to identify students' initial level of speaking accuracy. Second, communicative drills were implemented through structured classroom activities over six weeks. Finally, the post-test was administered to assess students' speaking accuracy after the intervention and compare their performance with the pre-test results.

The quantitative data obtained from the speaking tests were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated to compare students' overall speaking accuracy before and after the intervention, as well as their performance across the four assessed criteria. Because the same students participated in both measurements, a paired-samples t-test was used to examine whether the difference between pre-test and post-test total speaking accuracy scores was statistically significant. The normality of the paired differences was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test. Statistical significance was established at $p < .05$.

Ethical considerations were addressed by obtaining permission from school authorities and informed consent from students' legal representatives. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by assigning a unique code to each participant for the instruments and data analysis. The information collected was used exclusively for academic purposes.

RESULTS

This section presents the results obtained from the pre- and post-tests used to assess changes in students' speaking accuracy.

Table of results

Table 1

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for students' total speaking accuracy scores before and after the implementation of the communicative drills. The table shows the mean and standard deviation obtained in the pre-test and post-test.

Table 1.*Pre-test and Post-test Accuracy Scores.*

Test	n	M	SD
Pre-test	13	3.77	0.77
Post-test	13	7.46	0.49

Note. *n* = number of participants; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation. Total scores were calculated as the sum of pronunciation accuracy, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary accuracy, and sentence accuracy and clarity

The primary focus of this study was to examine changes in speaking accuracy among A2 EFL seventh-grade students following the implementation of communicative drills. The results of the pre-test were mean speaking accuracy scores of 3.77 (*SD* = 0.77) while those of the post-test were 7.46 (*SD* = 0.49). There was a mean increase of 3.69 points.

Normality of distribution for differences between paired data was determined using the Shapiro-Wilk test prior to making inferential comparisons, which showed that there was no statistically significant trend away from normal ($W = 0.921$, $p = .256$). By using a paired-samples *t* test, the mean total speaking accuracy scores of the post-test were shown to be significantly higher than those of the pre-test, $t(12) = 25.03$, $p < .001$. This result indicates a statistically significant difference between the two measurements.

The pre-test indicated several areas where students experienced difficulties achieving a certain level of accuracy when speaking, including pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary accuracy, and clarity in the structure of their sentences. The pre-test indicated difficulties across the four assessed dimensions of speaking accuracy: pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary accuracy, and sentence accuracy and clarity. These results provided the baseline for examining changes after the six-week intervention.

The post-test results indicated significant improvements in a variety of areas, which included pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary usage, and sentence coherence. Students had a greater level of control over the grammatical structures and pronunciation they used during their speaking activities throughout the six-week intervention. The post-test results showed higher scores in pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, vocabulary accuracy, and sentence accuracy and clarity following the six-week intervention.

Regarding score distribution, the standard deviation results indicate some variation in students' performance. Nevertheless, the higher post-test scores and the paired-samples comparison indicate a statistically significant improvement in speaking accuracy following the intervention.

Table 2

Table 2 presents the distribution of students' speaking accuracy scores across the four assessment criteria: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence accuracy and clarity. The table shows the pre-test and post-test mean scores and the mean difference for each criterion.

Table 2.*Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores by Speaking Accuracy Criterion (n=13).*

Criterion	Pre-test M	Post-test M	Difference
Pronunciation accuracy	1.17	1.81	+0.63
Grammar Accuracy	0.58	2.04	+1.46
Vocabulary Accuracy	1.15	2.13	+0.98
Sentences Accuracy and Clarity	0.87	1.48	+0.62

* *Note. Scores were obtained from the analytic speaking rubric. The maximum score for each criterion was 2.5 points.*

The results obtained for each speaking accuracy criterion are shown in Table 2. Grammar Accuracy demonstrated the greatest increase in mean scores, from 0.58 to 2.04 after six weeks of drill activities. Vocabulary Accuracy also saw a significant increase, from a mean of 1.15 to 2.13. Pronunciation accuracy increased from a mean of 1.17 to 1.81. Sentence accuracy and clarity increased from a mean of 0.87 to 1.48. Overall, mean scores increased across all four measures of speaking accuracy from pre-test to post-test following the six-week intervention. The grammar measure demonstrated the largest increase; followed by vocabulary accuracy; followed by pronunciation accuracy; and then sentence accuracy and sentence clarity. Comparing the student's results on the pre- and post-tests indicates an overall increase in the ability to speak accurately after completing communicative drill activities.

DISCUSSION

According to the results of the research project, students' speaking proficiency increased significantly after they had completed the six weeks of working with communication drills. The results showed a statistically significant increase in students' speaking accuracy following the six-week implementation of communicative drills. The mean total speaking accuracy score increased from 3.77 in the pre-test to 7.46 in the post-test, representing a mean increase of 3.69 points. Grammatical proficiency was found to have the greatest change of all criteria measured, with vocabulary, pronunciation, and sentence clarity and accuracy experiencing much less. These findings indicate that higher speaking accuracy scores were observed following the implementation of communicative drills among the participating A2 EFL learners. The initial activities were repetition drills where students practiced the correct pronunciation and intonation of complete English sentences. Students became familiar with the sounds of English and the pattern of sentences by receiving multiple exposures to the target language. Although this research project did not identify whether the activities provided a sense of motivation or confidence for students, there were repeated chances for student participation in speaking English. This coincides with Hasbi's (2021) findings that were in line with repetition activities supporting student development in spoken language and were also supported by Saitongsuk and Ekkayokkaya (2021), who found that completion of task repetitions significantly improved student fluency when speaking, but no improvement in accuracy when speaking was noted. These findings suggest that the effects of repeated oral practice may vary across different dimensions of speaking performance.

To reinforce grammatical accuracy, the last six weeks of controlled oral practice were conducted using sentence structures where certain words or phrases would be changed in order to maintain the grammatical structure of the sentence. The increase in grammatical accuracy indicates that students have developed a higher level of sentence construction skills through their use of these structures. According to Hasbi (2021), drills will aid students' development of their spoken language.

Further, there is agreement between the study by Aini et al. (2020), and that of Hasbi (2021). As Aini et al. indicated, students utilize repetition drills to enhance their speaking capabilities. In addition, according to Larosa et al. (2021), students hold a favorable opinion regarding repetition activities and believe that these activities are advantageous when it comes to enhancing their oral language skills. Also, this study enabled students to combine their repeated practice of structures used in the corresponding communicative activities to grow their production methodologically from controlled to functionally correct oral English.

Through the combining of repeated practice with scaffolding of controlled language structures, students were afforded more ways to practice and produce the English grammatical sentence structure, enabling them to produce a greater number of grammatically correct utterances. Therefore, this study supports the use of language-focused activities in the communicative teaching model. As Spada and Lightbown (2008) have indicated, combining Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) with the communicative approach allows learners to practice grammar (i.e., grammatical structures) while communicating in the target language, on a communicative level.

Recent evidence also supports integrating attention to linguistic form within communicative speaking instruction. Woymo et al. (2024) found that form-focused communicative grammar instruction contributed to improvements in learners' grammar and pronunciation in speaking. This finding is relevant to the present study because grammatical accuracy showed the largest descriptive increase, while pronunciation accuracy also improved from pre-test to post-test.

As noted in the present study, this is supported by the findings by Hsu (2019), who noted that when combining post-task Transcription along with the repeated Task Performance, students will demonstrate Greater Oral Production Accuracy due to having had an opportunity to focus their attention on their Linguistic Forms during the Repeated Task Performance. While the present study did not use post-task transcription, this finding does indicate that it is possible that combining Linguistic Focus with Repeat Performance of Tasks may have a Positive Impact on Students' ability to effectively produce Accurate Language in the future.

Although the present intervention did not incorporate artificial intelligence, research in English language education has explored the potential of personalized learning resources to respond to learners' individual linguistic needs (Bernal Párraga et al., 2025). This perspective may be relevant for future applications of communicative drills in which practice is adapted to students' specific difficulties in grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation. Similarly, recent research suggests that AI-supported instruction can facilitate more personalized and adaptive learning by providing immediate feedback and adjusting educational activities to learners' specific needs (Mena Castillo et al., 2026).

The future use of the Communicative Drill approach to the study of Language may yield increased results due to the implementation of additional adaptations to our Practice to meet the individual needs of our Learners for improved Grammatical Accuracy, Vocabulary Development, and Pronunciation.

In addition, both Role Plays and Information Gap Activities provided opportunities for students to practice vocabulary and express ideas with their classmates and teachers about the target Language. The results of the Pre-tests indicate that there was a limited vocabulary range and that students used the same words over and over. However, after the implementation of Activities, the Post-test data indicates that the students had improved both Vocabulary Accuracy and Sentence Accuracy and Clarity. According to Arniatika (2023), Communicative Drills can support learners' development of Oral Skills as they relate to Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Comprehension.

The development of learners' Communicative Competence has the potential to be developed by using short Role Plays to facilitate the Transition from Controlled Practice to Contextualised Oral Production within a Learning Cycle. Role Plays encourage learners to utilise Language in their everyday activities and interactively experience the Language. This approach is consistent with the objectives identified by this Study and the use of a Communicative Approach.

Additionally, previous studies have supported the finding that not all learners will have the same result from task repetition on their skill development. Dawadi (2019) reported that task repetition was beneficial for the development of both fluency and complexity for efl oral narrative. However, task repetition had minimal effect on accuracy. Task repetition may increase fluency and complexity, but it does not provide a guaranteed increase in accuracy; increases in accuracy for each learner may be different based on each learner's profile; the characteristics of the task will influence the outcome desired, as well as the support, attention to linguistic form provided during instruction. The increasing availability of personalised learning and differentiated learning options for language learners from a broader pedagogical framework continues to grow. The research on artificial intelligence, adaptive platforms has evolved into the creation of personalized resources to help foreign language learners (jara chiriboga et al., 2025; padilla chicaiza et al., 2025). Future research should be conducted to determine whether the combination of personalized resources and communicative drills be beneficial in developing further targeted oral practice. This possibility is also consistent with research highlighting the potential of artificial intelligence to support personalized feedback and meaningful language production in academic learning contexts (Villacreses Sarzoza et al., 2025).

CONCLUSIONS

The results show that after taking part in the communicative drills, students improved their overall speaking accuracy. The mean total speaking accuracy score on the pre-test was 3.77, while the mean total score on the post-test was 7.46, an increase of 3.69 points, and the difference was statistically significant according to a paired samples t-test. After 6 weeks of the intervention, all A2 EFL 7th grade participants had increased their speaking accuracy scores.

The speaking accuracy criteria also showed that there was improvement in students' speaking accuracy following the intervention. Of the four categories used to rate speaking accuracy, grammar accuracy had the greatest improvement, increasing from a mean of .58 to 2.04. Vocabulary accuracy, pronunciation

accuracy, and clarity and sentence structure had fewer increases, but also improved overall. These results indicate that improvements in speaking accuracy were observed across all four assessed areas following the intervention.

In general, the students exhibited a positive change in their level of speaking accuracy on the pre-test and post-test after participating in the communicative drills for six weeks. The small sample size and the lack of a control group limit the degree to which the difference between the pre-test and post-test can be solely attributed to the use of communicative drills. Future research should involve a larger sample size and/or a control or comparison group to provide evidence of the effectiveness of using communicative drills to develop speaking accuracy.

Author contributions

Julissa Yeraldin Jimenez Granda: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, and Project Administration. Yessica Paola Diaz Guaman: Investigation, Data Curation, Methodology, Visualization, and Writing – Original Draft. Johnny Campoverde López: Methodology, Formal Analysis, Validation, Supervision, and Writing – Review & Editing. Josué Bonilla Tenesaca: Conceptualization, Validation, Supervision, and Writing – Review & Editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the authorities of the participating educational institution. Informed consent was obtained from the students' legal representatives before their participation in the study. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were maintained throughout the research process, and the data were used exclusively for academic purposes.

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