



## **How to Enhance Speaking Skills in an EFL Class Through Flipped Learning**

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### **Dedication**

This research study is dedicated to my family for their valuable support, trust, and companionship from the very beginning of my goal to become a language teacher. Their belief in me has been a constant source of motivation and strength.

### **Acknowledgments**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my research advisor, Mabel Quinchía, for her guidance and support throughout my journey to becoming a teacher. Her expertise and encouragement have been important in my process. I am also very thankful to my cooperating teacher Genny Gomez for always being willing to contribute with fresh and creative ideas to complement my teaching practice. She was a valuable model for my development as a teacher.

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### **Abstract**

This study was an action research project designed to understand how flipped learning can enhance language speaking skills in a group of ninth graders. The participants, aged between 14 and 16 years old, comprised a total of 41 students. Data was collected through class observations, interviews, and questionnaires. A review of the collected data revealed that flipped learning was generally effective in enhancing students' accuracy and participation through the use of videos, grammar exercises, online pronunciation platforms, and after-reading exercises. While fluency was partially improved, additional strategies are recommended to achieve better outcomes in this area.

*Key words:* Language speaking skills, fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, participation, negotiation of meaning.

## Resumen

Este estudio fue un proyecto de investigación-acción diseñado para comprender cómo el flipped learning puede mejorar las destrezas lingüísticas orales en un grupo de alumnos de noveno curso. Los participantes, con edades comprendidas entre los 14 y los 16 años, eran un total de 41 estudiantes. Los datos se recogieron mediante observaciones de clase, entrevistas y cuestionarios. Una revisión de los datos recogidos reveló que el flipped learning fue en general eficaz para mejorar la precisión y la participación de los estudiantes mediante el uso de vídeos, ejercicios de gramática, plataformas de pronunciación en línea y ejercicios posteriores a la lectura. Aunque la fluidez mejoró parcialmente, se recomiendan estrategias adicionales para lograr mejores resultados en este ámbito.

*Palabras clave:* Palabras clave: Competencias lingüísticas orales, fluidez, precisión, pronunciación, vocabulario, gramática, participación, negociación del significado.



## Introduction

This action research project was conducted at a public school in Medellín, located in the neighborhood of La Floresta, which serves students from sixth to eleventh grades. The study focused on the ninth-grade group, specifically addressing the enhancement of language speaking skills through flipped learning. The initial phase of the research involved identifying the problem, which stemmed from the limited opportunities students had to practice their speaking skills. The large class size presented a significant challenge in assessing individual student levels and providing meaningful activities for the group.

The action research process comprised several phases. The first phase was a preparation stage aimed at getting to know the students, understanding their interests, and assessing their overall English proficiency. It was also essential to get familiar with the institution, its curriculum, the school environment and the resources available to work in the classroom. This first phase was also important to identify the problem, look for a strategy to address this problem, and design the action plan.

Next was the implementation phase, where flipped learning sessions were conducted with structured speaking activities. First, the speaking skills of the students were assessed through a diagnosis activity. I also implemented a questionnaire to know the students' study habits and general perceptions of English. During this phase, the focus was on monitoring students' use of vocabulary and grammar, eventually shifting towards pronunciation. The evaluation phase involved assessing the impact of flipped learning on various aspects of speaking skills, such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the ability to convey messages clearly and accurately. This phase included Cycle one, where initial progress was checked, and Cycle two, where post-assessment data was collected, and overall progress reviewed. In the second part of the study, the findings will be presented, accompanied by interpretations and conclusions drawn from the

data collection and analysis. This will lead to recommendations based on the evidence gathered, aimed at further enhancing the effectiveness of flipped learning in improving language speaking skills.

### **Description of the Context**

The Institución Educativa Concejo de Medellín is a public school located in Medellín, Colombia. It operates across three distinct sites, all within the city of Medellín. The primary campus is situated in the Floresta neighborhood and caters to students in eighth through 11th grades. A separate site, located in Pichincha, is dedicated to preschool and elementary education. Additionally, there is a third site known as 'Anexo Clodomiro,' which accommodates students in sixth and seventh grades. In total, the school has an enrollment of 3,633 students. This study will be carried out at the primary campus in the Floresta neighborhood with a group of teenagers of grade ninth - one. This site features spacious classrooms, a cafeteria with varied products for students and workers of the school, and a sports court where physical education lessons are held. At the library, students can find useful books and other printed resources like magazines and newspapers. Although there are scarce resources in English, students can still find dictionaries and a handful of other reference books for their English lessons.

As for the school environment, it is characteristic of a public school where it is common to see numerous students in the halls engaged in different activities. This creates a spirited atmosphere that is energetic and lively, but also noisier than you would expect. The school philosophy fosters students' diversity and inclusion, traits that can be seen in the varied cultural, social, and economic backgrounds where the students come from. Even though the school caters to students who can be very different from one another, they all seem to get along and share the school spaces respectfully. In regard to the English department, the students have three hours of English class during the week. The school claims to implement a communicative language

teaching methodology that can be seen in how the teachers guide their lessons; however, limitations in terms of the availability of essential class materials hinder the application of said methodology. Moreover, each teacher has the responsibility of overseeing four groups, each comprising around 42 students, thereby posing further logistical difficulties in delivering personalized and interactive learning experiences.

On the other hand, the classrooms are average size, they can be quite dark due to the lack of windows and they are equipped with a whiteboard, sufficient chairs for all the students, a fan and some markers. The classrooms are in long halls where there are always lots of students chatting, running, or even yelling, something that can be distracting during a class. The group where I am carrying out my research comprises 39 students, 19 boys and 20 girls. Their level of English is mostly low, with students who show poor vocabulary and language skills in general, and who rarely participate, as opposed to some pre-intermediate learners who tend to engage actively in class activities. Most students are respectful, however, there are some who can be sometimes confrontational. They lack motivation and interest, and many times end up affecting the pace and overall atmosphere of the lesson.

Finally, moving on to the cooperating teacher, Genny Gomez is a professional who graduated as a foreign language teacher from Universidad de Antioquia. She addresses the students by their names and sometimes by using kind and warm expressions like honey, dear, or darling. She expresses her interest in the communicative language approach to teaching as proposed by the school. Most of her lessons focus on developing reading comprehension skills and vocabulary and claims that the biggest challenge she faces is to find strategies to engage the students in more meaningful speaking activities to develop their oral production abilities. The lack of materials and a high number of students are some of the struggling factors the teacher has encountered to achieve this goal.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education for teenagers, I have identified several challenges that the students face in every lesson. One of the most common challenges has to do with the generalized low vocabulary the students can use. This difficulty has been tackled by the efforts of the cooperating teacher, who brings fresh and interesting activities to the classroom to mainly target reading comprehension skills, (Journal entry 3, February 29th, 2024). For instance, through the story “The African Mask”, an adapted version of the original story with simpler vocabulary, the teacher focuses on specific words that the students need to achieve the goals of the term. However, based on observations I collected in my personal journal and the conversations I have had with the cooperating teacher, there have been few opportunities for the students to develop their speaking skills. The reading activities tend to target isolated vocabulary, like verbs and their past forms and some adjectives. The students are expected to memorize words and they are rarely exposed to group work where they must communicate using those words, (Personal journal entry, April 11th, 2024). This lack of interactive speaking activities emerges due to several reasons: Unfortunately, the students are only provided with three hours of English lessons, and their chances to interact with the language outside the classroom are limited. According to Zhang (2009), speaking is seen by many learners as the most difficult skill to acquire in the context of language learning. Therefore, it becomes a must to engage students in communicative activities that allow them to use the language as much as possible. Moreover, direct teaching instruction inevitably takes away essential class time that can be used more effectively in interactive speaking activities. Students tend to go to class unprepared and having to getting them ready for a new lesson is often time-consuming and exhausting. (Personal journal entry, April 11th, 2024).

In addition, as stated by Al Hosni (2014) “the linguistic domain constitutes the most serious area of difficulty, and this is because, as explained by teachers, the learners have not yet

developed an adequate level in the basic abilities of the language” (p. 24). On top of that, since the number of students in the group is significantly high, their levels of proficiency in the language are very different from one another. Bearing this in mind, the present action research study aims to determine how Flipped learning can enhance speaking skills in students of group ninth - one. As stated by Sohaya (2021), “The flipped classrooms were feasible in learning English and effectively used to improve students' English-speaking skills.” (p. 95) I believe that the systematic and structured use of these strategies can successfully address the limitations and difficulties encountered by the students of this group.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research proposal aims to find out how the flipped learning methodology can be helpful to enhance the English level, specifically the speaking skills, of a group of EFL ninth graders. This section will then define the four core concepts that shape the purpose of this study: Flipped learning, flipped learning pillars, EFL speaking skills, and learner-centered instruction.

#### **Flipped Learning**

Flipped learning has emerged as an interesting alternative to traditional instruction and places the focus on students. The role of classroom activities and homework is reversed:

“In conventional instruction, students acquire new knowledge in the classroom, such as via lecture, and practice it at home via homework. In flipped learning, the students acquire knowledge at home, such as via watching videos made by the teacher, and practice the skills in class, where the teacher can easily monitor and correct the student.” (Hsieh, Wu, & Marek, 2016, p. 1)

Bermann and Sams (2012, reinforce what was proposed by these authors by stating that the flipped classroom methodology is based on a simple idea that proposes two steps: “Move the direct instruction away from the group space. This usually means that students watch and interact

with an instructional video prior to coming to class” and “Engage in various types of activities that allow students to practice learned concepts and use higher-order thinking.” (p.4). These simple steps have significant benefits for an EFL classroom like changing the mindset about homework where students get stressed with difficult tasks with little to no help. In the flipped classroom, the difficult task is left for classroom activities, and the “lecture” or instruction time is done independently. Another advantage is to remove presentations from classroom time and use them for teacher-student interaction. Consequently, I strongly believe the use of flipped classroom strategies would be of great help to providing students with tools that might eventually facilitate their participation in speaking activities. Finally, unlike traditional lessons, with teacher-made videos, students can pause and rewind them.

### **Flipped Learning Pillars**

As stated by Hamdan, “a cadre of experienced educators from the Flipped Learning Network, along with Pearson’s School Achievement Services (2013), identified the key features, or pillars, of flipped classrooms that allow Flipped Learning to occur”. (Hamdan et al; 2013, pp. 5-6). In the F-L-I-P model, each letter stands for one specific principle which are: Flexible Environment, Language Culture, Intentional Content, and Professional Educators.

Flexible learning environments in flipped classrooms offer students various modes of learning, allowing them to choose when and where they study. Lessons are more active and engaging compared to traditional, quieter ones. This approach shifts the focus from teacher-centered to student-centered learning, with in-class time dedicated to exploring topics and enhancing learning opportunities. It involves intentional content selection by teachers and requires professional educators to guide the transition from direct instruction to independent learning.

## **EFL Speaking Skills**

As stated by Goh and Burns (2012) “Speaking can facilitate language acquisition and contribute towards the academic development of many language learners” (p.1). They also explain that speaking skills are not only limited to expressing and understanding speech, but also go beyond by serving as a way to express ideas and share facts (p.2)

On the other hand, Bygate (1987) describes the importance of speaking skills as a transforming and powerful social tool: “Is a vehicle per excellence of social solidarity, of social ranking, of professional advancement and of business” (p. 2). It is safe to say then that developing speaking skills through the use of flipped learning is an idea worthy of exploration since it equips the students with useful tools to come to class more prepared to use speech in more meaningful learning activities.

This study aims to enhance students’ speaking skills, focusing on accuracy and fluency. Fluency, defined as natural language use with minimal correction, emphasizes negotiating meaning (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Accuracy refers to the correct use of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar (Yuan & Ellis, 2003). The research will implement flipped learning activities to improve pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar while enhancing students' ability to negotiate meaning.

## **Learner-Centered Instruction**

In order to develop effective flipped learning strategies in the classroom, the lessons must be one where the main protagonist is the learner. In this sense, a learner-centered classroom is defined by Michael and Brecher (2017), as a place where the learner is seen “as an individual with personal interests, preferences, and motivations, and a uniquely human set of cognitive capacities” (p. 15).

Nunan (2013) elaborated on the definition of learner-centeredness, stating that “in a learner-centered classroom, decisions about what will be taught, how it will be taught, when it will be taught, and how it will be assessed will be made with reference to the learner. (p. 53)

In conclusion, a thorough grasp of the aforementioned concepts is key to carry out my research at Institución Educativa Concejo de Medellín, since my main goal is to assess how flipped learning can help students to enhance their speaking skills. By having a clearer idea of what flipped learning and its main pillars encompass, as well as acquiring a better understanding of the concepts of speaking and learner-centered, I will be able to direct my research with greater precision and effectiveness.

### **Research Question**

How can flipped learning enhance speaking skills among EFL students of grade ninth-one at Institución Educativa Concejo de Medellín?

### **Objectives**

#### **General Objective**

To assess how flipped learning can enhance speaking skills among EFL students of grade ninth-one.

#### **Specific Objectives**

- To evaluate students' grammatical accuracy in spoken language across various communicative contexts after they engage with videos, reading activities, and online grammar exercises.
- To determine the accuracy and clarity of students' pronunciation in various speaking activities after they use websites at home to check the pronunciation of key words and expressions.



- To assess how effectively students select and use words to convey their ideas after being provided with key vocabulary to study outside the classroom.
- To evaluate the effectiveness and clarity of students' performance in speaking activities after they use pre-class self-learning materials.

### **Action Plan**

In teaching English as a foreign language to teenagers, enhancing speaking skills is crucial due to its importance in the job market (Ramamurthy et al., 2021). I propose an action research plan to explore how flipped learning can improve speaking skills among ninth-grade EFL students at Institución Educativa Concejo de Medellín. This plan aims to innovate and improve my teaching practice and support students in developing their speaking abilities.

The research will span eight weeks and involve two cycles of EFL lessons. The first cycle will implement a flipped classroom model where students prepare by watching videos, reading texts, and learning vocabulary. This will assess improvements in vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and overall speaking accuracy. The second cycle will refine this approach based on student feedback collected through audio recordings, questionnaires, interviews, and performance evaluations. Each cycle will include planning, development, implementation, and evaluation phases.

The first cycle included the following activities: From April first to fifth, the preparation phase focused on getting to know the students to understand their interests and overall English proficiency. The problem was also identified mainly through a series of class observations kept in a journal, and conversations with the cooperating teacher. The conversation with the teacher provided valuable insights from their perspective, enriching the understanding of the students

before starting any activities. The journals offered a detailed account of the students' progress, which helped in identifying their needs before initiating specific activities.

Between April eighth and 26th, the preparation phase continued with a diagnostic assessment of the students' speaking skills through a speaking activity. This activity evaluated their vocabulary and grammar use, as well as their ability to use the language spontaneously. Pre-assessment questionnaires were distributed to establish the students' speaking skills. This method helped me to understand the students' proficiency in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and their ability to convey messages clearly and effectively. From April 29th to May third, flipped learning sessions with structured speaking activities aimed at assessing the students' speaking skills were implemented. The initial focus was on monitoring the students' use of vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation. The evaluation of speaking skills was done through audio recordings, interviews, and observation journals, which helped in monitoring and documenting the students' engagement and progress in real-time.

Between May sixth and 17th, the evaluation phase assessed the impact of flipped learning on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the students' ability to convey messages clearly and accurately for cycle one. Post-assessment questionnaires were conducted, and audio recordings of speaking tasks during flipped sessions were made to evaluate progress. The data collected was compared to the pre-assessment data to reflect on student progress and engagement. From May 20th to 24th, during the implementation phase of cycle two, flipped learning sessions continued with an emphasis on vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and clarity in conveying messages, taking into account the students' performance during the first cycle. Class observations were again used to monitor these aspects, continuing the documentation of students' speaking skills.

Finally, from May 27th to 31st, the evaluation phase involves collecting post-assessment data for Cycle two and checking overall progress. Pre- and post-assessment results from both cycles are analyzed along with audio recordings of speaking tasks. This analysis determined the effectiveness of the action plan in achieving its objectives and identified areas for improvement.

### **Development of Actions**

The action strategies were directly connected with the project objectives and consistent with the theoretical framework of flipped learning theory. This approach emphasizes the role of pre-class preparation to increase in-class interactive learning time, supporting the project's goals of enhancing grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and overall speaking effectiveness and negotiation of meaning.

Two cycles were conducted, each involving specific strategies designed to meet the project's objectives and solve the problem I identified in the group. In Cycle one, a questionnaire was administered to understand students' study habits, interests, and preferences for practicing speaking skills. According to Dörnyei (2003), "questionnaires are easy to construct, extremely versatile, and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly" (p. 1). The questionnaire, distributed at the beginning of the cycle, gathered useful data to plan learning activities based on the students' needs and preferences. This information was fundamental to select grammar videos, online resources, and vocabulary activities, according to flipped learning theory by addressing students' needs in pre-class preparation.

An initial diagnostic activity involving recordings and one-on-one interviews was conducted to evaluate students' speaking abilities. Brown (2004) states, "A diagnostic test is designed to diagnose specified aspects of a language" (p. 46). Conducted in the first week, this

activity provided a better understanding of grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary use, essential for measuring progress and plan future teaching strategies.

Class observations were written in a personal journal to capture classroom dynamics and student engagement. According to Randolph, P. T. (2018) "The observation journals are essentially short, focused, and descriptive pieces about daily observations. They are not reflections of past events, but observations that focus on the moment at hand" (p.7). These observations were continuous throughout the cycle, focusing on student interaction and responses to the implemented strategies, providing qualitative data to complement the quantitative data from questionnaires and recordings. The strategies included sharing videos, online grammar exercises, a story with after-reading activities and online platforms for the students to practice their pronunciation. The videos were shared to replace basically to save lecture time, and have the students prepared for in class activities that focused on language practice and production. The remaining strategies provided the students with useful resources to strengthen their language weaknesses, whereas it was pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar use.

In cycle two, the strategies were refined considering the students' interests. Interviews with both students and the cooperating teacher were conducted to gain qualitative insights into the effectiveness of the strategies. Kvale (2007) highlights, "Interviews in educational research are essential for obtaining in-depth, contextual insights" (p. 36). These interviews, held midway and at the end of the cycle, provided detailed feedback from multiple perspectives, helping to improve the strategies based on experiences both from the students and the cooperating teacher. Classroom observations continued to be written in the personal journal, focusing on changes in student performance and engagement. These observations helped track the effectiveness of pre-class and in-class activities, following the flipped learning method. Therefore, the focus was more on pronunciation platforms, after-reading activities to work on grammar and vocabulary.

Finally, a post-implementation questionnaire was administered at the end of the cycle to gather students' perceptions and feedback after implementing the action strategies from cycle one. Nunan (1992) said, "Feedback collection is critical in educational settings to assess the effectiveness of instructional methods and make necessary adjustments" (p. 115). This feedback was crucial for assessing the impact of pre-class preparation and in-class activities on student learning, supporting continuous improvement.

### **Data Analysis**

Action Research was the research method followed in this project. This research method allows the researcher to find solutions to a previously perceived problem, however, Burns (2015) says that "Rather than suggesting that the participants or their behaviors are the 'problems', the term problematic reflects a desire on the part of participants to 'problematize', that is question, clarify, understand and give meaning to the current situation" (p. 188). Data were gathered and then analyzed using a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data from questionnaires and qualitative data from interviews and observations.

The analysis process involved categorizing data into themes reflecting the project's objectives: grammatical accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and overall speaking effectiveness. This approach proposed by Altrichter (2018), allowed for a structured analysis, identifying patterns and trends in student performance. Pre- and post-assessment data were compared to assess the impact of the action strategies. This comparison was essential for evaluating progress and the effectiveness of the flipped learning approach. Data were validated through triangulation, using multiple sources such as questionnaires, interviews, and observations to ensure trustworthiness and validity. (Noble and Heale, 2019) state, "Triangulation is a method used to increase the credibility and validity of research findings" (p. 67). In addition, as stated by (Burns, 2015), "triangulation means using more than one data-collection method".

She goes on stating that “By using different perspective sources, confidence that findings are not simply the result of using a particular method is increased” (p. 193). The comprehensive analysis provided a better understanding of the impact of the action strategies on student learning.

The flipped learning theory underpinned the project by emphasizing pre-class preparation to maximize interactive learning during class time (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). By aligning the action strategies with this theory, the project aimed to enhance students' speaking abilities through structured, data-driven interventions. Each cycle lasted approximately one month, allowing sufficient time to implement the strategies, collect data, and evaluate outcomes. This structured approach ensured that the action strategies were both effective and responsive to student needs, ultimately enhancing their speaking skills through targeted, evidence-based interventions.

### **Findings and Interpretations**

This research explores how flipped learning can enhance speaking skills in EFL students. After analyzing the data collected, it can be said that some flipped learning strategies proved to be effective in developing speaking skills to a certain extent, providing useful conclusions to consider the integration of this method into EFL teaching practices. I divided the findings into four main categories: the effectiveness of videos and after-reading exercises to enhance the use of grammar, online platforms to practice pronunciation, assigning readings to expand target vocabulary, and flipped learning to develop meaning negotiation speaking skills. Participation was identified as an emerging category, and a significant impact of the flipped method was seen during the implementation of some of the actions.

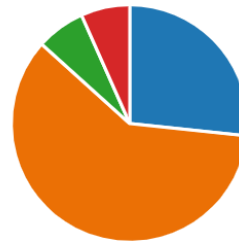
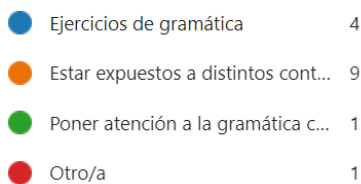
## Videos, After-Reading Activities and Grammar Exercises to Enhance Speaking

When implementing flipped learning, various strategies are employed to enhance the learning process. The flipped classroom (Bergmann and Sams, 2012) is an alternative teaching strategy that proposes a change in the traditional way of presenting content through lectures, towards the use of learning materials that are usually assigned as homework. Bearing this in mind, a questionnaire was designed to learn about the students' preferences when it comes to practicing English at home. This questionnaire was implemented during the first cycle of the study, and it showed there was a positive attitude towards practicing grammar outside the classroom, with the students expressing their preferred strategies in one of the questions they answered:

**Figure 1**

7. ¿Qué encuentras más útil para mejorar la gramática?

[Más detalles](#)



(Questionnaire cycle one from April 26th, 2024)

Based on the questionnaire, most students prefer to be exposed to different types of content in English such as videos and readings, whereas others would rather do grammar exercises. Hence, I decided to focus on sharing videos, after-reading activities and online grammar exercises so that the students are able to prepare for the in-class activities. The findings indicate that this strategy worked to enhance grammar in the students who used the materials

that were shared, however, the lack of engagement from the majority of the students limited better outcomes.

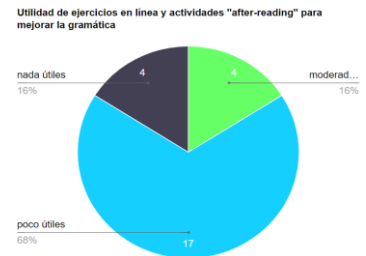
Along the process using this strategy, an interview was conducted with a small group of eight students to gather their perceptions of a grammar video and an after-reading exercise they were assigned on the use of past simple. Some positive comments arose from this conversation: “El poder prepararme me dio más confianza para hablar en inglés”, “Es mejor practicar antes de la clase para poder usar mejor el inglés”, “Los videos no son tan aburridos y uno aprende con las imágenes que muestran”. (Interview from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024). This interview showed that using videos and after-reading activities was an effective strategy to learn about the past simple. The students’ feedback highlighted important aspects like confidence in speaking activities, the importance of preparation for an English lesson, and the engaging component of videos. Finally, another questionnaire was carried out with the participation of 31 students showing the following evidence:

**Figure 2**



(Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024)

**Figure 3**



Evidence showed that, after implementing the actions, only six of the students claimed to have seen the videos shared before the classes. Even though the strategies used responded to the students’ preferences about the materials to practice grammar, only between 12 and 20% showed willingness to use them. (Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024)

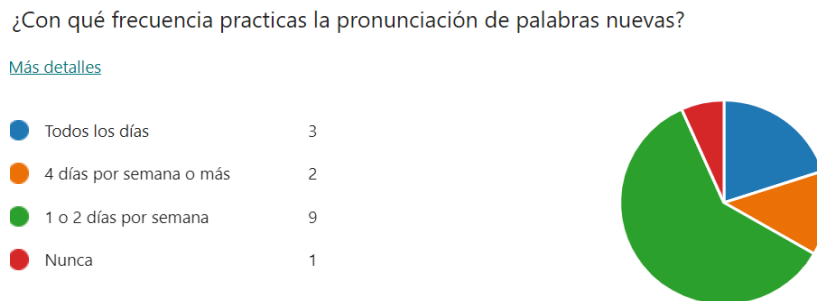


In conclusion, the strategies shared with the students proved to be effective to enhance the use of grammar since the students who evidenced interaction with the pre-class learning resources, showed a better understanding of grammar structures and an improved performance in speaking activities. However, lack of engagement by the students and insufficient time for sharing more resources limited the achievement of better outcomes.

### Online Platforms to Practice Pronunciation

In order to assist the students with pronunciation, several strategies can be implemented in an EFL classroom. According to (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), “Flipped classroom that utilizes computer technologies can also enhance pronunciation instruction”. Since the beginning of the present study, most students showed good habits to practice their pronunciation, as seen in one of the questions they were asked during the first cycle of the study:

**Figure 4**



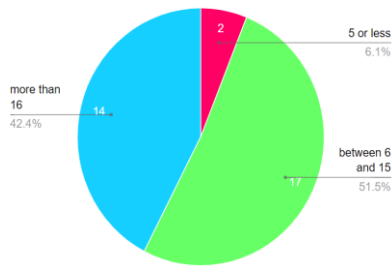
(Questionnaire cycle one from April 26th, 2024)

Based on these results, I decided to share with the students different online platforms for them to work on their pronunciation. The main platforms used were <https://www.deepl.com/translator>, <https://www.naturalreaders.com/online/>, and [getpronounce.com](https://www.getpronounce.com). These online tools proved to be an effective model for the students to practice

their pronunciation before class. One of the first activities that showed a significant improvement thanks to the use of these platforms was an oral presentation about countries. The students gave two presentations, one before using the platforms, and another one after interacting with them. Pronunciation errors were counted and compared across both cycles:

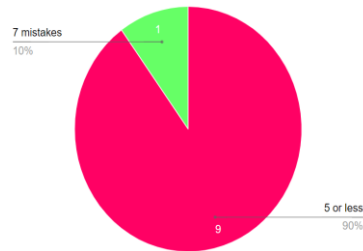
**Figure 5**

Pronunciation mistakes before sharing the online resources



**Figure 6**

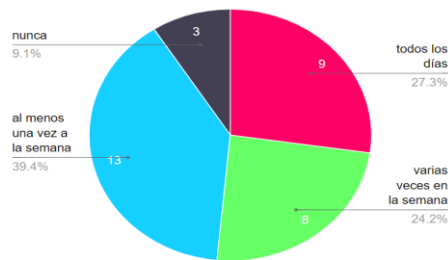
Pronunciation mistakes after sharing the online resources



For the first presentation, six out of 33 students reported using online tools for practice, mainly translators. For the second activity, ten students gave a presentation at an activity called “fair of countries.” During the fair, nine students made less than five pronunciation mistakes, and only one made seven mistakes. The evidence indicated that the online platforms to practice pronunciation were proved effective for this activity. In addition, the questionnaire of the second

cycle also showed positive results:

Frecuencia de uso de las plataformas para practicar pronunciación



**Figure 7**

(Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024)

Evidence shows that most students use platforms to practice pronunciation. A questionnaire and an interview with eight students revealed reasons such as: “I can compare my

pronunciation with the correct one,” “I hear what I need to say in English, and it’s easier,” and “I used a translator for pronunciation because it was easier.” (Interview, May 30, 2024). A speaking activity had students discuss questions about the book "The African Mask" in groups. Their interactions were recorded and transcribed to analyze pronunciation errors:

**Figure 8**



(Personal journal entry, May 17th, 2024). Eight students participated in this speaking activity by answering specific questions about the last page of the book. As seen in the pie chart above, even though the number of words used by the students was limited, they made almost no pronunciation mistakes during their interventions. The students that were not shown in the chart made no mistakes when they spoke.

The implementation of online platforms to assist with pronunciation in the EFL classroom has shown promising results. The data indicates that most students used these tools effectively, leading to noticeable enhancement in their pronunciation skills. Activities such as oral presentations and group discussions demonstrated fewer pronunciation errors following the integration of platforms like DeepL, NaturalReaders, and getpronounce.com.

### Readings to Expand Target Vocabulary

Among the resources that can be shared with the students in the flipped model, reading and online materials like Power Point presentations are useful alternatives to enhance target vocabulary. According to (Zhang et al, 2016), flipped learning allows teachers to “the internet, the mobile equipment and other resources to carefully prepare rich online materials to broaden vocabulary learning methods, therefore, the student can adjust their learning process and allocate their time for studying vocabulary according to their actual situation” (p.7). Moreover, “Many researchers recognize that learning vocabulary through reading in the EFL context, and teaching the target words can be a more efficient way to acquire them” (Coady et al. 1997, Sokmen 1997).

Once again, the questionnaire of the first cycle allowed me to identify the students' preferences to practice vocabulary:

**Figure 9**

9. ¿Cómo sueles aprender vocabulario nuevo?

[Más detalles](#)

● A través de tarjetas de vocabula...	0
● Leyendo libros o artículos en in...	6
● Usando aplicaciones de vocabul...	4
● Solamente en las clases de inglés...	4
● Otro/a	5



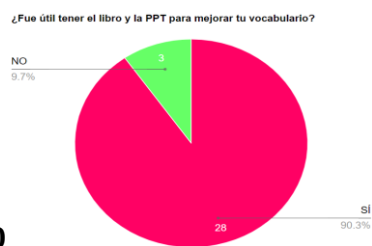
(Questionnaire cycle one from April 26th, 2024)

According to the questionnaire, students primarily learn vocabulary through reading and English lessons at school. Therefore, I focused on two main strategies: presenting target vocabulary with key words, meanings, Spanish translations, and examples, and using the book "The African Mask" from the school curriculum. Students interacted with the book, did activities, and read assigned pages at home. They then participated in speaking activities during class. Data

from these activities showed the strategies were effective. Students used vocabulary from the story to describe characters and passages. Many students found the resources helpful for practicing vocabulary before class discussions. For example, my journal noted that more students participated in group conversations and used words like "solicitor," "hired," "postmark," "spirit," and "mask" naturally (Personal journal, May 16th, 2024).

Second, the positive impact of flipped learning to expand target vocabulary can also be proven by the students' responses to questions about one of the passages of the book: Question: How does the story end? Response: "Ana flew to Botswana. It's a country in Africa. She returned the mask. The spirit of the mask was in peace." To the question: What did Ana say at the end of the story? More students responded: "She say, I think there's a ghost in the house", "Donald's house is in a little village in Scotland" "The beautiful wooden mask brought them luck". Through the responses of the students, I noticed that the students used words like wooden, spirit, mask, village. These words were previously shared with the students through a power point presentation. In addition, evidence also proved that "some students read the last page of the book and thanks to that they were able to share their thoughts about the story using accurate vocabulary. (Personal journal entry, May 16th, 2024).

Third, most students agreed on the effectiveness of having the book and the target vocabulary to feel more confident and have more language tools during speaking activities. The second questionnaire showed this when the students were asked whether they thought that having the book and the resources contributed to enhance their vocabulary:



**Figure 10** (Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024)

the results were concluding with 28 students answering yes and only 3 saying it was not helpful. Some of the reasons why having the book was helpful were: “Aprendes muchas palabras nuevas que son útiles para responder las preguntas del libro” and “Una historia es una forma diferente de aprender vocabulario. Es interesante y uno quiere saber lo que pasa.” (Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024). These perceptions were partially confirmed in an interview with the CT, who noted that having the book and target vocabulary to work on at home allowed students to "review, rethink, repeat, and remember class material" and prepare for future lessons. However, she was skeptical about relying on students to learn course content independently, stating, "The only way to know if a student uses the resources for self-study is by using them in class. Usually, only 3 or 4 students complete the assigned activities, and they end up sharing their work with classmates" (CT's interview, June 6th). This highlights a key limitation of the flipped learning method.

In conclusion, flipped learning was an effective method in enhancing vocabulary acquisition with stories and online materials. By providing students with pre-class resources such as vocabulary-focused PowerPoint presentations and access to the book "The African Mask," students were able to engage more deeply with the language content. The study found an increased usage of target vocabulary words in discussions and responses. The evidence gathered from personal journal entries, student questionnaires, and the CT interview showed that while most students found the resources beneficial, there remains a challenge in ensuring consistent engagement with the materials as with the other speaking skills. Despite this, the general positive feedback suggests that integrating stories and online resources in a flipped classroom can effectively support vocabulary learning, fostering a more interactive and enriched EFL learning environment.

### Flipped Learning to Develop Meaning Negotiation Speaking Skills

Negotiating meaning is a key component of speaking. Pica (1987) defines it as the interaction where a listener signals that a speaker's message is unclear, prompting both to resolve the confusion (p. 200). Rachma et al. (2020) emphasize that “various communication tasks must be provided” to foster these skills. With a large number of students, I implemented several group discussions to promote meaning negotiation and spontaneous interaction, as suggested by the CT. This approach, combined with flipped learning resources, proved effective. One activity involved discussing a passage from "The African Mask." Students shared their opinions on a character's decision to visit Scotland and what they learned about the country. Before the lesson, they watched videos about Scotland, read the relevant passage, and reviewed key vocabulary. During the lesson, a conversation with nine students showed they could effectively answer questions and clarify points.

**Table 1**

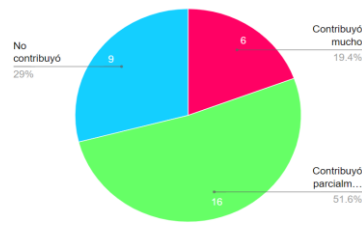
Student one: Questions (yellow) Answers (Blue)	Student two: Questions (yellow) Answers (Blue)	Student three, four and five:
Do masks have special powers?	Do the masks have powers?	Why did Donald die?
Yes, because they have special powers	Yes, because it's in the mask?	Because he sick
All the masks in the world or only African masks?	What's in the mask?	For he take the mask
Only African masks.	The spirits and the masks cause dreams.	Because he stole the mask
Tell me more about the spirits	Can the masks kill someone?	
Animals, and persons.	Yes.	

In addition, the students performed well in terms of vocabulary and grammar use and displayed accurate pronunciation. When observing and monitoring the activity, “A small group of eight students are interacting with their classmates naturally. They can answer the follow-up questions I ask them, and they continually make clarifications and repeat what they say with other words”. However, “many of the remaining students are speaking lines they learned by heart.” (Personal journal entry, May 17th, 2024).

Finally, the second questionnaire showed mixed feelings towards the flipped learning method and its contribution to enhance the students' overall level of English and their ability to interact with others and answer questions:

**Figure 11**

Contribución del flipped method para interactuar en Inglés haciendo y respondiendo preguntas.



(Questionnaire cycle two from May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024)

Most of the students answered that the flipped resources “contribuyeron parcialmente” and only six answered they “contribuyeron mucho”. The limitation is again the level of engagement and motivation to use the pre-class materials.

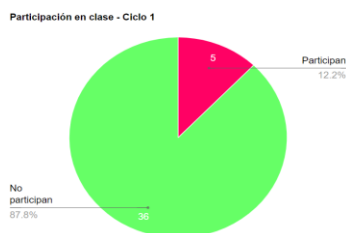
It can be concluded that the role of flipped learning was meaningful in promoting negotiation of meaning among EFL students through diverse communication tasks and pre-class resources. The use of flipped learning strategies, such as watching videos, reading passages of the book and engaging with key vocabulary, enabled students to participate more effectively in discussions and interactive activities. A small group of students showed valuable interactive skills where the influence of the pre-class resources was evident by their responses to questions and their knowledge of the story. Even though most of the students stick to memorizing lines and did not engage in discussions actively, the evidence is enough to conclude that the flipped method has a lot to offer to develop meaning negotiation skills.



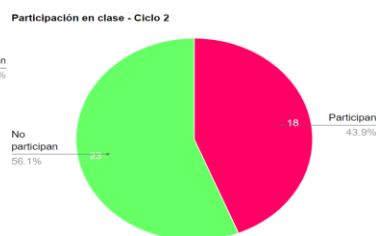
## Increase in Participation

During the implementation of the actions, two important communication elements came to surface that were not originally considered as possible advantages of flipped learning and its role in enhancing speaking skills in EFL learners.

**Figure 12**



**Figure 13**



The evidence shows an increase in participation after sharing the pre-class materials. The results of the two questionnaires can be compared with my own observations: “The same four or five students are the ones who engage in the discussions proposed in class. The remaining 35 students seem uninterested and absent, and they speak only if asked directly”. (Personal journal entry, Mar 15th, 2024). Conversely, the attitude of the students changed radically during the discussion held about the book. “Most students participated in the discussion by answering simple questions. They participated in the speaking activity by sharing information about Scotland and expressing their opinions about the main characters.” (Personal journal entry, May 17th, 2024). Interviews with ten students were also conducted and the majority of them shared positive opinions about the flipped learning strategies and how they helped them to participate more: “Uno siente que sabe de lo que están hablando”, “Tengo más vocabulario sobre el tema del que hablan” “El libro es una forma diferente de aprender y es interesante hablar de él” This data highlights the impact that the flipped learning method had on the students’ participation in speaking activities.

## Conclusions

The study effectively met its general objective of enhancing speaking skills among ninth-grade EFL students through the implementation of flipped learning strategies. The use of videos, online grammar exercises, and after-reading activities significantly improved students' grammatical accuracy, as confirmed by triangulating data from interviews, questionnaires, and personal observations. These activities allowed students to engage with grammatical concepts outside of the classroom, ensuring that in-class time could be dedicated to practicing these concepts in various communicative contexts. Furthermore, online platforms were found to be highly effective in improving students' pronunciation. Evidence from informal conversations, recordings of speaking activities and interviews, as well as classroom observations indicated that these platforms provided valuable opportunities for students to practice and refine their pronunciation skills outside of class, making them a worthwhile complementary learning tool.

The incorporation of stories and after-reading exercises also proved beneficial for expanding students' vocabulary. This was supported by data from journals, questionnaires, and interviews, which highlighted the positive impact of these activities on students' ability to select and use words effectively. Although participation was not explicitly targeted as a category, flipped learning significantly increased student involvement in speaking activities. This indicates the approach's broader positive impact on classroom engagement. While the negotiation of meaning showed promising results, more time and a greater variety of materials could have strengthened the evidence and led to more solid conclusions. Overall, the study demonstrates that flipped learning can effectively enhance various aspects of speaking skills in EFL students, providing a structured and engaging framework for language learning.

### **Recommendations**

This research study showed the effectiveness of flipped learning on one specific group of teenagers. Therefore, conducting studies on wider and more varied populations, including different age groups, backgrounds and learning abilities would be helpful to understand the reach of these method. Doing this would allow researchers to understand how different individuals respond to flipped learning and achieve even better outcomes. Also, the exploration of different technological tools to understand their uses and learn about their advantages would be useful. In this study, videos and pronunciation platforms proved to be effective tools to promote the use of flipped learning, however, many other resources that remained unexplored certainly have the potential to maximize the effectiveness of this method. Finally, further research should be conducted to find successful and more efficient communication strategies. Communication tools such as google classroom, online forums or social messaging apps are likely to be impactful in the way students and teachers communicate.

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