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Reading-Aloud Technique for Enhancing Oral Production Skills.

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Dedication

To God, because everything I am and have, is because of Him. My faith has driven me to where I am now, and I am completely grateful for all the blessings I have had and know I will continue to have.

To my family: my mom, my dad, and my sister. Their support has motivated me to achieve every dream and goal I have had in my life. I am grateful to have them with me every step I take.

To my little niece, Arianna. As I submit this thesis, you are just a few days old. You should know that your aunt loves you with all her heart and that you were one of the biggest motivators for me to finish my thesis. Your existence is an absolute blessing in our lives. I hope this serves as inspiration for you to follow your dreams. Your aunt and your family love you and will always be there for you.

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Abstract

This action research study describes the incorporation of the Reading-Aloud Technique to enhance oral production skills in an eighth-grade English course in a public school in the municipality of Itagui, Antioquia. Data collection involved class observations from an external person, interviews with the cooperating teacher and students, focus group interviews, questionnaires, and journals, as well as quantitative data such as tables measuring students' improvement in terms of accuracy and fluency in their speech. Four different strategies were employed when incorporating the Reading-Aloud Technique: repetition of sentences, pronunciation of complex words, collaborative learning, and feedback. The results demonstrated that the Reading-Aloud Technique improved students' oral production skills primarily through the implementation of three of the strategies. The speaking characteristic that showed the most improvement in students is accuracy, specifically their pronunciation. Additionally, the study showed that other characteristics such as confidence, participation, and reading comprehension were enhanced through the implementation of this technique.

Key words: Reading-Aloud technique, oral production, strategies, confidence, participation, reading comprehension

Resumen

Este estudio de investigación-acción describe la incorporación de la Técnica de Lectura en Voz Alta para mejorar las habilidades de producción oral en un curso de inglés de octavo grado en una escuela pública del municipio de Itagüí, Antioquia. La recolección de datos involucró observaciones de clase por parte de una persona externa, entrevistas con el profesor colaborador y los estudiantes, entrevistas en grupos focales, cuestionarios y diarios, así como datos cuantitativos como tablas que miden la mejora de los estudiantes en términos de precisión y fluidez en su discurso. Se emplearon cuatro estrategias diferentes al incorporar la Técnica de Lectura en Voz Alta: repetición de frases, pronunciación de palabras complejas, aprendizaje colaborativo y retroalimentación. Los resultados demostraron que la Técnica de Lectura en Voz Alta mejoró las habilidades de producción oral de los estudiantes, principalmente a través de la implementación de tres de las estrategias. La característica del habla que más se desarrolló en los estudiantes fue la precisión, específicamente en su pronunciación. Además, el estudio mostró que otras características como la confianza, la participación y la comprensión lectora se vieron mejoradas mediante la implementación de esta técnica.

Palabras clave: técnica de lectura en voz alta, producción oral, estrategias, confianza, participación, comprensión lectora.

Introduction

This action research is conducted in the Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagui, in the municipality of Itagui. The selected group was an eighth-grade group with 22 students. The process was divided into two phases: the second semester of 2023 and the first semester of 2024.

In the first phase, I observed the students' behavior, preferences, attitudes toward English, and their language challenges. Additionally, I examined the teacher's methodology, activities, materials, and the classroom environment. During this phase, I identified the main problem in the classroom: the limited opportunities for students to develop their oral production skills. I then started to do some research about activities, methodologies, or strategies to address this issue, which led me to incorporate the Reading-Aloud Technique into my research project. With the problem defined and a proposed solution, I carried out a literature review to base my study on valid theory. I defined my research question and objectives and designed an action plan to be implemented in the following phase, starting in the first semester of 2024.

During the second phase, the action plan designed in the first phase was implemented with the same group, but it was guided by a different teacher. This phase includes sections on the development of actions, data analysis, findings and interpretations, conclusions, and recommendations. All the evidence collected will be presented to demonstrate how implementing the Reading-Aloud technique enhanced the students' oral production skills.

Description of the Context

The "Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí" is a public school founded in 1970. It is in the southern part of the municipality of Itagui, covering the neighborhoods of Bariloche and San Francisco. The headquarters is in Bariloche and has three buildings with three floors each, with more than 40 classrooms. This headquarters provides educational programs from the sixth to the eleventh grade, with the ninth grade offering technical programs in Informatics, Ecology, Commerce, and Electricity. The school has a proud legacy of being consistently ranked among the best educational institutions in the municipality of Itagui.

The institution follows a cognitive-constructivist pedagogical model and employs the Fontan Method (SER+I Sistema Educativo Relacional de Itagüí). It is a method that consists of four phases; starting with the lesson's introduction; moving to the research and information collection phase; followed by skill development; and finishing with the knowledge acquisition phase. This transition from traditional teaching to a more modern educational experience has faced challenges within the school thanks to limited resources and insufficient research materials, making it difficult for students to achieve autonomy.

Regarding the English department, there are eight English teachers, six in the Bariloche headquarters and two in San Francisco. These teachers design their curriculum with the Ministry of Education's guidelines. Additionally, they receive support from the platform https://www.asistentedebilinguismo.com/, which provides them with materials and activities for all grade levels. For the selected group, the English class follows the syllabus which is mainly based on the textbook "Way to Go" an eighth-grade English book.

The cooperating teacher holds a Bachelor's degree in Foreign Language Teaching from the Universidad de Antioquia and has worked for over twenty-five years in the educational field. He also has a Master's degree in "Gestion de tecnologia educativa" from the Universidad de Santander, so his teaching methodology is more focused on the use of information and

communications technologies. Nevertheless, this has changed to better align with the school's teaching approach; therefore, in implementing this new approach, his methodology has changed into relying on the textbook's activities, with some use of the technology, but mostly focused on the proposal from the curriculum.

Concerning the materials and resources, although the classroom has more materials compared to other classrooms, there is still a lack of them. For instance, in the classroom of my research, out of the 15 computers, 12 are functional, and there are not enough power sources to charge them. Even though there is a video bin and speaker in the classroom, the volume of the speaker is weak, and the video bin does not project a clear image on the whiteboard.

About the students of the institution, most of them come from socioeconomic strata between one and three and reside in the vicinity of the school, which is also close to the municipal jail. At present, the school has approximately 1,100 students, distributed across five groups per grade from fifth to eleventh. The selected group for this action research project is an eighth-grade group of 22 students who are pre-teenagers, ranging between thirteen and fifteen years old. These students have a total of four hours of English classes, distributed over two days. It is important to note that this research study started in the second semester of 2023 when the selected group of students was in seventh grade. In the present year, the group remains the same, although with fewer students from the last year.

Regarding students' interests in English, they find the language necessary for communication and understanding music, movies, and TV series in English (Informal conversation, Journal Entry 1, September 4th, 2023). In general, they maintain a positive attitude towards the language and maintain good behavior in class. Although they are occasionally talkative, they are attentive to the teacher's instructions and activities.

Statement of the Problem

When considering language learning, textbooks have been generally accepted as essential tools for teachers and learners. According to Wen-Cheng, W., et al, (2011), textbooks offer guidance and orientation for teachers and students, addressing a logical sequence in a class. Thus, textbooks are viewed as guides rather than instructional tools. Nonetheless, the use of textbooks has also been viewed negatively, since Hutchinson and Torres (1994) argued that textbooks can "reduce the teacher's role to one of managing or overseeing pre-planned events" (p.316). This duality in the perception of textbooks highlights their significance in education. However, its importance raises questions, especially when it comes to English language learning. While textbooks offer structure and guidance, they can limit teachers' creativity, reducing them to the support of the textbook and not the guidance in the classroom.

In the context of Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí, one of the observed issues in the English class for the eighth- two group was a lack of student participation and oral production (Journal Entry 2, September 11th, 2023), possibly caused by a general sense of monotony among many students and a lack of motivation that might have obstructed their enthusiasm for learning English. The initial impression suggested that the reason students lack motivation is because their English classes mainly focus on writing and answering questions provided by the English textbook in their notebooks. This was evident due to multiple observed classes following a consistent protocol from the seventh-grade teacher: First, the writing of textbook-based activities on the whiteboard; second, asking students for answers to some of these activities; and finally, checking whether they had written the answers in their notebooks. (Journal Entry #1 and #2, September 4th, September 11th, 2023). Even though the cooperating teacher is different for the eighth grade, some of the issues remain the same, such as the dependent use of the textbook, and following and solving its activities as the main point of the classes.

Another aspect that further evidenced this issue regarding the use of textbooks, is the feedback received from students. Five students participated in an informal conversation and one of the general answers highlighted a concern: the perception that classes center on reading and writing from the textbook. The prevailing method focuses on simply reading the textbook and answering questions, often without having a real understanding of the material and with limited opportunities for active participation and oral production in the classes (Journal Entry #1, September 4th, 2023).

Therefore, to overcome the difficulty of understanding the material and participating in oral production activities, it is important and necessary to create strategies and implement different techniques that allow students to develop their language skills as best as possible. For instance, the reading-aloud technique can be an effective strategy to achieve this. According to Dhaif (1990), the act of the teacher reading aloud holds significant importance for individuals learning English as a foreign language or as a second language, particularly during the initial phases of language acquisition. Additionally, when a teacher reads aloud, it helps English learners recognize meaningful phrases. Furthermore, ample evidence taken from different authors such as Cardenas et al. (2022); Gibson (2008); Martinez Adrián (2014); and Omar & Saufi (2015), demonstrate the effectiveness of the reading-aloud technique in improving pronunciation, word stress, intonation, and sound articulation.

Several studies have been conducted on the reading-aloud technique, and they have shown significant findings regarding its effectiveness. For instance, Subedi (2022) conducted a study entitled "Silent Reading and Reading Aloud for Better Comprehension and Speaking Motivation: A Comparative Study". where the author compared the effectiveness of both reading techniques (the reading aloud and the silent reading) for comprehension and speaking motivation. One of the results regarding the effect of reading aloud on introverted students' oral participation showed that "the reading aloud practice can be a useful and effective tool for

encouraging introverted students for self-expression" (p. 43). After three weeks of implementing the reading-aloud technique "students who never proposed themselves to speak out in class began to ask questions about the lesson, take part in discussions, and present their opinions" (p. 43). This study revealed and concluded that reading aloud can work as a motivating tool to encourage introverted students to engage in oral performance.

For this research project, it is expected that students can enhance their oral production in English classes through this Reading-aloud technique. The focus of this research is to address these concerns within the specific context of eighth-two group English classes at the Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí and explore how the use of the reading-aloud technique can potentially enhance students' oral production.

Theoretical Framework

This action research study aims to explain how the implementation of reading-aloud activities can enhance students' oral production skills and, consequently, their active engagement in English classes. Although the utilization of the reading-aloud technique has often been perceived as a traditional teaching method, some authors, and researchers, who are going to be shown in this section, support that the reading-aloud technique is effective in promoting oral participation. This section of the research will define the concepts of oral production, reading comprehension, the reading-aloud technique and its role in literacy development; the evidence of reading aloud as an effective technique for enhancing oral production, and some strategies for implementing the reading-aloud technique.

Oral Production

Speaking is outlined by Goh and Burns (2012) as "a highly complex and dynamic skill that involves the use of several simultaneous processes—cognitive, physical and socio-

cultural—and a speaker's knowledge and skills have to be activated rapidly in real time" (p. 166). Magnan and Chastain (1998) expressed that "speaking is a productive skill which involves many components and goes beyond making the right sounds, choosing the right words, or getting the constructions grammatically correct" (p. 330). In essence, oral production, as defined by Chaney and Burk (1998), involves the exchange and construction of meaning through the utilization of verbal and nonverbal symbols within diverse contexts, while incorporating sociocultural norms and expectations. Moreover, Leong & Ahmadi (2017) mentioned that there are two important characteristics of speaking skill, such as fluency and accuracy, defining the first one as the ability a speaker has, to maintain an understandable and interesting speech; and accuracy is defined as the correct use of the language in terms of the selection of suitable words and the correct pronunciation of them. With all of this, oral production, or speaking, covers the intricate process of communicating and negotiating meaning through speech, involving cognitive, physical, and socio-cultural elements, and goes beyond just the correct language use.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is described by Snow (2002) as "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p.11). Additionally, in his article, McKee (2012) stated that "Reading comprehension can be defined as the ability to understand a text, to analyze the information, and to interpret correctly what the writer is stating" (p. 46). This is important because to produce an opinion or any other expression orally related to a text, the reader should understand the text itself. According to Huang (2010) the reading-aloud technique not only enhances and involves students in exploring the pronunciation of words by imitating the sounds, but it also involves the use of other aspects of the language such as grammar and vocabulary

comprehension. That is how the use of the reading-aloud technique facilitates the understanding of vocabulary, and in consequence, the comprehension of a text.

Reading-Aloud Technique

In the world of language teaching methods, the way we use reading aloud has changed significantly over the past few decades. Gibson (2008) observed that for more than thirty years, communicative teaching methodologies have largely discouraged the use of reading aloud, leading to less frequent and sometimes incorrect use of it. Gibson mentioned that "Probably the prime activity which contributed to the disrepute of Reading Aloud is the practice of unprepared reading around the class" (p. 29). Likewise, Huang (2010) concluded that not every teacher uses the reading-aloud method because they find it challenging. Nevertheless, it holds significant importance in language learning due to English being a phonetic language. With teachers prepared to implement effective strategies for reading aloud and having analyzed students' interests to select appropriate readings, we can anticipate a positive impact on English language development.

Reading Aloud for Literacy Development

The essential importance of reading aloud lies in its transformative impact on language learning and literacy development, particularly for non-native speakers. Subedi (2022) argued that even though "Reading aloud to children before they can even talk is one of the most important elements in literacy development" (p. 40) it can also "benefit school-age children as they build foundations of lifelong reading with it" (p. 40). Subedi also emphasized the early importance of Reading Aloud in literacy development, highlighting its contribution to expanding students' vocabulary and fostering phonological awareness.

Benefits of Using the Reading-Aloud Technique

Gibson (2008) stated that beyond student benefits, teachers utilize Reading Aloud as a diagnostic tool to pinpoint persistent issues such as pronunciation and graphemic-phonemic connections. He mentioned that Reading Aloud serves as a potent instrument for assessing comprehension: "Reading Aloud can be a powerful tool for diagnosing a student's comprehension of the text. The intonation the student uses can indicate where understanding is not complete" (p. 31). He noted that by reading extended passages aloud, prosodic features are perfectioned, promoting a more natural flow of speech. Furthermore, reading aloud can genuinely help shy students; it serves as their first step into joining class discussions, providing them with a comfortable space to speak up for the first time.

Teaching Reading-Aloud Strategies

In a study conducted by Cardenas et al. (2022) titled "Reading Aloud Technique as a Resource to Develop Reading Skills in English as a Foreign Language," the researchers aimed to understand the impact of the reading-aloud technique on college students. The study focused on beginner-level college students, providing them with authentic texts like biographies of famous people. Over seven weeks, students recorded themselves reading the assigned biography weekly. Researchers observed improvement in accuracy, expression, and phrasing during the reading-aloud sessions.

Similarly, Martinez Adrián (2014) conducted a study in which "Learners were provided with 10 different texts to be recorded in the lab throughout the semester. Learners recorded a text once a week for 10 weeks" (p. 102). The researchers concluded that Reading Aloud aids students in enhancing their pronunciation, stress, and intonation. This conclusion is drawn after observing students' performance while reading texts aloud and conducting a questionnaire about their perspective on the technique. The findings of this study demonstrated that students

experienced improvements in their pronunciation, and the test results indicated that their grades improved after being exposed to this technique.

Moreover, in their case study, Omar & Saufi (2015) explored the reading-aloud technique involving two teachers, highlighting a set of strategies consistently implemented across all five sessions. These strategies included pronunciation practice: repeating the more complex words; repetitive reading: involving students reading the same story multiple times; comprehension assessment: giving the chance to students assess their understanding; vocabulary enrichment: explaining the words with visual aids or translation into their first language; and, active text engagement: in which the teachers actively encouraged students to physically interact with the text by pointing to the words as they read.

This study intends to integrate and adapt some of the strategies described in the mentioned studies to create a comprehensive approach to utilizing the reading-aloud technique in an educational setting. By combining the strategies from these three studies, the goal of this research is to design reading-aloud activities that can enhance students' oral production skills.

Research Question

How can the use of the reading-aloud technique enhance the oral production skills of the eight-two grade students at the Institución Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí?

Objectives

General objective

To establish how using the reading-aloud technique can enhance the oral production skills among eight-two grade students.

Specific Objectives

-   To identify which of the strategies of the reading-aloud technique works best when reading aloud texts from the English textbook of the course and authentic materials.

-   To monitor how after implementing all the strategies from the reading-aloud technique, students enhance their accuracy and fluency.

-   To assess how during the implementation of the strategies and the different reading-aloud exercises, students can elaborate their own opinions about a text.

<div align="center">Action Plan</div>

This action plan was designed to achieve the objectives of my research project, which focused on establishing how the reading-aloud technique can enhance the oral production skills of students at the Institucion Educativa Concejo Municipal de Itagüí. The primary goal of this action plan was to offer eight-wo grade students, guidance while implementing reading-aloud strategies in the classroom environment to enhance their oral production skills. These activities were implemented during nine weeks in two cycles, four weeks the cycle one, and five weeks the cycle two.

The instruments for the data collection during those cycles were my journals from observations of the classes, diagnostic assessments, audio recordings from students, questionnaires, and focus groups, as well as interviews with my cooperating teacher and my students, and observations from my advisory teacher. With this information, I triangulated the data collected from the different participants and the different data collection tools.

The first cycle involved the implementation of strategies that included repetition of sentences, pronunciation of complex words, and group or peer-based reading activities or collaborative learning. They had a recording activity by the end of the cycle to check progress

in their accuracy and fluency after implementing the strategies mentioned. Importantly, the materials employed in this first cycle were texts from the English course textbook.

The second cycle was based on the strategies introduced in the first cycle, incorporating additional elements. In this phase, students were also encouraged to record themselves while reading the text aloud, thereby reinforcing their oral skills. Additionally, in this cycle, students received direct feedback as part of the final strategies to be implemented. This cycle introduced more authentic texts into the learning process, increasing the complexity of the reading materials and activities. Moreover, by the end of this cycle, students were expected to be able to elaborate on their own opinions about a text worked during this cycle.

Development of the Actions

The classes were conducted twice per week, two hours each. The research actions were implemented in two cycles, the first one involved the utilization of the English course textbook. During the first week, I presented my research proposal to the students and my cooperating teacher orally and provided a consent form to ask parents for their permission for students to participate in the study. In the following class, I implemented the diagnosis test that allowed me to track the progress of the oral production skills from the beginning of the implementation to the end. This was a reading-aloud exercise from a text taken from the textbook. They had to record themselves reading that text, without any help or input from me. For all the classes, the primary data collection method I used was the diary or journal, where I described what happened in all my classes. According to Altrichter et al. (1993), "It is a good place to record notes from unstructured classroom observations or to record the description of the context and conditions of an interview just carried out" (p. 11).

For the second week, I implemented the first reading-aloud strategy, which involved repeated recitation of sentences: I read the sentences from the text, and the students had to

repeat them after me. In the second class, I repeated the exercise with another text, and I also asked them to attempt to give a short opinion about the text. This week, I conducted a questionnaire with the students to understand the factors influencing their English proficiency. According to Anderson & Arsenault (1998), "the decision to use a questionnaire is often motivated by a need to collect routine data from a large number of respondents" (p. 170).

In the third and fourth weeks, I implemented the strategies involving the pronunciation of complex words and collaborative learning. To implement the first strategy mentioned, I started by writing keywords from the text on the whiteboard for the reading-aloud activity; then, I explained the pronunciation and meaning word by word. After this pronunciation strategy, the strategy of collaborative learning was implemented. They were asked to form groups of four people to work on the reading-aloud activity. By the end, I went group by group to record them reading aloud the text.

In the following weeks, the activities were the same, with me writing the words on the whiteboard first, and with them reading within their small groups while recording themselves. Before starting the second cycle, I also conducted a focus group interview to check students' perceptions of collaborative work. According to Krueger & Casey (2015), in a focus group interview, researchers collect diverse perspectives on the participants' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences.

In the second cycle, the actions were the same but authentic texts were incorporated. In the first class of the fifth week, I started by writing a list of keywords on the whiteboard that were part of the reading. I asked the students to pronounce the words and guess their meanings; after their attempts, I provided the correct words' pronunciation and their meaning. After this, we began reading, and they had to repeat after me. In this class, I also asked them to provide their opinions about the text. Additionally, I used another data collection method: an external observer, in this case, my advisory teacher. According to Altrichter et al. (1993), "By acting as

an observer, a fellow teacher or an external critical friend can provide a new perspective on the classroom, if only by having 'blind spots' different from those of the teacher." (p. 90). For the second class, they worked on the same text but had to read in groups of three or four. The aim was for them to assist each other in the reading before submitting the group audio.

For the sixth week, the actions were the same as the fifth, but with different texts each day. By the seventh week, I implemented the last strategy, which was direct feedback, where students read a part of a selected text individually, recorded themselves, and sent the audio to me; then, they had to send a second audio incorporating the corrections I suggested. Additionally, by the end of that seventh week, I collected data from an interview conducted with my students, which according to Altrichter et al. (1993) "interviews give access to other people's perceptions, including crucially the thoughts, attitudes and opinions that lie behind their behavior". (p. 100). These interviews were made to know students' perceptions towards the strategies implemented in the reading-aloud technique and their thoughts about their improvement in the language.

In the eighth and ninth weeks, the activities included repetition of sentences, pronunciation of complex words, and collaborative learning, while recording themselves using different authentic texts. By the end of these activities, they answered reading comprehension questions and tried to give more elaborate opinions about the texts. In one of the classes, I obtained data collection from an external observer, my advisory teacher; this second observation allowed me to compare students' performance changes from the first observation of the external critical friend, to the second one she did.

In the last class, I implemented a reading-aloud exercise with the same text from the diagnosis test, and students sent me an audio recording of their reading. Additionally, I interviewed my cooperating teacher, asking him general questions about students' performance and improvement.

Data Analysis

In this research project, the method followed was action research, which, based on Altrichter et al. (1993) "lies in the will to improve the quality of teaching and learning as well as the conditions under which teachers and students work in schools" (p. 4). This method is coherent with the context of my project as it directly involves classroom-based interventions aimed at enhancing students' oral production skills.

After implementing the strategies proposed to improve students' oral production skills through the reading-aloud technique, I analyzed the data using several methods. I codified qualitative information from my diaries, interviews with my students and my cooperating teacher, observations from a third person, and questionnaires to my students. To do this, I organized all the collected information in a spreadsheet, highlighting different phrases with various colors and assigning a keyword to each highlighted phrase. According to Saldaña (2009), coding is "to arrange things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize" (p. 8).

Following the coding process, I categorized the data into specific themes relevant to my research objectives. This involved distributing the codified phrases into deductive and inductive categories, which facilitated easier identification and comparison of data. For validation, I triangulated the categories with multiple data sources and different participants' perspectives to ensure the consistency and trustworthiness of the findings.

Simultaneously, I collected more information from my students, such as audio and video recordings, for which I made a transcription of each, and created tables to demonstrate quantitative data from those transcriptions. According to Bell (2005), "Tables and charts are easy to manage. You may be able to devise different question types and different methods of analysis and presentation." (p. 226). By doing this, I was able to analyze both qualitative and quantitative data to determine the findings of the study.

Findings and Interpretations

The information collected indicates that the use of strategies for implementing the reading-aloud technique enhanced the oral production skills of eighth-grade students. In this section, the deductive and inductive categories are examined, interconnected, and interpreted based on the evidence gathered during data collection.

Enhancing Oral Production Skills through the Implementation of Four Strategies

Chaney & Burk (1998) defined oral production as an exchange and construction of meaning through the utilization of verbal and nonverbal symbols within diverse contexts. Within this skill, it is necessary to discuss fluency and accuracy in speaking. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) define fluency as a speaker's ability to maintain understandable and engaging speech, and accuracy as the correct use of language in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.

In this research project, there was evidence that demonstrated how these two characteristics of speaking were improved by using some of the strategies in the reading-aloud technique.

Repetition of Sentences

The repetition of sentences was the first strategy implemented in the classroom, and some outcomes appeared with this strategy. First, students' accuracy using this technique improved, as demonstrated in the journals "I started the reading aloud session. We began reading, and they had to repeat after me. With each repetition, their reading improved" (Journal entry, April 8th, 2024). Additionally, some students perceived that this strategy improved their pronunciation skills. In an interview, students were asked: "Which strategy has worked best for you?"

Stone: *"When you read first, we know how to pronounce the words better."*

Phoenix: "The one where the teacher reads first, and we follow, and the strategy of putting the words on the board first." (Students' Interview, April 29th, 2024)

To triangulate this finding, my advisory teacher's observations confirmed that: *"Students had improved their pronunciation since the last observation, most of the time they pronounced the words very clearly, especially when repeating them after the teacher."* (Second Observation, May 8th, 2024)

Pronunciation of Complex Words

Implementing the strategy of pronouncing complex words also brought positive results when enhancing students' accuracy. This strategy involved writing on the whiteboard the keywords to work on throughout the text, first asking the students for the pronunciation of those words, and second, giving them the correct pronunciation of them. Observations from my advisory teacher supported this claim: *"I observed that since the very beginning the students tried their best to pronounce correctly, some of them guessing the pronunciation and some others looking for the correct pronunciation in their cellphones. Once they listened to the correct pronunciation by the teacher, they repeatedly tried their best and almost all students pronounced words correctly."* (First Observation, April 8th, 2024). Further evidence from my advisory teacher, in a different moment, supported this finding *"I could observe progress in their pronunciation of the words, also when pronouncing sentences, they felt more comfortable reading aloud."*. (Second Observation, May 8th, 2024)

Similarly, students' perceptions, when asked "Which strategy has worked best for you?" also indicated that this strategy improved their accuracy:

Sky: "When you put the words on the board and say how they are pronounced."

Arrow: "In my opinion, it's putting the words on the board because you explain perfectly how they are pronounced and their meaning."

Orion: "with the one where you write on the board, I feel like I pronounce better."

(Student's interview, April 29th, 2024)

When comparing the two strategies, repetition of sentences and pronunciation of complex words, it is evident that they both yield positive results. However, the evidence supported that they both worked best when used together. In the following tables, it is shown a comparison of two different classes, where a reading-aloud activity was conducted. In Table 1, the strategies of repetition of sentences, pronunciation of complex words, and collaborative learning were applied. Whereas in the next table, Table 2, the repetition of sentence strategy was omitted.

Table 1

Repetition of sentences, pronunciation of complex words, and collaborative learning

Identification for the Research	Total words read correctly from the list	Total words read from the list:	Percentage of words read correctly from the list:	Total words read (including mistakes):	Total mistakes:	Percentage of words read correctly (including mistakes):	Average proficiency
Falcon	9	9	100,00	91	1	98,90	99,45
Willow	6	6	100,00	46	8	82,61	91,30
Rain	2	2	100,00	50	10	80,00	90,00
Phoenix	8	10	80,00	70	17	75,71	77,86
Arrow	3	5	60,00	90	9	90,00	75,00
Orion	2	4	50,00	76	16	78,95	64,47
River	1	4	25,00	87	27	68,97	46,98
Echo	0	3	0,00	39	9	76,92	38,46

Table 2

Pronunciation of complex words and collaborative learning

Identification for the Research	Total words read correctly from the list	Total words read from the list:	Percentage of words read correctly from the list:	Total words read (including mistakes):	Total mistakes:	Percentage of words read correctly (including mistakes):	Average proficiency
Falcon	8	11	72,73	121	7	94,21	83,47
Orion	5	6	83,33	128	22	82,81	83,07
Willow	3	4	75,00	111	13	88,29	81,64
Arrow	5	7	71,43	163	21	87,12	79,27
Phoenix	8	11	72,73	121	18	85,12	78,93
Rain	3	6	50,00	96	17	82,29	66,15
Echo	1	6	16,67	96	23	76,04	46,35
River	3	10	30,00	113	46	59,29	44,65

This illustration shows that in Table 1, where the strategy of repetition of sentences was included, more students achieved an "average proficiency" (in terms of pronunciation) above 90%. In contrast, in Table 2, where the repetition of sentences strategy was omitted, the highest average proficiency was 83.47%. This indicates that when students receive initial input from the teacher, they perform better than when they do not have that input throughout the entire reading.

Collaborative Learning

This third strategy was my contribution to the theory of the reading-aloud technique. I aimed to see how working in a group could help students explore this technique, learn vocabulary, and improve pronunciation autonomously. However, it did not work as expected.

Based on Table 2, where students had a lower performance compared to Table 1, one of the aspects that led me to think they had this performance was the strategy of collaborative learning. According to Johnson and Johnson (2004), Collaborative Learning involves students working together to achieve common learning goals, enabling them to construct knowledge through social interaction and shared problem-solving. Since the beginning of the implementation of this strategy, I observed that students were not working as expected "Collaborative learning did not resonate with everyone; some students viewed this time as "non-work time" rather than an opportunity for learning and interacting with peers. They worked individually within their groups rather than collaboratively." (Journal entry, March 20th, 2024).

It seemed that the ones who refused the most to work in groups were the more proficient ones in English "It did not seem like they were helping each other much in the groups. For instance, in one group where one of the most proficient students was, they split the group, so the two most proficient students worked together, leaving the others to work separately" (Journal entry, April 10th, 2024). This was also corroborated by a focus group interview in

which the most proficient students and members of different groups in the class participated. In response to the question: "When you worked in groups, did you help each other, and did this help you to read better?" Here is the answer of one of the most proficient students:

> Nova: *"It was easy but it was more like individual work, everyone already knew what to do. They asked me more than I asked them."* (Focus group interview, April 1st, 2024)

Additionally, when asked "Which strategy has worked best for you?" this is what one student mentioned about collaborative work:

> Orion: *"Group work is good and bad because we talk a lot and get distracted."* (Students' interview, April 29th, 2024)

Feedback

The last strategy implemented in the group demonstrated to be good at improving students' pronunciation and, therefore, their accuracy. In this strategy, each student had to send a voice message reading a specific paragraph. The instructions were to read the whole text first, identify words they did not understand or did not know how to pronounce, practice them, and then, send the text recorded in audio. For the first submission, ten students sent their recordings and received direct feedback from me. All of them were expected to send a second audio incorporating the corrections, but only four students did so. All the students who sent a second version, showed remarkable improvement as it is shown in the following table:

Table 3

Feedback strategy while reading aloud two times

Identification for the Research	Total of words read the first time	Total of mistakes the first time	Total of words read the second time	Total of mistakes the second time	Number of words improved from the first time to the second time
Willow	164	18	164	10	12
Rain	176	31	172	13	26
Arrow	165	19	178	10	15
Cloud	147	19	147	7	15

From Comprehension to Communication: Reading Aloud on Oral Production Skills

According to Snow (2002), "Reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (p. 11). As students interacted with text while reading aloud, there is evidence showing that reading comprehension improved, which is crucial for enhancing the oral production skills. This was mainly noticeable in the last session "I noticed that most of the class understood the main topic of the text, and also, when they were asked to answer the questions orally, they answered it very well in English, although with the help of the translator, they did show understanding" (Journal entry, May 8th, 2024)

Furthermore, the answer from my cooperating teacher evidenced that *"Reading comprehension was a separate goal, but it was also achieved. Whether they spoke in Spanish or English, they still grasped the message of the reading."* (Cooperating Teacher's interview, May 20th, 2024).

Additionally, in the two observations from my advisory teacher, she mentioned her appreciation concerning reading comprehension *"The teacher asked several questions about the paragraph and most of the students showed comprehension and answered correctly or at least with information very close to what the text said. When I observed this, I realized they were understanding details from the reading."* (First observation, April 8th, 2024). This claim was repeated in the second observation when she mentioned that "*When students answered the specific questions, I saw that most of them were enthusiastic about answering the questions, some of them in Spanish and others in English".* (Second observation, May 8th, 2024).

Improvement After all the Strategies

After implementing the four strategies mentioned, the evidence showed that students improved their accuracy and their fluency. When conducting the diagnosis test, the results supported this finding. The same text was used in the diagnostic test before implementing the strategies and after that occasion.

From column A to column D, the criteria assessed students' fluency in their reading, while from column E to column L, the criteria assessed students' accuracy.

What these tables reflect is that all the students' grades in all the criteria from Fluency and accuracy, increase from Table 4 (at the beginning of the implementation of the actions) to Table 5 (at the end of the implementation of the actions). For example, in the criteria in column A "Speech is clear", student "Arrow" got a grade of 3 in Table 4, different from Table 5 where the student got a 4. Similarly, in column K "Percentage of accuracy" the same student went from 88,46% in Table 4 to 91,54% in Table 5.

Table 4

Diagnosis test at the beginning of the implementation of the actions

	Perspective from the teacher								Numbers based on the transcription			
Column	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Identification for the Research	Speech is clear	Uses pauses effectively	Maintains a smooth flow of speech.	Demonstrates appropriate rhythm in longer sentences	Pronounce words accurately.	Places stress on the correct words within a sentence	Uses rising and falling intonation appropriately	Applies stress to the correct syllables within words	Total mistakes in pronunciation	Total of words pronounced well	Percentage of accuracy	Grade
Arrow	3	2	4	2	4	3	2	2	15	115	88,46%	4,4
Blaze	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	36	94	72,31%	3,6
Falcon	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	125	96,15%	4,8
Frost	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	72	58	44,62%	2,2
Nova	5	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	10	120	92,31%	4,6
Orion	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	41	89	68,46%	3,4
Phoenix	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	48	82	63,08%	3,2
Rain	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	16	114	87,69%	4,4
Sky	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	8	122	93,85%	4,7
Sun	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	11	119	91,54%	4,6

Table 5

Diagnosis test at the end of the implementation of the actions

	Perspective from the teacher								Numbers based on the transcription			
Column	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Identification for the Research	Speech is clear	Uses pauses effectively	Maintains a smooth flow of speech.	Demonstrates appropriate rhythm in longer sentences	Pronounce words accurately.	Places stress on the correct words within a sentence	Uses rising and falling intonation appropriately	Applies stress to the correct syllables within words	Total mistakes in pronunciation	Total of words pronounced well	Percentage of accuracy	Grade
Arrow	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	11	119	91,54%	4,6
Blaze	3	3	2	2	4	2	2	3	16	114	87,69%	4,4
Falcon	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	127	97,69%	4,9
Frost	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	50	80	61,54%	3,1
Nova	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	6	124	95,38%	4,8
Orion	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	22	108	83,08%	4,2
Phoenix	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	23	107	82,31%	4,1
Rain	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	20	110	84,62%	4,2
Sky	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	3	127	97,69%	4,9
Sun	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	7	123	94,62%	4,7

What these tables reflect is that all the students' grades in all the criteria from Fluency and accuracy, increase from Table 4 (at the beginning of the implementation of the actions) to Table 5 (at the end of the implementation of the actions). For example, in the criteria in column A "Speech is clear", student "Arrow" got a grade of 3 in Table 4, different from Table 5 where the student got a 4. Similarly, in column K "Percentage of accuracy" the same student went from 88,46% in Table 4 to 91,54% in Table 5.

Further evidence reflected that after the implementation of the strategies, the two characteristics of speaking improved. For instance, one of the pieces of evidence that reflects accuracy improvement is an interview with my cooperating teacher, where he remarked *"There was noticeable progress in the students, especially in their speaking skills. Reading aloud to improve pronunciation showed progress. There has been an advancement in listening and pronunciation through this activity"*. (Cooperating teacher's interview, May 20th, 2024).

Furthermore, in a questionnaire administered to the students, when asked, "Do you feel that you have made progress in your English learning process? If yes, please describe in which

aspects you feel you have progressed," eight students reported improvement in their pronunciation (Questionnaire, April 12th, 2024). Similarly, during an interview with them, on April 29th, 2024, when asked, "Overall, do you feel that you have improved, stayed the same, or worsened your level of English?" students answered:

> *Arrow: "I feel that I have improved a bit in pronouncing some verbs and words. For example, with the word "climate," I used to say "climat" and not "claimet." Or the word "suggested," which I pronounced as "sujested"" and not "suyested."*
>
> *Nova: "I think I have greatly improved in pronunciation"*

Regarding fluency, the evidence did not indicate significant improvement. However, as already mentioned, Tables 4 and 5 evidenced the improvement in both characteristics of speaking, and from column A to column D, the criteria assessed students' improvement in their fluency, from the beginning to the end of the implementation of the actions.

Confidence

When discussing fluency, it is crucial to consider confidence. According to Roysmanto (2018), "If the learners have high self-confidence, they will achieve the best performance in speaking skill fluently" (p. 2). This category emerged in this research project when incorporating the strategies of the reading-aloud technique. It was observed that as classes progressed, students grew more confident in speaking. They perceived the classroom as a safe space where they could express themselves in English without fear, supported by their peers. For instance, "When a classmate didn't want to speak, someone said, *"Hazlo que nadie se va a reír porque somos familia"* (Do it, no one will laugh because we're like family)." (Journal entry, February 28th, 2024).

This confidence extended not only when they had to read aloud in front of the class, but also when they had to give an opinion or elaborate on an answer in English "Three students

gave the full answer entirely in English. Another student tried to give her answer fully in English, and she did it correctly despite her nervousness" (Journal entry, March 18th, 2024).

Moreover, in an interview with my cooperating teacher, he expressed that *"they gained confidence and overcame the fear of speaking, which is challenging for students in a classroom setting. This group overcame that fear"* (Cooperating teacher's interview, May 20th, 2024).

Furthermore, during an interview, one of the students expressed this feeling when answering the question *"How have you felt about the reading-aloud activities?"* the student "Nova" answered *"I feel like I can now speak more in public in English without feeling strange or embarrassed"* (Student's interview, April 29th, 2024)

Participation and Engagement

Throughout the implementation of the actions, another category emerged, showing a notable increase in students' participation and engagement. According to Ghalley & Rai (2019) "Participation is when students are paying attention, being on task, and responding to questions." (p. 2). The implementation of the reading-aloud technique demonstrated that when following the appropriate strategies and incorporating the appropriate materials, students become highly engaged and participate actively during the reading sessions. This was also evidenced by my advisory teacher, who said "*Almost all students seemed very engaged with the lesson. I just saw two or three students who from time to time were doing something different but from time to time they returned to the activity paying attention and participating."* (First observation, April 8th, 2024). Furthermore, her claim was reaffirmed during the second observation, where she noted *"Students were more enthusiastic about participating than they were in the class observation I did when starting to observe the group. I noticed that some students who were all the time playing around or seemed to be there but were absent were willing to participate."* (Second observation, May 8th, 2024).

Something else to highlight is that participation goes beyond students' language proficiency "I noticed that two out of the three students who were weak in the diagnostic test were participating actively, answering when I asked, even with some pronunciation mistakes, but they were always active" (Journal entry, March 18th, 2024).

Conclusions

This action research study aimed to explain how the implementation of the reading-aloud technique can enhance eighth-grade students' oral production skills. I incorporated four different strategies for implementing the reading-aloud technique: the repetition of sentences, the pronunciation of complex words, collaborative learning, and direct feedback. All these strategies were implemented using the English course textbook and authentic materials as resources. Although the strategy of collaborative learning did not show the expected results, the other three strategies did show improvement in students' speaking, especially in terms of accuracy, more specifically pronunciation. Also, their fluency was also improved, not to the same extent as their accuracy, but there was evidence of improvement in this characteristic of speaking.

Furthermore, with the implementation of the reading-aloud technique and its corresponding strategies, students were able to improve some other characteristics, not necessarily aligned to the oral production skills, but which contributed to their improvement: confidence and students' participation. A significant increase in students' confidence and engagement was observed. Students felt more comfortable speaking in public and more willing to participate actively in class activities.

Moreover, although students were not able to fully produce their language in English, the evidence demonstrated that through the reading-aloud technique, students could understand the texts read, which is crucial for enhancing students' oral production. Nevertheless, to fully

achieve the goal of oral production, it is necessary to dispose of more time for students to better develop their reading comprehension skills, scaffolding with different strategies and activities to take them to think deeper about the texts read and therefore, to elaborate their oral responses.

Recommendations

The collaborative learning strategy was my contribution to the research in the reading-aloud technique; however, it did not work as expected. I consider that it is necessary to do deeper research about the progressive implementation of collaborative learning since it involves different things that students should scaffold to arrive at its correct implementation. It does not have to be necessarily aligned to the reading-aloud technique exclusively.

On the other hand, I consider that the implementation of the reading-aloud technique can be incorporated as part of the activities of the curriculum, and not as the only technique used during a term, since when this technique is the only one implemented, other language aspects can be omitted, for example, the writing skill. Additionally, it is important to maintain other kinds of activities different from the reading aloud, so students can keep engaged and participatory with the upcoming readings.

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