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Oral skills and Flipgrid platform in english as a foreign language learners

Habilidad oral y plataforma Flipgrid en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera

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ABSTRACT

Speech has often been the main problem when students learn a second language. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to analyze how to improve interactive communication and pronunciation by using the Flipgrid platform with A1 level students at the Salesian Polytechnic University. For this purpose, a Diagnostic Test, a Cambridge Speaking test and a guided response survey were applied. The research collected data to assess the effect of the Flipgrid platform on students' speaking skills and to learn about students' perceptions towards the Flipgrid platform. The results provided information on students' failures in speaking, the benefits of the Flipgrid platform, and a proposal with recommendations for using this platform with A1-level university students.

Descriptors: Language of instruction; bilingual education; academic achievement. (UNESCO Thesaurus).

ABSTRACT

El habla ha sido a menudo el principal problema cuando los estudiantes aprenden una segunda lengua. Por ello, el objetivo principal de este estudio fue analizar cómo mejorar la comunicación interactiva y la pronunciación mediante el uso de la plataforma Flipgrid con estudiantes de nivel A1 de la Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. Para ello, se aplicó un Test de Diagnóstico, un test de Cambridge Speaking y una encuesta de respuesta guiada. La investigación recogió datos para evaluar el efecto de la plataforma Flipgrid en las habilidades orales de los estudiantes y para conocer las percepciones de los estudiantes hacia la plataforma Flipgrid. Los resultados proporcionaron información sobre los fallos de los estudiantes en la expresión oral, los beneficios de la plataforma Flipgrid y una propuesta con recomendaciones para utilizar esta plataforma con estudiantes universitarios de nivel A1.

Descriptores: Idioma de enseñanza; educación bilingüe; rendimiento escolar. (Tesauro UNESCO).

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INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, when technology has been part of the teachers' and students' lives to help students improve their knowledge and skills, teachers improve their methodology. Likewise, for learning a second language, specifically English, students need to develop different abilities to understand and produce English. Speaking is one of these skills that students learning English need to understand because speaking is an essential ability for communication. Improving students' speaking skills has always been a concern in classrooms, more so now because of the pandemic (Ounis, 2020).

Thus, in the last century, several innovative technologies have been introduced to teach speaking in classrooms and recognize that technological tools are the instrument to connect with this modern world, not only for communication or commerce but also for the educational area (OECD, 2016). One of these tools is Flipgrid, a free platform developed for educational purposes. Students can post a video in response to the teacher's questions and comment on their peers' videos (MacIsaac, 2020).

Concerning the Flipgrid platform, different studies have been published on its usefulness and effectiveness as a teaching tool. One of them indicates that according to students' perception, Flipgrid is a technological tool that allows them to interact with their classmates, facilitating communication in different learning situations. (Taylor, 2020)

Additionally, a study finds that using the Flipgrid platform helps EFL high school students reduce their anxiety about learning English, and teachers can assess students' attitudes toward its applications (Tuyet & Khang, 2020). Also, Flipgrid is an easy-to-use video platform where students can participate in video and audio recording conversations. Besides, they can start discussions or exchanges, which increases speaking time, pronunciation, and communication among students (Yunus, 2021).

Nevertheless, in Ecuador, different studies were conducted to improve oral production, but there are no studies based on the Flipgrid platform as a resource to increase Speaking skills. Consequently, the purpose of this mixed-method research study is to analyze whether the use of the Flipgrid platform helps A1 level students at the Universidad

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Politécnica Salesiana to improve their speaking skills. As well as to know the students' perception and if using this platform during their English classes has had any effect on their speaking skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Speaking skill involves more than specific grammar rules. It is related to the speaker's ability to spontaneously convey and understand ideas, opinions, and comments in different communicative contexts. Therefore, students can learn to express their ideas fluently with precise vocabulary and improve their pronunciation while they use this skill regularly (Dueñas et al. 2015).

Motivation theory

Motivation is perhaps one of the essential elements in second language learning because it significantly impacts an L2 learner's learning outcome. According to the author, Gardner's motivation theory has dramatically influenced the second language motivation field (Guerrero, 2015). In addition, motivation includes three main elements: the effort to learn the language, the desire to achieve a goal, and the positive effect of enjoying the task of learning the language (Seven, 2020).

If a teacher needs to feel motivated, he needs to have something to look forward to, a purpose related to an objective; in this case, the aim could be learning a second language. Learners need to have something to accomplish or achieve, and the target language can be the vehicle to get it (Nurhidayah, 2015). Furthermore, the social-cultural environment greatly influences language skills because it can help maintain, improve, or lose language skills (Pazyura, 2016).

Motivation is based on learners' reasons to acquire a second language. According to the authors, motivation is divided into two orientations: instrumental cause, which is a desire to learn a language to fulfill reasonable goals. On the other hand, integrative motivation

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concerns a desire to learn a language to communicate with people of another culture that use this language to interact (Kruk & Mahmoodzdeh, 2018).

Theory of Transactional Distance

Theory of Transactional Distance raises that in distance learning scenarios, the separation between the teacher and students can create communication gaps and misunderstandings between the behaviors of instructors and learners (Delgaty, 2018).

Also, the nature of the transaction developed between teachers and students in distance learning needs to consider three factors: dialogue, structure, and learner autonomy. It means that discussion refers to communication that deems all forms of interaction. Meanwhile, the course structure includes goals, objectives, and methodologies used during the course. Communication media significantly impacts dialogue and helps interact between teachers and learners. However, it is essential to mention that conversation is less spontaneous but perhaps more thoughtful and reflective than a similar course in a classroom (Bastiaens, 2018).

State of the art

The research study focuses on the theories of motivation by Garner, the transactional approach by Moore, and Second Language Acquisition by Krashen. All of them develop speaking skills for English language learners through the Flipgrid platform as a digital application for interaction.

First of all, it is necessary to know that speaking is an essential tool for communicating. Therefore, speaking is one of the skills that have to be mastered by students when they learn English. However, improving these skills in the classroom has been a concern. Nevertheless, in the present 21st century, technology has been introduced to help develop speaking skills in school.   Technological tools help students improve their language skills,

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such as speaking. These tools are the Internet, podcasts, video conferencing, discussion boards, and speech recognition software (Yahya et al. 2019).

About video platforms, Flipgrid increases students' perception of a natural interaction by showing different social features that represent a conversation. (Clark et al., 2015). Therefore, other researchers present Flipgrid as a video discussion board where students can record their videos and interact with their classmates to improve their speaking skills (Green & Green, 2018).

Flipgrid is an online video discussion platform. It is designed to empower learners and facilitate collaboration and social learning between students. Microsoft developed it and acquired the platform in June 2018, making it freely available to educators worldwide as Office 365 for Education. The teacher creates a topic on this platform, and students upload short video responses using a custom link. It is an easy tool to work with students during class or as home tasks (Stoszkowski, 2018).

Different studies show that Flipgrid helps increase students' perceptions of connectedness in the online classroom. This tool helps students get to know each other and increases communication efficiency (Bartlett, 2018). It means showing body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice (Huertas, 2021).

This platform is an effective learning tool for students. Also, the students, who participated in this study, reported that Flipgrid is an easy-to-use platform, and it engaged them in more language practice from home. In addition, the author states an increase in students' confidence in their English-speaking skills (McLain, 2018).

Flipgrid increased the English language learners' oral communicative skills. It shows that students' verbal language fluency increased with a decrease in pauses when speaking the target language. Students became more autonomous and independent when using the English language orally through Flipgrid (Syahrizal & Pamungkas, 2020).

Furthermore, students' speaking skills could be strengthened by using Flipgrid as a forum to upload their speaking videos, and it influences the student's speech performance in the

class. Their fluency, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and vocabulary improved while using Flipgrid (Amirulloh et al. 2020).

Flipgrid is easy to use for students and makes communication with classmates enjoyable. However, it was not the same because some students found this platform challenging to use. In another case, there are students who do not feel self-confident when they record videos of themselves. Nevertheless, the results show that Flipgrid helped achieve a real interaction between students. Data show that many students enjoy using Flipgrid and facilitate interaction. Likewise, they have the opportunity to learn more about their classmates. On the other hand, it demonstrates that participants thought that Flipgrid was a limited tool, and they could not have face-to-face conversations (Taylor, 2020).

Another critical study refers to students who perceived Flipgrid as a helpful resource. It helped them develop their language skills and autonomy in their learning process. In addition, it facilitated students' participation in speaking activities, thus enhancing their learning and making them feel more confident (Mango, 2021).

Current studies state that students have a positive attitude towards the Flipgrid platform to practice their English-speaking skills. Also, they highlighted the importance of using Flipgrid to learn and teach English speaking skills (Shin, 2021). Moreover, this platform helps learners improve their interaction, communications, and digital environment effectively and potentially (Kiles, 2020). Another study shows that after using Flipgrid in EFL high school learners, their anxiety decreased and their positive attitudes towards using this platform because they can be expressive and comfortable when interacting with their friends. In addition, they can be expressive while they practice their speaking (Budiarta & Santosa, 2020).

In business English classes, the opportunity to produce the language asynchronously is necessary. Therefore, Flipgrid improved speaking skills to help students increase their productive language skills. This tool was essential to increase students' speaking outside the classrooms by getting spontaneous answers and engaged students during the production (MacLain, 2018).

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Regarding the Industrial Revolution is necessary to have engineers well equipped with different skills to stay in a competitive world. Therefore, other technologies to improve their skills were applied. One of these tools is Flipgrid which was used to practice oral presentations, obtaining favorable outcomes using Flipgrid according to students' experience. It is necessary to mention that it was possible due to peer feedback that helps to improve engineers' oral presentations (Yunus, 2021).

METHODS

This study design was a mixed-method, specifically an embedded design. Mixed methods research is where the researcher combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts, or language into a single study for breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration of data information (Yu & Khazanchi, 2017). Therefore, this research study used the Cambridge speaking diagnostic test to use the quantitative method. The qualitative approach, which involved a guided survey, helped know about students' perception of the Flipgrid platform.

Procedure

It used the quantitative method to know if the Flipgrid platform affects students' speaking skills. First, it was applied a general test to measure the four skills. Next, a specific speaking diagnostic test was applied in which students participated by answering and asking simple questions using the Flipgrid platform (Cambridge University Press, 2020). This test was administered to learners at the beginning of the investigation. In addition, the global achievement scale presented by the University was used to grade this test.

On the other hand, a quantitative method was used to collect data to know about the students' perceptions. It was administered a guided survey consisting of open-ended answers.

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After getting the results, it was necessary to consider that Flipgrid is a platform that would help students cover the students' necessities in pronunciation and interactive communication. It was because of the characteristics that this platform presents.

Participants

The participants in this study were 28 A1 level students of the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana. They were from different subjects. First, all participants received informed consent before the survey data collection of this study. This was because the students should be aware of the process and that the data will not be disseminated outside the study.

Instruments

The research instrument was considered because of the characteristics it could provide, its validity, and reliability. Moreover, whether it collected adequate data relevant to the research topic. In addition, researchers should consider whether it could test the hypotheses and answer the proposed research questions. Finally, if it contained clear and defined instructions for using the instrument. Therefore, the tools for this research project are as follows:

1) Diagnostic test (four skills)
2) Cambridge Speaking Test
3) Guided Survey

Type of the data analysis

Cambridge Speaking test items were analyzed by descriptive statistics to answer the first question. In addition, the qualitative analysis was conducted to identify the strengths and weaknesses that were found in the survey; this data provided information for the second research question.
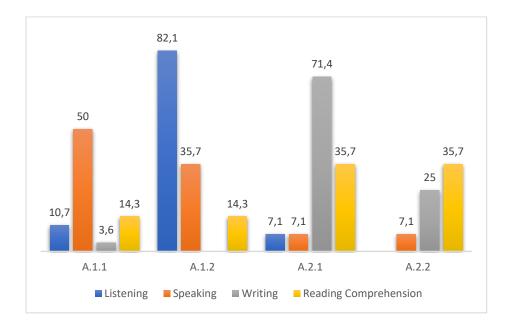
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Statistic description

The data was analyzed through Excel 2019 and SPSS 25 version. Excel 2019 software was used to calculate the percentage of each essential skill in the bars diagram. SPSS 25 version was proper to establish the mean and confidence interval to draw an error bar diagram to show the speaking subskills level means. Finally, a Likert table was elaborated in Excel to present the percentages of the eight students' perception questions about the Flipgrid platform.

RESULTS

The results are organized into three sections. The first one is about the basic skills; the second is related to the three speaking sub-skills; the last one regards students' perception of the Flipgrid platform.

Figure 1. Percentage in bars diagram of four essential skills.
Source: Survey.

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Figure 1 shows the results of evaluating the four basic skills according to the four stages of level A using a CEFR rubric. Listening skill has 82.1% of the results located in the A.1.2 level, is the second-lowest skill. The lowest skill corresponds to the Speaking skill, 50% in A.1.1 level and 35.7% in A.1.2 level. Writing skill shows the highest level, mainly concentrated on the A.2.1 level (71.4%). Accordingly, the reading comprehension skill is located in the second-highest place with 35.7% in A.2.1 and A.2.2., accordingly.

Figure 2 Mean in error bars diagram of the three speaking subskills.
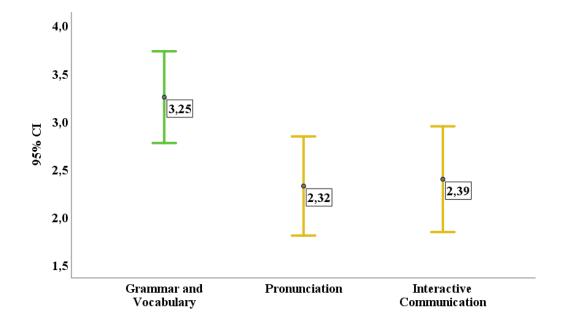**Source:** Survey.

Figure 2 presents the results of the three speaking subskills in the error bars diagram. Each one states how the variability of the mean behavior (on a 0-5 scale) is similar. Grammar and vocabulary are in the highest place on the scale with 3.25 points, which means that students are prepared to express their ideas using the correct language and grammar. Accordingly, pronunciation and interactive communication have a similar result, 2.32 and 2.39. In the case of pronunciation, it means that despite them knowing the

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vocabulary and grammar, they have problems articulating the words. In the case of Interactive Communication, it can be inferred that students feel uncomfortable with their speaking level when they need to talk. Consequently, they do not interact with their classmates.

Table 1.
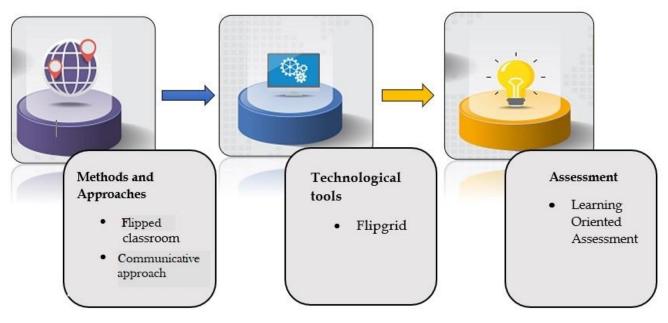Likert scale of students' perception about Flipgrid platform.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Q1: I will enjoy using Flipgrid to learn.	1	2	4	12	9
Q2: Using Flipgrid will help me become more confident in my learning.	0	2	2	13	11
Q3: Flipgrid will have a positive effect on my study behavior.	0	2	6	16	4
Q4: Flipgrid will give me confidence knowing I have my resources at hand and can access it at any time.	0	1	6	18	3
Q5: I will check the pronunciation of the words I will be learning on the app.	0	1	7	12	8
Q6: Interacting with Flipgrid will help me remember my English vocabulary better.	0	1	4	13	10
Q7: Using Flipgrid to test my vocabulary knowledge will be more fun and less stressful.	0	0	6	16	6
Q8: Flipgrid will help me prepare for the final test.	0	1	5	10	12

Source: Survey.

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Table 1 shows the results of students' perception responses about the eight-Flipgrid platform items. According to the highest agreement level, there are two items: "Q2: Using Flipgrid will help me become more confident in my learning"; and "Q8: Flipgrid will help me prepare for the final test". Both of them have a mean of 2.93 points in the Likert scale order. On the other hand, the lowest agreement level regarding Q3: Flipgrid will positively affect my study behavior, which has a mean of 2.65 points in the Likert scale order. Another common item is "Q4: Flipgrid will give me confidence knowing I had my resources at hand and could access it at any time," which means is of 2.67 points in the Likert scale order. According to these results and other studies, students' perceptions of this platform are positive. It shows that it helps increase English speaking skills and reduce stress and anxiety when they speak English. (Hammett, 2021)

PROPOSAL

Figure 3. Proposal for the use of the Flipgrid platform as a resource in English classes. **Elaboration:** Authors.

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Methods and Approaches: In this first phase of the proposal, the teacher will use one of the methodologies or approaches that he masters best for his class. It will help students achieve better communication and performance in speaking skills. For example:

Flipped Classroom method is a student-centered approach where teachers act as facilitators to motivate, guide and give feedback on students' performance. Students are more active during the learning process. (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016) Then, the teacher will reinforce the knowledge by putting them into practice. This way, meaningful learning will be achieved through individual and collaborative work.

Communicative approach: the main aim of this approach is to help students to achieve communicative competencies using the target language. (Santos, 2020) Therefore, for this proposal, students will prepare speeches about fundamental aspects of their life using the English language. And teachers could evaluate the students' performance in real-time.

Technological tools: the use of technology in teaching speaking is one of the changes which focuses on communicative competencies rather than just passing an examination. (Sosas, 2021) In this case, helping students practice pronunciation and conversation boosts students' oral skills. Therefore, in this second stage of the proposal, the teachers will use digital tools to improve the students' speaking skills. For them, it is recommended:

Flipgrid: this platform helps students to improve their speaking proficiency towards videos. This platform allows students to post a video response according to the teacher's instruction and answer peer videos. (Lowenthal & Moore, 2020) Therefore, as a proposal is essential that teachers receive workshops on how this platform works. After that, teachers will use this tool for free to send speaking activities, and students will respond by recording short videos. Also, students will respond to their classmates' videos. Regarding the activities, students will improve their listening comprehension and remember vocabulary. In addition, teachers will share their comments on the same platform.

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Assessment: according to the author, assessment is an essential component of curriculum practice. It means it is a process for obtaining information about student learning and making decisions. (Mikre, 2010) Teachers will use assessment to evaluate students' progress after using the Flipgrid platform as a speaking resource.

Learning Oriented Assessment: This objective promotes productive student learning, whether summative or formative. (Carless & Joughin, 2006) Consequently, the teachers will use learning-oriented assessment on the Flipgrid platform as a summative and formative assessment resource. It will check if the speaking results are negative or positive after using the Flipgrid platform.

CONCLUSION

The COVID 19 forced everybody to be up-to-date because of the situation around the world. Education was not the exception; thus, many platforms appeared for different purposes. Flipgrid, which is easy to use, motivates students allowing the interaction between student-student and teacher-student.

Different studies state that using the Flipgrid platform helps students improve their speaking skills such as pronunciation and interaction. Furthermore, it allows them to interact without being in front of others. According to the studies, recording a video is more accessible than talking face to face.

The diagnostic test results show that the lowest skill is speaking. Meanwhile, the Cambridge speaking test demonstrates that students have the lowest level in pronunciation. The guided survey indicates that students are interested in using Flipgrid as a resource to improve their speaking skills.

This research proposes using methods and approaches that help students communicate better using English. All of this, using the Flipgrid video recording platform lets them speak about their reality. In the end, teachers will evaluate the students' level and identify whether or not they have any improvement.

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