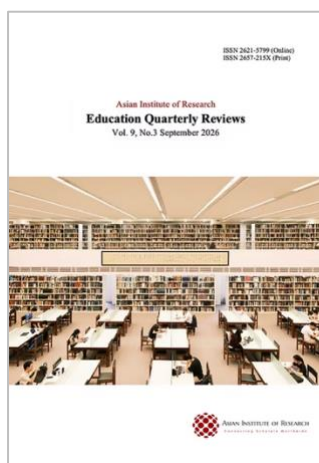




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Practice of Speaking English Language Fluency through Innovating Communicative Tasks

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of innovative communicative tasks on oral fluency in English among nine children aged 6 to 10 years enrolled at Fundación Submarino Amarillo in Manta, Ecuador. The research used a preexperimental one-group pretest-posttest design during a 35-day intervention. The pedagogical treatment replaced deductive grammar instruction with task-based activities, including information gap tasks, situational role plays, and mystery-solving tasks, all structured to increase Student Talking Time and promote meaningful oral interaction. Data were collected through oral performance assessment before and after the intervention, together with descriptive and correlational analysis of fluency, productivity, articulation, attendance, and formulaic sequences. The results showed improvement across all oral dimensions. Fluency presented the largest gain, followed by productivity and articulation. Individual progress was consistent across the full group, and the correlational analysis indicated a strong positive association between articulation and formulaic sequences, as well as a positive relationship between attendance and posttest fluency. These findings suggest that task-based communicative instruction can strengthen oral performance in young EFL learners when it is implemented in a structured and context-sensitive way. The study supports the use of communicative tasks as a practical strategy for increasing oral participation and reducing passive language learning in early English instruction.

Keywords: Oral Fluency, Task-Based Language Teaching, Communicative Tasks, Student Talking Time, Young EFL Learners, English as a Foreign Language

1. Introduction

Teaching English as a foreign language faces the challenge of translating linguistic knowledge into functional oral performance. In General Basic Education settings, oral fluency still faces limitations due to practices focused on explaining rules and mechanical repetition, which reduces effective student participation time and undermines meaningful interaction in the classroom (Masuram & Sripada, 2020; Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

In organizations that continue to use a grammar-translation method, this problem becomes more important. This method produces passive language competency by emphasizing the memory of structures and restricting opportunities for oral use. In this case, students gather declarative knowledge but find it difficult to negotiate meaning, participate in impromptu conversations, and react adaptably in real-world communication scenarios. The necessity of giving oral skill development top priority through communicative techniques and activities requiring meaningful contact is supported by recent data from Ecuador (Alava Valdéz et al., 2024).

Despite theoretical developments in task-based learning and the communicative approach, there is still a dearth of data unique to General Basic Education students that would enable assessing the impact of interventions centered on Student Talking Time in Ecuadorian situations. From this angle, the current study was carried out during the 2025–2026 school year at the Fundación Submarino Amarillo, which is situated in the Los Gavilanes area of the city of Manta, using a sample of nine pupils between the ages of six and ten. The goal of the project is to improve oral fluency by using creative communicative exercises that boost student talking time and lessen reliance on teacher guidance. The study's focus is solely on oral production; formal grammar or writing are not included.

The significance of the problem lies in the fact that the 6-to-10-year-old stage offers favorable conditions for the acquisition and consolidation of phonological and syntactic patterns, provided that the classroom offers active interaction and frequent opportunities for oral production (Lenneberg & Chomsky, 1967). In the local context, English language training also addresses a social need linked to participation in broader educational and workplace settings. Therefore, this research aims to implement and evaluate innovative communicative tasks designed to maximize effective speaking time and strengthen oral fluency among students at the Fundación Submarino Amarillo.

According to the evaluated literature, teaching grammar alone does not lead to fluency. Task-based learning encourages the smart use of few linguistic resources to accomplish a task and focuses on reaching a communicative objective. Richards and Rodgers (2014) elucidate the benefits of the communicative method to language instruction, and Nunan (2009) centers meaningful interaction around the job. Masuram and Sripada (2020) reveal that task-based materials improve oral abilities.

In contrast to this background, the present proposal adapts the tasks to the playful and technological context of children aged 6 to 10 and assesses changes in speaking time before and after the intervention. In this way, the study provides a context-specific analysis of oral fluency within an Ecuadorian educational setting.

The primary conclusion drawn from the earlier review is that students' oral fluency will be greatly improved by the methodical use of creative communicative tasks. According to a structured observation sheet and a timing register used during the sessions, the secondary hypothesis asserts that the use of technology resources, such as audio recordings and direct timing devices, in conjunction with the instructional materials provided at the institution, will improve students' speaking time. Finding out how the intervention affects oral fluency is the main goal. The quasi-experimental design supports conclusions about the strategy's efficacy and permits a comparison of performance before and after the intervention.

A pre-experimental design that enables the performance of a focused group of nine youngsters (ages six to ten) has been chosen to test these hypotheses. Since measuring STT necessitates a controlled setting where language interactions can be recorded both before and after the intervention, this design is in line with the nature of the issue. We are able to isolate the variable of fluency thanks to the conceptual delimitation to the 2025–2026 period and the exclusion of formal grammar instruction. This ensures that the conclusions drawn are directly related to the efficacy of communicative tasks rather than to general linguistic maturation or theoretical language study.

2. Method

This study employs a pre-experimental design, as it consists of an educational intervention aimed at developing oral fluency in English through innovative communicative tasks. The study spans a period of 35 days and includes

pre- and post-intervention assessments of the participants, with the aim of analyzing changes in their oral expression skills.

2.1 Technics and instruments

The data collection technique was assessment. A pretest and a posttest were administered to establish the baseline and track the evolution of oral performance. The instrument used was the Cambridge English A2 Key, an oral exam administered in two parts in a face-to-face format, with one or two candidates and two examiners. The exam takes eight to ten minutes for each pair of candidates, and its descriptors correspond to the A2 level of the CEFR, which divides language proficiency into six levels ranging from A1 to C2.

2.2 Participant (Subject) Characteristics

The study was conducted with 9 students aged 6 to 10. The gender distribution showed a predominance of females, with 6 students (66.7 percent), while the male group consisted of 3 students (33.3 percent). In terms of educational background, the sample included students from private, public, and charter schools.

Table 1: Descriptive summary of the participants.

Variable	Category	Frecuency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	6	66.7%
	Male	3	33.3%
School sector	Private	4	44.4%
	Public	3	33.3%
	Fiscomisional	2	22.2%

To assess the impact of communicative tasks on participants' language development, the following variables and measurement procedures have been defined:

2.2.1. Primary Measures: Oral Fluency

Oral fluency is operationally defined as the student's ability to produce utterances in the target language with a continuous and natural flow, minimizing cognitive interruptions (prolonged pauses or hesitations). This measure will be assessed using an Adapted Fluency Rubric, based on the descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) for beginner levels (A1-A2). Specific criteria include:

- Temporal Continuity: Reduction of pauses longer than three seconds in simple sentences.
- Capacity to Connect: Connect ideas using simple connectors like and, but, and then.
- Speech Rate: An increase in the number of intelligible words uttered per minute (WPM) during tasks involving free creation.

2.2.2. Secondary Measures: Student Talking Time (STT) and Confidence

As a secondary measure, Student Talking Time (STT) will be quantified, defined as the percentage of time during the class session in which students engage in active language use compared to the teacher's speaking time. These data will be collected through direct timing and analysis of audio recordings of the sessions. Additionally,

Perceived Confidence will be measured, observed through behavioral indicators such as the initiative to initiate exchanges and the reduction of gestures of insecurity during oral expression.

2.2.3. Covariates

To ensure that the results are attributed to the pedagogical intervention, the following covariates have been identified:

- Prior Knowledge: An initial diagnostic test was administered to establish a baseline for vocabulary and grammatical structures.
- Attendance and Exposure: Regular attendance at the foundation will be recorded, given that the frequency of exposure to communicative tasks directly influences the progression of fluency.
- Age Range: Although the group is small ($N=9$), age (6 to 10 years) is considered a factor influencing the complexity of responses and cognitive maturity for negotiating meaning.

2.2.4. Measurement Quality and Transparency

To ensure data reliability, observations will be validated using the Multiple-Point Observation method, with three measurements taken (initial, intermediate, and final). The rubrics have undergone a content validity review to ensure their cultural relevance and suitability for the context of the “Submarino Amarillo” Foundation. It is worth noting that, although preliminary data on “Intrinsic Motivation” were collected using pictographic questionnaires, these are not included in the main analysis of this report in order to maintain a strict focus on oral communication competence.

2.3. Research Design

This study employed a single-group pre-post design. This design was appropriate for the context of the Fundación Submarino Amarillo because it allowed for the observation of changes in oral fluency and Student Talking Time following the implementation of innovative communicative tasks. The absence of a control group limits strong causal inferences; therefore, the results are interpreted based on the intragroup change observed after the intervention.

The task-based approach served as the foundation for the educational intervention. The experimental modification involved substituting communicative activities that required the functional use of language to solve problems for deductive grammar training. Information gaps, situational role-plays, and mystery-solving were the three rotating task types included in the strategy. These assignments encouraged students to actively participate, negotiate meaning, and engage in spoken communication.

Participation was driven by the foundation’s voluntary dynamics and the natural composition of the group. For this reason, non-probabilistic convenience sampling was employed. The 9 participants were not randomly assigned to different conditions, since they were all part of the same pre-existing group. This methodological decision was based on the feasibility of the study in a non-formal education setting.

The Yellow Submarine Foundation carried out the intervention in 2025–2026. Two 60-minute sessions each week were required per the protocol. A 5-minute pre-task phase, a 40-minute task phase, and a 15-minute final feedback phase comprised each session. Previous vocabulary was used in the first stage. The communicative task was completed in the second phase with little assistance from the researcher. Communicative accomplishments and the most common mistakes were examined in the third stage.

2.3.4 Experimental Manipulations or Interventions

The study adopted a preexperimental one-group pretest-posttest design. This choice fit an intervention context in which the same participants received the treatment and later served as their own comparison baseline. Such designs are commonly used to estimate change after an intervention when full experimental control is not feasible.

The intervention was a systematic pedagogical approach that used task-based language instruction to improve oral fluency in English. The approach substituted communicative tasks that required students to solve a problem, exchange meaning, and produce oral language for a predetermined end for deductive grammar teaching. This approach aligns with the fundamental tenets of task-based language instruction, which prioritize meaningful task completion, learner participation, and communication through interaction.

The intervention was implemented in three rotating task types. The first task type was an information-gap activity in pairs, in which each learner received partial information and had to negotiate meaning to complete the shared goal. The second task type was a situational role-play based on everyday contexts adapted to the children's age group. The third task type was a mystery-solving activity in which learners followed oral or visual clues in English to reach a group solution. These task types align with established task-based pedagogical components and with recent classroom evidence that role-play supports communicative competence, fluency, and confidence.

The intervention was conducted at the Fundación Submarino Amarillo between 2025 and 2026. It consisted of two 60-minute sessions per week. There were three stages to every session. During the five-minute pre-task phase, a quick warm-up was used to activate past vocabulary. The researcher served as both a facilitator and an observer during the 40-minute main task phase, which focused on task completion. The 15-minute post-task phase was devoted to reflection, feedback, and fixing common communication mistakes. The traditional task cycle employed in task-based lessons, which divides instruction into pre-task, main task, and post-task stages, is reflected in this order.

The study involved 9 students between 6 and 10 years of age. The sample was selected by convenience because the institution had a natural preexisting group and the program followed a voluntary structure. No random assignment or separate experimental conditions were used. All participants received the same intervention and the same instructional sequence. This arrangement was consistent with the practical limits of a pre-experimental design and with the educational setting in which the intervention was carried out.

No external control group was included. The manipulation consisted of the planned introduction of communicative tasks, which replaced the usual grammar-centered routine during the intervention period. The comparison relied on the change observed within the same group from pretest to posttest. Consequently, the study evaluated the effect of the treatment through intragroup variation in oral performance rather than through comparison with a parallel group.

3. Results

This section presents the findings from the intervention using innovative communicative tasks designed to develop oral fluency in English. The analysis was organized sequentially, with a description of recruitment, statistical synthesis of the data, and a review of individual change. The study employed a single-group pre-post pre-test design, appropriate for examining within-group variation following an educational intervention (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003).

3.1. Recruitment

Recruitment took place at the Yellow Submarine Foundation with a pre-existing group of nine students aged 6 to 10. The draft report does not specify the exact dates of recruitment or follow-up; therefore, this information should be included in the final version of the report. The selection was based on institutional availability and voluntary participation in the program.

3.2. Statistics and Data Analysis

The statistical analysis was based on the calculation of pre-test and post-test means, along with the identification of absolute differences between the two measurements. The analysis focused on three dimensions of oral

performance: fluency, productivity, and articulation. Additionally, individual changes were examined to verify the consistency of improvement within the evaluated group.

Table 2: Comparison of pre-test vs. post-test means.

Dimension	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Increase
Fluency	1.67	2.78	+1.11
Productivity (Output)	1.67	2.44	+0.77
Articulation	1.78	2.44	+0.66

The results show an increase in all three measured dimensions. Oral fluency showed the greatest improvement, with a net difference of 1.11 points. Productivity increased by 0.77 points, and articulation improved by 0.66 points. Overall, the statistics show that oral performance improved after the intervention.

An increasing tendency among participants was confirmed by individual analysis. The most gain was shown by student F9-3, whose fluency improved by two points. F10-6, M9-5, and M8-3 all gained one point in the meantime. The stability of the change shown in the group average is supported by this pattern.

The intervention maintained a task-based approach with an emphasis on oral exchange and the negotiation of meaning, a central principle of task-oriented teaching (Nunan, 2009).

3.3. Ancillary Analyses

The supplementary analysis was limited to Spearman's correlation between attendance, fluency, productivity, articulation, and formulaic sequences. No subgroup analyses or additional adjusted procedures were applied. With a value of 0.58, attendance demonstrated a somewhat positive relationship with posttest fluency. Similarly, there was a strong positive link (coefficient of 0.92) between articulation and the usage of formulaic sequences. Additionally, a substantial correlation (coefficient of 0.82) was found between productivity and fluency. When combined, these findings show a steady correlation between speech performance attained at the end of the intervention, formulaic expression usage, and session attendance.

3.4. Participant Flow

The initial sample consisted of nine students. According to the submitted data, all participants completed the pretest, the intervention, and the posttest. No dropouts, lost to follow-up, or crossovers between conditions were reported, as the study involved a single natural group with no experimental reassignment. The final version of the report should include the exact dates of recruitment, the start of the intervention, and the end of follow-up, along with the institutional source of recruitment.

3.5. Intervention or Manipulation Fidelity

The intervention was implemented according to the planned sequence of innovative communicative tasks. Each session was organized into an initial activation phase, a central task phase, and a final feedback phase. Attendance monitoring and session records allowed for verification of participants' regular exposure to the program. No substantive changes in content or in the planned order of activities are reported. To complete this section, the final report must include the number of sessions conducted compared to the total scheduled and observational evidence supporting adherence to the protocol.

3.6. Baseline data

The oral production pretest was given before the instructional intervention to establish the study's baseline. The preliminary findings consistently showed poor performance in the areas of articulation, productivity, and fluency. Fluency had an initial mean of 1.67, productivity was 1.67, and articulation was 1.78. These findings verified that the group's oral performance limits at the beginning of the trial were comparable.

Nine students between the ages of six and ten made up the demographic distribution. The male group made up 33.3 percent, while the female group made up 66.7 percent. Additionally, the sample's educational diversity was enhanced by the participants' attendance at public, private, and public-private partnership schools.

Table 3: Baseline linguistic performance in the pretest

Variable	M	SD	LL
Fluency	1.67	0.50	1.17
Productivity	1.67	0.50	1.17
Articulation	1.78	0.44	1.34

3.6.1. Statistics and data analysis

The statistical analysis included all participants who completed the intervention process and the final assessment. Since no student dropped out of the study or was absent from the posttest, the analyzed sample matched the initial sample. For this reason, the analysis focused entirely on the nine participants who underwent the intervention.

Descriptive statistics and Spearman's correlation analysis were used in the data analysis. The means from the pretest and posttest could be compared thanks to descriptive measures. The correlation analysis then looked at the relationship between formulaic sequences, attendance, fluency, and articulation. Given the limited sample size and the ordinal nature of some of the data, this method proved suitable.

With a coefficient of 0.58, the findings indicated a somewhat positive relationship between attendance and fluency. Similarly, a strong positive correlation (coefficient of 0.92) was found between articulation and formulaic sequences. Additionally, a positive correlation (coefficient of 0.82) was found between productivity and fluency. These correlations imply that the participants' oral production was enhanced by repeated usage of formulaic sequences and prolonged exposure to communicative activities.

To better understand the learning process, a Spearman correlation analysis was conducted, identifying two main results:

A moderate-to-strong correlation ($r_s = 0.58$) was identified between attendance at the sessions and the fluency achieved on the post-test, indicating that continuous exposure to innovative communicative tasks has a positive influence on progress.

The employment of formulaic sequences and articulation were shown to be significantly correlated ($r_s = 0.92$). This finding suggests that by lowering the cognitive load during oral production, the usage of pre-made expressions enabled students to talk more rapidly and clearly.

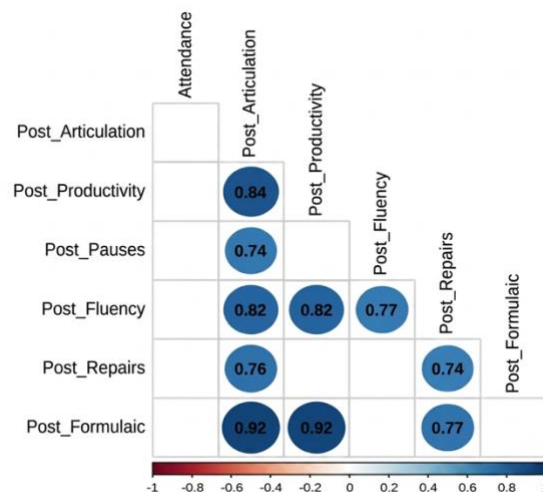


Figure 1: Matrix of Linguistic Correlations

Figure 1: Spearman's correlation coefficients between oral production variables in the post-test.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data processed in R (2026).

The statistical association between the linguistic parameters measured after the intervention is seen in this image. The most important result is the perfect or almost perfect positive connection ($r_s = 0.92$) between the employment of formulaic sequences and articulation, indicating that using pre-formulated phrases promotes more fluid motor execution. Similarly, there is a considerable correlation ($r_s = 0.82$) between productivity and fluency, indicating that students' perceptions of fluency are inextricably related to speaking at a higher volume.

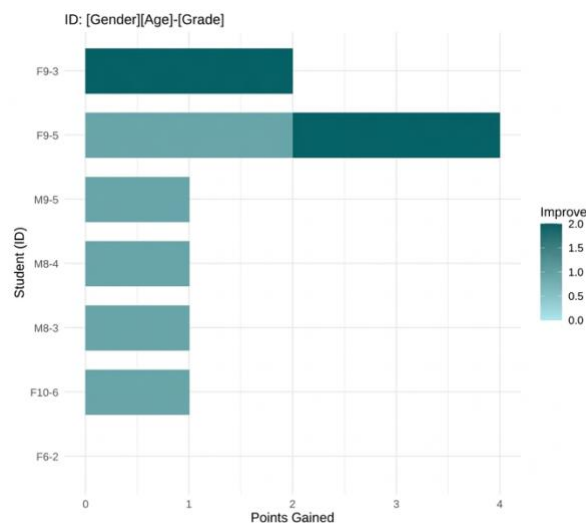


Figure 2: Analysis of Individual Improvement by Student Profile

Figure 2: Distribution of points gained in fluency per participant by gender, age, and grade.

Source: Author's own work (2026)

The nine participants' individual development is shown in the segmented bar chart. Remarkably, every single sample showed an improvement of at least one point on the fluency measure. Student F9-3's 2-point rise is the most noteworthy example. The results show that the creative communicative activities were beneficial to all participants, even the youngest (6 years old) and those who were closer to pre-adolescence (10 years old).

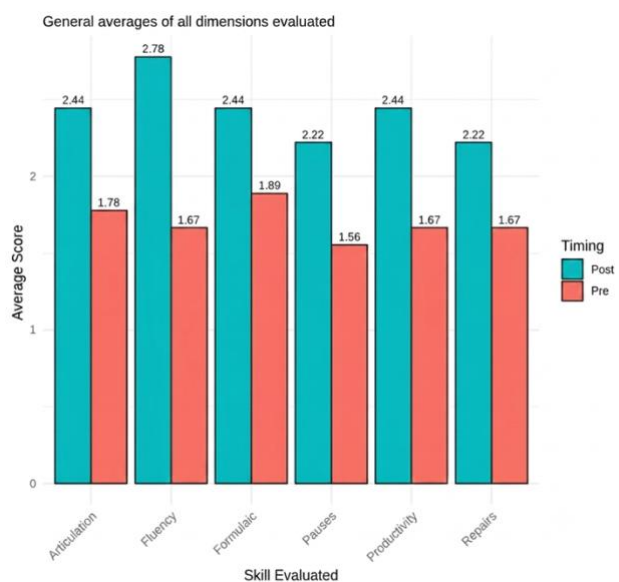


Figure 3: Comparison of Linguistic Performance: Pre-test vs. Post-test

Figure 3: Comparison of overall averages by linguistic dimension before and after the intervention.

Source: Author's own work (2026).

The quantitative effects of the communication tasks on the six main study areas are shown in this image. All variables indicate an increasing trend, but fluency shows the biggest gain, going from an average of 1.67 to 2.78 (+1.11 points). Additionally noteworthy is the rise in Repairs and Pauses, which, in the context of meaning negotiation, suggests that the kids are paying closer attention and exerting more effort when trying to communicate complicated ideas in the target language.

3.6.2. Adverse events

No serious adverse events or side effects that would have compromised the students' participation were reported during the intervention. All participants completed the scheduled activities and maintained regular attendance at the sessions.

However, small episodes of initial insecurity were noted in several activities, particularly in the initial sessions of spontaneous output. Long pauses, a brief drop in speech level, and reluctance to start oral conversations were some of these symptoms. As the intervention went on, these reactions progressively declined and didn't necessitate stopping activities or making significant changes to the teaching methodology.

4. Discussion

The findings support the primary hypothesis, as the intervention led to consistent improvements in fluency, productivity, and articulation, with a notable increase in oral fluency. The secondary hypothesis receives partial support, as the institutional setting—with its educational and technological resources—likely facilitated oral participation, although the study design did not isolate this factor independently. Overall, the observed pattern aligns with recent evidence attributing a favorable effect of task-based language teaching on oral production in school settings, especially when the task organizes verbal exchange with a clear communicative goal.

The most plausible causal interpretation attributes the improvement to the reorganization of the classroom toward greater student production and a reduced centrality of teacher explanation. The increase in Student Talking Time fostered meaning negotiation, turn-taking, and spontaneous production, so that language ceased to operate solely on a receptive level. Recent literature indicates that positive perceptions of teacher speech and classroom interaction are associated with better linguistic performance, while more participatory environments tend to foster greater engagement and learning (Wu & Wang, 2025).

Particularly instructive is the relationship found between articulation and formulaic sequences. Pre-formulated phrases may have acted as a cognitive assist by lowering the need for real-time syntactic building and freeing up resources for oral production, as indicated by the high association. This explanation aligns with Yi y Zhong's (2024) recent meta-analysis, which showed a processing advantage for multi-word sequences, as well as research showing that speed, smoothness, and the effective management of recurrent linguistic units are associated with fluency. Thus, speaking more naturally is just as important to grow as speaking more.

The fact that every participant showed improvement supports the notion that the intervention worked for everyone and wasn't just for a select few. The small group's consistent progress indicates that the tasks' order was appropriate for the participants' age, skill level, and classroom environment. This result is consistent with evidence from Aaj et al. (2024), who discovered that young English learners profited from repeating assignments, especially when it came to oral performance. Accordingly, frequent exposure, controlled variety, and systematic repetition seem to boost confidence and fluency.

The group's positive response also suggests that the instructional sequence was effective because it provided cumulative opportunities for language use, rather than through isolated instruction. Information-sharing tasks, role-playing, and mystery-solving increased the need to respond, clarify, repair, and continue the discourse. This dynamic is consistent with recent studies showing that the task-based approach is most effective when activities are grounded in the real-world classroom context and when oral performance is assessed in situations of meaningful production (Lu et al., 2025). Thus, the intervention did not work through the transmission of rules, but rather through the activation of use.

The study has risks to internal validity, necessitating a cautious interpretation despite the positive outcomes. Regression toward the mean, test familiarity, practice effects, and natural maturation cannot all be fully excluded due to the single-group design. Estimates of change may also be erratic due to the limited sample size and short intervention duration. Any claims for retention are further limited by the lack of a follow-up measurement. As a result, the data indicate that the intervention and performance are positively correlated, but it does not support strong causal conclusions or wide generalizations.

External validity also calls for caution. The study was conducted at a specific institution, with a small group of children aged 6 to 10 and within a unique classroom setting. Therefore, the transferability of the findings to other contexts depends on similarities in developmental level, group size, availability of pedagogical support, and institutional culture. Even so, the research does offer a useful insight for English-as-a-foreign-language settings that need to increase oral use at an early age. The practical relevance is strengthened because recent studies highlight that oral production improves when tasks are tailored to the local context.

The fidelity of the intervention was a decisive factor, as the observed effect depends on how the tasks were carried out. The pre-task, task cycle, and post-task structure allowed for a clear progression, with prior activation, central production, and final feedback. This order aligns with recent approaches to the localized implementation of the task-based approach and with the need for teacher mediation that maintains the communicative focus without reclaiming the monopoly on speech. The literature on teacher talk itself indicates that the quality of teacher-student interaction influences student learning and well-being (Lu et al., 2025).

Alternative explanations should also be considered. Some of the improvement may be due to the combined effect of repeated practice, familiarity with the activity formats, and increased confidence, rather than a single linguistic mechanism. Similarly, the association between fluency and formulaic sequences may reflect a general level of oral competence, not a direct causal relationship between the two variables. The magnitude of the observed correlations, especially with such a small sample, calls for cautious interpretation. At this point, recent evidence on multi-word sequence processing supports the theoretical plausibility of the finding, but does not eliminate the need for replication with larger samples (Yi & Zhong, 2024).

Despite these reservations, the study's significance is clear. In a context where English instruction often prioritizes reception and repetition, the intervention demonstrated that a task-centered pedagogical approach can empower students to speak and transform the classroom into a space for meaningful oral production. This contribution is valuable for teaching practice and for future research, as it suggests that early fluency can be strengthened through contextualized tasks, functional repetition, and interactive mediation. The main contribution lies in the fact that the problem does not seem to lie in a lack of content, but rather in the structure of participation that the classroom offers.

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Informed Consent Statement and Ethics Approval: Prior to data collection, each participant's legal guardian provided written informed consent. Additionally, the students' consent was acquired in age-appropriate language. The Declaration of Helsinki was followed in the conduct of the study.

Data Availability Statement: Upon reasonable request, the relevant author will provide the data supporting the study's conclusions. The complete dataset is not publicly stored due to participant age and institutional confidentiality regulations.

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Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologies: This study has not used any generative AI tools or technologies in the preparation of this manuscript.

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