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THE USE OF TEACHING STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP STUDENTS' ORAL SKILLS

**EL USO DE ESTRATEGIAS DE ENSEÑANZA
PARA DESARROLLAR LAS HABILIDADES ORALES
EN LOS ESTUDIANTES**

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The Use of Teaching Strategies to Develop Students' Oral Skills

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this scientific article is to determine the potential of a didactic strategy to improve English language pronunciation. To achieve this, an in-depth review of psychopedagogical and didactic foundations related to English language learning was conducted. The research adopted a quantitative descriptive approach with the synthetic analytical method. The survey and test techniques were applied to eighth-grade students at the Picoazá Educational Unit in Portoviejo. The findings reveal that the students have deficiencies in pronunciation and/or oral expression. The study concludes that these deficiencies in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary management, and communication effectiveness can be attributed to the lack of an implemented teaching strategy that fosters English language learning as an integral element in education. Furthermore, the study suggests that tackling diction issues, which are not only limited to the English subject but also prevalent in students' overall speech, should be incorporated into the curriculum for comprehensive development.

Keywords: teaching strategy, english language learning, communicative skills

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El Uso de Estrategias de Enseñanza para Desarrollar las Habilidades Orales en los Estudiantes

RESUMEN

El presente artículo científico tiene como objetivo el de determinar la potencialidad de una estrategia de enseñanza para mejorar la pronunciación del idioma inglés; para lo cual se realiza una revisión de las fundamentaciones psicopedagógicas y didácticas relacionadas con el aprendizaje del idioma inglés. La investigación tuvo un enfoque cuantitativo de tipo descriptivo con el método analítico sintético, aplicando la técnica de la encuesta y test a los estudiantes de 8vo año de Educación General Básica de la Unidad Educativa Picoazá de la ciudad de Portoviejo, los hallazgos demuestran que los alumnos presentan deficiencias en la pronunciación y/o expresión oral; concluyendo que las deficiencias en la fluidez, pronunciación, manejo de vocabulario y efectividad de los estudiantes al tratar de comunicar alguna idea se debe principalmente a la falta de implementación de una estrategia de enseñanza que permita hacer del aprendizaje de la Lengua Inglesa un elemento que contribuya a la formación de los estudiantes en esta importante destreza; y así superar los problemas de dicción que están presente no solo en la asignatura de inglés sino que es una práctica de la forma en que hablan los estudiantes.

Palabras claves: estrategia de enseñanza, aprendizaje del idioma inglés, destrezas comunicativas

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INTRODUCTION

The importance of learning English is a universally acknowledged fact; across social, economic, cultural, educational, and technological sectors, it is widely recognized that for a country, culture, or nation to increase in a globalized world, it is imperative for their children and young people to acquire proficiency in this second language during their school years. This proficiency opens doors to better job opportunities, so contributing to an enhanced quality of life.

The Inter-American Dialogue emphasizes that English language proficiency is a crucial "21st-century skill" for many Latin American countries (2020, p. 12). It further highlights that proficiency in English is becoming increasingly essential for business and international communication. In this context, it is connected to the potential for economic competitiveness and growth in the global economy.

Acquiring proficiency in English in Latin America presents numerous new opportunities, potential sources of income, and enhanced security. The advantages of learning and speaking multiple languages are evident, with English proficiency unlocking a broader spectrum of job opportunities. Besides, English serves as a prevalent "business language" and is widely utilized in diplomatic settings. Across various fields such as tourism, science, and computer science, English distinguishes as the dominant and often indispensable language.

However, acquiring proficiency in English or a second language is not an easy task. The IDI English Proficiency Index indicates that, as of 2020, Latin America has the lowest levels of English proficiency (p. 03). This deficiency in language skills is attributed to the deficient quality of language teaching programs in public education and challenges in accessing alternative training options (p. 34). The root causes are diverse and include issues related to pedagogical infrastructure, the training of English teachers, and the attitudes of the students.

According to Rojas and Esparza (2020), some of the Latin American countries with the lowest rates of English proficiency include Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Mexico. Notably, in Mexico, less than 10% of schools incorporate English into their educational curriculum. Furthermore, as of 2015, Latin America lagged two and a half years behind the countries affiliated with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in terms of educational development.



According to the report "Work in Progress: English Teaching and Teachers in Latin America" (2018), "Many, if not most, English teachers in Latin America lack the necessary English skills, pedagogical skills, or both, to be effective educators in the classroom" (p. 23). However, the majority of Latin American countries lack structured programs to ensure that English educators receive the training essential for delivering high-quality English language education.

Indeed, one of the challenges associated with learning English in the Ecuadorian educational system is related to the pronunciation of the language. Mispronunciations block the quality of communication and can impede the understanding of the message being conveyed. According to Ricoy and Álvarez (2016), the teaching of English should be integrated with the development of specific linguistic skills. This integration is closely connected to the cognitive evolution and intellectual maturation of students. The Ministry of Education in Ecuador (2020) is presently employing Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) knowledge levels to categorize students based on their proficiency in the English language. Nevertheless, the limited utilization of effective academic resources, classrooms lacking technological tools, and insufficient support for the integration of electronic devices in educational institutions are impeding students from achieving the desired proficiency levels as outlined by the CEFR.

In general, teaching involves many strategies and methods for educating students. To better understand these strategies, you can organize them into two distinct approaches: didactic teaching and pedagogy. If you're working with children, it's helpful to learn about these approaches and understand how they contrast.

According to García et al. (2021), "Didactic strategies encompass all the actions and activities that a teacher plans for their students to facilitate learning. These strategies are underpinned by various methods, techniques, and resources" (p. 12). The authors also propose a classification of didactic strategies into two categories: teaching strategies and learning strategies. This distinction implies that some strategies are focused on the instructional methods employed by the teacher, while others are geared towards enhancing the learning processes of the students themselves. Understanding this classification can provide educators with a nuanced perspective on the diverse approaches available to foster effective teaching and learning environments.



García-Ros et al., (2018) point out some didactic strategies for teaching the English language:

Characteristics of the teaching strategy

García-Ros et al., (2018) indicates that “When we talk about teaching strategies, we must begin by establishing that these are used by the teacher from the very act of planning. Teaching strategies trace routes, organize and contribute to the proper development of content” (p. 12). It is for this reason that they are defined as: as the set of decisions that the teacher makes to guide teaching to promote the learning of their students. These are general guidelines on how to teach disciplinary content considering what students are intended to understand, why and for what purpose.

Talking about teaching strategies today implies not only a focus on traditional methods and research carried out in the past, it also implies a look towards the future of teaching and learning. Today, with technological advances, teaching strategies go beyond a plan in which guidelines are drawn up.

At present, the educator must consider that students are characterized by what has been called a virtual mind. Schools and teachers cannot ignore the new ways of reading and interpreting the world with which today's students approach school content and tasks.

Aldana (2018) identifies and explains some characteristics of this new group, He considers that they use a variety of resources to obtain information: web pages, hard drives, cell phones, virtual communities, etc.; They use and decode different types of language that, furthermore, are not presented sequentially, but simultaneously, such as animations, photographs, graphics, texts, hypertexts; create new productions from parts of other products (copy-paste); They are relativists par excellence; on the one hand, because the website is constantly updated, and on the other, because all information is considered valid.

For this reason, when defining teaching strategies, other strategies: didactic, methodological, or learning. Since previous years, Teaching Strategies have been considered as procedures that the teaching agent uses in a reflective and flexible manner to promote student learning achievement. (Mayer, 1984; Shuell, 1988; Farmer & Wolf 1991).

Teaching strategies according to Mayoral-Valdivia (2016) “are also considered as means or resources to provide pedagogical help. For this reason, the teacher must have a broad background of strategies, knowing what function they have and how they can be used appropriately” (p. 23), other



characterizations of teaching strategies are based more on teaching work, an example of this is the one presented by García and Corrales (2012) when characterizing teaching strategies as the “set of decisions that the teacher makes to guide teaching in order to promote the learning of their students” (p. 09). Here they are presented rather as general guidelines on how to teach content considering what you want students to understand, why and for what purpose.

According to Durán -Escribano (2021), in his article Training processes in the classroom: Teaching-Learning Strategies; “A teaching strategy is equivalent to the potentially conscious sequenced action of the educational professional, of the teaching process in its triple dimension of knowing, knowing how to do and being” (p. 45).

It is important to note that teaching strategies affect students in different ways such as: in the content that is transmitted to students, the intellectual work that they do, the values that are put into play in the class situation, the way of understanding social, historical, scientific, artistic, cultural content, among others.

When applying teaching strategies, it is necessary to consider some aspects or factors, which are defined by De La Cruz et al (2020) as essential aspects, these are:

Consideration of the general characteristics of the learners, such as level of cognitive development, emotional factors, prior knowledge.

Type of mastery of general knowledge and curricular content.

The intentionality or goal that is desired to be achieved and the cognitive and pedagogical activities that the student must carry out to achieve it.

Constant monitoring of the teaching process, as well as the progress and learning of the students.

Determination of the intersubjective context (e.g., the knowledge already shared) created with the students up to that moment.

Each of these factors constitutes an important argument to identify how and when to use a certain strategy.

Teaching Strategies to Teach English Language Speaking and/or Pronunciation Well

Vega (2020) considers that "Pronunciation is more than 'listening and repeating'. Pronunciation includes features of language (vocabulary and grammar) and skills (speaking and listening)" (p. 45) Like



vocabulary and grammar, we pronounce by noticing and understanding the rules and patterns that lie beneath the surface of speech. For example, if an English word has two syllables, the accent is usually on the first syllable for nouns and adjectives, and on the second syllable for verbs.

Since pronunciation is part of speech, it's also physical. To pronounce a new language, we need to retrain the muscles we use to speak. And pronunciation involves listening to how the language sounds. We can practice focusing on connected speech while playing back snippets of voice recordings.

Pabón (2019) stresses that the tongue, lips, and jaw (vocal articulators) physically shape pronunciation:

When we learn our first language, we develop speaking habits that we may not be aware of developing. This is what makes pronunciation in a new language so difficult: we carry with us the speaking habits of our first language, (p. 31)

According to Tracey Derwing and Murray Munro, (2018) authors of *Pronunciation Fundamentals*, most people who learn a new language retain the accent characteristics of their native language. However, accent isn't necessarily a problem. You can keep the accent and still be understood.

English has become a lingua franca, or language that people use to communicate with each other globally. People with different languages use English to communicate, even if there is no native English speaker present.

In her book *The Phonology of English as an International Language*, Jennifer Jenkins (2018) argues that the role of English as a lingua franca has implications for pronunciation teaching. "The goal is not to sound like a native speaker, but to communicate effectively in a global context" (p.45). With this vision, a learner's goal may be to communicate with other people around the world, not necessarily with native English speakers. The teacher should focus more on the aspects of pronunciation that aid comprehension.

Hence, Miranda (2019) states that:

Some features of pronunciation make the message clearer to the listener. For example, a clear difference between the /r/ and /l/ sounds. You can teach or practice intelligibility with communication activities. Using the example of /r/ and /l/, you can put pairs of words like correct and collect into a game where success depends on the learner being able to hear and tell the difference, (p. 23).



It means that the teacher should teach optional features of pronunciation to make words easier to say, such as saying *going to* instead of *going to*. *Going to* may be easier for a learner to say, and it's closer to the way many native speakers pronounce *going to*. However, it is optional because most listeners will understand *go to* or *go to*.

Miranda (2019) advises that you should observe what the muscles of the lips, tongue, jaw, and throat do when the student speaks, in your own language and in English.

For example, when you say the /t/ sound, pay attention to the tip of your tongue. Does it touch the back of the teeth or the ridge above them? How is it like the /d/ sound? What's the difference?

They should also become aware of beliefs and prejudices about pronunciation.

Many English speakers say they never use glottal plosives (the sound made when glottis closes while speaking), but they do. According to John Wells (2028) in the Longman Dictionary of Pronunciation, most people use glottal occlusion to replace the /t/ sound in words like *button*.

For Salamanca (2020) "Deciding to learn English with a British or American accent is not a ultimate goal" (p. 67). Instead, the teacher should focus on features of pronunciation that could distort their message. For example, Vietnamese speakers may miss consonants at the ends of words, and German speakers may confuse the /v/ and /w/ sounds. This can make it difficult for listeners to understand some words.

Salamanca also states that the most serious pronunciation problems are those that are not known. "For example, people who speak Spanish already make sounds that resemble English /b/ and /v/. However, in Spanish, /b/ and /v/ are allophones, variants of the same sound" (p. 90).

Spanish listeners may not notice the difference, because listening to a language, like speaking it, is a habit formed in childhood. If a difference is not significant in the native language, it may not be noticed in the language being learned.

Teachers should help students to become aware of these characteristics in the target language. This can be done by teaching a short rhyme that includes many examples of a sound, so that it is perceptible to the student.

Chavez (2019) claims that English spelling is not useful for students. It evolved from speech, but then speech and spelling went their separate ways. Consequently, there are often many ways to spell the



same sequence of sounds. This gives rise to homophones such as 'piece' and 'peace'. (Piece and Peace), such as:

Conversely, the same sequence of letters can be pronounced differently, resulting in homographs such as row (line) and row (argument).

Homophones and homographs are a challenge for English learners, but they are not the main problem. They are extreme cases of a larger problem: the irregular relationship between spelling and sound in English throughout the language.

It's almost enough to drive a student to despair, and we teachers don't help much by throwing a bunch of words into the class while suggesting that there's no rhyme or reason in English spelling. In fact, there are many patterns and regularities.

There are many strategies for teaching English language, however, to improve pronunciation there are very few; But in general, some strategies are listed that can be adapted to the needs of the problems that arise in learning English, (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2016)

Predictable Routines and Signals. Reducing Anxiety.

Total Physical Response and Total Physical Response Storytelling (TPR and TPRS)

Integrating Movement into. Language Acquisition.

Modeled Talk. Demonstrating as You Talk.

Visual Scaffolding. Providing Language Support through Visual Images.

Vocabulary Role-Play. Building Vocabulary through Dramatization.

Collecting and Processing Words. Making Vocabulary Your Own.

Manipulatives Strategies. Using Objects to Connect Concepts.

Refers to the last strategy mentioned above, Chin-Wen (2023) in his article titled implementation of local culture curriculum in an English Scenario Classroom on Taiwanese sixth graders' environmental and vocabulary knowledge, analyzed the influence of the implementation, using a mixed approach. The author concluded in this study that the use of realia, images, technology, and hands-on activities helped students recognize the spoken form and meaning of the English language.

At Picoazá UEP Educational Unit, the lack of support from authorities and the deficiency in technological resources and ICT-related training is a prevalent issue. Consequently, the 8th-grade



students in the "E" section of the UEP will undergo an oral expression test to assess their proficiency, vocabulary, and apprehension when speaking English. This evaluation aims to uncover the factors contributing to the students' challenges, such as a lack of interest and the influence of their living and studying environment, given that it is a location situated not far from the city.

The mentioned educational institution has been making efforts over the past few years to enhance overall English language learning, with a particular emphasis on addressing pronunciation challenges. To get this goal, the institution has implemented communicative strategies that go beyond a sole focus on the accuracy of English language usage. These strategies enable students to take advantage of their linguistic knowledge, such as learning new words, employing synonyms, and engaging in dialogue both inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, non-linguistic elements like gestures, pronunciation, and mimicry are also incorporated, allowing students to effectively overcome challenges in transmitting messages orally or in writing and ensuring uninterrupted communication.

Despite these efforts, the results have not been as significant as desired, as students continue to face challenges in pronunciation. Therefore, there is a need to explore and implement new didactic strategies to effectively address and overcome this persistent issue.

Here's a refined formulation of the problem:

How can the implementation of a new didactic strategy contribute to the improvement the English language pronunciation among eighth-grade students at the Picoazá Educational Unit?

In this context, this scientific article has the following general objective: Propose a didactic strategy to strengthen the pronunciation of the English language in the eighth-grade students of the Picoazá Educational Unit

This research is grounded in the substantial challenges encountered in learning the English language, with speech and pronunciation being notable difficulties. Consequently, there is a pressing need to improve didactic strategies to promote the development of language skills and abilities among students. The significance of this study lies in its potential to identify and establish effective didactic strategies that facilitate clear and proper pronunciation, aiding students in being better understood. Given the inherent advantage of early age learning, this research aims to contribute valuable insights, making the acquisition of a second language more accessible.



Another importance of this research lies in its contribution to the educational landscape, particularly for teachers at the Picoazá educational unit and other institutions facing similar challenges. The work aims to provide a tailored didactic strategy that aligns with the students' conditions and the realities they encounter. Importantly, it addresses the limitations posed by the scarcity of didactic resources and infrastructure within educational establishments in the city of Portoviejo. By offering a practical and feasible approach, this research seeks to empower educators with an effective tool that can be readily applied in their specific teaching contexts.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodology utilized a quantitative approach, presenting results through frequencies and percentages displayed in statistical tables and graphs. This dataset enabled a comprehensive understanding of the underlying causes and effects of students' difficulties in pronouncing the English language. The study adopted a descriptive approach, focusing on analyzing and identifying the main characteristics of the phenomenon under investigation.

Additionally, a synthetic analytical method was employed, breaking down the studied problem into its component parts and elements. This facilitated a dialectical analysis and offered a holistic view of the problematic situation. Field research involved collecting data directly at the site of the issue, employing survey and test techniques administered to a sample of 38 students

The instruments used for this research were the English pronunciation test of the Columbia Languages Institute, an individual course to speak English, and a survey applied to students. The study involved 38 students from the 8th level of Basic Education chosen by the director of the Educational Unit, as well as the 2 teachers of the subject of English

Results of the application of the English language pronunciation test

This section shows the results of the diagnostic test applied to the 8th grade students to identify their English level. All the information was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted based on the epistemological background of the topic investigated.



Table 1 Fluidity

Assessment	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strong	9	24
4	Average	14	37
3	Weak	15	39
	TOTAL	38	100

The fluency of oral expression is connected to the capacity to communicate easily and naturally, adapting to various communication circumstances without hesitation

In assessing students' fluency, the observed results indicate that 24% of students achieved a rating of 5, indicating a strong level of fluency. Additionally, 37% of students obtained a score of 4, representing an average level, while 39% achieved a score of 3, indicating a weak level of fluency. The results from the test application reveal that just over a third of the students exhibit weak fluency, falling below acceptable levels, let alone reaching an optimal level of proficiency.

Table 2 Pronunciation

Assessment	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strong	10	26
4	Average	13	34
3	Weak	15	40
	TOTAL	38	100

Pronunciation holds a crucial significance in mastering the English language as it directly impacts effective communication between the sender and receiver.

In evaluating students' pronunciation skills, the results indicate that 26% of students achieved a rating of 5, signifying a strong proficiency level. Additionally, 34% of students attained a score of 4, representing an average level, while 40% obtained a score of 3, indicating a weak proficiency level. Based on these results, it is noteworthy that approximately half of the students received a weak evaluation in terms of pronunciation, suggesting that they face challenges in effectively making themselves understood.



Table 3 Vocabulary

Assessment	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strong	7	18
4	Average	14	37
3	Weak	17	45
	TOTAL	38	100

In English communication, using clear and appropriate vocabulary is essential to ensure that the message or idea is understood by the receiver

In the evaluation of students' vocabulary, 18% of the students achieved a score of 5, indicating a strong proficiency level. Additionally, 37% of students obtained a score of 4, representing an average level, while 45% received a score of 3, indicating a weak proficiency level. The results suggest that around half of the students exhibit weakness in vocabulary, indicating challenges in employing a clear and appropriate range of words during communication.

Table 4 Effectiveness

Assessment	Evaluation	Frequency	Percentage
5	Strong	5	13
4	Average	14	37
3	Weak	19	50
	TOTAL	38	100

Effectiveness in communication involves the coherence and logic of the words and sentences used by the speaker, crucial for ensuring understanding.

In the test applied, 13 students achieved a rating of 5, indicating a strong level of effectiveness. Additionally, 37% of the students obtained a score of 4, representing an average level, while 50% of the students achieved a score of 3, indicating a weak level of effectiveness. This data suggests that half of the students exhibit weaknesses in the effectiveness of their communication when expressing ideas in the English language.

Results of the application of the survey to students

1.- When it comes to speaking English, what do you consider to be your strength?



Table 5 Strength in speaking English

Order	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
a	Fluidity	7	19
b	Pronunciation	8	21
c	Vocabulary	10	26
d	Effectiveness	5	13
and	No	8	21
	TOTAL	38	100

It should be borne in mind that learning English depends on each student and on several external factors. Everyone learns at their own pace and has language skills or aptitudes for the various skills involved in learning a language such as reading, writing, listening, speaking and pronunciation.

In terms of strengths in speaking English, the survey results indicate that 19% of students identified fluency as their strength, 21% highlighted pronunciation, 26% expressed confidence in their vocabulary, 13% mentioned effectiveness, and 21% indicated none as their strength. The outcomes suggest that a notable portion of students perceives vocabulary as their strength in English communication. However, it is noteworthy that 21% of the students did not identify any specific strength, indicating a varied range of perceptions and experiences among the student population.

2.- When speaking in English, what do you consider to be your weakness?

Table 6 Weakness in speaking English

Order	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
a	Fluency	7	19
b	Pronunciation	10	26
c	Vocabulary	7	18
d	Effectiveness	5	13
and	All Things	9	24
	TOTAL	38	100

English is more difficult to learn than others, although he recognizes that English grammar can cause more problems for the Spanish student than that of French or Italian, which are more similar since they come from Latin. But that's not to say that English grammar is more complex, it's just less family.



In terms of weaknesses in speaking English, the survey results indicate that 19% of students identified fluency as their weakness, 26% pointed to pronunciation, 13% mentioned vocabulary, and 13% indicated effectiveness. Interestingly, 24% of students expressed that all aspects (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and effectiveness) were their weaknesses. This suggests that a quarter of the students perceive pronunciation, particularly in all its aspects, as their primary weakness when communicating in English.

3 Do you think you have the required level to express your idea in English?

Table 7 Existence of the level required to express ideas in English

Order	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
a	Yes	10	26
b	No	13	34
c	Sometimes	15	40
	TOTAL	38	100

The main difficulties in learning the language come from the so-called Peak forms or reduced forms of certain words, as well as other characteristics of fluent language that change the way words are pronounced. And this can be a drawback because in Spanish the words are always pronounced the same.

When questioned about their proficiency in expressing ideas in English, the students provided the following responses: 26% answered affirmatively, 34% responded negatively, and 40% stated that they can do so sometimes. The survey data indicates that approximately a third of the students do not feel they possess the necessary level of proficiency to consistently express their ideas in English.

4.- According to your personal criteria: Why do you think oral production is affected?

Table 8 Difficulties in oral production of English

Order	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
a	Lack of teaching strategies	12	32
b	Fear or embarrassment of being wrong	8	21
c	Lack of vocabulary	5	13
d	Lack of fluency	4	10
and	Does not know the pronunciation of words.	9	24
	TOTAL	38	100



Among the main mistakes of students is pronunciation, which is what is most difficult for students learning English. They generally have problems with vowels because there are more sounds in English and they are often not pronounced as they are written. It can be difficult to distinguish between long and short sounds such as the ee in sheep or the i in ship.

The responses from students regarding factors affecting their oral production in the English language reveal several challenges. Specifically, 32% of students identified the lack of teaching strategies as a hindrance, 21% expressed fear or embarrassment about making mistakes, 13% cited a lack of vocabulary, and 24% mentioned not knowing the pronunciation of words. Notably, the students' feedback emphasizes the significant impact of the lack of teaching strategies and pronunciation knowledge on their oral production in English.

DISCUSSION

The introduction to this scientific article underscores the significance of teaching the English language in the contemporary era, driven by the demands of globalization where English is considered a crucial second language. The challenges associated with speaking English, as discussed by Macías (2017), are multifaceted, with fluency being a key element. Macías, defines fluency in any language as the ability to speak easily, reasonably quickly, and without frequent pauses. Fluency is essential for being well understood by the interlocutor. However, the test results reveal that only about a quarter of the students attain a strong evaluation, indicating a high level of adequacy, while more than a third are classified as weak. This suggests a significant deficiency in fluency among students when speaking the English language.

In addition to the challenges highlighted, pronunciation emerges as a significant difficulty, with results reflecting those of fluency. Forty percent of students are categorized as weak in pronunciation, indicating insufficient proficiency in both listening and phonetic comprehension. Vocabulary levels, crucial for clear and precise communication, also present challenges, with 45% of students receiving a weak evaluation in this aspect. Furthermore, in terms of the effectiveness of the message, as emphasized by Gudiño (2017), half of the students exhibit a weak assessment, pointing to difficulties in achieving logical and impactful communication. These combined challenges highlight the multifaceted nature of language proficiency issues among the student population.



The survey results provide further support for the identified challenges in oral expression. Only 26% of students acknowledge vocabulary as a strength in speaking English, while a notable 21% admit to having no strength at all. Pronunciation emerges as a significant weakness, highlighted by 26% of students, and it's remarkable that many students indicate difficulties across all elements of oral expression. This indicates that only a quarter of the students possess a sufficient level to express their ideas in English. Importantly, the lack of teaching strategies is recognized as one of the contributing factors to these lacks, emphasizing the need for targeted instructional approaches to address these challenges comprehensively.

Teaching strategy to improve students' oral skills, 8th grade of Basic General Education of the Picoazá Educational Unit of the city of Portoviejo

This strategy is based on the "Realia Strategies for Connecting Language Acquisition with the Real World" by Herrell and Jordan (2014).

Given that the use of realia is essential for improving oral skills in learning the English language, several definitions of this concept have been noted

Realia refers to real objects used in the classroom to develop basic knowledge and vocabulary. It provides students with opportunities to engage all their senses in the learning process (Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2010). Although it is not always possible to use realia in the classroom, it is often the best option when students are learning about a particular topic. Realia allows students to see, feel, hear, and even smell the objects they are studying

Love to Teach (2019) explains the importance of using physical (concrete) materials that can be appreciated by all the students' senses, particularly for improving the pronunciation of new items and concepts. This methodology is rooted in cognitive theory. If the real object is unavailable, a teacher should move from the concrete (real thing) to a replica such as a model, and then to a semi-concrete object like a photograph or illustration. However, each transition to a less concrete representation results in the loss of some sensory information that could aid comprehension. Providing multiple opportunities to explore new vocabulary in different contexts deepens vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 2005). See Figure 5.1 (on the next page) for suggestions of classroom realia that enhance powerful learning experiences.



According to Herrel and Jordan (2014), various categories of realia can significantly aid in developing students' oral skills. For instance, household items such as eating utensils and kitchen appliances from different cultures, as well as miniatures like household furniture and old-fashioned items no longer commonly seen, can be utilized for active experiences, vocabulary development, role-playing, story reenactment, prereading activities, oral language practice, and story problems in math.

Additionally, food realia such as fruits and vegetables, along with plastic food items available for classroom use, can facilitate sensory experiences, vocabulary development, story.

Herrel and Jordan also suggest that the use of various types of hats, gloves, sweaters, jackets, boots, and examples of ethnic clothing can support understanding, contribute to vocabulary development, aid in story reenactment, provide writing support, and enhance oral language practice. Furthermore, they emphasize that the use of flowers and plants allows students to make size and smell comparisons.

Category

1.- Household Goods

Realia

Utensils that are used for eating, kitchen appliances (from different cultures of Ecuador), miniatures such as furniture for home, items used by grandmothers and that are no longer used today.

Uses

Active experiences, (each student says aloud the name of each object indicated) vocabulary development, role plays, recreation of stories, pre-reading activities, oral language practice.

2.- Feeding

Realia

Fruits, vegetables, unusual items unknown to students; Many plastic foods are available to be used in the classroom

Uses

Sensory experiences, vocabulary development, story representation, grammar activities (singular, plural).

3.- Clothing



Realia

Different types of hats (from the coastal region and the mountains), shoes, sweaters, jackets, boots, any example of dress from the region to support understanding.

Uses

Vocabulary development, story recreation, writing support, oral language practice.

4.- Literacy materials

Realia

Books, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, reference books, checkbooks, bank books

Uses

Role play, vocabulary development, easy access for research, exposition

5.-Agricultural or occupational articles

Realia

Rakes, plows, harnesses, tools, baskets, compost, nails, models of barns, silos, scarecrows, carts, farm carts, (miniature models).

Uses

Pre-reading activities, role plays, vocabulary development, knowledge of dimensions and weight

6.- Flowers and plants

Realia

Examples of flowers and plants being studied or read about; unusual plants such as large sunflowers, pumpkins

Uses

Vocabulary Development, Sensory Experiences, Size Comparisons

7.- Animals

Realia

Pets in the classroom, household pets, farm and zoo visits. You can also make small representations of animals.

Uses

Sensory experiences, vocabulary development



8.- Craftsmanship

Realia

Weaving, making thread cords, necklaces, clay carving, potter's wheel, spinning wheel, loom,

Uses

Vocabulary development, role-playing, sensory experiences, pre-reading activities

9.- Ethnic Items

Piñatas, chopsticks, tortilla press, tea sets, mate, rafts. (Many of the items may be miniature representations.)

Vocabulary development, intercultural experiences

Meza (2020) suggests various methods for assessing vocabulary using realia, sculpted to different stages of the learning process. For students at the preproduction level, the assessment involves showing two objects and prompting them to identify what they see. At the early production stage, students are tasked with observing two objects and discussing their use. As students reach the speech emergence stage, they progress to naming objects. Additionally, realia can be utilized to evaluate students' fluency by prompting them to describe and compare objects.

According to Hayness, (s/f) there are three stages for a second language acquisition

In the preproduction stage, often referred to as the silent period, realia serve as a valuable tool for introducing new vocabulary. Meza recommends employing realia to familiarize students with new words by passing objects around for them to observe and learn. Encouraging students to attempt pronouncing the correct name of the object while holding it can facilitate vocabulary acquisition during this silent period.

In the early production stage, learners begin to speak one- or two-word phrases. Meza recommends using objects and visual aids to facilitate the pronunciation of new vocabulary. This can involve writing the names of the objects on the board and utilizing teaching materials such as flipcharts, posters, and photos to visually represent the objects.

In the speech emergence stage, students have developed a basic vocabulary. During this phase, Meza advises instructing students to verbally identify objects and describe their use. For example, students may say, 'This is a computer, and it is used to process data.' This approach not only reinforces



vocabulary acquisition but also encourages students to express themselves more fluently and comprehensively.

Here there are some activities:

Intermediate Fluency

Tell a short story, naming common objects, and ask students to say where and what the named object was used for

Fluent

Conduct a presentation (sociodrama) with students where you use role-playing objects and demonstrate how the objects relate to the situation being acted out.

Preproduction

Name two or three objects and suggest that students identify the correct object and pronounce it as you name it.

Early Production

Present two or three objects and ask students to identify the correct object by its use (e.g., "What is the name of the text-making machine?").

Speech Emergence

Encourage students to compare objects.

Include objects of different color, size, and usefulness. Example: What's the difference between a desktop computer and a laptop??

Intermediate Fluency

Suggest that students use the objects they like to write a brief history of their usefulness. This way, encourage creativity.

Fluent

Organize students into small teams. Then have each team make a single story considering the stories. Texts should involve the objects being discussed.

For Evaluation, according to Arango (2020), the steps to implement the use of realia are as follows:

- Identify opportunities to use realia—Be aware of opportunities to include realia in lessons as you plan.

Pre read any stories that will be read aloud or used for reading instruction to identify vocabulary that



may be unfamiliar to the students. Once the vocabulary is identified, locate realia that will be helpful in enhancing their understanding.

- *Collect realia*: Start collecting items that can be incorporated into the classroom and organize them in a way that can be easily accessed for the teaching-learning process. You can use newspapers, magazines, books that are in good condition but that students can reuse. It should also gather men's and women's dresses that can be used in sociodramas or story performances. Don't forget to collect videos and songs in English with topics that students like. To do this, a material collection campaign can be organized.

Based on what is pointed out by Hermes and Jordan (2014) Del Portillo & Ballén, (2020) indicate some activities to be carried out:

- *Build a library of realia*— Organize with the other teachers at the educational institution to create a real laboratory or nursery, where students can observe and feel real plants.
- *Use field trips as realia*—If it's too large to move and your students' learning would benefit by experiencing it, take a field trip. Give your students the opportunity to really understand what they are studying.
- *Assess by using realia*—Realia can be used to assess students' vocabulary and understanding of verbal directions. An example of using realia to assess vocabulary is shown in Figure 2. For suggestions on ways to adapt realia use for students at different levels of language development.

Objective of the proposal:

To improve students' oral skills by using realia as a teaching strategy at 8th grade Basic General Education of the Picoazá Educational Unit of the city of Portoviejo,

Introduction: Nowadays and with the globalization era, it is imperative that citizens of the world need to develop more communication skills. Based on this reality, the following strategies are proposed so that, by using realia, students can develop one of the most important skills in managing a language. These strategies are based on Hermes and Jordan (2014), Meza Cifuentes & Llanos y Perez (2024).

Strategy No. 1

Household items

Objective: To talk about students' homes.



Class stage:

Preproduction

The teacher presents the new vocabulary, modeling the pronunciation of the words.

Early production:

Choral drill to practice pronunciation.

Filling the gap activity using the new vocabulary.

Speech emergence

Guessing the right object: The teacher shows some objects, then, he describes one of them and students guess which of the of the objects is described.

Intermediate fluency

Students prepare a short speech describing some objects.

Fluent

Students prepare a short story using the new vocabulary.

Assessment:

Teacher evaluates this activity using a rubric with some criteria: number of words used, pronunciation, related vocabulary.

Household Goods

Strategy 2

Objective: To talk about the daily diet of students

Class Stage:

Preproduction

The professor presents a list of natural foods and others in plastic containers.

Early Production:

The teacher has the students repeat the names of each food they pronounce.

The teacher grabs a food item and asks a certain student: what is the meaning of? The student must answer: the meaning ofis.....

Intermediate Fluency:

Students construct a sentence with the food of their choice.



Fluent:

The students prepare a short exhibition on the origin of a chosen food.

Assessment:

The teacher evaluates this activity with a rubric with some criteria: number of words used, pronunciation, related vocabulary.

Strategy No. 3

Clothing

Objective: To improve the pronunciation of the clothing used by people.

Class Stage:

Preproduction

The teacher indicates common clothes and objects, using words and how to pronounce them correctly.

Early Production:

The teacher makes the following speech: Today I visited my grandmother, but I didn't want to leave empty-handed, so I bought a jipijapa hat, a brown sweater; But I also bought a jacket for my nephew who lives with my grandmother and since there was promotion, I bought a pair of cowhide boots.

The teacher asks the students to identify the clothing that is named in the speech

Speech Emergency:

The teacher asks the students to identify the objects or clothing that they are going to pronounce.

Intermediate Fluency:

Students make a short sentence out of an object or clothing

Fluent:

Students make an oral presentation with the objects and costumes used in the class.

Assessment:

The teacher evaluates this activity using a rubric with some criteria: number of words used, pronunciation, related vocabulary.

Strategy No. 4

Household Goods

Objective: To incorporate vocabulary that is used in written texts in different contents



Class Stage:

Preproduction

The teacher has organized a small log with books, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedies, checkbooks and bank books.

Early Production:

The teacher names each material in the log one by one.

The students repeat the teacher's pronunciation in chorus.

Speech Emergency

Students are organized into groups of three and pronounce the names of the objects and correct each other.

Intermediate Fluency

The students face the teacher and pronounce the name of the objects in the log

The students organize an exhibition with the literacy materials for which they pronounce each object.

Assessment:

The teacher evaluates this activity using a rubric with some criteria: number of words used, pronunciation, related vocabulary.

Strategy No. 5

Agricultural or occupational articles

Objective: To teach the pronunciation of agricultural or occupational articles that are used in common communication

Class Stage:

Preproduction

In a model, the teacher exhibits a series of items that are used in agriculture: rakes, plows, harnesses, tools, baskets, compost, nails, models of barns, silos, scarecrows, carts, farm carts, (miniature models).

Early Production:

The teacher makes an exposition of the objects, highlighting their correct pronunciation.

The students repeat the teacher's pronunciation in chorus.

Speech Emergency



Students make a list of objects and write them as they should be pronounced.

Intermediate Fluency

Students in teams of three spell and pronounce, in one minute, the greatest number of words that the teacher presents to them.

Evaluation:

The teacher evaluates the number of words correctly spelled and pronounced for the teams.

CONCLUSIONS

Students often encounter substantial challenges in pronouncing the English language, manifesting in difficulties with fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and effectively communicating ideas. These struggles can largely be attributed to the absence of effective teaching strategies within the learning process. The recognition of these issues underscores the critical need for implementing targeted instructional approaches aimed at addressing pronunciation challenges and enhancing overall language proficiency among students.

A didactic strategy plays an essential role in elevating the learning of the English language to a meaningful component that enriches overall education. In today's global context, English holds indispensable importance as a tool for international communication. Beyond its practical utility, language serves as a medium for representing reality, offering educational values that warrant active promotion. Moreover, within the curriculum, English education should address issues pertaining to pronunciation, which extends beyond mere linguistic competence and deeply influences how students verbally express themselves. By integrating effective didactic strategies, educators can not only enhance language proficiency but also foster broader educational and communicative development.

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