

Applying universal design for learning principles to foster speaking fluency in EFL Classrooms

Aplicación de los principios del diseño universal para el aprendizaje en el desarrollo de la fluidez oral en aulas de inglés como lengua extranjera

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ABSTRACT

Speaking fluency is a key component of communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language, as it enables students to express their ideas clearly and at the same time participate actively, and interact in meaningful contexts inside and outside the classroom. However, in many high school contexts, this skill still presents limitations due to inflexible teaching practices that do not always respond adequately to learner diversity, students' confidence levels, or their different ways of participating. In response to this problem, the present study aimed to examine the impact of applying Universal Design for Learning principles on the development of speaking fluency in second-year Bachillerato students in Ecuador. This research adopted a pedagogical intervention design with a mixed-methods approach. The intervention incorporated strategies based on the UDL principles of engagement, representation, action and expression. The Data was collected through speaking pre- and post-tests, a Likert-scale survey applying open-ended questions for students, post-intervention interviews, an observation checklist, and a Likert-scale survey for the teacher. A comparative between before and after the intervention was applied for Quantitative data, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to participation, confidence, engagement, and perception. The findings show an improvement in students' speaking fluency, especially in more continuous oral production, reduced hesitation, and greater participation in speaking activities. In addition, students reported feeling more motivated and confident when tasks included visual support, choice, scaffolding, and flexible ways of expression. In conclusion, the application of UDL principles contributed to the creation of a more inclusive learning environment and showed potential for strengthening speaking fluency in second-year Bachillerato students.

KEYWORDS: Universal Design for Learning, speaking fluency, English as a Foreign Language, inclusive education, oral communication, student participation.



RESUMEN

La fluidez al hablar es un componente clave de la competencia comunicativa en el inglés como lengua extranjera, ya que permite a los estudiantes expresar sus ideas con claridad y, al mismo tiempo, participar activamente e interactuar en contextos significativos dentro y fuera del aula. Sin embargo, en muchos contextos de bachillerato, esta habilidad aún presenta limitaciones debido a prácticas docentes inflexibles que no siempre responden de manera adecuada a la diversidad del alumnado, a los niveles de confianza de los estudiantes o a sus diferentes formas de participar. En respuesta a esta problemática, el presente estudio tuvo como objetivo examinar el impacto de la aplicación de los principios del Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje (DUA) en el desarrollo de la fluidez al hablar en estudiantes de segundo año de Bachillerato en Ecuador. Esta investigación adoptó un diseño de intervención pedagógica con un enfoque de métodos mixtos. La intervención incorporó estrategias basadas en los principios del DUA: compromiso, representación, acción y expresión. Los datos se recopilaron a través de pruebas previas y posteriores de expresión oral (pre- and post-tests), una encuesta de escala Likert con preguntas abiertas para los estudiantes, entrevistas posteriores a la intervención, una lista de verificación de observación y una encuesta de escala Likert para el docente. Para los datos cuantitativos se aplicó una comparativa entre el antes y el después de la intervención, mientras que los datos cualitativos se analizaron de forma temática para identificar patrones relacionados con la participación, la confianza, el compromiso y la percepción. Los hallazgos muestran una mejora en la fluidez al hablar de los estudiantes, especialmente en una producción oral más continua, una menor vacilación y una mayor participación en las actividades de expresión oral. Además, los estudiantes informaron sentirse más motivados y seguros cuando las tareas incluían apoyo visual, opciones de elección, andamiaje (scaffolding) y formas flexibles de expresión. En conclusión, la aplicación de los principios del DUA contribuyó a la creación de un entorno de aprendizaje más inclusivo y demostró tener potencial para fortalecer la fluidez al hablar en estudiantes de segundo año de Bachillerato.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Diseño Universal para el Aprendizaje, fluidez oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación inclusiva, comunicación oral, participación estudiantil.

INTRODUCTION

In the last decade, the development of communicative competence has been recognized as a fundamental goal in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Among the different skills constituting communicative competences, speaking fluency has gained a particular relevance, since it reflects students' ability to convey ideas clearly and interact effectively in most real-life contexts. In Ecuador, the capacity to communicate orally in English among secondary school students is not only a linguistic achievement but also a means of building confidence for students, engaging in collaborative learning, and developing 21st-century skills. However, despite curricular emphasis on the communicative approach, many learners still struggle with fluency due to rigid teaching methodologies that fail to address learners' variability. Previous studies in this problem for English Language Teaching have highlighted the need to implement inclusive methodologies that fulfill students' different learning styles, backgrounds, and abilities. For instance, (Han & Lei, 2024) argue that traditional methods tend to privilege a narrow group of learners and overlooking those who require different means of engagement and expression. Similarly, Pawlik, Rzeznicka-Krupa, Gierczyk, & Hornby (2023) emphasize that sometimes schools fail to provide an appropriate educational environment, considering students' interests, diverse needs, and abilities, which directly affects their learning process and academic success.

Consequently, while Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-based Learning (TBL) approaches have been widely studied, little research has examined how Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles might directly support fluency development in high school EFL settings, noticing that UDL principles (multiple means of representation, action and expression, and engagement) support instruction for those learners with diverse needs, skills, and backgrounds in the classrooms (CAST, 2024).

The present research intends to address this gap by examining the impact of applying UDL principles to foster speaking fluency in second-year bachillerato students. The central purpose is to evaluate how these principles can create more inclusive and effective learning environments for oral communication. Specifically, this research seeks to answer: how does the implementation of UDL principles affect students' speaking fluency? In what ways do UDL-based activities influence learners' motivation and self-confidence in oral communication? By examining these questions, the study contributes to the development of innovative strategies that align with both educational equity and effective language learning outcomes.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) has become increasingly relevant in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction because it offers a practical way to respond to learner variability and to design instruction that is accessible from the start. CAST (Center for Applied Special Technology), a nonprofit education research and development organization, originally developed UDL and publishes the UDL Guidelines to help teachers anticipate barriers and plan flexible learning pathways (CAST, 2024). UDL is organized around three principles: Engagement (the “why” of learning), Representation (the “what” of learning), and Action and Expression (the “how” of learning).

For the purpose of this study, these principles are used as a pedagogical lens to design inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered speaking lessons that promote oral participation and, ultimately, speaking fluency in second-year bachillerato EFL classrooms. This specific framing supports our core objective, demonstrating how applying UDL principles (the independent variable) can directly impact and transform student speaking fluency (the dependent variable).

The first UDL principle, which corresponds to Engagement (the “why” of learning). This focuses on increasing motivation, sustaining effort, and reducing affective barriers that limit participation (CAST, 2024). In speaking lessons, offering meaningful choices engagement can strengthen engagement (topics, roles, and partners), building a psychologically safe climate for risk-taking, and increasing relevance through authentic purposes for communication. Engagement supports the research aim because speaking fluency depends on practice frequency and persistence, learners need repeated opportunities to speak, even when they make mistakes. For this study, engagement-based strategies are especially relevant to the second specific objective, which examines how multimodal and differentiated speaking activities affect learners’ oral performance and engagement, because students’ willingness to speak is a key condition for observing fluency growth in the students of second year of bachillerato.

The second UDL principle is Representation (the “what” of learning). This emphasizes on providing multiple ways to access content and building understanding (CAST, 2024). In terms of speaking instruction, representation can be included using models of spoken language like teacher modeling, short dialogues, audio or video clips; with visual supports such as pictures, timelines, mind maps; and language scaffolds including sentence starters, word banks, and pronunciation cues. These supports reduce the demand on processing information so learners can focus on fluency including pacing, pausing, and message continuity rather than stopping frequently to search for words.

The third principle: Action and Expression (the “how” of learning) focuses on providing multiple ways for learners to act, communicate, and demonstrate their learning outcomes (CAST,

2024). In speaking development, this means offering scaffolded output options such as pair work before whole-class performance, role-plays with cue cards, recorded speaking, or guided dialogues, in addition to strategic supports like planning time or self-monitoring checklists, and opportunities to gradually increase complexity.

Diverse ways of expression can be truly supported through communicative teaching practices that promote realistic interaction, meaningful communication, and the use of language in realistic environments. Instead of being passive receptors, Communicative Language Teaching encourages students to participate actively through pair work, group work, role-plays, games, and other tasks that require them to exchange meaning and use the target language for authentic purposes. It also gives importance to learner-centered participation and to opportunities for students to express ideas in socially relevant contexts rather than focusing only on isolated structures (Azimova, 2019).

For this study, Representation and Action and Expression are expected to support the first specific objective (identifying which UDL principles enhance fluency through pre- and post-tests) because they directly shape the quality of input, scaffolding, and oral output conditions that influence fluency performance. Recently, studies highlight growing interest in teachers' and students' attitudes toward UDL and how those perceptions relate to inclusive practice in class. Han and Lei (2024) Ultimate stakeholder see UDL as a powerful tool for making instruction more flexible and responsive to diverse classroom needs.

Priyadharsini and Mary (2024) emphasize that UDL supports inclusive education by removing rigid instructional barriers and designing access proactively. These authors help explain why UDL is a relevant framework for diverse second-year bachillerato students in EFL classrooms. Learner differences in proficiency, attention, confidence, and participation can be anticipated through planned options. In other words, for the purpose of this study, UDL is interpreted as a structure that helps teachers move from "one-size-fits-all speaking tasks" to planned variability that increases equitable opportunities to participate in oral communication.

Research has also documented positive effects resulting from UDL implementation, particularly in teacher competencies and inclusive instructional design. Almeqdad et al. (2023) ran a systematic review and meta-analysis report an overall positive impact of UDL on learning outcomes across multiple studies, strengthening the claim that UDL can produce measurable benefits. Rusconi and Squillaci (2023) focus specifically on UDL training and show that professional development can improve teachers' competence to design flexible, learner-centered instruction.

Moreover, Espada-Chavarría et al. (2023) complement this evidence by describing UDL-aligned instructional strategies that enhance inclusion and participation; although their setting is higher education, their findings are useful here because they illustrate how UDL principles translate into concrete classroom practices. These studies are particularly relevant to the third specific objective of this research, which aims to assess teachers' perceptions and instructional practices when implementing UDL through a Likert-scale survey.

At the same time, the literature recognizes debates about the strength and quality of the evidence behind some UDL claims. Boysen (2024) reviews the research evidence behind CAST's UDL Guidelines and argues that more rigorous empirical studies are needed to strengthen their scientific foundation. In this study, that critique is interpreted as a constructive call for stronger, classroom-based evidence rather than a reason to dismiss UDL.

Therefore, this literature review takes the position that UDL remains a promising framework, but its classroom impact should be tested with clear outcomes and transparent methods. This argument directly supports the rationale for the present research, which seeks to contribute empirical evidence by measuring speaking fluency changes (pre- and post-tests), exploring learner engagement through interviews, and documenting teacher perceptions of UDL implementation.

In parallel, the development of speaking fluency in EFL classrooms continues to be a central goal in language pedagogy. In L2 fluency research, utterance fluency is often examined through three dimensions: speed, breakdown, and repair fluency (Peltonen et al., 2024). From this perspective, speaking fluency is not limited to speaking quickly, but also involves how learners manage pauses and repairs during oral production.

Clarification above is important for students from the second year of bachillerato, who often experience limited vocabulary access, fear of making mistakes, and frequent hesitations when speaking in front of peers. For the purpose of this study, fluency improvement is interpreted as more continuous and confident oral production, with fewer disruptive pauses and more effective repair, which is consistent with the research aim of promoting inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered oral communication practices.

Research also provides classroom techniques that can foster fluency through structured and drilled practice. Ghasemi and Mozaheb (2021) describe practical techniques such as rehearsed tasks, timed speaking, and the use of structured expressions, which can increase the use of automatic response and reduce hesitation. López, Becerra, and Ramírez-Ávila (2021) show that authentic oral production supports a more natural and intuitive oral production, an essential condition for fluency

development. These authors argue that fluency growth depends on both structured practice that builds automaticity and authentic communicative demands that require real time meaning making.

For the present research, UDL principles are expected to strengthen these conditions by ensuring that learners can access models and scaffolds (Representation), stay motivated to speak (Engagement), and express themselves through supported pathways that gradually increase challenge (Action and Expression).

Current research also highlights that speaking fluency is influenced by psychological and cognitive variables. Wang, Rezaei, and Izadpanah (2024) report that creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm significantly predict higher levels of speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners. This evidence is relevant to the present study because UDL's Engagement principle explicitly targets motivation, emotions, and persistence, which are conditions that can strengthen learners' willingness to participate orally.

For the purpose of this study, these findings are interpreted as support for designing speaking lessons that not only teach language forms but also reduce stress, increase autonomy, and build positive attitudes toward speaking, because these factors can indirectly contribute to fluency development by increasing practice and lowering avoidance.

In addition, integrating UDL principles into speaking assessment and instruction is emerging as an innovative approach. Solo, Lustyantje, and Murtadho (2025) develop a UDL-based rubric for assessing children's speaking skills in inclusive schools and show how clear criteria combined with flexible supports can make assessment more equitable. Their contribution is relevant because speaking assessment in school contexts often needs to balance institutional requirements with the reality of diverse learners. In this study, their work is interpreted as a useful reference for aligning assessment with UDL and a rubric can keep fluency criteria transparent while allowing accommodations such as planning time, visual prompts, or alternative formats like recorded speaking when appropriate, which helps avoid penalizing learners for barriers unrelated to the construct being assessed.

Overall, the literature suggests a growing intersection between UDL and EFL speaking fluency. UDL provides principles for designing flexible learning environments that can increase participation, reduce affective barriers, and support strategic communication, while speaking fluency research clarifies what fluency entails and which instructional conditions can strengthen it. Together, these sources support the rationale for investigating how implementing UDL principles can foster speaking fluency in second-year bachillerato EFL classrooms.

The reviewed evidence also aligns with the three specific objectives of this study by supporting the selection of UDL principles as an intervention framework, informing the design of multimodal and differentiated speaking activities, and highlighting the importance of examining teacher practices and perceptions when implementing inclusive instructional approaches. These approaches can give students opportunities to reflect not only on language itself, but also on their personal experiences and connections beyond the classroom.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

This study adopts a pedagogical intervention design to examine how implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles can improve speaking fluency in students from second-year bachillerato EFL classroom in Ecuador. The research's objective is to evaluate the effects of UDL-aligned, inclusive instruction on learners' oral fluency and participation while documenting students' and the teacher's perceptions of the intervention. Here, speaking fluency is not treated as a single metric. Instead, it is analyzed as a multi-faceted construct built on speech rate, reduced disruptive pauses/hesitations, message continuity, and intelligibility. To gather comparable oral samples, students complete a brief speaking tasks. For example, the description of a movie (1-2 minutes) before and after the intervention.

The intervention is implemented under regular school hours, preserving ecological validity and allows the researcher to observe fluency development in authentic classroom interaction. The participants consists of 22 second-year bachillerato EFL students; however, the sample for detailed measurement and analysis is 14 students selected from the class, while the intervention activities are carried out with the whole group. Throughout the process, implementation fidelity is monitored to confirm that the planned UDL supports and communicative tasks are consistently applied.

The intervention is informed by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and the Communicative Approach, which means that the lessons are designed to focus on meaning-oriented interaction and meaningful communication through pair/group work, role-plays, guided conversations, and information-gap activities. UDL is incorporated into the lessons through multiple means of engagement, representation, and action/expression.

Engagement is facilitated through choice (topics, roles, partners), clear procedures, and a supportive environment to minimize anxiety and maximize volition to speak. Representation is enhanced through multimodal input and scaffolding (visuals, models, cue cards, word banks, sentence stems) to promote access for all students. Action and expression are addressed by providing

opportunities for different forms of speaking and incorporating scaffolding strategies such as preparation time and gradual release to more spontaneous speaking.

Since communicative instruction demands real-time language management, the intervention explicitly includes learning strategies as practical tools to achieve the fluency goal. Metacognitive strategies direct learners to set a micro-goal and structure ideas, monitor their speaking output (self-prompting and restating), and reflect afterwards. Cognitive strategies automate skills through chunking and varying practice, while sociological strategies enhance fluency through collaborative speaking, peer assistance, and peer feedback.

Data is triangulated through a speaking pre/post test (rubric scores and indicators such as words per minute and pause patterns), a student Likert survey with open-ended answers, post-intervention student interviews, an observation/fidelity checklist, and a teacher Likert-scale survey. The implementation of UDL principles is measured through teacher practices (e.g., use of strategies aligned with UDL) and student responses (e.g., participation and engagement), in order to capture both the application and the immediate effects of the intervention. The teacher survey is revised to include items that reflect the metacognitive, cognitive, and sociological strategies employed in the intervention.

Instruments matched with the study variables and examined through expert judgment for content validity. Quantitative data were contrasted across pre/post measures, while qualitative data obtained from interviews and open-ended survey responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. This process involves coding the data, identifying recurring patterns, and organizing them into themes related to students' engagement, confidence, participation, and perceptions of UDL-based speaking activities. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to interpret participants' experiences in a systematic and meaningful way, complementing the quantitative results.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The triangulated findings provide consistent evidence of a positive change in students' speaking fluency following the four-week UDL-based intervention. From a quantitative perspective, oral performance improved substantially, as reflected in the increase of the mean score from 4.57 in shown in the pre-test resulting into 8.54 in the post-test. Likewise, the average number of words produced in speaking increased from 24.64 to 67.50, and words spoken per minute rose from 15.94 to 39.61, while the mean number of pauses dropped from 4.86 to 2.86. These numerical improvements were reinforced by the qualitative data results, since students repeatedly reported improvement in their oral production, greater confidence, and stronger motivation to participate.

Similarly, the teacher surveys and the observation checklists documented smoother speech, higher participation, and progressively stronger engagement throughout the intervention sessions. As a whole, these findings suggest that the improvement was both measurable through pre- and post-test comparison, and also perceptible in students' and teacher's outlook of the intervention.

Table 1

Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Fluency Results

Variable	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	Change
Score /10	4.57	8.54	+3.96
Total Score /20	9.14	17.07	+7.93
Words Produced	24.64	67.50	+42.86
WPM	15.94	39.61	+23.67
Pauses (2+ Sec)	4.86	2.86	-2.00
Fluency /5	1.86	3.93	+2.07
Coherence /5	2.14	4.29	+2.14
Pronunciation /5	2.57	4.07	+1.50
Content / Task Completion /5	2.57	4.79	+2.21

A more detailed reading of the triangulation matrix indicates that the observed progress cannot be attributed to a single instructional factor, but rather to the combined influence of several UDL-related supports and the three principles applied. This interpretation is reinforced by the teacher survey, which yielded high mean scores in Engagement (M = 4.67), Representation (M = 5.00), and Action and Expression (M = 4.50), suggesting that UDL-based supports were implemented consistently during the intervention.

In addition, the observation checklist showed that a positive classroom climate, task modeling, planning time/scaffolds, and movie-related vocabulary support were present in 100% of the sessions, while active participation and visual/auditory supports were observed in 87.5% of them. Furthermore, engagement levels increased from low or medium in the initial sessions to high in the final sessions, which suggests that students responded progressively more positively to the intervention.

The strongest convergence appeared in the categories of motivation and engagement, speaking improvement, choice and flexibility, and visual or multimodal support. Students consistently valued the opportunity to choose tasks or formats, as well as the use of images, videos, models, and vocabulary scaffolds, while the teacher responses and classroom observations confirmed that these

supports were implemented systematically during the intervention. The implementation of movies as central theme can also help explain these results, since it offered familiar, meaningful, and visually engaging content for adolescent learners. Movie-based speaking tasks created authentic opportunities to describe, express opinions, justify preferences, and make recommendations, all functions that naturally promote oral production. On top of that, discussing genres, audiences, favorite scenes, and movie elements enabled students to activate vocabulary in context and sustain oral responses more effectively than in decontextualized speaking tasks.

This evidence back up the pedagogical rationale presented in the introduction and theoretical framework, where engagement is associated with motivation and willingness to communicate, representation with access to comprehensible input and scaffolds, and action and expression with flexible speaking pathways and gradual oral production. Still, the evidence also revealed areas of partial rather than complete improvement. Although confidence increased and hesitation decreased, these gains were not equally strong for all learners. In addition, pronunciation and speaking in front of others remained challenging for a portion of the group, suggesting that the intervention enhanced oral fluency considerably but did not completely remove all barriers to oral performance.

Table 2

Triangulated findings by category

Category	Pre/Post Test	Student Survey	Student Interview	Teacher Survey	Observation Checklist	Overall Interpretation
Speaking Fluency Improvement	Higher score, WPM, fewer pauses	—	Reported improvement	Observed smoother speech	Greater continuity across sessions	Clear evidence of improvement
Confidence Gain	Higher fluency/coherence	Positive perception of support	More confidence Reported	Observed greater confidence	Participation increased over time	Confidence improved

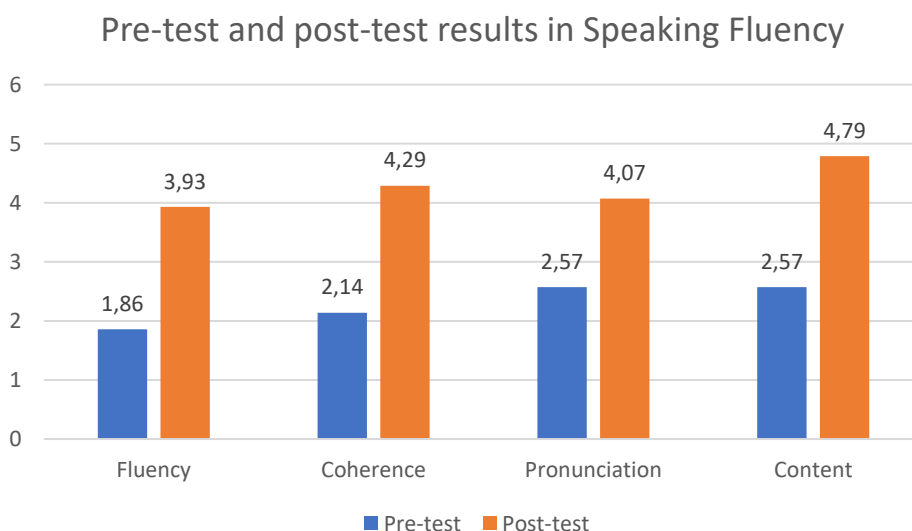
Motivation	—	High	Expressed	Reported	Engagement	Strong	
And		engagemen	strong	high	rose across	motivational	
Engagement		t mean	motivation	engagem	sessions	l effect	
				ent			
Visual	And	—	Highest	Valued visuals,	Rated	Observed	Key
Multimodal			mean in	models, videos	support	frequently	facilitating
Support			Representa		highly		factor
			tion				
Choice	And	—	Positive	Valued options	Confirme	Choices	Increased
Flexibility			student		d offering	observed in	comfort and
			perception		choices	most	participatio
						sessions	n
Vocabulary	Content	Vocabulary	Mentioned as	Used	Present in all	Essential	
Support	improved	support	support and	vocabular	sessions	scaffold	
		valued	difficulty	y			
				scaffolds			
Remaining	Pronuncia	—	Pronunciation/	Continue	Some	Improveme	
Difficulties	tion		public	d support	fluency	nt with	
	improved		speaking still	needed	issues	persistent	
	but		difficult		remained	barriers	
	remained						
	uneven						

In terms of contribution, the findings provide classroom-based empirical evidence that the application of UDL principles can be associated with meaningful gains in speaking fluency in an Ecuadorian Bachillerato EFL context. To be more specific, the results indicate that meaningful choice, multimodal representation, teacher modeling, vocabulary support, and flexible speaking formats were not only positive for students, but also guided them to perform stronger oral outcomes, including increased production, lower levels of hesitations, and better task performance. This contribution is particularly relevant since the study moves beyond a purely theoretical discussion of inclusive pedagogy and demonstrates how UDL can be operationalized into a concrete EFL intervention with observable effects on oral communication. In this sense, the findings also resonate with recent

research on Ecuadorian EFL speaking development, which highlights the importance of supportive classroom environments, methodological flexibility, and opportunities for authentic speaking practice in strengthening oral proficiency.

Figure 1

Pre-test and post-test comparison



From a critical standpoint, these findings are closely aligned with the objective stated in the introduction, namely, to examine the impact of UDL principles on the speaking fluency of second-year Bachillerato students in Ecuador. The convergence between quantitative and qualitative evidence strengthens the interpretation that the intervention contributed positively to both oral performance and classroom participation. At the same time, the results presented in this study should be interpreted with caution, since it was conducted with a single group in a specific instructional context. In addition, difficulties persisted in pronunciation, vocabulary management, and speaking in public. Therefore, while these findings support the pedagogical value of UDL in EFL speaking instruction, they also point to the need for further research with larger samples, comparative designs, and longer intervention periods in order to determine more precisely how specific UDL supports influence distinct dimensions of speaking fluency over time.

CONCLUSIONS

The impact of applying Universal Design for Learning principles on the development of speaking fluency in second-year bachillerato students in Ecuador becomes evident on the triangulation of the pre-test and post-test, the student survey, the post-intervention interviews, the teacher survey, and the observation checklist, which findings suggest that the intervention had a positive effect on students' oral performance. In general, the students were able to speak with greater continuity, participate more actively, and show more confidence during speaking tasks. They also produced fewer hesitations and more complete responses after the intervention.

In this sense, the results support the view that speaking fluency should be understood as a multidimensional construct that involves not only speed, but also continuity, pausing, and repair during oral production as they reinforce the importance of repeated practice, guided speaking, and authentic opportunities for oral production in EFL classrooms.

Another relevant point is that the study offers classroom-based evidence of how UDL can support speaking fluency in a Bachillerato EFL context shown by meaningful choice, multimodal support, teacher modeling, vocabulary scaffolding, and flexible speaking formats that create better conditions for oral participation. This is important because it moves the discussion of UDL beyond theory and shows its value in real classroom practice. In that sense, the findings are in line with previous studies that describe UDL as a flexible and inclusive framework that can respond to learner variability and reduce barriers to participation.

From a practical perspective, the study suggests that speaking fluency can be strengthened when oral instruction is planned through the three UDL principles: engagement, representation, and action and expression. In particular, this intervention confirmed the value of working with familiar and meaningful topics, giving students options for participation, using visual and auditory supports, modeling tasks clearly, and allowing sufficient time to plan before speaking. The topic of movies was especially useful due to offering familiar, motivating, and visual engagement for bachillerato students. Through this topic, students were able to describe events, draw opinions, justify preferences, and make recommendations more naturally. At the same time, these conclusions are relevant in the Ecuadorian context, where supportive classroom environments, methodological flexibility, and authentic speaking opportunities have been identified as important for the development of oral skills.

Even so, the findings should be interpreted with caution. The study was conducted with a single group in a specific classroom context, and some difficulties remained in pronunciation, vocabulary management, and speaking in front of others. For that reason, future studies could work

with larger samples, comparative or quasi-experimental designs, and longer intervention periods in order to examine more clearly how specific UDL supports influence different dimensions of speaking fluency over time. It would also be useful to explore the role of UDL in other language skills and at other educational levels. In this way, the present study responds to the need for more classroom-based and context-sensitive evidence on the effects of UDL, while also recognizing, as Boysen (2024) argues, that the framework still needs stronger empirical development in educational research.

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CONFLICTO DE INTERÉS:

Los autores declaran que no existen conflicto de interés posibles

FINANCIAMIENTO

No existió asistencia de financiamiento de parte de pares externos al presente artículo.

NOTA:

El artículo no es producto de una publicación anterior.