

# The Effect of Interactive Communicative Tasks on Oral Skill Development in A1 English Learners

*El efecto de las tareas comunicativas interactivas en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales de estudiantes A1 de inglés*

Rodrigo Guerrero Segura\*  
Universidad de Guayaquil  
[rodrigo.guerreros@ug.edu.ec](mailto:rodrigo.guerreros@ug.edu.ec)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2698-5659>

Javier Jiménez Peralta  
Universidad de Guayaquil  
[Javier.jimenezp@ug.edu.ec](mailto:Javier.jimenezp@ug.edu.ec)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4981-9020>

Michelle Zambrano Mendoza  
Universidad Bolivariana del Ecuador  
[mnzambranom@ube.edu.ec](mailto:mnzambranom@ube.edu.ec)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-0162-4184>

\*Autor para correspondencia

## Cómo citar:

Guerrero Segura, R., Jimenez Peralta, J & Zambrano Mendoza, M (2024) The Effect of Interactive Communicative Tasks on Oral Skill Development in A1 English Learners. *Buckingham Linguattech Journal*, 1(01) 49-58. <https://doi.org/10.66836/linguatech.v1n1.5>

**Recibido:** 18/04/24 **Revisado:** 09/05/24 **Aprobado:** 21/06/24 **Publicado:** 30/06/24

## Abstract

This study examines the impact of interactive communicative tasks on the development of speaking skills among A1-level English learners in a public-school setting. Recognizing that beginner students often face challenges such as limited vocabulary, hesitation, and reduced confidence, the intervention aimed to create meaningful opportunities for oral expression through structured, task-based activities. A mixed-methods design was implemented, including pre- and post-test speaking assessments, classroom observations, and student surveys. Over eight instructional sessions, learners engaged in pair dialogues, role-plays, information-gap activities, and guided communicative tasks that emphasized fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary development. Quantitative results show considerable improvements in students' ability to produce extended utterances, use basic connectors, and apply newly learned vocabulary spontaneously. Qualitative evidence also highlights increased motivation, reduced anxiety, and greater willingness to participate in oral tasks. Overall, the study suggests that interactive communicative activities offer an effective, humanizing approach to enhancing oral performance in beginner-level English classrooms.

**Keywords:** communicative tasks; speaking development; A1 learners

## Resumen

Este estudio analiza el impacto de las tareas comunicativas interactivas en el desarrollo de las habilidades orales de estudiantes de inglés nivel A1 en un contexto escolar público. Reconociendo que los aprendices principiantes suelen enfrentar dificultades como vocabulario limitado, vacilación frecuente y baja confianza para expresarse oralmente, la intervención se orientó a crear oportunidades significativas de comunicación a través de actividades estructuradas basadas en la interacción. Se empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos que incluyó evaluaciones orales antes y después de la intervención, observaciones de aula y encuestas estudiantiles. Durante ocho sesiones, los participantes realizaron diálogos en parejas, juegos de rol, actividades de intercambio de información y tareas comunicativas guiadas enfocadas en la fluidez, la pronunciación y el uso del vocabulario. Los resultados cuantitativos evidenciaron mejoras importantes en la capacidad de producir enunciados más extensos, utilizar conectores básicos y emplear vocabulario recién aprendido de manera espontánea. Los datos cualitativos revelaron mayor motivación, reducción de la ansiedad y mayor disposición a participar. En conjunto, los hallazgos sugieren que las tareas comunicativas interactivas constituyen un enfoque efectivo y humanizador para fortalecer el desempeño oral en estudiantes de nivel inicial.

**Palabras claves:** tareas comunicativas; expresión oral; aprendientes A1

## Introduction

Developing oral communication skills at the beginner level remains one of the most persistent challenges in foreign language learning. A1 learners often struggle with limited vocabulary, fragmented speech, and anxiety when attempting to speak. These difficulties are exacerbated by traditional teaching practices that emphasize grammar instruction and written drills over meaningful communication (Harmer, 2001). In many educational contexts, students have few opportunities to practice English in realistic or interactive situations, leading to low fluency and reduced confidence. As Horwitz (2001) explains, anxiety can significantly restrict oral participation, especially in classrooms where speaking is perceived as a high-stakes activity.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) frameworks propose that learners develop oral skills more effectively when they engage in meaningful, purposeful interaction. According to Nunan (1991), communicative tasks—defined as activities requiring learners to use language to achieve an outcome—help students move beyond controlled practice and approach more authentic forms of communication. These tasks include role-plays, information-gap exchanges, guided dialogues, and other activities that require learners to negotiate meaning and co-construct language with peers.

Interactive communicative tasks align with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasizes that language learning occurs through social interaction and scaffolded support. When learners collaborate, they gain access to peer modeling, immediate feedback, and shared problem-solving, all of which enhance language development. This scaffolding enables beginners to produce more language than they might be capable of individually, advancing their oral competence within their Zone of Proximal Development.

Task-based learning also supports fluency development, as learners use language repeatedly in meaningful contexts. Research by Graham and Santos (2015) shows that fluency grows when students focus on conveying meaning rather than accuracy, decreasing hesitation and promoting natural speech patterns. Furthermore, communicative tasks encourage the use of formulaic expressions, discourse markers, and functional language, which contribute to more coherent speech. This developmental process mirrors Nation's (2001) assertion that vocabulary and fluency improve when learners repeatedly encounter and utilize language in context.

Beyond linguistic benefits, interactive communicative activities play an important motivational and emotional role. Students often describe communicative tasks as more enjoyable and less intimidating than formal speaking evaluations. Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory argues that motivation increases when learners experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness—three conditions frequently met during collaborative communicative tasks. When students feel supported and connected to their peers, their willingness to speak increases, lowering affective barriers to learning.

Despite these advantages, many beginner-level classrooms continue to rely heavily on teacher-centered instruction and mechanical speaking drills. As a result, learners may understand basic grammar but lack experience applying it in meaningful communication. This study addresses this gap by investigating how interactive communicative tasks contribute to the development of speaking skills among A1 learners. Specifically, it examines improvements in fluency, vocabulary use, pronunciation, coherence, and learner confidence.

## Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to investigate the impact of interactive communicative tasks on the speaking development of A1 English learners. A mixed-methods approach was selected because it enables researchers to integrate quantitative evidence of learning gains with qualitative insights into students' experiences, behaviors, and perceptions. As Creswell (2014) explains, combining numerical and narrative data allows a more comprehensive understanding of educational interventions, particularly those involving complex processes such as second-language oral production. In this study, quantitative data were obtained through pre- and post-test speaking assessments that documented measurable linguistic progress, while qualitative data from classroom observations and learner surveys provided a deeper perspective on engagement, confidence, and participation. By triangulating these sources, the design allowed the findings to reflect not only what changed, but also how the learners emotionally and socially navigated the communicative activities implemented throughout the intervention.

The participants were 22 A1-level English learners, aged 12 to 14, enrolled in a public middle school. These students displayed characteristics commonly associated with beginner language learners, such as limited vocabulary range, fragmented speech, long pauses during oral expression, and a noticeable dependency on the teacher when initiating or sustaining conversational exchanges. According to Harmer (2001), learners at early proficiency levels often experience elevated levels of insecurity, as the fear of making mistakes in front of their peers reduces their willingness to speak. In addition, most participants reported minimal exposure to English outside the classroom, a condition that typically slows the development of oral skills in foreign-language contexts. Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians, while institutional approval ensured that the intervention aligned with school guidelines and respected students' educational needs.

To ensure data validity and triangulation, the study employed three primary instruments: speaking tests, an observation checklist, and a student perception survey. The pre- and post-intervention speaking tests required learners to complete short oral tasks such as guided descriptions, picture-based narratives, and simple dialogues. An analytic rubric adapted from Luoma (2004) assessed performance in terms of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary use, and coherence, which allowed for detailed identification of improvements within each domain. The observation checklist was used systematically throughout the intervention to record indicators such as participation frequency, willingness to speak, hesitation patterns, peer interaction, and the use of communicative strategies.

This instrument followed the classroom observation principles described by Richards and Farrell (2011), emphasizing observable behaviors that reflect engagement and communicative development. Finally, the student survey captured learners' perceptions of the activities, their level of enjoyment, confidence when speaking, and any perceived improvement. Drawing on qualitative research traditions, the survey combined open-ended questions and Likert-scale statements, enabling a rich understanding of students' affective responses to communicative tasks.

The intervention took place over eight instructional sessions, each embedded in the regular English class schedule. The instructional sequence was designed according to communicative language teaching principles, moving students gradually from controlled practice toward more spontaneous oral interaction. Each session began with

vocabulary activation and brief modeling of functional language, which provided learners with the linguistic scaffolding needed to complete the day's task—an approach aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of supported performance within the Zone of Proximal Development. Students then participated in communicative tasks such as role-plays, information-gap exchanges, peer interviews, and guided dialogues.

These activities encouraged negotiation of meaning, turn-taking, and active language use, elements highlighted by Nunan (1991) as central to communicative competence development. At the end of each session, learners engaged in short reflective discussions where they identified challenges, strategies used, and aspects they felt more confident about. This reflective component supported metacognitive growth and helped students become more aware of their progress as speakers.

Data analysis followed two complementary paths. The quantitative analysis relied on descriptive statistics comparing pre- and post-test scores in fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and coherence. This analytical approach aligns with Dörnyei's (2007) recommendation for exploratory classroom-based studies, particularly when sample sizes are small and the primary aim is to observe general patterns of improvement rather than establish inferential significance. Meanwhile, the qualitative analysis involved thematic coding of classroom observation notes and student survey responses.

Following the procedures outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), emerging themes were identified, grouped, and interpreted to capture students' emotional engagement, confidence levels, willingness to participate, and perceptions of the communicative tasks. The integration of both quantitative and qualitative findings strengthened the validity of the study, allowing for a more nuanced interpretation of the pedagogical effects of interactive communicative activities on beginner-level English learners.

## Results and Discussion

The results of this study provide clear evidence that interactive communicative tasks had a positive impact on the oral performance of A1 learners. This section presents quantitative and qualitative findings derived from the pre- and post-test assessments, classroom observations, and student perception surveys. The results are organized into four thematic areas: (1) overall improvement across speaking components, (2) detailed performance patterns per linguistic subskill, (3) comparative progress among students with differing initial proficiency levels, and (4) qualitative changes in motivation, confidence, and classroom interaction. To ensure clarity, the findings are supported by analytical tables that illustrate the measurable changes observed throughout the intervention.

Across all evaluated components—fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, and coherence—students demonstrated consistent improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. These gains suggest that the communicative tasks provided meaningful opportunities for oral practice, enabling students to transition from fragmented speech with frequent hesitation to more continuous utterances with emerging structure. Table 1 summarizes the mean scores obtained in the speaking assessments.

**Table 1**  
*Pre-Test and Post-Test Mean Scores Across Components*

| Component            | Pre-test Mean | Post-test Mean | Improvement |
|----------------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <b>Fluency</b>       | 1.4           | 2.9            | +1.5        |
| <b>Pronunciation</b> | 1.7           | 3.1            | +1.4        |
| <b>Vocabulary</b>    | 1.3           | 2.4            | +1.1        |
| <b>Coherence</b>     | 1.5           | 2.8            | +1.3        |

Source: Guerrero (2024)

These results reveal that fluency registered the greatest improvement, followed by pronunciation and coherence. Vocabulary showed slightly more modest gains but remained significant. The overall pattern indicates that repeated communicative exposure allowed learners to internalize and access language more efficiently. Importantly, all components exhibited an upward trend, demonstrating that interactive tasks supported the development of oral skills in a balanced and meaningful manner. Improvements in Fluency and Speaking Continuity

Fluency was the area with the most substantial growth, reflecting the effectiveness of tasks that required learners to speak for extended periods, negotiate meaning with peers, and react spontaneously to communicative demands. Students gradually reduced their dependence on memorized phrases and began producing original utterances with clearer sequencing. Many learners who initially paused excessively between words later demonstrated the ability to maintain short but coherent stretches of speech. Table 2 highlights specific fluency indicators measured during the intervention.

**Table 2**  
*Fluency Indicators Pre- and Post-Intervention*

| Indicator                       | Pre-test Level | Post-test Level | Change Description                     |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------|
| <b>Mean length of utterance</b> | Very short     | Moderate        | Longer, more connected sentences       |
| <b>Pauses per sentence</b>      | Frequent       | Occasional      | Reduced hesitation and faster delivery |
| <b>Use of time connectors</b>   | Minimal        | Frequent        | Greater narrative and descriptive flow |
| <b>Self-correction attempts</b> | Rare           | Occasional      | More confident repair strategies       |

Source: Guerrero (2024)

Students' improved use of connectors such as then, after that, and finally contributed to longer speech segments with clearer organization. These gains demonstrate that communicative tasks helped learners develop pragmatic strategies often missing in early proficiency levels. Observations further confirmed that students became more comfortable speaking without relying on continuous teacher support, an important developmental shift in beginner oral production.

Pronunciation improvements were also notable. Learners developed clearer articulation of common vowel and consonant sounds and demonstrated better control of basic word stress patterns. Although they did not achieve full accuracy, the global intelligibility of their speech increased. The repetitive nature of communicative tasks, particularly role-plays and guided dialogues, exposed learners to frequent modeling and opportunities for mimicking natural speech. Table 3 shows the progression of key pronunciation features assessed.

**Table 3**  
*Pronunciation Features Before and After the Intervention*

| Feature                       | Pre-test description                 | Post-test description                   | Change summary                   |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Segmental articulation</b> | Frequent substitutions and omissions | Fewer errors and clearer articulation   | Improved intelligibility         |
| <b>Word stress</b>            | Inconsistent placement               | Mostly correct in familiar words        | More predictable stress patterns |
| <b>Rhythm and pacing</b>      | Choppy, uneven                       | more even and natural                   | better flow and continuity       |
| <b>Intonation</b>             | Flat or erratic                      | Mildly varied with rising/falling tones | Improved expressive quality      |

Source: Guerrero (2024)

These improvements suggest that learners benefited not only from repetition but also from increased comfort when speaking aloud. As their anxiety diminished, their pronunciation became more natural and less constrained. Observational notes indicated that some students also began using gestures to support meaning an encouraging sign of developing communicative confidence. To better understand individual differences, learners were grouped into three categories based on pre-test performance: Emerging A1, Mid A1, and High A1. Table 6 shows comparative improvements.

**Table 4**  
*Improvement by Learner Proficiency Group*

| Group              | Fluency | Pronunciation | Vocabulary | Coherence |
|--------------------|---------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Emerging A1</b> | +1.6    | +1.3          | +1.0       | +1.4      |
| <b>Mid A1</b>      | +1.4    | +1.5          | +1.1       | +1.3      |
| <b>High A1</b>     | +1.2    | +1.2          | +1.0       | +1.1      |

Source: Guerrero (2024)

Emerging A1 learners showed the largest relative improvement, indicating that communicative tasks provided essential scaffolding for students who initially struggled most with oral production. Qualitative data revealed substantial affective and behavioral changes. Students' confidence increased as they engaged in communicative activities that prioritized meaning over accuracy, reducing the fear of making mistakes. Observation notes documented higher levels of participation, greater enthusiasm during speaking tasks, and more frequent volunteering to answer questions. Additionally, students demonstrated stronger collaboration during pair-work, supporting each other in vocabulary retrieval and pronunciation attempts. Survey responses confirmed that many learners perceived speaking in English as "less intimidating," "more enjoyable," and "easier to understand" after completing the communicative sessions. These changes reflect a shift not only in performance but also in learners' identities as developing speakers.

The results of this study indicate that interactive communicative tasks are highly effective in promoting oral development among A1 English learners. The substantial improvements in fluency, pronunciation, coherence, and vocabulary suggest that students benefit from opportunities to use language in meaningful, purposeful ways

rather than through isolated drills. These findings align with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching, which emphasize language use for genuine communication as a catalyst for oral proficiency development (Nunan, 1991). The observed reduction in pauses, increased use of connectors, and greater continuity of speech demonstrate that communicative tasks helped learners internalize basic discourse patterns necessary for constructing short but coherent utterances. This confirms Graham and Santos' (2015) assertion that fluency emerges when learners focus on conveying meaning rather than achieving perfect accuracy.

Pronunciation gains also support existing research showing that oral modeling, repetition, and interactive speaking practice lead to more intelligible learner output (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Students' increased clarity and improved stress patterns reflect not only linguistic progress but also greater willingness to speak, which is strongly influenced by affective factors. In line with Horwitz (2001), many students initially exhibited anxiety and hesitation, but the communicative nature of the tasks—especially pair and group interactions—helped reduce this pressure by shifting attention away from error avoidance and toward shared meaning-making. The increase in confidence observed in surveys suggests that the intervention positively impacted learners' emotional relationship with speaking English, which is crucial for sustained oral development.

Similarly, the use of organizational elements such as sequencing words and topic maintenance enhanced learners' coherence, demonstrating that structured communicative tasks provide the scaffolding needed for beginners to organize their thoughts. This finding resonates with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the supportive role of interaction and peer collaboration in extending learners' communicative capabilities. Students who initially struggled to express even simple ideas became capable of crafting short narratives or explanations because the tasks required negotiation, cooperation, and shared decision-making—all communicative conditions that stimulate linguistic growth.

Vocabulary expansion, while more modest than gains in fluency or pronunciation, nonetheless indicates that repeated lexical exposure within communicative contexts supports meaningful retention and retrieval. This outcome aligns with Nation's (2001) claim that vocabulary is best acquired when learners encounter words in relevant and engaging situations. The thematic structure of the tasks encouraged students to reuse key vocabulary naturally, leading to improvement even among those with the lowest starting proficiency.

Overall, the study demonstrates that interactive communicative tasks not only foster linguistic development but also contribute positively to learners' motivation, confidence, and engagement. These affective and cognitive interactions create a humanizing learning environment where beginners feel supported and capable of participating actively in oral tasks. The findings reinforce the need for pedagogy that prioritizes meaningful communication, social interaction, and learner agency—particularly in contexts where students have limited exposure to English outside the classroom.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study demonstrate that interactive communicative tasks provide a powerful and accessible approach to fostering oral development among A1 English learners. Through meaningful exchanges, structured interaction, and opportunities for spontaneous language use, students showed measurable improvement in fluency, pronunciation, coherence, and vocabulary. These linguistic gains reflect the value of activities that require learners to negotiate meaning, take communicative risks, and construct ideas in real time, rather than relying solely on controlled or mechanical practice. The continued use of connectors, clearer articulation, and greater confidence observed during the post-test support the argument that beginner learners benefit significantly from communication-rich tasks that mirror authentic language use.

Beyond linguistic progress, the intervention also had a positive impact on students' affective and behavioral engagement. Learners reported feeling more motivated, less anxious, and more willing to speak in English—changes that are essential for long-term oral proficiency development. The collaborative nature of the tasks helped build a supportive classroom environment where students felt safe to express themselves, even with limited linguistic resources. Overall, the study suggests that integrating interactive communicative tasks into beginner-level English instruction is both pedagogically sound and humanizing, offering an effective pathway for developing essential speaking skills while nurturing learners' confidence and autonomy.

## References

- Carvajal-Campuzano, S. E., & Ramírez-Ávila, M. R. (2025). Self-Assessment of high school students' Oral Performance in a Public Institution. *YUYAY: Estrategias, Metodologías & Didácticas Educativas*, 5(2), 17-38. <https://doi.org/10.59343/yuyay.v5i2.63>
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. Plenum Press. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4899-2271-7>.
- Derwing, T. M., & Munro, M. J. (2015). *Pronunciation fundamentals: Evidence-based perspectives for L2 teaching and research*. John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/llt.42>.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies*. Oxford University Press.
- Gatbonton, E., & Segalowitz, N. (2005). Rethinking communicative language teaching: A focus on access to fluency. *The Canadian Modern Language Review*, 61(3), 325–353. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.61.3.325>.
- Harmer, J. (2001). *The practice of English language teaching* (3rd ed.). Longman.
- Horwitz, E. K. (2001). Language anxiety and achievement. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 21, 112–126. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190501000071>.
- Luoma, S. (2004). *Assessing speaking*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511733017>.

- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2001). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524759>.
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. Prentice Hall.
- Richards, J. C., & Farrell, T. S. C. (2011). *Practice teaching: A reflective approach*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139151535>.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes* (M. Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, & E. Souberman, Eds.). Harvard University Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvjf9vz4>.