

Communicative language teaching through role playing activities to develop English speaking skills

Enseñanza del lenguaje comunicativo a través de juego de rol para desarrollar el habla inglesa

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Cómo citar:

Perez Novo, Eduardo. (2024). Communicative language teaching through role playing activities to develop english speaking skills. (2024). *Buckingham Linguattech Journal*, 1(1), 13-24.
<https://doi.org/10.66836/linguatech.v1n1.2>

Recibido: 15/04/24 **Revisado:** 05/05/24 **Aprobado:** 20/06/24 **Publicado:** 30/06/24

Abstract

This research, which focuses on enhancing the motivation to speak in B1 level students of English as a foreign language, has significant practical implications. The implementation of the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) communicative approach is a key aspect of this study. B1 level students often face challenges in oral communication due to limited knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. The research, conducted at Buckingham English Center, Guayaquil- Ecuador, with 61 b1 level students between 18 and 24 years old, utilizes a mixed methods approach for a comprehensive assessment of the impact of learning on motivation to speak. The research results, obtained through teacher interviews and student surveys, reveal that CLT activities positively impact motivation to speak. The data collected through surveys indicated an increase in motivation and a preference for learning among students. In conclusion, the research successfully achieved its objectives, implementing various techniques that resulted in significantly positive changes as evidenced in the statistical results. The findings emphasize the effectiveness of the methods in improving language motivation, addressing language anxiety and adapting to individual learning preferences, offering valuable and actionable insights for language educators and professionals.

Keywords: teaching methods; clt approach; oral skills; communicative activities; oral production

Resumen (es)

Esta investigación se centra en mejorar la motivación para hablar en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel B1 mediante la implementación del enfoque comunicativo CLT (Enseñanza Comunicativa de Lenguas). Los estudiantes de nivel B1 a menudo enfrentan desafíos en la comunicación oral debido al conocimiento limitado de vocabulario y gramática. El aprendizaje implica movimiento físico y actividades prácticas; se ha demostrado que es eficaz en la enseñanza de idiomas al adaptarse a diversos estilos de aprendizaje y mejorar la memoria y la comprensión. La investigación se llevará a cabo en Buckingham English Center, Guayaquil, Ecuador, con 61 estudiantes de nivel B1 entre 18 y 24 años. El enfoque de métodos mixtos permite una evaluación integral del impacto del aprendizaje en la motivación para hablar. Los resultados de la investigación, obtenidos a través de entrevistas a docentes y encuestas a estudiantes, revelan que las actividades CLT impactan positivamente en la motivación para hablar. Los datos recopilados a través de encuestas indicaron un aumento en la motivación y una preferencia por el aprendizaje entre los estudiantes. En conclusión, alcanzados con éxito sus objetivos, la investigación implementó varias técnicas, resultando en cambios significativamente positivos como se evidencia en los resultados estadísticos. Los hallazgos enfatizan la efectividad de los métodos para mejorar la motivación lingüística, abordar la ansiedad lingüística y adaptarse a las preferencias de aprendizaje individuales, ofreciendo información valiosa para los educadores y profesionales del lenguaje.

Palabras claves: métodos de enseñanza; enfoque clt; habilidad oral; actividades comunicativas; producción oral

Introduction

In the ever-changing field of education, speaking and learning are fundamental components of complete student development. When effectively combined, these aspects inspire students to connect with topics more profoundly. This method promotes a well-rounded learning experience that accommodates diverse learning styles while also improving speaking skills. This introduction explores a series of informing studies, starting with Barcos & Guato and continuing with Mostafa Ahmed Abd El Kader.

A study developed by (Barcos & Guato, 2017), named "Influence of speaking activities in Oral Motivation Performance," aimed to improve communicative skills by incorporating various learning styles into the curriculum activities found through data collected with classroom observations based on the Communicative Language Teaching methodology and the Multiple Intelligences theory that the integration of speaking activities and catering to diverse learning preferences positively influences students' success in acquiring new knowledge and strengthening their communicative abilities.

The study "Influence of Speaking Activity to Develop the Oral Skill of EFL" by Santana (2019) targeted the effectiveness of short speech learning as a teaching method and examined it compared to traditional approaches. The research highlighted the importance of nonverbal communication in enhancing communicative and oral skills and collected data through classroom observations and student input. The findings indicated that integrating communicative learning enhances students' comprehension and communicative abilities, offering a valuable teaching alternative.

The research conducted by Espinoza (2015) addressed deficiencies in linguistic competencies related to English language skills. Found through data collected involved field with observation surveys and interviews. Additionally, the findings gave valuable insights into the benefits of adopting various speaking techniques and exercises, aided by a digital manual with visual stories, to facilitate skill development, turning students into proficient speakers.

Numerous studies have shown that teaching speaking, especially to B1-level students, presents several difficulties. The restricted vocabulary and grammatical patterns characteristic of students at this level present a major challenge. According to Al-Jamal & Al-Jamal (2013), many EFL students struggle with speech competency because traditional textbook material does not account for the communicative demands of the actual world. This can demotivate and alienate pupils. Many students do not get enough chances to practice speaking in real-life situations. This lack of practice makes it hard for them to feel comfortable speaking in important settings. Also, because classes are often large and there is limited time, each student has less opportunity to speak.

Finally, significant obstacles to the development of speaking include fear and lack of confidence. According to Barcos & Guato (2017), students' high anxiety levels—which are frequently based on a fear of making mistakes or facing criticism from peers—make it difficult for them to communicate orally. This anxiety may become more intense in conventional classroom settings, where accuracy is prioritized above fluency. These kinds of settings discourage taking chances and trying new things, two things that are crucial for language development. Studies that use communicative teaching methods have shown that encouraging a more engaged and supportive learning environment can help students overcome these challenges and become more motivated and self-assured communicators.

This research paper examines how communicative learning strategies, particularly role-playing, might increase B1-level English language learners' speaking motivation. This method incorporates movement and interaction into the learning process in an attempt to overcome the difficulties students encounter when speaking to others. This study's research domain is the employment of communicative strategies to help B1-level students in a private academy become more engaged, fluent, and confident speakers of English.

The general objective of this project is to explore the impact of incorporating physical movement and hands-on activities during language learning sessions on students' speaking motivation to identify the impact of communicative activities to benefit speaking abilities in university students. By examining the use of communicative techniques such as role plays, interactive games, and group discussions, the research seeks to assess the effectiveness of these methods in enhancing students' confidence, fluency, and overall engagement in verbal communication.

Three specific objectives have been defined in this research to reach the general objective, and they are:

1. To explore the impact of integrating communicative techniques to boost motivation when speaking as a B1 learner at Buckingham English Center.
2. To evaluate and identify students' learning styles through the application of a survey.
3. Identify the Teacher's lesson plan methodological strategies to boost motivation to develop speaking environments and provide amendments when necessary.

The independent variable in this study is the role-playing technique, a dynamic and interactive teaching strategy that improves English language learners' motivation and competency when speaking the language. Through role-playing, students can practice language skills in a more meaningful and authentic environment by adopting characters or personas and participating in simulated real-life scenarios. This method encourages students to apply their knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in a useful, communicative way by encouraging active involvement, creativity, and critical thinking.

Role-playing promotes a more laid-back and encouraging learning atmosphere while also lowering the anxiety frequently associated with speaking a second language. The dependent variable in this study is B1 Speaking motivation. As per the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), B1 speaking motivation pertains to individuals at a basic language proficiency level. These individuals can engage in communication within everyday contexts using commonly used expressions and basic vocabulary. The CEFR serves as the system that outlines and clarifies various levels of both oral and written language expression and comprehension applicable to languages like English.

The research focuses on enhancing speaking motivation in B1 level English Language Learners (ELL) through role-playing learning techniques at Buckingham English Center, offering valuable practical contributions, holding significant importance, and addressing a pertinent social need. This research aims to provide actionable insights to educators, advance pedagogical understanding, and fulfill the demand for improved language skills. By investigating the impact of role-playing learning on oral fluency, this research bridges an essential gap in language education. It guides instructors in designing effective and engaging strategies tailored to the students' needs, promoting a

more dynamic and interactive language learning environment to enhance language proficiency and foster more confident communication.

This research lies in its potential to optimize language teaching methodologies. By exploring the effectiveness of role-playing learning techniques, the investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of innovative and learner-centered language instruction to potentially revolutionize language education by enhancing social integration, cross-cultural communication, and access to diverse opportunities benefiting both educators and learners to develop confidence and proficiency.

Methods

The selected research approach for the study is a Mixed-Methods Research Approach, as Battist & Torre (2023) suggested. This approach involves the simultaneous or sequential utilization of quantitative and qualitative research methods to understand the research topic thoroughly.

In this study, a Quasi-experimental design will be employed, combining quantitative data with qualitative data to explore the impact and effectiveness of communicative learning techniques on the speaking motivation of B1-level ELL students. The significance of the mixed-methods research approach for this study is multifaceted. Firstly, it enables the assessment of the impact of role-playing learning techniques on speaking motivation using diverse data sources. Quantitative methods objectively measure improvements in speaking motivation, while qualitative data offer insights into students' experiences, challenges, and perceptions.

Moreover, the combination of quantitative and qualitative data serves to validate findings. If quantitative data indicates an improvement in speaking motivation and qualitative data confirms positive student experiences, it strengthens the evidence supporting the effectiveness of learning techniques. Qualitative data plays a vital role in providing rich, in-depth insights into the "why" and "how" behind the effectiveness of role-playing learning.

Consolidating qualitative and quantitative research methods results in a holistic and comprehensive research process. This comprehensive approach enables an in-depth exploration of the student experience (qualitative) while rigorously assessing the overall effectiveness (quantitative) of communicative learning techniques in enhancing the speaking motivation of B1 Level ELL students. The mixed-method approach contributes to a well-rounded, exhaustive study that can inform tailored instructional strategies. Convergent parallel designs involve collecting quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, combining the data, and using the results to understand the research (Sahin et al., 2019).

The first instrument to apply was the student survey; it has 10 questions, rated from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The goal is to enhance the students' language learning experience by evaluating and implementing innovative teaching methodologies and resources tailored specifically to the needs of B1 learners.

The purpose of these questions is to gather the attitudes and preferences of the B1 English students in relation to their level of comfort, motivation, and belief in the usefulness of practical and physical activities in enhancing their speaking abilities, self-assurance, and overall language learning experience. With an emphasis on improving their English language learning through interesting, interactive ways, they also ask about

their past experiences with enjoyable physical activities in English classes and their desire for such activities in the future.

The second instrument is the interview for the teacher; it has 9 questions open questions. The purpose of this Teacher Interview is to explore the candidate's understanding of speaking motivation in the context of B1 level language learning, their strategies to minimize L1 interference, identify effective methods for enhancing speaking motivation, address student speaking anxiety, and assess their comprehension of learners and how they integrate communicative learning into their teaching approach.

The research is conducted at Buckingham English Center, a private institution in Guayaquil - Ecuador. A specific course was taken on career software development, It has 510 students divided in two groups, in the morning and the afternoon. However, the research will be focused on the morning session of the fifth semester that has a proficiency B1 English level. It is particularly important to remember that all participant identities in this study will remain private. To further ensure a fair and impartial selection process, the cluster of students chosen to take part in this study was chosen at random. The English classes are scheduled within the school hours for a total of 3 hours per week, each lasting 40 minutes.

The control group for this study will be a sample size of 38 students, despite the fact there are 61 students in the two courses. The teacher applied the activities suggested to one group. It is crucial to note that this sample is still thought to be representative of the overall student body despite its relatively smaller size. These students come from low- income families, non-traditional families, with family issues, and limited social interaction.

The instruments were validated through experts' judgments (Zohrabi, 2013) states that mixed methods research, key instruments include closed-ended and open-ended questionnaires, interviews. Combining these methods enhances data validity and reliability. Quantitative data are primarily collected through closed-ended questionnaires, while qualitative data come from open-ended questionnaires, interviews. Nevertheless, analyzing data from open-ended questions can be time-consuming.

In the process of gathering information and all the important details for the research, it was necessary to implement two instruments. First, surveys were applied to the students; they helped acquire general information about what they think. Then, the teacher interview was conducted, providing a qualitative exploration of detailed perspectives and experiences. Finally, a checklist was employed to assess the lesson plan, ensuring a comprehensive examination of role-playing criteria. This methodological combination facilitates a holistic understanding of the subject, laying a foundation for decision-making in subsequent stages of research.

Results and Discussion

The results were obtained through the mixed methods employed in this research. The thoughts, backgrounds, experiences, feelings, and challenges involved are shown in the analysis of the qualitative teacher interview, checklist, and quantitative student surveys. After the implementation of communicative activities.

The findings of the instruments were conducted and applied to the students through a survey involved exporting the response data to excel Sheets by organizing and formatting the data consistently, it also applied the Likert scale data analyze which

showed the following results. The data was divided into two variables Speaking Motivation and Role play.

Table 1
Speaking Motivation Frequency

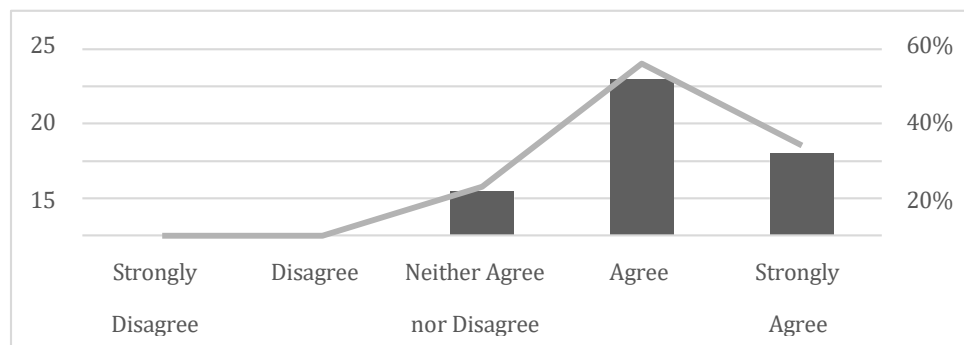
Category	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Low scale</i>	0	0%
<i>MEDIUM scale</i>	5	13%
<i>HIGH scale</i>	33	87%
	38	100%

Source: Perez (2024)

The Speaking Motivation Frequency table illustrates that 13% of students fall into the medium-scale category, which is relatively low while the majority of students (87%) fall into the high-scale category for speaking motivation. This is a positive finding, suggesting that a significant portion of English B1 students is highly motivated to engage in speaking activities. It's important to leverage and build upon this motivation to enhance their overall language learning experience.

First, the speaking motivation dimension which is represented in 5 statements such as: (I feel comfortable when I speak in English - I feel motivated to improve my speaking skills - I enjoy talking in English with Friends - I think that speak in English during activities is fun -I feel relax in to being part of class discussions) evaluate the students new face to the communication environment in class.

Figure 1
I feel comfortable when I speak in English

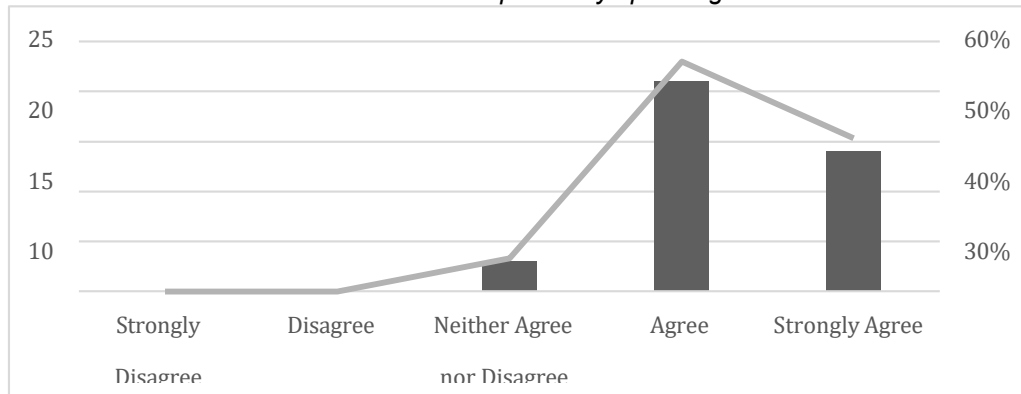


Source: Perez (2024)

The survey results refer to the speaking motivation dimension, specifically focusing on the statement "Feeling comfortable when speaking in English," reveal a predominantly positive trend among participants. Approximately 84% of respondents expressed agreement or strong agreement, underscoring a general sense of ease and motivation in English communication.

Nevertheless, a minor percentage, constituting 16% of the sample, neither agreed nor disagreed, warranting further investigation into the nuanced factors contributing to this neutrality. This finding emphasizes the need for a comprehensive understanding of individual motivations and challenges in the context of English language proficiency.

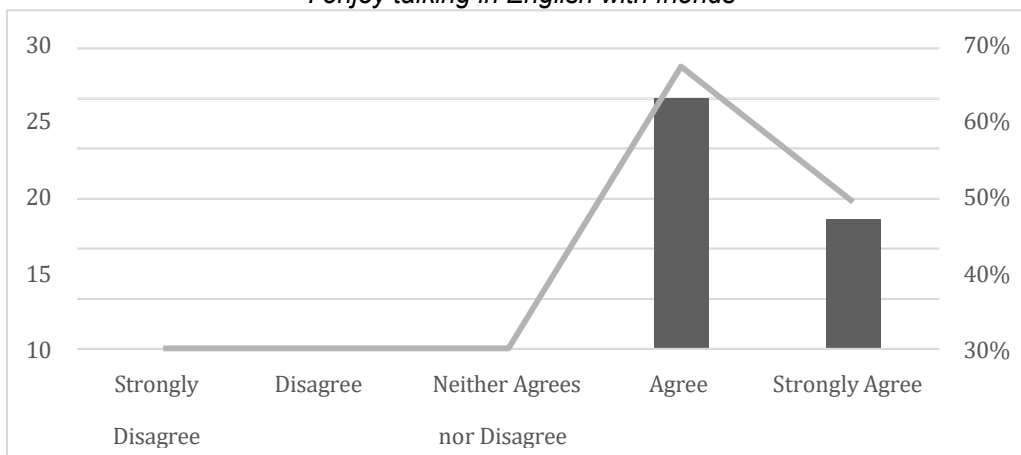
Figure 2
I feel motivated to improve my speaking skills



Source: Perez (2024)

The graph of the statement "I feel motivated to improve my speaking skills," reveals a positive inclination of 92% respondents, either agree (55%) or strongly agree (47%) with the statement, indicating a general motivation to enhance their proficiency in spoken communication. Significantly, none of the participants expressed disagreement or strong disagreement, highlighting an absence of resistance to the aspiration for skill enhancement. This finding shows that most people are feeling good and motivated about trying to get better at speaking.

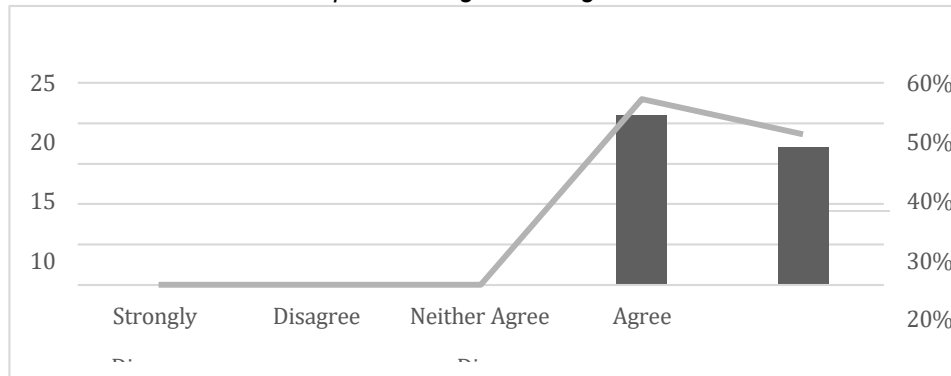
Figure 3
I enjoy talking in English with friends



Source: Perez (2024)

The statement "I enjoy talking in English with friends" graph reveals a highly positive trend among participants and all participants either agree (66%) or strongly agree (46%) with the statement, indicating a common inclination towards deriving enjoyment from conversing in English with friends. This outcome suggests a strong motivational factor in the social aspect of language use. This positive inclination recognizes the potential impact of social interactions on speaking motivation.

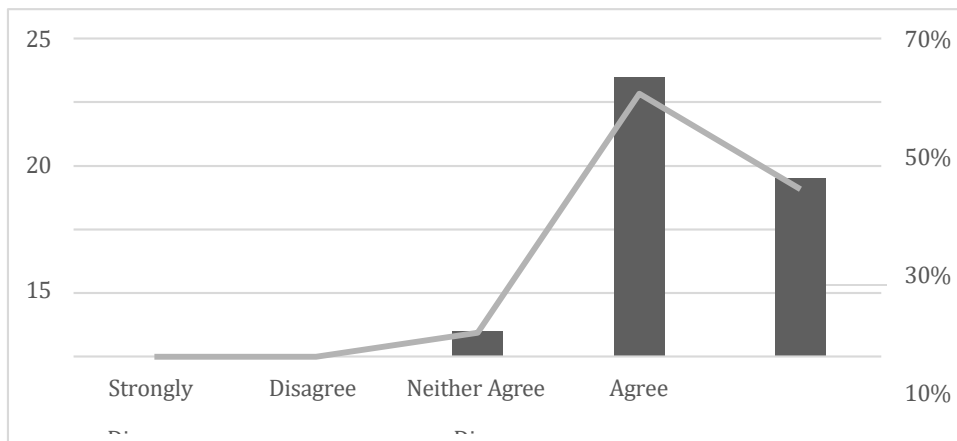
Figure 4
I think that speak in English during activities is fun



Source: Perez (2024)

The outcomes around the statement "I think that speaking in English during activities is fun," represents a tremendously positive response from participants and all participants either agree (52%) or strongly agree (45%) with the statement, indicating an agreed belief that engaging in English communication during activities is an enjoyable experience. This outcome highlights a strong motivational aspect associated with the perceived fun in using English in various activities. Finally, this positive inclination to foster an engaging and enjoyable language learning environment, recognizing the impact of fun activities on speaking motivation.

Figure 5
I feel relax in to being part of class discussions



Source: Bonilla (2024)

Statement 5, "I feel relaxed being part of class discussions," indicates a predominantly positive sentiment among participants. A significant majority, comprising 95% of participants, either agree (58%) or strongly agree (37%) that they feel at ease participating in class discussions. This outcome underscores the overall positive atmosphere and comfort level of participants in contributing to class discussions. Most people agree and feel comfortable when they join class discussions. There is no strong disagreement or disagreement, so it seems like everyone generally feels the same way about participating in class talks.

Table 2
Communicative Technique Frequency

Category	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Low scale</i>	0	0%
<i>MEDIUM scale</i>	5	0%
<i>HIGH scale</i>	33	100%
	38	100%

Source: Perez (2024)

The Communicative Techniques Variable table indicates a uniform trend among participants, with all respondents (100%) falling into the "High scale" category. This outcome suggests a unanimous inclination towards a high level of communicative learning style among the surveyed individuals. The absence of participants in the "Low scale" and "Medium scale" categories underscores the dominance of the high-scale preference for communicative learning. This finding emphasizes the importance of considering individual learning styles in instructional design to cater to the diverse preferences of learners, in this case, those with a pronounced communicative style.

The Communicative technique dimension which is represented in 6 statements such as: (I think I learn best when I can use my hands or do things, like experiments or moving around - I believe I remember things better when I can touch or do them, like moving objects or doing tasks- I have personally participated in fun activities in my English class, such as games or acting - I enjoy activities that involve physical movement while learning a language - I think using hands-on learning activities could make learning English more fun - I would like to do fun activities in my English class.) evaluate the students' new face to the communication environment in class.

After implementing communicative techniques, the teacher's opinion shows a clearer perception of the importance of enhancing speaking motivation among students. Speaking motivation, an essential factor for effective English communication, is particularly challenging for B1-level students who often fear making errors, hindering their language progression. Disadvantaged environments exacerbate these difficulties, impacting access to resources and diminishing confidence in spoken English.

Recognizing the significance of fostering speaking skills at the B1 level, teachers assume a crucial role in crafting engaging and appropriately challenging activities. Conversations within the classroom not only reinforce language rules but also bolster confidence, providing a motivational impetus for ongoing learning. In resource-limited settings, teachers act as facilitators, emphasizing the importance of resourcefulness, creativity in utilizing limited materials and technology, and collaborative efforts to create an inclusive language learning experience.

Specific rules and techniques for B1-level speaking activities involve minimal material usage, focusing on verbal communication. Everyday objects, printed handouts, and traditional aids are employed for resource efficiency, with an emphasis on real-life situations, grammar, and relevant vocabulary. Motivating student participation entails using engaging questions, incentives like extra credits or small gifts, and creating a supportive and enjoyable environment, especially for shy students.

Addressing language anxiety becomes a priority. This involves teaching correct breathing techniques, encouraging practice with classmates, and emphasizing that mistakes are inherent in the learning process. Mother tongue interference is tackled through the incorporation of humor and playful reminders to focus on English.

Conclusions

This study delved into the enhancement of speaking motivation for B1-level English Language Learner (ELL) students through the integration of communicative learning techniques. B1-level learners often grapple with oral communication challenges stemming from limited vocabulary and grammar proficiency. The primary goal was to cultivate a more captivating and interactive learning atmosphere by leveraging role-playing methods, acknowledged for their efficacy in catering to diverse learning styles for fostering comprehension.

The research unfolded successfully at Buckingham English Center, achieving its objectives, which encompassed examining the impact of speaking motivation, surveying students to identify learning styles, and uncovering teacher strategies. The culmination of teacher interviews revealed significant positive shifts. Teacher perspectives evolved from rule-centric teachings to prioritizing practical application and communication, acknowledging classroom challenges and resource constraints.

In summary, this research contributes crucial insights to language educators, curriculum developers, and practitioners. It underscores the significance of incorporating communicative learning techniques to augment speaking motivation in B1-level ELL students. The affirmative results advocate for further exploration and application of role-playing methods in language education to foster dynamic and effective learning environments.

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