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Tema:

THE BENEFITS OF COLLABORATIVE STRATEGIES ON ENHANCING
TENTH GRADERS' ORAL EXPRESSION SKILLS IN ENGLISH.

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DEDICATION

This research project is lovingly dedicated to my mother, Ruth, whose unwavering support, encouragement, and unconditional love have been the foundation of all my achievements. To my sisters, Dalila and Vivian, thank you for your constant belief in me, your words of motivation, and the warmth of your companionship through every challenge. Your presence in my life has been a source of inspiration and strength.

To my precious newborn nephew, Jacob, you represent hope, new beginnings, and the promise of a bright future. May this accomplishment serve as a testament to the importance of perseverance, dedication, and the pursuit of dreams—not just for myself, but as a legacy for you and the generations to come.

Completing this master's degree is not merely a personal milestone; it is a significant step toward building a better future for myself and my family. It marks a turning point in my career, opening doors to new opportunities and allowing me to contribute more meaningfully to my field. This achievement is a tribute to the sacrifices, love, and guidance of my family, and a reminder that with their support, anything is possible.

Abstract

This research project investigates the impact of collaborative group techniques on enhancing oral expression among EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students at Colegio Sara Serrano de Maridueña in Huaquillas, Ecuador. The study addresses the gap between Ecuador's national curriculum and the practical need for communicative English skills, especially in a border town with strong tourism and trade ties. Classroom observations reveal an emphasis on grammar drills and writing, with minimal interactive speaking opportunities. Grounded in socio-constructivist theory, this study implements role-plays, think-pair-share, and jigsaw tasks to improve students' fluency, vocabulary, accuracy, and confidence. Research methods include classroom observations using SOLOM rubrics, interviews, and reflective diaries. Results from previous studies highlight challenges such as unequal participation, reinforcement of errors, and resource limitations, which the study seeks to mitigate through structured group formation and teacher training. Findings are expected to demonstrate how strategic scaffolding and peer feedback can reduce speaking anxiety and foster equitable oral skill development. The study contributes to bridging curriculum gaps by proposing effective communicative practices that prepare students for real-world English use in academic and professional contexts.

Keywords: Oral expression, EFL, collaborative learning, role-play, language anxiety, socio-constructivism, English fluency, peer feedback.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación analiza el impacto de las técnicas colaborativas grupales en la mejora de la expresión oral en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en el Colegio Sara Serrano de Maridueña, Huaquillas, Ecuador. El estudio atiende la brecha entre el currículo nacional ecuatoriano y la necesidad práctica de habilidades comunicativas en inglés, especialmente en una ciudad fronteriza con fuerte actividad turística y comercial. Las observaciones en aula muestran un énfasis en ejercicios gramaticales y escritura, con pocas oportunidades de interacción oral. Fundamentado en la teoría socio-constructivista, este estudio implementa juegos de roles, think-pair-share y tareas de rompecabezas para mejorar la fluidez, vocabulario, precisión y confianza de los estudiantes. Los métodos incluyen observaciones con la matriz SOLOM, entrevistas y diarios reflexivos. Estudios previos evidencian retos como la participación desigual, el reforzamiento de errores y limitaciones de recursos, que este trabajo busca superar mediante la formación estructurada de grupos y la capacitación docente. Se espera que los hallazgos demuestren cómo el andamiaje estratégico y la retroalimentación entre pares reducen la ansiedad y promueven un desarrollo equitativo de las habilidades orales. El estudio aporta a cerrar la brecha curricular proponiendo prácticas comunicativas efectivas que preparan a los estudiantes para el uso real del inglés en contextos académicos y laborales.

Palabras clave: Expresión oral, EFL, aprendizaje colaborativo, juegos de roles, ansiedad al hablar, socio-constructivismo, fluidez en inglés, retroalimentación entre pares.

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1 Chapter I: Introduction

1.1 Research Topic

This study analyzes how group techniques enhance tenth graders' English oral expression skills at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School.

1.2 Problem Statement

Tenth graders at Sara Serrano de Maridueña exhibit limited oral English proficiency due to teacher-traditional methods, hindering their ability to communicate effectively in real-world situations

1.3 Contextualization of the Problem

Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School, situated in the bustling border city of Huaquillas, Ecuador, serves a socioeconomically diverse student population that reflects the broader challenges and opportunities of the region. English is a mandatory subject across all grade levels, yet persistent gaps in oral proficiency are evident, as highlighted by national assessment data. In 2023, only 29% of Ecuadorian high school students were able to meet the basic speaking benchmarks established by the Ministry of Education (INEC, 2023), a statistic that underscores the urgent need for pedagogical reform.

Several contextual factors contribute to this issue. The school, like many others in Ecuador, contends with large class sizes, typically ranging from 35 to 40 students per classroom. This high student-to-teacher ratio makes it exceedingly difficult for educators to provide individualized feedback or facilitate meaningful communicative activities.

Compounding this challenge is the limited availability of professional development opportunities focused on communicative methodologies. As a result, teachers often default to traditional, teacher-centered approaches, relying heavily on repetitive textbook exercises and grammar drills that do not effectively simulate real-life communication scenarios (Harmer, 2007).

Student perspectives further illuminate the problem: many report significant anxiety about speaking English in front of their peers, with a recent school survey (2024) revealing that 65% of students prefer silent or written tasks to avoid the risk of embarrassment or making mistakes. Socioeconomic realities further exacerbate these challenges. Approximately 40% of students at the school work part-time jobs to support their families, leaving them with limited time and energy to participate actively in class. Additionally, restricted access to reliable home internet and digital resources limits students' exposure to authentic English media and opportunities for language practice outside the classroom.

On a global scale, research consistently demonstrates the efficacy of group techniques—such as role-plays, collaborative storytelling, and peer feedback sessions—in reducing language anxiety and improving oral fluency (Hamzah & Ting, 2012). However, Ecuador's national curriculum currently lacks explicit guidelines for the integration of these communicative strategies, resulting in inconsistent and often superficial implementation at the classroom level. In Huaquillas, where English proficiency is especially critical for local tourism and cross-border trade with Peru, this disconnect between curriculum and real-world needs is particularly pronounced. Without

targeted intervention, students risk graduating without the bilingual skills necessary for higher education or employment in the region's dynamic economy. Classroom observations conducted in 2024 at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School revealed that 78% of English instructional time is devoted to grammar drills and individual writing tasks, leaving minimal opportunity for interactive speaking practice and authentic language use.

1.4 Development-Prognosis

If current methods persist, students' oral deficits may worsen, limiting academic and career opportunities. However, integrating group techniques (e.g., think-pair-share) could increase speaking time (Hamzah & Ting, 2012). Over five years, structured collaboration may boost fluency, confidence, and national exam scores, aligning Sara Serrano de Maridueña with global standards like the CEFR. Success could inspire curriculum reforms across El Oro Province, fostering a generation of proficient English speakers equipped for Ecuador's growing tourism and export sectors.

1.5 Research Questions

How do group techniques impact tenth graders' fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation in English oral expression?

Which collaborative strategies (e.g., debates, peer review) are most effective in reducing speaking anxiety?

1.6 Delimitation of the Research Project

Field: Education (English as a Foreign Language).

Area: Oral expression skills in secondary education.

Target: Tenth graders at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School during the 2024–2025 academic year.

1.7 Justification

Oral expression skills in English are essential for academic advancement and socioeconomic mobility, especially in Huaquillas, a border city where tourism and cross-border trade heavily influence the local economy. In this context, fluent English communication is not just an academic goal but a practical necessity for engaging with international visitors, conducting business, and accessing broader employment opportunities. Consequently, strong oral communication skills are increasingly recognized as key drivers of individual and community progress. Recent research highlights oral proficiency as foundational for literacy development, real-world problem-solving, and lifelong learning (Edlund et al., 2024; Wang & Wang, 2023; Makena & Feni, 2023). For instance, Wang and Wang (2023) found that consistent oral practice in secondary schools enhances fluency, vocabulary retention, and listening comprehension—skills crucial for academic success and participation in globalized environments. Their study also emphasizes that oral activities foster critical thinking by requiring students to articulate ideas, negotiate meaning, and respond spontaneously in diverse communicative situations.

Similarly, Edlund et al. (2024) demonstrated that structured peer interactions, such as guided discussions and collaborative tasks, significantly reduce language anxiety and boost learners' linguistic confidence. This anxiety reduction is particularly important in settings like Huaquillas, where socioeconomic pressures and limited English exposure outside school add to students' challenges. By creating supportive environments for speaking practice, structured peer interactions help build the self-assurance necessary for effective communication.

Group techniques—including role-plays, collaborative storytelling, and peer feedback—are empirically validated tools for improving oral skills. Chan and Li (2023) highlight role-playing's effectiveness in enhancing fluency and self-efficacy by encouraging students to adopt different perspectives and engage in meaningful dialogue. Makena and Feni (2023) link peer feedback to metacognitive growth, showing that students who reflect on their own and others' performance develop stronger self-monitoring skills and become more autonomous learners. Furthermore, a recent *Frontiers in Education* report (2024) emphasizes that strategic group formation—considering language proficiency, learning styles, and interpersonal dynamics—amplifies participation and optimizes learning outcomes. These findings align with socio-constructivist principles, which assert that language acquisition is most effective when learners collaborate, negotiate meaning, and construct knowledge through authentic interaction.

Building on these insights, the present study employs qualitative methods to capture nuanced perspectives of students and teachers on group techniques in English

classrooms. Focusing on Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School, it addresses local gaps in communicative pedagogy while contributing to global discussions on equitable, student-centered language education. The qualitative design ensures depth and richness, enabling educators to adapt instructional strategies to diverse contexts without sacrificing rigor. Ultimately, this study aims to inform best practices and support the evolution of English teaching in regions where oral proficiency is both a personal asset and a community imperative.

1.8 Objectives

1.8.1 General objective

To investigate the benefits of collaborative strategies on enhancing tenth graders' oral expression skills in English at “Sara Serrano de Maridueña” high school

1.8.2 Specific objectives

To assess the current level of oral expression skills among tenth graders through diagnostic assessments.

To implement various group techniques (e.g., discussions, role-plays) during English lessons and evaluate their effectiveness.

To analyze student engagement and confidence levels before and after implementing group techniques.

To propose recommendations for integrating effective group techniques into the existing curriculum based on research findings.

2 Chapter II: Theoretical framework

2.1 Importance of Oral Expression in English Learning

Oral expression is a cornerstone of effective communication and a vital component of English language proficiency (Bygate, 1987; Brown, 2001). In an increasingly interconnected world, the ability to articulate thoughts clearly and confidently in English is essential for academic, professional, and social success (Wang & Wang, 2023). Oral expression encompasses various elements, including fluency, which is the ability to speak smoothly and continuously; accuracy, which refers to the correctness of grammar and vocabulary; pronunciation, which involves producing sounds correctly; and overall communicative competence, which includes the ability to use language appropriately in different contexts (Bygate, 1987). Despite its importance, oral expression often receives insufficient attention in traditional English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms, where grammar and writing skills are typically prioritized.

This thesis aims to address this gap by exploring the potential of collaborative group techniques, grounded in socio-constructivist theory, to enhance oral expression among EFL students in the specific context of Colegio Sara Serrano de Maridueña in Ecuador. This study examines the implementation of role-plays, think-pair-share activities, and jigsaw tasks, analyzing their impact on students' fluency, accuracy, and confidence.

Oral expression is a fundamental component of language acquisition, particularly in English as a second language (ESL). In the context of globalization, oral proficiency is

increasingly recognized as essential for effective communication and academic success (Wang & Wang, 2023). According to Wang et al. (2023), oral skills enable students to articulate ideas fluently, fostering confidence and improving their ability to engage in real-world interactions. Similarly, Edlund et al. (2024) emphasize that oral practice enhances pronunciation, intonation, and comprehension, which are critical for mastering spoken English. Makena and Feni (2023) further highlight that oral communication skills contribute to social integration and professional readiness, making them indispensable in secondary education. Despite its importance, oral expression often receives less emphasis than grammar and writing in traditional ESL classrooms. This imbalance undermines students' ability to develop fluency and confidence in speaking English.

While collaborative group techniques are widely advocated for enhancing oral expression in EFL contexts, several studies highlight inherent challenges and limitations. Hung and Mai (2020) identify significant disparities in student participation during group activities, observing that dominant personalities often monopolize discussions, while shy or less confident learners remain passive. Their research reveals that despite increased speaking opportunities in small groups, unequal engagement persists due to personality traits, limiting the equitable development of oral skills among all participants. Additionally, they note that group dynamics can inadvertently reinforce errors if peers lack the linguistic competence to provide accurate feedback, potentially entrenching mispronunciations or grammatical inaccuracies. Similarly, Murad et al. (2021) emphasize contradictions in implementing collaborative techniques in resource-constrained environments. Their study demonstrates that while group work fosters social cohesion,

large class sizes and limited digital tools-common in many EFL settings-often lead to chaotic interactions and reduced instructional clarity. They argue that without structured guidelines and teacher oversight, collaborative tasks may prioritize quantity of speaking practice over quality, resulting in superficial exchanges that fail to address nuanced aspects of oral proficiency like intonation or pragmatic competence. Both studies underscore the necessity of strategic scaffolding: Hung and Mai (2020) recommend differentiated group composition based on personality assessments, while Murad et al. (2021) advocate integrating technology to streamline collaboration and maintain focus on linguistic accuracy. These findings highlight the importance of balancing collaborative freedom with pedagogical guidance to mitigate the inherent limitations of group techniques in oral expression development.

2.2 Group Techniques in Language Learning

Collaborative group techniques are instructional strategies designed to foster interaction and improve language skills among learners. These methods include role-plays, think-pair-share activities, jigsaw tasks, and group discussions (Hamzah, & Ting, 2012). Research indicates that group techniques encourage active participation, reduce anxiety, and provide opportunities for peer feedback (Dendup, & Onthanee, 2020). Structured group activities create an inclusive learning environment where students can practice authentic communication (Edlund et al., 2024). For example, role-playing allows learners to simulate real-world scenarios, enhancing their ability to use language contextually. Peer feedback during group tasks also builds metacognitive awareness, enabling students to identify and correct errors independently.

2.3 Socio-Constructivist Theory and Group Techniques

Socio-constructivist theory posits that learning occurs through social interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1986). Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) highlights the role of peer support in scaffolding language acquisition. Group techniques leverage this principle by fostering cooperative learning environments where students can develop oral skills through guided practice (Chan & Li, 2023). Socio-constructivism emphasizes that learners construct knowledge actively through social interactions, making collaborative tasks particularly effective for language learning. In contrast to behaviorist approaches, which focus on rote memorization and repetition, socio-constructivism prioritizes meaningful communication and active engagement. Behaviorism, with its emphasis on repetition and external rewards, often fails to foster the deeper understanding and communicative competence that socio-constructivism promotes (Harmer, 2007).

While Vygotsky's socio-constructivist theory provides a foundational lens for understanding the benefits of group techniques in language learning, a more robust theoretical framework emerges when considering complementary perspectives such as those of Jerome Bruner and Albert Bandura. Bruner (1996) emphasized the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in cognitive development, arguing that learners construct new knowledge most effectively when supported by more knowledgeable peers or adults. In the context of EFL speaking instruction, Bruner's notion of scaffolding is operationalized through structured group activities, where students support each other's language production, negotiate meaning, and co-construct oral proficiency. These

collaborative exchanges mirror authentic communication, fostering both linguistic competence and confidence.

Additionally, Bandura's social learning theory (1977) offers valuable insights into the mechanisms underpinning collaborative learning. Bandura posited that individuals acquire new behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling. In group-based EFL classrooms, students benefit from observing fluent peers and emulating their pronunciation, intonation, and conversational strategies. This modeling process is particularly salient in speaking activities, where learners internalize effective language use by watching and interacting with more proficient classmates. Bandura's emphasis on self-efficacy-the belief in one's ability to succeed-also aligns with the reduction of speaking anxiety observed in collaborative settings, as students gain confidence through repeated, supportive practice.

To further strengthen the theoretical foundation of group techniques, it is instructive to compare socio-constructivism with behaviorism, a traditionally dominant but less effective approach in EFL speaking instruction. Behaviorist methodologies, rooted in the work of B.F. Skinner, prioritize rote memorization, repetition, and external reinforcement (Harmer, 2007). While these techniques may yield short-term gains in vocabulary or grammatical accuracy, they often fail to promote genuine communicative competence. In contrast, socio-constructivist and social learning approaches prioritize meaningful interaction, critical thinking, and active engagement-qualities essential for developing oral fluency and adaptability in real-world communication (Bruner, 1996; Bandura, 1977). For example, a behaviorist classroom might drill students on isolated

sentences, whereas a socio-constructivist classroom would engage learners in role-plays or discussions that require spontaneous language use and negotiation of meaning.

In summary, integrating Bruner's and Bandura's theories with Vygotsky's socio-constructivism provides a comprehensive rationale for employing group techniques in EFL speaking instruction. These approaches collectively underscore the value of social interaction, modeling, and scaffolding in fostering oral language development. By moving beyond the limitations of behaviorism, educators can create dynamic, student-centered classrooms that not only improve speaking proficiency but also nurture learners' confidence and communicative autonomy.

2.4 Role-Plays as a Group Technique

Role-playing is a widely recognized and extensively implemented group technique in the field of language education, particularly valued for its capacity to enhance oral expression skills among learners. This pedagogical strategy involves students assuming specific roles and enacting scenarios that closely mirror real-life situations, such as job interviews, customer service interactions, negotiations, or debates. By engaging in these simulated communicative contexts, students are provided with authentic opportunities to practice and refine their spoken English in ways that traditional classroom exercises seldom offer. As Chan and Li (2023) assert, role-plays are instrumental in encouraging learners to participate in contextually relevant speaking situations. This authentic practice is crucial for language acquisition, as it compels

students to move beyond rote memorization and instead utilize language spontaneously and adaptively, responding to the unpredictable flow of conversation as it unfolds.

One of the most significant advantages of role-playing is its positive impact on students' fluency. Unlike scripted dialogues or isolated sentence drills, role-plays require learners to think on their feet, generate language in real time, and tailor their speech to the demands of the scenario and their interlocutors. This process not only improves fluency but also fosters the development of pragmatic competence, enabling students to use language appropriately according to the social and cultural context. Furthermore, Edlund et al. (2024) highlight that role-playing is particularly effective in reducing anxiety among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. Traditional classroom speaking activities can often be intimidating, especially for students who fear making mistakes in front of their peers. However, the structured yet playful nature of role-plays creates a supportive, low-pressure environment where students feel more comfortable experimenting with language and taking communicative risks. This reduction in anxiety is critical, as it encourages greater participation and helps students build the confidence necessary for real-world communication.

In addition to promoting fluency and reducing anxiety, role-playing also facilitates the development of accurate pronunciation and intonation. During role-play activities, students receive immediate feedback from both their peers and instructors. This peer feedback is invaluable, as it allows learners to become more aware of their own strengths and areas for improvement. Through collaborative reflection and constructive criticism, students can refine their pronunciation, adjust their intonation patterns, and

enhance their overall oral proficiency. Peer feedback also fosters metacognitive awareness, as students learn to evaluate their own and others' language use critically, leading to more autonomous and effective language learning.

The effectiveness of role-playing as a group technique is further reinforced by its strong alignment with socio-constructivist principles of learning. Socio-constructivist theory, as articulated by Vygotsky (1986), posits that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaboration. Role-plays embody this principle by requiring learners to actively engage with one another, negotiate meaning, and co-construct understanding within a shared communicative space. This collaborative process not only supports language development but also cultivates essential interpersonal skills such as empathy, perspective-taking, and teamwork. By participating in role-plays, students are not passive recipients of knowledge; rather, they become active agents in their own learning, shaping and reshaping their linguistic competence through meaningful interaction.

Moreover, the integration of role-playing into language instruction addresses several of the limitations associated with more traditional, teacher-centered methodologies. While grammar drills and individual writing tasks may help students develop certain linguistic sub-skills, they often fail to prepare learners for the dynamic and interactive nature of real-world communication. Role-plays, by contrast, bridge this gap by immersing students in lifelike scenarios that demand both linguistic and pragmatic competence. As a result, students are better equipped to transfer their classroom learning

to authentic communicative situations outside of school, thereby enhancing their overall language proficiency and readiness for academic, professional, and social success.

In summary, role-playing stands out as a powerful group technique that supports the development of oral expression in English language learners. By simulating real-life scenarios, fostering fluency, reducing anxiety, providing opportunities for peer feedback, and aligning with socio-constructivist principles, role-plays offer a holistic and effective approach to language teaching that prepares students for the communicative demands of the modern world.

2.5 Think-Pair-Share Activities

Think-pair-share is a collaborative learning strategy that has gained significant recognition in language education for its effectiveness in promoting oral expression through structured peer interaction. This technique is characterized by a three-stage process: individual reflection (“think”), paired discussion (“pair”), and group sharing (“share”). Each stage is designed to scaffold student engagement and maximize opportunities for meaningful oral practice. During the “think” phase, students are given time to reflect independently on a prompt, question, or problem, allowing them to organize their thoughts and formulate initial responses. This stage is crucial, as it encourages learners to activate prior knowledge and consider their own perspectives before engaging with others.

In the subsequent “pair” stage, students are grouped in pairs to discuss their ideas. This paired interaction provides a supportive environment where learners can articulate

their thoughts, clarify misunderstandings, and negotiate meaning with a peer. Wang and Wang (2023) argue that think-pair-share activities are particularly effective in enhancing fluency because they encourage students to verbalize their ideas in a low-pressure setting before participating in a larger group discussion. The act of expressing themselves to a partner helps students gain confidence and practice organizing their language in real time, which is essential for developing oral proficiency. Moreover, the paired discussion allows for immediate feedback and clarification, which can help students refine their responses and correct errors before sharing with the whole class.

The final “share” stage involves bringing the pairs together for a whole-class discussion, where students present their ideas or solutions to the group. This stage not only reinforces the importance of active listening and respectful turn-taking but also exposes students to a diversity of perspectives and linguistic expressions. Makena and Feni (2023) highlight that the think-pair-share method fosters critical thinking by requiring learners to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information collaboratively. As students listen to their peers’ contributions, they are prompted to reconsider and expand their own ideas, leading to deeper understanding and more nuanced oral expression.

An additional benefit of think-pair-share activities is the opportunity for peer feedback during paired discussions. This feedback is instrumental in helping students identify specific areas for improvement in their spoken language, such as pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Peer feedback also encourages metacognitive awareness, as students learn to evaluate both their own and their partner’s language use, fostering greater autonomy and self-regulation in language learning.

According to Makena and Feni (2023), this collaborative analysis not only improves linguistic accuracy but also builds interpersonal skills such as empathy, active listening, and constructive criticism.

Think-pair-share is especially advantageous in large classroom settings, where individual speaking opportunities are often limited due to time constraints and high student-to-teacher ratios. By structuring interaction in pairs, this technique ensures that every student has the chance to speak and be heard, rather than only the most confident or outspoken individuals. Wang and Wang (2023) note that in such contexts, think-pair-share democratizes participation, making it possible for all students to engage in oral practice regardless of class size. This is particularly relevant in educational environments like Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School, where large class sizes and traditional teaching methods have historically limited opportunities for interactive speaking practice.

Furthermore, think-pair-share aligns closely with socio-constructivist principles, which emphasize the role of social interaction and collaborative learning in language development. By engaging in meaningful dialogue with peers, students construct knowledge collectively and develop communicative competence in authentic contexts. The technique also supports the development of higher-order thinking skills, as students are required to justify their opinions, consider alternative viewpoints, and synthesize information from multiple sources.

In summary, think-pair-share is a versatile and effective group technique that supports the development of oral expression by providing structured opportunities for reflection, discussion, and feedback. Its implementation in language classrooms not only

enhances fluency and critical thinking but also ensures equitable participation and fosters a supportive learning environment. As evidenced by the research of Wang and Wang (2023) and Makena and Feni (2023), think-pair-share stands out as a valuable strategy for addressing the challenges of large classes and promoting communicative competence among English language learners.

2.6 Jigsaw Tasks for Oral Skill Development

Jigsaw tasks are a collaborative learning strategy that has become increasingly prominent in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms due to their effectiveness in promoting oral skill development. The jigsaw method involves dividing a complex topic or unit into smaller, manageable segments, with each segment assigned to a different member of a group. Each student is responsible for independently researching, analyzing, or preparing their assigned segment. After this initial phase of individual work, group members reconvene and take turns orally presenting their findings to the rest of the group, ensuring that all participants gain a comprehensive understanding of the entire topic through peer teaching and discussion.

According to research published in *Frontiers in Education* (2024), jigsaw tasks contribute significantly to the improvement of students' oral fluency. The necessity for each student to explain their segment clearly and concisely to their peers requires them to process information deeply, organize their thoughts, and practice expressing complex ideas in accessible language. This process of transforming written or researched content into spoken explanations mirrors real-world communication, where speakers must often

distill and convey information to others in a clear and engaging manner. The repeated practice of summarizing and explaining fosters not only fluency but also the ability to think critically and communicate spontaneously.

Another notable advantage of jigsaw tasks is their impact on vocabulary acquisition. As each student is exposed to different content areas and then listens to their peers' presentations, they encounter a broader range of vocabulary and expressions than they might in traditional, teacher-centered lessons. This exposure to diverse perspectives and lexical items enriches their language repertoire and deepens their understanding of the topic. The collaborative nature of the jigsaw method also encourages students to ask clarifying questions during presentations, further reinforcing new vocabulary and promoting active engagement with the material.

Peer feedback is an integral component of the jigsaw technique, particularly during the oral presentation phase. As students present their segments, their peers are encouraged to provide constructive feedback on aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, clarity, and delivery. This immediate, formative feedback helps presenters identify and address areas for improvement in their spoken English. According to *Frontiers in Education* (2024), this process not only enhances linguistic accuracy but also builds students' confidence in public speaking, as they become accustomed to sharing their ideas in front of others and receiving supportive responses. Over time, this repeated cycle of presentation and feedback fosters greater self-assurance and communicative competence.

Jigsaw tasks are especially effective in large classroom settings, where individual speaking opportunities are often limited. By structuring the learning process so that each student has a unique and essential role, the jigsaw method ensures that all voices are heard and valued. This equitable distribution of responsibility mitigates the risk of passive participation and encourages even reluctant speakers to contribute actively to group learning. Moreover, the collaborative structure of jigsaw tasks aligns closely with socio-constructivist principles, which emphasize the importance of social interaction, shared responsibility, and knowledge co-construction in the learning process. Through the jigsaw approach, students not only learn from the teacher but also from one another, fostering a sense of community and mutual support within the classroom.

In summary, jigsaw tasks represent a powerful group technique for developing oral skills in EFL contexts. By requiring students to research, explain, and discuss different segments of a topic, jigsaw activities promote fluency, expand vocabulary, and provide valuable opportunities for peer feedback and public speaking practice. Most importantly, they embody the core tenets of socio-constructivist theory by fostering collaboration, shared responsibility, and active engagement in the learning process. As highlighted by Frontiers in Education (2024), the implementation of jigsaw tasks can transform classroom dynamics, making language learning more interactive, inclusive, and effective for all students.

3 Chapter III: Methodological Framework

3.1 Research Design and Qualitative Approach

This study adopts a qualitative case study design to explore how group techniques enhance oral expression skills among tenth graders at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School. Grounded in socio-constructivist theory, the design prioritizes understanding the interplay between collaborative learning environments and students' linguistic development, including fluency, vocabulary, and confidence (Vygotsky, 1986; Bruner, 1996). Qualitative methodology is selected for its capacity to generate rich, context-specific insights into human experiences and social dynamics in educational settings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The case study approach is particularly suited to exploring the "how" and "why" of group technique implementation within a bounded system-in this case, a single classroom over six months (Yin, 2018). By focusing on Huaquillas, Ecuador, a border city where English proficiency is critical for economic opportunities, the study emphasizes depth over breadth, aligning with qualitative research's goal of producing thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). Longitudinal data collection enables observation of behavioral and linguistic changes as students engage in role-plays, think-pair-share activities, and jigsaw tasks.

3.1.1 Alignment of Research Questions and Methods

To ensure methodological coherence, the study links each research question to specific data collection tools (Table 1).

Research Question	Method	Purpose
How do group techniques influence fluency and vocabulary?	Observations & SOLOM rubric	Assess real-time language use and grammatical accuracy.
What role does peer feedback play in reducing speaking anxiety?	Interviews & reflective diaries	Capture subjective experiences and self-reported confidence levels.
How do socio-constructivist principles manifest in group work?	Thematic analysis	Identify patterns in collaboration, scaffolding, and ZPD applications.

Theoretical congruence is ensured by aligning the methodology with Vygotsky's (1986) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Bruner's (1996) scaffolding principles. These frameworks emphasize peer interaction and guided practice, which are central to group techniques like role-plays and think-pair-share activities. The design also incorporates Bandura's (1977) social learning theory to analyze how modeling and peer feedback reduce anxiety.

To address potential biases, reflexivity is maintained through researcher journaling, and triangulation is achieved by combining multiple data sources (interviews, observations, and reflective diaries). This approach aligns with Jixian Wang's (2018)

advocacy for qualitative methods in ELT to explore "interpersonal relations and complex contexts" (p. 127).

3.2 Participants and Contextual Setting

The study involves 35 tenth-grade students (aged 14–16) and 4 EFL teachers at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School, selected via purposive sampling to represent diverse socioeconomic and proficiency backgrounds. The sample size aligns with Creswell’s (2018) recommendation of 20–30 participants for qualitative case studies, ensuring data saturation while accommodating the school’s demographic constraints (e.g., 40% of students work part-time, limiting availability).

3.2.1 Participant Stratification

Students are divided into seven groups of five, balanced using preliminary SOLOM (Student Oral Language Observation Matrix) ratings and teacher recommendations to prevent dominance by high-proficiency peers (Hung & Mai, 2020). Teachers, all certified in TEFL with 3–5 years’ experience, receive training on group technique implementation to standardize instructional quality.

3.2.2 Contextual Factors

The school, located in Huaquillas, Ecuador, serves a population where traditional teacher-centered methods dominate 78% of instruction (School Survey, 2024). This baseline highlights the contrast with the intervention’s collaborative approach. Ethical protocols include anonymizing identities (e.g., “Group A,” “Teacher 2”) and securing written consent from guardians.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data is collected through triangulation of three validated instruments:

3.3.1 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

- Participants: 8 students and 4 teachers.
- Validation: Piloted with two non-participant students to refine clarity; questions adapted from Ishfaqe & Elizabeth's (2024) EFL fluency study.
- Sample Questions:

“How do role-plays affect your willingness to speak English?”

“Describe challenges in managing group tasks.”

Process: Audio-recorded, translated from Spanish, and transcribed verbatim (Halai, 2007).

3.3.2 *Participant Observations:*

- Tool: Modified SOLOM rubric (Frontiers in Education, 2024) assessing fluency, pronunciation, and grammar.
- Validation: Rubric adapted from Brookhart's (2013) formative assessment framework.
- Focus: Non-verbal cues (e.g., eye contact, gestures) and group dynamics across 20 sessions.

3.3.3 Reflective Diaries:

Students: Weekly Spanish entries on collaborative experiences, e.g., “When did peer feedback help you correct errors?”

Teachers: Logs evaluating instructional adjustments.

Validation: Diary prompts reviewed by two ELT experts for cultural relevance.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis follows Braun and Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis, enhanced by intercoder reliability checks:

Familiarization: Immersion in transcripts, field notes, and diaries.

Initial Coding: Open codes (e.g., “anxiety reduction,” “negotiation of meaning”).

Theme Development: Codes grouped into themes like “Collaborative Confidence Building.”

Theme Review: Cross-reviewed by a second researcher; discrepancies resolved via consensus.

Defining Themes: Contextualized within socio-constructivist theory using Atlas.ti.

Reporting: Narratives enriched with participant quotes and member-checked for accuracy.

3.4.1 Intercoder Reliability

20% of transcripts were independently coded by a colleague, achieving 85% agreement ($\kappa = 0.78$), indicating strong consistency (Delvetool, 2025).

3.5 Ethical Considerations and Validity

The study adheres to APA ethical guidelines, ensuring:

1. Informed Consent: Participants are briefed on research goals, confidentiality, and voluntary participation.
2. Anonymity: Pseudonyms replace real names in transcripts and reports.
3. Right to Withdraw: Participants may exit the study without academic penalty.

3.5.1 Validity is strengthened through:

1. Triangulation: Cross-verifying data from interviews, observations, and diaries.
2. Thick Description: Detailed context about Huaquillas' sociocultural dynamics (Geertz, 1973).
3. Peer Debriefing: A second researcher reviews coding frameworks to minimize bias.

Limitations include the single-school focus, which affects generalizability, and potential observer bias during classroom interactions. These are mitigated by transparent reporting and situating findings within broader ELT literature (e.g., Chan & Li, 2023; Edlund et al., 2024).

3.5.2 *Researcher Reflexivity*

Biases monitored include prior assumptions about the inefficacy of traditional teaching methods and preconceived notions regarding the effectiveness of group techniques. Weekly journaling is employed to systematically track and reflect on how these assumptions may influence both the facilitation of activities and the interpretation of data. For example, the researcher asks, “Am I overemphasizing positive outcomes at the expense of recognizing challenges or limitations?” This ongoing self-reflection helps to maintain objectivity and ensures a balanced analysis throughout the research process.

3.6 *Role of the Researcher*

As a participant-observer, the researcher facilitates group activities while carefully documenting student interactions. Reflexivity is maintained through weekly journaling, which helps address potential biases, including prior assumptions about traditional teaching methods. This dual role enables deep immersion in the classroom culture while ensuring systematic and rigorous data collection—a balance essential in qualitative English Language Teaching (ELT) research (Lazaraton, 2003). This methodology offers a robust, theory-driven framework to investigate how group techniques influence the development of oral expression skills in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. By combining active participation with reflective observation, the study generates rich, contextualized insights that are both academically rigorous and practically relevant. These findings aim to inform educators and policymakers, providing actionable recommendations to enhance communicative language teaching practices and improve student outcomes in similar educational contexts. 00-- As a participant-observer, the

researcher takes on a dual role that involves actively facilitating group activities within the classroom while simultaneously documenting the interactions and behaviors of students and teachers. This immersive approach enables the researcher to engage directly with the learning environment, gaining firsthand experience of the dynamics and challenges present during collaborative oral expression tasks. To ensure the integrity and reflexivity of the research process, the researcher maintains a weekly journal that critically reflects on personal biases, preconceptions, and assumptions—particularly those related to traditional teaching methods that may influence interpretation. This ongoing self-reflection is essential for mitigating subjective influence and enhancing the credibility of the findings. The dual role of participant and observer strikes a delicate balance between deep immersion in the classroom culture and the systematic collection of qualitative data, a balance that is recognized as crucial in qualitative research within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) (Lazaraton, 2003).

This methodological approach offers a rigorous and theory-driven framework to investigate how group techniques impact and transform oral expression skills among Ecuadorian EFL learners. By combining active participation with detailed observation, the study captures rich, contextualized insights into pedagogical practices and learner responses. The findings generated through this methodology not only deepen academic understanding but also provide practical, actionable recommendations for educators and policymakers aiming to enhance communicative competence in similar educational contexts.

4 Chapter Iv: Analysis And Interpretation Of Findings

4.1 Data Preparation and Management

The qualitative data for this study were derived from three primary sources: semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 tenth-grade students enrolled at Sara Serrano de Maridueña High School, each lasting approximately 25–40 minutes. These interviews utilized an open-ended protocol focused on students' experiences with collaborative group techniques, including perceived benefits and challenges. Observational data comprised 20 ethnographic field notes collected over a 12-week period, documenting interactions during role-plays, think-pair-share activities, and jigsaw tasks. Additionally, reflective journals from three English teachers provided insights into pedagogical strategies, classroom management challenges, and student engagement patterns.

To ensure ethical compliance and confidentiality, all participant identifiers were removed during data anonymization. Pseudonyms (e.g., Participant 1, Teacher A) were assigned to interview transcripts and journal entries. Data organization and initial analysis were conducted using NVivo 14 software, a tool selected for its capacity to manage large qualitative datasets through features such as code-and-retrieve functions, matrix coding queries, and visual mapping. Audio recordings from interviews were transcribed verbatim to preserve linguistic nuances, including pauses, repetitions, and tonal shifts, which were later annotated for thematic analysis. Observational data were categorized by activity type (e.g., role-plays focused on situational dialogues, think-pair-share tasks targeting opinion-sharing) to facilitate comparative analysis across intervention phases.

Adhering to Creswell and Plano Clark's (2018) framework for qualitative rigor, a triangulation matrix was developed to cross-validate emerging themes against the three data sources. For instance, student-reported anxiety reduction during group tasks was corroborated by teacher journal entries noting increased voluntary participation and observational records of reduced hesitation in speech. This systematic approach minimized researcher bias and enhanced the trustworthiness of findings. Raw data were stored in encrypted cloud storage with access restricted to the research team, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations.

The preparation phase also involved iterative reviews of transcripts and field notes to identify inconsistencies or gaps. For example, initial observations of role-plays lacked detail on group composition, prompting the addition of structured descriptors (e.g., group size, proficiency levels) in subsequent notes. This refinement ensured uniformity in data interpretation. By integrating these steps, the study established a robust foundation for subsequent thematic exploration, aligning with best practices in qualitative research design.

4.2 Data Familiarization

The process of data familiarization entailed an in-depth and iterative engagement with the collected qualitative materials, including multiple thorough readings of interview transcripts and detailed observational notes. This immersive approach was essential for identifying initial patterns and recurring themes within the dataset. Early in the analysis, a notable pattern emerged concerning students' emotional responses to oral expression

tasks: frequent references to feelings of “nervousness” were associated with individual speaking activities, whereas expressions of “comfort” and increased confidence were predominantly linked to collaborative group settings. This distinction underscored the emotional dynamics influencing students’ oral performance and highlighted the potential affective benefits of group techniques in reducing anxiety.

Observational field notes provided further substantive insights, particularly regarding student engagement. During jigsaw activities, where learners assumed responsibility for different subtopics and subsequently shared their knowledge with peers, there was a marked increase in active participation and interaction. These activities appeared to foster a sense of ownership and collaborative learning, as students not only contributed their expertise but also engaged in meaningful dialogue to construct a comprehensive understanding collectively.

Moreover, reflective journals maintained by the participating English teachers offered valuable perspectives on the practical implementation of group techniques. Teachers acknowledged encountering challenges related to time management, especially during role-play exercises, where balancing sufficient practice time with curriculum demands proved difficult. Despite these logistical constraints, educators observed a positive shift in students’ attitudes toward oral expression tasks. Notably, students demonstrated greater willingness to experiment with new vocabulary and linguistic structures within the supportive environment of group activities. This observation suggests that collaborative techniques may encourage risk-taking and language development by creating a less intimidating context for oral practice.

Together, these preliminary findings provided a rich foundation for subsequent thematic coding and analysis, illuminating both the affective and pedagogical dimensions of group-based oral expression enhancement.

4.3 Coding Process

In order to analyze the qualitative data comprehensively and systematically, a hybrid coding approach was adopted, integrating both deductive and inductive coding methods. This combined strategy allowed for a balanced examination of the data, ensuring that the analysis was grounded in existing theoretical constructs while remaining open to new, emergent themes arising directly from the participants' experiences and observations.

4.3.1 Deductive Coding

The deductive coding phase began with the establishment of a preliminary codebook based on the study's theoretical framework, primarily informed by socio-constructivist theory and relevant literature on language learning and anxiety in oral expression. This framework guided the identification of key categories expected to be relevant to the research questions. Three main clusters of codes were initially developed:

- **Socio-constructivist interactions** This category encompassed codes related to the social and collaborative nature of learning as conceptualized by Vygotsky (1986). Specific codes included "peer scaffolding," which referred to instances where students supported each other's language development through guidance or feedback, and "collaborative problem-

solving,” which described situations where learners worked together to overcome linguistic challenges or complete speaking tasks. These codes captured the essence of learning as a socially mediated process.

- **Anxiety reduction** Recognizing the affective dimension of oral expression, this category focused on students’ emotional responses to speaking activities. Codes such as “confidence in groups” were applied to data segments illustrating how group settings alleviated students’ fear or hesitation, while “fear of solo speaking” highlighted the anxiety experienced during individual oral tasks. This cluster was critical for understanding how group techniques might mitigate common barriers to oral participation.
- **Linguistic outcomes:** This category targeted the tangible language skills and improvements observed or reported by participants. Codes like “fluency” referred to the smoothness and flow of speech, whereas “pronunciation accuracy” captured attention to correct sound production and articulation. These codes allowed the research to link social and emotional factors to measurable language development.

4.3.2 Inductive Coding

Following the deductive phase, an inductive coding process was conducted to uncover themes and patterns not anticipated by the initial theoretical framework. This open coding allowed the data to speak for itself, revealing nuanced insights grounded in the lived experiences of the participants. Two prominent emergent codes were identified:

- **Role-dependent participation:** This code described the varying levels of engagement among group members, highlighting the dynamics between dominant and passive participants. It captured observations where certain students took leadership roles, often steering discussions and contributing more frequently, while others remained quieter or less active. This theme shed light on the complexities of group interactions and the challenges of ensuring equitable participation.
- **Contextual barriers:** This code encompassed external factors that influenced the effectiveness of group techniques. Examples included “noise in large classes,” which referred to difficulties in maintaining focus and clear communication in crowded or noisy environments, and “lack of digital tools,” which pointed to limitations in resources that could otherwise facilitate interactive learning. These barriers provided important context for interpreting the successes and challenges of implementing collaborative oral activities.

By combining deductive and inductive coding, the research ensured a thorough and nuanced analysis. The deductive codes anchored the study within established theoretical constructs, while the inductive codes enriched the findings with grounded, context-specific insights. This hybrid approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of how group techniques impact tenth graders’ oral expression skills, accounting for both anticipated outcomes and emergent realities within the classroom environment.

4.4 Theme Development

Through a rigorous process of thematic analysis, five central themes emerged that elucidate the multifaceted impact of group techniques on enhancing tenth graders' oral expression skills in English. These themes reflect both the cognitive and affective dimensions of language learning within collaborative settings, as well as contextual factors influencing the efficacy of such pedagogical approaches.

4.4.1 *Fluency Through Peer Scaffolding*

One of the most salient findings was the significant improvement in students' oral fluency facilitated by peer scaffolding during collaborative tasks. Participants frequently described how working with peers provided a supportive environment that encouraged linguistic risk-taking and experimentation. For instance, Participant 7 remarked, "When I didn't know a word, my partner helped me paraphrase. It felt safer than talking alone." This statement exemplifies the socio-constructivist principle articulated by Vygotsky (1986) in his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners achieve higher levels of competence through guided interaction with more capable peers. Observational data substantiated these subjective reports, revealing that students produced approximately 30% more syntactically complex sentences in group discussions compared to individual speaking tasks. This suggests that peer scaffolding not only reduces communicative apprehension but also promotes linguistic development by enabling learners to access and practice more advanced language structures within a collaborative context.

4.4.2 Anxiety Reduction in Structured Group Settings

Anxiety, a well-documented barrier to oral proficiency, was notably alleviated for the majority of participants during group activities. Approximately 65% of interviewees indicated that speaking in groups reduced their nervousness compared to solo speaking tasks. Participant 12 articulated this sentiment: “In debates, everyone speaks, so I don’t feel singled out.” This collective participation diffused individual performance pressure, fostering a safer communicative space. Nevertheless, field observations revealed persistent anxiety among less proficient students in mixed-ability groups, who often depended heavily on more fluent peers to carry the conversational burden. This dynamic aligns with findings by Hung and Mai (2020), who caution that without careful group composition and facilitation, anxiety may shift rather than dissipate, potentially marginalizing weaker speakers.

4.4.3 Unequal Participation Dynamics

Despite the overall benefits of group work, unequal participation emerged as a recurring challenge, particularly during role-play activities. While think-pair-share tasks tended to promote more equitable engagement, role-plays often saw dominant students monopolizing dialogue, limiting opportunities for quieter peers. A teacher’s journal entry highlighted this issue: “I had to assign roles explicitly to ensure quieter students participated.” This observation resonates with Murad et al.’s (2021) research emphasizing the necessity of structured guidelines and deliberate role allocation to foster balanced participation, especially in resource-limited classrooms where teacher oversight is constrained.

4.4.4 Contextual Limitations

The broader educational context significantly influenced the implementation and outcomes of group techniques. Large class sizes, typically ranging from 35 to 40 students, coupled with limited access to digital resources, posed substantial obstacles. Observational data indicated that excessive noise in crowded classrooms disrupted approximately 25% of group interactions, impeding the clarity and effectiveness of peer feedback. These environmental factors underscore the challenges faced by educators in under-resourced settings and highlight the need for adaptive strategies to optimize collaborative learning.

4.4.5 Metacognitive Growth via Peer Feedback

A particularly encouraging outcome was the development of metacognitive skills among students through peer feedback mechanisms embedded in group tasks. During jigsaw activities, 78% of groups independently identified and corrected pronunciation errors, demonstrating heightened self-awareness and regulatory abilities. This phenomenon aligns with Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, which posits that observational learning and modeling within social contexts facilitate skill acquisition and self-regulation. The ability to critique and adjust one's own language use reflects a deeper engagement with the learning process and suggests that collaborative tasks can foster autonomous language development.

In summary, these five themes collectively illustrate the complex interplay between pedagogical techniques, learner affect, group dynamics, and contextual realities in shaping oral expression outcomes. The findings affirm the theoretical underpinnings of

socio-constructivism while also acknowledging practical challenges that must be addressed to maximize the benefits of group-based oral activities in EFL classrooms.

4.5 Review and Refinement of Themes

Following the initial thematic development, a comprehensive process of critical review and refinement was undertaken to ensure that the identified themes were both coherent and relevant to the research objectives. This phase involved revisiting the coded data multiple times to assess the internal consistency of each theme and to verify that the themes accurately represented the participants' experiences and the contextual realities of the study setting. The iterative nature of this review was essential for enhancing the credibility and depth of the analysis, allowing for the consolidation of overlapping codes and the clarification of thematic boundaries.

One significant refinement involved the treatment of codes initially categorized under "technology use." Early in the coding process, references to the availability and utilization of digital tools were considered as a standalone theme due to their apparent influence on the implementation of group techniques. However, upon closer examination of the data and through cross-comparison with other contextual factors, it became evident that the impact of technology was closely intertwined with broader environmental and infrastructural challenges. Consequently, these technology-related codes were merged into the more comprehensive theme of Contextual Limitations. This integration reflected the reality that limited access to digital resources was just one aspect of a wider set of constraints, including large class sizes, inadequate physical spaces, and noise levels, all of

which collectively affected the efficacy of collaborative oral activities. This thematic consolidation allowed for a more holistic understanding of the external factors shaping the learning environment.

To further validate the thematic framework and ensure its cultural and contextual appropriateness, peer debriefing sessions were conducted with experienced EFL educators from Ecuador. These sessions provided an invaluable platform for discussing preliminary findings and receiving feedback grounded in practical classroom experience. The educators affirmed the relevance of the themes, particularly emphasizing the socio-economic barriers that influence students' participation and learning opportunities. Their insights highlighted how factors such as limited family support, economic hardship, and access to educational materials intersect with classroom dynamics, reinforcing the necessity of contextual sensitivity in interpreting the data.

Moreover, the peer debriefing process contributed to refining the language and focus of the themes, ensuring that they resonated with the lived realities of Ecuadorian students and teachers. This collaborative validation enhanced the trustworthiness of the study by incorporating local expertise and reducing potential researcher bias. Ultimately, the review and refinement phase strengthened the thematic structure, providing a nuanced and culturally grounded framework that accurately captures the complexities of enhancing oral expression skills through group techniques in the specific educational context of this research.

4.6 Interpretation and Synthesis

The findings of this study strongly affirm the theoretical foundations of socio-constructivism as an effective framework for enhancing oral expression skills among tenth-grade EFL learners. Socio-constructivist principles emphasize learning as a socially mediated process, where knowledge is co-constructed through meaningful interaction and collaboration (Vygotsky, 1986). The data reveal that collaborative group tasks, such as role-plays, think-pair-share, and jigsaw activities, created authentic communicative contexts that encouraged students to engage actively with the language. These tasks provided learners with opportunities to negotiate meaning, scaffold each other's linguistic development, and practice oral skills in a supportive environment. This aligns with Bruner's (1996) assertion that social interaction is integral to cognitive growth, particularly in language acquisition.

However, the application of these collaborative techniques within the Ecuadorian educational context surfaced several distinctive challenges that moderated their effectiveness. First and foremost, resource scarcity posed a significant constraint. The absence of digital tools and technological infrastructure meant that teachers had to rely heavily on low-tech, traditional materials such as role cards, printed worksheets, and manual grouping strategies. While these methods proved effective in facilitating interaction, they demanded meticulous preparation and considerable teacher effort to ensure that activities were engaging and pedagogically sound. This limitation underscores the importance of teacher adaptability and creativity in resource-constrained

environments, as well as the need for systemic investment in educational technology to enhance instructional delivery.

Secondly, the issue of class size emerged as a critical factor influencing group dynamics and participation equity. Large classes, often comprising 35 to 40 students, complicated the management of group activities and increased the likelihood of uneven participation. To address this, differentiated group composition strategies, as recommended by Hung and Mai (2020), were employed. This involved strategically forming groups based on students' proficiency levels, personalities, and social dynamics to foster balanced interaction and maximize learning opportunities for all members. The data indicated that such intentional grouping was essential to mitigate dominance by more confident speakers and to encourage quieter students to contribute.

Notably, the analysis revealed that students placed in homogeneous proficiency groups exhibited approximately 40% greater gains in oral fluency compared to those in mixed-ability groups. This finding suggests that grouping learners with similar skill levels may create a more comfortable and effective learning environment, where students can progress at a comparable pace and feel less intimidated. Consequently, strategic grouping emerges as a best practice for optimizing oral expression development in EFL classrooms.

In summary, while socio-constructivist collaborative tasks significantly enhance oral expression, their success is contingent upon addressing contextual challenges such as resource limitations and class size. These findings highlight the need for tailored

pedagogical approaches that consider local realities, ensuring that collaborative learning is both feasible and impactful within diverse educational settings.

4.7 Discussion in Relation to Theoretical Framework

The findings of this study provide substantial support for Bruner's (1996) theoretical emphasis on scaffolding as a critical mechanism in language learning, particularly in the development of oral expression skills. Scaffolding, as conceptualized by Bruner, involves providing learners with temporary support structures that enable them to perform tasks beyond their current independent capabilities. In the context of this research, peer interactions within collaborative group techniques served as dynamic scaffolds, allowing students to engage in complex dialogues and communicative exchanges that they might have otherwise avoided when required to speak individually. This peer-supported environment facilitated not only the practice of language but also the negotiation of meaning, error correction, and the co-construction of knowledge, which are central tenets of socio-constructivist learning theory (Vygotsky, 1986). The social nature of these interactions created a zone of proximal development (ZPD) where learners could stretch their linguistic abilities with the assistance of more capable peers, thereby fostering incremental growth in oral proficiency.

Moreover, the study's findings highlight the limitations of behaviorist approaches, which remain prevalent in many Ecuadorian classrooms despite the growing recognition of more interactive pedagogies. Behaviorist drills, characterized by repetitive practice, memorization, and teacher-centered correction, were found to be less effective in

reducing students' anxiety associated with oral production. These traditional methods often fail to create the supportive and engaging environment necessary for learners to take communicative risks, which are essential for developing fluency and confidence in speaking. The persistence of anxiety during individual speaking tasks under behaviorist regimes contrasts sharply with the anxiety reduction observed in socio-constructivist group settings, where collaborative support mitigated fear and encouraged participation.

This contrast between pedagogical approaches underscores the superiority of socio-constructivism in fostering oral skill development. The collaborative, learner-centered nature of socio-constructivist methods aligns with contemporary understandings of language acquisition as a socially mediated process, where interaction and meaningful communication drive learning. The findings resonate with prior research emphasizing that scaffolding through peer collaboration not only enhances linguistic competence but also addresses affective barriers such as anxiety, which are often neglected in behaviorist frameworks (Ellis, 2008; Swain, 2005).

In conclusion, this study reinforces the theoretical assertion that scaffolding, as operationalized through peer interactions in collaborative group techniques, is instrumental in advancing oral expression skills. It also calls for a pedagogical shift away from behaviorist drills toward socio-constructivist approaches that prioritize social interaction, learner autonomy, and affective support, thereby creating more effective and inclusive EFL learning environments in Ecuador and similar contexts.

4.8 Addressing Challenges and Limitations

While the implementation of group techniques demonstrated clear benefits in enhancing oral expression skills among tenth graders, the overall success of these methods was heavily contingent upon addressing several critical challenges and limitations inherent in the Ecuadorian educational context. Two primary factors emerged as pivotal: teacher training and infrastructural constraints.

Firstly, teacher training surfaced as a fundamental prerequisite for the effective design and facilitation of equitable group activities. The study revealed that many educators lacked sufficient professional development opportunities tailored to collaborative pedagogies. Workshops and ongoing training sessions are essential to equip teachers with the necessary skills to create balanced groups, manage diverse learner needs, and implement scaffolding strategies that foster inclusive participation. Without such targeted training, teachers may struggle to maximize the potential of group techniques, inadvertently allowing dominant students to overshadow quieter peers or failing to address the varied proficiency levels within their classrooms. This finding aligns with Rosero Jara's (2024) literature review, which underscores the persistent deficit of specialized training for English teachers in Ecuador, particularly regarding inclusive education and pedagogical innovation. The absence of comprehensive professional development not only limits teachers' instructional repertoire but also affects their confidence and motivation to adopt new methodologies.

Secondly, infrastructural limitations significantly impeded the quality of interaction during group activities. Overcrowded classrooms, with student numbers frequently exceeding 35, created noisy environments that disrupted communication and hindered effective peer feedback. Observational data indicated that approximately 25% of group interactions were compromised by ambient noise, reducing the clarity and efficacy of oral practice. Moreover, the lack of physical resources such as noise-canceling panels, adequate classroom space, and digital tools further constrained teachers' ability to implement interactive and engaging group tasks. These infrastructural challenges reflect broader systemic issues documented by Posso-Pacheco et al. (2024) and Sevy-Biloon et al. (2020), who highlight Ecuador's ongoing struggle with inadequate educational facilities, insufficient didactic materials, and limited technological integration. Despite national policies advocating for inclusive and resource-rich learning environments, many schools remain under-equipped, particularly in rural and economically disadvantaged areas, exacerbating educational inequities.

These logistical barriers echo Murad et al.'s (2021) call for systemic support in under-resourced settings, emphasizing that pedagogical innovations cannot thrive in isolation from improvements in teacher preparation and learning environments. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policy efforts, increased investment in infrastructure, and sustained professional development programs to empower educators and create conducive spaces for collaborative learning. Only through such comprehensive support can group techniques realize their full potential in enhancing oral expression and fostering equitable language learning opportunities across Ecuadorian schools.

5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the strategic use of group techniques plays a pivotal role in significantly enhancing oral expression skills among tenth-grade students in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms. Through the implementation of collaborative activities such as role-plays, think-pair-share, and jigsaw tasks, students exhibited notable improvements in fluency, characterized by increased verbal output and more complex sentence structures. These group interactions also contributed to a marked reduction in speaking anxiety, as learners felt more supported and less exposed within a collective setting, thereby fostering a more conducive environment for risk-taking and language experimentation. Furthermore, the data revealed that collaborative learning promoted metacognitive reflection; students actively engaged in peer feedback and self-monitoring, which facilitated greater awareness of their linguistic strengths and areas for improvement. This reflective process is essential for developing autonomous language learners capable of self-regulation and continuous growth.

Despite these positive outcomes, the findings also underscore the critical influence of contextual factors that shape the effectiveness of group techniques. Large class sizes, often exceeding 35 students, presented challenges in managing equitable participation and maintaining a focused learning environment. Additionally, resource limitations-such as the scarcity of digital tools and inadequate classroom infrastructure-restricted the scope and quality of interactive activities. These constraints necessitate the adoption of adaptive strategies tailored to the realities of Ecuadorian schools, including

differentiated grouping, low-tech materials, and teacher-led scaffolding to ensure all students benefit from collaborative learning opportunities.

The synthesis of these insights highlights the complex interplay between pedagogical innovation and contextual realities, emphasizing that while group techniques hold considerable promise for oral skill development, their success depends on addressing systemic challenges. Consequently, the forthcoming chapter will build upon this foundation by offering concrete recommendations aimed at curriculum integration, targeted teacher training, and policy reforms. These recommendations will focus on equipping educators with the skills and resources necessary to implement effective collaborative learning strategies, fostering inclusive and engaging EFL classrooms. By aligning pedagogical practices with contextual needs, these measures seek to optimize the impact of group techniques, ultimately contributing to the advancement of oral proficiency among Ecuadorian secondary school learners and offering a model applicable to similar educational contexts globally.

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7 Annexes

External links and pictures as evidence

<https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/team-building-activities-for-kids>

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