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TEMA:

EFL BACCALAUREATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING AND SELF-REPORTED ORAL COMMUNICATION IN ECUADOR

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RESUMEN

El aprendizaje basado en proyectos (ABP) incorpora actividades en las que los estudiantes usan el inglés para colaborar, intercambiar ideas y elaborar un producto. Este estudio examinó las percepciones de estudiantes de bachillerato en Ecuador sobre el ABP en la clase de inglés y sobre su propia comunicación oral. Se empleó un diseño cuantitativo, transversal y descriptivo. El análisis incluyó 53 respuestas a un cuestionario de diez afirmaciones con escala Likert de cinco puntos. Cincuenta respuestas contenían información para los diez ítems; las tres restantes presentaban datos incompletos. La media de los ítems sobre ABP fue 3,53, mientras que la de los ítems sobre comunicación oral percibida fue 3,07. La afirmación sobre practicar inglés mediante la comunicación obtuvo la media más alta (M = 3,72). Las respuestas sobre la capacidad de mantener una conversación en inglés se dividieron: 20 personas marcaron desacuerdo o total desacuerdo y otras 20, acuerdo o total acuerdo. Los resultados reflejan percepciones favorables sobre las oportunidades comunicativas que ofrece el trabajo por proyectos y valoraciones más diversas sobre la propia comunicación oral. Como no se evaluó el habla ni se comparó el desempeño antes y después de una intervención, los datos no permiten afirmar que el ABP haya causado mejoras en la fluidez.

PALABRAS CLAVES: aprendizaje basado en proyectos; inglés como lengua extranjera; fluidez oral; percepciones estudiantiles; bachillerato.

ABSTRACT

Project-based learning (PBL) engages students in activities that require them to use English while collaborating, exchanging ideas, and producing a shared outcome. This study examined Ecuadorian Baccalaureate students' perceptions of PBL in English classes and their own oral communication. A quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive design was used. The analysis included 53 survey responses to ten five-point Likert items. Fifty responses had complete data for all ten items; three were incomplete. The mean for the PBL items was 3.53, compared with 3.07 for the perceived oral communication items. The statement about practising English through communication received the highest mean (M = 3.72). Responses to the statement about sustaining a conversation in English were divided: 20 respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 20 agreed or strongly agreed. The results point to favorable views of the communicative opportunities offered by project work and more varied self-ratings of oral communication. Since the study included no speaking assessment or pre- and post-intervention comparison, the findings describe perceptions and do not establish that PBL caused gains in speaking fluency.

KEYWORDS: project-based learning; English as a foreign language; speaking fluency; student perceptions; Baccalaureate.

1. INTRODUCCIÓN

Articulating in a foreign tongue necessitates that learners choose vocabulary, construct phrases, and react to others as dialogue progresses. These requirements position oral practice as a pivotal focus in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education. Brown and Yule (1983) differentiate between communication aimed at imparting information and communication intended to sustain social engagement. Bygate (1987) characterizes oral production as a competency that relies on linguistic knowledge and the capacity to employ it in communicative exchanges. Canale and Swain (1980) categorize this skill as part of communicative competence, encompassing both an understanding of linguistic structures and the ability to apply them appropriately in context. Hughes (2011) examines the significance of context in the education and evaluation of speaking. Classroom assignments influence the frequency with which students articulate thoughts, engage with peers, enquire, and reply in English.

Fluency constitutes one aspect of verbal performance; nonetheless, it does not denote a singular skill. Lennon (1990) characterizes fluency as a multifaceted construct. Tavakoli and Skehan (2005) investigate aspects of speech pace, pauses, and repairs during task execution, whereas Segalowitz (2010) links spoken fluency to the cognitive mechanisms engaged in language production. Kormos (2006) examines the strategies and processes that speakers engage in while producing a second language. De Jong (2018) and Suzuki et al. (2021) also differentiate characteristics of speech from assessments of a speaker's fluency. A survey can document if students believe they can articulate thoughts or maintain a dialogue; however, it cannot determine speech tempo, duration of pauses, or variations in recorded speech. The current research thus investigates perceived verbal communication instead of assessed fluency.

Project-based learning (PBL) structures education around an inquiry, challenge, or objective that culminates in a tangible outcome or presentation. Dewey (1938) linked education to experience, while Kilpatrick (1918) characterized the project approach as intentional engagement. Blumenfeld et al. (1991) and Thomas (2000) investigated the ways in which project design might include learners in inquiry and the development of knowledge. Krajcik and Shin (2014) characterize project-based environments by elements including a central inquiry, exploration, teamwork, and the production of an item. Bell (2010) associates project endeavors with communication and collaboration. Collectively, these narratives depict PBL as a methodology where students apply information to achieve a result, rather than

merely as a supplementary presentation to a class devoid of ongoing inquiry or a common objective.

In language instruction, project-based activities can link English usage with content knowledge and a communication objective. Fried-Booth (2002) characterizes project work as a method to translate classroom education into meaningful engagement. Beckett and Slater (2005) provide a model for amalgamating language, content, and skills via projects, whereas Stoller (2006) examines project-based pedagogy as a method for captivating language learners with content. Poonpon (2011) investigated project-based learning within an English as a Foreign Language framework, whereas Dooly and Sadler (2016) analyzed technology-enhanced project work in language acquisition. Throughout a project, students could deliberate on alternatives, allocate tasks, gather data, create resources, and provide a presentation. These phases can generate opportunities for verbal practice. The quantity and calibre of English usage may nevertheless differ among students, contingent upon the assignment, group responsibilities, linguistic assistance, and classroom environment.

Investigations into PBL and oral communication have utilized various demographics, educational environments, and assessment tools. Ruengkul (2018) conducted a study on Thai EFL undergraduates on project-based learning in speaking pedagogy. Tuyen, Nguyen, and Mai (2022) investigated project-based learning within a distant higher education context, emphasizing English speaking. Benlaghrissi and Ouahidi (2024) conducted research on mobile-assisted project-based learning involving 91 Moroccan secondary students, incorporating speech evaluations and a student questionnaire. Syafryadin et al. (2024) examined the perspectives and difficulties faced by university students in a PBL speaking course. Bei and Tiarina (2025) employed a descriptive quantitative methodology to investigate secondary students' perceptions of project-based learning about their speaking proficiency and self-esteem; Hasibuan et al. (2025) conducted a survey of university students regarding project-based learning in an English-language course. Sulistiyaningsih (2026) employed a Likert-scale survey to investigate students' perceptions of PBL in English classes. Guo et al. (2020) evaluated the results analyzed in PBL studies, encompassing students' perceptions and experiences. Gunawan (2026) and Pitaloka et al. (2025) conducted a review of research concerning PBL and oral communication, encompassing initiatives such debates, storytelling, presentations, and video blogging. These investigations focus on perceptions, engagement, and speaking results; nevertheless, their findings cannot be considered comparable due to variations in participants, educational environments, study methodologies, and assessment tools.

Ecuadorian studies have focused on project-based learning and spoken communication in both educational and higher education environments. Muñoz Ponce and González Reyes (2025) conducted a mixed-method investigation involving seventh-grade students in Santa Elena. Mosquera Zapata, Letamendi Lazo, and Bonilla Tenesaca (2025) investigated debate as a project-oriented approach with adolescent EFL students and assessed verbal communication via speaking assignments, classroom observations, and student questionnaires. Benites Bachón, Campoverde López, and Bonilla Tenesaca (2026) conducted research on project-based learning and oral communication among secondary students in Guayaquil utilizing a mixed-method, quasi-experimental approach. Vallejo-Paspuel and Criollo Vargas (2026) investigated project-based learning and English-speaking proficiency in students at a higher technological institution. This research demonstrates that project-based learning and verbal communication have been examined in Ecuador at various educational tiers and utilizing diverse methodologies. The current research concentrates on students' views regarding project activities and their self-assessed English communication skills.

Research utilizing questionnaires must differentiate between student perceptions and evaluated performance. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) examine the formulation and analysis of surveys in the context of language acquisition studies. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018) discuss the choice of methodologies in educational research, whereas Creswell and Creswell (2018) differentiate between descriptive designs and those aimed at examining causal relationships. Mackey and Gass (2016) highlight the connection among research enquiries, data gathering, and the assertions that a study can substantiate. This differentiation delineates the parameters of the current study. The ten-question survey encompasses two domains: students' perceptions of project activities in English lessons and their self-assessments on interactions with peers, dialogue, fluency, authenticity, and precision. The research outlines reactions in both domains and examines their trends within the cohort involved. It does not evaluate documented speech or examine if PBL induces alterations in speaking proficiency. The objective is to deliver a relevant description of the perceptions held by EFL Baccalaureate students in Ecuador regarding project work and their proficiency in oral communication in English.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research employed a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive methodology to investigate EFL Baccalaureate students' views on project-based learning (PBL) and oral communication in English. A descriptive design was appropriate for the objective of

encapsulating students' perspectives at a single moment, without altering classroom pedagogy or examining causal relationships. Responses were collected via a digital survey conducted from October 7 to 13, 2026. The research lacked educational intervention, a comparative group, or an evaluation of verbal performance; its results reflect the opinions expressed by participants.

The examination encompassed 53 questionnaire entries, each including a minimum of one reply to the ten survey assertions. Fifty entries included replies to all ten assertions. Due to the inability to associate each contribution with a verified individual participant, the sample is shown as 53 submissions instead of 53 authenticated students. The participants were recognized as EFL Baccalaureate students in Ecuador. The institution and the methodology employed to enlist participants were not detailed in the material provided for this draft. Consequently, the sample must be interpreted in the context of the analyzed replies, and the results should not be seen as indicative of all Baccalaureate students in Ecuador.

The survey had two demographic enquiries regarding age and grade level, succeeded by 10 assertions evaluated on a five-point Likert scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree). Items 1 through 5 pertained to project-based learning in English as a Foreign Language classroom. They enquired if the project activities facilitated verbal expression, interaction with peers, practice via classroom dialogue, engagement in discussions, and enhancement of speaking skills. Items 6–10 examined participants' views on their English oral communication skills, encompassing dialogue, concept articulation, fluency, spontaneity, and precision.

The two sets of items illustrate the structure of the questionnaire and denote interconnected yet separate domains. The initial aspect pertains to students' perceptions of project endeavors; the subsequent aspect relates to their self-assessments on communication. This differentiation directed the examination, as positive perceptions of classroom activities alone cannot confirm an enhancement in students' speaking proficiency. Neither category of items offers a direct assessment of verbal fluency. The research did not gather any verbal samples, speech-rate statistics, pause metrics, or evaluations from an oral performance scale.

Response frequencies and percentages were computed for each question to illustrate how participants chose among the five scale options. Means and standard deviations were employed to encapsulate item responses and the two dimensions of the questionnaire. Dimension metrics were derived from all accessible item evaluations within the pertinent group; they serve as descriptive summaries rather than scores from a validated instrument. Three replies were absent among the ten items. Each was excluded from the computation for

its respective item, with no response value deduced or replaced. Age inputs were inconsistently documented in numerical format, and one grade-level response was absent; hence, this background information was not utilized for subgroup analyses.

No inferential examinations or causal investigations were performed. The design fails to determine if PBL induced alterations in students' speaking fluency, nor can the self-reported assessments be construed as actual speaking improvements. The details provided for this draft do not specify the consent process or the status of the ethics review; these aspects must be verified from the study documentation prior to submission.

3. RESULTS

The evaluation contained 53 questionnaire responses, each containing at least one answer to the ten statements. Fifty entries received replies for each of the ten items. Three item responses were absent, resulting in a valid response count for each item varying between 51 and 53.

Responses about numeric age varied between 15 and 17 years (n = 46): six participants indicated age 15, 26 indicated age 16, and 14 indicated age 17. The grade level was documented in 52 entries: one denoted the initial year of Baccalaureate, 31 referred to the second year, and 20 to the third year. The insufficient age data and the limited quantity of first-year replies hinder significant comparisons among these demographic groups.

In items 1–5, which focused on PBL in EFL classes, the average rating was 3.53 (SD = 1.12; 262 item responses). The average score for items 6–10, which focused on perceived speech communication, was 3.07 (SD = 1.22; 265 item responses). The initial category of items received a superior average rating. These metrics encapsulate the documented item evaluations; they do not represent scores derived from a validated scale.

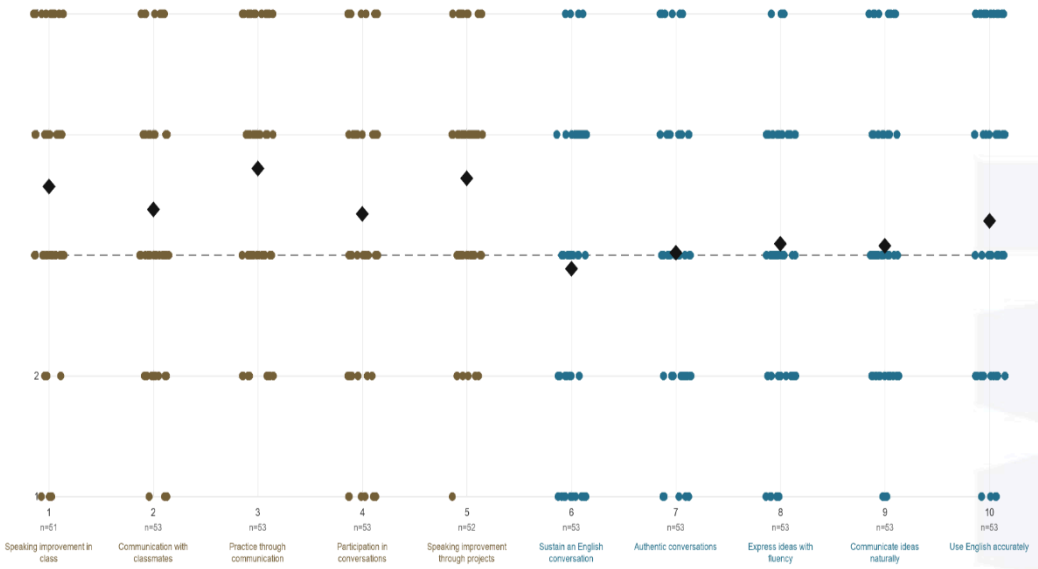
Among the PBL items, the assertion on practicing English via communication attained the highest average (item 3: M = 3.72, SD = 1.06). Thirty out of fifty-three replies indicated Agree or Strongly Agree, constituting 56.6%. The aspect of project activities aiding students in enhancing their speaking skills likewise recorded a mean beyond the scale's midpoint (item 5: M = 3.63, SD = 0.99). Item 4, concerning participation in discussions with peers, exhibited the lowest average in this cohort (M = 3.34, SD = 1.27). This trend indicates positive perceptions of communicative practices via projects, with differences among the particular activities outlined.

The evaluations for the oral communication components were diminished and exhibited greater variability. Statement 6, "I can maintain a dialogue in English with my

peers," exhibited the lowest average across all ten assertions (M = 2.89, SD = 1.25). Twenty participants chose Strongly Disagree or Disagree, 20 opted for Agree or Strongly Agree, and 13 indicated Neither Agree nor Disagree. The remaining four items in this category exhibited means ranging from 3.02 to 3.28. Consequently, replies varied about the facets of verbal communication outlined in the survey.

Figure 1.

Individual Likert responses across the ten questionnaire items



Note. Each dot represents one recorded response. Vertical jitter separates points with the same rating; it does not change response values. Black diamonds mark item means. The dashed horizontal line marks the scale midpoint (3). The figure has a transparent background.

Table 1.

Response distributions and descriptive statistics for the ten items

Item	Valid n	Responses 1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5*	Mean	SD
1. Project-based activities improve my speaking in English class.	51	3 / 3 / 18 / 16 / 11	3.57	1.08
2. Project work allows me to communicate with my classmates in English.	53	3 / 9 / 17 / 13 / 11	3.38	1.16
3. Project-based activities help me practise English through communication in class.	53	0 / 8 / 15 / 14 / 16	3.72	1.06

4. Project-based activities allow me to take part in conversations with classmates.	53	6 / 7 / 14 / 15 / 11	3.34	1.27
5. Project-based class activities help me improve my speaking.	52	1 / 5 / 17 / 18 / 11	3.63	0.99
6. I can keep a conversation in English with my classmates.	53	10 / 10 / 13 / 16 / 4	2.89	1.25
7. I can have more authentic conversations with my classmates.	53	6 / 11 / 18 / 12 / 6	3.02	1.17
8. I can express my ideas in English more fluently.	53	5 / 12 / 15 / 15 / 6	3.09	1.17
9. I can communicate my ideas in English more during classroom activities.	53	4 / 15 / 16 / 9 / 9	3.08	1.21
10. I can use English more accurately.	53	4 / 14 / 10 / 13 / 12	3.28	1.29

Note. Response counts follow the scale order: 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree), 4 (Agree), and 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 2.

Descriptive summaries by questionnaire dimension

Dimension	Items	Available item responses	Mean	SD
PBL in EFL classes	1–5	262	3.53	1.12
Perceived oral communication	6–10	265	3.07	1.22

The feedback indicates a greater preference for project-based activities compared to students' personal speech communication. This distinction illustrates the way participants evaluated the two sets of items; it does not indicate that projects enhanced fluency. The research depended on self-reported data and did not incorporate a speaking task, performance evaluation criteria, or a comparison of oral proficiency before to and following instruction.

The dataset had 53 questionnaire entries, each featuring at least one answer to the ten claims. Out of the 530 potential item responses, 527 were documented; three were absent. The replies to each item varied between 51 and 53. Figure 1 illustrates the documented Likert

scores by item. The diamonds represent the average values of the items, while the dashed line indicates the scale's middle.

The collective average of the five components related to project-based learning in EFL classes was 3.53 (SD = 1.12), surpassing the midpoint of the scale. Item 3, which enquired if project activities facilitated English practice via classroom communication, garnered the highest average in this cohort (M = 3.72, SD = 1.06); 30 out of 53 responses indicated “Agree” or “Strongly Agree.” Conversely, Item 4, concerning engagement in discussions with peers, recorded the lowest average in this group (M = 3.34, SD = 1.27).

The aggregated average for the five oral communication elements was 3.07 (SD = 1.22), nearing the midpoint of the scale. Item 10, concerning the utilization of English with enhanced precision, recorded the highest average in this cohort (M = 3.28, SD = 1.29). Item 6, concerning the maintenance of an English conversation with peers, exhibited the lowest average (M = 2.89, SD = 1.25): 20 out of 53 responses fell into the two disagreement classifications, 13 were neutral, and 20 were categorized as agreement.

The analytical findings indicate a superior average evaluation for project activities compared to self-assessed speech communication. The pattern of responses differs across each category: participants rated their experience of practicing English through project-related dialogue most positively, whereas their evaluations of conversational sustainability were more varied. These findings illustrate the documented impressions; they do not assess speaking proficiency or demonstrate that project-based learning induced a shift in fluency.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate a disparity between participants' perceptions of project-based tasks and their self-assessments about spoken communication. The aggregated average for the five project-based learning items was 3.53, but the aggregated average for the five spoken communication items was 3.07. This disparity indicates that the submissions had a higher consensus regarding the communicative significance of project work compared to their own speaking abilities. The two factions tackle different viewpoints; hence, the disparity need to be seen as a descriptive trend. The evidence does not indicate that project work enhanced, or hindered, pupils' speaking abilities. This differentiation aligns with studies that regard project

design, classroom engagement, and language results as interconnected yet distinct domains of investigation (Thomas, 2000; Beckett & Slater, 2005; Stoller, 2006).

Item 3 exhibited the greatest average among the five assertions on project-based learning. It enquired if project activities improved students' English practice via classroom communication, with 30 out of 53 respondents indicating "Agree" or "Strongly Agree. This framework aligns with characterizations of project-based work as an environment conducive to significant language application, where learners communicate information, deliberate on choices, and collaboratively create a final result (Fried-Booth, 2002; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006; Markham, 2011). Stoller (2006), Beckett and Slater (2005), and Thomas (2000) also characterize projects as endeavors that link educational objectives with ongoing efforts toward a deliverable or exhibition. The current findings provide proof of students' positive perceptions of communication during project tasks. They do not determine the frequency of English usage among students, the extent of their speaking, or if their language proficiency improved.

The project-based learning components did not obtain uniform evaluations. Item 4, pertaining to engagement in discussions with peers, exhibited a lower average than item 3. This disparity would suggest that participants differentiated between the availability of opportunities to practice English and engaging in dialogue with colleagues. The survey is unable to ascertain the rationale behind their differentiation. The assertions might have been interpreted variably, and the replies could indicate disparities in students' educational encounters. Research on project-based language acquisition has identified collaboration, planning, and presenting as components of project work; nevertheless, the mere existence of a group activity does not guarantee that all students engage in verbal contact (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Fried-Booth, 2002; Stoller, 2006). In this dataset, the diminished rating for Item 4 serves as a topic for debate rather than evidence of restricted involvement.

The oral communication components exhibit a less advantageous and more diverse trend. The aggregated average was in the midpoint of the scale, whereas Item 6, concerning the maintenance of an English discussion with peers, recorded the lowest average in the survey. Out of 53 comments, 20 were categorized as disagreements, 13 were neutral, and 20 were classified as agreements. This distribution illustrates discrepancies in self-reported data; it fails to endorse a singular characterization of the speaking proficiency of all participants. The remaining oral communication aspects similarly garnered scores close to the scale's

middle, encompassing assertions regarding the fluid expression of ideas, natural communication, and precise use of English. Such evaluations imply perceived competence. They cannot replace a speech analysis, as fluency studies investigate aspects including speech tempo, pause patterns, and coherence in verbal output (Wood, 2001; Segalowitz, 2010; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005).

The disparity between positive assessments of project activities and more ambiguous self-reports regarding speaking may indicate the gap between appraising a learning experience and assessing one's own proficiency. A learner could appreciate an endeavor that offers an impetus for dialogue, even while grappling with doubts over their ability to maintain a discussion or articulate thoughts fluidly. Investigations on project-based language learning have analyzed student perspectives in conjunction with classroom dynamics and educational results, advocating for the separation of different domains in interpretation (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Srikrai, 2008; Stoller, 2006). The existing questionnaire encompasses both perspectives; nevertheless, it fails to indicate whether there is a correlation between project involvement and self-assessed speaking proficiency for each individual respondent. The existing summaries fail to demonstrate that relationship, hence the disparity between the two aggregated means should not be seen as indicative of an individual-level trend.

The results likewise indicate the composition and organization of the tool. Questions 1–5 enquire about project-oriented tasks and their perceived impact on communication, whereas Questions 6–10 request respondents to evaluate facets of their own verbal communication. The two sets were categorized based on the structure of the questionnaire; the existing data does not confirm that they constitute validated scales. The aggregated means serve as descriptive overviews of item evaluations, rather than scores derived from a validated assessment of PBL or speaking proficiency. This is significant as a scale interpretation necessitates proof that the items assess a unified construct and operate as designed. Previous research on project-based learning encompasses various elements, such as project design, student engagement, language utilization, and perceived educational outcomes (Thomas, 2000; Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006; Beckett & Slater, 2005). The existing categories ought to be understood at the same level of attention.

Numerous aspects of the research constrain the assertions that can be formulated. The cross-sectional survey collected impressions at a single moment and did not incorporate an

oral performance task, a comparison group, or pretest and post-test evaluations. Consequently, it is unable to demonstrate alterations in verbal fluency or ascribe any modifications to project-based learning. The documentation includes 53 entries with a minimum of one reply, although it does not confirm if each originated from a distinct student. Three out of the 530 potential item replies were absent, and the counts for item responses varied from 51 to 53. These omissions do not hinder a detailed analysis of the documented ratings, nevertheless they ought to be included in the interpretation. Research evaluating fluency via speech samples or performance metrics poses a distinct inquiry compared to a perception survey (Wood, 2001; Segalowitz, 2010; Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005).

The findings offer a concentrated overview of how the documented submissions evaluated project-oriented tasks and their personal verbal communication. The most evident positive feedback pertained to the chances to engage in English practice via classroom dialogue. The most varied reaction pertained to maintaining dialogue with peers. This pattern can guide future classroom investigations by highlighting the relationship between project activities and students' genuine chances to communicate. A further investigation may correlate perceptual data with documented speaking tasks, a comprehensive description of the project activities, and longitudinal measurements. Such evidence would enable researchers to investigate if students' perceptions align with their actual speaking behavior and if fluency varies during project work, enquiries that the current descriptive survey cannot address.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined EFL Baccalaureate students' perceptions of project-based learning and oral communication in English in Ecuador. Across the ten questionnaire items, ratings for project-based classroom activities were more favorable than ratings for self-reported oral communication. The strongest response concerned opportunities to practise English through classroom communication. Ratings for sustaining a conversation with classmates were more divided, with the same number of responses in the agreement and disagreement categories. These findings suggest that respondents saw value in the communicative opportunities associated with project work, while their views of their own speaking ability varied.

The results describe perceptions reported in 53 questionnaire submissions with at least one item response. They do not establish that project-based learning improved speaking

fluency. The study included no recorded speech, oral performance assessment, comparison group, or pretest and posttest. The two item groups followed the questionnaire's structure and were not validated scales. The submission count also cannot confirm how many unique students took part. Conclusions should therefore remain within the scope of this descriptive survey.

The response pattern draws attention to the distinction between offering communicative activities and supporting learners' confidence in speaking with peers. Project tasks may create occasions for students to exchange ideas, make decisions, and present their work, but the survey does not show how each student took part in those exchanges. Teachers could use the findings to review whether project stages give all learners a clear role in spoken interaction. Future studies could pair perception questionnaires with recorded speaking tasks, performance criteria for fluency, and measurements at more than one point in time. Such evidence would help clarify whether students' views correspond with observed speech and whether oral fluency changes during project-based instruction.

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