

EFFECTIVENESS OF BEELINGUAPP TO IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS IN FRESHMEN AT SITIO PRADO ANNEXE

EFICACIA DE BEELINGUAPP PARA MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DE HABLA INGLÉS EN ESTUDIANTES DE PRIMER AÑO DEL ANEXO SITIO PRADO

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ABSTRACT

This is descriptive research based on a pre-post-test and observation as well, which determined the results of this research. The sample of 20 freshmen in the English bachelor's program of this annex. This place is located in Ngäbe-Buglé Comarca in the Republic of Panama. The results showed an improvement in students' oral and speaking skills after the implementation of Beelinguapp. These have improved their comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thus, it can be said that this app helped them become better ESL learners after the first semester.

KEYWORDS: Beelinguapp application, English Oral skills, English speaking skills, ESL learners, Freshman, MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning).

RESUMEN

Se trata de una investigación descriptiva basada en un pre y post-test y también observación, la cual determinó los resultados de esta investigación. La muestra de 20 estudiantes de primer año del programa de licenciatura en inglés en este anexo. Este lugar está ubicado en la Comarca Ngäbe-Buglé en la República de Panamá. Los resultados mostraron una mejora en las habilidades orales y del habla de los estudiantes después de la implementación de Beelinguapp. Estos han mejorado su comprensión, fluidez, vocabulario, gramática y pronunciación. Por lo tanto, se puede decir que esta aplicación les ayudó a convertirse en mejores estudiantes de ESL después del primer semestre.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Beelinguapp aplicación, habilidades orales en inglés, habilidades para hablar inglés, estudiantes de segunda enseñanza en el idioma inglés.

INTRODUCTION

One of the main concerns of most English language professors at the superior level is teaching learners the best strategies and techniques to develop oral and written English skills. According to Yong Mei Fung (2016): "One of the difficulties which prevent learners from learning to speak in English is due to apprehension" Speaking and writing English fluently and coherently is crucial; however, there are many cultural and sociolinguistic factors that influence this process. Some of those aspects are a lack of vocabulary, ideas to express, the use of technology, and motivation to learn a second language. The acquisition of English as a Second Language (ESL)



especially speaking skills remains critical despite numerous actions taken to improve the use of English (Kaur & Yunus, 2014)

Bin (2015) said that somebody is considered successful in learning a foreign language when he or she can speak it. For these reasons, we have implemented “Beelinguapp” with freshman students of Sitio Prado Extension English School. The purpose is to have students use the application in and out of the classroom to improve their oral skills. They will be exposed to different English activities in the App that help to improve speaking skills. According to Roy (2019) using technology in classrooms also makes the lesson more efficient. Many technology tools can be used in ESL classes to improve foreign students’ English and technology skills.

The study is important in identifying how effective is it to use a technological tool to teach speaking skills to freshman students of Sitio Prado Extension. This is a new approach that can help to enhance ESL oral communication skills among ESL learners. Zahra & Farrah (2015) discusses that the majority of the students need more practice and they do not improve their skills of learning the language. As a result, the implementation of this app provides a variety of exercises for these ESL learners.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is quantitative research since we are collecting and analyzing data. In this study, we describe and examine the results of a group of participants to measure the level of improvement they show after using the mentioned tool. For this reason, we applied a pretest to determine the current level of proficiency of the students. The design is pre-experimental since we are taking a group of students, and we are studying the improvement regarding the pre and post-test to see the enhancement of their speaking skills.

To conduct this research, it will be randomly selected a sample of 20 freshmen students enrolled in an Oral Expression Course for an English Bachelor's Degree from Sitio Prado. These students will be participating in this study for 14 weeks in which they will carry out a series of assignments using Beelinguapp. After this period, a post-test will be applied, and the results will be compared with those of the pretest.

The Speaking test was 6-10 minutes long containing three parts.

Speaking - Part 1 - In the first part of the Speaking test the examiner will introduce him or herself and ask students to do it as well, providing as much information as they can.

Speaking - Part 2 - In the second part, the examiner will ask students to describe college life at Universidad de Panamá.

Speaking - Part 3 - In the third part, the examiner will ask students to talk about their experience as English learners at the university.

To evaluate freshmen’s performance during the pretest and post-test examiners used the following rubric:

Instrument N. 2: Pre-Test Evaluation Rubric

Student's Name: _____ Group: _____ Date: _____

This rubric uses five 5-point scales (25 total points) 25 is the best score and 5 is the worst.

Fluency	Pronunciation	Vocabulary	Grammar	Content	Fluency
5	Smooth and effortless speech; minimal to no hesitations; no need to search for words; excellent volume.	Pronunciation is outstanding; commendable effort at achieving accent.	Exceptional mastery of language features; a broad array of well-selected vocabulary.	Precision and variety of grammatical structures are superb.	5
4	Speech flows smoothly with minimal hesitations; occasional word search; only a few inaudible words.	Pronunciation is strong; notable effort to maintain an accent.	Effective control of language; a commendable selection of vocabulary.	Some errors in grammatical structures, perhaps due to an attempt to diversify.	4
3	Speech is moderately smooth with some hesitations and unevenness due to rephrasing and word searching; volume fluctuates.	Pronunciation is good; Some effort towards an accent, though non-native.	Competent language control: vocabulary range is sufficient.	Frequent grammatical errors that do not obscure meaning but lack variety in structures.	3
2	Speech is often hesitant, with incomplete sentences; very soft volume.	Pronunciation is acceptable; No attempt to achieve a native accent.	Limited language control; basic vocabulary choices, with some words missing.	Frequent grammatical errors, even in simple structures, sometimes obscuring meaning.	2

Observations:

Instrument N. 3: Speaking tasks with the use of Beelinguapp.

Task N. 1 - Create your video introducing yourself using the Video Capture Tool Beelinguapp (brief, less than 3 minutes). While recording your video, remember to

- State your name clearly.
- Place yourself - where you are from, your age.
- Talk about your preferences, interests, and hobbies.
- Add any information you consider relevant for others to know about you.

Task N. 2 - Prepare a speech about college life and the environment and a presentation illustrating it. You can base on the following aspects:

1. The University:

- What's the university like? Is there a good school spirit?

2. The Classroom:

- Do you feel comfortable? Your relationship with your teachers and classmates
- What subjects do you enjoy the most (the least)?

Present your speech illustrated with the visual aids. Be careful with the pronunciation of new words and phrases.

Task N. 3 - Prepare a speech talking about your personal experience learning English at Sitio Prado Annex. To do so, you can develop your speech considering the following order of ideas:

- Why do you want to learn English? Is English your goal, or the instrument for a major goal?
- How easy or difficult is learning English so far? Do you feel supported by your teachers and classmates during the process?

Presenting your speech using after using Beelinguapp. Use formal wear. Remember to pay attention to your body language and tone of voice.

Instrument N. 4: Tasks 1, 2, and 3 Rubric

Speaking Rubric	
Name: _____ Rating: _____ Activity N.: _____	
Comments:	
Rating	Demonstrated Competence
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied vocabulary and expressions • Speaks smoothly with minimal hesitation, maintaining effective communication. • Remains task-focused and consistently responds appropriately, actively enhancing interactions. • Pronunciation and intonation are consistently clear and accurate.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varied vocabulary and expressions with occasional word choice errors • Speaks with occasional hesitation, typically not impeding communication. • Remains on task, effectively communicating, generally offering appropriate responses, and working to enhance interactions. • Pronunciation and intonation are mostly clear and accurate, with infrequent issues.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited vocabulary and expressions • Speaks with noticeable hesitation, often disrupting communication.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to communicate but occasionally responds inadequately or unclearly. • Pronunciation and intonation errors at times hinder understanding.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic vocabulary and expressions exclusively • Deploys basic structures with frequent errors. • Frequently hesitates during speech, severely disrupting communication. • Lacks a clear purpose, requiring substantial assistance in communication, and generally responds inadequately or unclearly. • Encounters frequent issues with pronunciation and intonation.

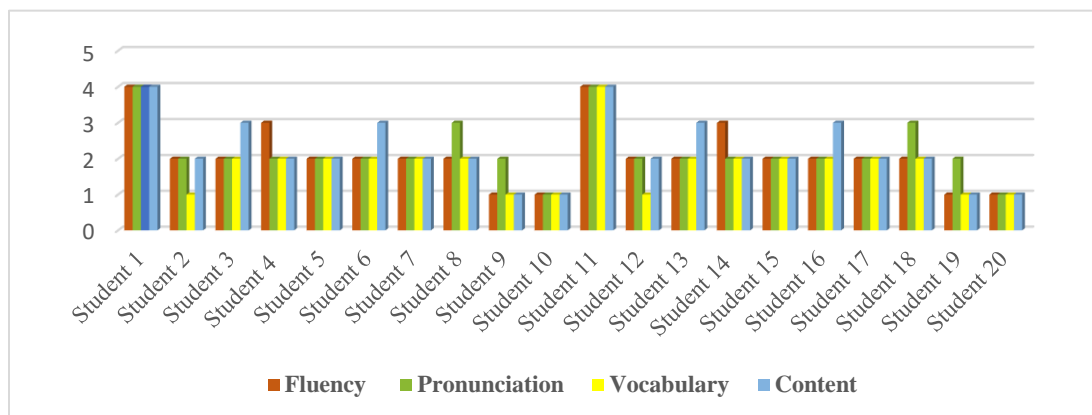
Instrument N. 5: Post-Test

The same pretest will be applied as the post-test. While taking the pretest at the beginning of the intervention program, students are not expected to know how to answer all of the questions; however, they should be expected to utilize previous knowledge to predict rational answers when taking the same test as a post-test at the end of the program. The only modification that the post-test will present is an additional item: Speak about your experience using Beelinguapp in this process.

RESULTS

Figure 1.

Pre-test results: First interview



The diagram illustrates the outcomes of the preliminary evaluation administered to the participants. It was segmented into three segments: self-presentation, discussion regarding university life, and description of their encounters with English learning. The scrutiny of the findings is elaborated in an array of tables delineating the connection between each standard and the corresponding ratings.

Table 1.*Pre-test: About Fluency*

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	4	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	1
Percentage	80%	40%	40%	60%	40%	40%	40%	60%	20%	20%

Note: The score scale goes from 5 (highest score) to 1 (lowest score). 5 points represent 100% and 1 point represents 20%.

Regarding fluency, student one exhibited commendable fluency during their speech. However, students two through eight demonstrated significant hesitancy in conveying their thoughts. They frequently sought additional time by requesting researchers to repeat the questions and took longer durations, typically between four and seven minutes, to complete their responses. On the other hand, students nine and ten encountered substantial challenges in articulating their ideas, often experiencing extended periods of silence. Additionally, they occasionally incorporated Spanish words into their speech.

Table 2.*Pre-test: About Pronunciation*

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	1
Percentage	80%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	60%	40%	20%

Participants from two to nine also exhibited challenges in pronunciation, particularly when their pronunciation closely resembled the spelling of the words or was influenced by word associations. In contrast, participant number one excelled in pronunciation. Conversely, participant number ten demonstrated the lowest level of proficiency in this aspect of speaking.

Table 3.*Pre-test: About Vocabulary*

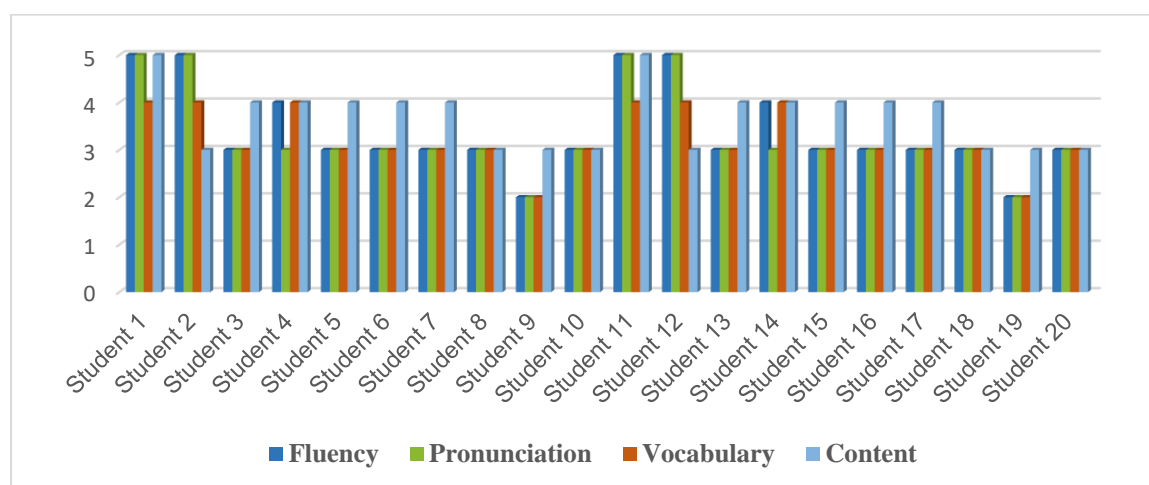
Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	4	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Percentage	80%	20%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	40%	20%	20%

Vocabulary was the most difficult aspect for most of the participants. Their vocabulary was very basic and limited. Participant number one had adequate vocabulary and was able to use idiomatic expressions.

Table 4.*Pre-test: About Content*

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	4	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	1	1
Percentage	80%	40%	60%	40%	40%	60%	40%	40%	20%	20%

The deficiencies observed in the previous aspects of the evaluation had a notable impact on the content of their responses. Inadequate vocabulary, protracted fluency, and hesitations in pronunciation placed added pressure on the participants, resulting in limited content

Figure 2.*Post-test: the last interview*

This chart presents the scores achieved by participants in the post-test. The results show significant improvement in the development of the posttest. 80% of the students did better in the post test after the 14 weeks using the app. The specific outcomes for each criterion are deliberated in the subsequent tables.

Table 5.*Post-test: About Fluency*

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	5	5	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3
Percentage	100%	100%	60%	80%	60%	60%	60%	60%	40%	60%

This table underscores the significant improvement exhibited by all participants in terms of fluency. In this instance, participants one and two demonstrated outstanding fluency during their speeches. Participants three through eight also made notable improvements in their fluency.

However, participant Nine had a less impressive performance on this occasion compared to the better results achieved during the assignments phase, displaying increased hesitation and frequent pauses while speaking. Notably, participant number ten exhibited substantial overall improvement, which was evident in both the post-test and their general performance.

Table 6.

Post-test: About Pronunciation

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3
Percentage	100%	100%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	60%	40%	60%

In this scenario, pronunciation obtained nearly as impressive results as fluency. Participants one and two continued to excel in their pronunciation, paying meticulous attention to detail. Participants three through eight also performed admirably in this regard, as did participant number ten. However, participant number nine once more delivered a less-than-stellar presentation, showing room for improvement in pronunciation.

Table 7.

Post-test: About Vocabulary

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3	2	3
Percentage	80%	80%	60%	80%	60%	60%	60%	60%	40%	60%

During this post-test, participants used an ampler vocabulary and phrases to express their ideas in a better way. Some idiomatic expressions were also present during their answers.

Table 8.

Post-test: About Content

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Points scored	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3
Percentage	100%	60%	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%	60%	60%	60%

The final analysis relates to content, where participants demonstrated a notable enhancement. They provided substantially more information in response to all questions compared to their performance in the pre-test. This improvement enabled them to express their thoughts more comprehensively on each topic. Even participants who received three points, representing 60%, displayed significant progress in their oral expression.

DISCUSSION

According to Eshankulovna (2021) "Technology allows students to engage in self-directed actions, self-paced interactions, privacy, and a safe environment in which errors are rectified and precise feedback is provided". Based on these results, we can draw the following observations about the entire process. In general, the pre-test provided a clear indication of the initially low level of speaking skills among the majority of participants. One student exhibited an acceptable level of language proficiency, while seven were considered average, and two demonstrated a very low level. Out of the twenty participants, this translates to 10% showing good proficiency, 70% displaying average proficiency, and 20% with limited proficiency.

It is worth noting that following the preparatory process, during which participants completed three distinct speaking assignments using Beelinguapp as a significant technological aid, we observed a substantial improvement in their speaking skills, including pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary. Alzatma (2010) stated that by exercises of learning, the pupil may acquire some words and grammatical concepts that allow the learner to communicate further at stage two as he or she learns enough to speak securely. As they enhanced these three aspects, they became more proficient at conveying a greater volume of information during their speeches.

These results imply that technological tools like Beelinguapp can indeed assist students in enhancing their speaking skills. Furthermore, other tools can be leveraged to cultivate different skills. This suggests that English educators and related professionals should explore the full range of technological possibilities available to aid and motivate students in their learning endeavors while taking into account individual needs and harnessing the benefits of connectivity. Hulme (2016) claimed that MALL (Mobile Assisted Language Learning) has been widely advocated in the educational context.

These tools offer the advantage of enabling learning anywhere and at any time. The individual improvements observed in each participant underscore the positive impact of Beelinguapp on enhancing their speaking abilities. As Hulme (2016) mentioned "the learners' speaking fluency improves when they use the audio and video recording features of a mobile phone to record and review their speaking performance either individually or as part of a class".

CONCLUSIONS

The findings gathered in this research, based on the experiences of both researchers and participants, have led to the following conclusions:

Freshmen students exhibit significant diversity in their speaking skills, but based on the sample in this research, the majority displayed a low level of proficiency in speaking. This aligns with the data presented in the first chapter, which positioned Panama as a country with low English-speaking proficiency according to the results of the EPI.

The final results of the study demonstrate a significant improvement in participants' speaking skills throughout the entire research process, highlighting the effectiveness of Beelinguapp as a valuable supportive learning tool. Beelinguapp emerged as a user-friendly and accessible tool that participants could utilize to prepare their speeches. This tool contributed to

their motivation, relaxation, and confidence when preparing and delivering their presentations, ultimately resulting in better performance and higher scores with each subsequent effort.

Beelinguapp, as a technological tool, has proven to be a valuable asset for both English teachers and students in the development of speaking skills. This aligns with the findings discussed in the literature review, which underscore the inclination of language learners to utilize tools and self-regulate their behaviors to enhance their language proficiency effectively.

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