

## The Contribution of the Elevator Pitch to Support 11<sup>th</sup> EFL Graders' Oral Fluency

### La Contribución del *Elevator Pitch* para Apoyar la Fluidez Oral de Estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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#### Abstract

This study adopted an action research design to analyze the contribution of the Elevator Pitch technique on English as foreign language learners' oral fluency. Six 11th graders in a rural at-risk context in a vocational public high school in Hualqui, Chile participated in this study. The Elevator Pitch technique was implemented during seven sessions. Data were collected by conducting a pre- and post-intervention test and a focus group. The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test; thematic analysis was used to categorize the responses from the qualitative data. Results suggest an improvement in oral fluency and a positive perception toward the technique used during the intervention, which illustrates how effective the Elevator Pitch technique could be among Chilean learners from similar contexts.

*Keywords:* Elevator Pitch, English as a foreign language, fluency, secondary education, vocational education

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## Resumen

Este estudio adoptó un diseño de investigación acción con el objetivo de evaluar la contribución de la técnica del *Elevator Pitch* para apoyar a estudiantes jóvenes de inglés como lengua extranjera. En esta investigación-acción participaron seis estudiantes de tercero medio. Ellos estaban inmersos en un contexto rural de alta vulnerabilidad en un liceo público en Chile. La técnica se implementó durante siete sesiones. Para la recolección de datos se administró una prueba previa, una posterior y un grupo focal. Los datos cuantitativos se analizaron mediante estadística descriptiva y la prueba no paramétrica de Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon, mientras que se utilizó el análisis temático para categorizar las respuestas emergidas de los datos cualitativos. Los resultados sugieren una mejora en la fluidez oral y una percepción positiva de la técnica usada durante la intervención, lo que ilustra cuán efectiva podría ser la técnica del *Elevator Pitch* entre los estudiantes chilenos de contextos similares.

*Palabras clave:* Elevator Pitch, fluidez, educación técnico profesional, educación secundaria, inglés como lengua extranjera

## Introduction

In recent years, the importance of effective communication skills in English has become increasingly recognized in academic and professional contexts. As globalization continues to shape the landscape of education and employment, the ability to articulate ideas clearly and persuasively in English is essential for success. This is particularly true for students in vocational programs in Chile where the demand for proficient communication skills is paramount.

In the context of this study, English for Specific Purposes (ESP onwards) is particularly relevant because it addresses the specific linguistic and communicative needs of students pursuing vocational programs in Chile, such as students in the Administration and Human Resources program in schools' eleventh grade that require English language skills that are directly applicable to their future jobs. The connection between communication skills and ESP is fundamental to developing effective language learning for vocational students. In vocational programs, students must master skills relevant to their future careers, such as presenting ideas, negotiating, and participating in meetings.

According to the Chilean Ministry of Education (2019), eleventh graders are expected to be able to present information orally and engage in conversations, discussions, and presentations, highlighting their relevance for communication. These expectations align with the need for students in vocational programs to develop English language proficiency that supports their career goals, ensuring they are prepared for the labor market demands. As English is often the lingua franca in many professional fields, students in vocational programs are expected to achieve a certain level of proficiency in English.

This action research study revolves around the low fluency levels displayed by English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, particularly among eleventh graders in a rural context in Chile. The study identifies that these learners often lack opportunities to practice speaking in English in and out of the classroom which impedes their ability to communicate effectively. These students exhibit difficulties in speaking fluency in English; observations performed for this study reveal that these eleventh graders struggle to communicate in English when they try. Daily exposure to English is insufficient to encourage students to improve their speaking abilities, as they cannot communicate clearly about studied subjects. They frequently take long, silent pauses while repeating the same idea multiple times; as a result, they have a very low level of oral fluency. This lack of oral fluency is seen in their low speech rate, extensive pauses, hesitations, and many corrections when speaking. These difficulties have prevented students from obtaining the desired proficiency level of English at the end of high school and when they complete their vocational program and enter the labor market. As a result, it is critical to address this shortcoming by developing a teaching strategy that supports students in achieving better results.

Therefore, the Elevator Pitch is shown as a technique to speak out clearly and concisely within thirty seconds to one minute and helps to prepare what someone wants to speak about. For example, in an interview, students can talk about job responsibilities and frame the speech as smooth, smart, and rehearsed due to its recitation practice (Yoshimura & MacWhinney, 2017). This strategy supports eleventh-grade students' fluency to decrease the hesitations, pauses, and corrections when they speak out.

## Literature Review

### *English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) in the Chilean Educational System*

In the Chilean educational system, the final four years of compulsory education are dedicated to secondary education, divided into two types: scientific-humanistic and vocational. The former (scientific-humanistic) is oriented towards deepening the learners' areas of interest regarding their general training to eventually pursue undergraduate studies (Ley General de Educación, 2009). On the contrary, the vocational program, known as Professional-Technical Secondary Education (EMTP-T), is a formal program within the technical-professional education path in Chile. According to Peralta-Rojas et al. (2020), this program is well-structured featuring a standardized curriculum and entrance requirements defined by the Chilean Ministry of Education (Mineduc) under the General Law of Education (Ley General de Educación No. 20.370) (BNC, 2009). The EMTP-T program is offered in various schools and includes clearly defined learning objectives, allocated learning

time, and support from qualified trainers, instructors, or teachers. Upon completion, students receive formal recognition, a bachelor's degree in secondary education, which validates their vocational training and prepares them for work.

In Chile, students can choose from seventeen majors during their final two years of high school, with vocational education offering thirty-four professional technical programs. Each includes a curriculum component that provides two hours of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) per week, more specifically English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). EOP is typically integrated into professional curricula, such as English for secretaries, technicians, pilots, or nurses (Bui & Huong, 2023; Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991; Kim, 2008). This focus on practical application emphasizes the importance of teaching English relevant to specific job roles and functions. By incorporating EOP into the curriculum, students are better prepared to meet the linguistic demands of their future careers, enhancing their employability and professional competence.

The context of this study is EOP, as it highlights the significance of equipping students with the language skills necessary for their specific occupations. EOP prepares students for immediate job communication and effectively fosters their ability to work in professional environments. By focusing on pre-work purposes, EOP ensures that students are proficient in English and able to apply their language skills in real scenarios, thereby enhancing their future careers.

### ***Oral Fluency***

Different authors agree that fluency is the ability to keep a natural conversation, known as speech rate, without many filled or unfilled pauses, using a small number of fillers and formulaic language (Bohn, 2015; Housen & Kuiken, 2009). Oral fluency is also “a measure of how well and how easily you can communicate your ideas clearly and accurately in speech” (Karimy & Pishkar, 2017, p. 49).

In language learning, fluency is a crucial aspect of oral proficiency. It involves communicating smoothly and effectively and demonstrating a command of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Fluency is not only about speed but also about the coherence and accuracy of speech. It is a key component in communicative language programs (Metcalf et al., 2016). Similarly, when assessing oral fluency, the following aspects are necessary: speech rate, articulation rate, number of pauses per minute, phonation-time ratio, filled pauses, disfluencies, length of utterance, and pause duration (De Wolf et al., 2017; Khau & Huynh, 2022).

The development of approaches that could improve student speaking skills and provide students more opportunities to communicate and express themselves in the target

language are all matters that teachers may do to assist students in learning English effectively (Namaziandost et al., 2020). Teachers need to keep in mind four characteristics while designing fluency activities: a message focus, easy material, pressure to go faster, and quality of practice. From these four aspects, choosing easy material is important because it is hard to become fluent while exposed to difficult material (Muller et al., 2014).

For instance, the 4/3/2 technique studied by Santos and Ramirez-Avila (2023) is a valuable tool for supporting students' fluency. This technique employs a three-round approach to speaking and listening. In the initial round, students share their thoughts on a given topic for four minutes, promoting comprehensive articulation of their ideas. Subsequently, in the second round, they summarize their ideas into a three-minute discussion in which they must prioritize and synthesize their thoughts. Lastly, in the third round, students must summarize their ideas within a concise two-minute presentation. As the time allocated decreases with each round, students develop the skill to express themselves more fluently and concisely. This technique enhances speaking confidence and nurtures the capacity to adapt language to various contexts and audiences. By planning and rehearsing learners can continue improving what they want to say, thus performing better. Therefore, planning becomes pivotal with such techniques.

Task planning has garnered significant attention from researchers in recent years, and its impact on language learners' fluency has been investigated in various studies. One such study, conducted on EFL learners at language institutes in Iran by Farde Davaji and Ghoorchaei (2023) aimed to investigate the effects of pre-task planning on fluency and accuracy. The study found that planning time before task performance showed better fluency and accuracy in their oral performance compared to groups with no planning time. The research findings indicate that different tasks and planning conditions during the pre-task planning stage contribute to fluency in oral performance. Moreover, this study aligns with previous research by Moradi and Talebi (2014) and Yuan and Ellis (2003), reinforcing that allowing learners to engage in planning before task performance yields beneficial outcomes for fluency. Ellis's (2005) classification of task-based planning into pre-task and within-task planning, further nuanced by guided and unguided, detailed, or undetailed planning, offers a comprehensive framework to understand the various dimensions of planning and their implications for oral proficiency.

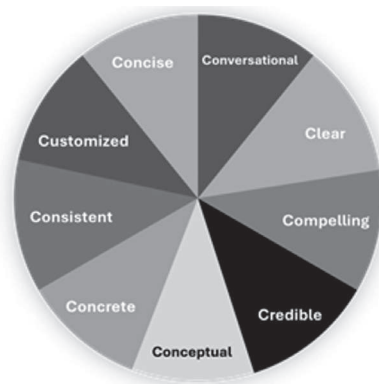
78

The presented concept discusses different planning types, as outlined by Ellis (2005), and their impact on oral performance. Ellis identifies two principal types of task-based planning: pre-task planning and within-task planning. Pre-task planning involves rehearsal and strategic planning, while within-task planning involves pressured and unpressured planning. Both plans can be categorized as unguided or guided planning, the latter is further considered detailed or undetailed planning. The study focuses on pre-task planning (strategic planning), the time given for pre-task planning, and its impact on oral performance.

### ***Elevator Pitch as a Strategy to Improve Fluency***

Elevator Pitch originated from the business world and was later introduced into the educational field around 1980. It can be described as a meeting between an entrepreneur and an executive in an elevator in which the former aims to persuade the latter. In education, the Elevator Pitch becomes a brief oral presentation designed to capture the listener's attention in a short time (Aznar Juan, 2022; Bieger Morales & Caballero-García, 2019).

Among effective techniques to support oral fluency, Sridhar Iyer (2016) states that Elevator Pitch briefly describes a product or service and its value proposition. A successful pitch persuades the listener to make the speaker's desired decision. The pitch is usually thirty seconds to one minute (what an elevator ride usually lasts) and its primary purpose is to provide a clear, concise, and memorable summary of a project. According to a course work (*Creating Your Elevator Speech*) designed by Sridhar Iyer (2016) from the Indian Institute of Technology in Bombay, a well-crafted elevator pitch should be precise; the problem should be emphasized, good examples should be used, and the speech should be free of vague points. Its implementation also provides room for learners to plan, design, craft, memorize, practice, and perform (O'Leary, 2008; Sagimin, 2015). O'Leary (2008) also adds that the Elevator Pitch should include key features, defined as the Nine C's (see Figure 1 below).



**Figure 1.** *The Nine C's*

Furthermore, implementing the Elevator Pitch in teaching how to speak to support speaking fluency poses a beneficial opportunity for EFL learners and their speaking skills (Beltrán-Palanquez, 2023; Sagimin, 2015). Sagimin (2015) reflects upon the results that students felt. The technique was easy to conduct and implement when drilling their speaking skills since it has easy steps to be learned, and they had a good opportunity to use and practice the language.

The same study contributes to the idea that practice allows students to produce language fluently and express ideas spontaneously (Sagimin, 2015). Moreover, when the speaker is given the option to repeat the task, a large chunk of the conceptualizing, formulating, and articulating process is already accomplished, and as a result, attentional resources are free up to be directed to various dimensions of oral output (Begley, 2017; Bygate & Samuda, 2005). This may result in improving the speaker's language production of the identical meanings expressed in the first task performance. According to Movahed and Karkia (2014), developing oral fluency is necessary to repeat the same words and phrases many times so students can feel confident, which makes each delivery grammatically correct.

This strategy appears to be an appropriate alternative for a speaking class, particularly for students who frequently use English to communicate in an office setting or job, and for those who deliver speeches or present brief presentations in front of others. Students are urged to produce any conceivable speech in various settings of their working field and interest when delivering an Elevator Pitch, such as presenting and promoting the product, or conducting a presentation in a meeting and elaborating ideas.

As the Elevator Pitch embraces practicing (Morgan & Wright, 2021; O'Leary, 2008; Sagimin, 2015), students from the vocational program of Administration and Human Resources can gain fluency in their speaking skills when they can practice saying their pitch through oral repetition.

## Method

This study followed an action research design with mixed-method techniques. It involved three instruments: a pre-intervention test, a post-intervention test, and a focus group. Each test was assessed by an analytic rubric (see Appendix A) adapted from Santos and Ramírez-Avila's (2022). The teacher-researcher created the focus group. The three instruments were validated by three university professors, experts in English teaching and research, an educational psychologist, and the vocational program coordinator in the school. The material was adapted according to the context of the Chilean curricular framework. The main objective was to assess the contribution of the Elevator Pitch technique on EFL learners' oral fluency. Two specific objectives were proposed: (1) To assess students' progress in their fluency in terms of rate, hesitations, pauses, and corrections, and (2) to identify students' perceptions regarding their fluency and the use of the Elevator Pitch when performing oral presentations.

## Participants

The purposive sample of this study was six 11th graders from a vocational public high school in Hualqui, Chile. Learners were observed and chosen due to their low performance

in speaking activities. Furthermore, learners and parents were informed about the study and agreed to participate voluntarily by signing a consent letter. The school is in a rural area of the region, with a high percentage (95%) of vulnerability according to IVE 2023 (i.e. *Index of School Vulnerability* as translated from Spanish) (Junaeb, 2023).

### ***Procedure***

Afterward, the participants were asked to take the pre-intervention test at the beginning of the intervention. This consisted of four lessons within five weeks using the Elevator Pitch technique. The teacher-researcher used the analytic rubric for fluency to assess the pre-test. Every lesson started with a brief vocabulary instruction of The Elevator Pitch's four steps and then the students modeled the task. The interventions outlined the key elements of the Elevator Pitch strategy, the introduction to fluency and its components, the creation of an outline on a given topic, feedback provision by the teacher-researcher, role switching in pairs, rehearsing the pitch by private practice, and recording an audio of the one-minute Elevator Pitch. These sessions focused on progressively building skills related to crafting and delivering Elevator Pitch.

By the end of the intervention, the participants were asked to take the post-intervention test by using the same analytic rubric in the pre-intervention test. Finally, a focus group was applied to five students.

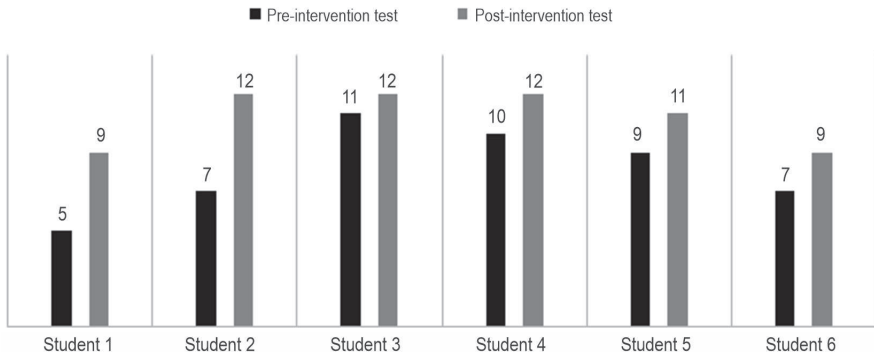
### ***Data Analysis***

The pre- and post-intervention tests responded to the first research objective; the focus group was conducted to address the second. The quantitative data were codified and analyzed using descriptive statistics and the non-parametric Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test. The qualitative data were transcribed and categorized into a thematic analysis. Considering the qualitative nature of the responses, thematic analysis is a suitable technique for analyzing data categorizing and defining themes that could emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings of the analysis are represented in the next section.

## **Findings**

The intervention sought to approach the main objective: To analyze the contribution of Elevator Pitch to support eleventh-grade students' fluency. An analytic rubric was used as a pre-intervention test to assess the participants and identify their initial fluency based on Santos & Ramírez-Ávila's rubric (2022). This includes the following criteria, which are worth three points each (12 points): (a) speech rate; (b) hesitations; (c) repetitions, and (d) corrections. According to each student's performance on the pre- and post-test, the researcher assigned

a mark ranging from one to three in each part of the rubric. Figure 2 shows students' results obtained in both pre- and post-tests.



**Figure 2.** *Participants' Results from both Pre- and Post-Intervention Tests*

**Note.** Own work.

Before the intervention, participants completed a pre-test to assess their initial level of oral fluency, which revealed a range of proficiency among the students. Some participants scored more than half of the total score, and some were close to the maximum. Notwithstanding, after the intervention, participants took the post-test to assess their fluency after using the Elevator Pitch. For this assessment, the same analytical rubric as the pre-test was used. As observed, there was an improvement in the participants' speaking fluency after the intervention. This improvement can be observed in the post-intervention test final mean score, which was 11 points, representing 90% of achievement compared with 68% in the pre-intervention test with a mean score of 8 points. It can also be noticed that, in the pre-intervention test, none of the students achieved 100% of the task, but in the post-intervention test, three students (50% of the participants) obtained 100% of achievement.

Table 1 shows the pre- and post-intervention test results regarding descriptive statistics, which demonstrate significant improvements across rates, hesitations, corrections, and repetitions.

82

There was a substantial increase in mean scores from 8 to 11, accompanied by a reduction in standard deviation from 2.23 to 1.47 in the post-intervention. Moreover, specific speech attributes such as speech rate experienced a notable enhancement, elevating from 2.50 to 3.0 in the post-intervention. Hesitation, repetitions, and corrections also exhibited marked improvements, indicating the efficacy of the intervention in refining these speech-related parameters. These findings underscore the intervention's positive influence on oral fluency and overall communication effectiveness in a one-minute pitch.

**Table 1.** *Descriptive Statistics from Pre and Post Intervention Tests*

	Pre-intervention test	Post-intervention test
Mean score	8	11
Standard deviation	2.23	1.47
Mean score: speech rate	2.50	3.0
Mean score: hesitation levels	1.67	2.50
Mean score: repetitions levels	2.17	2.67
Mean score: corrections levels	2.17	2.67

**Note.** Own work.

Furthermore, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test was applied to see any statistically significant differences between both tests in their fluency level. This non-parametric test considers a null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which states that there is no statistically significant difference between the results from the pre- and post-intervention tests whereas the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) sets the opposite: there is a statistically significant difference between these results. Table 2 shows the results from this non-parametric test.

**Table 2.** *Test statistics of Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon Test*

	Results from pre- and post-intervention tests
Z-score	-1.92154
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) (p-value)	.05486

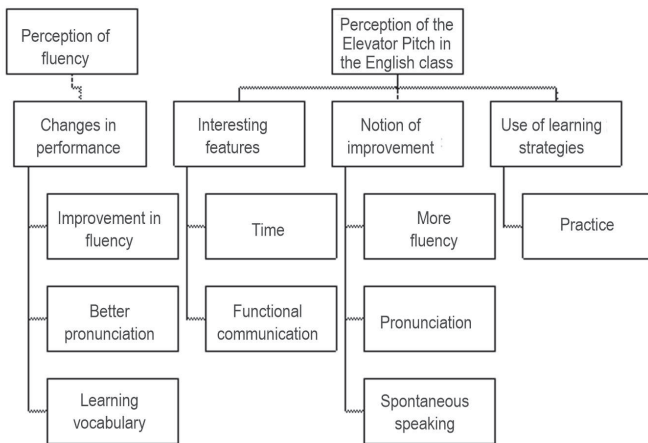
**Note.** Own work.

As can be seen in the table, p-value is higher than the significance level ( $.055 > .05$ ). This leads to accepting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), as the results show no statistically significant difference. Nonetheless, it is important to mention again that the scores in the post-intervention test have shown improvement in the participants' speaking fluency when using the Elevator Pitch despite the result from the Mann-Whitney Wilcoxon test.

Moreover, the second data collection instrument (focus group) included opening and follow-up questions. The focus group was designed to identify students' perceptions of

their fluency and the effectiveness of the Elevator Pitch in enhancing oral fluency. It aimed to uncover insights into how students felt about their speaking skills before and after the interventions.

The focus group consisted of the participants who underwent the Elevator Pitch. Their responses were expected to reflect their experiences and perceptions regarding the technique. Every utterance was transcribed and categorized. Two dimensions and four themes emerged from participants' responses, which have been established for the analysis of students' perceptions towards their experience of being exposed to the Elevator Pitch strategy. Of these four themes, nine sub-themes emerged. Figure 3 shows the students' most recurrent answers regarding their preference for using the Elevator Pitch during the intervention.



**Figure 3.** Dimensions, Themes, and Sub-Themes from Students' Perceptions

**Note.** Own work.

Regarding all the participants' responses in the focus group, it can be stated that most of them seem to value using the Elevator Pitch as a helpful strategy to support their fluency. Moreover, they also appear to hold high regard for how practicing has helped them improve other aspects as using time or vocabulary acquisition. For instance, P1 and P4 state the following: *"mejoré mi fluidez en inglés"* (I improved my fluency in English) (P1\_FocusGroup), *"Hablo un poco más fluido ahora"* (I speak a little bit more fluently now) (P4\_FocusGroup).

The information provided by the theme *Changes in Performance* from Dimension I (*Perception of the fluency*) highlights three main areas of improvement perceived by students using the Elevator Pitch strategy: fluency improvement, in which most of the students noted progress in their oral fluency. They mentioned how they enhanced their fluency in English

after using the Elevator Pitch in class. They also attributed the Elevator Pitch to improve their pronunciation noticeably, as can be seen in P5's response: "*Mejoró mucho mi pronunciación y mi fluidez*" (My pronunciation and fluency improved) (P5\_FocusGroup), and P2's response: "*Abora puedo pronunciar mucho mejor las palabras*" (I can pronounce the words much better now) (P2\_FocusGroup). Finally, they expressed how they expanded their vocabulary and learnt new words by practicing the one-minute pitch. As P3 said: "*Abora sé más palabras en inglés*" (I know more words in English now) (P3\_FocusGroup).

Among the participants' responses, favorable perceptions were identified in Dimension II (*Perception of the Elevator Pitch in the English class*). Time perception is crucial as it highlights the challenge that students faced within the time constraint when they crafted their pitch. It demonstrates their understanding of time as a factor in fluency development, as stated by P1: "*Lo común es que uno escribe, eso se traduce y eso queda en el cuaderno, pero aquí había que escribirlo, traducirlo y después practicarlo muchas veces, grabar y volverlo a grabar y que tenía que ser sólo en un minuto*" (One usually writes something, then it is translated and stays in the notebook, but [with the technique] it has been written, translated, and then recorded; then, recorded again. All in just one minute) (P1\_FocusGroup).

The *functional Communication* theme showcases the practical utility of the Elevator Pitch beyond mere language learning. It demonstrates how participants considered its applicability in expressing personal information and even in potential professional scenarios like selling products. The emphasis on consistent practice and repetition is fundamental in language learning. This theme highlights students' dedication and effort in refining their communication skills. For example, P1 said: "*Abora puedo dar mi información personal en inglés y vender productos*" (I can now give personal information in English and sell products) (P1\_FocusGroup), and P4: "*Nos ayudó a dar información de lo que a nosotros nos gusta*" (It helped us give information about what we like) (P4\_FocusGroup).

The focus group provided rich qualitative insights into students' perceptions of the Elevator Pitch technique. The findings highlighted improvements in fluency, increased engagement with the learning process, and the technique's applicability beyond the English classroom. The thematic analysis also revealed participants' positive impacts and challenges. Noting their observed improvements in fluency, vocabulary, confidence, and proficiency reinforces the effectiveness of the Elevator Pitch exercise. These detailed perceptions collectively indicate that the Elevator Pitch technique positively impacted students' fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary acquisition in the English class.

## ***Discussion***

Under this action research implementation, the EFL students improved their oral performance. Besides, implementing the Elevator Pitch technique in this classroom has

provided valuable insights into the dynamics of language learning, particularly in enhancing oral fluency among EFL learners. Throughout the intervention, the teacher-researcher observed an enhancement in students' speaking abilities, which could be attributed to the structured nature of the Elevator Pitch. This technique is essential for real-life communication because its format encourages ESP students to deliver innovative ideas or projects persuasively in a limited time (Beltrán-Palanquez, 2023).

Learners improved their oral communication after the intervention, which can be particularly observed in the post-intervention test final mean score, which was 11 points, representing 90% of achievement compared with 68% in the pre-intervention test. Another important point is that all the students (100%) reported an improvement in their fluency. Similar results on speaking fluency are stated in Sagimin's study (2015), which reflects upon the important contribution to students' speaking fluency from this technique. Like that investigation, this action research showed that this technique helped train English students' speaking skills in producing the language fluently, concisely, and smoothly, for students had several opportunities to use and practice by crafting, drilling, practicing, and memorizing (Begley, 2017; Sagimin, 2015).

Moreover, these results showed important consequences for fostering students' fluency since Elevator Pitch required individual practice through oral repetition, as Yoshimura and Macwhinney (2017) indicated. Furthermore, students' perceptions align with their actual performance as many perceived improved oral fluency after being exposed to the intervention. All these results and viewpoints provide a wider perspective for the teacher-researcher in the field of EOP and vocational education, especially when considering the inclusion of more real-life tasks in the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, the Elevator Pitch technique shares some similarities with the technique known as 4/3/2, because both methods aim to deliver fluent messages in a limited amount of time (Beltrán-Palanquez, 2023; Santos & Ramírez-Ávila, 2023). In the case of the 4/3/2 technique, Santos and Ramirez-Avila (2023) observed that after implementing this technique in an exploratory group significant improvements were noted in the post-intervention test. These improvements encompass enhanced English-speaking speed, a reduction in filled and silent pauses, fewer repetitions, and a decrease in the number of corrections required. Namely, this action research participants also saw improvement in repetition or correction levels. These positive outcomes highlight the efficacy of concise communication techniques like 4/3/2 and the Elevator Pitch in supporting students' fluency.

The improvements in students' fluency shown in this action research are directly linked to the efficacy of concise communication techniques in supporting students' fluency. Overall, the use of these technologies has contributed to the observed improvements in fluency, as they encourage students to speak more fluidly, with greater confidence, and with

reduced pauses, repetitions, and corrections when students use English. All factors were also observed by the teacher-researcher from the outset and pointed out by the participants in the focus group. Moreover, the teacher-researcher noticed a marked increase in students' engagement during the sessions. The format of the Elevator Pitch, which requires concise and focused communication, seemed to resonate well with the students, as they are likely to appreciate the straightforward steps involved in crafting and delivering pitches (Sagimin, 2015).

Additionally, when considering how planning and practice are pivotal for a good pitch, the features and benefits of strategic planning (Farde Davaji & Ghoorchaei, 2023; Moradi & Talebi, 2014; Yuan & Ellis, 2003) play a crucial role, as Elevator Pitch technique provides room for these learning strategies. This technique offers learners several opportunities to rehearse students' fluency by crafting, drilling, practicing, and memorizing (Morgan & Wright, 2021; O'Leary, 2008). Besides, Sagimin (2015) and Farde Davaji and Ghoorchaei (2023) highlight the importance of planning in language learning, particularly concerning speaking skills. Therefore, strategic planning is a crucial aspect of an elevator pitch. It comes into play when crafting an elevator pitch, as it involves rehearsing and planning the key points and structure of the pitch to effectively capture the listener's attention and communicate the intended message within a short time frame. It is essential for developing and supporting students' fluency.

Finally, participants showed positive perceptions towards speaking activities using Elevator Pitch. They expressed their perception in two dimensions: perception of fluency and the use of the Elevator Pitch in the English class. Learners pointed out that Elevator Pitch helped them express their ideas fluently, learn new words, and improve their pronunciation. They also felt the Elevator Pitch helped them speak English confidently because the practice allowed them to improve their pitch (Morgan & Wright, 2021; Sagimin, 2015). Not only did they perceive this enhanced oral performance but scores in the post-intervention test matched their perceptions, as previously described.

## Conclusions

Firstly, the Elevator Pitch helped all the participants to improve their speech rate, they avoided extended hesitations and decreased repetitions and corrections in one-minute speech as indicated by the results of the Wilcoxon test. Comparing the pre- and post-intervention tests yields three different outcomes. On the one hand, all the participants increased their scores in the fluency rubric, which was 68% in the "good level" and moved forward to the "excellent level". There were two cases in which the participants did not show an improvement nor a decrease in their performance in terms of hesitations, corrections, and

repetitions because their level of fluency was not high before the pre-intervention test, and they needed further practice.

Secondly, participants' perceptions about the contribution of Elevator Pitch to support their speaking fluency were mostly favorable. The participants agreed that the Elevator Pitch was useful to practice oral fluency; after the intervention, they felt more confident when speaking. Even more, some students agreed that the Elevator Pitch helped them develop their ideas better and they had more chances to improve their pronunciation.

Thirdly, results indicate a relation between the participants' time practice during the sessions and their increased speaking fluency. Learners who practiced more when using the Elevator Pitch were the ones who improved their post-intervention test, hence their speaking fluency. This is probably because they had more chances to improve when they received peer feedback each time they practiced. Therefore, when students practice the Elevator Pitch by themselves, they have numerous instances of reading aloud, repetition, planning, and managing their thoughts or ideas. Thus, they can improve their articulatory pronunciation and delivery, they can focus on speaking, using the appropriate tone and pace, and making their message engaging.

Finally, through practice, students can adapt their pitches in various situations, such as job interviews, networking events, or project presentations. This adaptability is crucial due to the participants' vocational program. It is worth mentioning that, due to the nature of action research, the contextualized intervention, and the specific features of this group, the results and their conclusions are not generalized. Nonetheless, EFL teachers in vocational programs or EOP could consider some aspects addressed in this study to adopt or adapt the Elevator Pitch technique in their classrooms.

### *Limitations*

The EFL learners' fluency was low before the intervention. Their lack of speaking skills might have been caused by their context and limited opportunities to interact with native speakers outside the classroom in real-world situations. Learners seemed to have experienced limited opportunities to approach speaking activities inside the English classroom. The main drawback encountered was the participants' attendance throughout the intervention. Though only six participants completed the intervention, eleven students originally participated in this investigation and five of them had to cease participation due to health and familiar issues.

Doing the intervention sessions in the school lab caused another drawback to developing the action plan, with technical problems and participants' lack of technological knowledge. Some participants had technical difficulties in the first intervention. For example, some reported computer problems and a slow internet connection. Other participants had

difficulties using Microsoft Word and sending emails. Consequently, the teacher-researcher decided to develop the intervention plan in the students' classroom where the participants feel more comfortable using their phones and notebooks.

There were also some challenges during the interventions. The first was that the participants were not used to working with time limits, although they tried to, they did not finish the tasks. Thus, the teacher-researcher concluded that some stages needed to be longer in terms of time. The second challenge was that one participant presented difficulties writing and speaking in Spanish, so writing and speaking in English was also a struggle. The cause delayed his process to achieve the task; however, the participant was helped by the teacher of special education and the teacher-researcher decided to adapt the speaking fluency rubric.

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## Appendix A

### Fluency Rubric 1-minute pitch (pre- and post-intervention test)

Descriptors/ Score	1 point	2 points	3 points
Rate	The speaker speaks 20 to 39 words	The speaker speaks 40-59 words	The speaker speaks 60 or more words
Hesitations	The speaker has many hesitations (4 or more hesitations)	The speaker has some noticeable hesitations (from 2-3) and short pauses (3 seconds or less)	The speaker has few noticeable hesitations (1 or less) and few short pauses
Repetitions	The speaker makes many repetitions (4 or more)	The speaker makes some repetitions (from 2-3)	The speaker makes a few repetitions (1 or less)
Corrections	The speaker makes many corrections (4 or more)	The speaker makes some corrections (from 2-3)	The speaker makes a few corrections (1 or less)
<b>Total:</b>			

**Source:** Own work. Based on Santos and Ramírez-Avila (2022).

## Appendix 2

Dimensions	Questions	Main Ideas
Dimension I Fluency	1. ¿Cómo te sientes hablando en inglés en la clase después de usar el Elevator Pitch?	
	2. ¿Qué cambios notaste en tu uso del inglés al hablar después de hacer el Elevator Pitch?	
	3. ¿Crees que ahora hablas más rápido en un minuto?	
	4. ¿Qué dificultades encontraste al presentar tu Elevator Pitch de un minuto? ¿Las pudiste superar? ¿Cómo?	
Dimension Ii English Class	5. ¿Qué es lo que más te llamó la atención de preparar el Elevator Pitch en la clase de inglés?	
	6. ¿Como crees que el uso del Elevator Pitch podría mejorarse o ampliarse en las clases de inglés?	

Source: Own work.