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Research Paper

Enhancing Young Learners' English Linguistic Competencies Through Group Work and Role Plays

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of modern and active Communicative Approach strategies by assessing the use of Group Work and Role-play to enhance the English linguistic competencies of 30 6th-grade students from a Colombian public school. A quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest design was applied. The YLE Movers exam from Cambridge Examinations was administered before and after the intervention to assess participants' initial and final macro skills. Furthermore, to measure statistical significance, effect size and pedagogical efficiency, data were analyzed through a paired-samples *t*-test, Cohen's *d*, and Hake's normalized gain (*g*). Findings showed a statistically highly significant improvement across all assessed macro-skills ($p < .001$), with the most prominent growth observed in listening ($t(29) = -16.86$, $d = 2.97$, $g = 0.65$) and speaking ($t(29) = -14.00$, $d = 1.48$, $g = 0.48$). Thus, it was concluded that EFL learners' skills were strengthened through the implemented interactive dynamics within the Communicative Language Teaching approach. These outcomes suggest that traditional, grammar-heavy methods should be replaced with collaborative learning environments that foster genuine peer interaction and maximize foreign language achievement.

Keywords: Communicative Approach, English Language Teaching, Group Work, Linguistic Competence, Role-play

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1. Introduction

Throughout history, there has been an urge to delve into the best teaching practices that can boost students' skills and develop their competencies proficiently, so enriching and cutting-edge strategies are seen as necessary to help them thrive in a globalized society. Therefore, several teaching methodologies and approaches have evolved and somehow worked as the foundation to improve the next. Consequently, teaching foreign languages has moved from studying pure grammar rules and translating content as it was believed in the 15th century with the Traditional Grammar Method (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013) to prioritizing interactive and authentic language use in real and concrete environments as it was claimed in the modern Communicative Approach (CA) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Along with the evolution of methodologies, teachers' preconceptions and practices must also meet and adapt to the new changes (Eaton, 2010), as some educators are still strongly concerned with correcting students' grammar errors. Besides, they might be skeptical about focusing on the class in a student-centered style, betting on an expert-centered focus instead. Thus, teachers need to stop catastrophizing the lack of training they have, as this can negatively influence their self-perspective as an English teacher and then affect their teaching practice because they would not try to develop their students' Communicative Competence (CC). Still, they would tend to teach grammatical aspects of the language instead, depriving learners of getting a quality education (Abad, 2013). This systemic issue is often exacerbated during institutional transitions toward communicative language teaching, where educators frequently encounter instructional barriers and a pronounced

lack of specialized training to execute revised interactive curricula successfully (Sayyadi & Aliakbari, 2025).

Although several teachers display a strong acceptance and positive beliefs toward modern methodologies such as the CA (Khatib & Ashoori, 2019), many still rely on outdated classroom practices rooted in translation and memorization (Orfan et al., 2021). This discrepancy occurs even though the CA effectively fosters harmonious learning interactions where language interpretation is actively constructed. Besides, the low English class intensity limits students' contact with the language, affecting their self-esteem and leading them to obtain low English proficiency levels (Gultom & Oktaviani, 2022), which is also a result of the grammar focus within a course curriculum (Khasawneh, 2021). Thus, as Navarro-Arana et al. (2024) claimed, interesting methods and strategies are needed to catch students' attention and help them enhance their skills, so when going deeper into different approaches that can help students improve their CC; and when Linguistic Competence (LC) is the target objective for improvement, the use of Role-Plays (RP) promises significant enhancement regarding the four macro skills (Nasihah, 2019), mainly in the oral ones as it reduces anxiety levels (Dwiyanti & Lolita, 2023). Additionally, although Group Work (GW) within Task-Based Learning (TBL) demands effective classroom management, it can also boost students' CC significantly (Xue, 2013). Therefore, more research on the efficacy of these strategies is needed to guide educators in choosing the ones that fit their students' needs better so that learning English becomes more practical, real, and significant. In that order, this paper aims to determine GW and RP efficacy for improving the English LC.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Schools of Thought: Principles and Incidence in ELT

Structuralism emerged as an influential School of Thought (ST), claiming that language follows a structured system where the various units that play a role within this structure interrelate, giving meaning to one another (De Saussure, 1983). While Lévi-Strauss contributed to this ST, Saussure remains the main figure, emphasizing language as a whole where structured rules run (Xia, 2014). Thus, matching exercises and repetition of utterances are found to be effective here (Rohman & Wijaya, 2023); however, these could lead to boredom and hence uninterest (Irmawati & Hum, 2014) as they do not focus on function but on form (Şanal, 2017). Nonetheless, this ST gave room for scholars to develop the Audio-lingual Approach, which uses mainly imitation and repetition, leading to a mechanical practice of the language, developing oral skills but diminishing written ones (Wenhua, 2017).

On the other hand, Behaviorism interrelates with structuralist views as both consider language learning as a habitual process. However, Behaviorism claims that language learning is a consequence of repeated behaviors praised by rewards (Muñoz, 2014). Thus, the focus of this ST is not on the mind but on behaviors (Bacanli, 2016). Methods such as the Silent Way, Direct Instruction, and Total Physical Response exemplify this ST; however, while this ST may help students perform well in familiar contexts, they can struggle in novel situations where new behaviors lack reinforcement (Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009).

The next ST, Cognitivism, appears to be a dominant school that somehow concurred with the previous one as they considered knowledge to be habituated and without inconsistencies (Nagowah & Nagowah, 2009). It assumes the process happening in the learners' minds based on the analysis of the seen behaviors (Gage & Berliner, 1998), focusing on the dynamicity

and creativity aspects of cognitive development (Reid, 2005). Therefore, critiquing Skinner's theory, Chomsky (1959) argued that learners' speech is unforeseeable and shaped by innate rules from birth (Campbell, 2017), regardless of a specific stimulus. Thus, this ST focuses on learners' actual competence rather than performance (Chomsky, 1964), so an Eclectic Method can fit in with it.

The last ST, Constructivism, deals with the structures built in the learners' minds because of the experiences this individual goes through, enabling the creation of the utterances needed for interaction (Bruning et al., 1999). Thus, this ST values cooperative learning and real-life experiences (Bruner et al., 1956) as they enhance learning due to the physical and mental activities involved (García, 2000). In the classroom, the educator acts as a facilitator, helping students realize the utterances needed for a particular negotiation (Rhodes & Bellamy, 1999), fostering their ability to interact seamlessly in real-life situations. Dell Hathaway Hymes expanded Chomsky's analysis by developing CC, including four features such as how probable CC agrees with grammar, how practical language can be, how suitable the speech is, and how effective speech can be (Wen, 1999). Therefore, the CA, rooted in Constructivism, emphasizes peer interaction as fundamental. Later, Canale and Swain (1980) identified specific components such as Linguistic Competence, Sociolinguistic Competence, Discourse Competence, and Strategic Competence. Nonetheless, despite its positive outcomes that inspired Task- and Content-Based Instruction development, language function classification can be challenging due to the vast possibilities (Alshalan, 2019).

2.2 Outcomes from the use of GW and RP

Group Work (GW) can serve as an effective scaffolding strategy, allowing lower-level students to benefit from interactions with higher-level peers. Several studies highlight its positive outcomes, such as that of Marsevani (2023), who found that students improved their grammatical competence after just eight sessions in groups, while Rospinah et al. (2021) noted enhancements in speaking skills. Besides, Ahmada (2020) demonstrated that reading comprehension improves when stronger students collaborate with those at medium or low levels during engaging reading tasks. Additionally, Al-Qadi and Smadi (2014) identified significant gains in discourse competence, sentence structure, and tense use. Furthermore, GW fosters interaction among learners, emphasizing responsibility and promoting learning through activities like think-pair-share and role play (Karim, 2015). Moreover, Ramchander (2020) stated that GW enhances multilingual competencies, enabling students to navigate complex situations that improve their performance (Irkinovich, 2021); on the other hand, while some students may initially resist group work as it could lead to negative behaviors (Alfares, 2017), consistent practice can lead to acceptance and enhanced CC (Xue, 2013).

Finally, following the line of CA, RPs significantly lead to lots of learning outcomes, as they involve students acting according to specified roles and contexts (Neupane, 2019). A systematic review by Faitaki et al. (2026) supported this potential, concluding that integrating structured drama-based programs for young foreign language learners simultaneously enhances their oral output and shapes their socio-affective skills. Besides, considering the three types of RPs, the fully scripted, where students receive complete sentences to practice (Harper & Morris, 2005); the semi-structured, which includes gaps in dialogue that students must fill to convey meaning

(Livingstone, 1983); and the non-scripted, where students have the freedom to create their dialogue using key vocabulary and context, RPs reduce anxiety levels as learners are not worried about mistakes, turning the class into an enjoyable learning experience (Togimin & Jaafar, 2020), so students become self-confident during the activity, being motivated to speak (Arham et al., 2016). This pedagogical relief is crucial considering that high anxiety levels heavily deplete learners' cognitive resources, leading to avoidance behaviors and severely diminished oral fluency; consequently, establishing a supportive, low-stress learning environment handles communication apprehension by normalizing mistakes as natural learning milestones (Purba et al., 2026). Furthermore, systematic analysis by Rao and Zakaria (2025) validated that role-playing fosters a secure and low-anxiety interactive environment, which effectively mitigates the common fear of peer ridicule and promotes more spontaneous, real-life verbal practice among language learners. This is highly consistent with recent evidence indicating that lowering performance anxiety and fostering a relaxed mindset are critical milestones for accelerating oral production and maximizing student autonomy during communicative tasks (Ismail & Çakmak, 2025).

3. Methodology

This research was structured following a case study method that sought to explore the impact of modern and active CA strategies. Hence, it aimed to determine GW and RP efficacy for improving the English LC in thirty 6th-grade male and female students aged 11-12 from a public school in Colombia. Thus, these questions were set: 1) Which differences are found in the students' English macro skills before and after applying GW and RP as teaching strategies? 2) Are both oral and written skills influenced in the same amount by GW and RP? 3) Are there any other benefits from the use of the

above-mentioned strategies? For that reason, a quantitative approach was implemented as it provides an organized framework to examine initial and final findings by the administration of a test (Newby, 2014). Convenience sampling was implemented considering the easy access to the population and participants' willingness towards the study (Dörnyei, 2007); furthermore, due to ethical and practical reasons, where the need to provide participants with the possible benefits of the experiment is considered (Knapp, 2016) i.e., improvement of their LC by the strategies mentioned, a one-group pretest-posttest design was used to measure any change in the LC before and after using GW and RP. Moreover, the Movers exam from the Cambridge English Qualifications (2021) was applied to assess participants' initial and final macro skills, and a holistic rubric was implemented to measure other aspects that could be influenced by the strategies. Finally, a paired-samples *t*-test, Cohen's *d*, and Hake's normalized gain (*g*) were implemented to measure statistical significance.

3.1 Data Collection Instruments

Considering that the participants were male and female students aged 11-12 years old, along with their school grades and the Suggested English Language Curriculum for the Colombian public education system (Ministry of National Education, 2016) which claims an A1 level for 6th graders, the Cambridge Young Learners English Test: Movers was the international test chosen to assess students' LC, specifically Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. The test, divided into 3 sections, is designed under significant standards in terms of Construct Validity, Reliability, Impact, Practicability, and Quality Management (Cambridge English, 2016). Scores are translated into shields in the final certification as an insight into the testing of learner proficiency. These shields relate to the Common European Framework

(Council of Europe, 2001) as well as the Cambridge English Scale (CES) as follows: obtaining from 1 to 3 shields in a skill refers to Pre A1 and a CES range from below 80 up to 100. Besides, 4 to 5 shields are related to the A1 level, and a CES range from 100 up to 200 (Cambridge Assessment English, 2021). The scoring system changes from skill to skill and question; however, specific scores are given for the distinct parts evaluated. Additionally, a rubric was created and used to analyze the possible changes and highlight any progress, considering the first and last RP performances, with a range from 1 to 100 (see Table 1).

3.2 Procedure

This investigation evolved into eight phases that were crucial to meet the main goal. First, there was a comprehensive literature review that analyzed the evolution in education regarding collaborative learning; here, GW and RP strategies were chosen considering the promising benefits each one conveys within the constructivist CA method. Later, the participants were selected considering accessibility and their wish to try new teaching strategies. After that, consent forms were delivered to parents and guardians to authorize their children to participate in the investigation. Next, considering that participants were accustomed to receiving classes in which traditional methods, repetition, drills, and desk-row classroom arrangements took place, they took, for the first time, the Movers (YLE) exam, and the results were examined. Later, participants were taught under the CA, using GW and RP as the main strategies. Then, the Movers (YLE) exam was administered again to finally triangulate the data obtained in both test applications and thus conclude on the efficacy of both strategies.

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Table 1.

Rubric for Initial and Final Role-Play Performance

Criteria	1-20 Poor	21-40 Basic	41-60 Average	61-80 Satisfactory	81-100 Outstanding
Language Use	Repeats fragmented structures with frequent, systemic errors that severely disrupt the flow of delivery.	Translates vocabulary or grammar structures with persistent errors that actively impede communicative intent.	Produces structural patterns with moderate accuracy; exhibits 6 to 8 identifiable grammatical or lexical errors.	Selects appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures, maintaining clear communication despite minor errors.	Integrates complex grammatical structures and precise vocabulary seamlessly to enhance the overall narrative.
Pronunciation	Imitates phonemes incorrectly; exhibits severe mispronunciation and flat intonation that obscures the message.	Recognizes basic phonetic patterns but distinct mispronunciations alter or obscure meaning at multiple key moments.	Executes standard pronunciation; exhibits several mispronounced utterances that do not isolate or derail the core message.	Modulates intonation and pronounces words clearly with minimal errors, ensuring fluent delivery of the dialogue.	Defends communicative clarity by employing highly accurate pronunciation and expressive intonation throughout the performance.
Collaborative Engagement	Fails to demonstrate basic participatory behaviors or support peer interactions during the execution of the task.	Displays passive participation; struggles to interact or cooperate constructively with group members.	Demonstrates standard cooperative behavior, with a majority of the group (e.g., 3 out of 5) participating actively.	Supports peer contributions, ensuring almost all members actively drive the performance forward.	Maximized collective synergy; all members collaborate fluidly, actively managing roles to optimize group performance.
Creativity	Duplicates pre-existing scripts or prompts directly without adding personal input or variation.	Paraphrases basic source material but lacks structural novelty or distinctive scenario adaptation.	Illustrates a standard scenario by applying familiar concepts with an average, expected level of originality.	Adapts ideas into an engaging role-play, presenting distinctive and well-contextualized concepts.	Designs an exceptionally innovative performance, synthesizing highly original ideas into a unique dramatic context.

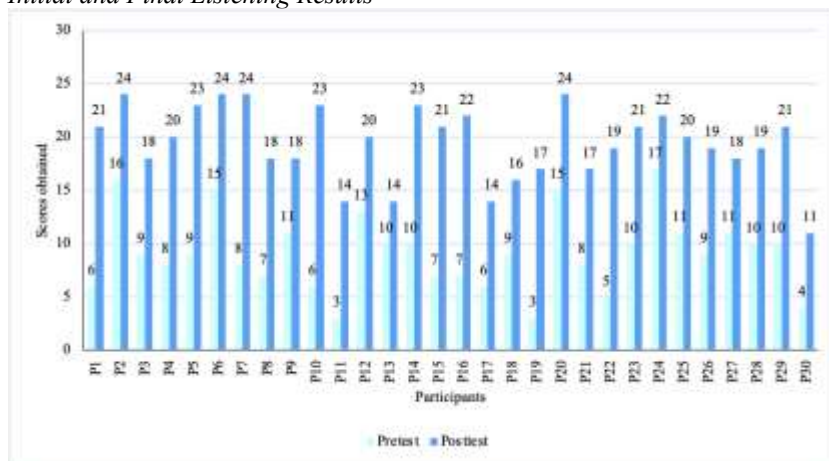
4. Findings

4.1 Pretest and Post-test Listening Results

There is no doubt that listening skills are one of the most challenging ones for students in public schools in Colombia, as they are not in constant contact with the foreign language, nor do they receive bilingual lessons. This difficulty was evidenced by the initial scores students obtained. However, after the intervention, the post-test results were considerably different as

participants reached a greater score than that obtained in the pretest (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Initial and Final Listening Results



As shown in the previous figure, participants in the pretest demonstrated a Pre A1 English level and a CES range from below 80 up to 100 regarding their listening abilities, as the maximum score led them to obtain 3 shields in this section of the exam, considering the scores from 0 up to 25. In that order, 3 students got 0 shields, 14 students got 1 shield, 9 students got 2 shields, and 4 students got 3 shields. On the other hand, as students' listening skills were constantly practiced throughout the intervention using communicative activities, participants doubled and even tripled their scores in the post-test, and even though 4 participants got 2 shields and 10 participants got 3 shields, there was an improvement in these students by comparing their pre and post-tests scores as they attained better results in the latter because those 4 participants that obtained 2 shields i.e., participants 11, 13, 17 and 30 got 3, 10, 6, and 4 points in the pretest and 14, 14, 14 and 11 in the posttest,

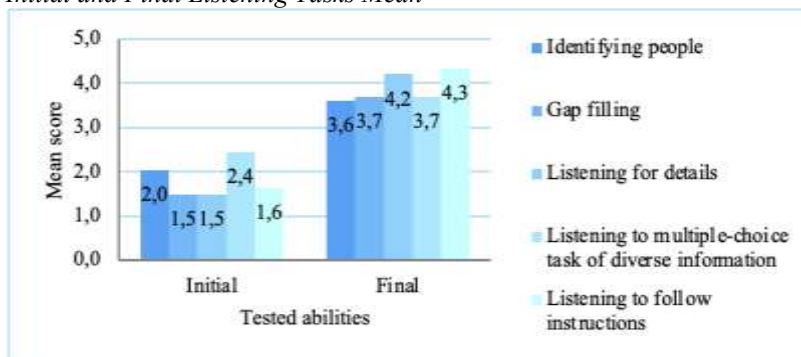
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respectively; and those who got 3 shields i.e., participants 3, 8, 9, 18, 19, 21, 22, 26, 27 and 28 got 9, 7, 11, 9, 3, 8, 5, 9, 11 and 10 in the pretest and 18, 18, 18, 16, 17, 17, 19, 19, 18 and 19 in the posttest, respectively. Strikingly, more than half of the students, i.e., 16 participants, moved forward their listening English level to an A1 with a CES range from 100 up to 200, obtaining 4 shields.

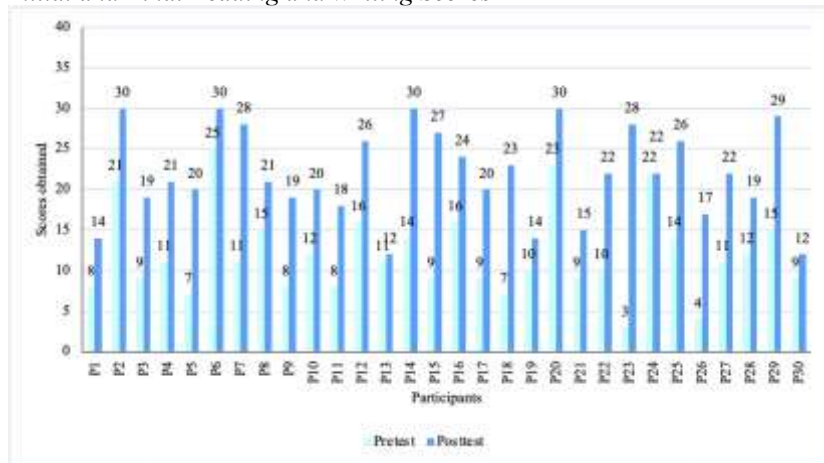
Furthermore, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the listening scores before and after the pedagogical intervention. The statistical analysis revealed a highly significant increase from the pretest scores ($M = 9.10$, $SD = 3.58$) to the post-test outcomes ($M = 19.50$, $SD = 3.41$), $t(29) = -16.86$, $p < .001$. Also, the analysis yielded a remarkably large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.97$), validating that the growth in students' listening proficiency was not accidental but directly linked to the communicative actions implemented. Furthermore, by analyzing the tested abilities or tasks assessed in the listening section, a great difference was noticed in the mean scores of those tasks. In the initial test, identifying people and listening to multiple-choice tasks of diverse information were the two tasks with which participants dealt better, while in the final test, the results were sort of similar, but listening for details and listening to follow instructions stood out from the others. These differences could be linked to the possible training students could have had to take national or multiple-choice exams before the intervention and many years back, while the results obtained in the post-test could be linked to the constant use of CA activities that put students into the continuous practice of their oral and written skills through receptive inputs, mainly listening ones (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.
Initial and Final Listening Tasks Mean



4.2 Pretest and Post-test Reading and Writing Results

As the Movers exam evaluates reading and writing skills in one section only, specific distinctions between these two abilities were complex to determine. From a general point of view of this section, a slight improvement in the scores was noticed; however, participants seemed to struggle with these skills as their scores were not high enough to reach either 4 or 5 shields in this section (see Figure 3).

Figure 3.*Initial and Final Reading and Writing Scores*

Considering the data above and the scoring indication for this section where a score from 0 to 7 was related to no shield; 8 to 15, 1 shield; 16 to 22, 2 shields; 23 to 30, 3 shields; 31 to 38, 4 shields; and 39, 5 shields, participants' skills began and remained in Pre-A1 with a CES range from below 80 up to 100 in both pre and post-test; thus, regarding the pretest, 4 participants did not get any shield, 20 participants got 1 shield, 4 participants got 2 shields and 2 participants got 3 shields. However, they did better in the post-test scores, as only 5 participants got 1 shield, 13 got 2 shields, and 12 reached 3 shields. Undoubtedly, it could be claimed that the slight changes in the scores might be attributed to the little practical exercises that were linked to reading comprehension or written production during the intervention phase, as most of the classes embraced listening comprehension activities, speaking, and vocabulary understanding, and a few addressed challenging reading and writing exercises. Interestingly, despite the rigorous nature of the tasks, the analysis of the paired-samples *t*-test yielded a statistically highly significant gain from the pretest ($M = 11.97$, $SD = 5.35$) to

the post-test scores ($M = 21.93$, $SD = 5.56$, $t(29) = -10.26$, $p < .001$). Moreover, the test produced a substantial effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.83$), demonstrating that the pedagogical strategies—although predominantly designed around oral interaction—exerted a positive cross-over effect on students' reading comprehension and written production.

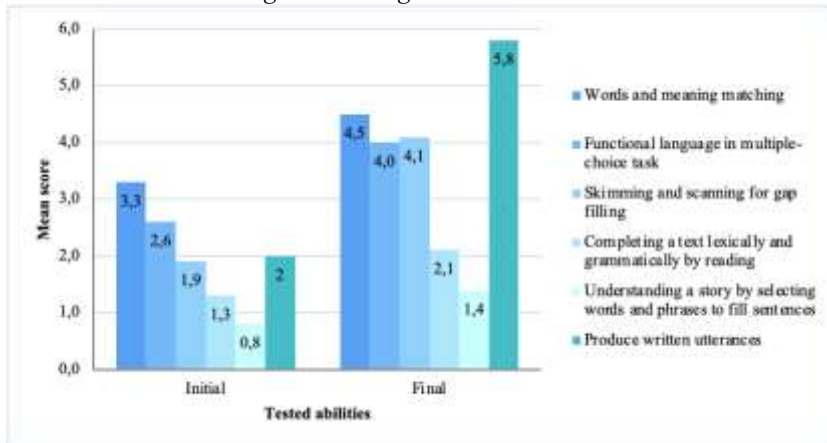
By scrutinizing the tasks assessed in this section, it was found that the first 5 tasks evaluated reading comprehension or even language use per se, as answers were implicitly given in the form of multiple choice or texts that students had to read. On the other hand, the 6th task was the only one that focused on written production as students had to create original sentences considering a given picture. In that order, and through an analysis of the difference in the initial and final mean scores in each task, it was found that although there was an increase in every task, participants demonstrated a significant performance in “words and meaning matching”, “functional language in a multiple-choice task”, “skimming and scanning gap filling” and a great improvement in the task of “produce written utterances” with an initial and final mean difference of 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, and 3.8, respectively. These results were attributed to the use of semi-structured RP during the intervention, where students had to fill in the gaps with appropriate vocabulary. Furthermore, credits were also given to the last 3 sessions where non-scripted RPs were used, and students needed to write their ideas (see Figure 4). This outcome stands in contrast to Latif et al. (2025), who argued that low-proficiency or vocationally oriented learners require low-cognitive-effort, non-academic reading inputs. Instead, the current study demonstrated that exposure to communicative, context-driven academic tasks could successfully drive complex written and reading production in young learners.

Figure 4.

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Initial and Final Reading and Writing Tasks Mean



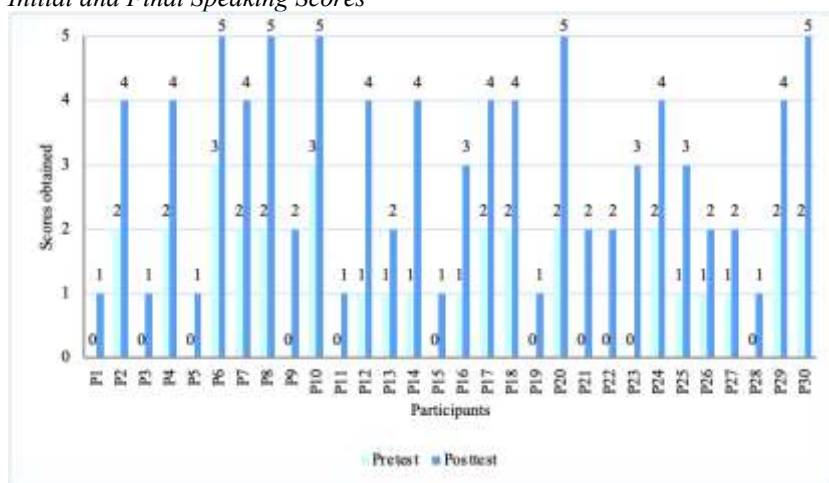
On the other hand, due to the lack of exercises during the intervention that addressed the skills of “completing a text lexically and grammatically by reading” and “understanding a story by selecting words and phrases to fill sentences”, their initial and final mean differences were not significant, as the former was 0.8 and the latter was 0.6. Furthermore, by getting the mean of the first five parts that dealt with reading skills explicitly and the mean of the last part, which focused merely on writing, it was found that there was a significant improvement in the writing skill as the latter improved almost 3 times its initial mean score while the reading skills improved only 1.6 times.

4.3 Pretest and Post-test Speaking Results

Moving to the last skill assessed, it was found that participants' initial speaking skills were completely undeveloped in most of them, maybe because of the previous methodological basis they were taught, in which they only translated and repeated what their teacher asked them to. Hence, 11 participants did not get any shield as they scored 0 on their initial test; 7 participants scored 1, obtaining 1 shield; 10 participants scored 2 for 2

shields; and 2 participants scored 3 for 3 shields. Thus, 36.6% of participants did not score enough to be labeled at an English level, while the others set their initial English-speaking level in Pre A1, with a CES range from below 80 up to 100 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.
Initial and Final Speaking Scores

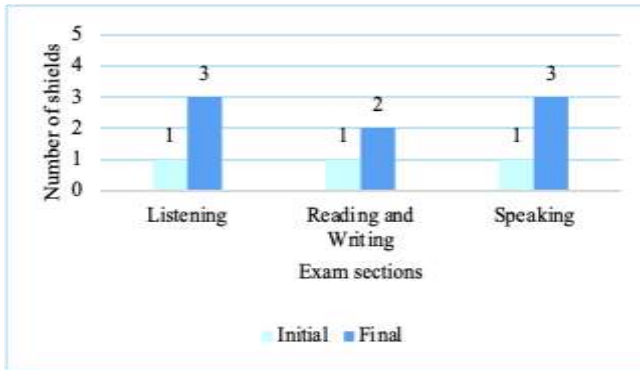


Nonetheless, significant improvement was evidenced in the post-test results as 46.6% of participants reached an A1 English level and a CES range from 100 to 200, as 9 participants got 4 points for 4 shields and 5 participants got 5 points for 5 shields. On the other hand, despite the others continuing in the Pre A1 English level with a CES range from below 80 up to 100, they did increase their initial scores. The above enhancement could be a result of the constant communicative strategies used as well as the continuous interactions in the collaborative groups, as students maintained their CC in action during the intervention. The substantial leap observed in oral production was further validated as the paired-samples *t*-test results proved that the difference

between initial speaking scores ($M = 1.10$, $SD = 0.99$) and the post-test milestones ($M = 2.97$, $SD = 1.47$) was highly significant, $t(29) = -14.00$, $p < .001$. Additionally, this transformation was supported by a very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 1.48$). These combined indicators support the premise that steady exposure to communicative tasks and collaborative group activities effectively transformed the students' speaking proficiency from undeveloped bases into active communicative capabilities. These quantitative milestones strongly align with the experimental evidence provided by Rababah (2025), whose research confirmed that EFL learners subjected to role-play treatments achieved significantly higher indicators in speaking fluency, motivation, and communicative self-efficacy compared to those restricted to traditional classroom setups.

Furthermore, by getting the mean of the overall performance in each section of the Movers exam and considering the scoring range for each to reach a specific shield, it was found that there was an enhancement in the three sections. Nonetheless, significant results were evidenced in the listening and speaking sections as students got better results, obtaining a mean of 3 shields each (see Figure 6); such improvement was related to the nature of the strategies implemented, as these were based on the above-mentioned oral skills.

Figure 6.
Overall Shields Mean



In addition, to evaluate the practical efficiency of the pedagogical intervention independently of students' initial baselines, Hake's normalized gain (g) was calculated for each macro-skill. The analysis revealed a medium learning gain across all areas ($0.30 \leq g \leq 0.70$). Receptive oral-aural processing demonstrated the highest efficiency, with a medium-high gain in listening ($g = 0.65$), meaning participants closed 65.4% of their initial knowledge gap. This was followed by the speaking performance, which achieved a medium gain ($g = 0.48$, closing 47.9% of the gap). In contrast, reading and writing yielded the most discrete yet steady progression ($g = 0.37$, closing 36.8% of the gap). These normalized metrics confirm that the communicative treatment successfully maximized the students' learning potential across both oral and written dimensions.

4.4 General Role-play Performance

Considering the rubric in Table 1, the groups' performances were assessed in the first and last lessons to measure any difference in their RP performance. Due to the aggregate nature of the group-based rubric assessments, a

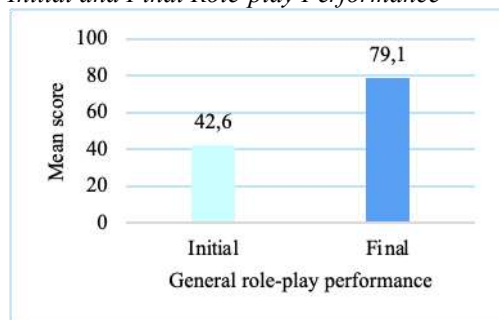
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descriptive population mean analysis was maintained for this section. Consequently, the score that each of the 6 groups got in each of the 4 criteria was added up and divided by four to get the general grade. Later, each group's general grade was considered to find the mean score of the population. In that order, participants' initial general grades positioned their RP performance at an average stage, but closer to being basic; this could have been related to the little or null exposure students had had to RPs in the past, so their communicative skills were not developed enough to achieve higher scores. However, after the intervention and thanks to the practical sessions that implemented RP as one of the main strategies, participants reached a satisfactory level of RP performance closely related to outstanding performance (see Figure 7).

Figure 7.

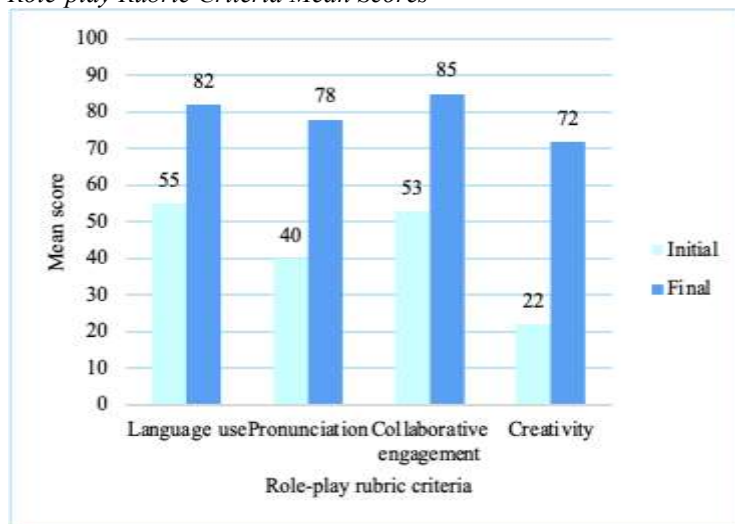
Initial and Final Role-play Performance



Furthermore, through a deep analysis of the different criteria within the rubric for participants' RP performance, it was found that, by getting the mean of each criterion in the 6 groups' performance, a great enhancement in the four criteria was achieved, as in the initial assessment, participants' language use and collaborative engagement were set at an average level while on the final assessment got an outstanding mark. On the other hand, there

was an improvement in participants' pronunciation and creativity as firstly they were set basic, but later, both reached a satisfactory level (see Figure 8).

Figure 8.
Role-play Rubric Criteria Mean Scores



The above results could be related to the different activities applied during the sessions, as students had to use their skills to complete gaps, answer questions, and the like, using appropriate English conventions. Furthermore, the teacher's and partners' attitudes were always positive and encouraging, leading participants to feel at ease to act out without considering possible mistakes or difficulties during the activities and performances. In addition, credit must be given to the several listening and speaking exercises students had to go through, making them grasp the correct sounds to later produce them in their RPs. Finally, as students had the opportunity to listen to their peers and participate in the different class activities, they developed a sense of imagination to devise and recreate ideas into fascinating RPs. This creative baseline mirrors the observations of Hosseini et al. (2025), who confirmed that implementing dynamic

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instructional actions like dramatization and role-playing successfully counteract classroom monotony and elevate young learners' illustrative capabilities.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study functioned as a tool to demonstrate the current reality in the public schools in Colombia as through the results of the initial test, it was evidenced the lack of opportunities teachers gave learners to work on their CC; hence, initial poor performance could be attributed to the tedious and constant implementation of traditional methods that Orfan et al. (2021) claimed to still be used in the country, leading to going against favorable educational beliefs. This baseline aligns with a documented instructional imbalance where learners consistently exhibit highly positive attitudes toward communicative activities, yet educational practitioners frequently revert to drilling and translation due to structural time constraints and a lack of intensive pedagogical training (Bedah et al., 2026). Evidently, it was revealed from the low pretest results that what Abad (2013) stated about the deprivation of quality education is becoming stronger and more real nowadays. Unfortunately, although some scholars suggest that pedagogical applications of structural linguistics can be beneficial (Rohman & Wijaya, 2023), the low scores obtained in the initial writing section align with Wenhua's (2017) perspective regarding the unverified claims of structuralism and the Audiolingual Method in practical language learning. Thus, it is time to go through a catharsis, in which grammar focus and memorization exercises that were considered a tendency by Orfan et al. (2021) are abandoned in English teachers' practices, as Eaton (2010) strongly advocated.

On the other hand, the positive results in the post-test can be attributed to the dynamism and creativity mentioned by Reid (2005) in light of

Cognitivism, as well as to collaborative work in light of Constructivism (García, 2000), because students had to put into practice their knowledge to build harmonious ideas with their peers to co-construct information needed to participate in the class activities. Furthermore, as synthesized by Soodmand Afshar et al. (2025), collaborative peer interactions provide highly repetitive production practice that empowers learners to proceduralize linguistic knowledge far more efficiently than individual isolated study. Thus, thanks to the implementation of GW and RP strategies, similar outcomes to those obtained by Marsevani (2023) were found in the current study; inferential statistical metrics confirmed that in only eight sessions, students achieved a highly significant leap in their macro skills, predominantly in listening and speaking, backed by remarkably robust effect sizes. Furthermore, the medium-to-high normalized learning gains achieved across all dimensions ($0.37 \leq g \leq 0.65$) mathematically confirm that the active nature of these strategies successfully optimized the students' learning potential by substantially closing their initial knowledge gaps, regardless of their low baselines. This outcome aligns with local empirical data showing that socio-affective variables yield their strongest significant correlation precisely with listening proficiency ($r = 0.49$) among Colombian secondary learners, suggesting that supportive, communicative environments optimize acoustic focus (Garnica-Rey & Navarro-Arana, 2025). This structural success corroborates the state-of-the-art review by Kaygısız and Akar (2025), which demonstrated that well-structured role-playing sessions directly integrated into the curriculum generate prominent gains in student autonomy, topic mastery, and self-efficacy when the instructor operates as a facilitator rather than an authority figure.

Similarly, speaking proficiency was also a promising positive result in the study of Rospinah et al. (2021), who implemented GW as the main strategy. Additionally, a match was found with Maarof's (2018) and Neupane's (2019) results because the different RPs used during the intervention contributed to participants' oral skills. Furthermore, the interactive nature of these role-playing tasks builds on students' natural interpersonal strengths, mirroring evidence from underresourced Colombian contexts where active multimodal strategies amplify learners' inherent resilience, empathy, and academic involvement (Navarro-Arana & Carrillo-Carrillo, 2026). Nonetheless, these findings diverge from those of Al-Qadi and Smadi (2014); although the participants' writing scores improved, they did not significantly surpass the other skills assessed. This might be attributed to the limited time allocated to producing complex writing tasks. These results contrast with the high-complexity writing advancements observed by Khezzinejad et al. (2025), whose framework proved that substantial structural progression in text accuracy and fluency depends heavily on intensive metacognitive instruction and structured pre-task modeling—variables that were secondary to the heavy oral-aural treatment maintained throughout our short-term intervention.

In light of these breakthroughs, strong emphasis is placed on the use of GW and RP, as in line with Karim (2015), this pedagogical combination not only improved students' linguistic capabilities but also their motivation and attitude. Moreover, considering participants' RP performances, TBL played an important role during the intervention, as in agreement with Xue (2013), it optimized students' abilities, helping them work independently with a specific purpose. Finally, as there is a constant evolution in education that fosters new methods and strategies that go hand in hand with the new generation of students and their needs, this study contributed to the field of

English teaching practices as it demonstrated the effectiveness of attractive and modern strategies so that educators reflect on their practices and improve what they consider necessary in light of providing significant learning experiences that can be used and applied in real-life situations where accurate communication among individuals is needed.

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