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FLIPPED CLASSROOM IN CHAIN: BOOSTING ORAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING, THROUGH CULTURE AND EMOTION INCENTIVES

Aula Invertida en Cadena: Impulso a la competencia oral en el aprendizaje del inglés como lengua extranjera, mediante incentivos culturales y emocionales

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of the Chained Flipped Classroom Method (CFCCM) on the development of oral expression in English as a foreign language among tenth-grade students at a public high school in Riobamba, Ecuador. The research employs a quantitative, applied, and pre-experimental design, involving a single group of 30 students (12 males, 18 females) without a control group. The intervention aimed to address how the CFC influences students' oral communication by providing online instructional content prior to face-to-face sessions, thus allowing classroom time for collaborative and student-centered tasks. The findings indicate a mean score of 5.9/10 on the diagnostic test, which increased to 8.2/10 on the post-application test. A paired-samples t-test calculated using SPSS yielded a t-value of 2.2952 and a p-value of 0.015. Since the p-value is below the significance threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$), the improvement in oral expression is statistically significant. These improvements were reflected in greater fluency, confidence, and student participation during the face-to-face sessions. Therefore, it is concluded that the MAIE is a valuable pedagogical approach for strengthening oral communication in the context of secondary education where English is taught as a foreign language.

Keywords: Flipped classroom, Multi-level in Chain, speaking skills, english as a foreign language, secondary education.

RESUMEN

El estudio explora el impacto del Método de Aula Invertida Encadenada (MAIE) en el desarrollo de la expresión oral en inglés como lengua extranjera en estudiantes de décimo grado de una escuela secundaria pública en Riobamba, Ecuador. La investigación adopta un diseño cuantitativo, aplicado y preexperimental, involucrando a un solo grupo de 30 estudiantes (12 hombres, 18 mujeres) sin un grupo de control. La intervención tuvo como objetivo abordar cómo el AI influye en la comunicación oral de los estudiantes al proporcionar contenido instructivo en línea antes de las sesiones presenciales, permitiendo tiempo en el aula para tareas colaborativas y centradas en el estudiante. Los hallazgos indican una media de 5.9/10 en la prueba diagnóstica, que aumenta a 8.2/10 en la prueba post aplicación. Una prueba t de muestras pareadas calculada con SPSS arroja un valor t de 2.2952 y un valor p de 0.015. Dado que el valor p se encuentra por debajo del umbral de significancia ($\alpha = 0,05$), la mejora en la expresión oral es estadísticamente significativa. Estas mejoras se reflejaron en una mayor fluidez, confianza y participación de los estudiantes durante las sesiones presenciales. En este sentido, se concluye que el MAIE es un enfoque pedagógico valioso para fortalecer la comunicación oral en el contexto de la educación secundaria donde se enseña el inglés como lengua extranjera.

Palabras claves: Aula invertida, Multinivel encadenado, expresión oral, inglés como lengua extranjera, educación secundaria.

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INTRODUCTION

The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic prompted a profound shift in education, challenging traditional paradigms and urging a redefinition of teacher-student roles, content relevance, and the role of technology in learning. This context demanded curriculum reconstruction from critical, constructivist, and complex perspectives. Education began integrating technology to foster meaningful, context-aware interaction with knowledge. Grounded in humanistic, intercultural, and connectivist approaches, this transformation emphasizes adaptability to learners' socio-economic and linguistic realities, making education more accessible, relevant and responsive in times of crisis (Divjak et al., 2022; Vergara Vásquez et al., 2024).

It has been well debated that social media, augmented reality and virtual reality make learning a vivid process where students can experiment, create, and re-create academic content based on their context and needs. But we propose that they lack somehow on the social abilities to create learning leaderships, which is mostly a personal experience. A prominent example is the Flipped Classroom Method (FCM), and Flipped Classroom Method in Chain (FCMC), which, departing from traditional model, it allows to foster the student self-driven skills, which promotes autonomy, engagement, co-responsibility, and leadership (Mukti, 2022; Cedeño Meléndez et al., 2024) (EL CONSEJO DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR, n.d.) (Artal-Sevil & Bernal-Agustín, 2024).

With the basis therein, this study showcases the results of applying the FCMC to address speaking challenges in English as a Foreign Language instruction (EFL). The research is based on the idea that leadership is a good incentive, and a) well controlled inputs b) self-driven learning groups experience, can provide the ability to lead a second group, which can prepare itself to lead a third group, and so on.

This idea promotes the Multilevel experience from marketing, which has converted big enterprises in leadership schools, creating a sense of unity and learning consolidation. This is the implemented idea:

Figure 1. Flipped Classroom in Chain. Own design.

The strategy was conducted under the objectives of the Ecuadorian National Foreign Language Curriculum and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), in Ecuador, both of which endorse the integration of technology and active methodologies in language teaching. In this regard, the specific objectives attempt to:

1. To diagnose the initial speaking level of the participants.
2. To apply speaking activities designed under the Flipped Classroom methodology, considering the realities identified during the diagnostic phase.
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of the proposal based on the participants' learning outcomes.

CLASSICAL FLIPPED CLASS METHODOLOGY EVOLUTION

The origins of FCM date back to the early 2000s, with early influences from King's study "From Sage on the Stage to Guide on the Side" which criticized traditional teaching and emphasized constructivist learning (King, 1993). In 2000, Wesley Baker interconnected pedagogy with technology footing the model (Baker Wesley, 2016). Initially, the intention was to help students catch up on the content they could not receive due to absenteeism, but after some effective practices, this approach revealed broader applications (Agirman & Ercoskun, 2022).

Its first empirical application began in 2007 when Bergmann and Sams, recorded and shared their lessons online to support absent students (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). The videos gained popularity and benefits started to be highlighted (Artal-Sevil & Bernal-Agustín, 2024). Hence, educators started using the method in different subjects, diverse levels of education, and multidisciplinary areas where teachers can create and disseminate any content (Farroñan Flores, 2024). The positive results derived after this implementation triggered the interest of the scientific community who through different research have evidenced the advantages and possibilities of the method.

For instance, Wang and Wright (2018)we tracked learners in a beginner-level Chinese Foreign Language classroom to see if flipped teaching based on a MOOC made a difference to their oral proficiency development and rate of progresscompared to a baseline group. Language developmentwas assessed by standard complexity, accuracy and fluency measures, alongside subjective ratings. Learners' investment of time and perceptions of the new method were also investigated. Results showed that learners exposed to flipped instruction significantly (p <.01 noticed substantial advances in fluency and accuracy of students. The authors attribute these grants to the opportunities for students to expand rehearsal and the possibilities to self and peer-feedback. Similarly, Bonilla and Narvaez (2025) realized that EFL students became more participatory and that their oral contributions were better qualified after using this method. In addition, Moreno et al. (Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020) showed that FCM also promoted empathy and respect for what and how students learn. Recently, Santhanasamy et al. (2022) and González-Gómez (2022) added that FCM could also integrate self-directed study and hands-on classroom activities, making education more effective and easier. This made it possible to understand why this method is prized in modern pedagogy, particularly in EFL context where enhancing learners' speaking skills is the target (Guillermo Morales, 2024).

WHICH IS THE CORE OF THE FCM SUCCESS?

The FCM is an innovative pedagogical method that integrates the traditional teaching model with innovative methodological strategies mediated with technology, because of this, it is considered as a semi-structured methodology. The method grounds its notions under the principles of social constructivism, which holds that communication and cooperation among people lead to learning (Vygotsky, 1978) back up value of experience-based learning, in which learners apply abstract ideas to real-world situations to solidify their comprehension (Piaget, 1970), and patrocinated the liaison between newly learned material and students' existing cognitive structures, which is consistent with Ausubel's theory of meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1963). In addition, self-directed learning makes learning more approachable and interesting for students, among person to person, and in multimedia formats.

The method combines both online and offline strategies. Commonly, theoretical instruction takes place outside the targeted classroom group, through multimedia or presential tutorials and, on the other hand, class time is effectively to self-learning and to debate pragmatical tasks, solving students' struggles and questions (Bergmann & Sams, 2014). This model encourages independence, accountability, and self-regulated learning by reorienting the emphasis from teacher-centered lectures to student-centered activities where scholars take responsibility for their education by using the resources at their speed and going over them again as necessary to ensure they understand them (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016; López Basilio et al., 2024) In addition, this model mitigates common barriers such as fear, and anxiety associated with public exposure. By allowing students to prepare in advance, they feel more confident and better equipped to actively participate during in-class activities. Furthermore, FCM reduces failure rates and improves academic performance by encouraging structured pre-study and more active class participation.

Speaking

Speaking is a dynamic process through which individuals articulate thoughts, convey ideas, and express viewpoints in ways that are intelligible and contextually appropriate for their interlocutors. This communicative act encompasses the physical articulation of speech sounds using the vocal apparatus, including the lips, tongue, and teeth, but also extends to alternative modalities depending on communicative intent and context (Richards & Rodgers, 2015; Castro Zapata & Londoño Bonilla, 2024).

Speech manifests in both verbal and non-verbal forms. Verbal communication includes oral and written expressions, as well as structured systems like sign language, which utilize manual and visual signals to represent linguistic elements (**Briceño-Nuñez, 2024).** Non-verbal communication, on the other hand, comprises cues such as posture, facial expressions, gaze behavior, and proxemics; each playing a pivotal role in meaning-making, often complementing or even substituting verbal output in diverse communicative contexts (Abdullah et al., 2021; López Castillo, 2025).

This English macro skill includes subskills such as: Fluency, Accuracy, Interaction, and pronunciation. The former comprises pronouncing words properly, forming ideas, articulating opinions. Accuracy refers to the competence to use the language correctly, counting the right lexical items, grammatical structures, and sentence formation. It safeguards that the speaker's message is not just understandable but also free from errors that lead to confusion (Santiago González et al., 2024). Interaction stands for the active part one can play in a conversation. It also entails starting and directing the conversation as necessary, as well as effectively answering an interlocutor's inquiries or remarks. Finally, Pronunciation refers to a speaker's ability to produce sound, word stress, intonation, and rhythm in such a way that one will be understood (Harmer, 2015; Encarnación Berrocal et al., 2025).

FCM and FCMC in the teaching of English-speaking skill

According to literature, FCM has been very useful for tackling the difficulties associated with speaking in EFL contexts as well as for fostering its development. Li and Li (2022) affirm that this methodological strategy enhances oral communication abilities resolving the shortcomings of conventional teaching methods, thereby promoting students' confidence and language competence (Santiago González et al., 2023).

To feed the FCMC notion it is important to remember that the speaking skills are strongly related to the incentives produced from created relationships. To enhance the importance of relationships, giving roles to people into a greater group, should produce more complex and dynamical contexts to learn. This is not just an intellectual but an emotional strategy to produce greater incentives (Hernández Aragón, 2025).

For instance, it is very common to know the bilingual couples foster their speaking abilities due to the emotional context that invades all the living process. So, created relationships, if they are not just provisional or task-oriented, as usual, but emotionally steadier, should provide stronger incentives to the learning process and to consolidate it. So, if classical academic literature uses to consider co-responsibility, not as a simple intellectual incentive but an emotional one, we should also think on other emotional group incentives, as leadership. The creation of levels of knowledge on several topics, will also work as an award because it will recognize the status for the the learning-teaching group.

Hence, this educational modality emphasizes the usage of engaging and dynamic exercises in multi-levels. The chain component also can promote effectiveness to more groups, with a certain level of autonomy, indicating the desired leadership. In that way, a school of language can produce different effects profiting its sections and grades, according to the designed strategy. Also a school can work as different sub-schools, even with different techniques, if it is well coordinated. From Gilboy (2015) notions, it will enable students to engage with one another and, apply what they have learned at home. Using activities that encourage students to actively participate is a crucial component of this strategy so, the very fact of multiplying this participation should increase the Method effectiveness. Group projects, role plays, debates, peer reviews, problem solving tasks, and individual presenting exercises, for instance, would facilitate learning consolidation at different levels, and establish a setting where oral practice will be prioritized.

EVALUATION OF THE METHOD

Research Design and Participants

This research adopts a quantitative approach to evaluate the impact of FCM and FCMC (its second or third phases) on the development of students' speaking skills, classifying the study as applied and pre-experimental as it involves a single group with no control one for comparison (Creswell J. David & Creswell and John W., 2018). The study population consisted of 30 10th-grade students (12 males, 18 female) from a public High School in Riobamba, at the Chimborazo Province, in Ecuador. Given the manageable size, no sampling was applied, and all students were purposively included. Informed consent was obtained to ensure participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, risks, and benefits. To protect their identities, students were assigned identification codes ranging from ST01 to ST30, and approval was also secured from parents and institution authorities.

Instruments

Data collection process involved a pre-test and post-test, analyzed using a paired sample t-test to evaluate changes in students' speaking skills. Instruments included a test questionnaire to assess students' initial speaking level and identify subskill challenges, and a post-test questionnaire to measure progress after the intervention. Additionally, a rubric from the Cambridge A2 Test for Speaking Skills (KET) was applied, using a six-band scale from 0 to 5,

with descriptors at level 1, 3, and 5 to define performance expectations.

The rubric assessed key speaking components: grammar and vocabulary, pronunciation and interactive communication. Both the pre-test and post-test had two sections, one focused on basic personal information and the other on expressing likes or dislikes with justification. Each section included five open- and close-ended questions, with slight modifications in the post-test. Students were evaluated in pairs.

To complete these assessments, surveys were implemented as a secondary data collection technique to gather students' perceptions of the methodology used (Dillman et al., 2014). The reliability of the survey instrument was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yield a coefficient of 0.92, indicating excellent internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2024).

Procedures

The intervention phase lasted 11 weeks: one for the pre-test, eight for instruction, one for the posttest, and one for reflection. Activities were organized via Google Meet and Google Classroom, platforms already familiar to students. The pre-test was conducted during class with students evaluated in pairs to encourage authentic communication. Sessions were recorded and scored by two independent raters using a Cambridge A2 speaking rubric to enhance inter-rater reliability.

Instructional tasks based on FCM and FCMC included asynchronous and synchronous activities, such as instructional videos, grammar tutorials, pronunciation drills, interactive worksheets, and model speaking samples. Before class, students submitted voice notes via Vocaroo and Flipgrid, promoting individual speaking practice. Live sessions included discussions, interviews, and role-plays, with feedback on grammar, pronunciation, and interaction. The post-test mirrored the pre-test and was similarly rated.

SPSS was used to assess data normality and perform a paired-sample t-test. Surveys results on students' perceptions were analyzed through frequency distribution to complement performance data

RESULTS

The pre-test was administrated to assess students' initial proficiency in speaking. As shown in Table 1, the results indicate notable weaknesses in two specific subskills: Pronunciation and interactive communication according to the stablished scoring rubric. Conversely, students demonstrated stronger competences regarding grammar and vocabulary.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Speaking Subskills Scores.

Speaking subskills	Grammar and Vocabulary M/SD	Pronunciation M/SD	Interactive Communication M/SD
Pretest	2,10/0,76	1,33/0,84	1,60/1,03
Posttest	1,83/0,95	1,87/0,97	2,47/0,93

Source: Own elaboration

Note: M=Mean, SD=Standard Deviation

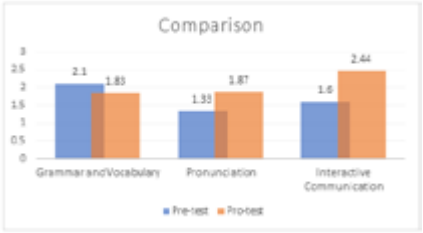
In pronunciation subskill, students have to achieve a score of 3 in this subskill. However, the mean score in the pre-test was only 1.33, indicating difficulty in this subskill. For Interactive Communication subskill, the pre-test mean was 1.60, but the standard deviation was 1.03 which reflected

that this subskill was especially challenging due to a variation in wrong and right answers of students. To address these weaknesses, the FCM/FCMC intervention focused on providing online resources to improve Pronunciation and interactive communication. Additionally, in-class activities incorporated targeted strategies to strengthen these subskills.

The post-test results reflect the positive impact of the intervention, particularly on the identified weak subskills. Pronunciation improved significantly, with the mean increasing to 1.87, indicating a more consistent articulation and reduced phonological errors. Interactive communication showed the most notable progress, as showed in Figure 1, with a mean of 2.47, reveling students' progress in turn-taking, responsiveness, clarification, and topic development. Additionally, in the post-test, the standard deviation decreased to 0.93, showing that students became more consistent in this subskill.

However, in Figure 1 it is worth noting a slight decline in the other two subskills. Understanding Key Information dropped slightly to 2.10 and Identifying Key Information also decreased to 1.83. This showed that despite the focus to develop the weaker subskills, it was important to consider a comprehensive focus to encompass all of them.

Figure 1. Pre-test and Post-test Subskills Comparison.



Source: Own elaboration

Note: Scores were measured on a scale of 0 to 3.

General Speaking Performance

Following the implementation of the FCM/FCMC, the post-test was conducted to determine the overall performance in speaking. Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for both the pretest and posttest. The increase in mean score reflects an overall improvement, while the standard deviation suggests greater consistency among students' performance.

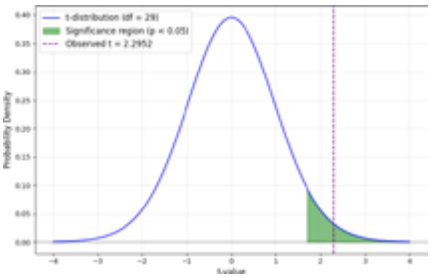
Table 2. Descriptive statistics of Pre and Post-test.

Sample	N	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	30	1,66	10	6,21	1,74
Post-test	30	0,83	10	7,13	1,67

Source: Own elaboration

Figure 2 further illustrates the acceptance region for the alternative hypothesis (H1) proposed in section 3.6 in green, where the observed t-value lies, confirming the positive impact of the Flipped Classroom Methodology on the students' speaking performance thus rejecting Null Hypothesis (H0).

Figure 2. t-Distribution with Highlighted Acceptance Region.



Source: Own elaboration

Note: The green area represents H1 acceptance

On the other hand, Table 3 presents the paired sample t-test results computed in SPSS, showing a t-value of 2.2952 and a p-value of 0.015. As the p-value is less than the significance level (α = 0.05), it can be concluded that the improvement in speaking skills is statistically significant.

Table 3. Pre and Post-test Paired Sample t-test Results.

	t-value	*Degrees of Freedom*	*p-value (unilateral)*	*Significance Level (α)*
Results	2,2952	29	0,015	0,05

Source: Own elaboration

Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics of the survey dimensions, which evaluated both the Flipped Classroom Methodology and the assessment instruments on a Likert scale from 1 to 5 applied after the post-test. Regarding FCM/FCMC dimensions, the highest mean score was observed in "Impact on Learning" with a mean of 3.91, suggesting that students perceived the methodology as having a strong positive effect on their learning.

"Clarity and Accessibility" with a mean of 3.64 and "Engagement and Motivation" with a mean of 3.63 also received relatively high scores, reflecting a generally favorable perception of the method's clarity, accessibility, and its ability to foster motivation.

For the Assessment Instrument dimensions, "Complexity and Familiarity" with a mean of 3.64 and "Relevance and Fairness" with a mean of 3.56 received moderate scores, indicating that while the instruments were seen as somewhat relevant and familiar, there is room for improvement. This may occur due to the lack of familiarity with the assessment instrument used and structure. The relatively higher standard deviations across all dimensions suggest variability in individual responses, highlighting differences in students' perceptions of the methodology and assessment tools.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of Survey Dimensions.

Flipped Classroom Dimensions	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
Pedagogical strategy		
Engagement and Motivation	3,63	1,09
Clarity and Accessibility	3,64	1,26
Impact on Learning	3,91	1,15

Assessment Instrument		
Relevance and Fairness	3,56	1,07
Complexity and Familiarity	3,64	1,21

Source: Own elaboration

Note: Scores were measured on a scale of 1 to 5

DISCUSSION

To what extent does the implementation of FCM/FCMC influence the development of speaking skills in EFL students?

The findings revealed significant improvement in students' speaking subskills, accompanied by generally positive perceptions of FCM/FCMC. Pronunciation exhibited marked improvement, as reflected by an increased mean score of 1.87. The most substantial advancement was observed in interactive communication, as illustrated in figure 2, where the mean rose to 2.47. Furthermore, the standard deviation for this subskill decreased to 0.93 in the posttest, pointing to greater consistency in students' interactive speaking performance.

This enhancement in oral performance was further supported by affective factors, such as motivation, which plays a preponderant role in foreign language acquisition. Students reported a high level of motivation toward participating in flipped learning activities, as reflected in a mean score of 3.63 (SD = 1.09) on the motivation scale.

These results align with the principles of Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of learning, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction, engagement, and meaningful task design in promoting language development (Mollo Torrico et al., 2025). The structured yet flexible nature of FCM, where foundational content is explored independently and communicative practice is reinforced in regular classes, creates opportunities for learners to construct knowledge within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

Additionally, students highlighted the importance of creative materials and interactive activities. These findings suggest that contextualizing tasks in familiar and enjoyable contexts can increase engagement in developing the target skill. In this regard, some authors (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016; Navas López & Yaques de la Rosa, 2025) (Zainuddin & Halili, 2016, suggest that enjoyable activities promoted through active methodologies, such as Gamification, can even increase the likelihood of students in achieving the desired result.

A growing body of empirical research underscores the effectiveness of FCM/FCMC in advancing speaking proficiency. For instance, Wei (2025) conducted an 8-week experimental study with high-school students, reveling that those exposed to the FCM/FCMC exhibited substantial improvement in speaking abilities, attributed to increased opportunities for pair-based practice and interactive learning environments. Similarly, Lui et al. (2019)2017 found that FCM/FCMC not only enhances speaking performance but also fosters positive learners' perceptions regarding engagement and collaboration. Ardiansyah et al. (2024)post-tests, and pre-tests. Either experimental and control class has 25 students. The test's reliability and validity were thoroughly examined through the employment of the Split-Half technique as well as the Aiken formula. Furthermore, in an effort to establish dependability for the questionnaire, Pearson Co-

rrelation testing methods were utilized. A comprehensive data analysis covered broad statistical areas including application of Shapiro-Wilk procedure, Levene Statistics test evaluating homogeneity characteristics, deployment of independent samples t-test and incorporation of Cohen's d in hypothesis validation procedures. Post intervention results from experimental group significantly indicated marked improvements in reading comprehension following hypothesis assessment. The alternative hypothesis (Ha reported statistically significant gains in post-test speaking scores compared to students in traditional settings.

To finish, although students demonstrated measurable improvements in their speaking performance, posttest results revealed that certain challenges persisted, particularly in tasks requiring spontaneous production under time constraints. These difficulties were especially evident in tasks involving rapid prompts or complex speaking scenarios, where some students struggled to maintain fluency and coherence.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of FCMC (Flipped Classroom Methodology in Chain) in this study demonstrated significant benefits for developing speaking skills in EFL contexts. By engaging learners with online resources prior to in-class activities, students come to class better prepared and more confident, factors that triggered students' participation on oral communication tasks. The structure of FCMC allowed for more collaborative and interactive activities that were directly linked to the material students had previously studied, providing ample opportunities for them to practice speaking in meaningful contexts.

The "Chain approach" gives more importance of the emotional incentives played by the increasing leadership roles, because it allows to the culture, which is one the fundamental basis in human knowledge, to participate in the learning process, and to avoid the purely intellectual incentives.

This shift from passive to active learning not only improved students' speaking fluency but also promoted a thorough understanding of how to use language in real-life situations, fostering both confidence and competence in oral communication. Furthermore, the study highlighted the positive impact of Flipped Classroom Methodology in Chain on students' motivation and engagement. As students had already encountered content online or offline, they were able to focus more on applying what they have learned through discussions, role-plays, and other interactive exercises during regular classes.

This active approach to speaking practice created a supporting learning environment that encouraged effective and affective feedback to collaborative learning. According to this innovation, centered in the importance to widen the social connection among students and teachers, culture is not an unconsidered or a secondary issue in the learning methodology, which makes the method to respond the main debates on postmodern philosophy (Castro Aniyar, 2014). Because of that, the usage of leadership in FCMC offers an effective framework for promoting dynamic interaction in culture, crucial for foreign language learning and, of course, oral communication competence, based on emotional and cultural incentives.

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