

UNIVERSIDAD LAICA “ELOY ALFARO” DE MANABÍ
Creada mediante Ley No. 010 Reg. Off 313 del 13 de noviembre de 1985



FACULTAD DE EDUCACIÓN Y TURISMO
CARRERA DE PEDAGOGÍA LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS

PREVIO A LA OBTENCION DEL TITULO
LICENCIADO/A EN PEDAGOGÍA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

TRABAJO DE INTEGRACIÓN CURRICULAR

MODALIDAD:

ESCRITURA DE ARTICULO CIENTIFICO

TEMA:

“Teacher Communication and teamwork of English learners: mentoring”

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MANTA - ECUADOR

2026

CERTIFICADO DE DERECHO DE AUTOR

PROPIEDAD INTELECTUAL

Título de Trabajo de Investigación: Teacher Communication and Teamwork of English

Learners: Mentoring

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Fecha de Finalización: 22 de julio de 2026

Descripción de Autoría:

La autoría del presente trabajo de investigación mediante la redacción de artículo científico, comprende el diseño, la implementación y la evaluación de una estrategia de mentoría grupal orientada al fortalecimiento de las habilidades de comunicación y trabajo en equipo en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. Asimismo, incluye el diagnóstico inicial, la revisión teórica, la aplicación de instrumentos, el análisis de los resultados y la redacción de conclusiones y recomendaciones derivadas del proceso investigativo.

Declaración de Autoría:

Yo, VEGA VÉLEZ ANTHONY GABRIEL, con documento de identidad 131555765-0, declaramos que somos autores originales y VILLAFUERTE HOLGUIN JHONNY SAULO ALBERTO con documento de identidad 130579907-2, declaro que soy el coautor en calidad de tutor del trabajo de investigación titulación "TEACHER COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK OF ENGLISH LEARNERS: MENTORING", Este trabajo es resultado del esfuerzo intelectual y no sido copiados ni plagiado en ninguna de sus partes.

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CERTIFICO

En calidad de docente tutor(a) de la Facultad de Educación, Turismo, Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Laica "Eloy Alfaro" de Manabí, CERTIFICO:

Haber dirigido, revisado y aprobado preliminarmente el Trabajo de Integración Curricular bajo la autoría del estudiante VEGA VELEZ ANTHONY GABRIEL, legalmente matriculado en la carrera de PEDAGOGÍA DE LOS IDIOMAS NACIONALES Y EXTRANJEROS, período académico 2026-2027(1), cumpliendo el total de **384 horas**, cuyo tema del proyecto o núcleo problémico es *"TEACHER COMMUNICATION AND TEAMWORK OF ENGLISH LEARNERS MENTORING"*

La presente investigación ha sido desarrollada en apego al cumplimiento de los requisitos académicos exigidos por el Reglamento de Régimen Académico y en concordancia con los lineamientos internos de la opción de titulación en mención, reuniendo y cumpliendo con los méritos académicos, científicos y formales, y la originalidad del mismo, requisitos suficientes para ser sometida a la evaluación del tribunal de titulación que designe la autoridad competente.

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Lo certifico,



VILLAFUERTE HOLGUIN JONNY SAULO ALBERTO
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family for supporting me all these years; my father, who has been a source of courage and inspiration; my mother, who has always cared for me with dedication and love; my siblings, whom I respect and love dearly; my best friend Lexy, a friend for over a for over a decade and with whom I have shared countless laughs; the professors who have guided us along this path with mastery and professionalism; my mentor Jhonny, who guided me through this final stage; and, last but certainly not least, my beloved girlfriend with whom I will share the rest of my life who has been my greatest support and has stood by me throughout this journey.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, who taught me all the values I possess, who have always cared for me, and who worked to ensure there was always food on the table. Thank you for believing in me and in the path I chose; I am who I am today because of you. Thank you. I love you very much.

Teacher Communication and teamwork of English learners: mentoring

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Abstract

Communication and teamwork are key soft skills in current educational context of EFL instruction. This study aims to strengthen communication and teamwork skills through a group mentoring strategy in pre-service EFL teachers program. The participants are 36 pre-service EFL teachers at an Ecuadorian public university. The instruments used for the collection of data are a Structured field diary, Team Effectiveness Likert Scale Questionnaire, and a Global self-rating scale. The researcher team designed an embedded mixed-methods. The results show that Communication scores increased from 6.94 (SD = 1.39) to 7.51 (SD = 1.44), $t = -3.13$, $p = .004$, and teamwork scores passed from 7.04 (SD = 1.75) to 7.73 (SD = 1.75), $t = -3.25$, $p = .004$. Qualitative findings showed increased participation, active listening, feedback, trust, coordination, and problem-solving. Results suggest group mentoring may support soft-skill development, although the small sample, and self-reports.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, mentoring, communication, leadership, teamwork, leadership.

INTRODUCTION

Communication and teamwork are essential soft skills for pre-service English language teachers because they help create learning environments that foster language acquisition. Such skills enable students to collaborate, deepen their understanding of the language, and exchange ideas (Bukit, 2023). However, some students still struggle with teamwork and communication—issues that can ultimately hinder their professional growth. In addition, soft skills are a fundamental requirement for most employers. Even though there is extensive literature on the professional development of English teachers—including research on soft-skill improvement—few studies have explored soft-skill development among pre-service EFL teachers in Latin America. Teamwork and communication are soft skills essential for harmonious professional collaboration in educational contexts. However, individuals have varying work preferences—some prefer

working alone, while others prefer working in diverse groups (Priadi, 2020). This creates a challenge because, even though modern technology has overcome previous barriers to teamwork, issues such as a lack of responsibility, failure to meet team deadlines, and procrastination hinder success. Therefore, it is necessary to implement actions centered on communication and teamwork within English classrooms. This research proposes mentoring pathways to strengthen soft skills related to teamwork.

The works of Tang (2021), Huang (2023), Alzubi (2024) and Lin (2025) focus on mentoring as a means to improve specific English language skills, without linking its use to the development of soft skills such as teamwork and communication. Consequently, there is a need for research to address this gap in the scientific literature; this study therefore focuses on ways to strengthen teamwork and communication in the context of English language teaching. The research questions that guide the research are:

RQ1. How can group mentoring be directed toward strengthening communication and teamwork skills in preEnglish class?

RQ2. How was the evolution of the participants' communication and teamwork soft skills?

RQ3. What changes occurred between the pre-test and post-test of soft skills and communication?

The hypotheses to be evaluated are:

Ho: There are no relationships between communication and teamwork items and the factors of sex, age, and employment status.

Ha: There are relationships between communication and teamwork items and the factors of sex, age, and employment status.

Ho2: There are no significant changes in communication and teamwork.

Ha2: There are significant changes in communication and teamwork.

This study aims to strengthen communication and teamwork skills through a group mentoring strategy in pre-service EFL teachers program.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Communication

Communication between teachers and the student body is essential in any educational setting; teachers must be able to convey information effectively, while students must be able to communicate their doubts and knowledge to their instructors. Thus, Zlatić (2014) views communication as one of the fundamental soft skills a teacher needs to impart knowledge effectively.

In recent years, soft skills such as communication and teamwork have proven essential in educational environments. Authors such as Dhillon (2021), Karjalainen (2022), and Priadi (2020) recognize classroom communication between students and teachers as a necessity, noting that this soft skill fosters more effective learning and facilitates greater interaction among peers, thereby demonstrating its social relevance.

Conversely, Deleke et al. (2022) observes that a lack of communication between educational administrators and the student body creates a gap; as a result, teachers fail to achieve

expected results, and student interaction declines. For this reason, Sabrifha and Sabrifha (2022) asserts that teachers play a significant role in student education—not merely as transmitters of knowledge, but as facilitators of learning. Communication plays a fundamental role in this process, as it enables the teacher to act as a guide and to understand the students' needs.

Similarly, Cahyani (2023) and Bukit (2023) agree that using communication strategies enables students to perform better in the classroom, leading to increased participation and engagement. Reinforcing this idea, Karasova (2023) states that communication strategies allow teachers to more effectively support students in areas such as autonomy, responsibility, and classroom behavior. Hengki and Ratna(2024) explains that teachers achieve better results when they strengthen students' creativity and communication skills.

2.2. Teamwork

Students can improve in various areas of knowledge and are more likely to learn new skills. Scholars such as Albon (2014) and Ronfeldt (2015) emphasize the importance of promoting collaboration in educational centers. Along the same lines, Akmal (2015) and Riebe (2016) show that team-based learning helps students improve their comprehension skills by supporting one another as a team and focusing on the material. However, teamwork also has its challenges. It doesn't work simply by bringing together different people with different skills and experiences; a relationship of trust must be built among the team members so they can work as efficiently as possible, making use of the tools at their disposal (Mendo-Lázaro, 2018). Thus, Bashan (2017) observes that teamwork has several drawbacks and areas for improvement initially, such as a lack of adequate communication among team members, a lack of trust, and a lack of awareness of which members can contribute to the team and which cannot.

Teachers work together to find the best strategies for effective intervention during class. It allows knowledge to be imparted in the best way in different fields of education. Jansen (2019) highlights the effectiveness of teamwork among teachers and its influence on improving the learning environment. Working in a team is a great way to improve and achieve objectives more efficiently; in this way, you can achieve better results in different areas of knowledge.

Related to this, Schulz (2022) points out the need to teach teamwork in universities to prepare students for the working world and thus give them a base of experience in this field, thereby highlighting the need for improvement in this soft skill.

Teamwork is more than two people working together as a group (Kratumnok, 2024). In addition, Navío-Marco (2025) shows in his study that students who demonstrate a greater interest in teamwork tend to be more focused on developing their own skills and, in turn, developing new ones.

2.3. Mentoring

Mentoring sessions are among the most useful tools for students to learn and develop their knowledge of the target language in controlled, educational contexts. Thus, Viáfara (2014) observes that education students with greater mastery of the target language achieve a positive impact within their respective disciplines. Taken together, these findings suggest that mentoring is a highly effective method for addressing knowledge gaps and enhancing students' practical skills. Tsai (2015) points out that disparities in knowledge and skills can demotivate English learners; however, this gap can be bridged by pairing students with higher proficiency levels with those at lower levels in peer mentoring sessions, an approach that offers not merely a solution, but an improvement.

Escobar Fandiño (2020) notes that the mentor plays a vital role in motivating students to learn a new language. In addition, Sánchez-Aguilar (2021) and Maarif (2020) report that implementing peer mentoring can enhance student skills and create more learning opportunities through peer interaction. Furthermore, Galullo (2023) adds that the peer mentoring method positively impacts all parties involved: those with greater knowledge see improvements in their vocabulary and instructional skills, while those with less knowledge make significant progress in language proficiency, as well as in their confidence and ability to express themselves.

Additionally, Shah (2023) and Samaranayake (2024) identify virtual mentoring as a suitable method for English learners who lack formal education or have knowledge gaps in the subject, emphasizing the importance of the students' commitment to the process. Along these lines, Silalahi (2025) states that students who learned through peer mentoring benefited from the tutor's guidance without the forced interactions often found in traditional classrooms.

Furthermore, Sari (2026) compares peer mentoring with traditional sessions, finding that mentoring yields better results regarding students' academic development.

Among the previous studies cited is the work of Tang (2021), which indicates that mentoring sessions can help university students improve communication and teamwork through interactive and collaborative activities. Furthermore, Huang (2023) emphasizes that team-based learning improves communication strategies among English language learners. These studies reveal that teamwork and communication are often associated in this context.

On the other hand, Alzubi (2024) highlights the use of group activities, such as discussions and debates, to improve EFL learners' communication, teamwork, and critical thinking skills. Putri's work (2024) points out that peer mentoring, collaboration, and support create an environment conducive to improving aspects such as confidence when speaking in EFL. Finally, Lin's work (2025) argues that peer mentoring improves communication and the use of strategies between mentors and mentees, which increases student satisfaction and participation in the activities.

METHODOLOGY

This study adheres to the modern paradigm and employs a mixed-methods approach, using both qualitative and quantitative data to understand the effects of mentoring on the soft skills of communication and teamwork in pre-service EFL teachers. For this purpose, participants completed a pre-test and post-test to measure the changes in their communication and teamwork skills following the implementation of a pedagogical intervention. The ethical considerations followed APA guidelines and the code of ethics of the participants' university. Therefore, informed consent was obtained for their voluntary participation. All data obtained through this project will be used exclusively for academic and research purposes. The data or results of this research will never be commercialized.

Table 1. The sample

Students	4 th semester	5 th semester	Total
Female	10	21	31 (86.1%)
Male	2	3	5 (13.9%)
Total	12 (33.3%)	24 (66.7%)	36 (100%)

The sample is a captive group from the National and Foreign Language Pedagogy program at a public university in Ecuador. The sample consists of 36 students; 86.1% female and 13.9% male.

Instruments

Three instruments were used during the intervention: contextualized observation and a Likert-type questionnaire.

Structured field diary. - This instrument was applied throughout the intervention to observe participants' engagement and responsiveness toward the mentoring sessions intervention. The data collected was used to adjust the mentoring interventions based on participants' acceptance of activities proposed and execute framework analysis. The instrument was used to analyse the categories and procedures (1) participation in sessions, (2) motivation, (3) teamwork, and (4) communication among participants. A panel of 3 experts in the fields of education, EFL instruction, and Didactics affiliated to an Ecuadorian university evaluated the instrument. They reported adequate clarity, pertinence, coherence, and relevance, and recommended to focus the fieldbook on the soft skills studied and acceptance showed by participants. The fieldbook consists in research team's reflexions about the 10 group mentoring sessions.

Likert questionnaire. - This instrument was adapted from the *Team Effectiveness Diagnostic* developed by the London Leadership Academy of the National Health Service (London Leadership Academy, 2014). The translation of the items was carried out by the research team. Linguistic review and contextual adaptation were performed by an independent professional. A pilot test with 10 participants was conducted, and modifications were implemented to incorporate the recommendations of the expert panel. The instrument was adapted to the Ecuadorian university context and Spanish language to assess participants' attitudes to execute activities related to teamwork and communication soft skills. The instrument's Cronbach's Alpha calculated by Trinidad et al. (2026) considering 56 items is 0.97. The version used in this research estimated Cronbach's Alpha 0.92. The instrument consists of 11 items for (1) Teamwork: Assessment of colleagues' abilities, Rapid problem-solving, Trust among members, Flexibility and adaptability, and Cooperation and mutual support; and 9 items for (2) Communication: Effective communication with other groups, Communication to meet plans, Constructive communication, Resolving differences without damaging relationships, Consideration of the impact of words, and Effort to communicate effectively. The alternative answers go from 1 = Total disagree (TD) to 7 = Total Agree (TA). A panel of 3 experts in the fields of education, EFL instruction, and Didactics evaluated the instrument. They recommended to check the instrument syntax. The research team prepared a google form to collect participants' perceptions. The time required to complete the instrument is 4 minutes.

Global self-rating scale. - The instrument designed ad hoc by the research team allows to assess pre-service EFL teachers' perceptions about their softskills communication and teamwork levels before and after the mentoring strategy intervention. The instrument consists of 2 sections. Section A consists of 3 demographic questions about participants' sex, age, and Employment status. Section B consists of 2 questions asking: What is your current level of teamwork? What is your current level of communication? This survey was administered on a scale of 1 = Minimum to 10 = Maximum answers option. The survey was administered in pretest and posttest. A panel of 3 experts in the fields of education, EFL instruction, and Didactics evaluated the instrument. They recommended to check the instrument syntax. The research team prepared a google form to collect the answers. The time required to complete the instrument 2 minutes.

Procedure

Stage 1: During the first stage of this project, a literature review was conducted, and administrative tasks were carried out, such as participant selection, the preparation of likert scale questionnaire including selection of items according to their pertinence, translation to Spanish and adaptation to university context. Selection of the participants and administrative procedures at the university that collaborate in the research.

Stage 2: In this second stage, the instruments to be used before, during, and after the intervention were selected; these consisted of forms serving as pre-tests and post-tests pilot process.

Stage 3: This stage marked the beginning of the intervention with the selected students. The mentoring intervention consists of 10 sessions of 45 minutes session/week. They were facilitated by the research leader. Session 1 is for general information, and Session 10 is for final evaluation and process closing. The mentoring sessions run from October 17, 2025 to January 27, 2026. Participant attendance ranges from 85% to 100%. The pre-test global survey and Likert scale questionnaire were administered to the participants on the first day. Missing data is treated as responses with a minimum value of 1.

Stage 4: During this stage, mentoring sessions were held for fourth- and fifth-semester students, covering the topics communication and teamwork. Research team prepared the structured field diary. All data collected in the research is kept anonymous in accordance with APA style guidelines.

Stage 5: At the end of the process, the post-test global survey and likert scale questionnaire were administered to the participants, thereby concluding the intervention.

Stage 6: Data analysis. For the qualitative analysis an external member of the research team coded the diary. Coding discrepancies were identified through blind peer review and by a member of the research team qualified for qualitative analysis, allowing for the objective assessment of the facilitator's potential reflexivity. For the quantitative analysis the research team used the software SPSS v28.

3. RESULTS:

The results are presented below.

3.1. Group mentoring strategy proposal for strengthening softskills.

Table 2 shows a proposal for group mentoring strategy to work communication and teamwork softskills at the university context.

Table 2. – Strategy for group mentoring focused on communication and teamwork skills

Title	Aims	Methods & Strategies	Sequence	Material	Evaluation
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Teamwork	Identify the importance and benefits of teamwork.	Presentation and discussion	Warm-up Presentation. Guided Discussion. Reflection Activity.	Slides. Computer and projector.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions. Answers to presentation questions.
Trust and selfconfidence	Identify why trust is important in relationships and teamwork.	session discusión. Pair work.	Warm-up Presentation. Activity: guiding a blindfolded person	Slides. Computer and projector. Blindfold.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions Pair-work collaboration
Communication	Identify importance and benefits of a Good communication.	Presentation and group discusión.	Warm-up Presentation. Case of study activity about communication in groups.	Slides. Computer and projector. Case of study.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions. Group activity performance
Leadership	Identify leadership challenges in teamwork situations.	Presentation and discusión. Cooperative learning.	Warm-up: Brainstorming Presentation. Case study activity.	Slides. Computer and projector.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions. Reflections on the case studies.
Feedback	Feedback. Identify characteristics of effective and ineffective feedback.	Group discusión. Think–Pair–Share.	Presentation: What is feedback. Guided Discussion. Feedback activity in groups.	Slides. Computer and projector.	Students will be evaluated through: Participates actively in discussions and activities.

Teacher as Mentor	Identify the importance and benefits of teamwork.	Presentation and discussion	Warm-up Presentation. Guided Discussion. Reflection Activity.	Slides. Computer and projector.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions. Answers to presentation questions.
Cooperative vs. Collaborative Teamwork.	Understand the role of the teacher as mentor.	Presentation and discussion. Role-play.	Presentation of Concepts. Respond questions during presentation. Case Study Analysis in groups.	Slides. Computer and projector. Case study.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in discussions. Critical analysis of the case study
Teamwork activities.	Use group activities to emphasize teamwork.	Use activities to practice teamwork and communication between students.	Present the activities. Explain the activities. Put the activities into practice Reflection Activity.	Plastic cups. Ropes. Markets. Labyrinths.	Students will be evaluated through: Participation in activities.

3.2. Evolution of the participants' communication and teamwork soft skills

The table 3 shows the deductive content and evolution of the group mentoring strategy implemented and data collected using a field diary.

Field diary of the strategy implementation

Reflection Mentoring session #1: This session consisted in the presentation of the research aims and schedule organization.

Reflection Mentoring session #2: This session marked the first time there was real interaction between the students and me as their lecturer. A lack of confidence and willingness to participate during the session became apparent. The session was also overly theoretical, and the students didn't have the opportunity to express their thoughts on the topic. However, this session wasn't entirely negative. I observed who was more proactive in speaking up and taking the lead. I also noted aspects of the slides and the sessions that could be improved.

Reflection Mentoring session #3: Starting with this second session, I began trying to interact more with the students, so I included questions in the slides that allowed them to talk more about their own experiences. This worked very well with this group; many participated and gave different opinions on the topic at hand. However, I still lacked confidence speaking in front of the session.

Reflection Mentoring session #4: I really enjoyed the topic of this talk, so this time I spoke with much more confidence and skill than in the previous two sessions. It also helped that I already knew this group of students quite well. The presentation went smoothly overall, and the students participated a lot, especially during the activity we did, which consisted of blindfolding one student while another student, acting as their partner, had to guide them down a hallway without touching them.

This session was too theoretical for the students, which was a mistake, because as the session dragged on, the students were less willing to participate in the questions. Since it was essentially two sessions in one, the planned activity couldn't be completed, causing the session to lose momentum. Even so, some students did participate and answered all the questions satisfactorily.

Reflection Mentoring session #5: During this session, I tried asking them some personal questions, like, "Has there ever been someone who has been a leader for you?" This went incredibly well; several students participated and shared their opinions about who had been leaders in their lives, from family members to professors at the university. I think it was one of the best session in terms of participation, but I still felt my lack of eloquence when speaking and interacting with them. In this session, some students were more hesitant to participate, but the session still went well.

Reflection Mentoring session #6: Personally, this was one of the best session I taught during this project. The topic was 'feedback,' and I think I was very eloquent during the session and managed to connect with the students. It was also a session where they talked a lot, since the activity I gave them was to talk about their Christmas plans and have the other students, in groups of three, give feedback on their speeches. I think it was a lot of fun.

Reflection Mentoring session #7: During this session, I focused on a topic more closely related to my project, "Teacher as Mentor." I asked a question similar to one I'd asked before: "Has there been anyone in your life who has acted as a mentor?" This question was well-received, and several students participated, many naming family members or teachers and explaining why they consider them mentors in their lives. I think it was a very enjoyable session, but I still had some trouble expressing myself, which confused them at times. I think I expressed myself quite well, and the students also followed the instructions correctly and were very participative. I asked them the same question as in the previous session, which was well received, and the students gave their answers, many similar to the other group, which was nice to hear.

Reflection Mentoring session #8: In this session, I taught a very interesting topic: 'collaborative vs. Cooperative.' Obviously, I emphasized teamwork, its differences, uses, and so on. Since it's a topic I'm quite familiar with, it was easy to give the lecture to the students, and I think it was easy for them to grasp the idea of these two models as well. However, there was a problem: the activity. I gave them case studies to determine whether they were collaborative or cooperative and the reasons why, but the activity was very simple and somewhat boring, which ended up being disappointing.

The students were very receptive and participated a lot, as they were already familiar with the topic and found it easier to recognize the two models. In this group, I noticed that most students use the cooperative model, due to time constraints. During the lecture, the session went very well, but the activity, like the previous group's, was the least satisfactory part.

Reflection Mentoring session #9: This time I didn't bring any specific topic. I brought two group activities focused on teamwork. The first activity involved students using four strings to hold a marker and draw a line through a maze from the start to the exit. This activity was a lot of fun, and the students really enjoyed doing it with their friends. The second activity, similar to the first, involved students using four strings to hold a rubber band and use it to grab plastic cups and build a five-story tower. This activity was a lot of fun to both do and watch. I think this session was the simplest, but also the one that went best of all the session. The session was very fun and dynamic. The only negative thing I can mention about this session is that I didn't ask questions about what skills they used during these activities.

Reflection Mentoring session # 10: Mentoring intervention closing.

Table 3. Deductive analysis matrix

Textual evidence	Analytical interpretation	Identified evolution
Soft skill: Communication		

COM-1. Confidence to participate - Sessions 1, 2, 3 and 4		
In session 1, a lack of confidence and willingness to participate was observed. In session 2, many students participated and expressed diverse opinions. More frequent participation was recorded in sessions 3 and 4.	Communicative confidence was initially limited, but it increased when students had concrete opportunities to talk about personal experiences.	Participation shifted from passive to more active and frequent.
COM-2. Expresión de ideas y experiencias - sessions: 2, 4 y 6		
The students discussed personal experiences, identified leaders, and explained why family members or teachers had acted as mentors.	Questions related to personal life facilitated the organization and verbalization of ideas. Personal relevance led to more extensive and meaningful contributions.	Communication evolved from brief answers to explanations and opinions grounded in experience.
COM-3. Listening and feedback - session 5		
The students discussed their Christmas plans and, in groups of three, provided feedback on their classmates' speeches.	The activity required two-way communication: speaking, listening, evaluating the message, and formulating a relevant response.	Progress was evident from individual expression to interaction and peer feedback
COM-4. Comunicación funcional. 3 y 8		
In the blindfolded activity, one student had to verbally guide another. In the maze and tower activities, students had to coordinate movements by following instructions.	Communication became a practical resource for guiding actions, correcting movements, and completing group tasks.	The skill shifted from primarily discursive use to functional, results-oriented use.
Teamwork		
TEAM-1. Trust and interdependence - Session 3		
A blindfolded student relied on his partner's instructions to move forward down the corridor.	The success of the activity required trust, shared responsibility, and interdependence between two participants.	A first structured experience of peer interdependence and trust emerged.
TEAM-2. Group coordination - Sessions 5 y 8		
The groups of three distributed roles during the feedback activity. In session 8, several students jointly controlled a marker and an elastic band using ropes.	The tasks required adjusting individual actions to the movements and decisions of their peers.	Coordination evolved from small groups with verbal interaction to more complex collective tasks.
TEAM-3. Joint problem solving - Session 8		
The students had to navigate a maze using a marker and build a five-level tower using cups.	The activities required negotiating strategies, identifying errors, modifying moves, and maintaining a shared goal.	Session 8 provided the strongest evidence of collaborative problem-solving.

Communication Soft Skills. - The evidence shows the evolution of communication skills, which progressed from a limited level to a complex one, becoming clearer at the end of the intervention through mentoring strategies. Thus, at the beginning of the process, limited participation was observed when the mentor asked general and open-ended questions. The level of participation was optimized when the mentor asked personal questions. There, the participants were able to express their opinions and share experiences related to teacher training. During the final sessions of the intervention, more specific levels of communication were achieved when addressing pre-service teaching experiences. The group activities carried out by the participants received feedback, which allowed them to manage specific and complex levels of communication in the context of teaching, in areas such as decision-making and problem-solving from a teamwork perspective. It is important to consider that the mentor was a novice student researcher whose knowledge and experience in the field of EFL teaching required significant self-preparation to meet the expectations of the group of participants. The mentoring process followed this path:

Limited participation → expression of opinions → listening and feedback → functional communication to coordinate actions and solve problems within the EFL classroom context.

Teamwork Soft Skills. -. - Initially, evidence of teamwork skills was limited to participants with high leadership skills, who took the initiative in the face of challenges presented by the mentor. Once the dynamics of the mentoring process were understood, an increase in coordinated participation toward achieving goals was observed. The distribution of roles was more evident when working in small groups, while the final sessions of the intervention demanded greater planning, problem-solving, and initiative in coordination within each group. The mentoring process followed this path:

Initial participation from individual leadership → growth of team spirit → distribution of roles and responsibilities → collective coordination for problem-solving

3.3. Participants' communication and teamwork skills changes

Table 4. Evolution of the development of soft skills teamwork and communication of teachers in training

Dimensions	Test	TD	VD	D	ND/NA	A	VA	TA
1. Solving problems as a team results in effective solutions.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	3,8%	7,7%	30,8%	50,0%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	27,8%	41,6%	27,8%
2. Members of your study group value each other's abilities.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	3,8%	15,4%	42,3%	38,5%	0,0%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	11,1%	11,2%	50,0%	27,8%

3. Your study group addresses and solves problems quickly.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	15,4%	23,1%	57,7%	3,8%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	8,3%	19,5%	55,5%	16,7%
5. People in my group are recognized as good colleagues.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	26,9%	23,1%	34,6%	15,4%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	5,6%	13,9%	44,5%	33,2%
8. Group meetings are very productive.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	11,5 %	23,1%	26,9%	30,8%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	2,8%	8,3%	8,3%	30,5%	30,7%	19,4%
9. Members of our group trust each other.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	19,2%	42,3%	23,1%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	11,1%	16,6%	44,5%	25,0%
10. Our group has mechanisms for measuring task results.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	46,2%	23,1%	19,2%	3,8%
	Post	2,8%	0,0%	0,0%	36,1%	16,6%	25,1%	19,4%
11. Group members help each other deal with problems.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	19,2%	42,3%	23,1%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	13,9%	41,6%	38,%
15. Our group works with great flexibility to adapt to changing needs.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	3,8%	34,6%	38,5%	19,2%	3,9%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	0,0%	33,3%	41,6%	22,3%
17. When we choose consensus decision-making, we do so effectively.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	0%	11,5%	53,8%	26,9%	7,8%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	19,5%	44,4%	30,6%
18. Team members demonstrate high levels of cooperation and mutual support.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	0%	34,6%	42,3%	15,4%	7,7%
	Post	2,8%	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	16,7%	50,0%	27,7%

4. Members of your study group are good listeners.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	3,8%	15,4%	26,9%	42,3%	11,5%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	19,3%	46,6%	31,3%
6. Communication in our group is honest.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	34,6%	23,1%	30,8%	3,8%
	Post	0,0%	2,8%	0,0%	5,6%	30,6%	33,2%	27,8%
7. We communicate effectively with other groups.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	11,5 %	34,6%	30,8%	23,1%	0,0%
	Post	2,8%	2,8%	0,0%	2,8%	33,3%	44,4%	13,9%
12. We communicate effectively with other work groups to accomplish our plans.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	3,8%	30,8%	46,2%	19,2%	0,0%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	27,8%	47,2%	22,2%
13. Group members seek out and provide constructive communication with each other.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	11,5 %	23,1%	30,8%	26,9%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	33,3%	41,6%	19,4%
14. We use various forms of training to keep our communication skills up-to-date.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	11,5 %	23,1%	34,6%	23,1%	7,7%
	Post	5,3%	0,0%	2,8%	2,0%	33,4%	37,1%	19,4%
16. We can resolve differences of opinion without damaging group relationships.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	26,9%	34,6%	19,3%	11,5%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	5,6%	13,9%	52,8%	25,0%
19. Team members consider how their words will impact others when communicating their actions.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	15,4 %	30,8%	26,9%	23,1%	3,8%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	5,6%	5,6%	27,8%	38,8%	22,2%
20. Team members work to ensure we communicate as effectively as possible.	Pre	0,0%	0,0%	7,7%	23,1%	34,6%	26,9%	7,7%
	Post	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	2,8%	27,7%	47,2%	22,2%

N pretest = 26, N posttest = 36.

Over the course of the sessions, there was an increase of 10 participants, resulting in a discrepancy between the pre-test and post-test participants.

Favorable progress was observed in the soft skills of teamwork and communication. Table 3 shows the changes in the scores for agree, very agree, and total agree.

Table 5. The items that show the greatest progress in soft skills teamwork are

Soft skill	Indicator	Pretest	Posttest	Cambio
		A+VA+TA	A+VA+TA	
1. Teamwork	Assessment of colleagues' abilities	80,8 %	89,0 %	+8,2
	Rapid problem-solving	84,6 %	91,7 %	+7,1
	Trust among members	73,1 %	86,0 %	+12,9
	Flexibility and adaptability	61,6 %	97,2 %	+35,6
	Consensus decision-making	88,5 %	94,5 %	+6,0
	Cooperation and mutual support	65,4 %	94,4 %	+29,0
	Effective communication with other groups	53,9 %	91,6 %	+37,7
2. Communication	Communication to meet plans	65,4 %	97,2 %	+31,8
	Constructive communication	65,4 %	94,3 %	+28,9
	Resolving differences without damaging relationships	65,4 %	91,7 %	+26,3
	Consideration of the impact of words	53,8 %	88,8 %	+35,0
	Effort to communicate effectively	69,2 %	97,1 %	+27,9

N:36.

Hypothesis evaluation:

Ho: There are no relationships between communication and teamwork items and the factors of sex, age, and employment status.

Ha: There are relationships between communication and teamwork items and the factors of sex, age, and employment status.

Table x. 6 Chi square of items de softskills communication and teamwork y factores sex, age ,and employment status.

Items	Sex	Age	Employment status
1. Solving problems as a team results in effective solutions.	0,032	0,773	0,134
	0,592	0,897	0,772
2. The members of your study group value each other's abilities.	0,287	0,906	0,647
	0,959	0,726	0,937

3. Your study group addresses and solves problems quickly.	0,062	0,520	0,209
	0,211	0,194	0,206
4. The members of your study group are good listeners.	0,909	1,000	0,397
	0,838	0,887	0,941
5. The people in my group are known for being good colleagues.	0,583	0,115	0,800
	0,009	0,006	0,924
6. Communication in our group is sincere.	0,469	0,408	0,365
	0,013	0,001	0,019
7. We communicate effectively with other groups.	0,193	0,743	0,213
	0,396	0,326	0,537
8. Group meetings are very productive.	0,049	0,592	0,027
	0,081	0,971	0,166
9. The members of our group trust each other.	0,036	0,772	0,186
	0,080	0,837	0,074
10. Our group has mechanisms for measuring task results.	0,002	0,218	0,157
	0,985	0,860	0,207

N= 36

Pearson's chi-square test indicates that all items show no significant relationships with the factors of sex, age, and employment status, reporting a p-value > 0.05, except for the following items:

Participants' sex. - The results show significant relationships for the following items:

1. Solving problems as a team results in effective solutions: 0.032; therefore, it is a moderate association.

10. Our group has mechanisms to measure task outcomes: 0.009; therefore, it is a very weak association.

12. We communicate effectively with other work groups to meet our plans: 0.013; therefore, the association is weak.

15. Our group works with great flexibility to adapt to changing needs: 0.049; therefore, it is a moderate association.

17. When we opt for consensus decision-making, we do so effectively: 0.036; Therefore, this is a moderate association.

19. Team members consider how their words will impact others when communicating what they are going to do: 0.002; therefore, this is a very weak association.

Participants' age. - The results show significant relationships in the items:

10. Our group has mechanisms to measure task outcomes: 0.006; therefore, this is a very weak association.

12. We communicate effectively with other work groups to accomplish our plans: 0.001; therefore, the association is very weak.

Participants' Employment status:

12. We communicate effectively with other work groups to accomplish our plans: 0.019; therefore, the association is weak.

15. Our group works with great flexibility to adapt to changing needs: 0.027; therefore, this is a weak association.

3.4. Participants' Self-perception of English teachers in training regarding the soft skills of communication and teamwork.

Table 6. Self-perception of English teachers in training regarding the soft skills of communication and teamwork.

Indicator	Pretest Promedio	Posttest Promedio	Difference	T-Student
Communication				-3.13 0.004
Mean	6.94	7.51	0.57	
Standar deviation	1.39	1.44		
Minumun	5.00	5.00		
Maximun	9.00	10.00		
Teamwork				-3.25 0.004
Mean	7.04	7.73	0.69	
Standar deviation	1.75	1.75		
Minumun	3	3.00		
Maximun	10	10.0		

N=26.

Ho2: There are no significant changes in communication and teamwork.

Ha2: There are significant changes in communication and teamwork.

Soft skill of Communication.- the results show a statistically significant improvement from pretest to posttest. The average score increased from 6.94 on the pretest to 7.51 on the

posttest, a gain of 0.57 points. This indicates that, after the intervention, participants demonstrated better average performance in communication.

The paired-samples T-test yielded a T-value of -3.13 and a p-value of 0.004. Since the *p-value* is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant difference between the pretest and posttest results.

The negative sign of the T-value only indicates that the difference was likely calculated as pretest minus posttest. Because the posttest average was higher, the subtraction results in a negative value.

It was also observed that the standard deviation increased slightly from 1.39 to 1.44, indicating very similar variability between the two time points. The minimum score remained at 5.00, while the maximum increased from 9.00 to 10.00, suggesting that some participants performed better on the post-test.

Teamwork Test: The results show a significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, indicating a clear change in teamwork.

The average score increased from 7.04 in the pre-test to 7.73 in the post-test, representing a positive difference of 0.69 points. This indicates that after the intervention, participants achieved a higher average performance in teamwork.

The paired-samples T-test yielded a T-statistic of -3.25 and a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the difference is statistically significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and it is concluded that there was a significant change in the Teamwork indicator. The negative sign of the t-statistic is likely due to the difference being calculated as pretest-posttest. Since the posttest average was higher than the pretest average, the difference appears negative.

Furthermore, the standard deviation was the same at both time points, 1.75, suggesting that the dispersion of scores remained stable. The minimum score remained at 3, and the maximum at 10, so the improvement is primarily observed in the increase in the overall average, not in a widening of the response range.

Articulation quantitative and qualitative data:

The convergence between the field-diary observations, Likert questionnaires and global survey suggests that the mentoring sessions offers multiple opportunities to greater participation for reaching more functional communication, and stronger team work softskills in the context of EFL training programs.

DISCUSSION:

The present study explored the use of group mentoring in the context of pre-service teachers to promote the communication and teamwork softskills. It mix qualitative and quantitative evidences that suggest a favorable change in participants' perceptions and observable communication scores increment.

Quantitative results indicated increases in communication scores from 6.94 (SD = 1.39) to 7.51 (SD = 1.44), $t = -3.13$, $p = .004$, and in teamwork scores from 7.04 (SD = 1.75) to 7.73 (SD = 1.75), $t = -3.25$, $p = .004$. The qualitative findings complemented these results by showing a progression from limited participation and individual initiative toward more frequent

expression of ideas, active listening, peer feedback, trust, role distribution, coordination, and collective problem-solving.

The results allow researchers support the position of scholars as Tang (2021) and Putri (2024) when they affirm that peer mentoring can support the construction of more creative learning environments in EFL classes. In addition, authors express harmony with the work of Lin (2025) that found mentoring can be used to improve communication between tutors and students in key university process as graduation procedures and future professional practice. Finally, author remark the findings of Alzubi (2024) Huang (2023) concerning team-based learning can improve students' communication strategies in EFL students.

The main achievement of this research was evaluate a mentoring strategy with emphasis on communication and teamwork soft-skills. The participants were able to diagnose their weaknesses work to improve their level level. The mentoring exposed participants to many challenges in addition, sessions 3,4,5 and 6 were redesigned to support the participants' process in communication skills.

The mentoring process was evident both in the content of the 10 sessions and in the process carried out by the mentor. The mentoring process began with a needs assessment of the participants and adjustments to the planned content and activities to promote the use of soft skills such as communication and teamwork. The group mentoring sessions consisted of icebreaker activities, fostering team spirit, and evaluating the use of communication processes appropriate to the age and university context.

The presentation of challenges and questions motivated individual and group reflection to facilitate meaningful dialogue, identify individual weaknesses, and explore ways to improve as a group. Likewise, peer feedback provided a practical experience of guidance and support. The mentoring process can be summarized as follows:

Recruitment → Needs assessment → Pedagogical adaptation → Strengthening team spirit and collective trust → Feedback and support → Understanding the roles of mentor and mentee

This approach utilizes topics and activities relevant to the target skills being taught, providing explanations and examples to ensure student participation. The process reports the lowest levels of participation in the sessions 1 and 2 probably because their highly theoretical contents even they were combined to teaching experience topics, enawhiles the sessions reporting the highest levels of participation were 5, 6, 7, 8 and 10 which included peer feedback and the final teamwork challenges activities. In consequence, research team inferes the Mentory Strategy was therefore not equally effective in every session. It is probably related to the contents but also, on the mentors previous exporience in group mentoring process. It also allows to infer thar the mentor strategy was a learning process for the participants and the mentor.

For future research, it is recommended that mentoring schedules for participants be more closely monitored to avoid interruptions during the intervention. Likewise, it is suggested that the number of participants be increased by implementing a control group to adequately measure the difference between students using this tool and those in traditional classes. This would allow for a more thorough demonstration of the methodology's effectiveness and its usefulness for students of English as a foreign language.

CONCLUSION

The evidences allows to research team to conclude that group mentoring appears to be a promising pedagogical strategy can support positively the training process of softskills among pre-service EFL teachers. This intervention created opportunities for students to work collaboratively with their peers through activities that demanded frequently the usage of communication and teamwork softskills. The limitations of the study are (1) lack of a control group during the mentor strategy implementation, (2) the disrupted schedule of activities that operationally demanded reorganize mentoring session schedule, and (3) the number of participants does not allow to present any generalization. However, the results can be used to implement new actions and projects for working other groups softskills. The research team invite to schollars to run new researches using larger samples and incorporate a control group to allow comparison of this method with traditional methods. Thus, studies can center on other soft skills, such as leadership, conflict management, or adaptability. Finally, evidences allows to reseache team to conclude that soft skills as communication and teamwork can be implemented in university context using mentoring sessions successfully.

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