



***The Impact of the Natural Method on the Development of Oral Fluency in English
in Basic Education Students.***

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Summary

In the context of teaching English to elementary school students, the natural method promotes the use of practical, authentic activities that foster oral fluency by prioritizing comprehension and expression over strict grammatical correctness. Objective: To analyze the impact of the Natural Method on the development of oral fluency in elementary school students. A quantitative and quasi-experimental methodology was used, using a pre-test and post-test design with a sample of 66 students distributed in an experimental group (Group A) and a control group (Group B). Over ten sessions, the dimensions of complexity, accuracy, and fluency were measured. The results obtained in the post-test showed a significant improvement in Group A. In complexity, 51% of the students reached a high level in the structuring of clear ideas, far surpassing the 24% of Group B. In accuracy, 67% of the experimental group achieved high grammatical performance compared to 22% of the control. Likewise, in fluidity, 51% of Group A stood out in the use of connectors, compared to 42% of Group B. It is concluded that the Natural Approach favors discursive organization and lexical cohesion by transforming the student into an active agent.

Keywords: fluency; interaction; exposure; self-efficacy; acquisition

Introduction

The English language is a very important tool in the globalized world in which we currently live and learning it is transcendental (Cari & Pampa, 2021). The natural approach is based on the

acquisition of a foreign language before learning, which is acquired in a natural way as required or desired by the mother tongue (Melysia Cari, 2019). The classes are based on an environment of input that is understandable (focused information) (input, visual, verbal non-verbal, etc.) that is given to the student, in the same way, this approach gives a lot of importance to the affective part of the student, that he has the necessary self-confidence to achieve his communicative purpose and this is achieved through acquisition activities (Guevara-Betancourt & Flores Albuja, 2020).

The learning of the oral lexicon in English in basic education is a pillar for the cognitive, communicative and academic development of students (Prado-Yépez et al., 2021). However, doubts persist about which methods promote functional and lasting lexical acquisition in school contexts, this natural approach proposed as an alternative focused on comprehensible exposition, meaningful interaction and the reduction of pressure for immediate correction, poses that lexical acquisition occurs when students receive understandable input in real communicative situations and progress towards spontaneous production (Hidalgo Quilligana, 2024) (De La Hoz Santiago & Tilano Hernández, 2024).

Studies show that at the end of high school the English level of students is very low, in the classrooms it can be seen that the learning of the English language is rote, unnatural causing that when expressing ideas they lack fluency; Similarly, the low linguistic skills of the students can be observed in general (Puentes Chávez, 2023). What is mainly desired is that the student is an active agent of his learning and not just a spectator and then has to memorize it present it in class (Chamba & Gavilanes, 2019). This reality can be reversed with communicative situations where the English language is a means of communicating within the classroom, to then be applied in real situations. That is why the function of the teacher plays a fundamental role, he or she has to be highly trained; however, the opposite happens, the teachers who teach English are often not of the specialty or some have a very low level of English or are not updated in teaching methodologies (Siles Cruz et al., 2025). Another point to consider that is rarely taken into account is the affective part of the student since it is proven that learning flows more quickly in environments of low tension. In this way, the natural approach combines contributions from comprehensible input theory and communicative teaching: the frequency of exposure, contextual salience and the opportunity of use are key variables for the lexicon to go from being recognized to being actively used. Indeed, in basic education where motivation, anxiety and limited exposure outside the classroom condition learning, the natural approach offers didactic strategies such as meaning-based tasks, narrations and communicative play that prioritize comprehension before production and favor the internationalization of lexical units in functional context, premises that have been validated in quasi-experimental research that show positive effects on oral competence when practices consistent with the approach are implemented (Mantilla Cabrera et al., 2022).

However, the available evidence has limitations that justify research focused on basic education: many studies focus on adult populations or non-equivalent levels of education, use design with reduced goals, or lack specific measures for spontaneous lexical production versus passive recognition (Elvira & Jesús, 2019). In addition, the transfer and results to school contexts requires considering conceptual variables such as (class size, teacher training, materials and exposure time) that modulate the effectiveness of the method (Cuitiño Ojeda et al., 2019). For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate with experimental or quasi-experimental rigor whether the

practices of the natural approach generate a significant and sustainable increase in the productive oral lexicon of basic education students.

For the aforementioned reasons, the natural approach is a proposal for an alternative solution to these problems, so this research aims to analyze the impact of the Natural Method on the development of oral fluency in English in basic education students.

Development

The natural approach is a theory developed by Mantilla Cabrera et al., (2022) In order to improve the learning process in language teaching, his studies, which have been supported by a large number of scientific studies in different situations of language acquisition and learning, prove that this approach significantly develops people's communicative ability hours. This approach is based on the importance of acquiring the new language rather than learning it according to Islas Castillo (2025), Acquisition is a subconscious process that involves the natural development of language mastery through comprehension and language well to meaningful communication, while learning refers to conscious knowledge, that is, knowing the rules and being aware of them.(Purizaca-Gallo et al., 2023)

Table 1. Differentiation of acquisition and learning

Acquisition	Learning
Similar to a child's first language acquisition.	Formal knowledge of the language
“Pick up” a language subconsciously	Knowingly “Knowing” Language Consciously
Implicit knowledge	Explicit knowledge
Formal teaching doesn't help	Teaching forms help

Note: Socket Gxilishe (2013)

The process of learning English as a foreign language takes place through a set of controlled activities within the classroom, where the teacher has (personal characteristics, experiences, knowledge, information, skills, personality and accessibility) and the student (personal characteristics, motivation, aptitudes and attitudes towards specific learning, previous knowledge and experience in the specific area, skills), represent two elements of greater importance in their interrelation will depend on the correct or bad development of said process(Bobarin Conde, 2021). Two other important elements in English learning are thirdly the

teaching strategies (methodology) and, fourthly, the learning context and environment (Lalvay Llivigañay & González-Cabrera, 2024). Learning the English language comprises a path towards the denomination of oral and written skills that are expressed in four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Skills are understood as "receptive and productive linguistic capacities inherent to the human being (Buduen Saborit et al., 2024).

Listening comprehension: It consists of the development of listening skills, skills to perceive and construct messages, understand what others say in order to respond (García et al., 2018). Listening comprehension allows students to acquire information for better communication (Iza Simba & Díaz Gispert, 2019); therefore, listening must be done extensively and intensely.

Oral expression or Speaking: It is closely related to listening skills. It is a gradual process in which the student practices the language through discussions, conversations, answering questions or other activities that motivate him to express himself orally (Fallarino et al., 2020). Oral expression or

Speaking: It is closely related to listening skills. It is a gradual process in which the student practices the language through discussions, conversations, answering questions or other activities that motivate him to express himself orally (Jumbo-Chamba et al., 2024).

Reading: Going hand in hand with listening comprehension and oral expression, reading comprehension involves intelligence for the interpretation of the text, whether it is being read in the native language or in the foreign language (Ferro Quintanilla, 2017). Like listening, reading must also be extensive and intense, as important information can be obtained from it (Ferro Quintanilla et al., 2017). It is a process that includes "intellectual skills (strategies for inferring or interpreting meaning, retaining information) and knowledge of a variety of linguistic signs (morphemes, syllables, words, phrases, etc.)" (Abreus González & Haro Calero, 2019).

Writing: It becomes the extension of the other skills of: listening, speaking and reading (Hernández, 2014). It is the ability to take notes, identify the central idea, make summaries, drafts and corrections in the foreign language (Uquillas Jaramillo & Córdova Vera, 2021). During the last decades, the acquisition of the lexicon has been one of the aspects that has received less attention in the teaching of languages, so studies have progressed slowly and their teaching has been subordinated to that of grammatical or functional structures (San Martín et al., 2020). The author explains that one of the reasons for this situation undoubtedly responds to linguistic factors inherent to the very nature of vocabulary, among which two can be highlighted: the number of pieces that make up the lexical repertoire of a language, which is in fact unfathomable in its entirety, and the difficulties involved in its systematization. especially in comparison with the phonological and grammatical components.

Figure 1. Language Skills Development Cycle



Fuente: Elaboración propia

Materials and methods

The present study will be based on a quantitative, quasi-experimental approach with pre-test and post-test measures in two groups (group A = experimental that receives the intervention based on the natural approach and group = B control with conventional instruction). This design made it possible to assess changes in productive oral lexicon attributable to the intervention, controlling as far as possible for contextual variables specific to basic education. The intervention was applied during January-March 2026, oral assessments were administered immediately before and after the intervention to measure immediate gains and retention.

The population consisted of 66 basic education students and the sample was selected through probabilistic-intentional sampling stratified by grade and sex, to ensure representativeness of relevant subgroups and balance between conditions. The procedure consisted of stratification of the population into parallel subgroups of 8th A=33 and 8th B=33, completing a total of 66 students. The hypothesis was taken into account if the Natural Approach method is efficient in the dimensions of complexity, accuracy, fluency and complexity of the oral lexicon. The method under study was carried out through learning sessions based on lesson plans supported by the Department of Languages of the University of California, already applied by (Cari & Pampa, 2021), with a duration of 10 sessions adapted from the pre-test to the post-test.

In addition, an English lexical competence sheet was applied (Sanhueza 2018), It assesses four scales: 1= Unsatisfactory; 2= Low; 3= Medium; 4=High), for subsequent application before and after the method. To guarantee content validity, Cronbach's alpha was applied and determined 0.8 of internal reliability.

The research was governed by ethical principles and institutional regulations, written informed consent was obtained from parents or guardians and assent from students in appropriate language, informing that they have the right to withdraw without consequences, the autonomy of the participants and the voluntary nature of participation will be respected. To ensure nonmaleficence, communicative activities and tasks will be age-appropriate, designed to avoid physical or psychological harm, humiliation, excessive stress, or discrimination. Charity was

promoted by seeking direct educational benefit, improvement of lexical competence and by returning results and recommendations to the educational community. Confidentiality and privacy were protected by encrypting data and storing it on secure devices with restricted access.

Feasibility and applicability of the results of the degree work:

The research is viable thanks to institutional support and the availability of resources, which facilitated the development of the classes. In addition, the Magdalena Dávalos Educational Unit has shown openness to collaborate with the research process. The applicability of the results allowed the optimization of English teaching strategies, strengthening students' oral competence and motivation. The results will serve as a reference for future research and as a practical guide for teachers interested in implementing more effective communicative methodologies.

Results

The results of the pre-test of oral lexical competence in Basic Education students, with the aim of evaluating the effectiveness of the natural approach method, which focuses on three dimensions: complexity, accuracy and fluency), comparing the distributions identified in Group A (experimental) and Group B (control).

Table 2. Gender

Gender	F	%
Male	15	24%
Female	48	76%
Total	63	100%

Note: Own elaboration

The table presents a clearly unequal gender distribution in a sample of 63 individuals, with 76% of the female gender and 24% of the male gender. **Table 3. Lexical competence observation pre-test**

Nº	Items	Group A (Experimental)								Group B (Control)							
		1		2		3		4		1		2		3		4	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Complexity																	
1	Clear and wellconstructed ideas.	1 1	33 %	8	24 %	1 2	36 %	2	6%	4	12 %	1 2	36 %	1 7	51 %	-	-

2	Logical communication	8	24 %	1 2	36 %	1 1	33 %	2	6%	1 2	36 %	8	24 %	1 1	33 %	2	6 %
3	Formulation and use of	3	9%	1 6	48 %	1 4	42 %	-	-	8	24 %	1 9	58 %	6	18 %	-	-

	words joined with others without error.																
4	Maintains the English language from start to finish of the conversation .	9	27 %	1 5	45 %	8	24 %	1	3%	9	27 %	1 2	36 %	9	27 %	3	9 %

Accuracy

1	Mastery of the grammar presented.	6	18 %	1 4	42 %	1 2	36 %	1	3%	6	18 %	1 4	42 %	1 2	36 %	1	3 %
2	Ability to speak without interference.	9	27 %	1 6	48 %	8	24 %	-	-	9	27 %	1 3	39 %	1 0	30 %	1	3 %
3	Correct pronunciation.	1 4	42 %	1 8	54 %	1	3 %	-	-	1 2	36 %	1 8	54 %	3	9%	-	-
4	Correct vocabulary appropriate to the communicative context	4	12 %	1 7	51 %	1 1	33 %	1	3%	6	18 %	1 4	42 %	1 3	39 %	-	-

Fluidity

1	Ability to use connectors when expressing an idea, achieving fluid communication.	9	27 %	2 1	64 %	3	9 %	-	-	8	24 %	1 5	45 %	9	27 %	1	3 %
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1	Clear and wellconstructed ideas.	-	--	1	3%	15	45%	17	51%	8	24%	24	73%	1	3%	-	-
2	Logical communication	-	-	-	-	13	39%	20	61%	18	54%	13	39%	2	6%	-	-
3	Formulation and use of words joined with others without error.	-	-	3	9%	7	21%	23	68%	21	64%	9	27%	2	6%	1	3%
4	Maintains the English language from start to finish of the conversation.	1	3%	6	18%	11	33%	15	45%	27	82%	5	15%	1	3%	-	-
Exactitud																	
1	Mastery of the grammar presented.	1	3%	2	6%	4	12%	26		22	67%	9	27%	2	6%	-	-
2	Ability to speak without interference.	1	3%	3	9%	11	33%	18	54%	19	58%	14	42%	-	-	-	-
3	Correct pronunciation.	-	-	8	24%	11	33%	16	48%	8	24%	22	67%	-	-	3	9%
4	Correct vocabulary appropriate to the communicative context	1	3%	3	9%	9	27%	20	61%	11	33%	20	61%	2	6%	-	-
Fluidez																	
1	Ability to use connectors when expressing an idea, achieving fluid communication.	1	3%	4	12%	11	33%	17	51%	14	42%	18	54%	1	3%	-	-
2	Ability to speak smoothly	3	9%	5	12%	9	27%	16	48%	11	33%	15	45%	5	12%	2	6%
3	Demonstrates fluency when speaking in the foreign language	1	3%	3	9%	11	33%	18	54%	15	45%	8	24%	8	24%	1	3%

4	The student speaks clearly and directly in a conversation	2	6%	3	9%	10	30%	18	54%	12	36%	14	42%	6	18%	1	3%
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Note: Own elaboration This table presents a comparative analysis between two groups (experimental A and control B) in various dimensions of lexical competence, including complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The focus on these aspects is crucial to evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching method used in Group A, which appears to have undergone an innovative pedagogical intervention compared to Group B, which did not receive such treatment.

First, when looking at the complexity column, it is notable that Group A shows superior performance in most items. For example, in the item "Clear and well-constructed ideas", 51% of the students in Group A achieved the highest score, compared to 24% in Group B. This result indicates that the experimental intervention has had a positive impact on the students' ability to organize and express their ideas in a structured way. Essential aspect in learning to a second language, since clear and effective communication is an indicator of linguistic competence. As for accuracy, which refers to mastery of grammar and pronunciation, the results also favor Group A. 67% of the students achieved the highest grades in "Mastery of the grammar presented", in contrast to Group B, where only 22% achieved the same result, evidencing that the methods applied with Group A could have facilitated a more efficient learning of the grammar rules, essential to ensure that students not only communicate, but also communicate with each other. but that they do it correctly.

Finally, in the fluency analysis, a similar trend is observed, students in Group A showed a greater ability to use connectors and express ideas in a coherent way, likewise, 51% obtained the highest score in this skill, which contrasts with 42% in Group B, a difference indicative of Group A, which has not only improved its vocabulary, but also their ability to articulate thoughts clearly and coherently.

Discussion

In the complexity dimension, the data show mixed results: on the one hand, Group A (experimental) exhibits advantages in items such as *clear and well-constructed ideas* (51% high in one of the descriptions), which coincides with studies that report improvements in discursive organization when communicative methodologies and authentic materials are used (Abreus González & Haro Calero, 2019), those who argue that exposure to comprehensible input and meaningful tasks favors the ability to structure ideas.

However, the opposite observation where Group B presents a 51% unsatisfactory level in another passage of the analysis, which forces us to consider contextual factors: initial heterogeneity of the groups, duration of the intervention and methodological fidelity. Authors such as Cari and Pampa (2021), who warn that the *Natural Approach* can improve the organization of oral production, only if it is accompanied by scaffolding and guided practice; otherwise, the gains in complexity may be inconsistent.

Regarding accuracy, there is evidence of shared difficulties in grammar: similar high percentages in both groups, evidencing that the naturalistic intervention did not guarantee a

clear superiority in linguistic correctness. This is consistent with reviews that point out that methods focused on input and communication tend to favor fluency and implicit acquisition, but do not always produce proportional improvements in grammatical accuracy without explicit instruction (Gxilishe, 2013; Hidalgo Quilligana, 2024). Studies applied in university and language institute contexts show that accuracy improves more when formative feedback activities and exercises focused on form are integrated. (Buduen Saborit et al., 2024; Purizaca-Gallo et al., 2023). Therefore, the recommendation to complement the Natural Approach with specific metalinguistic interventions to consolidate grammar should be reinforced.

In the fluency dimension, the results partially favor Group A in the use of connectors by 64% and Group B in *speaking without problems* by 68%. This duality reflects what Chamba and Gavilanes report (2024); Guevara-Betancourt and Flores Albuja (2020): Fluency benefits from exposure to authentic materials and communicative tasks, but articulatory fluency and the absence of pauses can also depend on repeated practice and the affective confidence of the learner.

In other words, the Natural Approach enhances discursive cohesion (use of connectors, organization of ideas) while prosodic fluency and speech automation require deliberate practice and, sometimes, specific techniques (role play, repetition, controlled production activities) that have shown efficacy in similar contexts (Jumbo-Chamba et al., 2024; Purizaca-Gallo et al., 2023). In general, when contrasting these results with the literature, three relevant lines of argument emerge. First, consistency with studies that value authentic materials: improvement in connectors and in the organization of ideas supports the results of Abreus González & Haro Calero (2019) y Chamba & Gavilanes (2019), who document gains in oral expression when audiovisual resources and communicative tasks are used.

Second, discrepancy in grammatical accuracy: the absence of clear differences between groups in grammar coincides with the criticism that the Natural Approach, without explicit instruction, does not always produce precision; authors such as Buduen Saborit et al., (2024) they recommend integrating formal correction and scaffolding activities (Hidalgo Quilligana, 2024). Third, variability in fluency according to subcomponents: the literature (Marín et al., 2021) distinguishes between lexical/cohesive fluency and articulatory fluency; The results of the study seem to replicate that distinction, suggesting that interventions should be designed with specific targets for each subcomponent.

Conclusions

In the first instance, the research concludes that the Natural Approach constitutes a superior pedagogical alternative to traditional rote methods for the development of communicative competence in basic education. By prioritizing subconscious acquisition over formal rule-learning, this method allows the student to move from being a passive spectator to an active agent of their own linguistic process, making it easier for the English language to become a real means of communication within the classroom.

Regarding the organization of discourse, it is evident that exposure to understandable *input* and the use of meaning-based tasks enhance students' ability to structure clear and well-constructed ideas, this approach favors lexical complexity, allowing students to organize their thoughts in a

more logical and coherent way compared to those who receive conventional instruction based on mechanical repetition.

The success of this approach depends critically on the management of the affective filter and teacher training. The creation of a low-voltage environment, where the pressure is minimized by immediate correction, allows for a flowing learning in a natural way. It is therefore recommended that basic education institutions encourage the methodological updating of their teachers and the use of authentic materials to maximize the impact of this approach on students' oral competence.

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