

Mimicry as a Strategy to Improve Speaking Skill in the EFL Classroom

La Mímica como Estrategia para Mejorar la Destreza del Habla en el Aula de Inglés como Lengua

Extranjera

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Abstract

In Ecuador, students often lack motivation to learn English since effective strategies are not used to develop speaking skills while promoting interaction, participation, creativity, fluency, and correct pronunciation of words or sentence development. The general objective of the research is to analyze the effectiveness of mime as a strategy to improve speaking skills in the English as a foreign language classroom. Through mime, students feel comfortable relating vocabulary or phrases with gestures, mimicry, and imitating sounds, which will be easy to remember to perform activities with more self-confidence. Through the analysis of the state of the art and previous studies, the various ways in which mime as a strategy can improve speaking skills and promote a connection between words and body language are explored. The study was conducted with a quantitative methodology. A descriptive and explanatory approach was used. The research sample involved 29 children from the seventh year of Santo Domingo de Guzmán High School. The instruments applied before, during, and after the research revealed that a significant percentage improved their fluency and pronunciation skills while developing creativity, verbal expression, and body language. The rest of the students master this strategy, which suggests that mimicry and pedagogical strategies should be used more frequently to ensure total progress in fluency and pronunciation, contributing considerably to the students' gestures and body expression. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of expanding vocabulary and meaningful sentence construction through gestures, mimes, and body language to improve fluency and pronunciation by promoting active participation and interaction of all students in English classes.

Keywords: body language; fluency; interaction; mimicry; pronunciation; strategy.

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<https://doi.org/10.46652/runas.v6i11.264>

ISSN 2737-6230

Vol. 6 No. 11 enero-junio 2025, e250264

Quito, Ecuador

Enviado: febrero 20, 2025

Aceptado: mayo 09, 2025

Publicado: mayo 18, 2025

Continuous Publication



Resumen

En Ecuador, los estudiantes a menudo carecen de motivación para aprender inglés ya que no se utilizan estrategias efectivas para desarrollar la destreza del habla y que a la vez promuevan la interacción, participación, creatividad, fluidez, y correcta pronunciación de palabras o desarrollo de oraciones. El objetivo general de la investigación es analizar la efectividad de la mímica como estrategia para mejorar la destreza del habla en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera, ya que a través de esta los estudiantes se sienten cómodos relacionando vocabulario o frases con gestos, mímicas e imitando sonidos, los cuales serán fácil de recordar para realizar las actividades con más seguridad en sí mismos. A través del análisis del estado del arte y de estudios previos, se exploran las diversas formas en que la mímica como estrategia puede mejorar la destreza del habla y promover una conexión entre las palabras y el lenguaje corporal. El estudio se llevó a cabo con una metodología cuantitativa. Se utilizó un enfoque descriptivo y explicativo. La muestra de investigación involucró a 29 niños de séptimo año de la Unidad Educativa Santo Domingo de Guzmán. Los instrumentos aplicados antes, durante y después de la investigación revelaron que un porcentaje significativo mejoró sus habilidades de fluidez y pronunciación desarrollando también la creatividad, expresión verbal y lenguaje corporal. El resto de los estudiantes domina esta estrategia, por lo que sugiere que se utilice la mímica y estrategias pedagógicas con más frecuencia para garantizar un avance total en la fluidez y la pronunciación, aportando de manera considerable a la gestualidad y expresión corporal de los alumnos. En conclusión, este estudio resalta la importancia de expandir el vocabulario y la construcción significativa de oraciones a través de gestos, mímicas, y lenguaje corporal para mejorar la fluidez y pronunciación promoviendo la participación e interacción activa de todos los estudiantes en las clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: estrategia; fluidez; interacción; mímica; lenguaje corporal; pronunciación.

Introduction

Learning English as a second language presents numerous challenges, including the development of verbal expression, a crucial skill for effective communication. Various techniques are employed to enhance fluency and accuracy in oral discussions. Among these techniques, mimicry emerges as an innovative and effective strategy. Its application helps students improve their pronunciation, fluency, and confidence when linking gestures and facial expressions with linguistic structures, fostering an active and engaging learning environment. Previous studies have shown that the use of kinesthetic techniques, such as mimes, promotes vocabulary memorization and language organization during speech and discourse development, supporting its application in the EFL classrooms (Shan et al., 2023).

Speaking English as a second language is often considered difficult for young learners, particularly in environments where teachers fail to motivate them to learn the language. Moreover, teaching strategies should instill confidence in students during interactions. Mimicry allows individuals to feel comfortable imitating sounds, making gestures, and developing body language naturally (Subagya, 2023). Consequently, language is used in a more natural way, like learning a first language.

In the educational system, the lack of verbal communication in English is a common challenge in many institutions. According to data from the Ministry of Education, approximately 65% of secondary students' experience difficulties in communicating orally in English, despite years of studying the language. Additionally, about 78% of teachers acknowledge that the absence of

confidence and limited verbal interaction in the classroom negatively impacts the development of students' speaking skills.

In Ecuador, students often struggle with learning English due to the lack of effective techniques and strategies that motivate language acquisition. Young learners, particularly in primary schools, face numerous challenges because teachers frequently rely on traditional book-based strategies, limiting opportunities for peer interaction.

The objective of this research project is to analyze the effectiveness of mimicry as a strategy to improve speaking skills in the EFL classroom. This involves examining the theoretical principles of mimicry in language learning and its role in improving the speaking skill (Manoppo et al., 2021). Finally, the findings will be shared with the community of Santo Domingo High School to highlight the benefits of using mimicry to improve speaking skills in the EFL classroom.

Mimicry in Education

Mimicry is a pedagogical strategy in the teaching environment that combines body language, gestures, and facial expressions with sounds, allowing students to engage more deeply in the learning process (Villacrés & Solis 2023). This method enables learners to connect movements with senses, facilitating the acquisition of new ideas by focusing memory on these experiences. Mimicry is particularly beneficial for language teaching as it helps learners contextualize words and expressions, promoting effective language acquisition in a natural manner.

From a pedagogical perspective, mimicry is grounded in experiential learning theory, which posits that knowledge is assimilated more effectively when observation is combined with action (Alvarez et al., 2024). By involving the whole body in the teaching process, this methodology enhances various cognitive areas and strengthens the capacity to retain information. The application of mimicry extends beyond language learning; it also supports early childhood education by promoting socioemotional competencies and enhancing creative expression and collaborative work through performance.

Psychological and pedagogical bases of learning through Mimicry

From a psychological standpoint, mimicry enhances learning by engaging multiple senses to facilitate knowledge acquisition. The dual coding theory, as proposed suggests that information is retained more effectively when learners process visual and verbal cues simultaneously (Paivio, 1986). This process supports the development of verbal memory through gestures. Furthermore, observational learning theory individuals can acquire behaviors and knowledge by imitating models. In educational settings, mimicry enables students to respond with linguistic expressions and patterns, which is beneficial for improving pronunciation and fluency in speeches and discourses (Hafsari et al., 2024).

In the pedagogical domain, mimicry is closely tied to language acquisition methods. Constructivist theory emphasizes the importance of social interaction in knowledge construction (Vygotsky 1978). Speaking is one of the most important skills one should have. In the industrial 4.0 era, the ability to speak and elaborate on certain issues and topics in front of the public is highly significant since now information can no longer be limited. Information is available on the internet, especially on social media. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding the content of the information, public speaking ability is needed. The ability helps people to grasp information correctly.

Moreover, public speaking ability also teaches how to convince people which will be useful for those who are working and for job seekers. This article discusses the public speaking skills of SMA Way Jepara students, especially in grades 11 and 12. The students are encouraged to practice their speaking ability. They are given some materials and topics that would help them to be more confident. After the 2nd meeting was conducted most of the students were able to gain much better speaking ability and they also became more confident (Endahati, 2020). Consequently, the use of gestures and expressions in group tasks fosters collaborative learning. Similarly, kinesthetic learning highlights the role of movement in content assimilation, particularly benefiting students who learn more effectively through action-based approaches.

AMCO Planning

AMCO, which stands for Advanced Method Corporation, is a teaching methodology grounded in a Holistic Instruction Model designed to enhance students' linguistic abilities through dynamic and interactive strategies (Battigalli & Tebaldi, 2019). This method emphasizes effective communication by fostering confidence, fluency, and accurate pronunciation in English as a foreign language. This approach integrates innovative practices such as the use of technology, project-based learning (PBL), and regular implementation of both summative and formative assessments. These elements support personalized education tailored to the specific needs of each learner.

Moreover, AMCO strengthens speaking skills through consistent daily interactions, enabling students to develop meaningful language use in context. By combining modern pedagogical methods with adaptive strategies, the AMCO method creates an engaging and supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and linguistic growth.

Table 1. Relationship between Mimicry and the improvement of Speaking Skill

Aspect	Relationship with Mimicry
Effective Comprehension	Associating gestures with words helps us understand the meaning and usage of language in a better way.
Vocabulary retention improvement	The usage of physical movements reinforces memory and favors the recovery of terms and phrases.
Fluency development	Including mimicry when speaking promotes natural and spontaneous communication.

Aspect	Relationship with Mimicry
Reinforcement of Pronunciation and Intonation	Gestures emphasize sounds and rhythmic language patterns improving pronunciation.
Communicative anxiety reduction	When integrating expressions and movements, students acquire more confidence when speaking.
Interactive learning stimulation	Action based learning motivates participation and improves interaction in the classroom.

Source: Parra (2025).

Oral Fluency

This aspect emphasizes the learner's ability to engage in continuous interaction, maintaining an appropriate pace and minimizing unnecessary interruptions. It evaluates the capacity to construct phrases in a structured manner, linking concepts coherently and sustaining a dialogue without hindrance (Alvarez et al., 2024). Additionally, it assesses the quality of vocabulary and proper intonation.

Audio-visual Comprehension

This component assesses the ability to identify key words, recognize grammatical structures, and grasp the overall message without translation. It also evaluates the ability to respond orally to different accents, rhythms, and tones of voice (Yuldoshevna, 2021). These factors are crucial for effective communication in real-life situations. The learner's reactions depend on their concentration level and ability to receive information meaningfully from a given context.

Vocabulary and Grammar Usage

The use of vocabulary is significant as it reflects the range and frequency of word usage (Vu & Peters 2021). Learners should employ a variety of expressions in each situation. Similarly, this component analyzes the application of grammatical structures, verifying the correct conjugation of verbs and tenses, as well as subject-verb agreement. Ultimately, the correctness of the message relies on the structure and grammar applied during communication, facilitating effective interaction.

Interaction and Participation

In this stage, learners are evaluated through questions and oral activities, demonstrating initiative and confidence when responding to questions and engaging with peers. Students must

maintain a fluent dialogue, showing the ability to formulate new questions and provide coherent answers tailored to the context (Dina et al., 2022). Finally, it showcases the level of enthusiasm and interest in interacting with the teacher and classmates, maintaining a clear dialogue grounded in prior knowledge without relying on translation or memorized responses.

Methodology

This study research had a quantitative methodology, gathering the information easily and promoting an effective data analysis quantifiable to assess the effective use of this strategy in the language learning process. A descriptive and explanatory approaches were used due to the variables implied in the investigation being recognized and detailed during the progress of the verbal expression and interaction among students.

Participants and settings

There were 29 students from 7th grade in the English Subject at Santo Domingo de Guzman High School involved in the investigation, giving a representative data base assessing the effective use of mimicry as a strategy to develop speaking skill. This group has a diversity among their students between gender and age. Mostly the group is formed by females between 11 and 12 years.

Instruments

A Pre-Test and a Post-Test were the instruments considered to measure the effectiveness of mimicry as a strategy to improve speaking skill in the EFL classroom. The instruments applied to students were validated by three experts to raise reliability. It was also confirmed by pilotage. The activities contained three sections based on picture description, vocabulary-miming words and role-play tasks based on the contents of the AMCO planning (Advanced Methods Corporation) to follow up with the provided structure of the planning.

Research results

Table 2. Sociodemographic profile

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	10	34,5
	Female	19	65,5
Age	11 years old	13	44,8
	12 years old	16	55,2
	Total	29	100,0

Source: Parra (2025).

Based on the sociodemographic profile shown in the image the data shows an elementary school student group consisting of 29 total participants with a gender distribution about 10 males (34.5% of participants) and 19 females (65.5% of participants). This indicates a significant gender imbalance, with nearly twice as many female participants as male participants. The age distribution is about 13 students who are 11 years old (44.8%) and 16 students who are 12 years old (55.2%). The age distribution is more balanced than the gender distribution, though there is a slight majority of 12-year-olds in the group.

Pre-Speaking test of mimicry as a strategy to improve speaking skill in an EFL classroom.

Table 3. Picture Description: Describe in simple past and past progressive what you see in the picture.

	Has no proficiency at all	Has very little proficiency	Moderately proficient	Well proficient	Completely proficient
1. Fluency and coherence in communication.	10%	21%	24%	7%	38%
2. Accuracy in the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures.	14%	21%	20%	14%	31%
3. Ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime.	14%	7%	7%	38%	34%
4. Creativity and originality in responses and mime production.	10%	10%	21%	21%	38%
5. Active participation and collaboration with classmates.	0%	14%	17%	14%	55%

Source: Parra (2025).

Analyzing the picture description activity that focuses on using simple past and past progressive tenses: 38% of students demonstrated fluency and coherence in communication: showing strong communication skills when describing pictures using past tenses. 31% showed accuracy in the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures: applying past simple and past progressive grammar structures. 34% reached an ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime. 38% mastered original and creative picture descriptions. 55% indicated that more than half the students excel in collaborative work during picture description activities. The data reveals that students perform exceptionally well in active participation and collaboration, with over half demonstrating complete proficiency. There's also strong performance in fluency/coherence and creativity/originality (both 38%). Overall, the picture description activity focusing on past tenses appears particularly effective for developing collaborative skills while still supporting strong language development across all measured criteria.

Table 4. Vocabulary-miming words: Look at the teacher's mimes and write down the vocabulary words.

	Has no proficiency at all	Has very little proficiency	Moderately proficient	Well proficient	Completely proficient
1. Fluency and coherence in communication.	17%	24%	10%	24%	25%
2. Accuracy in the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures.	7%	28%	14%	17%	34%
3. Ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime.	10%	17%	28%	24%	21%
4. Creativity and originality in responses and mime production.	34%	17%	7%	21%	21%
5. Active participation and collaboration with classmates.	12%	20%	17%	17%	34%

Source: Parra (2025).

This table about vocabulary-miming activities shows that: 25% of students demonstrated fluency and coherence in communication. 34% showed strong language skills when identifying and using vocabulary from mimes and accuracy in the use of vocabulary. 21% of students reached an understanding and responding to the teacher's mimes, showing ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime. 21% exhibited complete proficiency in producing creative responses to miming activities. 34% demonstrated active participation and collaboration with classmates. The data indicates that students perform strongest in two areas: vocabulary/grammatical accuracy (34%) and active participation/collaboration (34%). This suggests that the miming activities are particularly effective for vocabulary acquisition and encouraging student engagement.

Table 5. Role-play: Think of the different situations and act out, mime and use gestures to perform each one.

	Has no proficiency at all	Has very little proficiency	Moderately proficient	Well proficient	Completely proficient
1. Fluency and coherence in communication.	31%	14%	10%	24%	21%
2. Accuracy in the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures.	28%	21%	10%	17%	24%
3. Ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime.	28%	21%	14%	13%	24%

	Has no proficiency at all	Has very little proficiency	Moderately proficient	Well proficient	Completely proficient
4. Creativity and originality in responses and mime production.	28%	14%	13%	14%	31%
5. Active participation and collaboration with classmates.	13%	7%	14%	21%	45%

Source: Parra (2025).

The table shows proficiency levels across five different role-play skills, with percentages of students at each level. 21% of students demonstrated fluency and coherence in communication. 24% achieved accuracy in the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures. 24% showed ability to interpret and respond appropriately to mime. 31% exhibited creativity and originality in responses and mime production. 45% of students demonstrate active participation and collaboration with classmates. The data suggests that students are most proficient in collaborative skills and creative expression, while fewer students have reached complete proficiency in communication fluency and language accuracy. The strongest performance area is clearly active participation and collaboration, where nearly half the students demonstrate complete mastery.

Application of the strategies connected to Mimicry and the Speaking Skill

The analysis of the results of the AMCO model applied to the students showed that fewer students cannot manage the mimicry strategy because they can deal with the appropriate use of the language and vocabulary, another important aspect is the audio-visual comprehension that provides an effective description of the vocabulary. So far, confidence and interaction are something that students acquire during their language learning process to improve their speaking skills.

There is a relationship between mimicry and speaking skills:

Table 6. Strategy – Use of Language and Vocabulary

Name of the Strategy	Mimic Masters: Exploring Grammar and Vocabulary Through Action
Objective of the Strategy	Reinforce the effective use of language and vocabulary improving fluency and precision in oral communication.
Learning Objective	At the end of the strategy, students will be able to correctly apply the vocabulary, and the grammar structures learned through mimicry to build sentences using a fluent and coherent form.
Skills to develop	<p>Improve listening skills to understand detailed instructions and specific vocabulary. Develop the capacity to use vocabulary and grammar adequately in sentence production.</p> <p>Use mimicry to represent ideas and concepts in a creative way.</p>

Name of the Strategy	Mimic Masters: Exploring Grammar and Vocabulary Through Action
Activity	<p>Pre-activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher presents a list of unfamiliar words using flashcards. Students guess the word that belongs to the picture. Give a brief explanation of the grammatical structure that will be used during the activity using simple and clear examples using the new vocabulary. <p>Activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In small groups, each student chooses a flashcard without showing it to the rest and miming it. The partners must guess the word and say a sentence using the given grammar structure using gestures or mimes. Each member of the group could make gestures or mimes to guess the word. All the students must practice sentence structure and mimicry. <p>Post-activity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each group chooses their best mimes and sentences to show it in front of the class. Teacher gives feedback, positive comments about the performance, and corrects little mistakes during the activity.
	<p>Resources and Materials</p> <p>Flashcards Classroom materials Grammar Structure Cards</p>
	<p>Achievement</p> <p>Students showed confidence when performing their task. They used body language, gestures and mimes correctly and the sentences were coherent and show fluency when talking. It was a significant learning.</p>

Source: Parra (2025).

Tabla 7. Strategy – Audiovisual Comprehension

Name of the Strategy	Auditory Adventures: Miming to Master Listening
Objective of the Strategy	Improve the audio-visual comprehension through mimicry strategy allowing students listen short descriptions in English using mimes, gestures or body language to promote a successful learning.
Learning Objective	Students will be able to identify key words and phrases in English speaking and showing comprehension through gestures and mimes when giving instructions.
Skills to develop	<p>Promote the capacity of listening actively and understand complex instructions.</p> <p>Analyze and decide how to perform verbally concepts when listening.</p> <p>Work collaboratively to interpret and act based on oral descriptions.</p>

Name of the Strategy	Auditory Adventures: Miming to Master Listening	
Activity	Pre-activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher introduces key words and useful expressions that students may need when miming. Example: “jump”, “run”, or “sleep”, showing pictures and making gestures, mimes, or actions.	
	Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Teacher performs an action such as, “A boy is jumping over a puddle”. In groups, students listen to it and then represent the action. The rest of the students must guess what the action was it.Each student could act out and guess the actions. Then, one by one must perform a different action given by the teacher. For example: “A girl is picking apples from a tree”, and so on.	
	Post-activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">Each group receives a more difficult instruction to perform, using different verbs and tenses. The rest of the students must guess what it is.Teacher gives feedback, positive comments about the best performances, and corrects little mistakes during the activity.	
Resources and Materials	Vocabulary and expressions list. Flashcards with actions and phrases to be described.	
Achievement	Students improve their abilities to understand oral instructions through the physical representation of actions.	

Source: Parra (2025).

Discussion

The findings showed that a relevant number of students could not domain these competences just through mimicry. It means that a revision review of the methodological need to fusion this technique with other pedagogical methods than can reinforce and improve language learning. It is important to highlight that, despite some students improving their fluency and pronunciation, a considerable percentage still challenge this (Vettori et al. 2024). The acceptance of mimicry as a strategy is a valuable tool.

Moreover, the findings point out that mimicry is more effective when promoting elements like gestures and body language with sounds during communication. Despite the progress, there are aspects to improve between the use of verbal language and gestures, mimes and body language (Damayanti & Ammar 2024). The learner’s ability to apply mimes correctly could be more effective if it relates to a most organized practice by the teacher and a well-guided fusion of gestures and structure of lexical language.

The assessment also highlights the importance of modifying the grammar instruction and vocabulary in an interactive and kinesthetic context. The findings point out the evident need for complementary strategies that not only focus on mimicry but also include linguistic and communicative activities that enhance the usage of vocabulary and grammar structures. It is essential to guarantee that young learners understand words and expressions superficially, but they must be able to apply them adequately in an authentic communicative environment (Endahati, 2020).

This study emphasizes the importance of an integral educative approach that fusions mimicry with other pedagogical techniques to enhance the English language learning. It is important to take additional investigations to look for diverse combinations of pedagogical techniques that can be adjusted to adapt students' learning needs. Finally, it will promote the efficient use of mimicry to improve speaking skills in an EFL classroom (Afifah et al., 2020).

Conclusions

Although mimicry has a beneficial effect in some aspects of communication and learning, its effectiveness is based on the combination of pedagogical strategies. The findings indicate that mimicry supports students in performing any word, sentence, or situation by focusing on confidence and fluency. The use of gestures and mimes helps students connect a word with a movement, and through memorization, students can remember each one easily.

Furthermore, the frequent use of mimicry improves the speaking skill in the EFL classroom reason why the advantages of using it as a strategy, are that mimicry enhances students' ability to develop the kinesthetic method, which engages the use of body language, interaction, and enjoyment when imitating others. Finally, students become familiar with unfamiliar words and participate more actively in classroom activities, promoting the production of the English language.

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Declaration

Conflict of interest

We have no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding

No financial support from outside parties for this article.

Note

The article is original and has not been previously published.