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INSTITUCIONES EDUCATIVAS PÚBLICAS EN MILAGRO**

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## **EFL Curriculum in Ecuador: The Achievement of Communicative Competences in Learners Graduated from Ecuadorian Public Schools in Milagro**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This research aims to test baccalaureate students' oral communication production from public high schools in the 2023 - 2024 academic year in Milagro city. A non-experimental research design was applied in this study to determine the achievement of communication competences based on the second thread from the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum. A questionnaire was elaborated to score listening comprehension skills, and a checklist was used to evaluate oral production skills. Both data collection instruments were applied and graded over 100 with the participation of 300 baccalaureate students from fourteen public high schools, which means that this evaluation procedure allows us to have a quantitative result based on the evaluation criteria and indicators from the National English Curriculum Guidelines. The results were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program to determine the media and a general average for our analysis and conclude if baccalaureate students achieved a pre-intermediate-level proficiency (B1) in their oral communication production. For this reason, this study wants to measure oral communication production and prove if the English learning process has been achieved successfully according to the curricular objective of English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador.

**Keywords:** curriculum, ecuadorian baccalaureate, oral communication, exit profile

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# **Currículo de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en Ecuador: Alcance de Competencias Comunicativas en los Bachilleres de Instituciones Educativas Públicas en Milagro**

## **RESUMEN**

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo probar la producción de la comunicación oral de los estudiantes de bachillerato de los colegios públicos en el año académico 2023 - 2024 en la ciudad de Milagro. En este estudio se aplicó un diseño de investigación no experimental para determinar el logro de las competencias de comunicación basado en el segundo hilo del currículo EFL ecuatoriano. Se elaboró un cuestionario para evaluar las habilidades de comprensión de la escucha y se utilizó una lista de verificación para valorar las capacidades de producción oral. Ambos instrumentos de recopilación de datos fueron aplicados y calificados a 100 con la participación de 300 estudiantes de bachillerato de catorce escuelas secundarias públicas, lo que significa que este procedimiento de evaluación nos permite tener un resultado cuantitativo basado en los criterios e indicadores de la Guía Nacional del Currículo de Inglés. Los resultados se procesaron utilizando el Programa de Paquete Estadístico para las Ciencias Sociales (SPSS) para determinar los medios y una media general para nuestro análisis y concluir si los estudiantes de bachillerato alcanzaron un nivel pre-intermedio (B1) en su producción de comunicación oral. Por esta razón, este estudio pretende medir la producción de comunicación oral y demostrar si el proceso de aprendizaje del inglés se ha logrado con éxito de acuerdo con el objetivo curricular del inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador.

**Palabras claves:** currículo, bachillerato ecuatoriano, comunicación oral, perfil de salida

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## INTRODUCTION

Mastery of the English language is essential for achieving success in both academic and social domains. Scholars such as Crystal (2003) and Warschauer (2005) have conducted extensive studies on the significance of English as a medium that enables individuals to gain access to academic knowledge, resources, and job opportunities on a global scale. Their studies have emphasized English's role in facilitating communication and fostering collaboration among individuals from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, Guerrero-Quíñonez et al. (2023) point out that English has become the lingua franca of international communication in business, education, technology, and entertainment. Under these circumstances, in the educational field, acquiring solid English skills expands work and academic opportunities and exposes them to other cultures and ways of thinking. English as a foreign language enriches the human experience by facilitating communication and the exchange of ideas inside and outside the classrooms.

Ecuador introduced a new National Curriculum in 2016, which contains an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) curriculum divided into sublevels starting from Basic General Education to Baccalaureate. Within the context of the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum, it is worth noting that learning objectives occupy an important place in achieving a successful educational outcome. Performance criteria skills are linked to evaluation criteria and indicators contributing to the Baccalaureate student's exit profile. These carefully constructed goals form the foundation for desired learning outcomes for students beginning to learn English as a foreign language (Lopez et al., 2021). By providing a roadmap for students to follow, these goals provide teachers with a comprehensive roadmap, allowing them to develop instructional strategies and assessment tools precisely designed to promote student success (Alcaráz-Mármol, 2019).

The objectives of the English curriculum exit profile must align with students' needs and international standards. Regular assessments are important to maintaining consistency between the curriculum and learning objectives, which are informed by domain descriptions like the CEFR. In Ecuador, the EFL curriculum, learning objectives, and assessment criteria are closely linked to create language learning opportunities that can inspire transformation.



The learning objectives in the Ecuadorian English as a Foreign Language curriculum serve as a guiding star, illuminating the desired learning outcomes for students beginning to learn English as a foreign language (Alvarez & Guevara, 2021). These carefully designed objectives are embedded within a framework of educational goals and standards, reflecting the set of competencies and skills that students are expected to acquire throughout their language-learning journey (Bernal & Bernal, 2020).

Teachers can effectively organize their instructional activities and assessment strategies by articulating clear and measurable goals. This ensures that students are well-supported in pursuing these goals with solid results (Romero-Romero et al., 2021). By carefully tailoring these goals to Ecuadorian English learners' specific language proficiency levels and cultural nuances, educators can ensure that the curriculum is appropriate, engages students, and leaves a lasting impact on them through various linguistic elements (Villafuerte & Mosquera, 2020). Therefore, the structure to achieve the planned objectives shows that high school students must reach level B1 according to the CEFR (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

The Ecuadorian EFL curriculum has five threads: Communication and cultural awareness, Oral communication, Reading, Writing, and Language through the arts. This study focuses on the curricular thread 2: Oral communication (listening and speaking) that provides a detailed understanding of the pedagogical strategies and learning outcomes needed to develop language learners' effective communication skills. Oral communication, including listening and speaking skills, is an essential foundation of Ecuador's English curriculum, reflecting the importance of learning communicative and interactive languages (Llerena & Van Ha, 2022).

This research wants to prove whether the communication competencies of learners who have graduated from Ecuadorian Public Schools in Milagro are according to the EFL curriculum. The study intends to determine students' English language proficiency and ability to communicate effectively in English. The research will examine the learners' oral communication skills, including pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and vocabulary usage. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to developing effective English language teaching strategies and materials for students in Ecuador's high schools.



## METHODOLOGY

### Study design

This study applied a non-experimental research design with the analysis of quantitative data. Campbell and Stanley (2015) stated in their book that a non-experimental design is a method where the researchers see and determine variables without manipulating them. This investigation is adapted to analyze the nature of the phenomena and relationships without changing the variables. Also, our field of investigation about oral communication in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms using quantitative data analysis is aligned to determine our primary research question, which would be to understand the current state of oral communication skills among recently graduated students belonging to the school year 2023 - 2024 from Milagro city and identify any factors influencing their proficiency through a test and checklist as data collection instruments.

### Population and sample

During our analysis to determine the effectiveness of the exit profile based on the second thread *Oral communication* from the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum, baccalaureate students from public high schools in Milagro city were selected by calculating the population and sample size. This process was challenging, and it was hard to take a complete group of students from the different public schools. In the final report from Educational Unit District Milagro (2023), nineteen public high schools, and fourteen institutions participated in this research study. Moreover, around 3000 students graduated from these public high schools, and our sample was selected randomly from a total of 300 students from the fourteen public institutions. The participants were between the ages of 17 and 19 with a total of 140 male and 160 female students who were called to evaluate their oral communication skills through a quantitative questionnaire.

### Tools

The instruments and techniques were selected for our investigation question to measure the learners' proficiency based on their oral communication skills. The techniques applied in the present study as the primary source of quantitative data collection were a listening test and a checklist for speaking, used to measure their language proficiency based on the skills with performance criteria from the Ecuadorian EFL curriculum second thread. Yousef (2023) states in his article how beneficial it is to measure



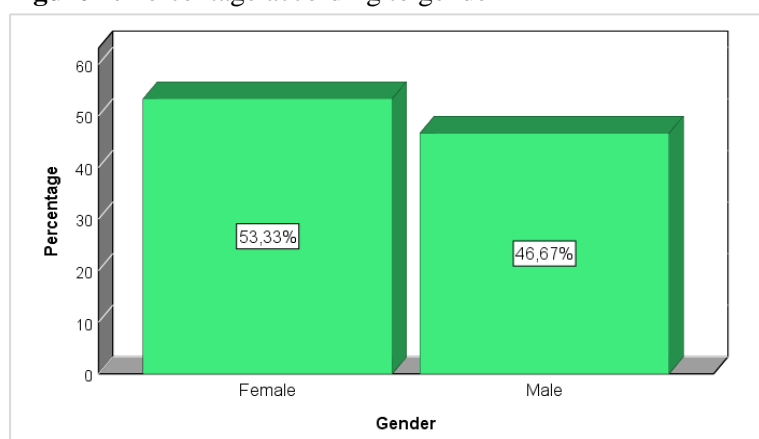
listening and speaking with correct data collection instruments. The test was developed using Google Forms as a technological tool to collect the quantitative data required, and it contains three different audios with questions focused on listening for meaning and specific information. In addition, the checklist was elaborated based on the production, interaction, and fluency considering the CE.EFL. 5.7-8-9 from the evaluation criteria section. The test and the checklist were graded 100 out of 100. The listening test contains ten questions, and each one grades 10 out of 10. On the other hand, the checklist was developed with five indicators, each indicator grades from 2 to 10, taking into account the components mentioned before.

## RESULTS

According to the oral communication thread and its indicators for the performance criteria, graduate students did not obtain a high score in their evaluations based on the communication competences established in the Ecuadorian English Curriculum. This research evaluated some performance criteria to measure oral communication production and listening for specific details. The quantitative data collected were calculated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program, and found the following results:

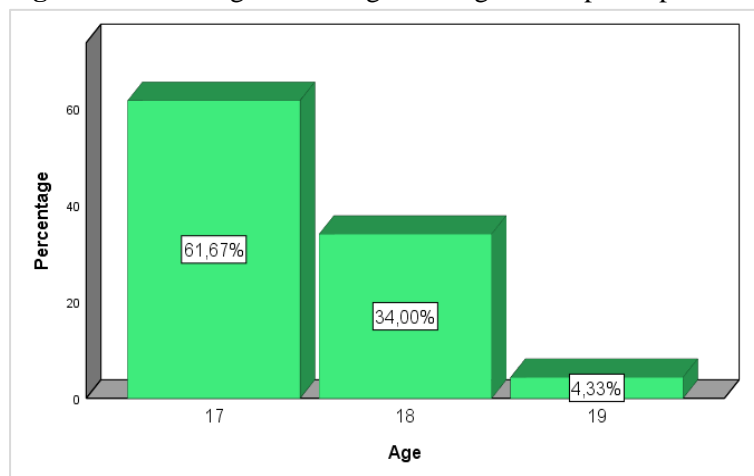
For the present study, descriptive statistics have been used to characterize the study population. Taking as reference the participation of 300 participants, this, in turn, is distributed as follows. In Figure 1, 53.33% were female, while 46.67% were male. Figure 2 shows the percentage of age of participation, with age with the highest participation being the age of 17, corresponding to 61.67%, followed by those who are 18, representing 34.00%, and the age with lower participation is 19, representing 4.33%.

**Figure 1:** Percentage according to gender



Source: Survey applied to the students.

**Figure 2:** Percentage according to the age of the participants.



Source: Survey applied to the students.

Table 1 and Figure 3 show gender participation between the ages of 17, 18, and 19 years. The female sex accounted for 53.33% of those aged 17 (117 people – 39.00%), 18 years (38 people – 12.67%) and 19 years (5 – 1.67%). In contrast, in the male sex, it represents 46.67%, where those who are 17 years of age (68 people – represent 22.67%), 18 years (64 people – 21.33%) and those of 19 years (8 people – 2.67%).

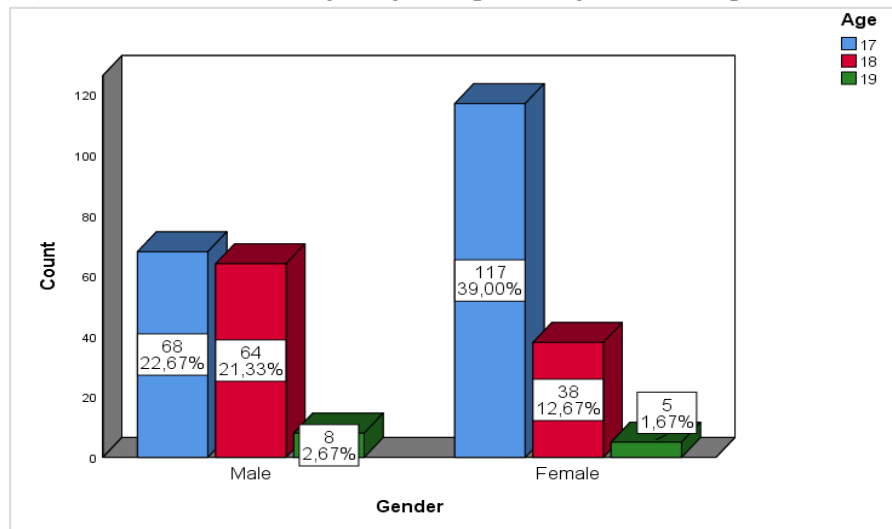
**Table 1** Gender according to age and percentage of the sample.

GENDER	AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Male	17	68	22,67 %
	18	64	21,33 %
	19	8	2,67 %
	Total	140	46,67 %
Female	17	117	39,00 %
	18	38	12,67 %
	19	5	1,67 %
	Total	160	53,33 %
Total		300	100,0 %

Source: Test and Checklist instruments elaborated by the teachers



**Figure 3:** Gender according to age and percentage of the sample.



Source: Gender according to age and percentage of the sample.

Table 2 compares the averages between the two gender tests where a one-factor ANOVA was applied, which shows a small significant difference between the male and female genders in the application of the Listening Test with a value of 069. Similarly, in the Speaking Test by gender, in this case, they did not present a difference between groups with a value of 983.

**Table 2:** Listening Test and Speaking Test according to gender for the average

		N	Mean	p valor	Score tests	
					Min	Max
Listening Test	Male	140	31,29	,069	10	90
	Female	160	27,31		10	70
	Total	300	29,17		10	90
Speaking Test	Male	140	28,36	,983.	10	70
	Female	160	28,31		10	80
	Total	300	28,33		10	80

Figures 4 and 5 show the students' comprehension and production by gender. Figure 4 determined that graduate females obtained a low level of comprehension in the listening section, and it represented 27,31 %. They had some difficulties understanding the meaning and details of the audio applied. However, male graduates achieved a 31,29 % understanding in the listening section, which is not enough according to the Indicators for the performance criteria.

Figure 5 represents the graduate students' oral production. Graduate males obtained 28,36 %, and graduate females achieved 28,31 % over 100%. This result indicates that graduate students have a low level of oral communication production.

**Figure 4:** Listening Test according to gender with respect to the average.



**Figure 5:** Speaking Test according to gender with respect to the average.



Table 3 presents the averages of both tests indicating Listening and Speaking skills. The data analysis revealed that the average for male participants was 59.64, while for female participants, it was 55.62. The average of both is 57, 5.

**Table 3:** Overall average of Listening and Speaking tests, by gender.

Gender	Promedio	Promedio General
Male	59,64	57,5
Female	55,62	

## DISCUSSION

The results of the current research confirm that there are some problems regarding the low level of mastery in oral communication of students who belong to public high schools in Milagro City. Reasco and Rodriguez (2022), in their study, have found the same way: the students, regarding students' oral production and comprehension of the English language, do not achieve the desired results based on the national criteria, and they are in the process. This study was carried out in Milagro City, and graduate students, after six years of being in EFL classrooms in different public high schools, need to improve their language skills. Students require more interactive communication activities with authentic learning to foster their interests when they have to produce their English inside the classroom.

According to the research done by Tawil (2018), language teachers should apply some techniques to impart communicative skills more effectively to their learners. Moreover, The application of contemporary topics, dynamic physical and digital resources, and high motivation are more fundamental factors in this new way of teaching in contrast to traditional methods. Students may achieve and retain more information, and their comprehensible input (Krashen,1982). is more effective and promotes a successful learning environment.

As a result, our current Ecuadorian graduate students have not achieved the curricular objective of English as a Foreign Language. Students need to develop their oral production, which means, accuracy and intelligibility as components to have a clear speech. Also, interaction and fluency are other factors to be considered at the time to communicate with someone else. From our findings, male and female students obtained the same result in their averages. On the other hand, listening for meaning and information are two components based on the listening comprehension skill. In these skills, our male participants obtained 31,27% better than female students with 27,31%. However, these percentages do not represent a high level of proficiency based on communication competencies and the Ecuadorian curricular exit profile.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the academic year 2023-2024, it was found that graduate students have a basic level of communication skills. In particular, their oral communication skills need improvement. They lack fluency in speaking, struggle with listening comprehension, do not practice oral production outside of



the classroom, and have difficulty understanding specific details when listening. These issues may be a result of the educational learning process, which could be explored further through future research. To address these shortcomings, educators should provide more opportunities for students to improve their oral communication skills within the classroom. Additionally, listening comprehension should be encouraged by modeling good speaking habits. Developing communication skills requires significant time and effort, both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, it is essential to implement these recommendations and establish performance criteria and indicators to ensure that learning objectives and exit profiles are met. By doing so, students can achieve oral communication skills and become effective communicators in both their professional and personal lives.

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