Universitat de Girona
Facultat d'Educació i Psicologia

EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER INTERACTION DYNAMICS IN ESL ORAL COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES

L'OBSERVACIÓ DE L'EFICÀCIA DE LA DINÀMICA D'INTERACCIÓ ENTRE IGUALS EN ACTIVITATS DE COMUNICACIÓ ORAL EN ANGLÈS COM A SEGONA LLENGUA

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First of all, I would like to thank Ingrid, my tutor, for all the help and support she has given me to successfully carry out this project.

I would also like to thank Míriam for her unconditional support during the most stressful moments, because together we have pushed forward.

I can't forget my family, who has been there for me emotionally, offering their support and believing in me all along the way and helping me to stay on track.

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Abstract

This study examines how English second language learners interact with their peers during context-based oral communication activities, aiming to assess whether peer interaction enhances children's oral discourse abilities and supports improved learning outcomes. Using a dynamic and interactive approach, three targeted linguistic structures were introduced and practiced by 52 students with varying levels of English proficiency. The results showed significant progress in both learning outcomes and oral communication abilities. These findings highlight the effectiveness of peer interaction as a strategy for fostering oral communication skills and promoting overall second language acquisition.

Key words: *peer interaction, oral communication, learning outcomes, linguistic structures, English as a second language learners*

Resum

Aquest estudi analitza com els estudiants d'anglès com a segona llengua interactuen amb els companys/es durant activitats de comunicació oral contextualitzades, amb l'objectiu d'avaluar si aquesta interacció millora les seves habilitats orals i resultats d'aprenentatge. A través d' un enfocament dinàmic i interactiu, 52 estudiants amb diferents nivells d'anglès van treballar tres estructures lingüístiques. Els resultats van mostrar un progrés significatiu tant en els resultats d'aprenentatge com en les habilitats de comunicació oral.Aquests resultats demostren que la interacció entre iguals és una estratègia efectiva per fomentar les habilitats orals i millorar l'adquisició d'una segona llengua.

Paraules clau: *interacció entre iguals, resultats d'aprenentatge, estructures lingüístiques, anglès com a segona llengua.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, oral interaction in second language (L2) acquisition is essential, because it is a fundamental skill that relates to language learning and allows students to express their ideas, communicate effectively, and participate in conversations and dialogues where they may need to contribute (Taleb et al., 2024).

Importantly, oral interaction often receives less emphasis in the classroom and this approach can limit the development of comprehensive communicative abilities, as highlighted by recent studies (e.g., Philp et al. 2013). To equip students with the necessary tools, schools must prioritize the development of oral communication skills, recognizing that we live in an increasingly interconnected world where effective communication in a second language is vital for both personal and professional growth. Furthermore, proficiency in speaking not only facilitates better language use but also boosts students' confidence and self-esteem, enabling them to engage more effectively in diverse social and academic contexts (Mandokhail et al., 2018). Some resources can be used to support students who do not excel in English or face difficulties in these situations.

There is evidence that, although students may initially find speaking in a second language challenging, it remains the primary and most frequently used mode of communication (Okey-Kalu, 2018). According to Tenenbaum and colleagues (2020), practice in real environments through oral interaction is essential for students to integrate grammatical structures and conversational skills effectively. Moreover, research indicates that peer interaction (which refers to the process of collaboration and communication between students in the same learning situation) can reduce anxiety and promote confidence in using the new language (Peltonen, 2024). Building upon this contextual issue, the present study will focus on enhancing oral communication skills and learning outcomes in an English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL) classroom through peer-to-peer interactions and dialogues that encourage students’ active engagement and build confidence in speaking a second language.

According to Pérez (2008), “to be competent in linguistic communication means to possess the necessary resources to take part” (p. 43). However, several factors can influence the teaching-learning process of a second language, particularly when developing speaking skills. One of the most significant challenges is that speaking often feels difficult at first, as it requires not only linguistic knowledge but also the confidence and speed to articulate thoughts in real time.

The proficiency level of the students is another key issue: learners with lower levels may struggle with limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge, blocking their ability to communicate effectively. Psychological factors, such as anxiety, fear of social judgment, and lack of motivation, add difficulties to the process. Additionally, the learning context—including the opportunities for exposure to the language, the frequency of practice, and the teaching strategies employed—plays a critical role in shaping students' progress. In our current context, within a third-grade classroom, there is considerable diversity in language proficiency. While some students have studied English outside school, others have only learned it during school hours and shown little interest in the subject.

Building upon this contextual issue, the present study will focus on observing and analysing the effects of peer interaction during oral communication activities on enhancing oral abilities such as fluency and autonomy and other learning linguistic outcomes (i.e., specific linguistic structures) in an ESL classroom. Specifically, the study aims to (a) observe how second language learners interact during peer dynamic and context-based oral communication in ESL activities and (b) examine the effects of this peer interaction approach on improving students’ oral abilities and target linguistic conversational structures (in terms of grammar accuracy and contextual appropriateness), enabling them to communicate more confidently and effectively in their second language.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

ORAL COMMUNICATION IN ESL CONTEXTS

Oral communication is an exchange of information by the use of spoken words, and it plays a vital role in the process of learning a second language, especially in the context of ESL. Gaining communicative competence in a second language requires more than just reading comprehension and grammar; it also entails the ability to create and understand spoken language. According to Levis (2018) and Munro and Derwing (1995), intelligibility, that is, the ability to be understood by others, is essential for oral communication and should be the primary goal of ESL classes, rather than grammatical perfection.

Despite this, the importance of teaching pronunciation in ESL settings has often been underestimated (Derwing & Munro, 2015). Crucially, previous studies suggest that focusing more on oral pronunciation can significantly enhance both oral comprehension and production (Derwing, 2019). Therefore, ESL classes should incorporate methods that address listening comprehension while encouraging students to speak and express themselves confidently in their second language.

Psychological factors such as anxiety and shyness can play a significant role in the development and learning of oral communication skills. ESL learners frequently feel nervous when speaking in a second language, which can inhibit their ability to communicate. A study by Soomro et al. (2019) demonstrated that language anxiety negatively affects students' fluency and confidence in communication, particularly in L2. Along these lines, Soomro et al. (2019) found that, while not all participants viewed English as a difficulty, for some of them it was a significant challenge. These participants, Pakistani engineering undergraduates, often avoided using English in both classroom settings and public places, limiting their opportunities for practising and improving their L2. Therefore, emotional factors must be taken into account when creating learning situations (LS) if we want to foster a positive and supportive learning atmosphere.

Several other factors could also influence the oral performance of second language learners. A study by Pangket (2019) identified environmental factors, such as limited opportunities to practice speaking outside the classroom and traditional teacher-centered lessons, which do not help oral language development. The author concludes that the absence of an interactive and dynamic learning environment restricts students' chances to effectively develop the oral skills required for real communicative situations.

Despite the challenges, various existing effective approaches can help address these issues and enhance students' speaking abilities in an ESL context.

RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE ORAL INTERACTION IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

When it comes to classroom methodologies to improve ESL students' oral competence, the communicative approach is particularly effective. This approach emphasises using language in real-life interaction situations in a way where speaking skills are improved. It focuses on natural interaction, using language as a tool for problem-solving and expressing ideas, which improves fluency and spontaneity (Brandl, 2020).

Task-based learning is another valuable methodology that offers students practical opportunities to engage in speaking activities with meaningful contexts, which helps improve both oral fluency and accuracy. By focusing on real-life tasks, students gain confidence in using English in everyday situations. Moreover, the inherent challenges these tasks present stimulate curiosity and active engagement, making the learning process more enjoyable (Alonso-Pérez & Sanchez-Requena, 2018). This approach not only enhances language skills but also encourages problem-solving and spontaneous communication.

The third methodology to highlight, and the primary focus of this study, is peer interaction. Sato and Ballinger (2016) state that this approach is distinguished for its ability to foster collaborative learning among ESL students. This research

explores many variables such as different tasks, different types of interaction, and social relationships between students' behaviours. That is, learners have the opportunity to actively practice speaking skills in a less formal and more relaxed environment, which reduces anxiety and improves fluency. Recent research by Adams (2018) indicates that this type of interaction facilitates a knowledge exchange, where students not only reinforce their learning but also assist one another, boosting their confidence in oral communication skills. It fosters a safe space where students can grow up with fluency and confidence while they are consolidating their language skills. Moreover, the author concludes that this peer work reinforces students' oral understanding while reaching new language skills.

According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978), peer interaction plays a crucial role in progressing within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In this collaborative context, students strengthen their language competence through scaffolded support, which boosts the opportunity to practice and refine their language structures in an authentic peer-supported environment. In the following section, we will address the significance of peer interaction and the many benefits it offers within ESL contexts.

BENEFITS OF PEER INTERACTION IN THE ESL CONTEXT

Peer interaction involves communication and collaboration among students in an educational context. It is defined as "any communicative activity carried out between learners, where there is minimal or no participation from the teacher*"* *(*Philip et al., 2014, p. 3*)* and thus allows students to get engaged in shared practices and knowledge-building, facilitating active learning. It is recognized as an effective approach to enhancing a range of academic skills, including language proficiency, as it offers students a space to practice language naturally and in real-life contexts. According to Allwright (1984), meaningful interactions between students, in which they share ideas that are important to them, engage students more deeply and increase the chance of learning. However, the author cautions that deep learning does not occur automatically in activities focused on

communicative interaction, even though such activities contribute to the construction of the meaning.

Specifically, there is evidence that peer interaction supports language acquisition in a more relaxed and collaborative environment and strengthens intrinsic motivation (i.e., which leads students to actively participate and take initiative in their language learning) (Sato & Ballinger, 2016). Some previous research also indicates that peer interaction enhances language abilities and fosters the development of socioemotional skills like collaboration and empathy, which are crucial for learning (Fujii et al., 2016). Additionally, Allwright (1984) points out that peer conversations in the classroom not only enhance comprehension as students discuss and share understandings but also provide opportunities for learners to articulate their knowledge, which reinforces both their confidence and conceptual understanding.

Moreover, peer interaction also foments autonomy in learning, as it allows students to take an active role in the construction of their knowledge. Students gain a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction when they see their progress and when helping their peers (Wu & Dong, 2024). This autonomy in learning is the key to developing a deeper dedication to the learning process, promoting more persistent and effective language acquisition.

Along these lines, several studies have validated the effectiveness of the peer interaction approach in real contexts inside primary classes. For example, Philp et al. (2013) found that interactions between students (*M* age = 12 years of age) with different levels of competence in ESL encouraged sense exchange, which improved students' language skills such as vocabulary and fluency. This level of variation facilitates opportunities for scaffolding, where more proficient students can help their peers understand language rules. This study adopted a dynamic and multifaceted approach, analysing interaction using a variety of classroom real-world activities: learning scenarios in a variety of educational environments. Through some analysis, the authors identified the benefits and drawbacks of group work while emphasising aspects that foster productive relationships, like

participant variation in skill levels and the creation of cooperative tasks with specific goals.

This exchange is also reflected in the work by Wang and Castro (2010), which found that small group work enables students (15 years of age) to notice specific language forms in English. They also highlight how these interactions created a favourable environment for learning through inputs that students could identify as relevant to their development. Conducted with L1 Chinese adult learners of English as a foreign language, the study explored the effects of classroom interactions between peers and teachers on learning English. Participants engaged in input activities such as reading, and output tasks such as reconstructing texts with teacher feedback. The results revealed how these interactions foster awareness of target forms and create a favourable learning environment through meaningful input and collaborative engagement between peers.

However, for some students, particularly those with lower levels of English proficiency, interactions with highly competent peers can represent a significant challenge, as noted by Hung and Hyun (2010). Nevertheless, structured small-group activities help students focus their attention on specific language forms and discourse while experimenting and suggesting linguistic alternatives (Philip et al., 2013). Working together allows learners to share their individual resources to tackle group tasks, which helps them refine their control over the language.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The aim of the present study is twofold. First, the study examines student oral interactions engaged in specific context-based, peer-interaction oral communication in ESL activities. Second, it aims to determine if this peer interaction approach in an ESL context can help enhance students' oral abilities (in terms of fluency and autonomy in using the language) and their learning of some target linguistic conversational structures (in terms of grammar accuracy and

contextual appropriateness), helping them become more effective communicators in English.

Although previous studies have well-documented the significant benefits of peer interaction in the (ESL) classroom (e.g., Philp et al., 2013; Sato & Ballinger, 2016; Tenenbaum et al., 2020), challenges remain, particularly for students with varying L2 proficiency levels, as is the case in the present study. To address these challenges and better understand the dynamics of peer interaction within a primary ESL classroom, this research seeks to answer the following research questions:

> **RQ1. How do primary second language learners engage in peer interactions (e.g., dialogues and tasks) within context-based oral communication activities during regular lessons?**
> **RQ2. To what extent and in what ways do these learners improve their oral abilities and apply the target linguistic structures learned (e.g., questions and answers) during a final task-based interaction?**

Considering previous studies, we expect that students will become increasingly engaged in interactions from the first session until the fifth one. As the sessions progress, we expect that they will feel more fluent and autonomous in using the language, and gain more confidence in using the linguistic structures introduced during structured peer-dynamic small-group activities. Collaborative work will allow learners to share their individual resources to tackle group tasks, which in turn will help them refine their control over the language (Philip et al., 2013; Wang & Castro, 2010). Furthermore, we expect that by the final session, the sixth one (i.e., the final task-based interaction), they will be significantly more fluent and autonomous in speaking and will use the target linguistic structures correctly (in terms of grammar accuracy and contextual appropriateness). As Tenenbaum and colleagues (2020) argue, practice in real environments through oral interaction is essential for students to effectively integrate grammatical structures and conversational skills, helping them become more confident and proficient in using the language. Moreover, in line with Wu and Dong (2024), as learners improve in terms of oral fluency, they will also feel better about their progress, which will motivate them to continue moving forward and their autonomy will increase.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research observed how students engaged during dynamic peer interactions in oral communication activities within an ESL context, and assessed whether their oral abilities (in terms of fluency and autonomy in using the language) and learning outcomes (e.g., the use of specific linguistic structures) improved from the initial five sessions to the final one, in which they engaged in a peer conversation to assess their progress.

Participants

The sample of participants consisted of 52 third-grade students (between 7 and 8 years of age; 22 female, 30 male) from a public school in Girona, Catalonia. The group was heterogeneous, with a wide range of English proficiency levels (See Figure 1). Some students attended English language academies outside school, while others only engaged with the school's curriculum and/or showed limited interest or motivation for learning the language. There was a student who has Autism Spectrum Disorder. He participated in all the activities because he found them motivating and engaging.

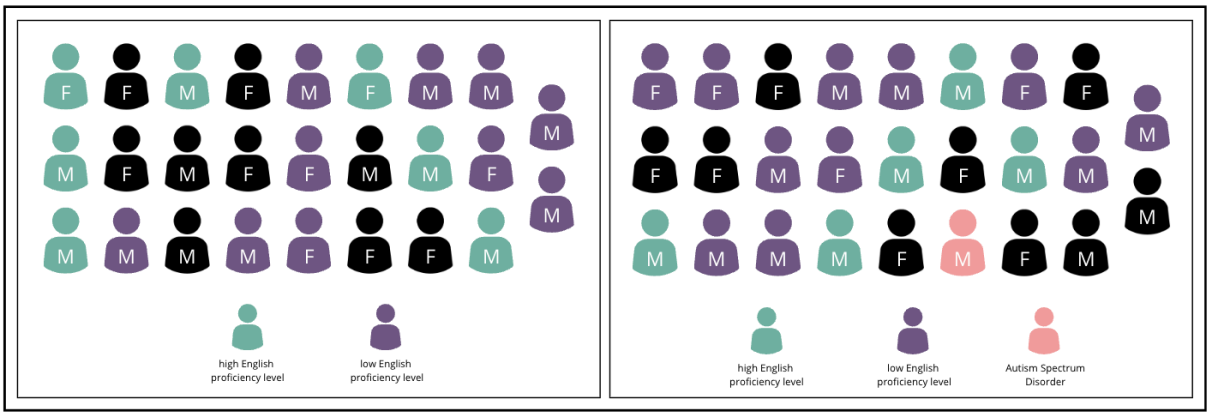

Figure 1. Participants' English proficiency level.

Materials for data collection

Initial sessions

The instruments used for data collection during the five initial sessions were the following ones:

- **Peer interaction activities and target linguistic structures**: The study included five initial sessions in which different materials were used. These sessions aimed to teach the linguistic structures and prepare students to respond when asked about them. Each session focused on a different linguistic structure (three in total), and some of the activities were designed to consolidate understanding and use of these structures. The linguistic structures covered were as follows:
    1. *Have you got a _____?*
    2. *How many _____ have you got?*
    3. *Can you lend me a _____, please?*

The material for the first session included the top section of the first page of the booklet (see Appendix A), 12 different 5x5cm cards featuring an object (see Appendix B, Material 1), and a piece of orange paper on which students had to write a question to attach to the question page of the booklet. In this activity, they used the linguistic structure “Have you got a ____?” to check if they had found their pair.

In the second session, the material included the last section of the first page of the booklet, 10 different 5x5cm cards with a number (see Appendix B, Material 2), and a piece of blue paper on which students wrote the question to attach to the question page. The numbers were used to complete the final page of the booklet, where a bar grid needed to be filled in (see Appendix A). The linguistic structure practiced in this activity was “How many _____ have you got?”. Students had to ask their peers how many they had and complete the grid by colouring according to their responses.

The material used in the third session was the backside of the first page of the booklet, which features circles to colour in and write the correct name. This activity was designed to reinforce the linguistic structure "Have you got a _____ _____?" in which students had to ask for the material and its colour.

In the fourth session, the third linguistic structure was introduced: "Can you lend me a ____ ____, please?". Students had to ask their classmates which pieces they could lend them to complete their board (see Appendix B, Material 3).

The fifth session was dedicated to reviewing all the materials, colours, numbers, questions, and answers. This was done through the preparation of a dialogue as a simulation for the final oral exam.

- **ESL class observation**: Throughout the previous five initial sessions, the first author of this study (who also served as the teacher during the class intervention) observed numerous student interactions, and took notes on various grammatical structures as students engaged in the planned activities. To assess students' interactions, a detailed rubric was used (see Appendix C, Rubric 1). This rubric was organised around three criteria designed for language proficiency across three levels. On the left side, the criteria focus on performance and the achievement of objectives targeted in three of the sessions carried out during the intervention. The proficiency levels range from beginner to advanced:
    - **Beginner**: indicates that the student needed a lot of help to carry out the assigned activities.
    - **Intermediate**: refers to the student who needed some help to be able to carry out the tasks.
    - **Advanced**: reflects that the student demonstrated full fluency and autonomy, knowing what to ask and how to respond effectively at all times.

  The teacher assigned students according to their oral abilities, with a specific focus on their fluency and autonomy in using linguistic structures.

Last session

The instruments used for data collection in the final (sixth) session were the following ones:

- **Assessment grid:** In this case, the first author of this study used a rubric to assess students' progress during the final session, focusing on oral abilities (fluency and autonomy) as well as grammatical accuracy and contextual appropriateness (i.e., in using the target linguistic structures) in a final pair conversation activity. In this activity, students were required to incorporate the target linguistic structures (questions and answers) they had learned during the process (see Appendix C, Rubric 2).
- **Final peer-to-peer conversations:** To develop the final pair conversation activity, the materials provided were those used in the previous sessions (see Appendix B - Material 1 and 2).

Procedure

The peer interaction dynamics in oral communication activities covered six sessions (five initial sessions plus one final session). To encourage interaction with the target linguistic structures, students took part in pair interaction activities during five ESL lessons, using a set of questions and specific vocabulary provided by the teacher. The structures used were new to the students; they had not studied these questions and answers before. During three of these five sessions (e.g., the first, second, and fourth sessions, in which these three target linguistic structures were introduced), the teacher observed students' language use in real-context conversations, using the ESL observation grid (see Appendix C), with a particular focus on target linguistic structures which involved vocabulary use and accuracy. Minimal feedback was provided when necessary. At the end of the five interaction sessions, students took part in a final conversation task to assess whether they could use the structures independently and coherently (see Figure 2 for a summary of the study procedure).

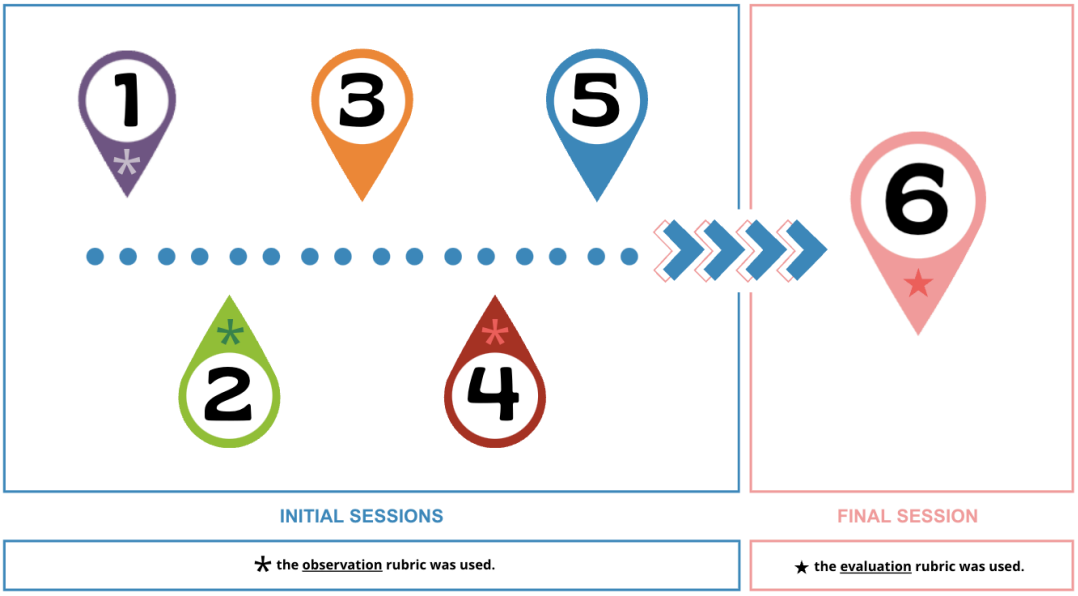

Figure 2. Chronological progress of the interaction activities to get to the final one.

The five initial sessions were structured as follows (see Figure 2):

- *First session: Students interacted by practicing the question "Have you got a ____?" during an activity where they had to move around the classroom, asking their peers to find their partner. They knew the material vocabulary and the linguistic structure because it was presented before starting the practice.
- *Second session: Students practiced the question "How many ____ have you got?" by moving around the classroom, asking their classmates, and filling out a bar chart with the correct answers. At the end, the bar chart was revised and corrected. The numbers and the linguistic structure were presented before the game started, so the students were already familiar with them.
- Third session. Students coloured and named the colours to practice vocabulary. Then, they played a guessing game, using the question "Have you got a _____ _____?" to identify a mystery object and its colour. The linguistic structure was introduced at the beginning.
- *Fourth session. In this session, students practiced asking for materials using the question “Can you lend me a ___ ___, please?”, while playing a role-play game with "sellers" and "buyers" in groups. They asked the sellers for items, which they may or may not have and marked the available or

unavailable materials on the board the group had (see Appendix B, Material 3).

- Fifth session. In this session, students revised all the questions, and their answers, and then wrote dialogues using the vocabulary and questions they had learned. They practiced these dialogues in pairs with flashcards provided by the teacher (see Appendix B - Material 1 and 2). The session concluded with a revision where students answered questions proposed by the teacher to reinforce all the linguistic structures studied.

The final session (the sixth one) served as a test of the students' learning from the previous five sessions. The teacher provided each student a number and an object (see Appendix B, Material 1 and 2), and they paired up to have a conversation. The teacher asked one of them to start freely, allowing the more confident student to begin, which minimized pressure. From there, they practiced the three linguistic structures that they had been working on. The teacher observed and noted down the structure that was used most frequently. To track their progress, the teacher recorded their performance in the previously mentioned evaluation rubric. See Appendix C.

4. RESULTS

Analysis 1. Observation and assessment of the learning progress in the five first sessions.

Of these first five interactive sessions, only three of them were observed and analysed in terms of fluency and autonomy in using the target linguistic structures. The ones observed were the **first**, **second**, and **fourth** because those were the ones in which the target linguistic structures were introduced. In the other two (third and fifth), learning was reinforced by practising the same linguistic structures. The effectiveness of the peer interaction approach was assessed in the last session, during the dialogue activity. In this case, students' oral abilities were assessed in terms of fluency, autonomy as well as grammar accuracy and contextual appropriateness in using the target linguistic structures.

The results from the first session are based on students' ability to ask and answer questions using the target linguistic structure "Have you got a ___?". Results showed that 50% of the students (26 out of 52) needed a lot of help to be able to ask questions and know how to answer (i.e., beginner level). In contrast, intermediate and advanced proficiency levels had 13 students each (25% intermediate; 25% advanced), showing that students only needed partial assistance or could do it autonomously. See Figure 3.

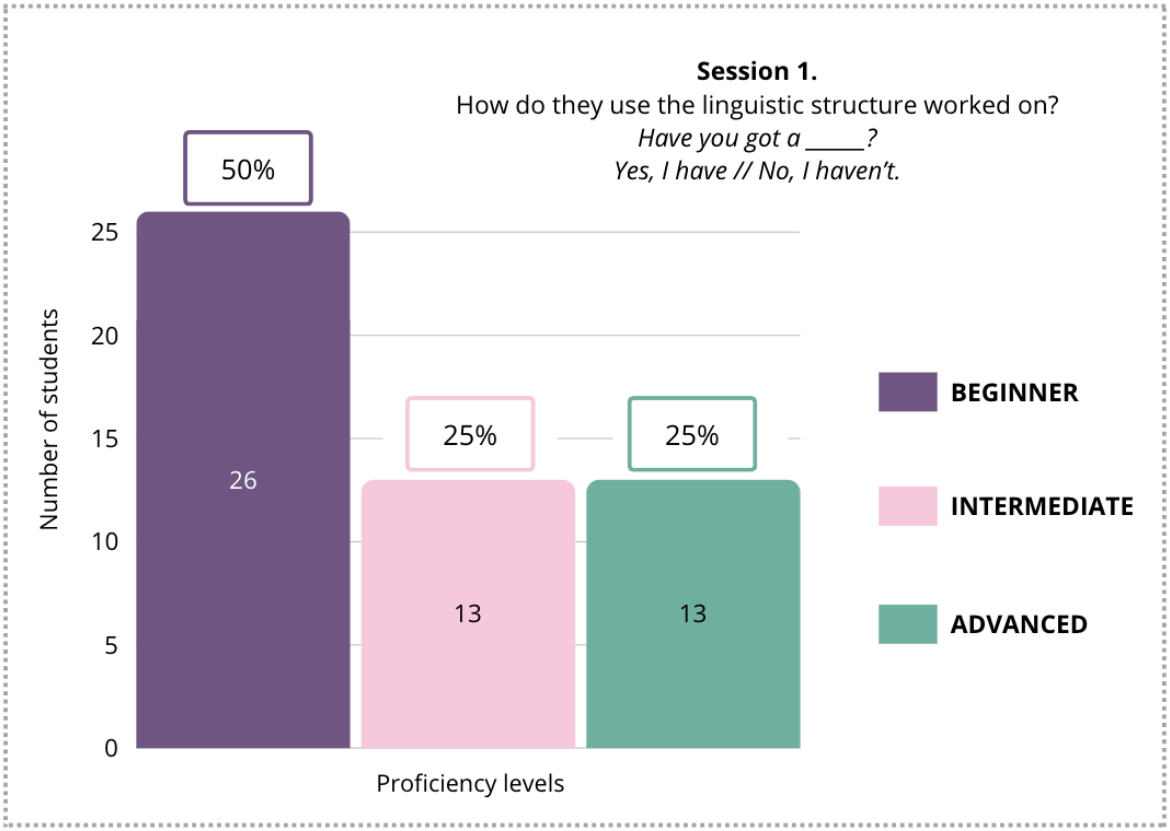

Figure 3. This figure represents how linguistic structures were used in the first session.

The results from the second session are based on the linguistic structure "How many ____ have you got?". In this case, a slight difference in the results was observed: there were fewer beginner students at the beginner level (46.15%) compared to the first session (50%), suggesting that more students required only some help to ask questions and respond, rather than extensive support. The intermediate level was slightly higher (30.77%), and the advanced level, however, remained largely unchanged, with only 23.08%. See Figure 4.

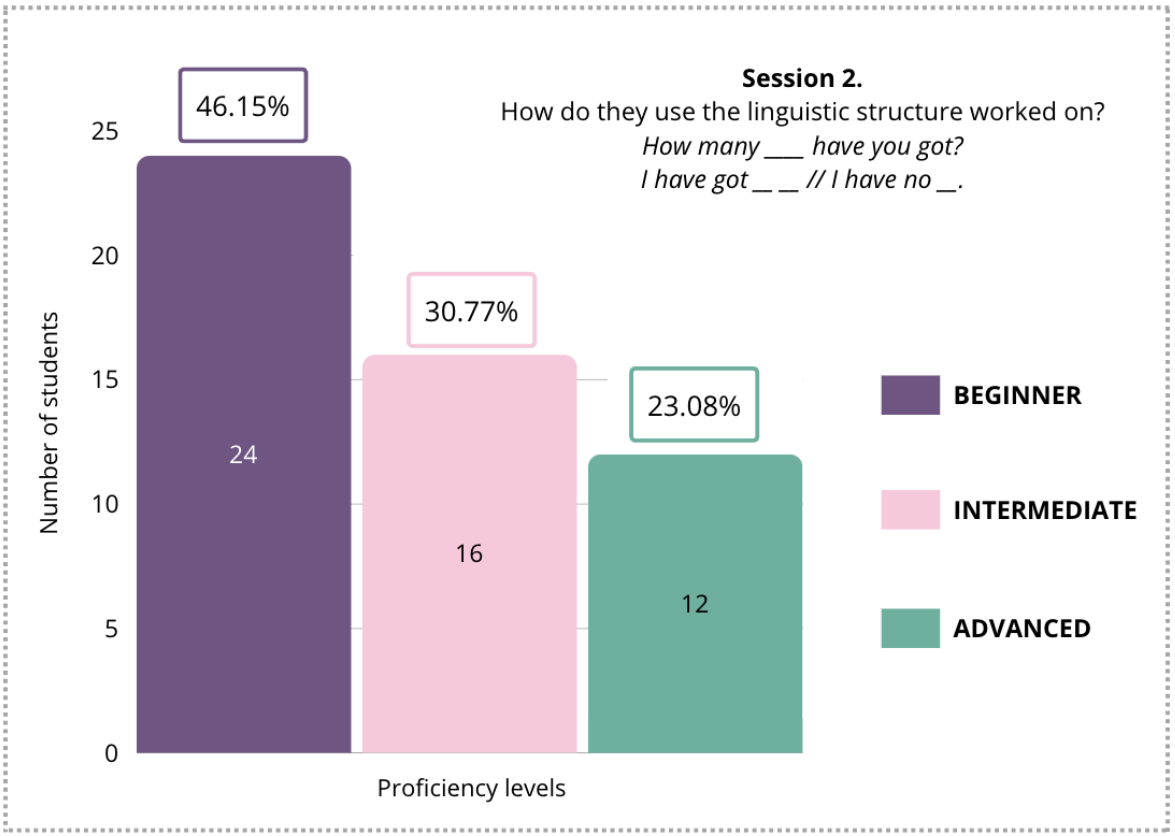

Figure 4. This figure represents how linguistic structures were used in the second session.

Results from the fourth session revealed that 50% of the students (26 out of 52) achieved the advanced level, indicating significant progress in their use of the linguistic structure “Can you lend me a ___ ___, please?”. In contrast, the number of students in the other two levels (beginner and intermediate) was much lower, with 23.08% (12 students) and 26.92% (14 students) students, respectively. This means that while half of the students still needed support, the other half were able to perform autonomously. See Figure 5.

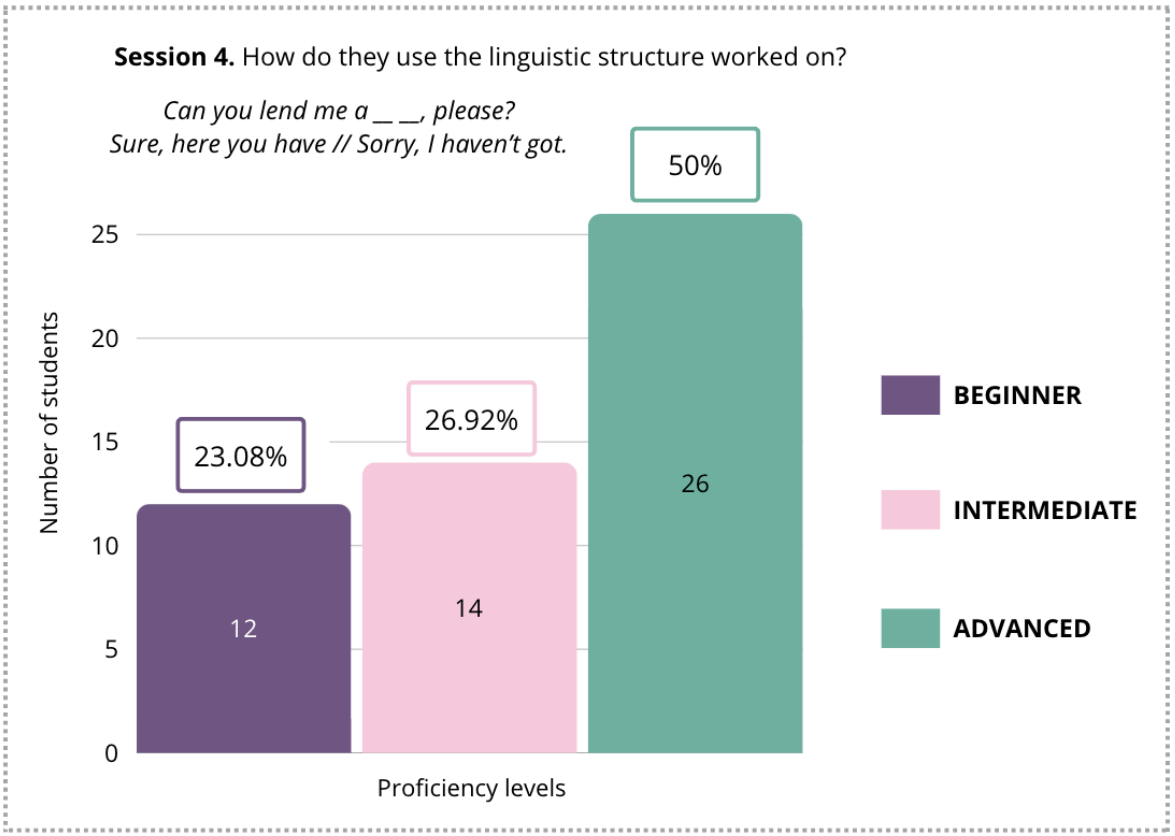

Figure 5. This figure represents how linguistic structures were used in the fourth session.

Analysis 2. Evaluating learners' use of target linguistic structures in the final task-based interaction.

Results from the last (sixth) session are based on the proper usage of all the linguistic structures (e.g., questions and answers) learned throughout the oral communicative activities, in terms of oral abilities and grammar accuracy and contextual appropriateness.

First, results showed that 48.08%, nearly half of the students (25 out of 52), had correct grammar usage, accuracy, and a well-structured application of the questions learned. Only 13.46% of students (7 out of 52) struggled to use the questions in the correct context and often applied them inappropriately. The remaining 38.46% (20 out of 52) demonstrated a good understanding of linguistic structures but occasionally made contextual errors when using the questions. See Figure 6.

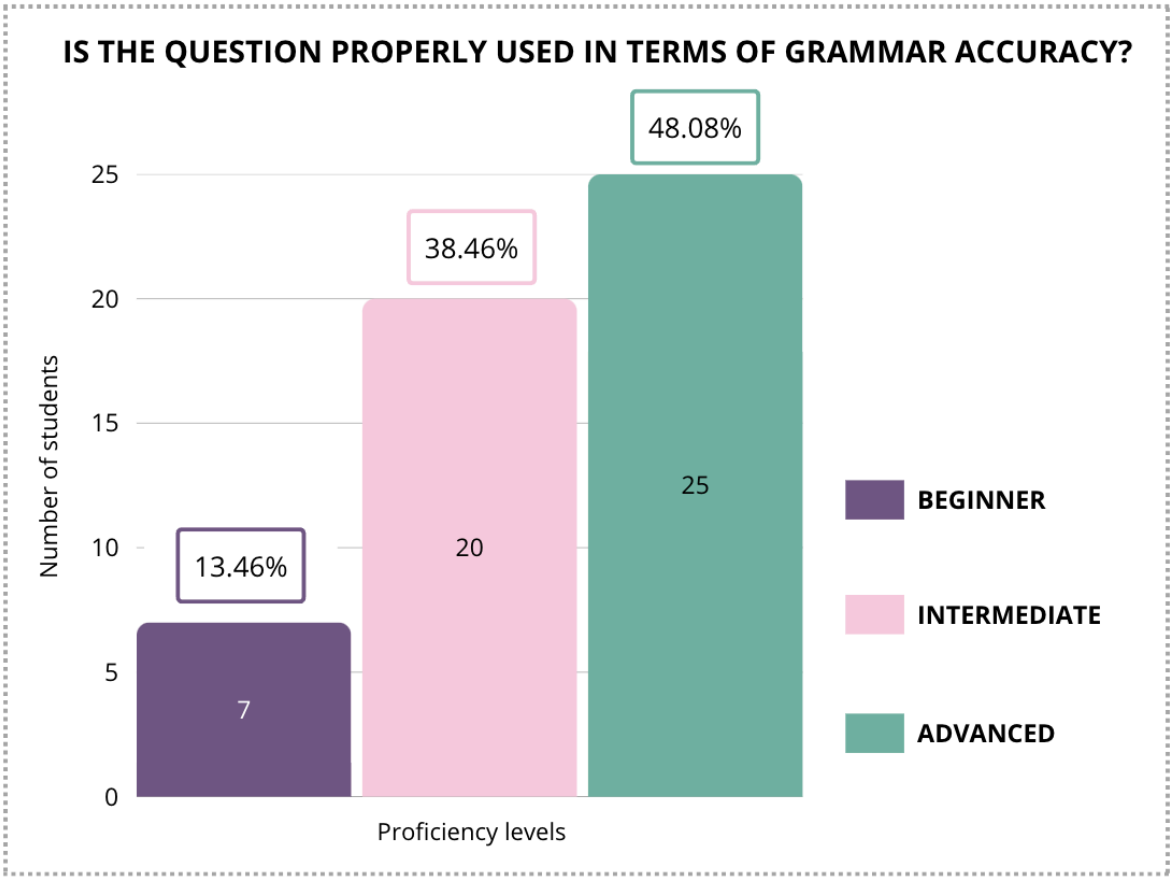

Figure 6. This figure represents the students at each proficiency level in terms of grammar accuracy.

Considering the contextual appropriateness in which students used the questions, the results revealed that almost all of them did it with a strong understanding of its application. Regarding adequacy in the context, 24 out of 52 students were classified at the advanced level (46.15%), indicating that nearly half of the students demonstrated a strong understanding of linguistic structures and their appropriate application in context. At the intermediate level, 42.31% (22 out of 52 of students exhibited a good understanding of when to use the question structure, although occasional contextual errors were observed. Finally, 11.54% of students (6 out of 52) struggled with both the correct structure and its application. See Figure 7.

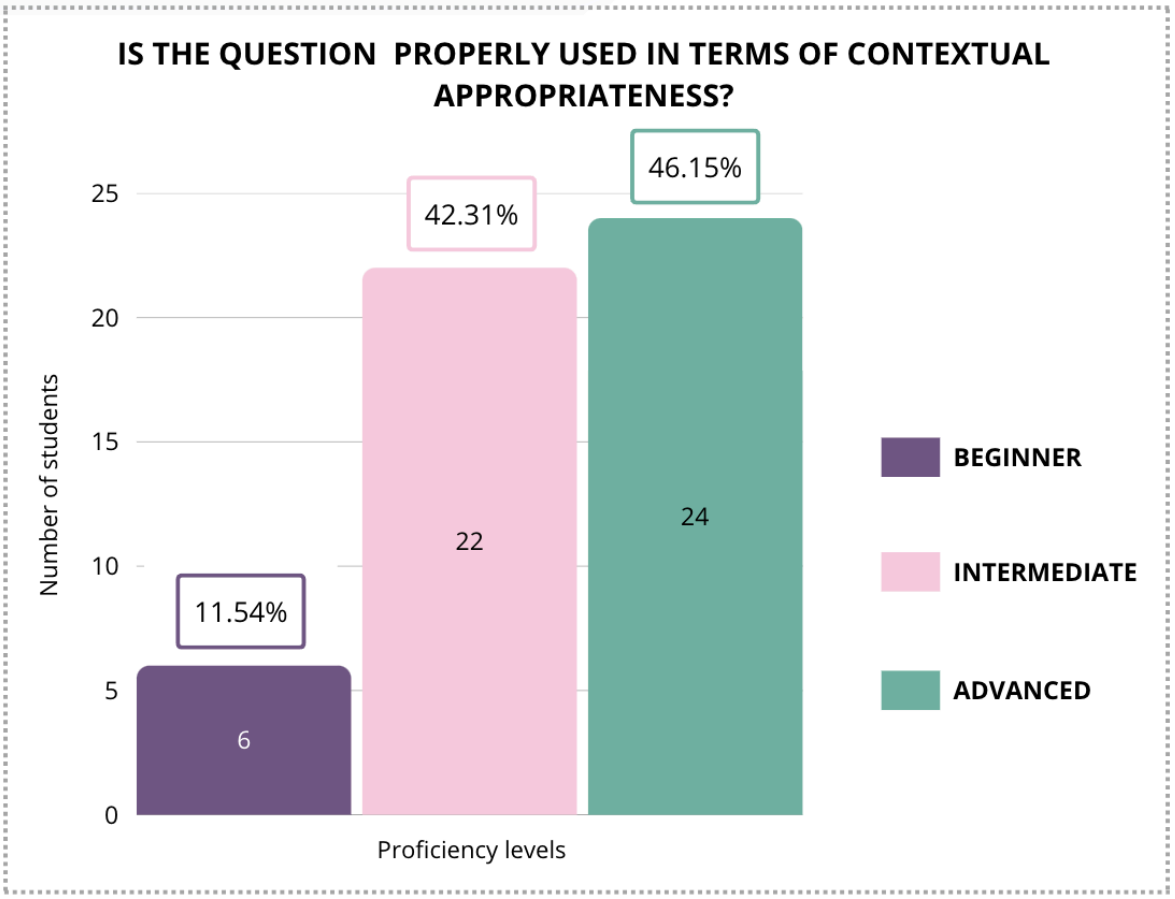

Figure 7. This figure represents the students at each proficiency level in terms of contextual appropriateness.

Considering the grammatical accuracy of the responses, the results indicated that 82,69% of the students (43 out of 52) were classified at the intermediate and advanced proficiency levels. Of these, 42.31% (22 out of 52) were at the advanced level, providing clear, concise, and grammatically accurate answers to all presented questions. The remaining 40.38% (21 out of 52), classified at the intermediate level, generally structured their responses well, even though they made occasional minor errors. Only 17.31% of students (9 out of 52) provided incorrect answers to the questions presented. See Figure 9.

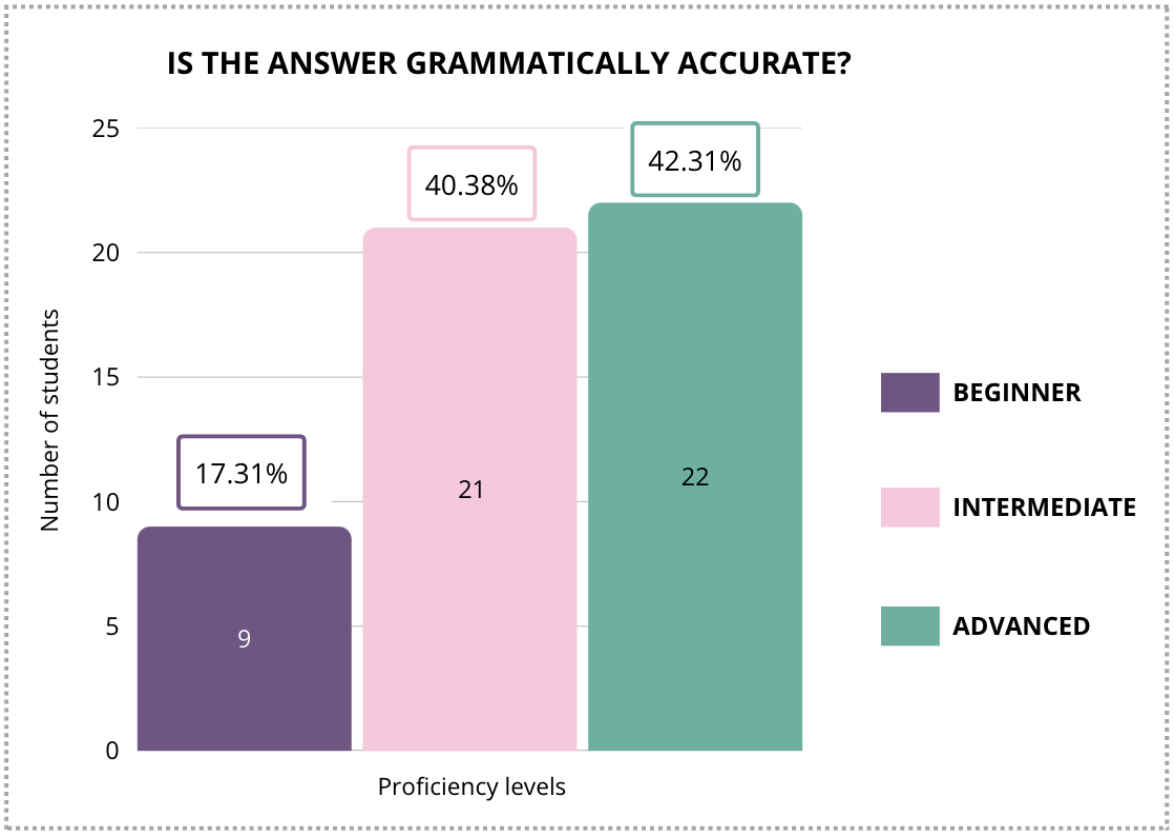

Figure 9. This figure represents the students at each proficiency level in terms of correctly structured answers.

Finally, in terms of contextual appropriateness, the results revealed that 65.38% of students (34 out of 52) provided responses that were clear, concise, and grammatically accurate. Additionally, 19.23% (10 out of 52) of students demonstrated well-structured answers, although with minor mistakes, highlighting areas for potential improvement. 15.38% of the students (8 out of 52) struggled to provide contextually appropriate answers often revealing significant structural errors. See Figure 8.

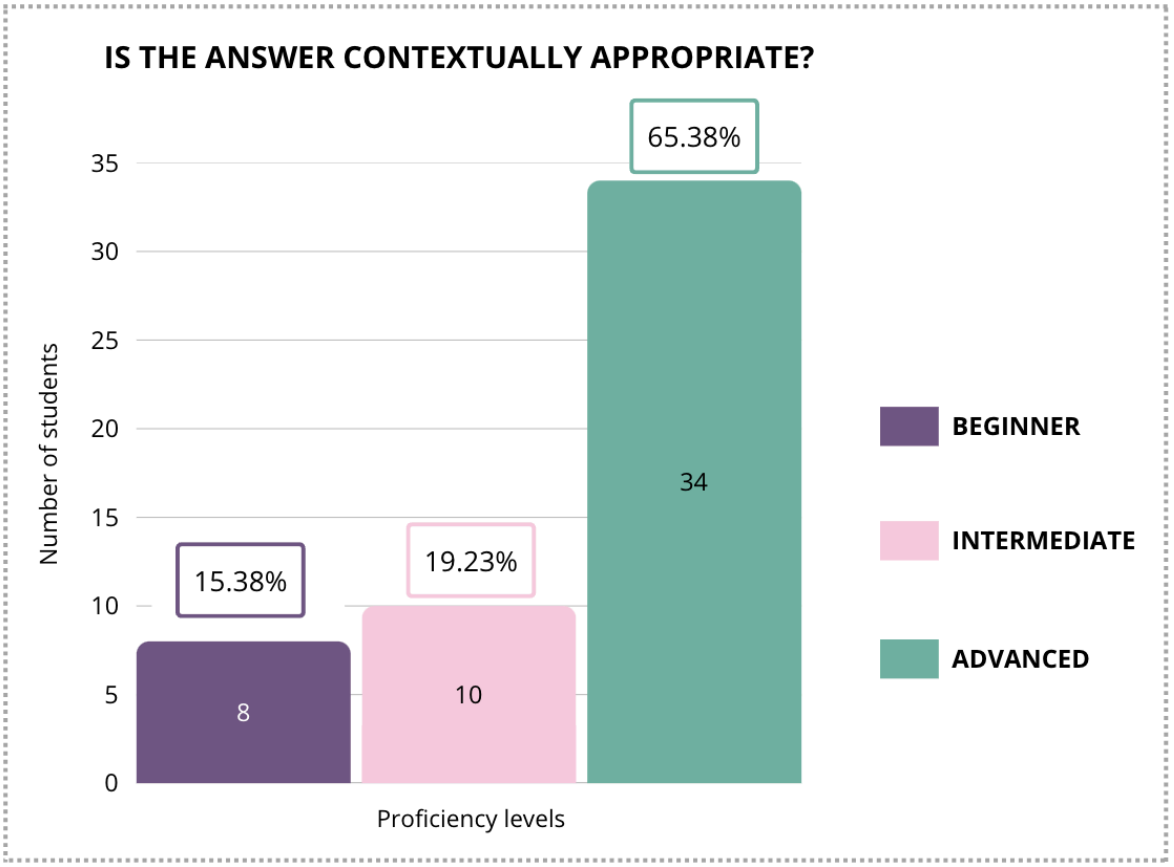

Figure 8. This figure represents the students at each proficiency level in terms of proper usage of answers.

Additionally, complementary analysis revealed that the question most frequently and confidently used by students, especially during the last session (sixth session) was "Have you got a ___?" (See Figure 10). This linguistic structure served as a reliable entry point for engaging in the activities and helped build students' confidence in using the language.

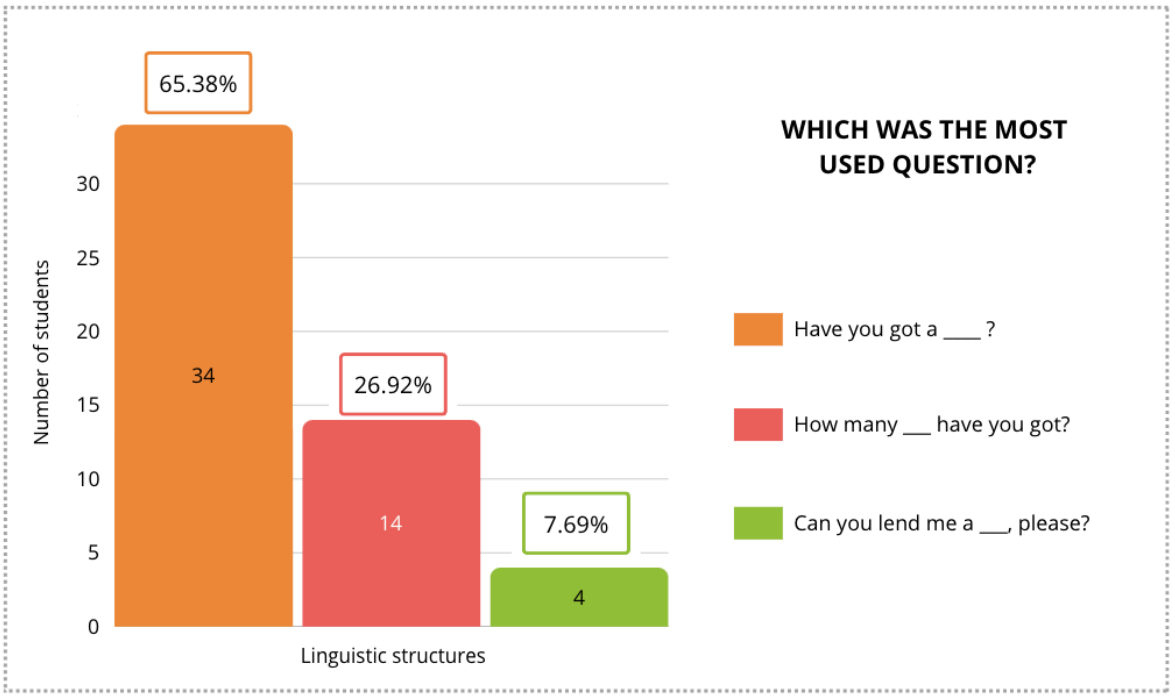

Figure 10. This figure represents the most used questions.

Overall, while there may be minor individual variations, most of the learners showed that they could effectively employ the target linguistic structures in meaningful contexts during the last session of this peer interaction. Other students, the vast minority, did not integrate this knowledge beyond the activities.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The two main goals of this study were to (a) observe how English second language learners interacted during oral peer-to-peer conversations and (b) examine whether oral abilities and target-specific linguistic conversational structures could be improved through these conversations to help students communicate more effectively in their second language. The obtained results corroborated the expected hypotheses. As the sessions progressed, students became more autonomous and fluent in terms of oral abilities (i.e., in using the linguistic structures during peer-interaction oral communicative tasks). They interacted among themselves, and if someone found it more challenging but had a more proficient partner, they would help each other to reach the stated goals. By

the end of the sessions, this collaborative approach further enhanced their language proficiency.

Considering the first research objective, the results indicated that peer interaction dynamics in oral communicative tasks embedded in regular ESL classrooms were generally positive. As the sessions progressed, the students improved their oral abilities in terms of autonomy and fluency when using the target linguistic structures learned throughout the five initial sessions. Although the linguistic structures learned were different but comparable, there was a clear evolution in their use, which was observed in the final session, where all three structures were used. Our results are in line with those by Wu and Dong (2024), who demonstrated that when learners improve in terms of oral abilities such as autonomy and fluency, they feel better about their progress, which motivates them to continue moving forward, and their autonomy increases.

In the first session, 50% of the students were at the beginner level, as it was the first day and they were learning the process. However, as the sessions progressed, the number of beginners gradually decreased, with only 23.08% of the students remaining at the beginner level by the fourth session, and 50% at the advanced level. These results suggest that the gradual reduction in beginner-level participants and the increase in advanced-level students reflect the effectiveness of the intervention in fostering autonomy and intrinsic motivation. This improvement arises from peer interaction activities and a collaborative environment. In the fourth session, it was also observed that, in contrast to the two previous sessions, students demonstrated greater proficiency in using the linguistic structure. This improvement may be attributed to the students' prior familiarity with its application, as well as their increased autonomy and fluency in using the structure effectively. Our findings support previous studies that state that peer interaction helps foster autonomy and intrinsic motivation, as students gain confidence by noticing their progress and helping peers (Wu & Dong, 2024).

The second research aim examined how effectively the learners applied the target linguistic structures, such as questions and answers, learned throughout the five

initial sessions during a final task-based peer interaction. The focus was on communication and applying the language in a practical and contextualised situation. The results showed that students increasingly incorporated the linguistic structures they had learned in their dialogues, demonstrating significant improvement in their oral abilities and use of these structures, particularly in terms of grammatical accuracy and contextual appropriateness. Initially, some students were uncertain about using the new linguistic structures. However, as the final oral activity progressed, their proficiency improved significantly, and by the final peer conversation task, they were able to use the structures more fluently, demonstrating greater grammatical accuracy and contextual appropriateness. Interestingly, these results confirmed that the dynamics of the peer interaction approach can help students internalize the language structures, as peer collaboration creates more authentic and practical usage of the language (Adams & Oliver, 2019). Moreover, this progression in the final session supports the findings obtained by Wang and Castro (2010), who found that small group interactions enable students to notice specific language forms. These interactions create a favorable learning environment through input.

Although this study provided valuable perspectives, several limitations should be tackled. First, the study was conducted with a relatively small sample size of 52 third-grade students, all from a single school in Girona, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The study also focused primarily on the use of target linguistic structures and did not explore other aspects of language, such as vocabulary acquisition or pronunciation in broader conversational contexts. Additionally, while the activities were designed to encourage peer interactions, the varying levels of proficiency among students may have influenced the dynamics, with more proficient students potentially dominating those with lower language abilities. Another aspect to consider is that only one teacher, and occasionally two, were observing the sessions. Having two teachers consistently present might have allowed for more feedback, leading to greater improvements in student performance. Finally, even though the materials were designed considering all the student profiles, using different materials might have benefited more children, as not all children students responded equally well to the same materials such as

students with special educational needs. However, this was not the case for the student with ASD in the group class.

Future studies could expand the sample size and include students from diverse educational contexts and proficiency levels to assess whether the benefits of peer interaction can be broadly generalized. In this sense, it would be interesting to explore the impact of the dynamics of peer interaction in oral communication tasks on children with special educational needs (e.g., ASD), and to assess the effectiveness of alternative supports. Moreover, extending the intervention over a longer period or spacing sessions could also help evaluate retention and application in spontaneous situations. For instance, there was an activity (in the fourth session) where students had to ask, "Can you lend me a ___, please?", and there was a girl who once the activity was over, wanted blu-tack (a material used during the lesson to attach two objects). However, instead of asking for it in the way they had been practicing (with the question mentioned earlier), she asked for it in Catalan. If the sessions had been extended over a longer period, she might have used the question naturally without thinking about it. Another future study could focus on confidence, both in oneself and in others. This could provide a greater understanding of whether this factor affects the retention and learning of linguistic structures or other key concepts.

The findings of this study have practical implications in a primary ESL classroom. Firstly, the materials created in this study can be applied to a wide range of activities, not just those designed for this particular study. These resources are flexible and can be easily adapted to different classroom situations, allowing their use in various educational contexts not only at the third-grade level. The activities can be generalized and modified to suit students of varying ages and proficiency levels, ensuring that the material remains useful and relevant across different stages of language learning.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant role that the peer interaction approach plays in promoting ESL learners' oral abilities and the use of target linguistic structures in terms of fluency and accuracy. The findings underscore the

importance of creating a non-judgmental, collaborative learning environment where students can feel safe to make mistakes and learn from their peers. By fostering such an environment, teachers can encourage students to develop both their oral linguistic and social communication skills, making them more confident and effective communicators in their second language. These results also emphasize the potential benefits of incorporating more peer-based oral communication activities into the ESL curriculum, which could ultimately lead to improved language proficiency and greater student engagement.

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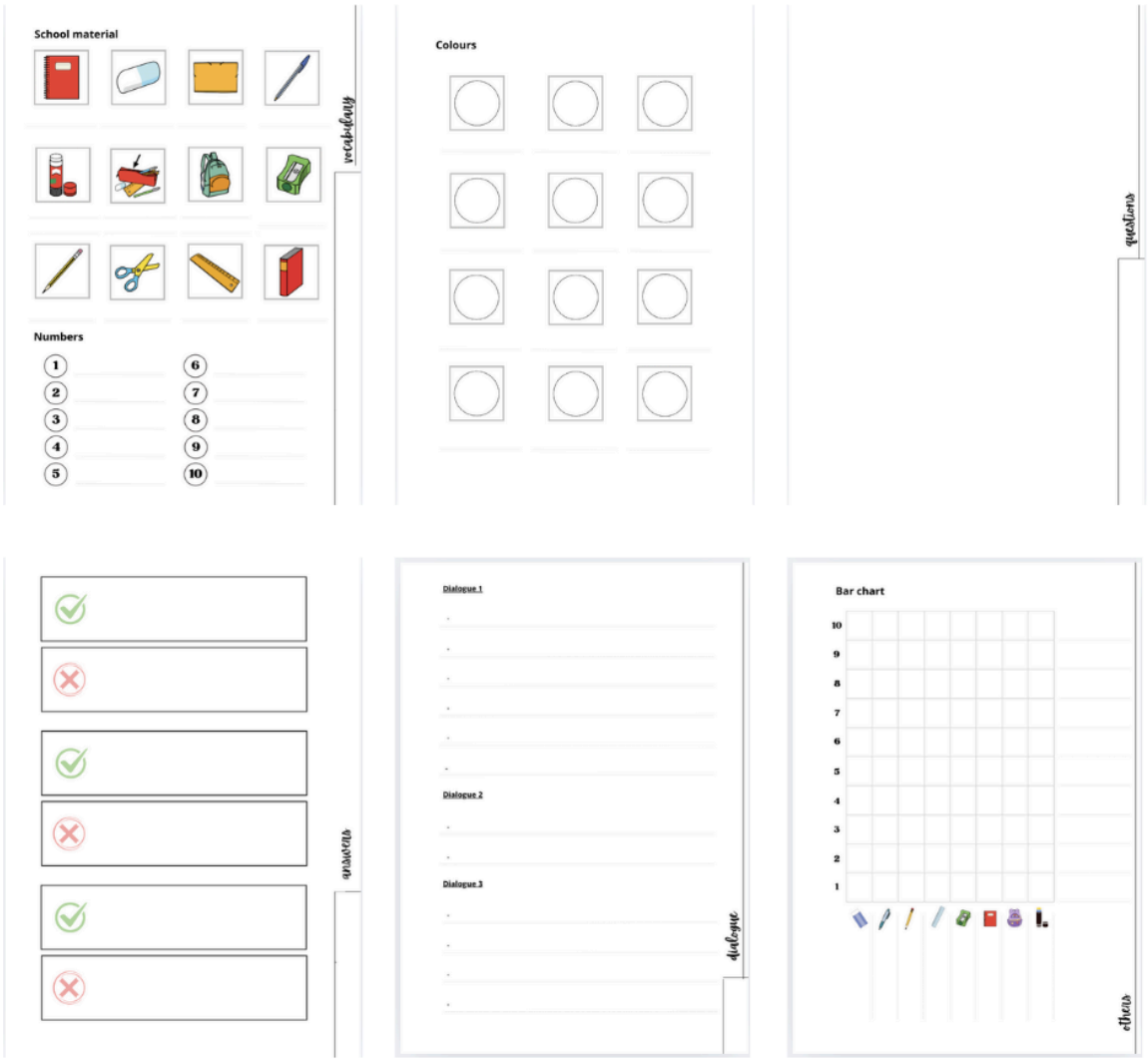
7. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



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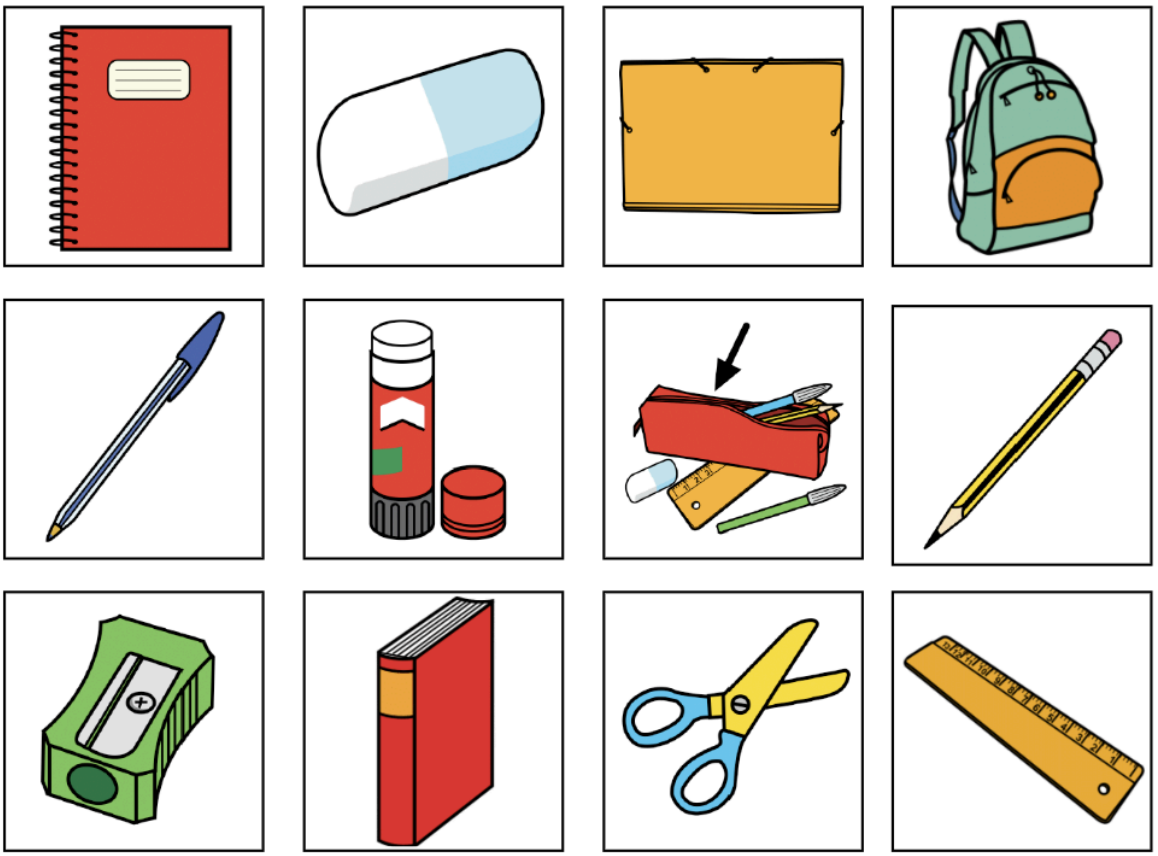
APPENDIX B

Material 1



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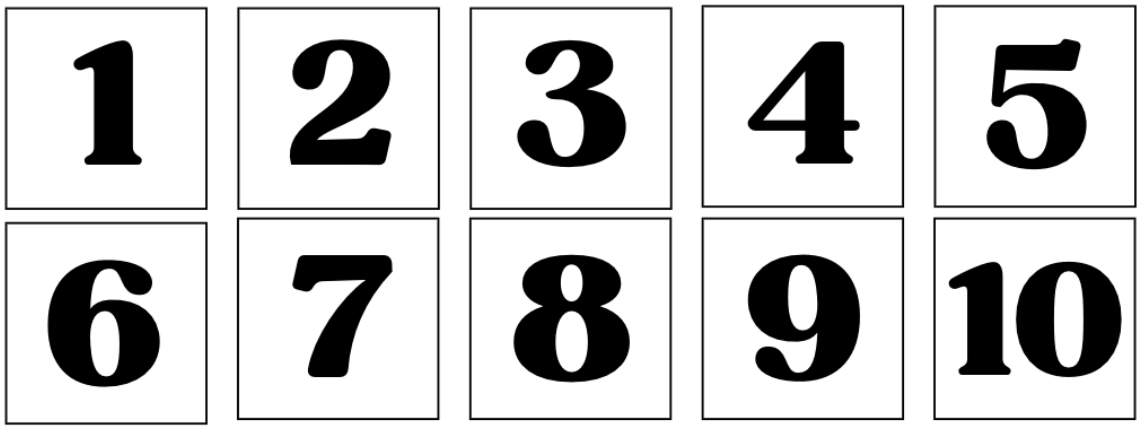
Material 2



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Material 3

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APPENDIX C

Observation grid (initial sessions)

OBSERVING INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES	BEGGINER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
Activity 1. How do they use the linguistic structure worked on? *Have you got a _____?* *Yes, I have // No, I haven't.*	Needs **a lot of help** to be able to ask questions and know how to answer.	Needs **some help** to be able to ask questions and respond.	**Knows** what to ask and how to respond at all times.
Activity 2. How do they use the linguistic structure worked on? *How many ____ have you got?* *I have got __ __ // I have no __.*	Needs **a lot of help** to be able to ask questions and know how to answer.	Needs **some help** to be able to ask questions and respond.	**Knows** what to ask and how to respond at all times.
Activity 4. How do they use the linguistic structure worked on? *Can you lend me a __ __, please?* *Sure, here you have // Sorry, I haven't got.*	Needs **a lot of help** to be able to ask questions and know how to answer.	Needs **some help** to be able to ask questions and respond.	**Knows** what to ask and how to respond at all times.

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Final evaluation grid

FINAL EVALUATION RUBRIC	BEGGINER	INTERMEDIATE	ADVANCED
QUESTION. Is the question correctly structured?	The question contains **multiple structural mistakes**, making it difficult to understand.	The question is **mostly well-structured**, with minor mistakes that do not affect understanding.	The question is accurate, grammatically correct, and clearly structured.
QUESTION. Is the question used properly? Do they understand when to apply it?	**Struggles** to use the question in the correct context and often applies it **inappropriately**.	Demonstrates a **good understanding** of when to use the question but **occasionally** makes contextual errors.	Uses the question appropriately in all contexts, showing a **strong understanding** of its application.
ANSWER. Is the answer correctly structured?	The answer is unclear, and contains **structural errors.**	The answer is **mostly well-structured** with minor mistakes.	The answer is clear, concise, and **grammatically excellent**.
ANSWER. Do they provide the appropriate answer to the question that has been asked?	Frequently gives irrelevant or **incorrect answers** to the question asked.	Usually provides a relevant and accurate answer, with **occasional lapses**.	Consistently provides **precise and appropriate** answers to all questions.

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