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THE IMPACT

OF THEME-BASED INSTRUCTION: TRENDING TOPICS ON SPEAKING SKILLS, IN EFL NINTH-GRADE LEARNERS FROM B.E.S PRESIDENTE VELASCO

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IMPACTO DE LA INSTRUCCIÓN TEMÁTICA: TEMAS ACTUALES EN HABILIDADES ORALES, EN APRENDICES DE INGLÉS DE 9NO GRADO DEL E.E.B PRESIDENTE VELASCO

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ABSTRACT

Recent studies suggest that integrating trending topics into language learning positively influences students' speaking abilities. This approach enables students to engage with language in a relevant and meaningful way, aligning with their evolving interests. This study aims to investigate the impact of incorporating Theme-Based Instruction (TBI)with Trending Topics into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, especially on the speaking skills of ninth-grade learners. The study involves 46 participants from the ninth grade at Presidente Velasco High School in La Troncal. To achieve this, a mixed-methods approach was adopted, including pre-and post-tests, surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings showed significant improvement in the experimental group in vocabulary usage, pronunciation, and interaction skills compared to the control group. These results open the door to the adoption of TBI, with a focus on trending topics like famous individuals, social media, and technology, as a promising and widely applicable method for language learners in the present and future. Therefore, by exploring the effects of TBI on language proficiency, this research contributes to a more effective and enjoyable language learning experience.

Keywords:

Educational innovation, speaking skill, EFL.

RESUMEN

Estudios recientes sugieren que la integración de temas de actualidad en el aprendizaje de idiomas influye positivamente en la capacidad de expresión oral de los alumnos. Este enfoque permite a los estudiantes comprometerse con el lenguaje de una manera relevante y significativa, en consonancia con sus intereses en evolución. El objetivo de este estudio es investigar el impacto de la incorporación de la enseñanza basada en temas (TBI) con Temas de actualidad en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), especialmente en las destrezas orales de los alumnos de noveno curso. El estudio involucra a 46 participantes del noveno grado de la Preparatoria Presidente Velasco de La Troncal. Para lograrlo, se adoptó un enfoque de métodos mixtos, que incluía pruebas previas y posteriores, encuestas, entrevistas y observaciones en el aula. Los resultados mostraron una mejora significativa en el grupo experimental en el uso del vocabulario, la pronunciación y las habilidades de interacción en comparación con el grupo de control. Estos resultados abren la puerta a la adopción de la LCT, centrada en temas de actualidad como las personas famosas, las redes sociales y la tecnología, como método prometedor y ampliamente aplicable para los estudiantes de idiomas en el presente y en el futuro. Por lo tanto, al explorar los efectos de TBI en la competencia lingüística, esta investigación contribuye a una experiencia de aprendizaje de idiomas más eficaz y agradable.

Palabras clave:

Innovación educacional, destreza de hablar, EFL (inglés como lengua extranjera).

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INTRODUCTION

Theme-based instruction (TBI) stands as a popular approach in language teaching that focuses on the integration of language learning with topics of personal relevance to students (Nation, 2009). The incorporation of trending topics within TBI has been shown to enhance learners' speaking skills (Kang & Kim, 2020). However, despite the potential benefits, there is a lack of research on the impact of TBI: Trending Topics on Speaking Skills (Chen, 2018). Therefore, this research endeavors to fill this gap in the existing literature by providing evidence and practical recommendations to educators and learners on how to implement TBI: Trending Topics to improve Speaking Skills.

According to Li & Wang (2019), TBI can significantly enhance learners' language proficiency, particularly their speaking skills. However, there is a lack of research examining the impact of TBI: Trending Topics on Speaking Skills specifically. Therefore, this research seeks to bridge this gap in the literature by providing evidence and practical recommendations for educators and learners on how to implement TBI: Trending Topics to improve Speaking Skills.

Theme-based instruction (TBI) is highly effective in the context of English as a foreign language class (Said et al., 2018). TBI involves the integration of language instruction with thematic content that is relevant and meaningful for learners (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). One specific type of TBI that has gained attention in recent years is the use of trending topics to amplify learners' speaking skills.

Studies have shown that incorporating trending topics into language instruction can facilitate experiential learning and heighten learners' speaking skills. For example, a study conducted by Yen & Wu (2017), found that learners who participated in TBI: Trending Topics reported significant improvements in their speaking skills, fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. Similarly, Chen & Cheng (2019), found that using current events as the basis for TBI led to greater learner engagement and motivation, as well as improved speaking skills. Furthermore, TBI: Trending Topics has been shown to increase learners' cognitive load, a key factor in promoting effective language acquisition (Villada, 2022). By using TBI: trending topics, learners can engage with the language in a relevant and meaningful way, which can improve their motivation for learning and language proficiency.

Overall, the literature suggests that TBI: Trending Topics can be an effective approach to improving learners' speaking skills in authentic and meaningful contexts. Both language educators and learners can benefit from incorporating current events and trending topics into their language instruction to enhance speaking proficiency and cognitive load. Besides, Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) is a popular teaching method that focuses on content-based instruction and provides learners with the opportunity to learn language through topics of interest. This has been shown to improve language proficiency and speaking skills by engaging learners in authentic and meaningful communication (Nation, 2009).

Using trending topics as a theme for TBI has become increasingly popular due to the prevalence of social media and the internet. Trending topics are highly relevant and engaging, and they empower learners to connect with real-world issues and events. This approach can enhance learners' motivation and interest in the learning process, leading to superior outcomes (Li & Wang, 2018). The impact of TBI on speaking skills has been extensively studied. Researchers have found that TBI can improve learners' speaking abilities by providing them with opportunities to practice and develop their language skills in authentic contexts (Yeh, 2017). Additionally, TBI can improve learners' confidence and reduce anxiety when speaking in a second language (Nation, 2009).

Furthermore, using trending topics can enhance learners' cognitive load by providing them with relevant and useful information. According to Houichi & Sarnou (2019), Cognitive Load Theory emphasizes that the working memory capacity has limitations when dealing with novel information. This means that the learners' working memory can only process a limited amount of information simultaneously. Therefore, providing learners with relevant and concise information can reduce cognitive load and optimize their learning experience. Finally, the application of trending topics can facilitate experiential learning, which is a process of learning through reflection on experience (Kolb, 1984). By reflecting on their experiences with trending topics, learners can develop critical thinking skills and become more effective communicators.

In conclusion, using trending topics as a TBI theme can be an effective approach to enhancing speaking abilities and becoming more confident and effective communicators. By engaging learners in authentic and meaningful communication, providing relevant and concise information, and facilitating experiential learning through reflection, this approach can lead to better outcomes and improve language proficiency.

Theme-Based Instruction (TBI) serves as the foundational theory for this study. TBI emphasizes the organization of language instruction around central themes or topics, fostering a cohesive and meaningful learning experience (Nunan, 2004). By connecting language learning to relevant real-world contexts, TBI aims to enhance learner engagement and facilitate the development of communication skills (Richards, 2006).

Engagement Theory supports the importance of engaging learners through relevant content. According to Astin's (1984), engagement theory, students are more likely to be motivated and invested in their learning when the subject

matter is personally meaningful and aligned with their interests. In the context of language instruction, incorporating trending topics within TBI can increase learners' interest and active participation, potentially leading to improved speaking skills (Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) provides insights into the cognitive processes involved in learning. Cognitive load theory posits that learners have limited working memory capacity, and effective learning occurs when cognitive load is managed appropriately (Houichi & Sarnou, 2020). By aligning TBI with familiar and relevant trending topics, instructors can reduce extraneous cognitive load, enabling learners to focus more on language acquisition and speaking practice (Paas et al., 2003).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) contributes to understanding learners' motivation in language learning. SDT posits that individuals are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and engaged when they feel a sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in their learning experiences (Deci & Ryan, 1985). TBI with trending topics can enhance learners' autonomy by allowing them to choose topics of interest and relevance, which in turn may positively impact their speaking skills as they become more engaged and motivated to participate actively in language activitie (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2006).

Social Learning Theory (SLT) emphasizes the role of social interactions in the learning process (Bandura, 1977). According to SLT, learners acquire new knowledge and behaviors through observation, imitation, and modeling of others. In the context of TBI with trending topics, learners can benefit from observing and interacting with peers during discussions and presentations, leading to the development of speaking skills through social learning experiences (Bandura, 1977; Nunan, 2004; Richards, 2006).

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is an essential theory that underpins language instruction, emphasizing the use of communication as the primary goal of language learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). CLT encourages learners to actively engage in meaningful interactions, such as discussions and presentations, to refine their speaking skills in authentic contexts.

By integrating these theories into the research framework, this study aims to explore the potential impact of Theme-Based Instruction with Trending Topics on learners' speaking skills, considering the role of motivation, engagement, cognitive processes, and communicative language teaching. Through this comprehensive approach, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how instructional practices, combined with communicative language use, can enhance language acquisition and communication abilities.

The investigation aimed to analyze the impact of Task-Based Instruction (TBI), specifically focusing on trending topics, on the speaking skills of ninth-grade EFL learners.

The study had two specific objectives: first, to examine how the use of trending topics influenced speaking performance, and second, to identify the preferred topics chosen by students for their speaking tasks. Through these objectives, the study provided insights into the past interaction between TBI, trending topics, and the development of speaking proficiency among ninth-grade EFL learners.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method approach to investigate the impact of integrating popular subjects into the classroom on the development of students' speaking abilities. The quantitative stage involved administering a pre-test assessment before the intervention and a post-test to gauge the progress made after the intervention. Additionally, qualitative data was gathered through interviews conducted both before and after the administration of the surveys. These interviews aimed to ascertain the students' perceptions, confidence levels, and motivation when engaging with trending topics during class.

This study involved forty-nine ninth-grade students enrolled at BES Presidente Velasco, a public school in La Troncal, Cañar, Ecuador. The ages of the participants ranged from 12 to 15 years old. To ensure consistency, the exclusion criteria for this research accounted for students who might have joined or left the courses after the study commenced. This criterion was necessary because the Education Ministry platform allowed students to switch between institutions and school days. The participants' selection was through convenience sampling (Mackey & Gass, 2005), as the institution made the course assignments at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. This study is aimed at ninth-grade students in the morning session, as it is a class with which I have previously worked and is not as numerous compared to other classes. Additionally, one of the parallel classes is under my guidance, which is why it was considered the control group. Due to this, more extracurricular activities such as talks, organizing presentations, etc., were carried out in this group. Meanwhile, the other parallel class, which I can consistently teach, was selected as the experimental group.

Data collection during the quantitative phase involved the utilization of an A1 Movers (YLE Movers) mock test to gauge the students' language proficiency at the commencement of the intervention. This test emulated the format and duration of the official YLE test, focusing exclusively on assessing speaking skills and serving as the pre-test. After this, the post-test maintained the structure of the A1 Movers exam but incorporated trending topics in place of the customary images and themes found in the standard assessment. The assessment of the test employed the prescribed rubric outlined in the Cambridge Handbook for teachers.

In the qualitative phase, data were collected through two strategically designed questionnaires—one administered at the project's commencement to gauge baseline perceptions and expectations, and the other post-intervention to capture nuanced reflections on students' actual experiences with trending topics. Additionally, a supplementary survey was implemented to discern specific topics of interest when discussing trending subjects. The pilot testing of one questionnaire involved advanced proficiency students and feedback from colleagues, leading to modifications for improved appropriateness and efficacy in data collection.

In tandem with the quantitative and qualitative methodologies, the study employed an observational approach during every class. This unobtrusive data collection method aimed to capture spontaneous student reactions and interactions with the trending topics in a natural setting. Detailed notes were surreptitiously taken when students were unaware, ensuring an authentic representation of their engagement with the subject matter. This triangulation of methods sought to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of trending topics on language learning within the context of the English language classroom.

Before embarking on data collection, explicit consent was diligently sought from both the high school director and parents to access student data. The study's objectives were transparently communicated to parents and students, with a steadfast assurance of maintaining strict confidentiality. Quantitative data, inclusive of pre-and post-test outcomes, were drawn from Cambridge A1 Movers test samples, while qualitative data were procured through surveys and additional components.

Task-Based Instruction (TBI) was implemented, with the classroom structure tailored to align with students' learning interests (Skehan, 2003). The primary approach utilized was the Presentation, Practice, and Production (PPP) speaking model, wherein the teacher conscientiously considered individual student needs, encouraging the practical application of learned content within and outside the classroom.

The initial objective was to scrutinize the impact of integrating trending topics on speaking performance, assessed through pre- and post-tests administered by the researcher following standard YLE procedures. Criteria for evaluation encompassed interaction, pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. The speaking assessment, aligned with A1 Movers guidelines, involved four sections: describing distinctions between pictures, continuing a story based on images, identifying unique pictures, and responding to personal inquiries about school, weekends, friends, and hobbies. Rigorous analysis and comparison of pre-test and post-test results ensued.

Simultaneously, the study sought to explore students' perspectives on leveraging trending topics to enhance speaking skills. To achieve this, two questionnaires with semi-structured questions were devised. The first, having undergone a pilot test, explored course methodology, students' comfort levels when speaking in class, and their preferred discussion topics. The second questionnaire delved into class dynamics, peer interaction, and the teacher's teaching methods. Furthermore, a supplementary survey was conducted to discern specific trending topics of preference among students.

Observations were systematically incorporated into the procedure during every class, adopting an unobtrusive data collection method. This approach aimed to capture spontaneous student reactions and interactions with trending topics in a natural setting. Detailed notes were surreptitiously taken when students were unaware, ensuring an authentic representation of their engagement with the subject matter. This comprehensive triangulation of methods sought to provide a thorough understanding of the impact of trending topics on language learning within the English language classroom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twenty-three students were assigned to the experimental group, with an additional twenty-six designated to the control group, the latter receiving traditional ESL desk-based instruction. However, three students from the control group were excluded from the study: one presented a second-level learning disability, one student joined in the middle of the term, and another did not attend classes regularly. The students in the experimental group participated in an active methodology, focusing on A1 speaking content with trending topics as the primary subject matter. Proficiency in speaking for all participants in both the experimental and control groups was evaluated through a pre-test administered at the beginning of the term. The pretesting aimed to establish equivalence in speaking proficiency between the two groups before the initiation of the experiment. Subsequently, the pretesting information was utilized for later comparisons with the post-test results.

Vocabulary

Regarding vocabulary, it considered the following criteria: the use of the required vocabulary, utterance production, and level of responsiveness of the student words as the base. In Table 1, the pre-test results were analyzed according to that criterion where, out of the 46 students considered in the study, 19,5% exhibited a poor performance by responding only with isolated words or not responding at all. Meanwhile, 74% demonstrated proficiency by employing appropriate vocabulary, utilizing more complex sentences, or attempting to respond beyond mere

isolated words. Notably, a mere 6,5% effectively used vocabulary and constructed sentences with a greater degree of naturalness.

However, this would change in the application of the post-test, as a significant improvement was evident in the experimental group, with no students of the 23 displaying poor results. In contrast, the control group still showed 13% with this issue. Similarly, in the experimental group, 39% demonstrated proficiency by using appropriate vocabulary, employing more complex sentences, or attempting to respond beyond mere isolated words, whereas in the control group, 69% could still be observed. Finally, in the experimental group, 61% exhibited the use of vocabulary and the production of sentences with greater naturalness, while in the control group, only 17% achieved this goal.

Table 1. Pre and post-test vocabulary and grammar results.

Criteria	Pre-test	Post-test	
		Control Group	Experimental Group
Uses the vocabulary required to attempt some test tasks, and attempts a few simple utterances, but makes some basic mistakes that may obscure meaning.	19.5%	13%	0%
Uses the vocabulary required to deal with most test tasks, produces some simple structures but makes some basic mistakes which may obscure meaning.	74%	69%	39%
Uses the vocabulary required to deal with all test tasks, and uses some simple structures correctly but makes some mistakes, although the meaning is generally clear.	6.5%	17%	61%

Pronunciation

Speaking of pronunciation, it consisted of individual sound production and word stress (Cole et al., 2019). In Table 2, in the pre-test, 19,5% of both groups attempted to produce language sounds, but these were often difficult to understand. Meanwhile, 78,3% were occasionally unintelligible, and only 2,2% were generally intelligible, though some sounds were not very clear, with limited stress control in words.

However, in the post-test, 4,4% of the experimental group faced difficulty producing language sounds, often being challenging to understand, whereas in the control group, 13% still had this issue. Additionally, 56,5% of the experimental group exhibited limited intelligibility in pronunciation, while in the control group, it remained at 78,3%. Finally, in the experimental group, 39.1% of the students were generally intelligible, although some sounds were not very clear, with limited stress control in words, whereas in the control group, only 8,7% reached this level.

Table 2. Pre and post-test pronunciation results.

Criteria	Pre-test	Post-test	
		Control Group	Experimental Group
Sometimes may be difficult to understand.	19.5%	13%	4.4%
Is mostly intelligible, although some sounds may be unclear, and has limited control of word stress.	78.3%	78.3%	56.5%
Is mostly intelligible, and has limited control of word stress and intonation.	2.2%	8.7%	39.1%

Interaction

In the case of interaction Table 3, which includes reception/responding, support required, and fluency/promptness, in the pre-test, 10,9% of both groups required support throughout and often did not respond to instructions, questions, and visual prompts. Their hesitation demanded a considerable amount of patience from a listener. Meanwhile, 87% responded to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although frequent support was necessary. They might attempt to seek support if needed, and there was hesitation with responses that could be delayed or halting. Only 2.1% generally responded appropriately to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although some support may have been required. They could ask for support if needed and often responded promptly, although there might be some hesitation.

However, in the post-test, 4.3% of the experimental group consistently required support and often failed to respond to instructions, questions, and visual prompts. Their hesitation demanded considerable patience from a listener. In contrast, in the control group, 17.4% still experienced this issue. Moreover, 60.9% of the experimental group responded to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although frequent support was necessary. In the control group, this percentage remained higher at 78.3%. Finally, in the experimental group, 34.8% of the students responded appropriately to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although some support may have been needed. They could seek assistance when required and often responded promptly, with occasional hesitation. On the other hand, in the control group, only 4.3% reached this level.

Table 3. Pre and post-test interaction results.

Criteria	Pre-test	Post-test	
		Control Group	Experimental Group
Responds appropriately to some instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although frequent support may be required.	10.9%	17.4%	4.3%
Responds appropriately to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, although some support is required.	87%	78.3%	60.9%
Responds appropriately to instructions, questions, and visual prompts, and very little support is required.	2.1%	4.3%	34.8%

Topics of Interest

When discussing current topics of interest in classes, there is a wide range, with the majority being related to social media and individuals immersed in that environment (Evans & Robertson, 2020). To identify the topics covered in class, a survey was conducted, ranking the preferred subjects as shown in Table 4. Various activities were employed in addressing these topics, including roundtable discussions, guessing games, character descriptions, in-class presentations, and group challenges.

According to current students, various topics have been proposed for discussion in class, considering the individual preferences of each student. The data obtained reveals that 46% of them showed a preference for topics related to famous individuals such as singers, YouTubers, and streamers. 28% leaned towards subjects associated with social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, while 13% expressed interest in topics related to technology. Nine percent indicated an affinity for themes related to travel, and only 4% preferred topics that revolve around family and friends.

Table 4. Trending topics' survey results.

Topics	N=46	%
Famous People (Singers, streamers, YouTubers)	21	46%
Social Networks (Facebook, Instagram, Tik-tok)	13	28%
Technology	6	13%
Traveling	4	9%
Family and Friends	2	4%

Perceptions of students about speaking in English in classTop of Form

Student perceptions of oral communication in an English classroom encompass a complex interplay of attitudes, motivations, and anxieties that significantly impact language learning experiences (Abad, et al., 2021). This preliminary investigation utilized a pre-test and a post-test to explore students' initial perceptions of oral communication in an English classroom setting, employing a spectrum from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." It is essential to remark that only the result from the experimental group was considered for this analysis.

Examining Table 5, the pre-test data, no participants strongly agreed that they could express messages orally, with only 4% partially agreeing, and a significant 52% strongly disagreeing, indicating a prevalent sense of reservation. Motivationally, a substantial 61% partially disagreed about feeling motivated to speak in class, while 22% strongly disagreed, revealing an initial inclination towards a less positive stance. Conversely, regarding anxiety levels, a noteworthy 70% strongly agreed about feeling anxious when speaking in class, indicating a significant initial challenge. In terms of communication preferences, 26% strongly agreed about preferring written communication, while 43% strongly

disagreed about enjoying expressing themselves orally. These initial perceptions highlight the nuanced attitudes of students, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to address challenges and cultivate positive language learning experiences in the English classroom.

Table 5. Pre-test results on Students' perceptions about Speaking in English in class.

Criteria	SA	PA	N	PD	SD
I can express messages orally.	0%	4%	13%	30%	52%
I feel motivated to speak in class.	0%	13%	4%	61%	22%
I feel anxious speaking in class.	70%	30%	0%	4%	0%
I like to communicate in written form.	26%	30%	4%	26%	13%
I like to express myself orally.	4%	9%	13%	30%	43%

In Table 6, the post-test results reveal a notable shift in students' perceptions of oral communication in the English classroom. A significant increase is observed in the percentage of students who strongly agree (26%) and partially agree (52%) that they can express messages orally, indicating improved confidence levels. Motivationally, a positive shift is evident, with 35% strongly agreeing and 43% partially agreeing that they feel motivated speaking in class. While 35% still strongly agree about feeling anxious, this marks a reduction from the pre-test. Changes in communication preferences include an increased percentage (30%) strongly agreeing that they like to communicate in written form. In expressing themselves orally, 39% now strongly agree, representing positive progress, with a decrease in those partially disagreeing. These post-test findings underscore a dynamic evolution in student attitudes, reflecting advancements in confidence, motivation, and communication preferences in the English language learning setting.

Table 6. Post-test results on Students' perceptions about Speaking in English in class.

Criteria	SA	PA	N	PD	SD
I can express messages orally.	26%	52%	4%	9%	9%
I feel motivated to speak in class.	35%	43%	4%	17%	0%
I feel anxious speaking in class.	35%	30%	13%	22%	4%
I like to communicate in written form.	30%	39%	0%	22%	9%
I like to express myself orally.	39%	26%	9%	17%	9%

This investigation aligns with recent studies advocating for the integration of trending topics in language learning, emphasizing its positive impact on speaking abilities (Kang & Kim, 2020). The notable improvement observed in the experimental group post-test, where no students displayed poor results, supports findings suggesting enhanced proficiency through Trending Topic-Based Instruction (TBI). In contrast, the control group exhibited persistent challenges, reinforcing the need for innovative instructional approaches.

Recognizing the limitations of our study is essential. The sample size, though representative, may limit generalizability, and individual differences among students could influence results (Kang & Kim, 2020). Excluding three control group students introduces potential bias. Acknowledging these limitations demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of our research.

The results hold implications for language researchers, educators, and the public. Researchers can leverage the findings to emphasize the efficacy of TBI, focusing on trending topics, in enhancing language skills (Johnson, 2022). Educators can benefit by refining language instruction and targeting specific areas identified in the study – vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction skills (Smith, 2023). The public gains insights into the impact of innovative language teaching methods on proficiency and communication skills (Brown, 2021).

Practically, language educators can adopt our instructional approach, integrating trending topics for enhanced language learning outcomes (Chen & Cheng, 2019). Tailoring language instruction to individual preferences, as evidenced in the study, fosters engagement and proficiency (Lee & Taylor, 2023). The research supports the practical application of TBI: Trending Topics in diverse educational settings, emphasizing its potential for language enhancement.

The study extends previous research by demonstrating the effectiveness of TBI, specifically focusing on trending topics (Villada, 2022). While TBI benefits have been explored, the investigation delves deeper into its impact on vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction skills. The tailored nature of the intervention contributes nuanced insights, advancing knowledge in language education (Brown & Chen, 2023). Abad et al. (2021), utilized a pre-test and post-test methodology, with a specific focus on the experimental group; the analysis uncovered initial reservations among participants. Prior to the intervention, a notable proportion expressed hesitancy in oral expression, lacked motivation, and reported elevated anxiety levels. Moreover, a significant percentage exhibited a preference for written communication over oral expression. However, the post-test results revealed a transformative shift, indicating heightened confidence levels, increased motivation, and reduced anxiety. These findings underscore the nuanced trajectory of student attitudes, emphasizing the imperative need for tailored strategies to address challenges and cultivate positive language learning experiences within the English classroom.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable contributions to language education, emphasizing the efficacy of TBI: Trending Topics in enhancing speaking skills. Despite limitations, the findings support the adoption of innovative instructional methods to optimize language learning outcomes. Furthermore, considering student perceptions, the analysis reveals a transformative shift in attitudes, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to cultivate positive language learning experiences in the English classroom. The integration of theory and practical application enriches the understanding of how tailored approaches can positively influence language acquisition and communication abilities.

CONCLUSIONS

The investigation unequivocally demonstrates that the incorporation of Trending Topic-Based Instruction (TBI) has a substantial and positive impact on the speaking skills of ninth-grade English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Kang & Kim, 2020). The experimental group, exposed to TBI with trending topics, exhibited significant improvement in vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction skills compared to the control group, reinforcing the potential of this approach in enhancing language proficiency.

Besides, the findings underscore the importance of incorporating topics of personal relevance, such as trending topics, into language instruction (Chen & Cheng, 2019). The students' preference for discussing famous individuals, social media, technology, travel, and family and friends highlights the significance of aligning language learning with students' interests. This not only enhances

engagement but also contributes to more effective language acquisition.

The study provides nuanced insights into the impact of TBI on specific language skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and interaction (Villada, 2022). The experimental group demonstrated notable advancements in vocabulary usage, pronunciation clarity, and interaction fluency. This suggests that TBI, especially when centered around trending topics, can effectively address multiple dimensions of speaking proficiency.

Language educators can leverage the study's results to refine their instructional methods, emphasizing the integration of trending topics to enhance language learning outcomes (Lee & Taylor, 2023). The tailored and experiential nature of TBI provides a practical and engaging framework for educators to optimize language instruction and foster a more enjoyable learning experience.

Despite the significant contributions, the study has its limitations. The sample size, while representative, may limit the generalizability of the findings (Kang & Kim, 2020). Individual differences among students and potential biases introduced by excluding three control group students should be acknowledged. Future research could address these limitations by conducting larger-scale studies with diverse participant profiles.

Moreover, the study focused on ninth-grade EFL learners in a specific educational setting. Future research endeavors could explore the applicability and effectiveness of TBI with trending topics across different grade levels, language proficiency levels, and cultural contexts. Comparative studies in varied educational environments would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the broader impact of TBI.

Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the sustained effectiveness of TBI over an extended period (Brown & Chen, 2023). Investigating the long-term retention of language skills and the continued engagement of students in TBI with trending topics would offer valuable information for educators and curriculum designers.

In conclusion, while the study affirms the positive impact of TBI with trending topics on ninth-grade EFL learners' speaking skills, recognizing its limitations opens avenues for further exploration. The dynamic nature of language education calls for ongoing research to refine instructional practices and contribute to the continuous improvement of language learning methodologies. The discussion also integrates insights from a study by Abad et al. (2021), revealing a transformative shift in student attitudes toward oral communication, emphasizing the imperative need for tailored strategies to address challenges and cultivate positive language learning experiences within the English classroom.

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