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The Effect of Realia on Improving Speaking Skills in EFL Basic Education Students

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of realia, real and tangible objects used as instructional resources, on the development of speaking skills among young learners of English as a Foreign Language in basic education. Speaking remains one of the most challenging skills to develop in this population, particularly in public schools where access to technological and didactic resources is limited. Using a quantitative quasi-experimental design, the oral performance of 32 third-grade students of a public Ecuadorian school was assessed before and after participating in instructional activities based on real objects, with a focus on fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation The findings revealed a substantial and statistically significant improvement in students' overall speaking performance after the intervention, with consistent gains across all three subskills examined. These results suggest that realia can serve as an effective, low-cost pedagogical resource capable of supporting meaningful oral language development among young learners with minimal prior exposure to the language. The study contributes subskill-specific evidence that addresses a gap in previous research on realia, which has traditionally focused on older or more experienced populations. Overall, these findings support integrating tangible, real-world materials into foreign language instruction as a practical strategy for enhancing communicative competence in under-resourced educational contexts.

Keywords: realia, speaking skills, Basic education, young learners

Los autores declaran no tener conflicto de intereses.
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El efecto de los materiales reales en la mejora de las habilidades orales de los alumnos de educación básica de inglés como lengua extranjera

RESUMEN

Este estudio examinó el efecto de la realia, objetos reales y tangibles usados como recursos didácticos, en el desarrollo de las habilidades de expresión oral en jóvenes estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera en educación básica. La expresión oral sigue siendo una de las habilidades más difíciles de desarrollar en esta población, especialmente en escuelas públicas donde el acceso a recursos tecnológicos y didácticos es limitado. Mediante un diseño cuantitativo cuasiexperimental, se evaluó el desempeño oral de 32 estudiantes de tercer grado de una escuela pública ecuatoriana antes y después de participar en actividades basadas en objetos reales, enfocadas en fluidez, precisión y pronunciación. Los resultados mostraron una mejora sustancial y estadísticamente significativa en el desempeño oral general, con avances consistentes en las tres subhabilidades evaluadas. Esto sugiere que la realia puede funcionar como un recurso pedagógico eficaz y de bajo costo, capaz de impulsar el desarrollo del lenguaje oral incluso en estudiantes muy jóvenes con poca exposición previa al idioma. El estudio aporta evidencia específica por subhabilidad que atiende un vacío en investigaciones anteriores, centradas tradicionalmente en poblaciones de mayor edad o experiencia. En conjunto, estos hallazgos respaldan integrar materiales reales y tangibles en la enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras como estrategia práctica para fortalecer la competencia comunicativa en contextos con recursos limitados.

***Palabras clave*:** objetos reales, habilidades orales, educación básica, jóvenes estudiantes

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate orally in English has become one of the fundamental skills expected of students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), since oral expression is often the clearest indicators of whether classroom instructions translates into functional use of the language in real life, rather than the isolated practice of linguistic forms (Ellis, 2009). Despite its importance, oral expression remains one of the most difficult skills to develop in many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms, especially in Basic education. Traditional teaching approaches, which emphasize repetition, memorization, and textbook-based exercises, offer limited opportunities for authentic oral interaction, in contrast to approaches that engage students in much more meaning centered communication that encourages them to negotiate meaning in a more natural way (Ellis, 2009; Willis & Willis, 2007). This is particularly evident among Basic schools students , who are still developing their vocabulary, confident, and, above all, the communicative strategies necessary to engage in spontaneous conversation, and who often experience anxiety and low motivation during oral expression tasks, difficulties that are reflected, for example, in students' pronunciation skills and their willingness to communicate in English as a foreign language in Basic education schools (Hsieh et al., 2023).One pedagogical strategy proposed to address these difficulties is the use of Realia , real and tangible objects from the students' everyday environment that are incorporated into language instruction based on the premise that linking classrooms activities to real-life contexts promotes a more contextualized and natural use of language (Sitepu & Kurniawati, 2021).

A body of research has examined the pedagogical value of realia in EFL instruction, generally reporting positive effects on learner engagement, vocabulary acquisition, and oral performance (Ahmadova, 2025; Hsieh et al., 2023; Manangkari et al., 2022; Riaz et al., 2024; Sitepu & Kurniawati, 2021).This literature, however, presents two important limitations. First, most existing evidence on realia's effect on speaking comes from secondary or higher education settings, leaving its impact on basic education learners largely unexamined. Second, few studies disaggregate speaking into its component subskills fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation treating oral performance instead as a single, undifferentiated outcome. These limitations are particularly relevant in local EFL contexts, such as basic education classrooms in Ecuador, where currículum reforms calling for communicative, learner-centered

metodologías have not always translated into the materials and practices available to teachers (Alvarez et al, 2025), and where empirical evidence on realia's effect on speaking remains limited. This study is intended to address that gap.

By examining realia's effect on speaking performance within a basic education sample, this study contributes evidence that is currently scarce in the literature: subskill-specific data on fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation, drawn from a population basic education that has received comparatively little attention in realia research. This contribution can help inform more effective, communicatively oriented EFL teaching practices in basic education contexts. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of realia on the development of speaking skills among EFL basic education students. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research questions:

- Does the use of realia affect the improvement of speaking skills in EFL basic education students?
- Does realia influence students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation?

Literature Review

Realia as a Pedagogical Tool

Realia, understood as real, tangible objects brought into the classroom, has long been considered a valuable resource for contextualizing language learning.Its use aligns with communicative and experiential learning approaches: authentic objects bridge abstract linguistic forms and real-world communication, enhancing task authenticity and deepening semantic processing(Ahmadova, 2026). Several studies support this claim from different perspectives. Manangkari, Ningsih, and Hente (2022) emphasize its motivational value, noting that realia helps students become more active participants in class. On the other hand, Sitepu and Kurniawati (2021) argue that realia maximizes learners' multisensory learning experiences, enabling them to connect language with concrete situations and facilitating meaningful communication. These findings are consistent with Ahmadova (2025), who reported that realia increases student engagement and promotes spontaneous language use and peer interaction during classroom communication. Similarly, Riaz et al. (2024) demonstrated that realia significantly enhances vocabulary acquisition by strengthening the relationship between lexical items and their real-world referents, which ultimately contributes to communicative competence.

In general, these studies suggest that realia not only increases learner motivation and participation but

also supports the development of communicative competence by creating authentic and meaningful learning experiences. However, despite the documented benefits of realia, much of the existing research remains descriptive and does not always examine its direct effect on specific language skills such as speaking. This highlights the need for further empirical studies focused on oral language development in EFL contexts.

The Impact of Realia on the Development of Speaking Skills

Empirical research consistently supports the positive influence of realia on students' oral communication skills. Hsieh et al. (2023) combined tangible objects with a social robot in a single intervention; within that hybrid system, elementary school students learning English as a foreign language showed improvements in pronunciation and willingness to communicate, although the individual contribution of the tangible objects could not be separated from that of the robot. Similarly, Huayamave Hidalgo (2025) reported that "significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition and oral production" were observed after the implementation of instruction supported by real objects, emphasizing the close relationship between lexical development and speaking performance. These findings are further supported by Ahmadova (2025), who documented that realia promotes spontaneous language use and peer communication, factors that contribute to greater speaking fluency. Likewise, Oshimeje and Flores Barahona (2025) demonstrated that learners who participated in authentic oral production tasks achieved notable gains in fluency, pronunciation, and overall communicative competence. In conjuction, these studies indicate that realia facilitates oral language development by creating opportunities for meaningful interaction, reducing communication anxiety, and encouraging learners to use English in authentic contexts (Ahmadova, 2025; Hsieh et al., 2023; Huayamave Hidalgo, 2025; Oshimeje & Flores Barahona, 2025). Nevertheless, although substantial evidence supports the effectiveness of realia, many studies have focused on secondary or higher education settings. Consequently, there remains a need for research examining its impact on speaking development among basic education students in EFL contexts.

Perceptions of Teachers and Learners Toward the Use of Realia in Language Instruction

Research examining perceptions of realia consistently indicates positive attitudes among both teachers and students. According to Manangkari et al. (2022), teachers perceive realia as a valuable instructional

tool that facilitates speaking lessons and promotes greater student participation, positive teacher perceptions are particularly important because they often influence the frequency and effectiveness with which these communicative materials are incorporated into classroom instruction. In turn, Tigrero Arteaga (2025) reported that teachers believe real objects enhance vocabulary comprehension and foster meaningful, contextualized learning experiences, increasing students' interest and engagement in language activities. From the learners' perspective, Ayu et al. (2025) found that students viewed realia-based speaking activities positively, reporting that tangible materials helped improve their speaking performance and the overall usefulness of classroom activities. Furthermore, learners described lessons involving real objects as more enjoyable, relatable, and accessible, factors that contribute to reducing speaking anxiety and increasing willingness to communicate, a concern also raised by Khoudri (2024), who found that teachers actively rely on strategies such as positive feedback and collaborative, task-based activities specifically to reduce EFL students' speaking anxiety and foster their willingness to communicate. Beyond its instructional benefits, these findings suggest that realia positive influence on the affective and motivational dimensions of language learning, creating a environment more conducive to oral communication. However, relatively few studies have cross-referenced students' perceptions with objective measures of speaking improvement, indicating the need for research designs that combine performance-based assessments with participants' perspectives.

The Role of Realia in Enhancing Communicative Language Instruction

The effectiveness of realia increases considerably when it is integrated into communicative and task-based approaches. Sitepu and Kurniawati (2021) emphasize that realia helps learners engage actively in the learning process, maximizes multisensory learning experiences, and enhances communication skills. This perspective is consistent with Ellis (2009), who argues that language learning is more effective when learners engage in "meaning-focused communication" rather than the isolated practice of linguistic forms. Likewise, Willis and Willis (2007) maintain that authentic materials increase the communicative value of classroom tasks by encouraging learners to negotiate meaning and interact naturally. Within this framework, real objects (realia) functions as an authentic stimulus that supports role-plays, simulations, information-gap activities, and transactional exchanges. As a result, learners are provided with opportunities to use language purposefully and contextually, contributing to the

development of communicative competence and oral fluency.

In summary, the reviewed literature highlights the pedagogical value of realia in promoting learner engagement, vocabulary acquisition, communicative interaction, and speaking development in EFL classrooms. Although previous studies have reported positive effects of realia on learners' oral performance, most of this research has been conducted in secondary or higher education settings, with limited attention given to basic education students. Furthermore, while existing studies have explored the general benefits of realia, fewer studies have specifically examined its impact on speaking subskills such as fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation within communicative and task-based learning environments. In addition, limited research has combined objective measures of speaking performance with students' perceptions of realia-based activities. These gaps highlight the need for further empirical research in basic education EFL contexts. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the effect of realia on improving speaking skills among EFL basic education students by addressing the following research questions: (1) Does the use of realia affect the improvement of speaking skills in EFL basic education students? (2) Does realia influence students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This study adopts a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental, one-group pre-test/post-test design to examine the effect of realia on the development of speaking skills in EFL basic education students.A quasi-experimental design was selected because random assignment to treatment and control groups was not feasible: participants belong to a single, pre-existing third-grade classroom, and altering that grouping for research purposes would have disrupted regular instruction, consistent with common practice in educational research where intact classroom groups make randomization impractical (Kim & Clasing-Manquian, 2023). The design allows for a direct, paired comparison of students' speaking performance before and after the implementation of realia-based instructional activities, using the same instrument at both time points. This design is consistent with previous classroom-based research involving young learners of English as a foreign language, which has used a criteria-based assessment rubric to evaluate oral performance within a comparable pre-test and post-test structure involving a single group (Cañete Outeiral, 2014) and has applied nonparametric statistical comparisons, such as the

Wilcoxon signed-rank test, to assess progress in oral expression subskills among young learners (Gapasin and Bautista, 2022).

Population

The population for this study consists of third-grade students in General Basic Education (EGB), aged 6 to 8, enrolled in an English-as-a-foreign-language program in Quevedo. These students receive English as a foreign language(EFL) instruction as part of their regular curriculum, with one 40-minute class per week. The school is a public institution that lacks sufficient technological resources and teaching materials for English instruction, which further limits the students' exposure to varied and engaging linguistic input. This population is appropriate for the study, as young basic education learners often have limited opportunities to practice speaking English in authentic and meaningful contexts, and are at a stage where concrete, tangible learning materials are especially relevant to their cognitive development(Dujić Rodić & Granić, 2022).

Sampling method

For this research, a non-probabilistic convenience sampling approach was adopted, involving direct participation in the target group's teaching during their teaching practicums. The study sample consists of approximately 32 third-grade students, whose parents or legal guardians provided informed consent authorizing the use of their children's pre-test results; this authorization also applied to the post-test data collected in the study. Although the sample size is reasonably adequate for the planned statistical comparisons, the use of convenience sampling still limits the extent to which the results can be generalized beyond this specific school context.

Data Collection Instruments

One main tool was used to collect the data:

1. Analytical speaking rubric, applied identically at pre-test and post-test to assess students' speaking performance in terms of fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation, following the Pre-A1 rubric structure. Given that participants were third-grade EFL learners aged 6 to 8 with minimal prior English exposure, speaking performance was assessed using a locally adapted three-level Pre-A1 rubric, consistent with the CEFR Companion Volume's recognition of Pre-A1 as a distinct proficiency level (Council of Europe, 2020) and with the age range targeted by the Cambridge

Young Learners Pre-A1 Starters assessment (ages 6–8). Following Cañete Outeiral (2014), each of three speaking subskills (fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation) was scored independently on a 3-point scale (1 = minimal knowledge, 2 = developing, 3 = more consolidated), and the three subscale scores were summed to produce a composite total score (range 3–9) for each administration, consistent with the subskill-based scoring structure used by Gapasin and Bautista (2022).

Collection Data Procedure

A speaking pre-test was administered to third-grade EGB (Educación General Básica) students prior to the intervention, evaluated using an analytical rubric that focuses on fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation. The oral test consisted of a series of simple questions about colors, fruits, greetings, animals, and a brief self-introduction. The same instrument was re-administered as a post-test following the implementation of realia-based instructional activities, allowing for a direct, paired comparison of scores across the two time points.

Because the same test is used at both time points, practice or familiarity effects are a possible limitation, consistent with well-documented threats to internal validity in one-group pre-test/post-test design(Shen & Zhu, 2018): students may perform somewhat better on the second administration simply from having completed the task once before, independent of the intervention. This is acknowledged when interpreting gains between pre-test and post-test.

Ethical considerations

Because participants are minors aged 6 to 8, this study relies on informed consent from parents or legal guardians, obtained prior to the pre-test and covering the use of results from the post-test as well. Institutional authorization from the school will also be requested. Participation is voluntary, and students may withdraw at any point without academic consequence. All data will be anonymized prior to analysis, and no results will be published in a way that identifies individual children.

Data analysis

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the difference. Before the primary analysis, the assumption of normality for the paired differences was evaluated. The Shapiro-Wilk test indicated a statistically significant deviation from perfect normality, $W(32) = 0.924$, $p = .027$. However,

visual inspection of the Normal Quantile-Quantile (Q-Q) plot revealed that the observed differences aligned closely along the diagonal reference line with no extreme outliers, suggesting an acceptable approximation of normality. Given that the t-test is robust to mild deviations from normality, the parametric analysis was prioritized. To ensure the integrity of the findings, a non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also performed as a sensitivity check.

RESULTS

This section presents the quantitative results of the study, organized according to the order of the two research questions that guide this work. First descriptive statistics are presented for the students' total speaking scores before and after the implementation of realia-based instructional activities, followed by an analysis of the results by speaking subskills: fluency, accuracy and pronunciation. Subsequently, inferential statistics(a paired-sample t-test and a Wilcoxon signed-rank test) are presented to ascertain whether the observed improvement in speaking performance is statistically significant.

The quantitative data from this study suggest that the use of realia can improve speaking skills. Descriptive statistics were calculated for students' oral performance before and after the implementation of realia-based instructional activities, using a sample of 32 third-grade students learning English as a foreign language (Table 1).

Ilustraciones, tablas, figuras

Tabla 1. Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test and Post-test Speaking Scores

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviati
PreTest	32	3	6	4,06	,878
PostTest	32	6	9	7,81	1,030
Valid N (listwise)	32				

Students' total speaking scores increased from a mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.878) to 7.81 (SD = 1.030), an average gain of 3.75 points. Notably, the maximum pre-test score (6) coincides with the minimum post-test score (6). The Post-Test scores were generally higher than the pre-test scores, with the observed ranges shifting from 3-6 in the pre-test to 6-9 in the Post-Test. In addition to the total speaking score, descriptive statistics were computed separately for each subskill fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation

at both time points (See Table 2).

Tabla 2. Descriptive Statistics for Speaking Subskills (Pre-test and Post-test)

Subskill	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Fluency	1.13	0.336	2.53	0.507
Accuracy	1.28	0.457	2.47	0.507
Pronunciation	1.66	0.545	2.81	0.397

All three subskills showed a consistent upward shift from pre-test to post-test. Fluency showed the largest relative gain, moving from a mean close to Level 1 (M = 1.13) to a mean approaching Level 3 (M = 2.53). Accuracy followed a similar pattern (M = 1.28 to M = 2.47). Pronunciation had the highest pre-test mean of the three subskills (M = 1.66), suggesting it was the least difficult subskill for students prior to the intervention, and reached the highest post-test mean as well (M = 2.81), approaching the ceiling of the 3-point scale. Taken together, these subskill-level results directly address the second research question, indicating that the effect of realia was not confined to overall speaking performance but was reflected consistently across fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation individually.

The correlation between pre-test and post-test scores was weak and not statistically significant, $r = .228$, $p = .210$, suggesting that gains in speaking performance following the intervention were relatively uniform across students, largely independent of their initial pre-test score.

A paired- sample t-test was conducted to evaluate the difference between pre-test and post-test speaking scores for a sample of 32 students (Table 3). The parametric paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the two time points, $t(31) = -17.806$, $p < .001$. Participants scored higher on PostTest (M = 7.81, SD = 1.030) compared to PreTest (M = 4.06, SD = 0.878). These findings were fully supported by the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which yielded a consistent conclusion ($Z = -4.973$, $p < .001$) (See Table 4.) The Wilcoxon signed-rank test yielded a consistent result, providing additional statistical support for the difference observed between the pre-test and post-test scores.

Tabla 3. Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PreTest	4,06	32	,878	,155
	PostTest	7,81	32	1,030	,182

Tabla 4. Test Statistics

	PostTest - PreTest
Z	-4,973[b]
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,001

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

All three subskills showed a consistent upward shift from pre-test to post-test. Fluency showed the largest relative gain, moving from a mean close to Level 1 (M = 1.13) to a mean approaching Level 3 (M = 2.53). Accuracy followed a similar pattern (M = 1.28 to M = 2.47). Pronunciation had the highest pre-test mean of the three subskills (M = 1.66), suggesting it was the least difficult subskill for students prior to the intervention, and reached the highest post-test mean as well (M = 2.81), approaching the ceiling of the 3-point scale. Taken together, these subskill-level results directly address the second research question, indicating that the effect of realia was not confined to overall speaking performance but was reflected consistently across fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation individually.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion will present according the research questions

Does the use of realia affect the improvement of speaking skills in EFL basic education students?

The significant improvement in students' total speaking scores following the implementation of realia based instructional activities dialogues directly with prior research reporting positive effects of realia

on learners' oral performance and engagement (Ahmadova, 2025; Manangkari et al., 2022; Sitepu & Kurniawati, 2021), confirming that the general direction of the effect of realia improves speaking outcomes holds even in a population markedly younger and less experienced than those typically studied. In this respect, the present findings reinforce the broader consensus in the literature.

However, the present study also diverges from prior research in an important way: most of the existing evidence comes from secondary, university, or otherwise older EFL populations (e.g., Ahmadova, 2025; Huayamave Hidalgo, 2025; Manangkari et al., 2022; Oshimeje & Flores Barahona, 2025), whereas the participants in this study were third-grade children aged 6 to 8 with minimal prior English knowledge. This distinction matters because the mechanisms through which realia operates may not be identical across age groups: for adolescent or adult learners, realia Is generally understood to support meaning-focused communication and reduce affective barriers such as anxiety(Ellis, 2009; Willis & Willis,2007) whereas for very young children, concrete objects may function more fundamentally as a bridge between an almost entirely unfamiliar language and the child's already-available conceptual knowledge of the physical world. Studies conducted specifically with young learners (Gapasin & Bautista, 2022; Hsieh et al., 2023; Riaz et al., 2024; Sitepu & Kurniawati, 2021) are the ones that align most closely with the present findings, both in direction and in the emphasis on multisensory, concrete engagement suggesting that age and prior linguistic experience may condition how, and how strongly, realia exerts its effect

This distinction also helps explain why the magnitude of improvement observed in this study, as reported in the Results section, is considerably larger than what is typically reported even among studies conducted with younger learners (Gapasin & Bautista, 2022; Hsieh et al, 2023). Because participants in the present study began at a Pre-A1 level with virtually no prior English exposure, even modest instructional gains in absolute terms translated into very large gains relative to their initial variability, a ceiling-and-floor dynamic that is less likely to occur in studies involving older or more linguistically experienced participants, whose starting scores are typically more varied and less concentrated near the bottom of the scale. Another suplemental explanation lies in the intensity of the intervention itself: sessions were held three times per week for 30 minutes over approximately eight weeks, in addition to the school's regular weekly English class, meaning that participants received substantially more

instructional exposure to English during the study period than they would have received under the school's typical schedule alone. This increased instructional density may have amplified the gains observed beyond what a single weekly session would have produced. Given how unusually large this effect is even relative to comparable young-learner studies, it should not be assumed to generalize directly to other populations or to less intensive implementation of Realia.

Does realia influence students' speaking fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation?

All three speaking subskills improved consistently from pre-test to post-test, directly answering the second research question. Fluency showed the largest relative gain among the three subskills, a pattern that dialogues with Ahmadova's (2025) observation that realia encourages spontaneous language use and peer communication, while accuracy improved in a similarly consistent manner, aligning with Huayamave Hidalgo's (2025) finding that instruction supported by real objects strengthens vocabulary acquisition and, by extension, more accurate word use. On these two subskills, the present findings agree with prior research even though that research was largely conducted with older learners, suggesting that the link between realia, vocabulary, and accurate/fluent production may operate similarly across age groups, even if the underlying cognitive mechanism differs somewhat between a child building a first mental model of a word and an adolescent or adult refining an already partially known one.

Pronunciation, by contrast, is where the present findings both agree with and complicate the existing picture. Consistent with Oshimeje and Flores Barahona (2025), who reported notable pronunciation gains following authentic oral production tasks, and with the broader claim that realia provides multisensory input conducive to active engagement (Sitepu & Kurniawati, 2021), pronunciation improved substantially in this study as well. However, unlike in studies with older participants, where pronunciation is often reported as one of the more resistant subskills to short-term instructional change, given entrenched first language interference , the children in this study showed particularly high gains in pronunciation, as detailed in the results section. This may not be fully comparable to findings from adolescent or adult samples, where phonological habits are typically more established and therefore harder to shift; for young children with minimal prior exposure to English sounds, there may be less first-language interference to overcome, allowing pronunciation to improve more readily. This raises a

genuine point of disagreement rather than agreement: the present results should not be interpreted as confirmation that real objects influence pronunciation in the same way or to the same extent across all age groups.

Taken together, these findings at the subskill level suggest that, while the general trend of the effect of real objects on oral production is consistent with the literature, the specific pattern, in particular, the especially marked and rapid improvements in fluency and pronunciation may be a distinctive feature of working with young learners with limited language exposure, rather than a mere replication of the effects documented in older age groups. Future research would be needed to directly compare age groups using the same instrument to confirm whether this divergence reflects a genuine developmental difference or, conversely, is an artifact stemming from the specific sample and context of this study.

These findings also carry practical significance beyond the specific classroom studied here. Realia offers a low-cost, readily accessible strategy for developing speaking skills in under-resourced EFL settings, which is particularly relevant given that the school in this study is a public institution lacking sufficient technological and didactic resources for English classes. This concern is not merely local to the present study: recent research on EFL instruction in Ecuadorian primary schools has documented a persistent gap between currículum reforms that call for communicative, learner-centered methodologies and the teaching materials and practices actually available to teachers in public schools classrooms (Alvarez et al., 2025), for that reason, the present study suggest that realia may offer a practical way to help narrow that Gap, al least with the respect to speaking instruction.

CONCLUSION

This research indicates that there are notable improvements in the speaking skills EFL basic education students when realia is used as a key instructional resource. It is noteworthy that realia is sometimes overlooked in language teaching in favor of digital or technological tools due to the perception that simple, everyday objects are too basic or unsophisticated to generate meaningful learning outcomes, especially in an era increasingly oriented toward educational technology. However, the quantitative results of this study demonstrate that tangible, real-world objects were what made students respond with greater fluency, more accurate word use, and clearer pronunciation, even within a public school setting lacking technological resources.

Overall, the findings provide evidence supporting the use of realia as a practical instructional resource for developing speaking performance among EFL learners in basic education. The observed improvements in fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation suggest that concrete and meaningful materials can support oral English production, particularly in classroom contexts with limited access to technological resources. However, the findings should be interpreted with the limitations of the one-group pre-test post-test design and the characteristics of the sample. Further research involving larger samples, comparison, group, and longer interventions could help determine the extent to which these findings can be generalized to other EFL contexts.

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