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Perceptions on Voice Recording Speaking Tasks

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Autores:

Lic. Jhonatan Lorenzo - jhonatanlrg@gmail.com

Universidad Veracruzana

Mtra. Patricia Núñez Mercado - pnunez@uv.mx

(Autor de correspondencia) - Universidad Veracruzana

ABSTRACT

Due to the pandemic COVID-19, emergency remote teaching and its emerging online classrooms became a significant area of research. One topic of interest in this area, but also relevant to any foreign language learning and teaching context both online and face-to-face, is the use of voice recording speaking tasks to promote oral production. Nonetheless, there is a relatively nonexistent body of literature related to voice recording applications and voice recording speaking tasks and their value within the Mexican context. This mixed-method study based on an explanatory sequential design aimed to examine twenty-three students' and forty-nine teachers' perceptions of voice recording speaking tasks to develop speaking skills in Mexican universities. Likert-type questionnaires, written reflections, and semi-structured interviews were used to explore attitudes and opinions regarding communicative tasks using a voice recording application. Findings suggest that learners and instructors value voice recording tasks. Nevertheless, educators and apprentices need to consider crucial factors to implement voice recordings appropriately. These derived in recommendations for students and teachers regarding classroom practice and the teaching profession.

KEYWORDS:

Voice recording, speaking skill development, teachers' perceptions, student's perceptions, Mexican universities

RESUMEN

Debido a la pandemia por COVID-19, la enseñanza remota de emergencia y sus aulas emergentes en línea se convirtieron en un área importante de investigación. Uno de los temas de interés en esta área, pero también relevante a contextos de enseñanza y apredizaje de lenguas extranjeras tanto presenciales como en línea, es el uso de grabaciones de voz para promover la producción oral. No obstante, existe un cuerpo de literatura relativamente inexistente relacionado con aplicaciones de grabación de voz y actividades que incluyan grabaciones de voz y su valor en el contexto mexicano. Este estudio de método mixto basado en un diseño secuencial explicativo

tuvo como objetivo examinar las percepciones de veintitrés estudiantes y cuarenta y nueve profesores acerca de las actividades con grabaciones de voz para desarrollar habilidades de expresión oral en universidades mexicanas. Se utilizaron cuestionarios tipo Likert, reflexiones escritas y entrevistas semiestructuradas para explorar actitudes y opiniones sobre actividades comunicativas mediante una aplicación de grabación de voz. Los resultados sugieren que los alumnos y los instructores valoran las actividades con de grabaciones de voz. Sin embargo, los educadores y aprendices deben considerar factores cruciales para implementar las grabaciones de voz de manera adecuada. Estos derivaron en recomendaciones para estudiantes y profesores sobre la práctica en el aula y la profesión docente.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Grabación de voz, desarrollo de habilidades para hablar, percepciones de los maestros, percepciones de los estudiantes, universidades mexicanas

Introduction

Learning English might benefit professionals, undergraduate, and graduate students as English plays a significant role in formal education in Mexico. Speaking this language allows people to participate in activities such as tourism, industry, government, media, science, and technology (Hidalgo et al., 1996). It is a skill by which learners are judged or helped to take or lose opportunities in life (Namaziandost et al., 2018). In addition, speaking is perceived as a vital skill because people who know the language are believed to speak the language (Namaziandost et al., 2019). Nevertheless, speaking may be one of the most complex skills for learners due to cognitive and affective factors (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017), and Mexican university students are not the exception. They might find speaking challenging, especially because English is not as relevant for communicative purposes as in countries where English is a second and not a foreign language (Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Educators have been implementing new strategies and techniques in their teaching practice to expand and promote oral skills, and technology and its affordances have played a significant role in this respect to address this challenge (Hashemifardnia et al., 2018). In this sense, the use of voice recording applications has recently emerged in the foreign language learning literature on account of their accessibility and practicality.

Voice recording applications allow students to communicate with their classmates and share their voice recordings with their teachers or peers for formative or summative assessment. They are free, and people can find them in different operating systems. Moreover, voice recording features are inside other applications or web-based services. Via these applications, learners can practice speaking in a safe environment collaboratively or individually inside the classroom or at home, face-to-face, or online. The use of voice recording applications depends on teachers' creativity, and speaking development is an area where there has been particular interest in using them as a pedagogical tool (Brown, 2012; Ibáñez & Vermeulen, 2015; Lander et al., 2019; Le, 2018; Parra & Fredy, 2018; Pop et al., 2011; Sun, 2009; Tomé & Richters, 2020; Wagner, 2020; Yanju et al., 2017). As a result, students owning a smartphone, a tablet or a laptop can use voice recording applications to develop speaking through voice recordings tasks. However, language educators and learners usually need some guidance and support to use these emerging technologies.

The first international studies on the topic involved voice blog recorded activities to practice speaking skills extensively (Sun, 2009) and synchronous voice tools to develop speaking (Pop et al., 2011). Voice recordings have also been used as a tool for self-assessment and feedback (Brown, 2012). Similarly, researchers have focused on audio descriptions for language development

(Ibáñez & Vermeulen, 2015) and voice recording activities to improve fluency (Yanju et al., 2017). Other projects involve Facebook closed groups for sharing recorded messages to enhance fluency and complexity (Le, 2018) and the implementation of web 2.0 and audio recordings to work on self-assessment and accuracy (Parra & Fredy, 2018). More recently, studies in this area incorporate an application called SpeakingPhoto to encourage participation in oral presentations (Lander et al., 2019), the creation of podcasts with voice recording applications to improve pronunciation (Tomé & Richters, 2020), and recording speaking tasks as formative assessment (Wagner, 2020). These research studies, primarily quantitative, portray creative alternatives to integrate voice recording applications in language teaching and learning, mainly focusing on asynchronous and individual tasks and other languages rather than English. Results from these studies show positive attitudes towards the implementation of voice recording applications. Nonetheless, researchers fail to describe potential drawbacks and the students' and teachers' views regarding their usefulness in developing the language. It is crucial to investigate learners' and instructors' perceptions concerning the value of voice recordings in promoting speaking to see whether their implementation offers benefits for educators and language learners in face-to-face and emerging online classrooms.

This research aimed to understand and give an account of participants' experiences using voice recording tasks to practice speaking in Mexican universities grounded in a mixed-methods approach (Creswell et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2017). It explores pupils' and educators' perceived gains and attitudes towards communicative tasks with voice recordings based on quantitative and qualitative data collection methods: surveys, semi-structured interviews, and written reflections of the participants' accounts. In general terms, the current study identified three broad main areas: teachers' and students' acknowledgment of the importance of voice recording speaking tasks, improvements in different language skills with voice recordings, and some potential drawbacks to bear in mind for the successful implementation of voice recording applications.

Designing Communicative Tasks

Developing communicative speaking tasks might be a challenging endeavor for educators because numerous factors may or may not contribute to language production. One of these factors may involve pupils engaging in simultaneous processes of conceptualization and formulation as well as thinking and speaking to construct an internal representation of the exterior (Guhe, 2019). When learners talk to partners, they need to know what to say (Qiu, 2020) and how to say it. They must create automatic responses, articulate, self-monitor, and repair (Tavakoli et al., 2020; Thornbury, 2005). The focus of speaking communicative tasks must be appropriate, and tasks should emphasize meaning rather than form (Newton & Nation, 2021; Thornbury, 2005).

Communicative tasks can be fluency- or accuracy-driven. Fluency can be regarded as the whole oral proficiency, or the ease of spoken production, the processing of language in real-time (Schmidt, 1992, cited in Newton & Nation, 2009). It encompasses a wide range of features such as speed, pausing, and length of runs, and for successful communicative interaction, turn-taking, discourse markers, and paralinguistics are also essential (Thornbury, 2005). Accuracy is the precision of the message conveyed, a set of linguistic mental structures related to syntax, lexis, and phonology (Ebsworth, 1998). Fluency-driven activities are critical to building speaking skills because learners use what they know to produce spoken language (Newton & Nation, 2009). To be an efficient learner of a foreign language, a balance between meaning and form must be present (Willis & Willis, 2001). Voice recording speaking tasks may help develop both accuracy and fluency. Admittedly, educators need to be careful while designing speaking tasks

using this strategy, and they need to consider conditions that might affect students' completion of assignments. In this sense, educators must make important decisions to accentuate activities that develop accuracy, fluency, or both.

For Thornbury (2005), speaking tasks should take place in real-time, be productive, purposeful, interactive, challenging, safe, and authentic. He maintains that they should include an appealing element that engages students and be simple for learners to succeed in the desired result. He emphasizes that cognitive, affective, and performance factors should thrive to encourage pupils to develop speaking appropriately. One of the cognitive factors involves familiarity with the topic (Aubrey et al., 2020; Thornbury, 2005; Qiu, 2020). This is critical as it facilitates learners to create competent speech, and increase complexity, accuracy, and fluency. Other cognitive elements involved are the genre, the interlocutors, and the processing demands of the spoken interactions. Affective considerations refer to self-consciousness and feelings regarding the topic and the participants. If learners have a positive attitude towards the topic and the participants, they will be more willing to communicate (Saeed Al-Sobhi & Preece, 2018). Performance aspects include mode, degree of collaboration, discourse control, planning, rehearsal time, time pressure, and environmental conditions. For instance, considering planning and preparation, students, who have had time to prepare a small presentation, do better and produce more complex speech than students who improvise (Crookes, 1989, cited in Newton & Nation, 2009; Qiu, 2020).

There are a variety of activities that instructors can implement to work on oral production. They include but are not limited to information gaps, surveys, repetitions, ask and answer activities, rehearsed talks, interviews, and tasks that involve the delivery of the best recording. A voice recording application can be used for students to record any of these tasks and have evidence of their oral work. For instance, the best recording technique exemplifies how a voice recording application, using a tape or a digital recorder, may be used. In this task, students can record personal accounts or authentic conversations and then listen to the recording to identify any inconsistencies. They re-record the task making improvements and continue to do so until they are satisfied with the results (Newton & Nation, 2009). With the advent of technology, expensive digital recorders are not necessary anymore. Instead, students can use the recording application from a cell phone, tablet, or laptop. They can also use other applications where an audio recording feature is embedded, for instance, WhatsApp or Messenger, among others. Learners can even use web-based services such as Vocaroo or VoiceThread to record their activities for free. Therefore, accessibility to these types of tools is no longer an issue.

Voice Recordings for Developing Speaking Skills

There is a relatively nonexistent body of literature that is concerned with the use of voice recording applications or tasks to improve English speaking skills within the Mexican context. There are, however, a few international studies, mainly quantitative, that have introduced them in unique ways to support foreign language learning other than English. In the following paragraphs, the most relevant projects are explored.

One of the first attempts to implement voice recordings was with Chinese students who used voice blog recorded activities for extensive practice of speaking skills and the documentation of their effects on language learning and teaching (Sun, 2009). The researcher concluded that blogs could constitute a dynamic forum that fosters extensive practice, learning motivation, authorship, and the development of learning strategies. In an English as a foreign language setting, researchers explored asynchronous voice tools to develop speaking (Pop et al., 2011). The participants used the Voxopop and the Voice Thread web-based services to voice record tasks

in talk groups on categorized forums. The outcomes suggested that students did develop more positive attitudes towards speaking, and their confidence to speak and talking time increased. Likewise, learners were able to identify inconsistencies with their pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency. For the teacher, these activities were invaluable evidence for assessment and evaluation. In an English as a second language setting, voice recordings and self-assessment were used to give students feedback, and individualized class materials according to the students' self-reflection of their performance (Brown, 2012). The recording project was perceived successful in improving learners' fluency. Students appreciated the additional opportunities of spoken output outside the classroom and believed that their pronunciation improved.

In Spain, 16 English language learners used a mobile-assisted language learning application called VISP to develop audio description techniques to promote language development (Ibáñez & Vermeulen, 2015). The researchers wanted to know the effectiveness of this technique to encourage oral production, vocabulary learning, use of accurate vocabulary, and intercultural competence. The results revealed an increase in motivation and positive attitudes toward the application students utilized, but their actual learning of vocabulary still needed improvement. In an Arabic-speaking country, undergraduate learners engaged in voice recording activities to examine their effectiveness in developing oral fluency in Mandarin (Yanju et al., 2017). The results of the study suggest that voice recording tasks using WhatsApp groups are efficient to help foreign language learners to improve oral fluency. The researchers argue that these kinds of activities are valuable to enhance listening skills, pronunciation, grammar, oral skills, self-reflection, and confidence. In Colombia, a self-assessment process through audio recordings and its impact on accuracy were researched (Parra & Fredy, 2018). Web-based voice recording services and computer tasks were included, and students were found to be able to monitor their language production and produce more complex utterances. Technology integration served here as a vehicle for language learning and fostered language improvement among students.

In Vietnam, Facebook closed groups were used as a learning platform to increase students' spoken interaction (Le, 2018). The aim was to increase opportunities to practice speaking with high school students, and findings suggest that voice recordings facilitated learners' opportunities to speak in that they improved on fluency and lexical complexity, but not syntactic complexity. In another foreign language setting, an application called SpeakingPhoto was found useful for students to record their voices to make presentations when there was not enough time in class or if they wanted to gain confidence (Lander et al., 2019). Results showed that learners achieved a higher quality of presentation skills, and most of them preferred to use the application rather than in-class presentations

More recently, Japanese university students recorded speaking tasks regularly during a semester to practice oral communication skills (Wagner, 2020). The activities were based on a textbook, and learners were instructed to use specific vocabulary and grammatical structures from specific units to complete the task. During this time, pupils self-assessed their oral performance, and the teacher provided personalized feedback. They identified their strengths and weaknesses, and they reported an overall improvement in their English skills. In Spain, pupils learning French tried podcasting as a tool to develop oral communicative competence (Tomé & Richters, 2020). They used three approaches to make a podcast: a mobile voice recording application, a web-based voice recording service, and a computer voice recording application. Results from the study revealed that pupils found podcasting helpful to improve pronunciation.

These research studies, mainly quantitative, suggest that learners showed improvements in language learning as well as positive attitudes towards the implementation of voice recording

tasks. Nevertheless, most of the activities studied in these projects did not include the collaborative and communicative element of oral production and failed to describe potential drawbacks. Furthermore, none of them focused on university students or teachers in Mexico, and few studies took into consideration their perceptions. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to add the Mexican context to the literature using a mixed-methods approach to provide a broader picture of university students' and teachers' voices on the use of collaborative voice recording tasks.

Method

An explanatory sequential design based on a mixed-methods approach was used to explain and describe the quantitative results in more detail by analyzing qualitative data. This resulted from gathering, exploring, and merging both quantitative and qualitative information (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007) to better understand issues and hear participants' experiences (Creswell et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2017). The study was conducted in two consecutive phases. First, the investigator followed a quantitative approach to gather and analyze data. In the second stage, the initial quantitative results were explained in more detail by analyzing data obtained through qualitative research methods. Therefore, findings were obtained by triangulating information from these different types of data collection methods.

Participants and Sampling

This study took place in a language center of a public university in the Southeast of Mexico. The language center offers courses mainly in English and French. Undergraduates learn English because it is a requirement for graduating and earning scholarships abroad or internships in international companies. Most English courses have a diverse population from different undergraduate engineering programs and one BA in Gastronomy. Consequently, the degree, age, and gender vary. Furthermore, this research included other universities throughout Mexico. These universities participated in providing data from different English language instructors. Many of these universities are public, and some are private. In some universities, the educators teach a major in English. However, in others, they teach English to university students in other language centers, and English is not a compulsory subject.

A purposeful sampling (D rnyei, 2007) strategy was used for the first sample of participants who joined in the quantitative and qualitative phases. The participants included twenty-three English pre-intermediate university students. On average, most participants had already taken four 90-hour English courses, and they were acquainted with the recording tasks and the use of voice recording applications. They commonly engaged in speaking tasks that involved more collaborative and synchronous activities rather than individual or asynchronous ones. Furthermore, they were required to complete a voice recording speaking task at least twice at the end of each of the eight units of their English course, and they had to share their products with their teacher. Among the tasks they recorded were conversations, fun interviews, functional dialogues, skits, reactions to topics, and personal accounts.

The second sample, who also participated in both phases, was selected mainly at random, and then purposefully for the interviewing stage. The participants included forty-nine English language teachers working in different universities in Mexico who had been teaching English face-to-face and online. They were twenty-six to fifty years old, and a fifth part of the instructors worked in the same language center in which the first sample resided. The other teachers belonged to other institutions, and thirty-six instructors had used voice recording applications or tasks to promote speaking. However, as thirteen educators had not used a similar application or task before,

three teachers, who were familiar with voice recordings, were interviewed; these constituted the aforementioned purposeful sampling for this type of participant.

Data Collection

In the quantitative phase, Likert-type questionnaires, adapted from Crofton–Martin (2015), were used to gather initial respondents' perceptions. These questionnaires were valuable because they measure attitudes, perceptions, opinions, and behaviors towards a specific subject (Brown & Rodgers, 2002; Crofton–Martin, 2015; Sun, 2009; Yanju et al., 2017). There was a version for students and another version for teachers. The early versions of the questionnaires were piloted to verify clarity and organization. The feedback received from the piloting stage helped the improvement of questionnaires, and translation of the students' version to assure understanding. The questionnaires were analyzed on the software SPSS for their reliability. The questionnaire included seven items. In each item, there were five options to measure the level of agreement. The items described perceptions related to perceived gains and attitudes derived from using voice recording tasks.

In the qualitative phase, the researcher collected students' and teachers' written reflections of their experiences working with the voice recording applications and tasks. These sources were vital because researchers can analyze learners' and instructors' "texts documenting their subjective experience and perspectives" (Hinkel, 2011, p.177). Teachers wrote their reflections in English, and students completed them in Spanish to express themselves spontaneously. The purpose of students' and teachers' reflections was to explain and illustrate the initial quantitative findings. Furthermore, three teachers participated in semi-structured interviews because thirteen educators had not used a similar application or task before and did not provide insights into the study. The semi-structured interviews were effective because they were flexible (McDonough & McDonough, 1997), and the data absent in the written reflections and the questionnaires was obtained and explored (Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2008; D rnyei, 2007).

Data Analysis

In the quantitative phase, results from the students' and teachers' Likert -type questionnaires were analyzed with descriptive statistics (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). Those results revealed a Cronbach's Alpha score of .883 and .800, respectively. Stacked bar charts were utilized to show descriptive statistics and illustrate the variety of responses. The bars from the charts represented the distribution of item responses, and they were easy to compare. Furthermore, the mean and percentages were calculated using the software SPSS to make the distribution and interpretation of results more reliable.

Qualitative analysis was used for the twenty-three students' reflections and forty-nine teachers' pieces of writing, along with three transcriptions from the teachers' semi-structured interviews. Thematic analysis based on grounded theory methodology was employed to find out the students' and teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the use of voice recording tasks to develop speaking skills. The software MAXQDA was used to classify all qualitative data, but the codification involved a deep understanding of the data from the researcher. Therefore, the investigator reiteratively read the data and assigned codes to different words, sentences, and paragraphs. Upon completion of this stage, the researcher put all similar information in the emergent themes that resembled the same construct. Once he identified the relevance and connection among them, the researcher distinguished three main categories using joint displays.

The joint displays summarize the main findings. They combine both sets of data, qualitative and quantitative, and reach meta-inferences. They include statements from the Liker-type questionnaire, stacked bar charts, number of participants and percentages, explanatory experiences and quotes, and inferences derived from quantitative and qualitative sources (see Appendix for an example of the joint displays).

Findings and discussion

Overall, both quantitative and qualitative datasets seem to indicate that educators and learners acknowledged the importance of voice recording speaking tasks to develop their oral skills. The majority of participants noticed an improvement in similar areas due to voice recordings, and both learners and instructors identified a few essential issues that may affect the effective implementation of this type of task. As follows, I present the findings, derived from the triangulation of data obtained from the different data collection methods, for my three main categories: the value of voice recording speaking tasks, perceived improvement with voice recordings, and potential drawbacks.

The Value of Voice Recording Speaking Tasks

Most students participating in this study were familiar with the voice recordings, and they recognized the value of their inclusion to promote the speaking practice. Many of them enjoyed them, identified their benefits, and even advise teachers to use them. 52.2% emphasized that they felt comfortable with voice recording tasks, and 78.3% preferred engaging in these activities because they were less afraid and anxious while speaking (Items 4 & 5/Student's questionnaire). As one pupil reported, voice recording may help students feel secure because they can talk at their own pace (S1/Written reflection).

Another interesting finding was the fact that 82.6% of students preferred voice recording instead of speaking in front of the class (Item 6/Student's questionnaire) (Lander et. al, 2019), and a probable reason for this may be that voice recording tasks reduce students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982) as they are not worried about making mistakes (S1, S3, S9, S12 & S15/Written reflections). Moreover, for learners, this strategy created more opportunities to speak (Brown, 2012; Le, 2018; Sun, 2009), interact, and socialize which may lead to the creation of strong bonds and better integration of the class (S5, S6 & S9/Written reflections). For instance, one informant acknowledged the importance of collaboration and interaction, 'if someone is listening to me, it makes me feel more confident and eager to talk, that is why I think it is better working in pairs or groups'(S6/Written reflection). Therefore, voice recordings may provide a less threatening option to trigger speaking within a collaborative learning environment.

Furthermore, 86.9% of students agreed that voice recordings were a good alternative to practice speaking (Item 7/Student's questionnaire). Learners likely agreed on this fact because voice recordings might help them identify their mistakes and reflect on their language (Parra & Fredy, 2018; Pop et al., 2011; Wagner, 2020) when they play and listen to their recordings (S1, S2, S3, S7, S9, S13, S14, S15 & S22/ Written reflections). This implies that students may be able to monitor their output (Krashen, 1982) and use voice recordings as a self-assessment instrument to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which included inconsistencies in pronunciation, accuracy, and fluency (Parra & Fredy, 2018; Pop et al., 2011; Wagner, 2020; Yanju et al., 2017).

From the educators' perspective, both in their interviews and written reflections, many teachers also recognized that voice recording tasks were a valuable strategy. Just over half of the instructors

(55.1%) agreed that learners might feel comfortable recording their voices in speaking tasks (Item 4/Teacher's questionnaire). This teachers' belief might be based on the fact that learners may be safer expressing their feelings and thoughts and might not be under pressure while trying to speak with voice recordings (T2 & T10/Written reflections).

85.7% of teachers agreed that they would ask students to record their voices in communicative tasks because they would be less anxious (Item 5/Teacher's questionnaire), and that this learning strategy may encourage timid students to participate in speaking tasks and thus maximize spoken language production (T3, T10 & T43/Written reflections). Consequently, voice recordings might serve as a means for motivation for learning and speaking. Furthermore, 61.2% of teachers believed that students would have liked to practice their oral expression with voice recording tasks in previous courses (Item 6/Teacher's questionnaire), and some acknowledged that students might assess their performance, self-regulate, rehearse, and improve their output with voice recording tasks (T32, T33 & T43/Written reflections).

97.9% of teachers concluded that they would consider using voice recording tasks to make students practice speaking (Item 7/Teacher's questionnaire). This positive perception of the usefulness of voice recordings might be due to the pandemic (T1, T2 & T3/Interviews) since they helped teachers assess students calmly, helped learners create more accurate speech, and served as an assessment instrument for students and teachers (T32 & T33/Written reflections).

Perceived Improvement with voice Recordings

Overall, many students agreed that voice recording tasks help them improve their oral skills, especially fluency, confidence, pronunciation, and accuracy. Many learners emphasized that fluency (82.6%) and confidence (78.26%) were the areas where most of them have seen improvements (Item 2 & 3/Student's questionnaire) (Brown, 2012; Le, 2018; Pop et al., 2011; Yanju et al., 2017). It is probable that since learners were less anxious, they were able to speak more spontaneously (S5 & S18/Written reflections), and their confidence increased (S16/Written reflection). Therefore, they were not worried about making mistakes, and a low affective filter was triggered (Krashen, 1982). Pronunciation and accuracy were other areas of improvement perceived by students (S1, S5 & S16/Written reflections) (Brown, 2012; Pop et al., 2011; Tomé & Richters, 2020; Yanju et al., 2017). This may indicate that voice recording tasks help learners identify their mistakes (S1/Written reflection) (Parra & Fredy; 2018; Pop et al. 2011; Wagner, 2020), and thus if students repeat the tasks to correct the mistakes, it is probable that students develop better pronunciation and more accurate language.

From the instructors' accounts, fluency, confidence, pronunciation, and some other aspects of the language (grammar, vocabulary, intonation, and even affective factors) arose as areas of students' improvement (Item 1/Teacher's questionnaire). The most common insight among teachers was the fact that voice recording tasks may help learners gain confidence (83.7%, Item 3/Teacher's questionnaire), which for them is translated into fluency gains (T1, T4, T5, T23 & T26/Written reflections) (Lander et. al, 2019; Pop et al., 2011; Yanju et al., 2017). This finding could be related to a low affective filter as well, as voice recordings may avoid students losing face, disinhibit students, and raise their self-esteem to produce spoken language (T26/Written reflection; T1/Interview).

81.6% of teachers agreed that fluency might be enhanced with voice recordings (Item 2/Teacher's questionnaire), probably because students may become fluent since the increased confidence would ultimately help them create spontaneous spoken language (T26/Written reflection).

Pronunciation was also mentioned as an area of improvement in the teachers' interviews and written reflections (T1/Interview; T4, T5, & T23/Written reflections). Therefore, teachers seem to believe that voice recordings allow students to identify issues in their output paying close attention to how they pronounce words. A few participants also mentioned that voice recordings can help students memorize chunks of language and vocabulary (T4 & T23/Written reflections), improve grammar and intonation, and work on their emotional side (T1/Interview). Consequently, the constant repetition and analysis of voice recording tasks, along with the delivery of the best recording might play a critical role in enhancing these areas.

Potential Drawbacks

Disadvantages are a neglected area of research on previous studies when it comes to the implementation of voice recording speaking tasks. One of these disadvantages refers to the lack of usefulness of voice recordings to develop speaking when there is no feedback provided afterward (S4 & S6/Written reflections). This suggests that teachers' feedback and students' self-assessment opportunities should be maximized when using this type of task because they may play crucial roles in their successful implementation. Despite the importance of feedback, however, too much instant feedback may be an issue for teachers and students, as they may get frustrated if they do not know how to deal with the proper assessment procedures (S4 & S6/Written reflections; T2 & T3/Interviews).

Students' attitudes might also influence the successful completion of a voice recording task. For instance, feelings toward an unpleasant voice or being aware of mistakes may demotivate learners (S6/Written reflection). Anxious and shy students may still feel embarrassed when they record, and this embarrassment may result in a high affective filter (S5 & S16 /Written reflections) (Krashen, 1982). This could hinder learners' speaking, and therefore, they might not perceive any improvement. Another challenge that teachers and students might face when implementing voice recording tasks has to do with technical problems (T1/Interview), but this could be easily solved by taking a few moments to familiarize themselves with basic applications to record and store the voice recordings.

Another challenging area for learners could be improvising when they try to voice record a speaking activity (S23/Written reflection). This might indicate that teachers should craft voice recording speaking tasks in such ways students are not forced to speak promptly, by allowing pupils to prepare and rehearse to reduce their affective filter and improve their speaking performance. On the other hand, a disadvantage of voice recordings could be precisely that students may sound too rehearsed and unnatural (T19/Written reflection). One of the teachers also argued that voice recordings were not appropriate for speaking practice because they might just involve reading a script (T1/Interview). Finally, based on their written reflections, many instructors believe that voice recordings just referred to individual work. This implies that educators need to be more informed about the flexibility and potential benefits of voice recording speaking tasks, as these can certainly be collaborative if designed appropriately.

Recommendations

For the successful implementation of voice recording speaking tasks, there are very important factors that educators and learners should consider. First, teachers might need to familiarize themselves with the different voice recording applications or web-based services that provide voice recording features. Instructors might test the different applications or just stick to one, in such a way they can assist their students in the recording process. Then, teachers should create

a system for storing, organizing, and keeping a record of students' voice recordings to facilitate assessment and further feedback. For instance, teachers can create a space where students can upload their recordings using Google Classroom or Microsoft Teams. Other alternatives may include students sharing an online folder on DropBox, OneDrive, or Google Drive.

When teachers design speaking activities including voice recording tasks, it is also important that they emphasize collaborative work in pairs or teams; nonetheless, individual work is also valuable when collaboration is not feasible. Pair and teamwork in voice recording activities foster interaction and the social aspect of communication. For collaborative online and remote instruction, teachers can suggest recording the audio of speaking tasks through platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams. Furthermore, educators should pay attention to the cognitive, affective, and performance factors that can encourage pupils to develop speaking appropriately. For example, voice recordings may be asked at the end of a unit or lesson when learners might be more prepared to so, as one of the students suggested in his written reflection. The speaking activities should be related to students' lives and interests, and learners may be allowed to go out of the classroom and record in a safe place to reduce their anxiety. They should be given enough time to prepare a speaking task, and they should also be encouraged to deliver the best recording.

Teachers should also pay attention to the focus of the tasks and the level of students. Frequently, teachers may include grammar as the focus of a speaking activity. However, speaking tasks should preferably focus on fluency, accuracy, or complexity (Thornbury, 2005). Therefore, teachers should balance the aspects they want students to master according to their students' needs and levels. Moreover, educators had better explore different alternatives to provide a variety of tasks rather than sticking to the same recording activity. For instance, they might encourage students to do information gap, survey, repetition, and ask and answer activities, as well as rehearsed talks and interviews, and prepare activities that involve the delivery of spoken reactions, podcasts, or presentations in their best-recorded version.

Furthermore, teachers should provide feedback regularly, and encourage learners to be responsible for their learning by self-assessing or pair-assessing their recording speaking task by using a rubric they should provide and explain. This way, teachers can tackle the issue of giving instant feedback for many recordings in a little time. Additionally, teachers should create a positive atmosphere and a good rapport with their students to reduce their anxiety levels and thus encourage them to speak more freely. Educators could also raise awareness of the purpose and benefits of voice recordings speaking tasks so that learners do not have the feeling that they are wasting their time and be aware of the practical objective behind the activities. Lastly, to maintain students' affective filter low, instructors should motivate and support students in any technical or emotional problem that they may face while trying to voice record a speaking task.

Conclusion

This mixed methods research aimed to identify students' and teachers' perceptions regarding the implementation of voice recording speaking tasks to promote oral skills. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of surveys, written reflections, and semi-structured interviews, it can be concluded that the use of the voice recording tasks to promote speaking is highly valued by students and teachers. There are cognitive, affective, and performance factors that should be considered for the effective integration of voice recordings in regular and online classrooms. The findings of the present study suggest that students value voice recordings tasks because they monitor, assess, and reflect on their output (Parra & Fredy, 2018; Pop et al., 2011; Wagner, 2020); and

at the same time students feel comfortable with the tasks and can expand, regulate, rehearse, and improve their speaking. Teachers are willing to integrate voice recording tasks as a less threatening option to trigger spoken interaction within a collaborative learning environment by lowering the students' affective filter (Krashen, 1982). Furthermore, findings imply that students and teachers agree that voice recording tasks can improve learners' confidence, fluency, pronunciation, and even accuracy (Brown, 2012; Le, 2018; Pop et al, 2011; Wagner, 2020). Nevertheless, lack or excess of feedback, negative attitudes toward the procedure of the tasks, affective factors, improvisation difficulties or lack of naturality, and even the most common technical issues may demotivate learners and instructors to implement voice recording tasks successfully.

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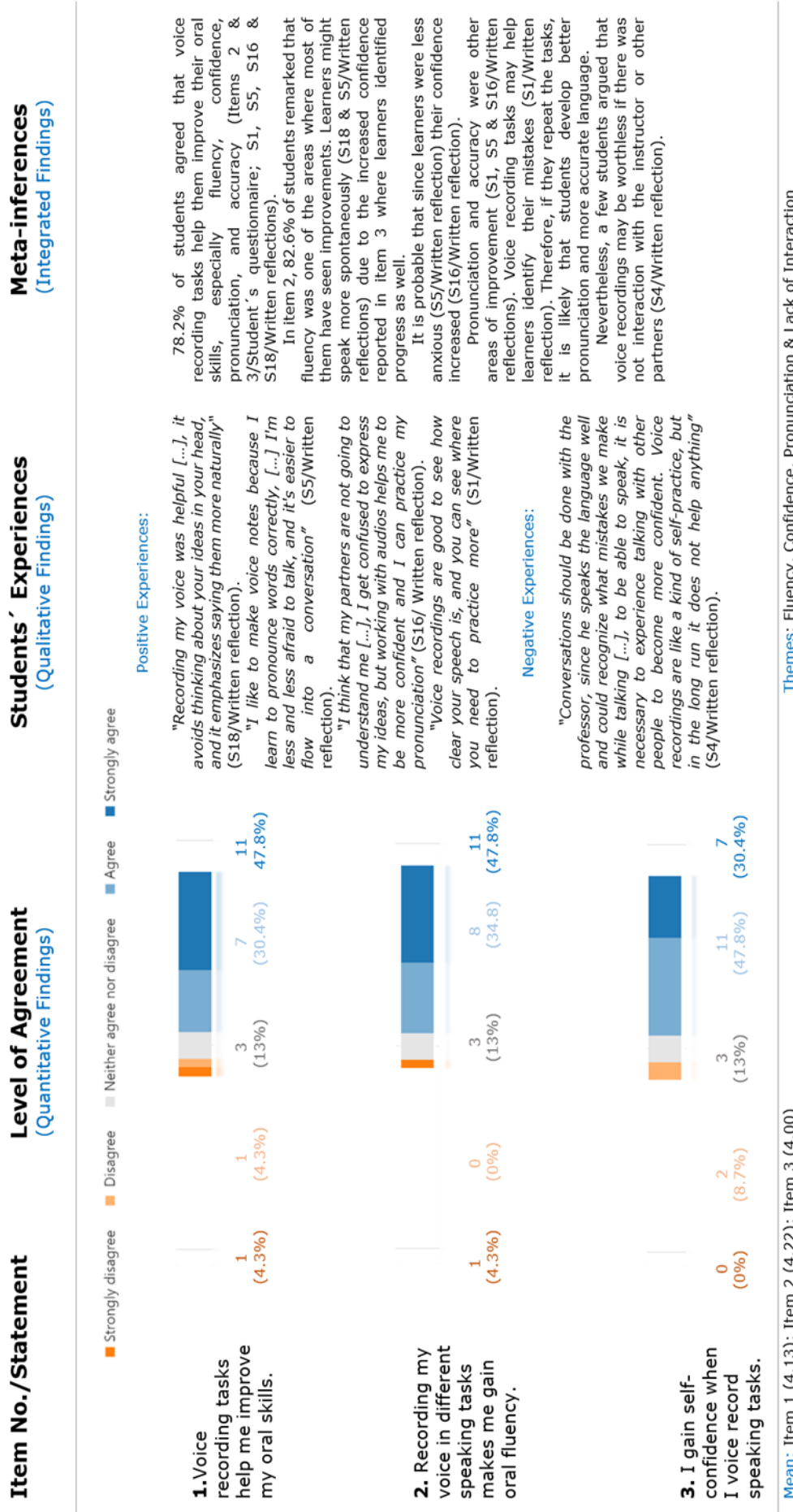
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Appendix: Example of a data analysis joint display

Figure 1 Students' Perceived Improvement with Voice Recording Tasks



Mean: Item 1 (4.13); Item 2 (4.22); Item 3 (4.00)

Themes: Fluency, Confidence, Pronunciation & Lack of Interaction

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- c) Literature review:** Present the main terms, concepts, and theoretical claims or principles, models, etc. analyzing and discussing the ideas presented by the main authors who have studied the topics related to the research or study presented. The references should not be more than 10 years old.
- d) Research methodology:** Describe the research approach: qualitative, quantitative or mixed.
- e) Describe the research method:** Case study, longitudinal research, transversal research, experimental research, cuasi-experimental research, etc. Describe the **data type** (describe

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and justify the data base, or universe, or sample, etc.) Characterize the **subjects** (describe the participants in the research). **Context** (describe the geographic and the institutional context where the research was carried out). **Instruments** (describe the research instruments used to collect information and data). Data analysis methods (describe and justify the quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods).

- f) **Main findings.** Synthesize, present, interpret and argue the most significant results found.
- g) **Main limitations of the study** (related to the geographical or institutional context or knowledge area where the conclusions or suggestions could be applicable).
- h) **Main applications and impact of the research.** Describe the main benefits of the research and the possible applications of the proposal.
- i) **Conclusions.** Describe the main conclusions generated from the answers to the research questions.

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