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Speaking Skills and Grammar Knowledge among English as a Foreign Language Learners at a Public High School in Marcabeli, 2025-2026 school year

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ABSTRACT

Communication is an important goal in learning English as a foreign language (EFL), in which speaking skills and grammar knowledge are closely related, providing the basis for accurate and meaningful communication. This study analyzed the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among ninth-grade EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabeli during the 2025-2026 school year. A quantitative correlational design was used. The participants in this research were 33 ninth-grade students, approximately 13-14 years old, selected by convenience sampling. Data were collected through achievement tests for speaking skills and grammar knowledge, with speaking skills evaluated using an analytic rubric. Both instruments were validated through expert judgment using Aiken's V ($V=0.9$). The results showed a moderate mean score of 6.98/10 for speaking and 6.86/10 for grammar knowledge. The Pearson correlation test revealed a strong, significant, and positive relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge ($r=.846$, $p<.001$), indicating that students with higher grammatical mastery tend to demonstrate better oral performance. The findings may motivate teachers to develop practices aimed at improving students' oral production. Future studies should incorporate qualitative data for a deeper understanding of the variables under study.

Keywords: *communicative competence, grammar knowledge, oral performance, secondary EFL learners*

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Habilidades Orales y Conocimiento Gramatical en los Estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en un Colegio Público de Marcabeli, Año Lectivo 2025-2026

RESUMEN

La comunicación es un objetivo importante en el aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera, en el que las habilidades de habla y el conocimiento gramatical se relacionan estrechamente al proporcionar la base para una comunicación precisa y significativa. Este estudio analizó la relación entre las habilidades orales y los conocimientos gramaticales de los alumnos de noveno grado que cursan inglés como lengua extranjera en un colegio público de Marcabeli durante el año escolar 2025-2026. Se utilizó un diseño correlacional cuantitativo. Los participantes en esta investigación fueron 33 alumnos de noveno grado, de entre 13 y 14 años aproximadamente, seleccionados mediante muestreo por conveniencia. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante pruebas de logro de habilidades orales y conocimientos gramaticales, con las habilidades orales evaluadas a través de una rubrica analítica. Ambos instrumentos fueron validados mediante el juicio de expertos utilizando la V de Aiken ($V = 0,9$). Los resultados mostraron un rendimiento moderado de 6,98/10 para las habilidades de habla y 6,86/10 para los conocimientos gramaticales. La prueba de correlación de Pearson reveló una relación fuerte, significativa y positiva entre las habilidades orales y los conocimientos gramaticales ($r = 0,846$, $p < 0,001$), indicando que los estudiantes con mayor dominio gramatical tienden a demostrar un mejor desempeño oral. Los hallazgos pueden motivar a docentes a desarrollar prácticas de enseñanza dirigidas a mejorar la producción oral de los estudiantes. Futuros estudios deberían incorporar datos cualitativos para una comprensión más profunda de las variables de estudio.

Palabras claves: *competencia comunicativa, conocimiento gramatical, expresión oral, estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera de secundaria*

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INTRODUCTION

In Ecuador, the development of communicative competence has been considered one of the most important objectives in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). Within this framework, speaking skills and grammar knowledge are regarded as fundamental components that support meaningful and effective communication, as grammar provides the structural basis for producing coherent and intelligible sentences, while speaking is the productive skill through which students express their ideas and interact in real-life contexts (Harmer, 2015). Therefore, integrating grammatical knowledge and speaking skills promote effective language performance.

However, according to the researcher's experience, during the internships, it was observed that many students face some grammatical difficulties, such as using verbs in the past tense, maintaining correct word order, and selecting appropriate question words. These challenges may hinder their oral performance, as it was also observed that some students have difficulties with pronunciation, limited vocabulary, frequent pauses when speaking, and a limited capacity to produce and understand simple sentences. Furthermore, although some students demonstrate acceptable grammatical usage in written tasks, they fail to transfer this knowledge to oral production. This issue has also been highlighted in the studies of Ulfa et al. (2022) and Zam et al. (2021), who observed that speaking difficulties stem from students' limited ability to apply grammatical rules during oral communication. Given this context, grammar knowledge and speaking skills were selected as the focus of this investigation.

In line with these concerns, a growing number of international studies have explored the relationship between these variables in different contexts. For example, two studies conducted with university students in Indonesia found a moderate positive correlation, suggesting that grammatical knowledge supports, but does not alone determine, communicative success (Zam et al., 2021; Hanafi & Septiana, 2024). Similarly, studies with

upper secondary school students showed a strong and moderate correlation, respectively. However, they noted that the greatest difficulty in speaking skills was fluency, and in grammar, most students struggled to order words to form sentences. (Ulfa et al., 2022; Tenio, 2024). Other studies have revealed positive correlations, indicating that grammar can be a predictive factor in students' oral performance (Tiana et al., 2023; Umami et al., 2024). Taken together, the available evidence emphasizes that, although grammar knowledge plays an important facilitating role, oral skills may depend on the interaction of multiple factors.

Despite these valuable contributions, a research gap remains in understanding the correlation of grammar knowledge and speaking skills among Ecuadorian EFL learners at the low secondary level, particularly in semi-urban contexts such as Marcabeli in El Oro [city](#). Most existing studies have focused on university or upper secondary school learners, leaving aside the analysis of younger students who are still in the process of consolidating their foundational language skills.

Expanding on the educational context, Marcabeli, a town located in the southern part of El Oro [city](#) in Ecuador, is characterized by a semi-urban and predominantly agricultural economy, where access to educational resources and extracurricular language exposure may be limited compared to larger cities. The only public secondary school in this area follows the national curriculum established by the Ministry of Education, which emphasizes communicative competence in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). However, classrooms often face challenges such as limited instructional hours, and insufficient opportunities for authentic language practice, which may lead to deficiencies in students' language development.

Therefore, this investigation offers empirical evidence regarding how grammar knowledge relates to speaking skills in this Ecuadorian context. The findings can also serve as a guide for designing specific interventions, plans, and teaching strategies that foster the improvement of

grammar and speaking skills, thereby supporting students to communicate effectively in English.

Building on this foundation, the first variable addressed in this study is speaking skills in EFL. As it is well known, this skill is a fundamental pillar in language learning, since its purpose is to convey a message through the verbal transmission of ideas, thoughts, and feelings to other people (Aisyah, 2023). Similarly, the Ecuadorian National Curriculum highlights speaking as a core practice in the development of oral production and emphasizes its relationship with other language skills (Ministerio de Educación, 2016). As the most demanding to acquire, this skill enables speakers to produce and receive language, thereby facilitating social interaction (Zam et al., 2022). Therefore, it is defined as the verbal action produced by a person to communicate a message to others. Based on Brown (2001), this study focuses on four components of speaking:

Pronunciation. It is the way in which a speaker expresses a language, and it is essential for effective and intelligible communication between speakers (Riska, 2020; Tiana et al., 2023). Conversely, incorrect pronunciation can alter the meaning and purpose of sentences (Saputri, 2023).

Vocabulary. It is a set of words used by a person to communicate and express their thoughts (Tiana et al., 2023). Also, it is considered a basic element to produce both the spoken and written form of a language, since it is not possible to speak or convey messages without vocabulary (Saputri, 2023).

Fluency. It is the ability to speak with confidence and naturalness, without pauses or self-correction (Brown, 2001). Similarly, Umami et al. (2024) define it as a challenging component in speaking that is characterized by the production of language at a normal rate and with limited interruptions in communication.

Comprehension. Putri et al. (2016, cited in Ulfa et al., 2022) state that it allows interpretation of information so that speakers' responses are accurate and relevant, also, it is important for improving or evaluating linguistic performance, both in written and oral form.

Regarding the second variable, Aisyah (2023) and Swan (2005, as cited in Dwipa, 2021) define grammar as the branch of linguistics that provides the structural rules that explain how words combine to convey meaning. It enables learners to construct accurate and meaningful sentences, supporting clarity and effectiveness in communication (Setiawati, 2022, as cited in Aisyah, 2023). From this perspective, grammar encompasses the structural norms that shape sentence construction. Consequently, mastering grammatical rules enables learners to recognize language patterns and understand and produce appropriate language, thereby enhancing their ability to comprehend what they hear, read, write, and speak (Hariyanti & Purwandari, 2022). Also, without this foundation, learners may feel insecure when expressing themselves, resulting in unclear speech (Ulfa et al., 2022).

In this respect, Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2016) propose that grammar consists of three dimensions: form, meaning, and use. Although these dimensions describe grammar in general terms, this research focuses on specific aspects relevant to the variables measured in the study.

The dimension of form concerns the observable characteristics of language that allow learners to recognize and produce correct sentence patterns (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016). In this regard, two aspects are directly related to this dimension:

Word order. This aspect reflects how subject, verb, and objects are organized to form meaningful sentences (Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia, 2016). In a similar way, Souadkia (2017) also defines word order as the sequence of words in a sentence. Therefore, understanding word order allows students to produce well-structured sentences that adhere to the syntactic patterns of English.

Past tense. Being challenging for many beginner students, this type of tense consists of actions that began and ended in a specific period in the past (Azar, 2007, as cited in Darsah et al., 2024).

The dimension of meaning associates a linguistic form with the meaning it conveys since two structures can express very different intentions or messages (Lee & VanPatten, 2003). In this study, the aspect associated with this dimension is:

There is/There are: They are also known as existential sentences, which express that something or someone exists in a particular place, and they are used to describe environments (Quirk et al., 1982; Azar & Hagen, 2017).

The dimension of use does not focus solely on form and meaning, but also on when to use it and why one construction is more appropriate than another with a similar meaning (Larsen-Freeman & Celce-Murcia, 2016).

Question Words. Greenbaum (1996, cited in Putri, 2020) explains that this indicator involves “questions that expect information from the interlocutor by using wh-questions” (p.24). In addition, each question word (what, when, where, why, who, and how) has a different purpose and directs the expected response, which are revealed as frequent mistakes when asking and answering questions (Silalahi, 2017, as cited in Putri, 2023).

In light of this, the present study aims to analyze the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among ninth-grade EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabelli, during the 2025-2026 school year. Based on this purpose, the following research question was formulated: What is the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners at a public high school in Marcabelli during the 2025-2026 school year? On this basis, the researcher also considered three sub-questions: What is the level of speaking skills demonstrated by EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabelli? What is the level of grammar knowledge among EFL learners at the

selected high school in Marcabeli? And is there a statistically significant correlation between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among EFL learners at a public high school?

This article is organized as follows: the introduction section presents the background and justification of the variables under study. The Materials and Methods section describes the participants, instruments, and methodological procedures. The results section outlines the main findings of the study. While the discussion section interprets these findings. The Conclusions presents the main conclusions, implications, and suggestions for future research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach because it gathered numerical data and examined the degree to which two variables are related (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

It followed a correlational, cross-sectional research design aimed at determining the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge at a single point in time. As noted by Creswell (2012), correlational research describes the extent of association between two or more variables, while cross-sectional studies assess this link within a defined population during a specific period (Levin, 2006).

This research was developed in a public high school located in Marcabeli, El Oro, Ecuador. The participants of this study were 33 ninth-grade students, approximately 13-14 years old, 19 males and 14 females, from a lower secondary school. A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used, which was justified by the specific characteristics required of the participants. This technique involves collecting data from a group of available individuals (Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, following the ethical principles of the research, it was first necessary to obtain permission from the District Education Authority and complete the required procedures to gain approval to enter the high school and administer the tests. Afterward, parental consent was obtained before the test administration, as they were still considered minors. It is also worth noting that, this research considered safeguarding the

anonymity of the participants and the educational institution. Finally, the participants are specifically English students at the A2.1 level in accordance with the EFL Ecuadorian curriculum, following the language proficiency standards set by the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación, 2016).

Moreover, the data collection instruments and techniques applied in this research included: First, the testing technique that was applied through the administration of two achievement tests as the instruments. In this sense, Hayati et al. (2020) test techniques served to evaluate abilities, assess learning outcomes, and academic progress, obtaining quantitative data. Therefore, speaking and grammar achievement tests were used to collect quantitative data to identify the speaking skills that the students have and measure their knowledge of grammar. In this context, according to Cizek (2004), achievement testing refers to the process of assessing a learner's acquired knowledge or skill.

In relation to the design of the achievement tests, it is relevant to mention that both instruments were aligned with CEFR A2 level. The test specifications were developed based on standardized Cambridge assessment formats appropriate for students' level, ensuring consistency. The first test assessed speaking skills in which students responded to four oral questions: three interview-style questions and one reading-aloud question, each containing two items. The questions were designed to measure the indicators of comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Additionally, it included a standardized speaking rubric, the design of which was adapted from Assessing Speaking Performance - Level A2 by Cambridge English (2019) to fit the context and the objectives of the study. The time to administer the test was a maximum of five minutes.

On the other hand, the second test assessed grammar knowledge, and it consisted of unscrambling, finding and correcting mistakes, matching, and yes/no questions, each of which included five items. These questions aimed to measure the students' understanding of

form (word order and simple past tense), meaning (there is/there are), and use (question words). The grammar test lasted 20 minutes and was supported by a scoring guide to ensure objective grading.

Another important aspect is to maintain the validity and reliability, both tests were adapted from the Cambridge English standardized assessments, ensuring alignment with the CEFR A2 level. Subsequently, the instruments underwent a content validation process through expert review, involving seven experts to ensure the tests' accuracy and suitability for the target population (Gay et al., 2012). The results of this process were analyzed using Aiken's V test, yielding a score of 0.9 out of a maximum of 1. This finding indicated a high level of agreement among experts regarding the relevance of the items, suggesting that the instruments effectively measured the intended construct. Based on the feedback provided by the experts, modifications were made to improve the overall quality of the tests.

In relation to the data analysis, it is relevant to consider that, as the study is correlational in design, inferential statistics were used to analyze and manage the quantitative data related to speaking skills and grammar knowledge. As stated by Creswell and Creswell (2018), correlational studies are essential for identifying statistical relationships between variables without manipulating them, thereby allowing researchers to conclude. Moreover, the data were organized into tables using JAMOV software to calculate measures of central tendency, which proved useful for analyzing the results obtained in the achievement tests.

Then, to identify the most suitable statistical procedure for the correlation analysis, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was performed to verify whether the data on speaking skills and grammar knowledge followed a normal distribution. This is usually suggested for studies with small to medium sample sizes, as it provides a reliable assessment of data normality (Field, 2018; Pallant, 2020). The analysis revealed p-values of 0.247 for speaking skills and 0.077 for grammar. Because both values were above the significance threshold ($p > .05$), the normality

assumption was met for both variables. Therefore, the Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationship between students' speaking skills and grammar knowledge and to test the hypothesis.

There is a relationship between students' "speaking skills" and students' "grammar knowledge".

The interpretation of correlation levels followed the guidelines proposed by Akoglu (2018) in A User's Guide to Correlation Coefficients.

Figure 1. Guidelines for correlation coefficients.

Pearson Correlation Value		Descriptive Interpretation
+ 1	- 1	Very Strong
+ 0.9	- 0.9	Strong
+ 0.8	- 0.8	Strong
+ 0.7	- 0.7	Strong
+ 0.6	- 0.6	Moderate
+ 0.5	- 0.5	Moderate
+ 0.4	- 0.4	Moderate
+ 0.3	- 0.3	Weak
+ 0.2	- 0.2	Weak
+ 0.1	- 0.1	Weak
0	0	Zero

Source: (Akoglu, 2018)

Note: own elaboration

The procedure began by defining the study's scope, selecting the sample, and designing the achievement test appropriate for the participants' English level. These instruments were reviewed by seven experts to ensure content validity and subsequently improved. Then, formal permission was obtained from the District Education Authority and the selected high school. Once authorized, the researcher informed the participants about the purpose of the study and ensured ethical compliance by obtaining parental consent and student assent, guaranteeing anonymity through the process. Subsequently, the tests were conducted. The collected data were organized and analyzed using JAMOV software. Finally, the results were interpreted, which led to the discussion, and conclusions of the study.

RESULTS

Objective 1. To assess the level of speaking skills demonstrated by EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabeli.

Table 1. Central tendency of students' speaking skills.

Speaking Skills.	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Comprehension (2.5 points)	33	2.03	0.438	1.20	2.50
Vocabulary (2.5 points)	33	1.56	0.537	0.80	2.50
Fluency (2.5 points)	33	1.43	0.560	0.40	2.50
Pronunciation (2.5 points)	33	1.97	0.545	0.80	2.50
Total (10 points)	33	6.98	1.864	3.60	10.00

Note: own elaboration

Table 1 shows the scores of 33 EFL students in a speaking test designed to measure the level of preexisting knowledge of “comprehension”, “vocabulary”, “fluency”, and “pronunciation”, each scored out of 2.5 points, indicating a total of 10 points.

In this regard, “comprehension” obtained the highest average score, while “fluency” registered the lowest of the four speaking skills. In the case of “comprehension”, which got the highest mean score (2.03/2.5), it was observed that students were more capable of producing accurate and relevant responses, demonstrating a clear understanding of the questions. The standard deviation of 0.438 suggests moderate consistency among participants. Furthermore, the range of 1.20 to 2.50 points suggests that, although “comprehension” was the most prominent element, some students still require improvement. In contrast, “fluency” received the lowest mean score (1.43/2.5). The standard deviation (0.560) indicates considerable moderate variation in the levels of “fluency” demonstrated by students, and a wide range of 0.40 to 2.50 reveals that while some students had considerable difficulty producing simple sentences fluently and without frequent pauses, a few were able to perform very well. These findings imply that “fluency” is one of the most challenging

components of speaking skills for this group and requires specific educational support.

In terms of “vocabulary” and “pronunciation”, both indicators showed intermediate performance. Vocabulary scored an average of 1.56/2.5, while “pronunciation” scored 1.97/2.5, making it the second-highest score after “comprehension”. These results imply that, while “pronunciation” appeared slightly stronger than “vocabulary”, both areas still require attention to ensure that students can effectively express their thoughts or ideas.

Overall, the mean total score for speaking skills was 6.98 out of 10, representing 69.8% of the maximum score. The standard deviation of 1.864 reveals a wide variation in speaking skills elements, meaning that while some students achieved high levels of performance, others scored much lower. Total scores ranged from 3.60 to 10 points, indicating that although a few students achieved the maximum score, a considerable number demonstrated limited competence.

Objective 2. To measure the level of grammar knowledge among EFL learners at the selected high school in Marcabeli.

Table 2. Central tendency of students’ grammar knowledge.

Grammar Knowledge	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Word order (2.5 points)	33	1.92	0.547	0.50	2.50
Past tense (2.5 points)	33	1.52	0.667	0.00	2.50
There is/There are (2.5 points)	33	1.64	0.653	0.00	2.50
Question words (2.5 points)	33	1.79	0.500	1.00	2.50
Total (10 points)	33	6.86	2.044	3.00	10.00

Note: own elaboration

Table 2 provides the scores obtained from the 9th-grade grammar test aimed at assessing their knowledge of four grammatical components: “word order”, “past tense”, “there is/there

are”, and “question words”, each evaluated on a scale of 2.5 points, reaching a total score out of 10 points.

From the four grammar indicators, “word order” achieved the highest mean score (1.92/2.5), while “past tense” recorded the lowest (1.52/2.5). Concerning “word order”, the results show that, in general, students performed well, with an average score close to two points. The standard deviation of 0.547 indicates moderate variation around the mean, suggesting that some students still struggle to form correct grammatical structures. Scores ranged from 0.50 to 2.50, meaning that while some students achieved the maximum score, others struggled to produce well-structured sentences.

On the contrary, the “past tense”, which had the lowest performance with an average score of 1.52/2.5, revealed that students had difficulty using verbs in their correct past tense forms. In addition, the standard deviation of 0.667 and the range of 0.00 to 2.5 indicate that some students were unable to produce a single correct answer, while others achieved the maximum score.

Regarding “there is/there are” and “question words”, both indicators showed intermediate performance. Students scored an average of 1.64/2.5 on “there is/there are” and 1.79/2.5 on “question words”. These results imply that, although most students showed partial mastery, a considerable number still needed specific support to use these indicators.

All in all, the average total score for grammar knowledge was 6.86 out of 10, which is 68.6% of the total score. The standard deviation of 2.044 shows a considerable difference in how well students did overall in grammar. Total scores ranged from 3 to 10 points, meaning that while some students achieved the maximum score, others demonstrated limited grammatical knowledge.

Objective 3. To determine the correlation between speaking skills, and grammar knowledge among EFL learners at a public high school.

Table 3. Normality test Shapiro-Wilk, Speaking skills and grammar knowledge.

	N	W	p
Grammar Knowledge	33	0.942	0.077
Speaking Skills	33	0.959	0.247

Note: own elaboration

After presenting the results for speaking skills and grammar knowledge, Table 3 reports the Shapiro-Wilk normality test conducted to determine whether the data from both variables followed a normal distribution. As shown in the table, the grammar scores obtained a p value of 0.077, whereas the total speaking scores produced a p value of 0.247. Since both values are higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05, the results indicate that the distributions of grammar knowledge and speaking performance can be considered statistically normal. Consequently, given that the data met the normality assumption, a parametric test, specifically, the Pearson correlation coefficient, was selected to examine whether there is a significant relationship between the two variables. The correlation analysis was therefore conducted based on the following hypothesis.

Null Hypothesis (H_0):

There is no relationship between students' "speaking skills" and students' "grammar knowledge".

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1):

There is a relationship between students' "speaking skills" and students' "grammar knowledge".

Hypothesis test

Table 4. Pearson correlation between “speaking skills” and “grammar knowledge”.

	Speaking skills
Speaking skills	—
Grammar knowledge	0.846***

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

A positive and statistically significant correlation (0.846, $p < 0.001$) was found between students' grammar knowledge and their speaking skills, indicating that higher levels of grammar knowledge are associated with better speaking performance. Given that the correlation is strong, positive, and statistically significant, the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

DISCUSSION

This study analyzed the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among ninth-grade EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabeli during the 2025–2026 school year, using a quantitative correlational, cross-sectional design. To address this objective, the study sought to answer the following questions:

What is the level of speaking skills demonstrated by EFL learners at a public high school in Marcabeli?

Findings indicate a moderate level of speaking skills with a total mean score of 6.98 out of 10 points. The weakness in “fluency” suggests that students may struggle with real-time communication, which is consistent with research highlighting “fluency” as a cognitively demanding component of oral production (Umami et al., 2024; Ulfa et al., 2022; Tenio, 2024). While comprehension appears stronger, that imbalance between understanding and production may reflect limited exposure to communicative practice.

What is the level of grammar knowledge among EFL learners at the selected high school in Marcabeli?

The findings revealed a moderate level of grammar knowledge with an average of 6.86 points. The weakness in “past tense” suggests insufficient consolidation of verb forms, a frequent difficulty among beginner students (Azar, 2007, as cited in Darsah et al., 2024). In contrast, the study by Ulfa et al. (2022) identified word order as the most challenging aspect of grammar, whereas in the present study, word order was the strongest component.

Is there a statistically significant correlation between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among EFL learners at a public high school?

As reported in the Results section, there was a strong positive and statistically significant correlation between the variables, which suggests that grammar knowledge plays a substantial role in oral performance. These results are similar to findings from previous studies, which report that grammar knowledge contributes meaningfully to speaking performance (Ulfa et al., 2022; Tenio, 2024). Although some studies found moderate correlations (Zam et al., 2021; Hanafi & Septiana, 2024), the general pattern in the literature supports the idea that better grammar knowledge is associated with clearer, more accurate oral expression.

However, this connection may have been influenced by attendance at language courses, participation in English clubs, or receiving extra tutoring, which may enhance their speaking skills beyond the classroom curriculum. For this reason, teachers should incorporate many opportunities for practicing both variables in their lessons in meaningful ways.

Furthermore, this study presented some limitations. First, the participants belonged to a specific geographic and educational sector; for that reason, the results cannot be generalized to other contexts. In addition, the quantitative approach of this study limited the scope of the phenomenon, as it did not incorporate qualitative information that could have enriched the

interpretation of the results. Another challenge was the difficulty of accessing a public institution due to administrative procedures designed to ensure student safety. Finally, as this study followed a cross-sectional type of research, it did not run an intervention to improve students' results.

In light of this, it is recommended that the study population be expanded to include institutions from different contexts in order to improve the generalizability of the findings. Similarly, future research could adopt a mixed approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between grammar and oral skills. It is also suggested to have an early contact with the district to complete the processes on time and not hinder the activities to be carried out in the institution. Finally, it is recommended to implement pedagogical interventions that help students improve the results obtained in the tests.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study was designed to analyze the relationship between speaking skills and grammar knowledge among English as a Foreign Language learners at a public high school in Marcabelli, 2025-2026 school year. The findings reveal that students demonstrated a moderate level of proficiency in both variables. In speaking, they showed stronger performance in “comprehension” and weaker, in “fluency”. Regarding grammar, “word order” was the strongest aspect, while “the simple past tense” was the most challenging. Moreover, the results also indicate a strong, significant positive correlation ($r = .846$, $p < .001$) between both variables. The findings of this study indicate that although some students perform well in grammar and speaking, possibly due to external factors such as additional practice, others continue to have difficulties expressing themselves. These results highlight the need to prioritize meaningful practice of these skills in the classroom. Furthermore, the research contributes to the Ecuadorian EFL context by providing empirical data from a

lower secondary school. They can also guide teaching practices to promote the improvement of grammar and speaking skills.

The limitations include the results that cannot be generalized since the specific context of the participants, the quantitative data limited the interpretation of the results, and a cross-sectional type of research impeded the implementation of interventions for improvement. Consequently, future research should consider including participants from different educational settings, adopt mixed-methods approaches, and implement pedagogical interventions to improve students' performance.

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