

POP SONGS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ORAL ENGLISH FLUENCY IN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Canciones pop y el desarrollo de la fluidez oral en inglés en estudiantes de secundaria

Músicas pop e o desenvolvimento da fluência oral em inglês em estudantes do ensino médio

Evelyn Gissel Velez Mendoza *, <http://orcid.org/0009-0005-1648-4681>

Raisa Macias Sera, <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9618-2854>

Universidad Laica Eloy Alfaro de Manabí- Extensión Chone, Ecuador

*Corresponding author. email evelyn.velez@pg.ulead.edu.ec

To cite this article: Velez Mendoza, E. G. y Macias Sera, R. (2026). Pop songs on the development of oral English fluency in high school students. *Maestro y Sociedad*, 23(2), 1379-1389. <https://maestroysociedad.uo.edu.ec>

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Ecuadorian high school students exhibit limitations in their oral fluency in English due to traditional grammar-focused methodologies, lack of motivation, and insufficient attention to classroom diversity. Materials and methods: An exploratory-descriptive study with a mixed-methods approach was conducted at the "Cinco de Mayo" Educational Unit in the Chone canton. The population consisted of 120 students, with a sample of 40 first-year high school students and 3 English teachers. Semi-structured interviews were administered, along with a pretest to diagnose initial oral fluency levels through role-plays and oral reports. A posttest was administered after an intervention based on the systematic integration of pop songs selected according to student preferences and pedagogical criteria (rhythm, vocabulary, message, and linguistic level). Results: The pretest showed that only 15% of the students achieved a high level of oral performance, while 50% were at low or very low levels. Following the intervention, the post-test revealed a significant improvement: 45% reached a high level, and only 5% remained at a very low level. Students improved in pronunciation, intonation, vocabulary, fluency, and confidence. 87.5% felt that pop songs helped them learn English, and 82.5% felt more confident speaking after the intervention. Discussion: These findings are consistent with previous studies demonstrating that pop songs reduce anxiety, increase motivation, and facilitate language retention through rhythmic repetition, in addition to catering to predominant learning styles. Conclusions: The systematic integration of pop songs, combined with tasks such as role-plays and oral reports, is an effective strategy for developing oral fluency in English, provided that the diversity of learning styles is considered and songs appropriate to the students' level and context are selected.

Keywords: Pop Songs, Oral fluency, High School, EFL, ESL.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Los estudiantes ecuatorianos de secundaria presentan limitaciones en su fluidez oral en inglés debido a metodologías tradicionales centradas en la gramática, falta de motivación y escasa atención a la diversidad del aula. Materiales y métodos: Se realizó una investigación exploratoria-descriptiva con enfoque mixto en la Unidad Educativa "Cinco de Mayo" del cantón Chone. La población fue de 120 estudiantes, con una muestra de 40 alumnos de primer año de bachillerato y 3 docentes de inglés. Se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas, un pretest para diagnosticar el nivel inicial de fluidez oral mediante role-plays y reportes orales, y un postest tras la intervención basada en la integración sistemática de canciones pop seleccionadas según las preferencias de los estudiantes y criterios pedagógicos (ritmo, vocabulario, mensaje y nivel lingüístico). Resultados: El pretest mostró que solo el 15% de los estudiantes alcanzó un nivel alto de desempeño oral, mientras que el 50% se ubicó en niveles bajo o muy bajo. Tras la intervención, el postest reveló una mejora significativa: el 45% alcanzó un nivel alto y solo el 5% permaneció en nivel muy bajo. Los estudiantes mejoraron en pronunciación, entonación, vocabulario, fluidez y confianza. El 87.5% consideró que las canciones pop ayudan a aprender inglés y el 82.5% se sintió más seguro al hablar después de la intervención. Discusión: Los hallazgos coinciden con estudios previos que demuestran que las canciones pop reducen la ansiedad, aumentan la motivación

y facilitan la retención lingüística mediante la repetición rítmica, además de permitir atender los estilos de aprendizaje predominantes. Conclusiones: La integración sistemática de canciones pop, combinada con tareas como role-plays y reportes orales, constituye una estrategia eficaz para desarrollar la fluidez oral en inglés, siempre que se considere la diversidad de estilos de aprendizaje y se seleccionen canciones apropiadas al nivel y contexto de los estudiantes.

Palabras clave: Canciones Populares, fluidez oral, EFL, ESL.

RESUMO

Introdução: Estudantes do ensino médio equatoriano apresentam limitações na fluência oral em inglês devido a metodologias tradicionais focadas na gramática, falta de motivação e atenção insuficiente à diversidade em sala de aula. Materiais e métodos: Um estudo exploratório-descritivo com abordagem mista foi conduzido na Unidade Educacional "Cinco de Mayo", no cantão de Chone. A população foi composta por 120 estudantes, com uma amostra de 40 alunos do primeiro ano do ensino médio e 3 professores de inglês. Foram realizadas entrevistas semiestruturadas, juntamente com um pré-teste para diagnosticar os níveis iniciais de fluência oral por meio de dramatizações e relatos orais. Um pós-teste foi aplicado após uma intervenção baseada na integração sistemática de músicas pop selecionadas de acordo com as preferências dos alunos e critérios pedagógicos (ritmo, vocabulário, mensagem e nível linguístico). Resultados: O pré-teste mostrou que apenas 15% dos alunos atingiram um alto nível de desempenho oral, enquanto 50% apresentaram níveis baixos ou muito baixos. Após a intervenção, o pós-teste revelou uma melhora significativa: 45% atingiram um alto nível e apenas 5% permaneceram em um nível muito baixo. Os alunos apresentaram melhorias na pronúncia, entonação, vocabulário, fluência e confiança. 87,5% consideraram que as músicas pop os ajudaram a aprender inglês e 82,5% sentiram-se mais confiantes ao falar após a intervenção. Discussão: Esses resultados são consistentes com estudos anteriores que demonstram que as músicas pop reduzem a ansiedade, aumentam a motivação e facilitam a retenção da linguagem por meio da repetição rítmica, além de atender aos estilos de aprendizagem predominantes. Conclusões: A integração sistemática de músicas pop, combinada com tarefas como dramatizações e apresentações orais, é uma estratégia eficaz para o desenvolvimento da fluência oral em inglês, desde que a diversidade de estilos de aprendizagem seja considerada e as músicas sejam adequadas ao nível e contexto dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Músicas pop, fluência oral, inglês como língua estrangeira, inglês como segunda língua.

Received: 21/1/2026 Approved: 15/3/2026

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of learning a language is to attain effective communication through language, that is, to clearly convey the message to transmit.

People, from almost all over the world, need to improve their command of the English language for communication; but, the structural traditional way of teaching still prevails; that is why, teachers are searching for new ways of teaching and proposals to make, to allow the students learn better and develop fluency and accuracy as much as possible when studying English as a foreign or second language.

Traditionally, the focus was on grammatical correctness, with lessons heavily emphasizing grammar rules, often interrupting student speech, and controlled practice through repetitive drills (Setyowati, 2020). Derived from this, learners of English have limitations related to vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, psychological barriers such as anxiety and fear of making mistakes (Alrasheedi, 2020; Hannaoui, 2017; Purwati et al., 2023); lack of opportunities for authentic communication (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021; Chand, 2021 and of confidence negatively affect speaking engagement, as well as, pronunciation errors (Chand, 2021; Winnie et al., 2023, as cited in Sugiharto 2025).

Authors like Sera, R. M, et all (2025) consider that learners lack the enthusiasm, motivation, and interest to learn English conventionally and that textbooks are not very engaging for students; however, English learning can be performed in a more enjoyable and relaxed method: integrating English songs in the English lessons.

However, modern approaches prioritize meaning over form, aiming to enable students to express themselves and understand others in real-life scenarios. This involves creating opportunities for authentic communication through activities like discussions and roleplays, accepting errors as a natural part of learning, and encouraging risk-taking to build confidence (Moosa et al., 2025, as cited in Sugiharto, 2025).

Currently, education in Ecuador is facing significant challenges, especially in productive skills such as oral expression in English, and this can be appreciated at the "Cinco de Mayo" school located in an urban area

in the Canton of Chone. Here, high school students show insufficient learning of oral fluency in English; despite having studied for so many years, they are still unable to hold a basic conversation. This is often due to traditional lessons that focus on grammar and written activities that do not sufficiently promote oral production or communicative confidence, as well as not give attention to the variety of learning styles of the students, and do not provide activities for non-face-to-face learning.

As a consequence, the study, whose results are presented here, gives answer to the research question: How to favour the development of oral English fluency in first year high school students at "Cinco de Mayo", as well as, demonstrates the validity of the following research hypothesis: the application of a teaching strategy using pop songs in English at the school of the study promotes the development of oral fluency in high school students. Also, in this study, it was corroborated that music and songs have an impact on language learning development and foster an emotional and cultural connection with language.

This research had as its main objective to analyse the use of pop songs in English for the development of oral fluency in high school students in the Canton of Chone, particularly at the "Cinco de Mayo" school. It aims at establishing the main theoretical and methodological aspects of pop songs in the development of English oral fluency in first-level high school students, diagnosing the academic achievement in oral fluency, using a strategy based on pop songs in English, and evaluating the intervention with pop songs.

The population considered for this study was 120 students, while the sample taken for this research consisted of 40 students and 3 English teachers from Cinco de Mayo school

Therefore, the intervention to solve the problem was considered to be effective in strengthening students' learning and addressing the shortcomings in the process; thus, contributing to a more fulfilling, comfortable, and, above all, actively participatory educational environment.

Oral or speaking skill

Definitions of oral or speaking skills have been provided throughout different studies and times, such as the following:

To Akalu, S. M. (2020), speaking is considered the most important skill, since, it involves lexical, psychological, social and cultural components; and it is the skill by which individuals can deliver ideas to each other, exchange ideas and understand the world, pointing out that oral expression refers to expressing one's own emotions and ideas through the process of oral speaking.

On the other hand, Wang (2019) stated that the so-called oral expression refers to speaking out one's own thoughts, and make others comprehend these thoughts through oral expression and Kitjaroonchai, T. & Sukman, S., (2025) affirmed that the skills of speaking can be defined as a "verbal language performance skills that is characterized by the ease, accuracy and clarity in communicating well organized ideas in clear use of appropriate vocabulary.

According to Fedorenko et al. (2024) and Kitjaroonchai, T. & Sukman, S., (2025) language serves as a fundamental tool for communication. Speaking, a productive skill, is often considered particularly challenging for English as a Second Language (ESL) or Foreign Language (EFL) learners due to the complexities of mastering English structures for accurate and fluent oral production. Oral expression is to express one's own emotions and ideas through the process of oral speaking, and be able to communicate with others with this ability.

Authors like Sera, R. M et all (2025) suggest that role playing and oral reports can be effective tools for improving speaking skills in English by offering a variety of topics and contexts that can enrich students' learning experience. The research identifies critical factors that impact listening comprehension cues, such as pronunciation, rate of speech, idioms, grammar, and phrasal verbs, and how English teachers use different alternatives to improve listening skills in students and, therefore, fluency.

All these thoughts are considered to be the basis of this research, focusing on listening, which is the input, and oral fluency to express ideas and emotions in situations similar to those of our daily life.

Fluency

One of the major characteristics of communicative competence is fluency. Oral fluency is a specific feature characterizing the level of speaking skills, which manifests itself in the learner's ability to speak freely, without unnecessary pausing, and with the prosody of speech, syntax, and vocabulary range comparable with those characteristics of the speech of a native speaker Gorkaltseva, E., Gozhin, A., & Nagel, O., (2015)

One of the features that shows a lack of fluency in English learners is the excessive use of pauses within clauses, which interrupts the flow of speech. Pauses in syntactically inappropriate positions (e.g., in the middle of a spoken sentence) are interpreted as signs of hesitation or cognitive difficulties in processing language (Pisco, B. H., Navarrete, D. C., & Macias Sera, R., 2026)

On the other hand, oral fluency is the ability to speak progressively without thinking first. Having good fluency helps to understand what is being talked about. It is the union of several words in a single intonation. "Mentions that fluency refers to focusing on the content of speech to communicate as effectively as possible" (Shahini, G., & Shahamirian, F, 2017, p. 100).

Some authors, Gorkaltseva, E., Gozhin, A., & Nagel, O. (2015), consider that perceptual fluency reveals the level of the performance of mental functions such as thinking, perception, memory, attention, and a few others. Further on, perceptual fluency began to be regarded as relevant to the process of learning- a much broader process, having perception of information in its root and then followed by several mental operations for the purpose of digesting and assimilating perceived facts and, when necessary, producing new knowledge.

According to Assam, S., & Cherifi, B. (2022), oral fluency improves self-confidence and self-esteem, both of which are necessary for effective communication. Madhok 2018 cited in Assam, S., & Cherifi, B. (2022) adds that a speaker who lacks confidence is frequently hesitant and unsure about how to react during a discussion, which may frustrate and discourage the listener from participating.

In addition, the proper use of turn-taking, pronunciation, vocabulary, and rhythm would foster effective speech with limited hesitations or unnatural pauses. All these aspects are considered paramount for this research.

Pop Songs

"Pop songs" is a term derived from the English word "popular", which means liked and supported by many people. It is a type of song that takes between two and four minutes. It consists of a frequent sequence of lyrical passages accompanied by the use of special instruments such as electric guitar and other musical instruments (Azab, A. H. E. M., 2023).

For Murphey (2013), a pop song is a melody accompanied with a narration, a "text made for the enjoyment of a sociocultural group which did not participate in the production of the text". The author suggests that pop songs can actually include varying musical genres, as the popular aspect of these songs is not strictly defined in a musical analysis point of view, but rather in their success among consumers.

According to Carrasquel, O., & Canese, V. (2021)., a song is a very strong means of triggering emotions that contributes to socialization (a song is collective); appeals to the ear (one listens to himself while singing); engenders pleasure (reproduction of a sound, enjoyment of the rhythm) and helps to develop an aesthetic taste (expressing feelings and sentiments)" p. 108.

Carrasquel, O., & Canese, V. (2021) remark that the implementation of the use of pop songs is a strategy to improve students' speaking skills generating a high increase in motivation in the students. This study shows that incorporating pop songs into English lessons offers a creative and relevant method to link language acquisition with students' genuine interests. This approach not only enhances pronunciation and fluency but also creates a more enjoyable and less stressful learning atmosphere.

Among all the materials used in class, songs are of great value. Songs are compositions that contain vocal parts ("lyrics") that are performed ("sung"), commonly accompanied by musical instruments. The lyrics of songs are typically of a poetic, rhyming nature, although they may be religious verses or free prose. They can provide a substantial amount of auditory input, which is most important at the early language learning stage. Learning English through songs also provides a conducive atmosphere for students, who usually experience tension when speaking English in a formal classroom setting (Duong Thi Huong Lan et al., 2020)

Likewise, authors such as Kumar et al. (2022) point out that song and music can certainly be considered as one of the useful language learning tools that aid second language teaching without putting a lot of academic pressure on the learners. Hence, music and songs not only alleviate the stress linked to acquiring a second language but also establish an emotionally resonant atmosphere that aids in the retention of vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical forms.

In 2022, a study was conducted to show that traditional learning is the usual chalk and talk lesson using textbooks, exercise books, and workbooks in the classroom, without any collaboration, group work, or any other

conventional learning strategy Kumar et al., 2022). Often, student stress is due to traditional classes, focused on grammar and written activities that do not sufficiently promote oral production or communicative confidence.

On the other hand, Chand (2021) stated that the fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence were found to be the major problems faced by students when speaking English. This study demonstrates once again that there are factors that hinder the development of English language fluency in the classroom; therefore, it is believed that integrating pop songs as a teaching strategy would reduce these barriers, promoting more effective, relaxed, and motivating learning. This work not only demonstrates that incorporating pop songs into the classroom can significantly improve fluency, but also students' pronunciation and confidence when speaking English, and a differentiated teaching and learning process can be structured.

According to Assam and Cherifi (2022), music and songs for foreign languages are not only a useful resource, but they are also critical in generating a calm and inspiring classroom environment, responsibility, love, history, traditions, customs, and special qualities of spoken language; that is why, they are popular authentic materials to utilize in the lessons and as outside sources of learning.

Other factors affect student learning. In 2019, a study was conducted that highlighted that there are three factors that lead to language learners' anxiety, namely, communication apprehension, poor performance, fear of negative evaluation, and bad learning experiences (Cheng, 2019, p. 102). However, by identifying these components, teachers can create more pleasant environments so that students participate with greater confidence and improve their performance in oral language production.

Songs stimulate learning. Some authors, such as Kaswari et al. (2023), state that the impact of music on speaking skills is significant, providing a range of benefits such as improved pronunciation, enhanced memorization, and increased confidence in language learners. Incorporating music as a strategy in education is considered to be an effective tool, demonstrating that learning can be more active, dynamic, and interesting. Furthermore, not only can students learn, but teachers can also learn by integrating new activities into the classroom.

Pop songs are useful tools in education that significantly engage students and teachers. In 1993, research was conducted which highlighted that pop music is one way of involving young learners and their teachers in meaningful, enjoyable, and collaborative classroom tasks (...) Pop music is viewed as important to the success of these changes (Domoney & Harris, 1993, p. 234). This is something that can be done, considering that many teachers are not accustomed to incorporating activities related to pop music; however, it is all a matter of adapting to a new change that can contribute to both the educational and professional development of students.

Simanjuntak et al. (2025) demonstrated that the repetitive structure and melodic contour of the song enhance both retention; also, pronunciation practice, and this repetition not only reinforces phonological memory but also fosters fluency by encouraging learners to produce longer utterances rhythmically and confidently. He said that through repetition and melody, songs can improve pronunciation and fluency in the language. In other words, integrating songs with repetitive structures can be a powerful strategy for reducing anxiety and fear when speaking English, as well as strengthening auditory memory and helping to internalize linguistic patterns in a more lasting and meaningful way.

Other authors, such as Carrasquel and Canese (2021), said that music would become an interesting tool to develop many language skills in students, especially connected speech abilities, through repetition and effective exposure to English songs. In addition to enhancing language abilities such as pronunciation and fluency through the repetition of English songs, music also nurtures an emotional bond with the language. This link can boost students' motivation and self-confidence in speaking, as they acquire knowledge in a fun and organic manner.

While songs offer clear pedagogical benefits, effective integration into EFL instruction requires careful planning. Teachers may face challenges such as selecting songs suitable for learners' proficiency levels, working within time constraints, and lacking training in song-based methods (Bokiev & Ismail, 2021; Xi, 2021). Learners, too, may struggle with fast-paced lyrics or idiomatic language (Muhamad & Rahmat, 2020). Therefore, songs should be chosen based on learners' age, proficiency, vocabulary demands, and cultural relevance Mobbs & Cuyul, 2018.

As well, they contribute to creating inclusive, low-anxiety learning environments that encourage greater oral participation and reduce communication apprehension (Fuekfon & Thumawongsa, 2023; Kim et al., 2024; Saldiraner & Cinkara, 2021).

Diversity of students in the English classroom

In the classrooms, there is a great diversity of students, since every personality is a unique one with his/her own features. Nevertheless, teachers impart their lessons as if their groups of students were heterogeneous; they prepare the same activities or exercises for all the students. Thus, no difference among them is considered. And students are different because of their diversity of necessities, interests, aspirations, previous knowledge, learning and personal experiences, psychological characteristics, among other aspects.

Bearing in mind these differences, this author agrees with Ramirez Berdud, I., Faedo Borges, A., & Macías Sera, R. (2018), when stated in their research in adults' education, that there is need of implementing a differentiating methodology for the development of the students' oral communicative competence and they made a proposal including phases and tasks to teach English language lessons to their different students in the classrooms. As well, they pointed out that this should depart from the students' initial diagnosis to determine their learning styles and, according to those styles, to assign tasks for oral communication, of which two types of tasks have been taken: oral report and role play. These bases are considered to be necessary for this paper.

Learning styles in language teaching

In 1983, Howard Gardner offered to the world his theory of Multiple Intelligences and, since then, it is known that every person is intelligent, has one or more predominant types of intelligence and potential for the development of other types, so it is teachers' responsibility to foster them in their lessons. The types of intelligence first known and frequently found among the students were: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, kinaesthetic, naturalist, among others. Accordingly, the students have a preferred way of learning: their learning styles. Learning styles can be of various types: visual, auditory, linguistic, and kinaesthetic, among others.

Ellis (1985) argued that language learners vary on a number of dimensions: personality, learning style, motivation, aptitude, and also age. These dimensions are assumed to be significant contributors that determine the success or failure in acquiring the English language. One of these dimensions is learning style (p.110)

Thus, learning style is not really concerned with what the learners learn, but rather how they prefer to learn the materials. Furthermore, each person has his or her own best way to learn, governing how they prefer to receive and process the knowledge. Some learners may rely on visual images or presentation (visual), others prefer listening to music while learning or learning better through their hearing (auditory), and others may respond better to hands-on activities (kinesthetic) (Barbe & Milone, 1981).

Learning style refers to an individual's habitual and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Wang, 2011).

Since the learners differ in their preferences for certain learning styles, it will be important for an educator to know the variations of students on the features of their learning styles because the information about students' learning style preferences can help the teachers or lecturers become aware of the students' differences brought to the classroom (Wang, 2011).

Nevertheless, as Magfirah, T. (2018) confirmed, some teachers do not pay attention to the learning styles of their students; though, it is considered and believed that if every student has different preferred ways of absorbing information or knowledge, they have different achievements p. 110. This is precisely what is wanted to achieve with the use of pop songs in the English lessons, as a strategy for bettering the students' oral fluency.

METHODOLOGY

The research was exploratory and descriptive in nature. Exploratory research is defined as research that studies a new, little-studied, or highly novel topic and seeks initial information to better understand the topic, is the preliminary research that serves as the foundation for more conclusive research (Asika, 2004; Akhtar, 2016; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2016) cited in Olawale, S. R., Chinagozi, O. G., & Joe, O. N. (2023). Descriptive research seeks to show reality as it is by detailing and characterizing situations or phenomena. Therefore, this study explores a poorly systematized resource related to the use of pop songs in the educational context and describes their effect on oral fluency.

This research used a mixed methodology (qualitative and quantitative) in which interviews with teachers and techniques such as a pre-test and post-test were applied to analyse students' performance. The instruments

used were validated by experts in the field of English.

The type of study already conducted is field research. Data was collected directly at the "Cinco de Mayo" school, through direct contact with the first-level high school and their teachers in the institution. The population considered for research was 125 students, including 40 pupils and 3 teachers from Cinco de Mayo school.

The school does not have an English language laboratory; however, it has interactive whiteboards with YouTube connectivity and computers. So, it has the necessary conditions to carry out the research process.

For the pre-test, the teacher selected a song and asked the students to complete gap-fill activities and discuss the lyrics. During the intervention, which involved the implementation of a strategy based on pop songs, the teacher asked students to carry out several tasks, including listening for specific details, completing gap-fill exercises, repetition activities, and role-plays or oral reports as productive tasks to express their emotions and demonstrate their understanding of the lyrics. The post-test was conducted to corroborate the effectiveness of the intervention.

Selection Criteria for Pop Songs

Students were first asked to identify the songs they currently listen to most frequently. Among the songs mentioned were Set Fire to the Rain by Adele, Perfect by Ed Sheeran, You Are the Reason by Calum Scott, and The Prayer by Celine Dion, among others.

Based on students' preferences, several selection criteria were established. Rhythm and audio quality were considered essential to ensure clarity and engagement. Additionally, the vocabulary and the message conveyed in the lyrics were carefully analyzed to ensure they were appropriate for the students' age, aligned with the lesson objectives, and suitable for their linguistic level.

Furthermore, teachers' awareness of students' learning styles and classroom diversity was regarded as highly valuable when selecting complementary tasks and activities to support the use of the songs in the instructional process.

The data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). First, the quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were coded and entered into the software to ensure accurate statistical processing. Descriptive statistics were calculated, including means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages, to determine students' initial and final levels of oral fluency.

Additionally, data obtained from interviews were categorized and analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings. This mixed-methods approach allowed for triangulation of results, thereby strengthening the validity and reliability of the study.

RESULTS

Interview with teachers

An interview was conducted with the English teachers to gather their perspectives on students' level of oral communicative competence, the types of materials and activities commonly implemented in their lessons, and the instructional strategies used to promote speaking skills. Teachers agreed to incorporate role plays and oral reports at the end of the lessons; these activities were considered the basis for the pre-test assessment. The remaining classroom activities continued to follow the established curriculum and the prescribed textbook. It is important to note that the researcher did not influence the teachers' responses at any stage of the interview process.

All participating teachers (100%) agreed that, although students had received English as a foreign language instruction for several years, they still demonstrated significant difficulties in oral communication. These challenges were evident when students attempted to speak individually, in pairs, or in groups. According to the teachers, learners frequently exhibited fear of speaking, limited fluency, and insufficient vocabulary, which hindered effective oral interaction.

Furthermore, the teachers acknowledged that the materials and activities used in their classes were "not sufficiently motivating" and lacked variety. They reported that their teaching practices tended to be repetitive and largely dependent on the curriculum guidelines and the textbook. They also indicated that Task-Based Language Teaching had not been systematically implemented in their instructional practice.

In addition, the teachers recognized that "they possessed limited knowledge regarding the application

of Task-Based Teaching". As a result, they felt inadequately prepared to design and implement task-based activities independently. Nevertheless, they expressed "willingness to incorporate role plays, oral reports, and task-oriented activities during the study, taking into consideration students' predominant learning styles and multiple intelligences", such as interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical, and kinesthetic.

These findings highlight the importance of addressing classroom diversity in language teaching, particularly in the development of oral fluency. Emotional factors such as fear, anxiety, and low self-confidence play a crucial role in students' oral performance; therefore, pedagogical strategies that consider affective variables and individual differences are essential to achieving improved communicative outcomes.

Students' interview

An interview was conducted with the 40 students to identify their perceptions of their oral English level, learning preferences, and attitudes toward the use of pop songs in English classes.

Table 1 Students' perceptions of oral English proficiency and learning preferences (n = 40)

The findings indicate that all the students (100%) agreed that they have serious difficulties communicating orally in English, mainly due to fear of speaking, lack of fluency, and limited vocabulary. Additionally, they acknowledged that the materials and activities usually employed are not sufficiently motivating and tend to be repetitive, following mainly the textbook and curriculum guidelines.

The results reveal that 70% of students perceived their oral English level as low, while 95% expressed a strong desire to improve, mainly to "speak without fear," "pronounce better," and "talk more fluently," using their own words rather than technical terminology.

They expressed a willingness to use songs for learning the language

Student Diagnosis (Pre-Test)

The diagnostic activities consisted of a role-play and an oral report based on the content of the material listened to during the lesson. In addition, students were asked to explain why they liked the selected song.

Students were allowed to choose the activity they preferred. Accordingly, they organized themselves into pairs or trios, although individual work was also permitted. This decision was grounded in the consideration of their learning styles and dominant types of intelligence, thereby providing them with the opportunity to select the task that best suited their strengths and preferences.

Students with a linguistic learning style tend to prefer reading and writing, thinking in words, producing reports, and engaging in storytelling or language-based games. For this reason, they felt comfortable developing tasks such as role-plays and oral reports, which required verbal expression and structured discourse.

Learners with a logical-mathematical style typically enjoy reasoning, problem-solving, calculating, and thinking conceptually. Through role-plays and oral reports, they were able to analyze communicative situations and collaboratively interpret the message conveyed in the song lyrics.

Students characterized by a musical learning style tend to think in terms of rhythm and melody, and they often use music as a tool for learning. Consequently, they responded positively to English lessons that integrated popular songs to foster listening and speaking skills, and they showed strong engagement in both role-plays and oral reports.

Finally, students with strong interpersonal abilities demonstrated a preference for collaborative learning. Their capacity to relate to and interact with others made them particularly inclined toward pair and group work. As a result, they predominantly selected role-plays, which allowed for meaningful interaction and cooperative communication.

Pre-Test Results (Role Playing and Oral Report)

Performance was assessed using a 0–10 scale, considering pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and coherence.

Table 2 Pre-test oral performance results (n = 40)

The results indicate that only 15% of students achieved a high level of oral performance, demonstrating acceptable fluency and comprehension. Of the totality of students, 35% reached a medium level, showing

partial control of oral production but frequent pauses and pronunciation errors. Conversely, 50% of students fell into low or very low categories, evidencing serious difficulties in fluency, vocabulary use, and confidence when speaking English.

Excellent listening comprehension, considering that they should understand details and specific aspects of the text, such as sentences and words, in addition to showing a deep and complete understanding of the auditory material. Achieving a score of 7-8 points.

Post-Test Results (After the Teaching Strategy)

After the systematic integration of pop songs, repetition, and task-based activities, students completed a post-test using the same evaluation criteria.

Table 3 Post-test oral performance results (n = 40)

The post-test results show a significant improvement in students' oral fluency. The percentage of students in the high-performance level increased from 15% to 45%, while those in the very low category decreased from 20% to 5%. Students demonstrated better pronunciation, greater lexical range, improved fluency, and increased confidence during oral production.

Comparative Analysis of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results

Table 4 Comparison of pre-test and post-test results

This comparison confirms that the teaching strategy using pop songs had a positive and measurable impact on the development of students' oral English fluency.

DISCUSSION

As it has been stated all through this paper and by analysing the results of the pre-test, students in high school in Ecuador have a limited level of English oral skill because, principally, they are taught in a traditional way. In this process, the students are not involved in motivating, interested, cooperative, and differentiated learning activities, exercises, or tasks. Teachers at "Cinco de Mayo" School, once they applied the strategy using the pop songs the students like, and through the results of the post-test, demonstrated how the students' oral skills were enhanced.

On the other hand, based on the findings, it is recognized that prior diagnosis of students is crucial to identify their current levels, and it showed that in spite of those students demonstrated a good development of the oral skill, there is a significant proportion who require additional support. This underscores the need for activities that are personalized to different levels of tasks and the students' learning styles.

Finally, it is essential to reiterate that the use of songs supported by tasks that promote confidence, motivation, interaction, cooperation, the consideration of the students' predominant types of intelligence, and their learning styles, all contribute to the development of English oral fluency.

These results are related to those of Sera, R. M et al (2025) who suggest that role playing and oral reports can be an effective tool for improving listening comprehension skills in English by offering a variety of topics and contexts that can enrich students' learning experience. The research identifies critical factors that impact listening comprehension cues, such as pronunciation, rate of speech, idioms, grammar, and phrasal verbs, and how English teachers can use alternatives to improve listening skills and therefore fluency

Kaswari et al. (2023) state that the impact of music on speaking skills is significant, providing a range of benefits such as improved pronunciation, enhanced memorization, and increased confidence in language learners that will finally allow them to speak more fluently.

Other studies, like Lo (2024), pointed out that English pop songs have important learning advantages, such as themes that students love, such as loneliness, friendship, adventure, love, and fantasy, which can soothe the hearts of students in a rapidly changing society, ease their tensions from the pressure of school work, and stimulate their motivation to learn. The author considers that many verses of popular English songs need to be sung over and over again and that after repeating a few times, students can usually memorize the lyrics and utter them easily, which would increase their sense of accomplishment in learning. This shows coincidence

with the findings of this research and the strategy of using songs to foster fluency.

CONCLUSIONS

At present-day times, English oral skills should be improved and strengthened, mainly by using motivating materials like songs. The main challenge of this study was to demonstrate how pop songs can be incorporated as a teaching strategy to improve students' fluency, explain the factors that influence the development of fluency, and highlight the shortcomings in the learning of oral fluency in English among high school students.

Popular songs have a good effect on oral proficiency, according to the findings of the current study. Meanwhile, it is reported that the students have a positive view of the curriculum. They also note that it has more benefits than drawbacks. Listening to songs, filling in the blanks, discussing the subjects covered in each song, and self-recording, role-playing, and oral reports are some of the actions that learners engage in throughout the strategy implementation.

The research project is entirely feasible because it has the institutional support of the school "Cinco de Mayo." In addition, pop songs are highly accessible materials, and the proposal can be replicated in other educational settings throughout the country.

Its results will apply to improving English teaching methodologies and strategies, as well as being used to design teaching materials based on pop songs, role playing, oral reports, and other types of tasks to strengthen methodological innovation and policies in English language teaching curricula. Accordingly, this author also searched on the use of task-based teaching and pop songs as part of a differentiating methodology for the teaching of listening comprehension lessons and the attention to the diversity of learning styles of the students in the classrooms. It is suggested to include other tasks like simulations, debates, and round tables, among others, to improve oral skill.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Declaration of responsibility of authorship

We, the authors of the aforementioned manuscript, DECLARE that we have directly contributed to its intellectual content, as well as to the genesis and analysis of its data; therefore, we are able to take public responsibility for it and accept that their names appear on the list of authors in the order indicated. Furthermore, we have complied with the ethical requirements of the aforementioned publication, having consulted the Declaration of Ethics and Publication Malpractice.

Evelyn Gissel Velez Mendoza y Raisa Macias Sera: Literature review and article writing process.