MONTESSORI METHOD FOR STRENGTHENING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE IN YOUNG CHILDREN[i]

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Abstract:

This work aims to strengthen the communication skills in English as a Foreign Language of young children in Ecuadorian elementary schools. It used the action research method and a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The sample consists of 10 children of the second grade of elementary school and their parents. All they have permanent residence in the province of Manabi, Ecuador. The researcher team designed an educational intervention based on the Montessori Methodology to improve participants' communication skills in English as a Foreign Language. The educational intervention lasted 6 months and used the contains of the second grade of the elementary education curriculum of Ecuador. The instruments used for data collection were in-deep interviews, class observation, and the vocabulary acquisition test of Windi (2017). The results showed that all participants improved in 3-4 points their scores of English communication skills from pre-test in comparison to post-test. It concluded that 100% of young children that participated in this research improved their communication skills in English as a Foreign Language when supported the instruction with Montessori Methodology.

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Resumen:

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo fortalecer las habilidades de comunicación en inglés como lengua extranjera de los niños pequeños en las escuelas primarias ecuatorianas. Utilizó el método de investigación de acción y una combinación de enfoques de investigación cualitativos y cuantitativos. La muestra está compuesta por 10 niños del segundo grado de primaria y sus padres. Todos ellos tienen residencia permanente en la provincia de Manabí, Ecuador. El equipo de investigadores diseñó una intervención educativa basada en la Metodología Montessori para mejorar las habilidades comunicativas de los participantes en inglés como lengua extranjera. La intervención educativa tuvo una duración de 6 meses y utilizó los contenidos del segundo grado del currículo de educación básica del Ecuador. Los instrumentos utilizados para la recolección de datos fueron entrevistas en profundidad, observación de clases y la prueba de adquisición de vocabulario de Wendi (2017). Los resultados mostraron que todos los participantes mejoraron en 3-4 puntos sus puntajes de habilidades de comunicación en inglés desde la prueba previa en comparación con la prueba posterior. Se concluyó que el 100% de los niños pequeños que participaron en esta investigación mejoraron sus habilidades comunicativas en inglés como lengua extranjera cuando se apoyó en la instrucción con la Metodología Montessori.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera, material didáctico, motivación para leer y escribir, innovación educativa, lectura y escritura

1. Introduction

The changes in the government policy for education in Ecuador included English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction in the national curriculum from the second grade of elementary school to university studies in 2017. The main educational policy changes included (a) Creation of a national curriculum for EFL instruction, (b) implementation of EFL teaching standards, (c) improvement of teachers' knowledge to level B2, and (d) EFL instruction from 2nd year of basic education (Soto et al., 2017; Intriago et al. (2019). However, the review of the international Index of English Knowledge reported that Ecuador descended from position 81 to 93 among 100 countries around the world during 2020 (EF, 2020).

In this concern, the researchers of this work chose the Maria Montessori methodology, developed in *Casa dei Bambini* Children's House in 1907, expecting to make more natural EFL instruction. The Montessori methodology characteristics can motivate children to discover and learn EFL in a more natural process. Besides, Krashen (1985) affirms that acquiring a foreign language requires exposure to key contexts to stimulate children to learn a foreign language.

According to Donoso, Mirauda & Jacob (2018), the Montessori methodology directs the attention of children between three to six years old, challenging children to explore everyday life activities in diverse environments for promoting values such as collaboration, tolerance, respect, honesty, solidarity, and justice. In addition, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, and Froebel cited in Vico and Tobaruela (2019) argue that children have an innate potentiality for developing contact with others inside freedom and an affective environment. Thus, exploration and confidence are key elements that can help instructors to create better educational environments for acquiring a foreign language.

In addition, Paris (2021) affirms that researchers such as Vygotsky and Piaget stated that learners require to be exposed to more natural learning processes for improving learners' abilities for perceiving, producing, and using the target language on common problem-solving. Thus, EFL instruction can be fun and meaningful when teachers engage children when they use activities, material and topics considered interesting by the learners. As a result, children will have the motivation to participate and interact with others enthusiastically (Krashen, 1985).

The situation described justifies the execution of socio-educational research processes to contribute to the improvement of EFL instruction. Though the questions that guide this study are:

1. How can the teacher use the Montessori method to improve the EFL instruction of second-grade elementary school students?
2. What is the Montessori methodology contribution to the participants' EFL improvement?
3. What is the students' level of motivation for learning when they use the Montessori method?

This work aims to strengthen the communication skills in English as a foreign language of young children in Ecuadorian elementary schools.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Montessori Methodology

Montessori was a physician woman who took an interest in the education of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She recognized the limitations of the traditional educational model and proposed a framework that was implemented in schools for promoting experiential learning and social justice (Aktas, 2017). The Montessori methodology proposed that children can learn better when complex tasks are broken into several steps, following a logical order from simple to complex stages, from concrete to abstract thinking, and making students move only a little beyond their comfort zone whilst for preserving the ability to improve their knowledge (Feng et al., 2017). It is an educational method very practical which is capable to influence changes in the current societies (Aktas, 2017). It is focused on quality tasks rather than quantity. As a result, teachers assist to learners with a sensory-based teaching method, expecting pupils to enjoy more the process of learning. In other words, instructors use the

Montessori methodology using a holistic approach to enable their pupils to learn more effectively. In such circumstances, every learner should be considered as an individual who must not be guided and controlled all the time by an adult, they should be stimulated for learning (Faryadi, 2017).

According to Donoso, Mirauda & Jacob (2018) the Montessori method mainly underlines children concentration and focusing. It is also called "*polarization of children attention*". Montessori defines the polarization of attention as the key to pedagogy and the development of education materials for improving children's concentration and maintaining their attention on learning activities (Kayılı, 2018). As a result, children tend to score higher in academic and behavioural skills compared to their non-Montessori peers (Walls, 2018). However, the Montessori methodology remains as a very difficult methodology to be understood by many schoolers (Hiles, 2018), probably because, it is based on exploration activities.

The Montessori methodology offers to instructors and learners a multidisciplinary approach for solving people's everyday problems. It is an educational project-based learning and inquiry (Livstrom, Szostkowski & Roehrig, 2019). It emphasizes other teaching methodologies used in the EFL instruction such as Pupil-Centered-Learning and Meaningful Learning for allowing children to learn through their independent activities forecasting with prepared materials. Thus, it does not follow teachers' instructions or lessons (Mix, Smith & Crespo, 2019). In addition, other scholars refer to Montessori methodology as a positive influence from the past that introduced child-size furniture into early childhood settings and classrooms (Bone, 2019).

This method remarks the necessity of respect towards children under social exclusion risks, as well as those having a higher level of learning capacity, who also suffer exclusion. Thus, didactical tools developed with Montessori methodology are based on several manageable devices, which allow children to learn while enjoying the execution of a concrete activity (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2020). When children are in a stimulating learning environment, they can develop their abilities without barriers, a condition that contributes to achieving higher goals. For this reason, Montessori education provides complete child development, integrating cognitive, and social growth for children healthy and autonomous functioning (Macià-Gual and Domingo-Peñafiel, 2020).

2.2 Contribution of Montessori Methodology to Education

In terms of Montessori (1977), the idea is not to replace the adult world with a world in miniature, rather, such learning environments should bring the adult's world to the kids. Besides, the Montessori learning materials have an internal and an external purpose. They further the inner development of the child by providing a means to act in sensitive periods and under human tendencies. But they also aid the child in acquiring new perspectives in the exploration of the external world around them and do not teach facts. Instead, they make it possible. In consequence, it increases the child's capacity for learning.

To Montessori (2006), learning environments under this methodology offer children multiple opportunities to develop their thinking in accordance with the laws of nature. The three key components to consider are (1) a group with children of the same stage of development, (2) materials and activities to match children needs and work according to their stage of development, and (3) a trained adult who understands child development for building and keeping special environments to connect children with the materials and activities within a triangle with sides of equal importance.

Thus, teachers should let students express their preferences, and something, more importantly, let them be wrong and try again an activity if it is necessary. Montessori insisted on affirming that dominant teachers' roles had to be changed, and students should play a more active and dynamic role in their learning process (Espejo, 2009). Furthermore, in Montessori methodology, the term "freedom" does not mean that children do whatever they wish to do. Rather it means that instructors need to remove all obstacles which might hinder the child's "normal" development. It also means that the child is free to choose a place where to perform the work within that prepared environment (Schilling, 2011).

Thus, environments that adults have created are complexly organized and efficient. The division of labour to achieve maximum productivity with the least effort. However, it is the exact opposite of the way that children work to develop their capabilities. Each child works individually and joyfully with maximum effort and no regard at all for productivity or efficiency. This is directly at odds with the adult environment in which the child finds himself (Melo and Barbosa, 2014)

This concern has led teachers to think about how young people can acquire conceptual elements that favour the development of adequate skills to understand, interpret, act, and transform in their own contexts, since these are constantly changing and, to this extent, their learnings. Indeed, educational practices must be oriented to innovate both in the curricula and in the didactic models and understand the learner as a being full of knowledge that can be articulated to new knowledge, and in this way, promote a critical spirit and reflection (Melo, 2017).

The Montessori environment is a wide and open, orderly, aesthetic, simple, a real place, where each element has a reason for being in the child's development. The environment is proportionate to children, with low shelves and different measures of tables and chairs where children sit individually or in groups. The classroom is subdivided into thematic areas where the corresponding materials and bibliography are exposed and allow great freedom of movement (Ramirez, 2019). Besides, classroom materials are arranged in the reach of children, thus avoiding confusion, facilitating concentration, interest, and creating the sense of order in the child (Juice, 2019) because, its stimuli learners' attention which gives them the freedom to learn by themselves (Pérez-Pérez, 2020).

2.3 Cognitive Learning Process of a Language

According to John Locke, children are like a *tabula rasa*, a "*blank page on which the society writes".* In consequence, children developed would depend exclusively on experiences they live. In contrast, the Swiss philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that children were born as "*noble savages*" who developed according to their positive natural tendencies, if not corrupted by society (Papalia and Martorell, 2017). In addition, Jean Piaget's theory affirms that young children begin to learn about the world through their senses and motor activity during the sensorimotor stage from two to seven years old. It is characterized by the generalization of symbolic thought: language. Although children show a greater ability to handle language, they are not yet ready to perform logical mental operations. Thus, symbols help children remember and think about things that are not physically present. By age three, the average child knows and can use between 900 and 1,000 words; By age six, he typically has an expressive (speech) vocabulary of 2,600 words and understands more than 20,000 words. Due to formal education, a child's passive or receptive vocabulary will quadruple to 80,000 words in the time you get to high school.

The intricate nature of foreign language learning justifies the involvement of professionals, which is to say, people who understand the working of the process to the point that they can deliberately cultivate it in the educational setting. What should such a professional know apart from being a fluent speaker of the source and target languages of the learner, as well as a trained linguist and an expert in culture? (Dakowska, 2005).

2.4 English as a Foreign Language Curriculum for Second Grade of an Elementary School in Ecuador

National Curriculum Directorate as part of the educational policy has designed a new English foreign language curriculum that responds to the needs of the Ecuadorian context. This curricular proposal is for students from 2nd to 10th grade of Basic General Education (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2016, p.7) stated:

> *"The curriculum is the expression of the educational project that the members of a country or a nation prepare to promote the development and socialization of the new generations. The curriculum reflects a greater or lesser extent, the educational intentions of a country. It guides the execution of these intentions and verifies the achievement)."*

According to Graves and Garton (2017), the curriculum's approach informs about contains and methodologies to use in the teaching process. It is related to teaching goals, selection of contains, instruction sequences, teaching techniques and evaluation process. In the area of foreign language instruction, the curriculum integrates contains with non-native language techniques instruction (Calderon, 2018).

To Soto et al. (2017) the main objectives of the English as a Foreign Language curriculum are: To create a love of learning languages starting at a young age, to foster learners' motivation to continue learning English throughout EGB and BGU, as well as

work and beyond, by means of engaging and positive learning experiences. To develop the personal, social, and intellectual skills needed to achieve their potential to participate productively in an increasingly globalized world that operates in English (Intriago et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Karimi et al. (2019) showed that EFL learners groups find more accessible and more attractive classes when teachers use common objects used in everyday life activities. Thus, the implementation of changes in the teaching process demands of instructors be well-motivated, and available to create dynamic and enjoyable learning experiences (Wienecke and Damsgaard, 2020). Nevertheless, Hsiao and Su (2021) suggested that learning motivation refers to a kind of attitude in which students naturally and willingly participate in learning, and work towards the teaching goal and the internal psychological process set by the teachers. To Maulana, Ningtyas, & Nugraheni (2021), motivation to learn is a person's motivation to carry out the desired goal, starting from one's motivation to learn to be better than their enthusiasm results of learning activities.

Curriculum can be summarized as: *The communicative language approach:* language is best learned as a means to interact and communicate, rather than as a body of knowledge to be memorized (a) *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL):* a model used to integrate the learning of language with cultural and cognitive aspects of learning such that language acquisition serves as a driver for learners' development, (b) *International standards:* the curriculum is based on internationally recognized levels and processes of teaching and learning languages, (c) *Thinking skills:* learning English should support the development of the thinking, social and creative skills needed for lifelong learning and citizenship, (d) *Learner-centered approach:* teaching methodologies should reflect and respond to learners' strengths and challenges and facilitate the process of learning by supporting learners' motivation for and engagement with learning (Bailon and Rivera, 2021).

In addition, for both school levels, Elementary Education (EGB) and Secondary Education (BGU), the ELT area has been organized into five sections, or threads: (1) Communication and Cultural Awareness, (2) Oral Communication (Listening and Speaking), 3) Reading, 4) Writing, and 5) Language through the Arts. Each of these threads, in turn, can be further divided into sub-threads (Ministry of Education, 2016). About, the Communication and Cultural Awareness thread is comprised of two aspects: (1) Intercultural Awareness and Identity, and (2) Social Competence and Values, while the Oral Communication thread is divided into three sub-threads: (1) Listening Skills, (2) Spoken Production, and (3) Spoken Interaction (Mosquera, 2021).

3. Material and Methods

This research subscribes to the transformative paradigm. It uses quantitative and qualitative methods of research to collect data and information relating to the execution of an educational intervention that used the Montessori Methodology to improve the EFL

instruction in young children in the province Manabí (Territorial zone 4 of Ecuador) between 2020-2021.

The authors followed the recommendations of Avraham (2016) for the process of the information, the analysis of categories was supported with the software Atlas Ti 8v. The statistical analysis used the SPSS, v25 for the hypothesis test.

3.1 The Participants

The research team invited potential participants' parents expecting 30 children to be part of this research. The invitation was accepted by 20 parents of seven different schools. 10 students took part in the control group and 10 in the experimental group. They all attended the 2nd year of an elementary school in public and private institutions located in the province Manabí in Ecuador. See Table 1.

Table 1: The Participants

School	Type of school	Experimental group		Control group		
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Total
1	Private	0	2	1	1	2
2	Private	1	0	1	1	1
3	Private	0	2	0	0	2
4	Public	0	1	0	0	1
5	Public	1	0	1	1	1
6	Private	1	0	1	1	1
7	Private	1	1	1	1	2
Total		4	6	5	5	20

Source: Research Project Registers (2020-2021).

3.2 Instruments

The instruments used in this studying are the following.

a. Speaking Skill Rubric

This instrument was created *ad. hoc,* by the researcher team. This instrument assesses three elements (1) pronunciation, (2) speed and (3) intonation. The instrument was evaluated by a panel of experts composed of three professionals in the fields of EFL instruction and Psych didactics. These experts are adscripted to University Laica Eloy Alfaro of Manabí (ULEAM) in Ecuador. They advised concentrating the evaluation on the listening and pronunciation aspects using the scale 1-10 points. This rubric was used at the end of each session for monitoring participants' progress.

b. Vocabulary Acquisition Test

The instrument used is the Assess Vocabulary Learning in EFL created by Windi (2017). The version used in this study is centred on small kids and individual evaluation. It uses a scoring scale to determine children response levels: (a) totally correct, (b) almost correct, (c) acceptable, and (d) incorrect. The instrument was evaluated by a panel of specialists

in EFL instruction. They recommended using the same instrument in pre-test and post-test.

c. Class Observation

The instrument used is an adaptation of the Assess Vocabulary Learning in EFL created by Windi (2017). It uses a scoring rubric to establish the participants EFL levels: (a) Totally correct, (b) Almost correct, (c) Acceptable, and (d) Incorrect. This instrument was evaluated by a panel of specialists in EFL instruction affiliated with the ULEAM in Ecuador. The specialist recommended using the same instrument in evaluations for pre-test and post-test to execute a comparison of results.

3.3 Process

The process executed consisted of six stages.

- **Stage 1:** Participants' selection. This researcher team invited to 25 families to participate in the study. It was an individual invitation that parents accepted or refused voluntarily.
- **Stage 2:** Design of the educational intervention. This researcher team planned the educational intervention considering the contains of the EFL curriculum.
- **Stage 3:** Selection of data/information collection instruments. This stage included the selection and adaptation of the data collection instruments according to participants' age.
- **Stage 4:** Educational intervention execution. It consisted of 8 sessions based on the Montessori method. This educational intervention included pre-test and post-test assessments for monitoring participants' listening and speaking skills monitoring.
- **Stage 5:** It began with the in-depth interviews and focus groups carried out with the collaboration of the English teachers at the participating schools. In addition, the process included sessions observations for determining participants' acceptance of the educational intervention.
- **Stage 6:** Data analysis. It consisted of the analysis of the collected data. It allowed comparing the changes in participants' listening and speaking skills and vocabulary learning. This quantitative analysis used the SPSS v25.

4. Results and Discussion

The results are presented following the logic of the research questions that appear in the introductory part.

Question 1: How can the teacher use the Montessori method to improve the EFL instruction of second-grade elementary school students?

To answer the question here is presented a lesson plan to show the adaptation of Montessori Learning Methodology to the social conditions of the 2nd year of elementary school and EFL instruction in Ecuador.

About the answer to the question: How can the Montessori Method be adapted to the first grade of elementary school for EFL class?

Table 2: Plan of Intervention: Achievement and Observations

	Class contextualization
School grade	First grade of Elementary school
Method	Montessori method
Learning skills	Spoken
Objective	To teach basic English vocabulary to first-class of elementary-high school students through the Montessori method.

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	The colours.	- Colours of the Rainbow worksheet. - Cup Cake Colours worksheet.	Saying the name of the colours of different objects.
Class Goals	**Materials**	- Wall circle sheet. - Games. - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" game. - Play "Point at the Coloured Circles" - Play "Colour Stand Up and Jump"	
Saying colours.	- Papers. - Watercolours. - Colours pencils and crayons. - Paints. - Cards.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson students will be able to: • Say the mane of the colours. • Identify the colours of the Rainbow. • Use the colour vocabulary as an adjective.		
Observation	All students were so thrilled to be involved during the class, because of painting. It got them to be more active and their participations were accurate. Moreover, working in pair is a good path for final activities.		

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	The Alphabet.	- Alphabet song. - The alphabet sheet as a painting activity.	Saying the name of the alphabet with the song.
Class Goals	**Materials**	- Games to rewrite the letters with a marker. - Play "Point to the letters of the alphabet".	
Saying all the letters of the alphabet.	- Sheet. - Flashcards. - Colours pencils. - Paints. - Markers.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson students will be able to: • Identify the letters by listening to the song. • Learn all the letters of the alphabet. • Say the alphabet in order.		

Observation	The students were excited to learn the entire alphabet. Besides that, they really like to paint and learn the alphabet through song. We provide flashcards for them to recognize the letters of the alphabet. Finally, each student had fun singing, painting, and repeating the letters.

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	Family	- Finger family craft. - My family worksheet. - Family poster. - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" games. - Do "Students' Family Photos Time" activity. - Make and play with Finger Puppets.	Recognize the member of the family by calling their own ones.
Class Goals	**Materials**		
Talk about different members of the family	- Paper. - Paint. - Cardboard. - Crafts.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson, students will be able to • Identify their own members of the family. • Use the grammatical structures "Who's this?" "This is my" • Talk about how many members there are in their own family.		
Observation	They love making hand puppets. Also, they really love paint. This lesson provided the learners learnt faster when they manipulate the instruments or create their own material and link their mother tongue with the foreign one.		

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	Days of the week	- Days of the Week Scramble 2 worksheet. - Days of the Week Order worksheet. - Puzzle research worksheet. Game: "Wall touch" - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" game	Order the days of the week through Puzzle worksheet.
Class Goals	**Materials**		
Saying the Week's days	- Scramble. - Work sheet. - Colour paper. - Colour pencils. - Paint. - Pencils.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson, students will be able to • Learn the days of the week. • Put in order the day of the week. • Volve puzzle research of week's days.		
Observation	The learners love solving the puzzle research. Moreover, putting in order was a funny activity. As teachers, it motivated us to continue teaching them because the students wanted to learn much more through the fun way of doing the games and puzzles.		

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	Months of the year	- Months Order worksheet. - Months Scramble worksheet. - Game: "Wall touch"	Order the months of the year through Puzzle worksheet.
Class Goals	**Materials**		

| Saying the year's months | - Scramble
- Work Sheet
- Colour paper.
- Colour pencils.
- Paint.
- Pencils. | - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" game | |

Observation Report	
Achievement	At the end of the lesson students will be able to: • Learn the months of the year. • Put in order the months of the year. • Volve puzzle research of year's moths.
Observation	The learners love solving the puzzle research. Moreover, putting in order was a funny activity. They find it more interesting to learn with things that catch their attention and can acquire vocabulary.

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	Farm animals.	- Use farm animal puzzles for "play time". - Match up the farm animals' worksheet.	Recognize the image of the farm animals.
Class Goals	**Materials**	- Play "Put the animal on the flashcard". - Farm Animals Match worksheet. - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" game.	
Saying farm animals and the noises that they make.	- Flash cards. - Papers. - Puzzle. - Colours pencils. - Worksheets. - Images.		

Observation Report	
Achievement	At the end of the lesson, students will be able to • Learn the name of farm animals. • Recognize farm animals through their own sounds. • Colour the images of the farm animals.
Observation	Making farm animals sounds was the favourite that the fids love to do, also they "put the animals on the flashcard" was a funny activity. They love puzzles, in this case, we made some puzzles by hand, then we proceeded to tell them the name of the animal so that they could place it in the right space, we also gave it a touch of adrenaline, turning it into a competition to see who does it Quicker.

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	Zoo animals.	- Use zoo animal plastic toys for "play time". - Match up the Animals 2 worksheet. - Zoo Animals Match worksheet.	Recognize the image of the zoo animals.
Class Goals	**Materials**	- Play "Put the animal on the flashcard". - Play "Flashcard touch" and "The missing flashcard" game	
Saying farm animals and the	- Flash cards. - Papers. - Colours pencils.		

noises that they make.	- Worksheets. - Images.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson students will be able to: • Identify and say vocabulary about different animals that live in the zoo. • Recognize farm animals through their own sounds. • Colour the images of the farm animals.		
Observation	Making zoo animals sounds was the favourite that the fids love to do, also they "put the animals on the flashcard" was a funny activity. Another activity they learned in this lesson was colouring each of the animals already presented previously, where they felt comfortable because we let the student be creative in doing it.		

Skills	Topic	Performance	Evaluation
Spoken	The Fruits	- The Fruits match worksheet. - Use the fruit puzzle to "play" in which students must compete and do it in less time. - Fruit's crossword game.	- Saying the name of the fruits. - Puzzle worksheet.
Class Goals	**Materials**		
Recognize and say the different fruits.	- Worksheet. - Puzzle. - Colours pencils. - Crosswords. - Flashcards.		
Observation Report			
Achievement	At the end of the lesson students will be able to • Identify the correct name of the fruit. • Say the name of the fruits. • Put together The Fruits puzzle.		
Observation	Students learn to say each of The Fruits learned by them. The funniest thing was putting the puzzle in order and, knowing it was a competition, they paid more attention to them. Most of the students liked doing crossword puzzles.		

Source: Research Project (2020).

4.1 Participants' EFL Learning Progress

The researcher team developed two rubrics to evaluate objectively the participants' progress on the EFL acquisition process.

The instrument evaluates the participants' speaking skills. Therefore, the rubric allowed the research team to find routes for giving feedback to each student concerning the most frequent mistakes.

This rubric also allows encouraging participants to improve little by little their speaking skills without any fear of making mistakes in coherence to Montessori (2006). See tables 3A and 3B.

Table 3A: The rubric A

Criteria	Marks 10 points	Mark 8 points	Mark 6 points	Mark 4 points
Intonation	Able to use the language accurately on a level normally pertinent.	Control of the grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively.	Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	Errors in grammar are frequent but the speaker can be understood by the teacher.
Fluency	Able to use the language fluently on a level normally pertinent.	Can speak with a little fluency.	Can handle with confidence but not with facility social situation.	Stutter a lot.
Pronunciation	Excellent pronunciation is evidenced throughout the intervention presented in English.	The intervention was mostly in English, with marked errors in pronunciation and a few words in Spanish.	The intervention was in English and Spanish but speaking in English was not acceptable.	The intervention was mostly in Spanish, with no evidence of any effort to do it in English.

Source: Research Project Registers (2019).

Table 3B: The rubric B

a) Totally correct	(b) Almost correct,	(c) Acceptable	(d) Incorrect
Able to use the language accurately on a level normally pertinent.	Control of the grammar is good. Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy to participate effectively.	Can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.	Errors in answer are frequent but the speaker can be understood by the teacher.

Resource: Adaptation of the Rubric of Windi (2017).

Question 2: What is the Montessori methodology contribution to the participants' EFL improvement?

Table 4 shows the participants' achievement on the topic 'The alphabet'. Besides, Graphic 1 shows the participants' answers when they were asked about pronunciation post-test of the 26 letters of the alphabet in the English language.

For elementary students was a challenge to learn the alphabet in English. Nevertheless, they could acquire a noteworthy per cent through the application of the Montessori method. Process of correction in 9 of the 10 students. The -participants attended a public school without any previous instruction in EFL.

Table 4: Participants' Achievement - Session The alphabet

Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
1	5	15	+10
2	5	15	+10
3	5	15	+15
4	0	**5**	+5
5	10	20	+10
6	10	**23**	+13
7	4	15	+11
8	7	20	+13
9	3	13	+10
10	4	14	+10

Source: Project Registers (2020).

The family vocabulary was a significant result because the manipulation of their own material allowed them learnt fast, in addition to this, the new knowledge followed the meaningful learning path.

Graphic 1: Participant's Achievement in Session Alphabet in English
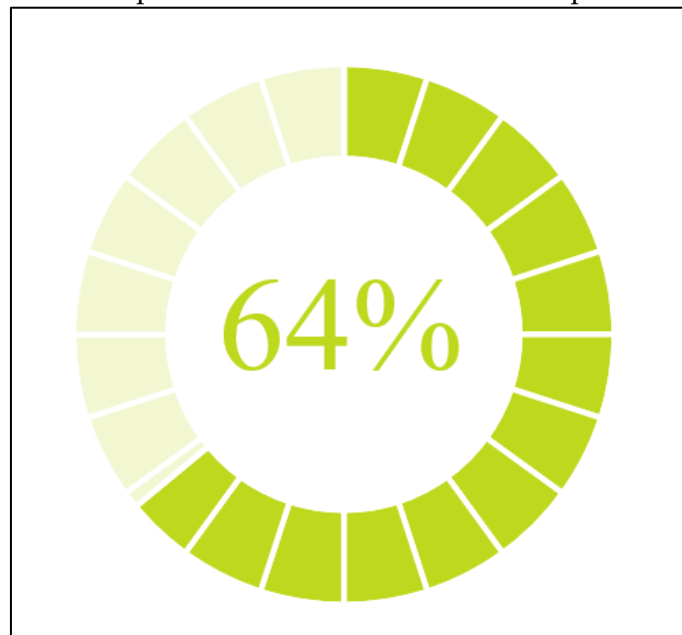
Source: Participants' Evaluation Records (2020).

The class performance engaged the students to participate and acquire the new vocabulary that is why the goal of it was significant because they learnt 85% out of 100% and it was a good sign for the rest of the classes.

Session 8: Students Fruits

Table 5: Participants' vocabulary acquisition

Student	Pre-test	Post-test	Difference
1	5	10	+5
2	4	8	+4
3	6	10	+4
4	3	7	+4
5	3	8	+5
6	4	9	+5
7	7	10	+3
8	4	9	+5
9	3	10	+7
10	3	9	+6

Source: Project Registers (2020).

The class performance hooked the students up to participate in learning new words in the English language in a more natural way. Thus, when children studied the lesson about the fruits, they smiled and tasted the fruit.

Graphic 2: Participant's vocabulary acquisition
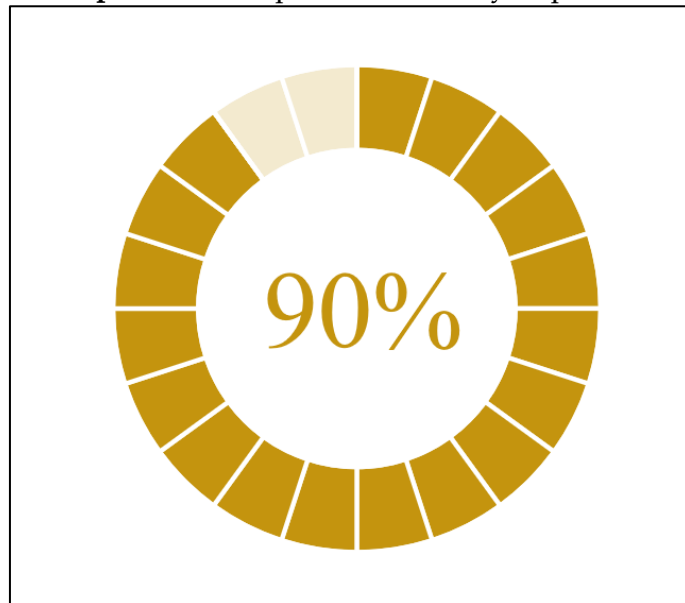
Source: Participants' Evaluation Records (2020).

Montessori methodology stimulate in children the interest in learning and be in attendance of the instructor explanations. It was probably the reason why the final percentage of vocabulary acquisition was very high. Children also learned about their favourite fruits. Finally, children remembered and put it into practice the vocabulary when they were evaluated.

The Montessori methodology represented a significatively positive experience for the participants on the English vocabulary acquisition. The results showed an increased

level of EFL speaking and listening going from 35% of correct answers reported at the pre-test to 82% of correct answers reported in the post-test of vocabulary.

Graphic 3: Contribution of Montessori Methodology
in Participants' Vocabulary Acquisition
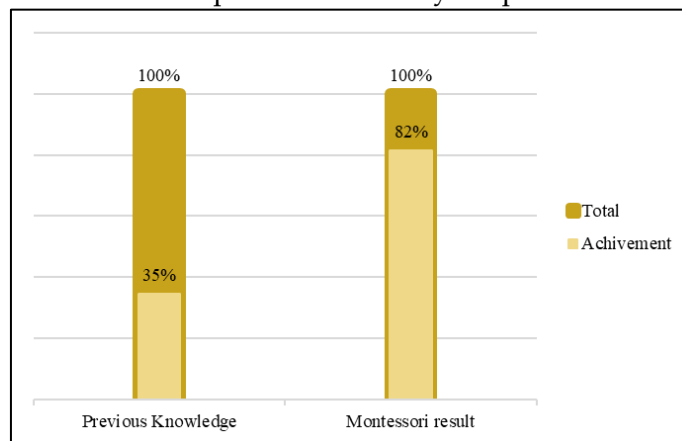
Source: Participants' Evaluation Records (2020).

The Montessori methodology represented a significatively positive experience for the participants on the English vocabulary acquisition. The results showed an increased level of EFL speaking and listening going from 35% of correct answers reported at the pre-test to 82% of correct answers reported in the post-test of vocabulary.

The data collected and observations executed in this research ratifies the position of Juice (2019), Pérez-Pérez (2020) Ramirez (2019), and Vico and Tobaruela (2019) when affirmed that Montessori Methodology stated as the most relevant elements to the freedom students have for developing their own process of learning.

English as Foreign Language instruction in Ecuador has undergone a series of changes in government policy. They have an influence on the teaching methodologies, contents, and objectives. Under this dynamic of permanent change, the constant concern of the teachers to make to teaching and learning process more durable, effective, and applicable has also changed. It is no longer enough to memorize a certain amount of information. When it is not possible to identify the use of the English language both in school and in everyday life. For that reason, teachers require to renovate methodologies for teaching (didactics) and the contents of the same (disciplinary knowledge).

Besides, when children worked in the "Children's House" they had a choice as to sit for example, on a chair by a small table or use the carpeted floor for their workspace. The adult in the Montessori environment does not schedule changes in activities for the children.

In the environments of learning proposed by Montessori children can work on the activity until the completion regardless of the time it takes, as well to repeat the activity as many times as the child finds it necessary. Freedom in a Montessori environment also means for a child to freely walk around and get a new activity when he/she so desires, and "greatest" of all, it means freedom to observe another child and learn by observing.

That is probably the way how the knowledge transfer operates between children, a situation that ratifies the position of Schilling (2011).

Freedom in education for Montessori was very important since the child needed to develop into a fully grown human and be able to take his/her place in society. As she so eloquently wrote, Education must foster both the development of individuality and that of society. Society cannot develop unless the individual develops, as we learn from observing. Most of our actions would have no reason for being if there were no other people around us, and we do most of the things we do because we live in association with others.

This concern has led teachers to think about how young children can acquire conceptual elements that favour the development of adequate skills to understand, interpret, act, and transform in their own contexts, since these are constantly changing and, to this extent, their learnings. Indeed, educational practices must be oriented to innovate both in the curricula and in the didactic models and understand the learner as a being full of knowledge that can be articulated to new knowledge, and in this way, promote a critical spirit and reflective incoherence to Melo (2017, 2020).

Finally, a game in the infantile stage is of great significance, because through this the child develops his learning; However, it has been an exclusive activity for children, ignoring the playful nature of human beings. Play goes beyond a breeding or biological function; This contains several meanings for the player and this condition allows them to carry out mental processes that favour the development of creativity, imagination, affectivity, motor skills and sociability at any stage of life, since it produces a transformation of himself and the environment, while he has great potential in educational contexts which ratifies the position of Melo (2020).

5. Conclusion

Based on the specialized literary review and the results of the empirical part of this study, the authors declare the 100% fulfilment of the proposed objectives. Montessori Method has the potential to bring about positive changes not only to our education system but to society at large. The question then remains, if the Montessori Method offers such potential for success why is it not used in every school across the world? One very simple answer is that not every educator is familiar with the Montessori Method. Those educators who are familiar with it try to use it or at least some aspects of it. There are many other schools, institutions, and research institutes that use Montessori-based programming for education, therapy, and research. Ecuadorian educational system is greatly influenced by Montessori's Method of education. Two major issues need to be resolved: (1) It is necessary that all educators who intend to use the Montessori Method, understand it thoroughly and not just in part. (2) It is necessary that all policymakers, and not just educators, put in the work, time, and effort it requires to implement it correctly, as it was meant by its creator Maria Montessori, and not as each individual interpret it. The weakness of this study is that the sample size does not allow for

generalizations. However, its results can be used to improve the current teaching processes of English as a foreign language in Ecuador and other Latin American nations. The scientific community is invited to carry out similar studies that contribute to the improvement of didactics and teaching methodologies of foreign languages.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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