

Improving Perceived Linguistic Competence in English (L2) through Dialogic Pedagogical Gatherings

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Abstract

Perceived competence is considered an essential predictor of learner's performance in language learning. It is therefore important to identify strategies that favor its development. This study aims to analyze whether the perceived linguistic competence of English as a L2 of pre-service teachers improves after implementing Dialogic Pedagogical Gatherings (DPGs), and if so, in which skills have there been improvements. Likewise, the study also pretends to identify which characteristics of the DPGs can favor this evolution. DPG is an educational strategy based on egalitarian dialogue among participants. The research involved 26 university students who participated in 8 DPGs during a whole academic year. Data was gathered qualitatively through an open-ended questionnaire and a focus group. The results show that the participants consider that they have improved their level of English after participating in the DPGs, especially in speaking and reading skills, as well as in pronunciation, listening comprehension, and confidence in using the language. They also identify some characteristics of the intervention as key to fostering this improvement: collaboration among peers, solidarity, reduced groups and classroom climate. The results with respect to this teaching strategy have implications for second language learning.

Keywords

Perceived competence, L2 learning, pre-service teachers, higher education, dialogic pedagogical gatherings

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Mejora de la Competencia Lingüística Percibida en Inglés (L2) mediante Tertulias Pedagógicas Dialógicas

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Resumen

La competencia percibida se considera un predictor esencial del rendimiento del alumnado en el aprendizaje de idiomas. Por ello, es importante identificar estrategias que favorezcan su desarrollo. Este estudio pretende analizar si la competencia lingüística percibida de inglés como L2 del profesorado en formación mejora tras la implementación de las Tertulias Pedagógicas Dialógicas (TPDs) y, en caso afirmativo, en qué destrezas se han producido mejoras. Asimismo, el estudio también pretende identificar qué características de las TPDs pueden favorecer esta evolución. Las TPDs son una estrategia educativa basada en el diálogo igualitario entre las y los participantes. La investigación contó con 26 estudiantes universitarios que participaron en 8 TPDs durante todo un curso académico. Los datos se recogieron cualitativamente mediante un cuestionario de preguntas abiertas y un grupo de discusión. Los resultados muestran que las y los participantes consideran que han mejorado su nivel de inglés tras participar en las TPDs, especialmente en las destrezas orales y de lectura, así como en pronunciación, comprensión oral y confianza en el uso del idioma. También identifican algunas características de la intervención como claves para fomentar esta mejora: la colaboración entre el grupo clase, la solidaridad, la reducción de grupos y el clima de aula. Los resultados respecto a esta estrategia didáctica tienen implicaciones para la enseñanza de segundas lenguas.

Palabras clave

Competencia percibida, aprendizaje de L2, profesorado en formación, enseñanza superior, tertulias pedagógicas dialógicas

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Self-concept is a cognitive construct (Garaigordobil & Berruero, 2007), complex (Munné, 2000) and evolutionary (Cazalla-Luna & Molero, 2013), that changes as the individual goes through the life cycle. Self-concept is considered one of the key factors in human learning (Marsh & Martin, 2011). It is defined as the personal perceptions of one's own abilities or skills (Erten & Burden, 2014) and has links of interdependence with others (Mead, 1934) as owes its configuration to the experiences lived in different contexts. Self-concept is made up of the following dimensions: emotional, physical, social, academic and familiar (Ríos et al., 2007). However, given its close relationship with self-concept, this study will only focus on the analysis of the academic dimension. Academic self-concept is one of the most relevant motivational variables within the field of personality that has the greatest impact on academic performance (Marsh & Seeshing, 1997; Pérez et al., 2008). Academic experiences of success or failure significantly affect students' self-concept (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In fact, there are numerous studies in the field that relate these two concepts (Amezúa & Fernández, 2000; Guay et al., 2003; Martínez-Anton et al., 2007; Pietsch et al., 2003) and the influence they have on each other (Erten & Burden, 2014). According to Sánchez-Romero (2010) the causality between academic self-concept and performance is possibly bidirectional. The student's view of his or her academic performance will affect his or her assessment of self. Similarly, beliefs about oneself will have a strong impact on performance (Sánchez-Romero, 2010).

As Pons (2004) points out, the academic self-concept varies depending on the relationship between the nature of the subject and the range of academic experiences encountered by students. Self-concept, is often considered to be composed of affective dimensions and perceptions of competence (Marsh, 1992). However, this study will focus on perceived competence to learn English as a second language (Hughes et al., 2011). Perceived linguistic competence refers to an individual's self-assessment of their abilities to perform tasks in a second language (Hughes et al., 2011). It has been identified as a critical factor influencing language learning performance, motivation, and the use of learning strategies (MacIntyre et al., 2003; Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014). Within the context of language learning, perceived linguistic competence is recognized as a predictor of performance, influencing learners' attitudes and strategic use of language. Additionally, research emphasizes that perceived competence positively impacts goal setting and motivation to excel, further supporting its relevance in education (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

Studies have shown that effective language strategies enhance learners' proficiency and self-confidence (Ardasheva & Tretter, 2013; Lee, 2010; Rao, 2016). Building on these findings, this study explores how DPGs can foster perceived linguistic competence improvements.

DPGs are an educational strategy rooted in egalitarian dialogue and collaborative learning environments (Lopez de Aguilera, 2019). They encourage active engagement by fostering meaningful discussions among participants. Specifically, they consist of creating meaning from a text through egalitarian dialogue (Fernández González et al., 2012). Prior to the gatherings, participants read the assigned text and, during the sessions, they share and deliberate on ideas they consider most relevant. Voluntary participation is highly promoted, ensuring inclusivity and collaborative learning (Flecha, 2000). These sessions provide a

platform for co-constructing knowledge through dialogue, aligning with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the pivotal role of interaction in learning.

DPGs have proven to have a positive impact on the development of academic language encouragement (Lopez de Aguilera, 2019). Nevertheless, the potential impact on enhancing students' perceived linguistic competence during second language acquisition remains underexplored. While previous studies (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2003; Platsidou & Kantaridou, 2014) have analyzed perceived linguistic competence as a predictor of language learning performance, its relationship with dialogic pedagogical approaches, such as DPGs, has received limited attention. Some research, such as Lopez de Aguilera (2019) and Santiago-Garabieta et al. (2021), highlights the role of dialogic learning in fostering L2 acquisition but does not explicitly address its impact on perceived competence. This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining how DPGs influence perceived linguistic competence, focusing on pre-service teachers in higher education. Thus, our study aims to analyze to what extent the self-perceptions of pre-service teachers in relation to their linguistic competence improve after having participated in DPGs.

Linguistic competence, as conceptualized by Chomsky (1965), refers to the implicit knowledge of language rules, while Hymes (1972) expanded it to include communicative competence, integrating sociolinguistic and contextual aspects. The CEFR (Council of Europe, 2000) further operationalizes linguistic competence, distinguishing macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and micro-skills (e.g., pronunciation and grammar). From a sociocultural perspective, Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the role of interaction and dialogue in language development. DPGs align with this theory by fostering collaborative environments where learners co-construct knowledge. Previous studies (Lopez de Aguilera, 2019; Santiago-Garabieta et al., 2021) have demonstrated the effectiveness of DPGs in enhancing language skills, making them a valuable pedagogical strategy for second language acquisition.

With these considerations in mind, the study seeks to address the following research questions (RQs):

- **RQ (1).** To what extent do DPGs improve the perceived linguistic competence of English as a L2 among pre-service teachers, specifically in aspects such as perceived speaking, writing, reading and listening?
- **RQ (2).** If improvements in perceived linguistic competence are observed, what specific features of DPGs contribute to this development?

Method

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted between September 2021 and May 2022 in a University located in the Basque Country. At the time of data collection, students were in their 3rd year of the bachelor degree of Primary Education and they were all enrolled in the English minor.

Students registered in this minor are required to comply with the syllabus set forth by the university. They are also expected to acquire fundamental communicative competences in their L2 to qualify as English teachers, specifically attaining a proficiency level of B2 as delineated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2000). This is in accordance with the updated requirements stipulated by the ORDEN of June 16, 2022, which amends the Annex of DECRETO 73/2012, establishing linguistic competence requirements for teaching in foreign languages in non-university education in the Basque Country, and recognizing various titles and certificates.

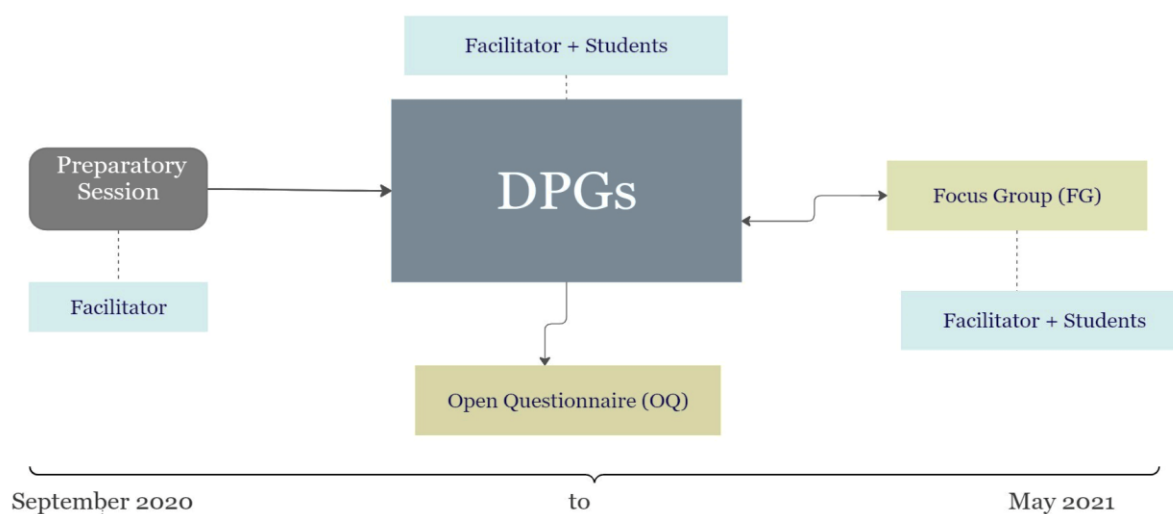
A total of 26 students participated in the study, forming a homogeneous group as they were all the same age range (between 20 and 21 years old) and shared English as their second language, with Spanish and Basque as their native tongues. Additionally, all participants began learning English during their school years. Furthermore, due to their parents' lack of fluency in English, they did not receive additional language support at home.

Intervention: Dialogic Pedagogical Gatherings

The students involved in the study participated in 8 DPG sessions, carried out between the months of September 2020 and May 2021 (Figure 1).

Figure 1

DPGs Process Overview



Each session lasted approximately one hour, which was the duration of the class. The DPGs focused on reviewing scientific articles that are published in high impact journals or publishers. The selection of texts included seven academic journal articles and one book chapter. The criteria for selection were thematic relevance, connection to teaching English as a second language, and accessibility in terms of complexity and language level, considering participants' proficiency. The inclusion of the book chapter was due to its pertinence in addressing teaching competencies from a broader perspective. This balanced approach allowed participants to reflect on diverse viewpoints, enriching the discussions.

Table 1 provides a list of the texts utilized in the development of the DPGs, along with the specific topics addressed within each text.

Table 1

Texts used in the DPGs

Type of publication	Reference	Topic
Article	Flecha, R., & Soler, M. (2013). Turning difficulties into possibilities: Engaging Roma families and students in school through dialogic learning. <i>Cambridge Journal of Education</i> , 43(4), 451-465. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2013.819068	School transformation and the impact of the dialogic model
Article	John Trent (2011) 'Four years on, I'm ready to teach': teacher education and the construction of teacher identities, <i>Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice</i> , 17(5), 529-543, https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2011.602207	Teacher identity
Book Chapter (4th Letter)	Freire, P. (2018). <i>Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach</i> . Routledge.	Indispensable qualities of educators.
Article	García-Carrión R, Molina Roldán S, Roca Campos E. Interactive Learning Environments for the Educational Improvement of Students with Disabilities in Special Schools. <i>Front Psychol</i> . 2018 Sep 19; 9:1744. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01744	Inclusion of children in segregated contexts
Article	Flecha, R., Puigvert, L., & Rios, O. (2013). The New Alternative Masculinities and the Overcoming of Gender Violence. <i>International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences</i> , 2(1), 88–113. https://doi.org/10.4471/rimcis.2013.14	Addressing gender-based violence
Article	Bruner, J. (1985). The role of interaction formats in language acquisition. <i>Language and social situations</i> , 31-46.	The role of interaction in language acquisition
Article	Villarejo-Carballido, B., Pulido, C. M., de Botton, L., & Serradell, O. (2019). Dialogic model of prevention and resolution of conflicts: Evidence of the success of cyberbullying prevention in a primary school in Catalonia. <i>International journal of environmental research and public health</i> , 16(6), 918. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph16060918	Prevention of violence and cyberbullying.
Article	Santiago-Garabieta, M., García-Carrión, R., Zubiri-Esnaola, H., & López de Aguilera, G. (2021). Inclusion of L2 (Basque) learners in Dialogic Literary Gatherings in a linguistically diverse context. <i>Language Teaching Research</i> , 0(0). https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168821994142	Importance of interactions in L2 learning.

Prior to the session the students are asked to read the text and select an idea or paragraph they consider relevant. The task was explained in the classroom and the information was available on the course platform. There they could access the article or had support with the most complex vocabulary, among others. After that, they are required to make a brief reflection to justify their selection. In this way, the teacher ensures that all students in the class have been actively involved in the DPG session. During the gatherings, participants willingly share insights derived from their personal readings. The teacher serves as a facilitator, ensuring equitable speaking opportunities for all. This approach motivates participants to refine their reasoning and constructively challenge their peers' viewpoints. Additionally, through the exchange of reflections and interpretations within a dialogical learning framework, participants collaboratively construct knowledge and ascribe meaning to texts, which might be more challenging to interpret on an individual basis.

Data Collection

Data collection included qualitative information, gathered through (a) a Focus Group (FG), and (b) an Open-ended Questionnaire (OQ). The FG was conducted in May 2020 at the end of the intervention. The OQ was carried out in February, in the middle of the intervention. Prior to participating in the study, the researcher informed the participants about the aim of the study, the voluntary nature of the participation and the confidentiality and anonymity of the information collected. Participants were also informed about their right to stop participating in the research at any time. Moreover, permission was requested for the audio recording of the FG.

Instruments and Procedure

Focus Group

The 26 students participated in the FG. It was conducted at the university and was held in Spanish. Holding the final session or assessment in Spanish, despite the discussions being in English, could be justified by several factors. Firstly, using Spanish allows for a more nuanced expression of thoughts and emotions, ensuring clarity and depth in participants' reflections. Secondly, it accommodates participants who may feel more comfortable articulating complex ideas in their native language, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable environment. It lasted about 1.5 hours and was audio recorded and later transcribed. The FG aims to recover information about the academic self-concept in relation to the English language proficiency. These are some of the questions asked: Have the DPGs helped you to improve your English level? If so, what skills have you improved? Can you provide me with some examples? What characteristics of the DPGs do you think have helped you improve your level of English? What benefits do you think the DPGs have for learning a foreign language?

Open-Ended Questionnaire

In order to gather information about their perceived performance during DPG sessions, the students filled out an OQ midway through the intervention. Participants answered the questions individually in class. They did it through a Google form questionnaire and had about 30 minutes for it. This questionnaire consisted of 10 questions. They were related to the characteristics of the gatherings that were helping them to participate: frequency of interventions, feelings arisen when participating in a language that is not their mother tongue and difficulties faced, among others. These are some examples: How often do you participate in the DPGs? Do you have difficulties participating in English? How do you feel while listening to your peers speaking?...

Data Analysis

The term language skills, also known as macro skills (Generoso & Arbon, 2020), include the competences learners can develop as outlined by the CEFR (2020). These skills are traditionally categorized by their mode of transmission—oral and written—and their function in communication, either as productive or receptive. However, discourse analysis and text linguistics studies advocate for recognizing oral interaction as a distinct skill. This perspective underscores that speaking and listening occur concurrently and inseparably during conversations, suggesting a more integrated approach to understanding language use (CEFR, 2020). Nevertheless, this study will only focus on analyzing the improvements identified in the remaining four macro skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening as they are considered to be the main vehicle to achieve effective communication in a global community (Croom Helm, 1998).

Each of the four areas of language proficiency involves a set of micro-skills. They are defined as those small skills that allow us to use the context to give meaning to a word, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are examples of it (Newman et al, 2023). In view of the close connection to the macro skills, this study research will also analyze the perceived improvements identified by students in the micro-skills.

Considering that, a deductive analysis was conducted to, on the one hand, identify the perceived level of the different language skills established in the CEFR (2020): reading, writing, listening and speaking and, on the other hand, to identify the underlying micro-skills of these skills. Moreover, considering the answers given by the students both in the FG and in the OQ an inductive analysis has been made to categorize the responses according to the characteristics of the DPGs that help to improve L2 competence in students.

Findings

The results are presented in two main sections. First, the students' perceived improvement in relation to their language proficiency is introduced. To this end, they are classified

considering the macro and micro skills of the language. Second, the characteristics of the DPGs that favored such improvement are presented.

Communicative Skills Improvement

Students mentioned having improved their overall English level with the intervention, stating that they "have improved my English level a lot during this course, I think this has been because I have had to let myself speak in the gatherings" (FG12).

In particular, they emphasize the improvement in oral and written proficiency. Students highlight that oral communication is the skill in which they have noticed the greatest improvement, with one participant stating that "the skill that I have improved the most has been the oral one, since the discussions were done orally" (FG3).

Students report feeling more confident when speaking, as they have had to practice this skill in many of the discussions with one participant sharing, "I feel more confident when making (oral) presentations in class now" (OQ7).

I feel more confident in class, and this I believe is because it is the competency I have reinforced the most. We've had eight sessions of DPGs, and in all of them I've been able to explain my point of view in English. (FG22)

This confidence, makes participants unashamed to intervene, as one participant shared, "I am no longer ashamed to speak in English in front of my classmates" (FG4).

Reading comprehension is another skill that some students highlighted as having improved with one participant noting, "The skill that I have improved the most is reading comprehension; that is what I feel, because I don't find it difficult to deal with texts written in English, as I did before" (FG1).

They state that reading scientific articles makes them feel able to understand texts written in academic language more easily, with one participant saying, "Now I understand better the texts we read in class, I finally got some practice after reading so many articles" (OQ8). Another participant added, "(...), now I have no problem reading articles in English" (FG20).

According to participants, listening comprehension has also improved. Having to participate in the DPGs, and listening to the ideas and contributions of their peers has made them get used to understanding different rhythms of speech, accents and even expressions. One participant mentioned, "In the gatherings you had to listen to what your classmates were saying in English, which helped me to improve my listening comprehension" (OQ6). Another shared, "Listening to the contributions of my classmates has helped me to become more familiar with English" (FG7).

Some of the participants in the DPGs mentioned that they had even improved their written expression skills. Writing a short reflection justifying the aim of the text has been a great learning aid. One participant shared, "I would say that written expression is the skill that I have improved the least, even so, I feel that I have reinforced it" (FG2). Another added, "Having to upload a justification to the platform has helped me get more comfortable writing in English" (OQ1).

In addition to macro skills enhancements students claim to have improved some micro skills. One of the students participating in the DPGs says that, after reading so much in English, he has acquired vocabulary, noting, "Although at times I did not understand all the vocabulary words, after reading so many articles I have learned many new words" (FG4).

Moreover, another participant mentions that she has learned expressions that she was not familiar with, stating, "I have come across some expressions that I had not previously used" (FG17). In addition, several students report that their pronunciation has improved. One participant shared, "On many occasions, when you didn't know how to pronounce a word, your classmates would say it out loud so that you could learn" (OQ9). Another noted, "It was very helpful to listen to your classmates speak English because many of them had a higher level of English than I did and it helped me to notice the pronunciation of the words" (FG22). In short, student participation in the discussions shows an improvement in the language skills analysed.

Characteristics of the DPGs that favor the Improvement of the Perceived Linguistic Competence

On the other hand, through an inductive analysis, the characteristics of the DPG that favor the improvement of the perceived linguistic competence have been categorized. First, the students mentioned that the classroom environment was respectful. They state that contributions were valued and this helped to generating a safe climate among participants, with one participant noting, "There was always a climate of respect in the classroom" (FG14). Another added, "All ideas were respected and accepted" (OQ5).

The reduced number of students in the classroom is highly valued. The participants mention that this made them lose their embarrassment, since they all knew each other. One participant shared, "The fact that there were only a few students in the class helped to loosen us up to participate. It is usually more difficult to speak in English in front of many people" (FG10).

It was also highlighted that the role of the moderator was very helpful. Specifically, the students mentioned that if they did not know a word, she was willing to help them, with one participant stating, "The teacher always helped us when we were struggling with vocabulary issues" (OQ3). Peer support and solidarity were also emphasized as a fundamental characteristic in the gathering session. The students consider that helping each other made the classroom climate friendlier, with one participant noting, "We were all equal, grades were not given so there was no reason to compete, and the climate of collaboration that was generated in the DPGs boosted a very good atmosphere in the classroom" (FG19).

Other participants mentioned that "when they did not know how to continue, or when they did not know how to express themselves, their peers were willing to help them." One participant shared, "My mates helped me on several occasions when I got stuck" (FG22).

A feature of the sessions that students highly appreciated was the inclusion of articles in the DPGs. They mentioned that "it has been an opportunity to access scientific literature

related to their profession." One participant noted, "This is the first time we have read scientific articles in a subject" (OQ4). Another added, "I think it is very important to read scientific articles that show what strategies work in the primary school classrooms" (FG18). Likewise, participants "highly valued the fact that the topic of the articles was directly related to the subjects they were studying at the time." One participant shared, "I was delighted that the topics covered in the discussions were related to the English teaching strategies we were taking. This helps me to get ideas and strategies to implement when I become a teacher" (FG1). As has been mentioned throughout this section, there have been several characteristics of the DPGs that have favoured the improvement of the linguistic competence of students in initial training.

Discussion

This study aimed to test whether DPGs improve the perceived linguistic competence in learning English as a L2 and, if so, which features of DPGs favor that improvement.

Several students recognize having improved their linguistic macro skill of listening, speaking, reading and writing (Generoso & Arbon, 2020). Oral skills, in particular, is one of the most frequently repeated. Although is considered an important skill and can encounter great challenge for students (Zhang, 2009), this was likely to be expected since the DPGs were conducted orally during the classes. During September, the classroom atmosphere was particularly reserved, as students encountered difficulties in active participation. Toward the end of the intervention, active participation had significantly increased. The positive and supportive classroom environment encouraged students to freely share their opinions, justify their contributions, and express their agreement or disagreement without worrying about their peers' perceptions. Students' emotions such as confidence in class have been reports to positively influence their participation (Howard et al., 2002).

Students also reported enhancements in their listening comprehension skills. The DPGs were conducted orally in the classroom, so the students had to pay attention to what their classmates were saying. This made them become familiar with different rhythms of speech, diverse accents in English, and varied lexis, among others. Successful L2 listening comprehension requires employing a range of listening strategies (Rost, 2007; Vandergrift, 2004) and being exposed to different rhythms of speech as this has a greater impact on comprehension.

The participants in the DPGs also claim to have improved their reading comprehension due to the number of texts they have read prior to the discussion sessions. Although reading texts was not initially of interest to them, seeing that their contributions were valued by their peers encouraged them to participate (Gutiérrez-Fernández et al., 2023). In this sense, research in this field has shown that students who are highly motivated gradually acquire reading skills even if they do not speak or write English fluently (Huang, 2006).

Finally, although to a lesser extent, several students claim to have improved their written skill. This is justified by the complementary activity to the DPG that the teacher asked the students: write a reflection, which on the one hand was useful for the teacher to check who had read the text and completed the task, and on the other hand for the students to think,

reflect and write about what the text meant to them. Doing this activity regularly has helped them to become more confident in writing in English. They have used the dictionary to learn new words, they have identified new expressions, and in short, they have been exposed to the language. In line with what highlights Van den Branden (2006) students are more involved when they are at the center of the teaching and learning process and are required to play an active role.

Beyond enhancing macro skills, students also made progress in micro-skills such as vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and pronunciation. In this sense, students comment that they have indirectly had to work with these micro competencies and they see great improvement in them. However, several micro-skills, such as pronunciation or intonation, are often a great challenge for second language learners (Zhang, 2009).

In relation to the characteristics of the DPGs that have helped students improve their perception of language proficiency, they mentioned that the limited group size provided them with opportunities to participate. As a consequence, it increased the amount of time in which they could speak English in class. This is consistent with research in the field showing that oral strategies depend on the complexity of the environment and group size (Hadley et al., 2021) and how the frequency of oral engagement increases when there is a congenial environment (Nisa & Alawiyah, 2021).

Another DPG important feature to improve students perceived linguistic competence was peer support. Providing peer scaffolding generates a collaborative classroom environment and positive social relationships between learners (Sato, 2013). And this has been reflected in this study, where the solidarity was easily identified. Participants supported each other, lending each other support when needed. As seen here, it has also been highlighted in other research studies (Soler, 2015), as solidarity is one of the main principles of dialogic learning (Flecha, 2000).

The participants positively valued having read scientific articles. On some occasions, university students may have difficulties in understanding academic texts (Carlino, 2003), so it is important that they work with them to improve their level of comprehension. Likewise, studies in this field show a broad consensus on the impact that reading scientific articles has on students' outcomes (Roca-Campos et al., 2021), in that sense, pre-service teacher education should be based on scientific evidence in order to be able to apply what science has shown to work and improve outcomes. In addition, as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OHCHR, 1966), access to scientific knowledge and to benefit from scientific progress and its applications is a human right.

Furthermore, students valued the relevance of the article topics to English teaching strategies, recognizing its potential to shape their teaching identity and explore practical applications for their future careers.

Limitations and Future Research

The primary limitation of this study lies in the sample size. Despite encompassing all enrolled students in the subject, the sample size remains relatively small. This is caused by the COVID 19 situation faced in the country during the data collection; this made it difficult to conduct the intervention and collect data in other universities, to compare results. Another limitation was that the session length was restricted by the duration of the classes. However, while there was adequate time for dialogue and a deep understanding of the text, longer sessions might have enhanced their overall impact.

Expanding this study to other institutions would be valuable to determine whether similar enhancements in students' perceived linguistic competence are observed. It would also be appropriate to apply it with a larger sample of students and relate it to other affective factors such as motivation or anxiety. A further aspect to bear in mind is that the study mainly used students' opinions to measure improvements in language skills. Gathering numerical data through validated methods could offer a clearer picture of their actual progress in different language areas.

Finally, although this research has only focused on analyzing the improvements identified in reading and speaking, future research should aim to collect more targeted data on listening and writing to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how DPGs impact these specific skills. Moreover, as a future line of research it would be interesting to focus on interaction and conduct an analysis of the type of interactions arising in the DPGs among preservice teachers.

Conclusion

The results show a greater improvement in oral and reading skills, as a result of the number of articles read and the conversations held during the discussion sessions in the classroom. Likewise, some characteristics of the DPGs that have helped to generate this improvement in the learning of English as an L2 have been identified. Among them, we can highlight the classroom climate, characterized as an environment where respect, collaboration among equals and solidarity prevail.

The results of this study contribute to knowledge about pre-service teachers' perceived language performance when learning an L2 after having implemented DPGs. They also provide clues about the potential of DPGs to improve perceived competence and thus confidence. In short, this study demonstrates that the use of DPGs can help to train future teachers of English while providing them with access to scientific articles of interest for their training.

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