Impact of the Dogme ELT Methodology on Sixth-Grade Students' Willingness to Communicate

Impacto de la metodología Dogme en la disposición de estudiantes de sexto grado para comunicarse en inglés

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This article reports an action-research study on willingness to communicate orally in English. Implemented through a conversation club, it aimed to tackle low willingness to communicate at a bilingual primary school. The objective was to see the impact of Dogme on learners. Data were collected using class observations, interviews, Likert-scale surveys, and open-ended questionnaires. Data were analyzed through thematic content analysis. The findings suggest that students aged 11–12 were more willing to communicate in English and to produce longer utterances during conversations about themselves and relevant events in their lives. Participants also showed favorable perceptions about Dogme-type lessons. Using Dogme encouraged participants' communication, so teachers can nurture students' interests by personalizing speaking activities.

Keywords: Dogme methodology, early teens, speaking activities, willingness to communicate

Este artículo presenta un estudio de investigación-acción sobre la disposición para comunicarse en inglés. La implementación, mediante un club de conversación, abordó la baja motivación de los estudiantes de una escuela primaria bilingüe para comunicarse. Se buscó conocer el impacto de la metodología Dogme. Se realizaron observaciones de clase, entrevistas, encuestas y cuestionarios, y los datos se sometieron a un análisis de contenido temático. Los resultados sugieren que los estudiantes estaban más dispuestos a comunicarse y producían enunciados más largos cuando las conversaciones eran sobre sí mismos y sobre acontecimientos relevantes en sus vidas. Los participantes mostraron percepciones favorables sobre las clases Dogme. El uso de Dogme motivó la participación de estudiantes, de tal manera que los maestros pueden motivar a los estudiantes mediante la personalización de las actividades orales.

Palabras clave: actividades orales, disposición para comunicarse, metodología Dogme, preadolescentes

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Introduction

Despite teachers' efforts and motivation strategies, such as introducing topics through videos or rewarding them with toy money notes redeemable for small gifts, sixth-grade students at a local bilingual primary school showed low willingness to communicate (WTC). While teaching, it was observed that most students did not lack language skills or vocabulary, but opportunities for authentic communicative activities were scarce. In addition, due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, speaking time was reduced, and peer interactions became even rarer in online lessons.

Moreover, the strict syllabus, routines, and school activities leave little or no time to use the target language for what these learners want to talk about. One of the authors of this paper is a teacher at the school, and she observed that the strict syllabus, routines, administrative guidelines, and school activities left her with little or no time to introduce English topics that could be more engaging for her students. The coursebook revolves around topics such as endangered animals in Australia, women's rights, or Confucianism, which do not seem to engage this kind of student in speaking activities.

This situation is problematic given that the school purports to follow a communicative approach in language teaching, for which learners' WTC is of paramount importance. The Dogme ELT methodology, with emphasis on conversational communication beyond the coursebook, seems to be an appropriate strategy to tackle this issue. Furthermore, there is a dearth of research on WTC among early adolescents or on implementing the Dogme methodology with this population (Ali et al., 2023). The Action Research reported here aimed to fill this gap by engaging a group of EFL young learners (aged 11–12) in a conversation club based on the ELT Dogme methodology.

The objective was to examine the impact of Dogme lessons on students' WTC, as this methodology emphasizes the communicative aspect of foreign language learning. One of the principles of Dogme is that a learner's beliefs, knowledge, experiences, and concerns are valid classroom content (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). In other words, speaking activities should be based on students' real interests and communicative needs. The questions that guided the study were: What is the impact of the Dogme methodology on sixth-grade students' WTC in English during speaking activities? What are the sixth-grade students' perceptions about Dogme-type lessons?

Theoretical Framework

Willingness to Communicate

WTC is influenced by a range of traits; some are stable and enduring, such as personality and intergroup relations, while others are situational and context-dependent. In MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) WTC model, communication in the target language (L2) is the priority, sustained by behavioral intention (i.e., WTC), which is, in turn, shaped by situated antecedents, motivational propensities, and affective-cognitive, social, and individual contexts. This conception of WTC aligns with the *social constructivist* perspective, as social and individual processes are interdependent in the co-construction of knowledge (McKinley, 2015; Palincsar, 1998). Consequently, WTC must be among the goals of language learning (MacIntyre et al., 1998), since interaction is the vehicle for learning and knowledge building.

Social constructivism traces its roots to Lev Vygotsky's work, whose theories have been expanded by numerous researchers and scholars. For social constructivists, motivation is both extrinsic and intrinsic. As a social phenomenon, learning depends not only on the individual's internal drive but also on the community (Berkeley University of California, n.d.). Similarly, elements of motivational propensity in MacIntyre et al.'s (1998) model include interpersonal and intergroup motivation. They state that "motivational propensi-

ties are based on the affective and cognitive contexts of intergroup interaction and ultimately lead to state self-confidence and a desire to interact with a particular person" (p. 550).

Thus, once WTC is achieved, interaction is guaranteed, which is a direct route to learning with an emphasis on scaffolding and socialization (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). Furthermore, as Palincsar (1998) suggested, interactions during classroom discussions enhance learners' cognitive development and communication skills in the foreign language. She also argues that teachers can mediate classroom discourse "by seeding the conversation with new ideas or alternatives to be considered that push students' thinking and discussion, and prepare them for conversation" (p. 365).

Dogme Methodology

Dogme is a methodology and a movement in ELT started by Scott Thornbury in 2000. He called for a return in ELT to a pre-method state "where learning was jointly constructed out of the talk that evolved in that simplest, and most prototypical of situations" (Thornbury, 2000, para. 9). The name Dogme comes from the analogy he made with a Danish filmmaking movement in 1995 that rejected the dependence on external resources and focused on the actual story and its relevance for the audience.

Dogme principles align with a communicative approach to language teaching, emphasizing speaking activities to promote learners' meaningful language use (Richards, 2006). Thus, the focus is on learners' communicative needs and fluency rather than on explicit grammar (Canale & Swain, 1980; Richards, 2006; Savignon, 2002).

Dogme is a methodology that highlights the dialogic nature of communication and its central role in language learning, aligning with a communicative approach to language teaching. Dogme proposes that natural conversation be encouraged in the language classroom and that learners be given time to talk about themselves. Given the proper conditions, the dialogue between students and teachers will naturally bring out actual communication needs, interests, and interaction.

For Meddings and Thornbury (2009), an over-reliance on imported materials (such as coursebooks) jeopardizes students' involvement and the learning opportunities arising from spontaneous interaction between learners and teachers. Consequently, Dogme challenges the "over-reliance on materials and technical wizardry in current language teaching. The emphasis on the here-and-now requires the teacher to focus on the actual learners and the content that is relevant to them" (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009, p. 6).

Dogme revolves around three core precepts for teaching: this should be (a) conversation-driven, (b) materials-light, and focused on (c) emergent language. It shares similarities with the communicative approach, as it, too, attempts to restore the communicative aspect of language learning (Thornbury, n.d.). It also encourages a textbook-free teaching methodology based on conversations between teacher and learner and among learners (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009). Through Dogme, interaction, feedback, or "language-related episodes" are likely to influence learning as "these are moments during a communicative activity when learners pay explicit attention to a feature of the language" (Thornbury, 2009, para. 4). Furthermore, it is a common belief that if students are not interested, they will not learn; therefore, class material should be generated by the learners and the lessons directed by them. The teacher's role is to facilitate the conversation and provide answers to grammar and vocabulary questions as they arise (British Council, n.d.).

Dogme Studies Review

As mentioned before, studies about WTC in early adolescents and the use of Dogme are scarce (Ali et al., 2023). Thus, the following review includes studies with tertiary students and a few with children.

AlAdl (2023) implemented Dogme lessons for 12 weeks in his university art classes to improve student speaking skills and self-efficacy. Following a quantitative research design, results showed that students' speaking skills improved during the study period. The researcher concluded that Dogme lessons can be used as a technique to increase speaking skills and WTC. However, the author is cautious about conducting an entire course using only the Dogme approach.

Bulut and Babajanova (2021) investigated whether Dogme online lessons could promote communication and confidence among Turkish students aged 15–16. The researchers applied the WTC scale to 33 students. Although the results showed that the Dogme approach helped participants feel motivated to speak with relatives and friends, they still refused to talk with native speakers in out-of-school settings. Researchers concluded that the Dogme approach was beneficial for participants since they developed fluency and self-confidence.

Xerri (2012) implemented a Dogme lesson for a whole year in English classes with students aged 16–18. The objective was to allow students to practice their speaking skills by focusing on emergent language, moving away from an evaluation-focused teaching style. Results revealed that students gained confidence in speaking English when interacting with peers about topics of their interest. The implementation was beneficial as it improved classroom interaction. The researcher expressed that the implementation helped him focus less on accuracy, which helped students develop their fluency.

Moskalets et al. (2024) conducted a 4-month case study with Ukrainian refugees in Germany. During this period, 26 students aged 11–16 were taught different subjects using Dogme. Although the study's purpose was not to evaluate the implementation of Dogme (also known as "teaching unplugged"), it is one of the few conducted with young learners. Participants reported that interaction with the teacher or classmates was the most significant factor in providing positive experiences and engagement. Researchers concluded that the role of the teacher, the learning environment, and the subject content were the essential factors for a positive learning process that proved satisfactory for the participants.

Finally, Chuquitarco Guagchinga (2024) conducted a quantitative investigation with 24 children in an Ecuadorian private primary school. The objective of the study was to analyze the effect of Dogme on speaking skills. The researcher found that confidence and motivation to talk during class activities increased. Moreover, the rapport between the teacher and students improved because the content was based on students' interests. The author concluded that Dogme improved not only speaking but also attitude and listening, as students used a variety of expressions to clarify their messages.

Method

This study fits into the category of action research. According to Ferrance (2000), "action research is a process in which participants examine their educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research" (p. 1). Action research is a cycle summarized as "plan, act, observe, reflect" (Burns, 2011, p. 238). This study complies with the five stages presented by Ferrance (2000): (a) identification of the problem area during class observation; (b) collection and organization of data through class observation, surveys, and questionnaires; (c) interpretation of the collected data; (d) action based on data using Dogme in a conversation club; and (e) reflection about the results and implications of the intervention. We used class observations, interviews, Likert-scale surveys, and open-ended questionnaires to collect data.

Context and Participants

The study took place in the primary level of a private urban bilingual school in Veracruz (Mexico). Students are taught in English for 3 hours a day (2

hours online during the COVID-19 pandemic), and the other 3 hours in Spanish for the rest of the subjects. The school's English program is purportedly student-centered and based on the communicative approach. It follows a six-level book series for primary EFL learners.

Students are placed in their English class according to their age and the grade they are in in the Mexican educational system. However, in a few cases, the language coordinator and the group's teacher may decide to move a student to a lower grade when the learner lacks the basic skills to function in the target language level.

Twenty students were interviewed and observed before the implementation (10 girls and 10 boys, aged 11–12). The participants belonged to two groups: 6A, with 11 registered students, and 6B, with nine students. Although the groups had different schedules and took classes separately, both shared the same teacher, lesson plan, syllabus, book, and activities. The implementation was conducted with both groups, but the results are presented as a single group.

Implementation

The intervention was carried out in a virtual setting using Google Meet due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. Google Classroom was used to distribute the survey and questionnaires, while Jamboard (a digital interactive board), documents, and slides were employed in the implementation. The class videos were available for a limited time to take notes for the research journal and record the students' participation. The conversation club met once a week for half an hour per group, covering six lessons. Attendance at the conversation club was voluntary.

Prior to the intervention, the participating students were given a questionnaire where, among other questions, they could suggest topics for the conversation club. During the implementation, the topics mentioned in the students' answers were incorporated. Methodologically, the lessons followed Dogme principles suggested by Meddings and Thornbury (2009). Table 1 summarizes the topics covered during the six lessons.

On the first day, the rules and dynamics for the conversation club were explained. The purpose was to talk about the things we like and our interests without worrying about making mistakes. It was emphasized that everyone was welcome to join in the conversation. Students could respectfully ask their classmates or teacher any questions, share opinions, and help others with vocabulary, if needed. It was also explained that any new word or expression would be written down for focus and comment at the end.

Table 1. Topics of the Intervention

Lesson	Title	Description
1	Names	Sharing the stories behind our names and their meaning
2	Likes and dislikes	Talking about our favorite and least favorite activities
3	Best in 24 hours	Sharing about recent enjoyable experiences
4	Celebrities	Sharing about our favorite celebrity in music, sports, social media, etc.
5	Opinions	Talking about our ideas regarding various topics. Agreeing and disagreeing
6	My top three	Sharing about common emotions, things that make us happy or irritate us

The lesson plans followed Dogme principles: they were dialogic, encouraging students to talk about themselves. The emphasis was on giving students the opportunity to voice their beliefs, knowledge, and experiences, and promote teacher–learner and learner–learner interaction. Following the three core precepts of Dogme, the lessons were conversation-driven, materials-light, and focused on emergent language. The objective was to positively impact participants' WTC in a setting that promoted socialization and conversation as vehicles for exchanging personal meanings.

The structure and dynamics were simple, and the topic was subject to change according to the needs of the moment. The teachers would not interrupt the conversation thread to introduce or impose their plan or topic. They remained aware of what students wanted to discuss and the course the conversation would take. In this way, teachers were able to extend the topic of Lesson 5 (opinions) and use part of Lesson 6 to discuss video games, as the participants were highly interested in this topic.

Every lesson, the conversation club started with the teacher asking how students were, what news they had, or anything they wanted to share. Some participants were active from the beginning, speaking up or typing comments in the chat. As the weeks passed, the conversation flowed more naturally. Students would share about their siblings, pets, or the special events they were planning for their graduation day.

After the introduction, the day's activity was explained, which was also a broad topic, and students were encouraged to ask questions or comment on each other's ideas. The teacher showed interest in whatever students shared and avoided explicit error correction. Also, students wrote down any word, phrase, or grammar feature that emerged from the conversation to focus on later.

Data Collection and Instruments

Before the Implementation

Prior to the intervention, a series of data collection procedures was followed to diagnose the participants' conditions regarding the phenomenon under investigation (in our case, WTC). This diagnostic stage also helped us design the intervention. The instruments used were a two-hour online class observation, a Likert-scale survey, and an open-ended questionnaire.

Observation. A two-hour online lesson was observed via Google Meet with each group. The objective was to determine whether students were willing to engage in English conversations with the teacher and classmates, using prompts from the coursebook or those suggested by the teacher.

To keep track of the students' interventions during the classes, Havwini's (2019) coding scheme was modified. The scheme comprises six patterns that echo the categories in the WTC survey. Some changes in Pattern 3 and Pattern 5 were made: "Presenting one's opinion—or spontaneous comments—in the class" and "Giving comments or questions in response to peers'—or teacher's—ideas," respectively. A distinction based on utterance length was made: L = long, M = medium, and S = short (see Appendix A). All the students' utterances during the observation were short.

Survey. We used Tavakoli and Davoudi's (2017) WTC survey (which is based on MacIntyre et al., 2001) to assess the participants' levels of WTC (see Appendix B). This survey has been used in similar studies (e.g., Alemi et al., 2011; Robson, 2015), which confers validity and reliability to the instrument. We adapted the survey and translated it into Spanish to facilitate students' comprehension. We also used face emojis as scale anchors to make it more appealing to participants.

Open-Ended Questionnaire. This consisted of six open-ended questions about learners' reasons for

participating in or not participating in conversations in the target language, their opinions about the coursebook's topics, and their feelings when speaking English, among others (see Appendix C).

From the data collected at this stage, we found that most students expressed a high level of self-perceived WTC. Only a handful of students reported feeling nervous, awkward, or insecure when speaking English in class. Nevertheless, during the observation, half of the participants showed low WTC, with a median of only 3.5 utterances per person. Eight students never said a word during the two-hour class.

The most observed patterns were related to WTC with the teacher or the whole class. Learners were more willing to speak when they had to complete class activities, answer the teacher's questions, or ask the teacher a question; a few were willing to give spontaneous comments, especially during the warm-up. In contrast, they were less inclined to speak with peers, comment on classmates' ideas, or help others to recall words. In their answers to the questionnaire, most participants said they liked the conversation activities from the book; they labeled them as "good," "fine," "some easy, some difficult," and one student said they were "boring." However, when asked what they like to talk about in English, only four students (out of 20) answered "topics from the book" or "whatever the teacher brings," whereas the remaining 16 students mentioned video games, life, peers' likes, food, music, sports, and science.

During and After the Implementation

The following tools were used to collect data during and after the implementation:

Observation. We video-recorded each 30-minute lesson. In this way, students' performance could be observed, allowing us to record any relevant data in the research journal. A record of the students' WTC was kept using the same observation protocol used before the implementation. Havwini's (2019) coding

scheme allowed us to categorize WTC patterns for each participant. On this occasion, the short, medium, and long-utterance categories were more useful, as students were speaking for longer periods. It was advantageous to have access to the videos, allowing us to pause, watch again, count the seconds, and classify the pattern type. Students' names were coded using the first two consonants and the last vowel of their names.

Journal. As suggested above, we kept a research journal to record instances of participants' WTC, the factors that could affect it, and the overall development of the intervention. The journal notes included comments on students' behavior, interactions in the chat, and incidents during the session, such as students having technical or health issues.

Interview. After the implementation, we conducted interviews with 10 participants via Google Meet. Although our initial intention was to interview only 6 participants (2 per WTC level: low, medium, high), students with low WTC were unavailable for interviews. Then, we used random sampling to select interviewees, increasing the sample to 10 to ensure greater representativeness of the whole group. The interviews were conducted individually in Spanish (see Appendix D).

One interviewee had technical problems and left the video call after the first question. Additionally, we requested that the head teacher record her observations of any differences between the students' WTC during the conversation club and their regular English class. We later transcribed all the audio recordings.

Data Analysis

The data analysis began by watching the recorded classes to identify students' WTC patterns and categorize their utterances using the observation form (see Appendix A). For each speaking pattern, we coded utterance length with the corresponding letter (L, M, S). Next, we counted all the utterances per student and entered the numerical (quantitative) data in an Excel

spreadsheet. With these numerical data, we created pie and bar graphs that helped us see the patterns' frequency and trends. We also obtained the utterances' average and median and compared the data collected before and during implementation to determine the impact of Dogme on participants' WTC, as stated in Research Question 1.

Our second research question was about students' perceptions of Dogme. Thus, we transcribed all the participants' interviews. Later, using qualitative data analysis software (ATLAS.ti), we coded the interviews to identify all themes that emerged. The data analysis was conducted using thematic content analysis.

Finally, triangulating quantitative data from Excel graphs, qualitative data from the interviews, and notes from our research journal enabled us to construct and test our assertions.

Findings

Impact of Dogme on Sixth-Grade Students' WTC

After processing the data, it was noticeable that the participants' number of utterances during the lessons went from 39.75 to 172.17, which is more than a fourfold increase. The median number of utterances quintupled, rising from 0.88 to 4.75. The median is the middl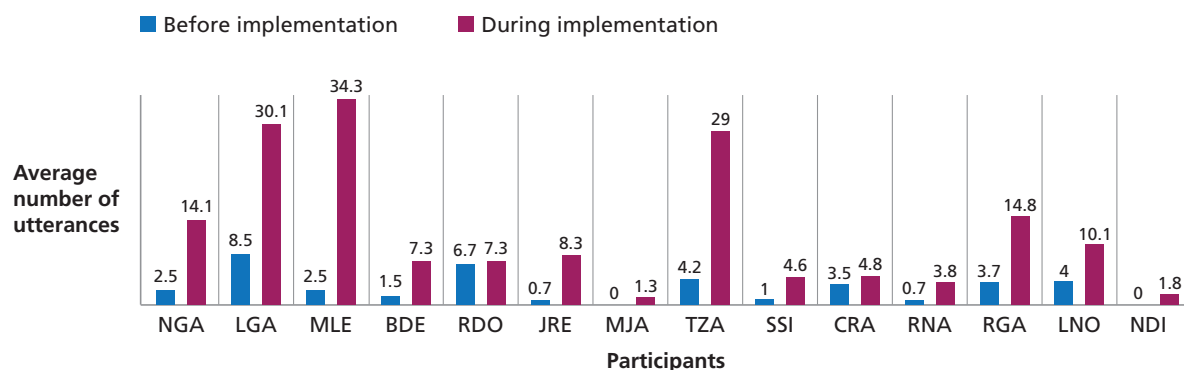e number in a sorted list of numbers, either ascending or descending. Since the median helps to identify the high values from the low values, it was more descriptive and adequate for this study.

Figure 1 shows the average number of utterances per student, before and during the implementation. Participants MLE and LGA had the highest number of utterances during the implementation. The increase in the number of times every participant was willing to communicate orally is more evident in students NGA, MLE, JRE, TZA, and RGA. For instance, MLE moved from a medium to high level of WTC, and her average went up from 2.5 to 34.33 utterances, which means it was multiplied by a factor of 13. Similarly, participant NGA's average increased almost sixfold, from 2.5 to 14.17. Although LGA also showed an increase in utterances, it was not as pronounced as for the other participants. LGA had the highest number of utterances before the implementation, but this was not the case during the implementation.

In this regard, the teacher mentioned that some students were more active during the implementation than in a regular class. About student NGA, she commented:

NGA, on the other hand, I think that, especially on the day where [sic] you talked about celebrities, I think NGA was really in her element, and she participated, I think, a little bit more in conversation club. I think usually I would like, call her name and ask her for her opinion,

Figure 1. Comparative Average Number of Utterances per Participant Before and During Implementation

but I felt like in conversation club, she just was a little bit more free [*sic*].

Data obtained from the interviews suggested that the topics had a positive impact on participants' WTC. We asked them to rate their self-perceived WTC level on a scale of 1 to 10 during the intervention. The highest self-perceived WTC was NGA's; she gave herself a 9.3. When we asked why, she mentioned that the topics made her want to talk more:

> Well, [the topics] were cool, because in fact, [the topics] were about the things children see nowadays, because practically these are the current topics, that is why I participated a little bit more. . . . If the class were about the things you like and do every day, I would be talking like a birdie.

Participant MLE also gave herself a nine in WTC. She attributed this to the topics, and she said she liked talking about herself or discussing the things she knows more about:
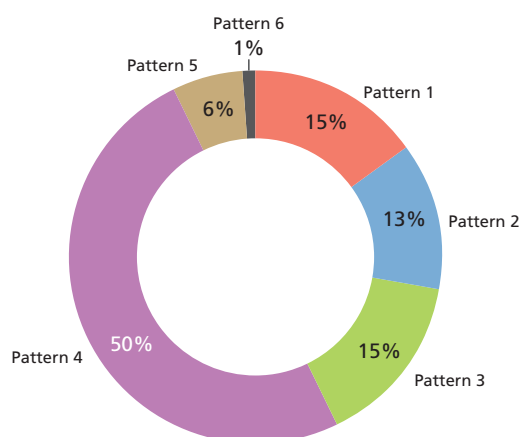
> It also depends on the topic we are talking about, but I think a nine…because I am a perfectionist in everything.

Indeed, we were asked about ourselves, so we talked about ourselves, and I liked that. Like a topic I like, a series or so, a celebrity, singer, or dancer. And since we talked about singer celebrities. So yes, those are the topics I am more attached to, the ones I know more about… and I think that is when I participate more, when there is a topic I know, let's say, music, or dancing.
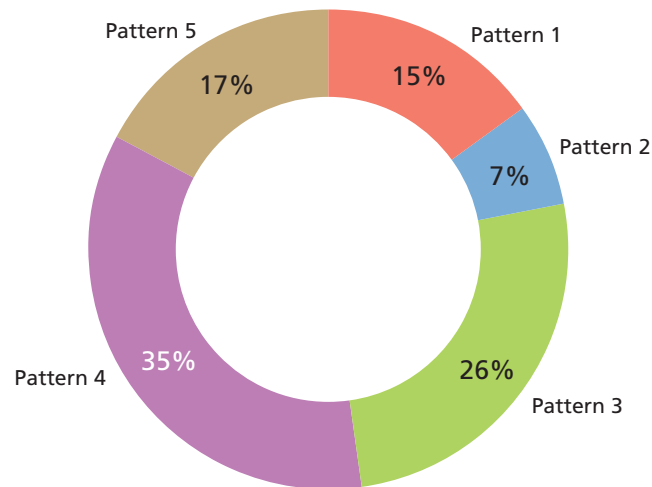
As noted in our research journal, while observing the class recordings, we realized that WTC patterns also varied during the implementation. Participants produced more spontaneous comments about their personal opinions or peers' ideas; in other words, they were more willing to communicate, even when it was not their turn to participate in the day's activity. Figure 2 and Figure 3 present the percentages of utterances per pattern before and during the implementation.

Students' utterances asking the teacher a question (Pattern 2) decreased from 13% to 7%, and participation in class activities (Pattern 4) declined from 50 % to 35 %. Meanwhile, students' WTC grew in Pattern 3, from 6% to 17%, as they made more spontaneous comments in class, and in Pattern 5, from 15% to 26%, as they were

Figure 2. Percentage of Utterances per WTC Pattern Before Implementation

Note. Pattern 1 = Volunteering to answer the teacher's questions to the class; Pattern 2 = Asking a question to the teacher; Pattern 3 = Presenting one's opinion or spontaneous comments in the class; Pattern 4 = Volunteering to participate in class activities; Pattern 5 = Giving comments or questions in response to peer's or teacher's ideas; Pattern 6 = Helping peers to recall difficult or forgotten words.

Figure 3. Percentage of Utterances per WTC Pattern During Implementation

more willing to ask or comment on peers' ideas. There was no significant change in Pattern 1 (answering the teacher's questions) and Pattern 6 (helping a peer remember a forgotten or difficult word).

Along with an increase in the number and the length of the utterances, students accomplished communicative purposes during the implementation. Participants shared about past events in their lives or gave opinions on relevant topics for their age. For example, participant MLE talked about a personal case of cyberbullying and explained social media's dangers and the way she protects her privacy. Similarly, other participants shared interesting or even funny anecdotes about their names.

Even though almost all participants spoke more, the impact of Dogme was less noticeable among students with low WTC. Although the average number of utterances increased from 0 to 1.33 and 1.83 in students MJA and NDI, respectively, the number of students with low WTC remained the same before and during implementation.

Perceptions About Dogme

Participants expressed feeling encouraged to communicate because they felt relaxed, as the topics and context during implementation were different from those in regular English classes.

Participants described the conversation club as different from a regular English class, a moment to relax and socialize with classmates. MLE mentioned the difference she experienced during the conversation club: "It seemed a little fun to me. [The topics were] very good, because even though we never stopped speaking English, yes, for a moment we came out of the pages [of the book] and all that."

Similarly, a couple of students indicated that Dogme presented a different dynamic in comparison to the usual school routine:

> Yes, it was different from what we were used to in school; we talked like, not to talk and do activities, because sometimes we talk about the topic but doing activities too [sic]. Here [in the conversation club] is more like only talking about the topic. (LGA)

Participants also perceived Dogme as related to socialization. Two students mentioned how they saw an opportunity to get to know their classmates better in a relaxed context: "Well, yes, it was creative…but also to learn how [English] is used more between us, like to get to know each other better. It truly

helped us a lot to begin to socialize more between us" (TZA).

Moreover, students said that the topics combined with interaction with their peers made the conversation club entertaining:

Suddenly, [the conversation club] was to relax and talk about problems or talk about a topic we liked. And the truth is that I felt very relaxed, and the topics [were] very good. So, because sometimes my classmates participated, I was happy I had at least someone to talk to, right? Besides [the teacher]. (LGA)

Discussion

The strategy used during this implementation was to select content that the participants could relate to. The purpose was also to provide authentic communication opportunities in the relaxed setting of a conversation club.

This study provided insight into how implementing changes in class dynamics and speaking activity topics can positively impact students' WTC. Dogme was conducive to increasing students' utterances in class: students spoke more frequently and for longer periods. Similar results were reported by Chuquitarco Guagchinga (2024) and AlAdl (2023). In addition, participants' interventions showed quality in accomplishing communicative purposes. According to Kang (2005), WTC needs to be emphasized in language pedagogy because it influences the frequency of communication and contributes to target language acquisition. The quantitative data showed that participants significantly increased the number and length of their utterances. Students were more willing to use English to make spontaneous remarks or comment on peers' ideas. The same was reported by Bulut and Babajanova (2021): participants were more willing to interact freely with peers. In this study, learners also showed initiative in sharing information about family, likes, dislikes, desires, and dreams. They also expressed opinions about musical or sports preferences, asking for clarification during their

partners' interventions, or telling funny stories. Thus, we can argue that their communicative competence developed during the implementation.

Dogme proved to be applicable to achieving the objectives of both the implementation and the study. The setting for the conversation club aligned with the communicative approach and Dogme principles and precepts. The participants seemed to positively respond to the proposed topics, as the goal was to stimulate meaningful and authentic conversations. This aligns with Moskalets et al.'s (2024) study that revealed the importance of peer interaction in class dynamics. Within the communicative approach framework, this project gives students the opportunity to experiment with what they know in English in a context where teachers and classmates are tolerant of errors that do not hinder understanding of the message (Richards, 2006). Additionally, learners supplied valid content for the class as they expressed beliefs, knowledge, and concerns, supporting the learning process and even engaging their peers in conversation (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009).

This study showed that young students are willing to take part in English conversations with the teacher and classmates when the topic is related to trendy things they like or know more about. Even though the implemented conversation club was not compulsory, the participants wanted to talk in the target language because they felt there was a communicative purpose.

Data obtained from the interviews suggested that the topics had a positive impact on participants' WTC. Participants reported feeling relaxed and positive about discussing topics with classmates, which helped them connect better as people. Meddings and Thornbury (2009) see interaction as intrinsic to the learning process, and socialization as central to the construction of knowledge. The learners' perceptions were consistent with Dogme's principles and precepts when they noticed that they were discussing their personal interests with their peers during the conversation club,

which felt like the conversations they usually have in Spanish. Participants pointed out that the conversation club allowed them to get to know each other better and interact, since conversations with peers were a missing component in the virtual classes. Similarly, Xerri (2012) reported that participants appreciated the opportunity to learn more about their classmates through Dogme activities, and this sentiment was linked to the need for conversation-driven activities.

Students displayed more WTC because the teacher showed interest in their opinions, peers were interacting and speaking more, and the topics were easy. As noted in the literature review, interlocutors' social support and background knowledge about the topic play an important role in creating security and situational WTC (Kang, 2005; Riasati & Rahimi, 2018). In the interviews, participants reported feeling relaxed and less burdened during the Dogme conversation club.

Learners expressed positive perceptions of the implementation, as they felt it was a more social and less academic dynamic introduced into the English class. The results showed that the Dogme methodology provided sixth-grade students with the proper atmosphere to speak more frequently and lengthen their interventions. Learners found the topics appropriate, different, and interesting, so they could talk about themselves, share opinions about sensitive issues such as bullying, and even show a sense of humor in their comments.

Conclusions

This study provided insights into how the Dogme methodology contributes to generating favorable situational factors that enhance WTC among early-adolescent EFL students. Findings revealed a positive impact on sixth graders' WTC when the conversation topics focused on themselves, their interests, likes, dislikes, and opinions. Moreover, it is an attempt to fill a gap in research on young learners' WTC, focusing

on situational variables such as topic, tasks, classroom atmosphere, and the teacher's methodology.

Creating and promoting WTC should be the goal of language learning teachers and a priority for programs. Students must want to use the language; otherwise, all efforts are fruitless. Teachers need to be aware of the factors that boost or inhibit WTC. Unlike those attributed to students' personalities or shyness, situational factors are within educators' control.

The current research aligns with other studies that indicate that more WTC not only stimulates oral production but also promotes more active and engaged learners (Kang, 2005; Riasati & Rahimi, 2018; Yousefi & Kasaian, 2014). Students with high WTC are more likely to use the target language in authentic communication, and they improve their autonomy as they tend to make independent efforts to learn through communication. They can expand their learning opportunities by getting involved in activities during and after classes (Kang, 2005).

Although pure Dogme advocates for a language classroom free from coursebooks (Meddings & Thornbury, 2009), the purpose of this paper is not to recommend such a radical measure, especially in early basic education. However, we recommend that teachers look beyond the book and focus on learners and the conversation content they can provide. We suggest incorporating Dogme during speaking tasks to improve students' WTC. Teachers can interview students and make a list of topics of interest. Dogme does not require much planning, as it is student-centered and gives learners the opportunity to talk and experiment with language as much as they want, so they feel they have a voice in their learning.

Despite time constraints, absenteeism, and the disadvantages of online classes due to the pandemic, the topics and dynamics implemented were conducive to fostering socialization and interaction during the conversation club. Participants' perceptions indicated that more flexibility is advisable in speaking tasks to

emulate a natural conversation, free from the stress that complicated, depersonalized, or uncontextualized topics can cause among learners.

Further studies should focus on the impact of different methodologies on WTC in children and early teens in EFL settings, and on ways to incorporate other skills, such as writing, as an extension of Dogme oral activities. It would be equally interesting to replicate the present study during in-person classes.

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Appendix A: Class Observation Form

Date of observation:

Group:

Time:

Topic:

Skill(s):

Activities:

Participant's code	WTC with the teacher and the class				WTC with classmates and friends	
	Pattern 1: Volunteering to answer the teacher's questions	Pattern 2: Asking a question to the teacher	Pattern 3: Presenting one's own opinion or spontaneous comments in the class	Pattern 4: Volunteering participation in class activities [a]	Pattern 5: Giving comments or questions in response to peers' or the teacher's ideas	Pattern 6: Helping peers to recall difficult or forgotten words
NGA	S, M		S, S, S	L, S, S, S		

[a] Depending on the activity, Pattern 4 could also show WTC with classmates and friends.

Codes:

Student's utterance	Duration
S (short)	Less than 30 s
M (medium)	Between 30 s and 1 min
L (Long)	More than 1 min

Appendix B: WTC Survey

How often do you do the following in your English class?

	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
WTC with the teacher and the class (translated and adapted from Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017)				
I ask the teacher in English whenever I have a doubt.				
When I speak English in class, I like waiting for my turn or when the teacher asks me to talk.				
When the teacher asks a question to the whole class, I'm always willing to answer in English.				
When we have to give an opinion in English, I willingly participate.				
I'm one of those students who willingly start talking in English in the classroom.				
In conversation activities in pairs or groups, I speak English with my peers.				
After group activities, I'm willing to express our conclusions aloud in English.				
I'm willing to express opinions, thoughts, and emotions in the English class.				
I feel relaxed when sharing emotions or opinions with my peers in English.				
I always volunteer to present topics in English to the class.				
I would rather be quiet than talk, because speaking English makes me nervous.				
WTC with classmates and friends (translated and adapted from Tavakoli & Davoudi, 2017)				
I'm willing to speak English to my classmates before the class.				
If I have questions in class, I ask my classmates in English.				
I have the desire to communicate in English with my classmates.				
I like using every opportunity in class or lunch break to speak English to my peers.				
I have the desire to speak English with classmates and teachers after the class.				
During conversation activities, I would rather work with classmates who let me speak more in English.				
Opinions about the coursebook's topics and conversation activities (own elaboration)				
The topics in the coursebook make me want to participate in English.				
In my class, there are chances to talk about our favorite topics in English.				
Conversation activities in English in my class are interesting to me.				

Note: Appendices B, C, and D were originally written in Spanish. They have been translated for publication purposes.

Appendix C: Open-Ended Questionnaire

1. Explain how you feel when you have to speak English in online classes.
2. Explain what makes you want to speak English in the online class.
3. Explain what makes you not want to speak English in online classes.
4. What do you think about the conversation topics in your book?
5. What do you like to talk about in English?
6. Explain how the fact that the class is online has influenced your way of participating in English.

Appendix D: Questions for the Interview After Implementation

1. What do you think about the topics discussed in the conversation club?
2. What do you think of the way the conversation club was run?
3. Was there something that motivated you to speak English in the conversation club?
4. Was there anything that made you stay quiet or type in the chat instead of speaking in English?
5. Did you feel more comfortable speaking in English with the teacher or with your classmates? Why?
6. How would you rate yourself on the willingness to communicate in English that you showed in the conversation club? Why?
7. What would have made you talk more in the conversation club?