

## Teacher Collaboration Impact on Bilingual Students' Oral Communication Skills in Inclusive Contexts

**Authors :** Diana González, Marta Gràcia, Ana Luisa Adam-Alcocer

**Abstract :** Incorporating digital tools into educational practices represents a valuable approach for enriching the quality of teachers' educational practices in oral competence and fostering improvements in student learning outcomes. This study aims to promote a collaborative and culturally sensitive approach to professional development between teachers and a speech therapist to enhance their self-awareness and reflection on high-quality educational practices that integrate school components to strengthen children's oral communication and pragmatic skills. The study involved five bilingual teachers fluent in both English and Spanish, with three specializing in special education and two in general education. It focused on Spanish-English bilingual students, aged 3-6, who were experiencing speech delays or disorders in a New York City public school, with the collaboration of a speech therapist. Using EVALOE-DSS (Assessment Scale of Oral Language Teaching in the School Context - Decision Support System), teachers conducted self-assessments of their teaching practices, reflect and make-decisions throughout six classes from March to June, focusing on students' communicative competence across various activities. Concurrently, the speech therapist observed and evaluated six classes per teacher using EVALOE-DSS during the same period. Additionally, professional development meetings were held monthly between the speech therapist and teachers, centering on discussing classroom interactions, instructional strategies, and the progress of both teachers and students in their classes. Findings highlight the digital tool EVALOE-DSS's value in analyzing communication patterns and trends among bilingual children in inclusive settings. It helps in identifying improvement areas through teacher and speech therapist collaboration. After self-reflection meetings, teachers demonstrated increased awareness of student needs in oral language and pragmatic skills. They also exhibited enhanced utilization of strategies outlined in EVALOE-DSS, such as actively guiding and orienting students during oral language activities, promoting student-initiated communicative interactions, teaching students how to seek and provide information, and managing turn-taking to ensure inclusive participation. Teachers participating in the professional development program have shown positive progress in assessing their classes across all dimensions of the training tool, including instructional design, teacher conversation management, pupil conversation management, communicative functions, teacher strategies, and pupil communication functions. This includes aspects related to both teacher actions and child actions, particularly in child language development. This progress underscores the effectiveness of individual reflection (conducted weekly or biweekly using EVALOE-DSS) as well as collaborative reflection among teachers and the speech therapist during meetings. The EVALOE-SSD has proven effective in supporting teachers' self-reflection, decision-making, and classroom changes, leading to improved development of students' oral language and pragmatic skills. It has facilitated culturally sensitive evaluations of communication among bilingual children, cultivating collaboration between teachers and speech therapist to identify areas of growth. Participants in the professional development program demonstrated substantial progress across all dimensions assessed by EVALOE-DSS. This included improved management of pupil communication functions, implementation of effective teaching strategies, and better classroom dynamics. Regular reflection sessions using EVALOE-SSD supported continuous improvement in instructional practices, highlighting its role in fostering reflective teaching and enriching student learning experiences. Overall, EVALOE-DSS has proven invaluable for enhancing teaching effectiveness and promoting meaningful student interactions in diverse educational settings.

**Keywords :** bilingual students, collaboration, culturally sensitive, oral communication skills, self-reflection

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