HOW TO MOTIVATE AND IMPROVE THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS OF

STUDENTS OF THE ACADEMY TEACH & PLAY FROM A VERY EARLY

AGE AND THROUGHOUT THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS?

A Monograph

Presented to

The Program of B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

School of Education

Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia

Colombia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

LicenciadA en Inglés como Lengua Extranjera

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December 2019

ABSTRACT

Speaking is a key ability in the teaching and learning process of a second language. It constitutes a challenge as it depends on several factors of the learner, language features, context, resources and teacher or instructor. In the specific case of English and its worldwide importance as international language, it's capital to develop the oral skills from a very early age and throughout the whole process to assure that our learners are able to participate actively in all kinds of communicative situations in their lives.

In order to achieve real fluency and accuracy, it is fundamental to work with the language from a holistic perspective with clear objectives and suitable activities that correspond to the different levels described by the CEFR and the characteristics and interests of each group of learners. There is not a unique method or activity that should be applied to everyone in order to make them speak. The combination of different methods and tasks according to each group, context and objective is a successful element to create with our students meaningful lessons where they feel motivated to participate and learn effectively.

Keywords: Speaking, oral skills, methods, activities, ESL (English as a Second Language)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the encouragement of my parents,
Beatriz Nieto and Octavio Ruiz, and the unconditional support of Alexandre, my husband and
Miranda, my daughter. My family has always motivated me to give my best although all kinds of
difficulties we may face along the way and try to make a personal difference into this world.

I also want to express my immense gratitude to all my professors at the UNAD,
especially to my tutor Liliana Moreno for her guidance and support along my studies and in
polishing this manuscript.

My students at Teach & Play have been a great source of motivation and analysis to make
English learning an interesting and effective activity of both personal and social empowerment.

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INTRODUCTION

When learning a foreign language, speaking is a challenge as we are afraid to make

mistakes and not being understood. Moreover, this linguistic ability is a capital aspect to achieve

real fluency in any language and it is an interaction key among human beings. It is actually used

every day in all kind of situations both in the personal and professional life.

As a future English teacher, I want to understand and analyze the best methods and

activities to enhance speaking among my students at Teach & Play and be able to apply them on

my daily teaching practice. Therefore, from a holistic perspective of learning a language, we

should not consider Speaking as a separate skill but we need to understand that it is part of a

complex process that takes into account the development of the other linguistic abilities. It also

depends on the students' motivation and a suitable classroom atmosphere led by a teacher who

promotes dialogues, debates and interactions by giving the necessary tools to talk and use

English according to each level of proficiency. And without penalizing or giving too much

importance to small mistakes of pronunciation or grammar.

Significance of the Study

From the pedagogical perspective, it is generally accepted that speaking and listening are considered the most complex skills to develop when teaching and learning a foreign language. It is usually much easier to read, write and understand written language. However, to achieve real fluency, we need to speak and be able to communicate in different situations.

But as Segura, R. (2012) explains, it is difficult for Spanish speakers to speak in English. First, English lessons are usually a master class where students listen to the teacher and repeat grammatical forms and structures without context. Then, they practice with tasks from the course book or workbook. In addition to this, in most cases, English is not used during the lesson but teachers explain and interact with their students mainly in Spanish. Another reason is that students are not in contact with the English language because they live in a Spanish speaking environment.

From the linguistic point of view, speaking is considered as one of the most important abilities to develop in a second language acquisition process. Thus, there are some international language standards such as The Common European Framework of Reference for languages that explain in detail the different levels that a student can obtain in speaking tasks and strategies according to six different levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. These abilities describe what students can do not only in terms of speaking, but also in writing, listening and reading. This kind of parameters shows that the teaching-learning process of a foreign language should be developed as an integrating system of all the linguistic competences.

However, as Bailey and Savage (1994) stated, speaking in a second or foreign language is usually considered as the most challenging of the fours linguistic skills. Brown (1994) explains why:

- The use of contractions, vowel reductions and elision.

- The necessity to interact with another speaker at least.

- The use of slang and idioms.

- The specific stress, rhythm and intonation of words and sentences.

Furthermore, human communication is a complex but necessary process. We communicate every day and for all kind of purposes. We use language to express ourselves, exchange information and interact with other people. Intention and context are also key aspects that shape our communicative exchanges and allow us to interpret and transmit the message we are receiving or producing. Speaking is then a challenging communicative ability that needs to be worked and developed with the most appropriate tools from a very young age.

From the cultural angle, being aware that language is a capital of element of any culture and represents it, is relevant when teaching any language. In addition to this, understanding that a language organizes a way of thinking of a specific group of people allows teachers to motivate their students from a holistic perspective where they can introduce other cultural elements such as gastronomy, music, dances, religion an etc. In fact, there is much more than grammar in a language. And if we really want to learn or teach a language, we have to take into account all these other aspects.

Since I started my teaching practice both in Simijaca and Chiquinquira, I have faced a recurrent problem: Learners are afraid of speaking English. Even if they have some good grammar skills and vocabulary, it is difficult for them to "break the ice" and make some phrases in this language. And this happens with primary school students as well as with high school and college learners.

Therefore, I suggest to focus on this problematic in order to find the best ways to

motivate and improve our students' speaking skills since a very early age and throughout their whole learning process.

This is in fact a pedagogical problem that needs consideration not only in terms of methods, strategies and activities to take into account. This constitutes also a linguistic problem and approach as we need to consider the language we are teaching, in this case, English from a holistic perspective where every skill (grammar, speaking, listening, reading and writing) is seen as part of a system that needs to be practiced and developed as a whole and not separated abilities that do not connect.

Statement of the Problem

Teach & Play is an institute of non-formal education that has existed since May 19th, 2014 where English and French are taught according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). It is located in Simijaca - Cundinamarca, a municipality located in the north of the department, in the region of the Ubate valley.

Source : https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simijaca

Figure 1. Simijaca location.

According to the last census of DANE (2015) Simijaca has a total population of 13,077 inhabitants, of which 7,293 reside in the urban area and the rest are located in the rural part. The main sources of income are livestock and agriculture. The production and sale of dairy products is also an important economic sector of the municipality and the region.

Currently, there are forty-five 45 students enrolled in Teach & Play. Their ages oscillate between 8 and 16 years old. 90% of them are from Simijaca, but also, the academy has students from other neighbor towns: Susa, Chiquinquira and San Miguel de Sema. These students use public transportation to be able to come to the classes.

Teach & Play is a private institution founded to promote foreign languages in the region and encourage children, teenagers and adults to learn them without having to move to other cities like Ubate or Bogota. Students come twice a week for a session of 60 minutes each time. The academy uses the new technologies of information and communication. It has a video beam, internet connection, three computers and nice facilities. Students seem motivated to come and take part of the courses.

Since I started my teaching practice in Teach & Play in Simijaca, I have faced a recurrent problem: 95% of the learners are afraid of speaking English. Even if they have some good grammar skills and vocabulary, it is difficult for them to "break the ice" and express themselves in this language. And this affects all kind of students from very young children, to teenagers and adults.

Segura, R. (2012) explains that speaking English can be difficult for Spanish speakers as we tend to teach and focus more on the grammar rules than learning in a context and developing the linguistic abilities. We make our students learn and repeat some vocabulary; fill out some books completing exercises. But do we really encourage them and give them the opportunity to

speak and apply what they are learning?

Moreover, as an English teacher working in this specific context, how can I motivate and improve the speaking skills of my students from a very early age and throughout the teaching and learning process?

This research is based on a qualitative study. In fact, how to motivate and improve the speaking skills of our students in English is a question that involves different aspects of the teaching and learning processes. Therefore, the tool that I propose to solve this problematic is a research of successful pedagogical models and methods that have been applied in other contexts to enhance the speaking abilities.

Moreover, pedagogical research uses the scientific method to study best practices in teaching by providing and comparing them as well as their contexts, models, purposes, methods and strategies. Its analysis can be done through different elements of the teaching – learning process:

- **Learning:** How do students best learn?
- **Teaching:** What are the most suitable teaching practices to promote students' achievement and success?
- **Motivation:** How can teachers motivate their students to learn and build together a significant learning process?
- **Development:** How do children, teenagers and adults change over time, taking into account their cognitive, social, and emotional abilities? What are the different interests and motivations in each life stage?
- **Classroom management:** What classroom or school practices and arrangements make the classroom ideal and most favorable for student learning?

The instruments that I propose to carry out this research is the analysis and comparison of three different successful pedagogical models and methods that have been applied in other countries or regions to promote the development of the speaking abilities.

Collecting scientific data about these important variables in teaching English as a foreign language, can help me to determine the most appropriate models, methods, strategies and activities to encourage and develop the speaking abilities of the students of Teach & Play.

Objectives

General Objective

Determine the most suitable strategies and activities to develop and enhance the Teach & Play's students' speaking skills since an early age and throughout their learning process.

Specific Objectives

- Establish the best ways to motivate the students of Teach & Play to speak in English and express themselves in different situations; give their opinions and practice what they have learnt.

- Understand the specific characteristics and needs of each life stage of the students of Teach & Play: childhood, adolescence and adulthood as well as the different changes from one stage to the other.

- Identify the required elements and appropriate factors to create an encouraging environment in the classroom for our students to feel confident and comfortable to express themselves in English; share their opinions about different topics and interact with their teachers and peers.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

"There is not point knowing a lot about language if you can't use it"

Scrivener (2005, p.146)

As a matter of fact, speaking in a second or foreign language is generally considered the most difficult linguistic ability to master for the majority of English learners as Zhang (2009) explains. There are some factors that may cause difficulty as presented by Ur (1996). Some of them are:

- **Inhibition:** Learners might be shy, fearful or just afraid to make mistakes and being criticized.

- **Nothing to say:** Students have no motive to talk and express themselves.

- **Low or even participation:** Some students may speak more than others according to their personalities especially in large groups.

- **Mother tongue use:** This can be very frequent when learners share the same mother tongue and tend to use it as it is easier and less risky.

Furthermore, there have been some previous studies that have researched the speaking difficulties encountered by English learners around the world. For instance, one study conducted

with Turkish English learners showed that anxiety and unwillingness were the two major obstacles during the English speaking process. (Dil, 2009). This study also demonstrated that learners' anxiety and unwillingness were caused by the general fear of receiving a negative feedback or evaluation in front of their peers. And it was more intense in students who perceived their English level as poor than with the ones who considered their English as very good, good or pretty ok.

Another study with Omani students showed that the lack of basic knowledge of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and discourse was the reason for poor oral production (Al-Lawati, 1995). In fact, the study also revealed that the large number of students per group and the curriculum guidelines do not promote speaking abilities development.

Finally, Al-Hosni (2014) study with young EFL learners revealed that beyond the difficulties that learners may face when developing oral skills, there are some aspects that remain common and that we should consider:

- **Teachers' perceptions and tacit beliefs about teaching speaking:** Although teachers agree on the importance of speaking, they argued that they don't have enough time to work on this skill as they have a special program, steps and even books to complete as required by their supervisors.

- **Teaching strategies:** There is a proven lack of speaking teaching strategies and teachers focus more on teaching grammar points and vocabulary considering these last aspects as being enough to work speaking abilities in the classroom and at home. Even when there is an opportunity to involve students in oral activities, teachers prefer to move on doing other activities such as reading and writing.

We will concentrate on describing different speaking teaching strategies along the content of this monograph.

- **Curriculum**: There are not enough planned activities particularly to teach and practice speaking. Teachers come across speaking when teaching writing and reading. Furthermore, there is not much interaction in the classroom. Students only answer teachers' questions with single words or short sentences. And this is verified analysing 5th grade textbooks where there are just a few opportunities for students to practice their speaking by asking and answering questions. Focus is made mainly on the form rather than the meaning. Therefore, we can say that there are not enough activities to enhance speaking in an interactive and communicative perspective.

- **Extracurricular activities:** The study has also shown that students are not provided with other tasks and places where English is needed in addition to school. There is a weekly English assembly where only the students with good level English attend but because of its frequency, it is not significant. Moreover, it does not provide with authentic communicative interaction.

- **Assessment regulations:** If speaking is assessed, it should have an important role in the curriculum to be worked and developed in the classroom daily activities. But as this study has shown, the relevance is mainly given to reading and writing. Teachers evaluate their students' oral abilities only when they ask and answer questions to each other or when repeating some dialogues from their textbooks.

After taking all these aspects into consideration, it becomes capital to understand what we can do as future English teachers to include speaking into our lessons and enhance this ability among our leaners. But before analyzing the different postures and contributions regarding the

best methods or activities to promote Speaking in the classroom, we should understand what is an ability and more concrete what is a linguistic ability.

As Navarro's (2009) article explains:

If teachers wish to know how to improve speaking skills, what they need to ask themselves first is what they are going to teach, and how. (p.88)

In fact, it is generally accepted that an ability is the capacity or faculty to do something. It is also the expertise, mastery or proficiency in a particular area. Moreover and according to the CEFR Common Reference (2001), a linguistic ability is the group of "can-do" aspects that a person develops in the process of acquiring and mastering any language. Therefore, when talking about Speaking and the other skills, we are focusing on what the student can achieve in terms of using and communicating in the language he is learning.

Speaking is considered as one of the most relevant skills to develop when learning and teaching a second or a foreign language. Thus, the Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) has organized the language proficiency and mastery at six different levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2. This framework also includes three "plus" levels: A2+, B1+ and B2+. All these different levels describe in a simple manner what knowledge and abilities learners have to acquire to learn and master effectively the new language. And speaking is of course, one of these skills.

In this perspective, the CEFR has been considered as a key indicator of language competence. In fact, it has been designed by the Council of Europe since 1971 to provide a transparent, coherent and comprehensive basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses and curriculum guidelines, the design of teaching and learning materials, and the assessment of

foreign language proficiency. It is available in more than 30 different languages and it has been used not only in Europe but also in other continents.

At the gathering of the European Council in Barcelona in March 2002, the Heads of State or Government asked for the establishment of a linguistic competence indicator. The Commission engaged in this important project on a consensual basis with Member States' representatives, involving the Expert Working Groups on Languages. The objective of this indicator is to describe and measure the leaner's four linguistic abilities:

- Speaking
- Reading
- Listening
- Writing

Moreover, each level and its abilities has been developed reviewing the content of language curricula and defining positive 'can do' descriptors adapted to the age, interests and needs of learners, adaptable to any specific context. They all correspond to a whole communicative perspective and methodology in language teaching and learning. According to the CEFR, the speaking ability should be measured in terms of spoken interaction and production according to the different levels standards as the following self-assessment chart shows:

		A1	A2	B1	B2	C1	C2
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.	I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).	I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly-flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate needs. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.	I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

Figure 2. Self-assessment chart of CEFR.

Under this perspective, the CEFR for English describes the following speaking competences per level, associating them to a specific Cambridge English exam:

Level			General description	Cambridge English Exam
Proficient user	C2	Mastery	Highly proficient – can use English very fluently, precisely and sensitively in most contexts	Cambridge English: Proficiency
	C1	Effective Operational Proficiency	Able to use English fluently and flexibly in a wide range of contexts	Cambridge English: Advanced
Independent user	B2	Vantage	Can use English effectively, with some fluency, in a range of contexts	Cambridge English: First/First for Schools
	B1	Threshold	Can communicate essential points and ideas in familiar contexts	Cambridge English: Preliminary/ Preliminary for Schools
Basic user	A2	Waystage	Can communicate in English within a limited range of contexts	Cambridge English: Key/Key for Schools Cambridge English: Flyers
	A1	Breakthrough	Can communicate in basic English with help from the listener	Cambridge English: Movers Cambridge English: Starters

Source : https://www.englishprofile.org/the-cefr/cefr-for-teachers-learners?

Figure 3. Speaking competences per level.

In accordance with these different parameters, speaking is considered as a capital communication skill that must be developed in any language teaching and learning process. Besides, productive and effective spoken communication demands learners being able to express their ideas and views clearly, confidently and concisely in speech, adjusting their content and style to the audience and promoting free-flowing communication. Of course, depending on the pupils' proficiency level, characteristics and objectives. As a conclusion, we can state that speaking is in fact, a complex but very important ability to work in the classroom. And we, as future teachers, need to focus on improving it in an effective and meaningful way.

Pedagogic Strategies to Enhance Oral Skills

Under this perspective, we are going to analyze three different postures of how Speaking skills should be developed and promoted in the classroom. The first one is of Anna Lazaraton who describes the current practice in oral skills pedagogy and some classroom activities and materials design parameters to enhance Speaking abilities. The second one is of Janet Goodwin who focuses on pronunciation and a systematic approach to achieve effective oral communication integrating important elements such as comprehension, self-expression and monitoring. The third and last contribution is the work of Sabrina Peck who highlights the different features and needs of adult learners and children when learning oral abilities. And how teaching resources, materials and activities should be adapted to each group of students.

Lazaraton (2001) starts by describing the reasons why Speaking is a challenging skill for most students. She explains how a variety of demands arise at the same time: monitoring and understanding the other speaker(s) ideas and way of thinking, thinking about one's own contribution, producing it and monitoring its effect.

Speaking is an "activity requiring the integration of many subsystems…all these factors combine to make speaking a second or foreign language a formidable task for language learners" (Bailey and Savage 1994)

Lazaraton (2001) also explains that since the appearance and spreading of the communicative approach in language teaching and learning, developing Speaking abilities as contextualized sociocultural activities have become more and more important in the classroom. In fact, she proposes that there are four dimensions that constitute oral communication: **1) Grammatical competence** that includes syntax, orthograph, phonology and vocabulary. **2) Sociolinguistic competence** that refers to the different rules of interaction and social meanings.

3) Discourse competence that is composed by the coherence and cohesion of sentences and texts. **4) Strategic competence** that connote diverse compensatory strategies to be used in difficult situations. Learners ought to cultivate and work out all these abilities in order to achieve a high oral level in English combining both fluency and the traditional accuracy.

Now that we know what to teach, we should consider the best ways to do it. In order to develop oral skills in the classroom, Lazaraton (2001) describes and analyzes a good number of activities. The first ones are more focused to work fluency and the last ones are specialized in working on accuracy.

1. **Discussions:** They are generally used in the classroom as teachers or instructors give a specific topic, problem or situation and students have to respond to it by sharing their postures about it or finding a solution for it. Teachers should plan these activities in advance and state very clearly their objectives and parameters according to each level in order to make them interesting and successful. There should be also a follow - - up activity to evaluate each student's contribution according to the criteria previously explained by the teacher.

2. **Speeches:** They are also commonly used to work Speaking abilities. Students prepare a speech about an explicit issue with some guidelines about the kind of speech and its length. Listeners should be assigned with some specific roles in order to make the activity more dynamic and interesting. The topic and features can of course vary from each group of students and their level. For more advanced learners, they can prepare a spontaneous speech which will make them think and speak without notes and preparation. Videotaping speeches can help teachers and instructors to analyze each student's strengths and weaknesses in a very objective and meaningful way.

3. **Role plays:** This kind of tasks are frequently used to put the theory into real life situations where interaction is needed such as making requests, offers; complaining; expressing your will, likes or dislikes; meeting someone new; complimenting and so on. As before, identifying the level of the learners is a key aspect in order to make the whole process successful and motivating. Students can prepare their role plays from prepared dialogues from a book or write their own if they have the necessary skills. Observing native speakers in the chosen situation of the role play can be very helpful as it will show the vocabulary, idiomatic expressions and slang that are also incorporated in real life.

4. **Conversations:** Another tool that has been recently used to develop oral skills is analyzing and evaluating conversations. This sort of activity is designed to make students become aware of the language characteristics produced in real life. As Lazaraton (2001) describes:

> In other words, it is not adequate to have students produce lots of language; they must become more metalinguistically aware of the many features of language in order to become competent speakers and interlocutors in English. (p.108)

In fact, this conversation analysis should be done through the study of transcriptions either provided by the teacher or made by the students themselves.

5. **Audiotaped Oral Dialogue journals:** In order to work fluency and more specifically accuracy, audiotaped journals are an excellent option. Students record themselves regularly talking spontaneously about a specific subject or topic given by the teacher and according to his instructions.

Then, teacher listens to the recordings and provides individual feedback and corrections in terms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Actually it's a very useful resource that focuses not only on what is said but also how it is said. And students can always refer to the material and recognize their improvement. It is capital that students register unplanned speaking without preparing it or reading their contributions and following exactly their teacher's guidelines.

6. **Other Activities to work accuracy:** Drills are also a very useful resource to enhance speaking abilities in the classroom. They have been used in the past but in order to make them more effective, they should be simple, short and contextualized to recreate authentic communicative situations.

   Other activities such as small conversations of two or three minutes allow students to get to know each other while practicing specific structures, vocabulary and grammar rules in realistic contexts.

   Structured interviews where students formulate both yes or no questions and open questions with Wh words can help learners to practice their speaking skills while developing accuracy.

Before finishing the analysis of Lazaraton's proposal, it is important to consider two important aspects: Error correction and assessment. In terms of error correction, the author proposes that teachers and students should agree on which errors are going to be corrected, how and by who. It's generally accepted that errors that block communication or change completely the meaning of the actual message should be corrected. But small errors such as third person singular -s should be ignored. Moreover, interrupting the students' speech to correct them can

make them feel unsecure and impact negatively their speaking abilities. It is then suggested to correct them at the end of their speeches providing a meaningful and complete feedback. It is capital to remember which level of mastery we want to achieve with each group of learners to correct them accordingly.

Assessment is another key aspect and Lazaraton proposes that there are two important moments to analyze:

1) Class performance evaluation

2) Students' performance in large-scale oral examinations

For the first aspect and according to the different activities described previously to enhance oral skills in the classroom there are several key factors to take into account: adequate planning of the class performance evaluation, consistency and uniformity of all input materials and activities for all students to be evaluated; and finally, clear and understandable criteria to be defined regarding the specific characteristics of the students as well as their level of English.

For large oral examinations, students face an important challenge as their results usually allow them to get into college or obtain a specific job. Therefore, they need to be prepared according to each international test standard. Lazaraton suggests to consult directly their websites for more detailed information. Some of these international exams for oral skills are The Oral Interaction test in the Certificate in Communicative Skills in English (CCSE). Another is the speaking part of the Business Language Testing Service (BULATS). Both of these tests are developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES). There is also the Test of Spoken English (TSE) offered by the Educational Testing Service that administers the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) offers the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview and

finally, there is a more recent option: The Phone Pass. In general, as Lazaraton explains all these international exams measure learners' fluency, linguistic accuracy, pronunciation, vocabulary and appropriacy according to different and specific situations.

In conclusion to Lazaraton's proposal, she explains that it is capital to understand the group of learners we have in the classroom to equalize the opportunities for them to speak and participate in the oral activities because some of them may be more talkative than others.

A Systematic Approach on Pronunciation

Continuing with the second proposal, we are going to analyze Janet Goodwin's systematic approach that focuses on pronunciation. In fact, this author considers that this is a key aspect that should be taught and developed in order to achieve effective oral communication.

According to Goodwin's perspective, there are several important elements that should be taken into account:

1. **Thought Groups:** These are the group of words as result of the speaker's pauses during their speech. They allow a better and clear understanding of the message just like punctuation in written language.

2. **Prominence:** In each thought group there is usually a prominent element such as a syllable that is emphasized to express a specific message and intention.

3. **Intonation:** This key pronunciation aspect helps highlighting the prominent element in each thought group changing the pitch of our speech. It also gives special meaning to the words used in a specific situation.

4. **Rhythm:** This element is the alternation of shorter and longer syllables that occur when we speak. Each language has its own rhythm and teaching it helps students to improve their proficiency.

5. **Reduced speech:** This aspect is related closely with thought groups and rhythm. It allows speakers to highlight relevant syllables by stressing them and unstressing those that are less important.

6. **Linking:** This feature describes the mechanisms used by speakers to connect words and make them easier to pronounce shifting final consonants and fusing syllables during their speeches.

7. **Consonants:** To teach the pronunciation of consonant sounds, there are three dimensions to consider: The place of articulation in our bodies, the manner of articulation and the voicing of each sound. This last aspect refers to the vibration or not of the vocal cords.

   There is also the International Phonetic Alphabet that should be taken into account as it represents each sound with a specific symbol.

8. **Vowels:** These are the syllable core that can be shortened or lengthened. They are usually defined by the relation between them than with a fixed point. Teaching vowels in English constitutes a challenge as there are fourteen (14) of them; there is also a large number of vowels variation among dialects and their spelling changes. There is also a good number of diphthongs in English that should be taught and practiced.

9. **Word Stress:** Word stressing patterns in English are complex and depend on the historical origin of the word, the part of the speech and finally, the affixation. Being aware of these rules and learning them will help students to have a better pronunciation.

Now that we have identified the important elements to teach pronunciation in an effective way, Goodwin (1996) proposes a communicative framework to follow in the classroom based on a presentation, practice and production sequence that includes five stages:

1. **Description and analysis:** Using charts, teacher introduces a feature describing how and when it occurs with examples that are familiar to the students. For instance, the *-ed* pronunciation rules of the regular verbs in the simple past form.

2. **Listening discrimination:** In this stage, both teachers and students interact by saying contextualized minimal pairs. These can be speech fragments listed into two different columns. The purpose of this kind of activities is to focus students' attention into contextualizing and practicing the new feature they are learning.

3. **Controlled practice:** Once we have identified and described the new feature, we have to make our students practice it. To do so, we can use different activities like rhymes, poems, dialogues and monologues. These tasks should be aimed almost entirely on form.

4. **Guided practice:** During this stage, we extend our scope focusing learners' attention not only on form but also on other important aspects such as grammar, meaning and intention. Activities like memory games help students to develop their cognitive skills while practicing the target feature.

5. **Communicative practice:** this final step should include tasks such as role play activities, debates, interviews and drama scenes that combine both form and meaning practice. It is important to set realistic goals in order to practice one or two features at a time and promote students' use of them in contextualized communicative situations.

In addition to the different activities described by Goodwin (1996) during the five stages proposed to teach pronunciation in the classroom, she gives a list and explains other possible teaching techniques that we teachers should consider and apply according to our students' needs and characteristics. Some of these are:

1. **Contextualized minimal pair practice:** As Bowen (1975) highlights, it is important not only to recognize the different minimal pairs in isolated words but to connect them in whole sentences and specific contexts. A good example of this, it is the exercise to identify the difference between *pan* and *pen*. And the sentences that we can create with them:

   This pen leaks.   *Then, don't write with it.*

   This pan leaks.   *Then, don't cook with it.*

   (P. 125)

2. **Cartoons and drawings:** These activities help to contextualize the use of English in different real life situations while developing students' creativity and imagination and practicing rhythm.

3. **Gadgets and props:** Working with different objects such as Cuisenaire rods to clarify rhythm and identify stressed and unstressed syllables as well as kazoos to highlight intonation patterns can be really effective tools to teach pronunciation.

4. **Rhymes, poetry and jokes:** These resources can be especially useful to teach and practice the rhythm of English as they have strong patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. Jokes help to exemplify and rehearse linking and reduced speech.

5. **Drama:** This is a very complete tool to teach and practice pronunciation because it develops at the same time, relevant aspects of the communicative skills such as nonverbal communication, discourse intonation and pragmatic awareness.

6. **Kinesthetic activities:** In order to achieve real fluency and accuracy, integrating movements with our fingers and hands to teach pronunciation can be a very useful technique as we communicate with our body and not only with our vocal cords.

Before finishing her proposal, Goodwin (1996) analyses an integrated whole-body approach to teach pronunciation. It is focused on spoken interaction and it takes real videotaped situations as source of study. Students examine them carefully in order to identify the key elements to be able to repeat the dialogues on their own in the practice section. Their production is then recorded in order to make the learners become aware of their progress and aspects to improve.

Goodwin (1996) also considers the use of media and technology to teach pronunciation. In fact, similar to Lazaraton's proposal, Goodwin highlights the utility of audio taped journals and goes beyond, suggesting that students should record their homework on a regular basis as well as words and sentences that seem difficult for them to pronounce. These can be reviewed and practiced during private tutorial sessions. The main purposes of these audio resources are to make students become familiar to the use of English on a frequent basis and allow them to practice the different features they learn gradually.

As Goodwin (1996) explains video can be used in different ways to teach and practice pronunciation. There are some videotape programs available that focus on pronunciation and can be an effective tool to use in the classroom. Short recordings of native speakers conversations

can help students to prepare themselves to interact in real life situations. Commercials and tv recording can also be very useful, we just should pay attention to copyright legislation in each context. Another form of using video is for students to record themselves from time to time and to videotape the lessons. These strategies help learners to analyze their performance in a complete way and become aware of the aspects to improve.

In addition to this, there are some computer software specialized in working pronunciation. Goodwin (1996) shares a website link that provides a summary of the best computer programs available with their description, cost and contact:

http://osu.orst.edu/dept/eli/june1998/html

(P. 129)

Moreover, Internet offers teachers and learners a wide range of resources to work on pronunciation. Different websites are available with lesson plans, charts, listening activities and online dictionaries with pronunciation characteristics. It is indeed a very useful tool if we have the connection and hardware required.

Finally, Goodwin (1996) proposes three sorts of assessing pronunciation: Diagnostic evaluation, ongoing feedback and classroom achievement testing.

1. **Diagnostic evaluation:** Goodwin explains that there are two ways of making a first diagnose, one is to make the learner read a passage containing different sounds and features. The other way is to make the learner speak about a particular subject without writing.

    She also mentions another possibility that consists of an oral interview recorded for later evaluation.

2. **Ongoing feedback:** As Goodwin explains, giving meaningful feedback during the lessons is capital to our learners' improvement process. This gives them an idea of their progress and highlights the aspects where they need to focus more and get better.

She also describes three forms of giving ongoing feedback: The first one is self-monitoring that promotes correction in a silent way making the learner aware of his errors. Charts, gestures and even recording their performance can help students to understand what aspects they have to improve.

Another form is peer feedback. Dividing the group of learners into performers and juries can be very practical. This alternative that can be applied in several types of activities can be very effective as receiving the feedback from another classmate nourishes the learning process beyond the teacher – learner perspective. Sometimes it is even more persuasive.

The last form of ongoing feedback is teacher feedback. Using gestures or signs to correct students in a silent way is a good manner to provide meaningful feedback by teachers and instructors. Another way is sound files in an e-mail exchange. The important aspect to keep in mind is the kind of errors that should be corrected. Not all of them deserve to be mentioned. According to Goodwin (1996) there are three types of errors that should be considered: The errors that are not isolated and that occur as a pattern. The ones that cause disruption in communication and finally, those errors related to the pronunciation features and aspects learnt by the students.

It is also relevant to understand that errors highlight the aspects that should be worked and improved during the lessons.

To conclude Goodwin's approach, she reminds us of the relevance of the goals behind teaching pronunciation. Some of them are: developing the ability of our students to understand and be understood in different communicative situations; developing the confidence needed by them to communicate in an easy and fluent way and finally, the possibility to evaluate their productions in order to adjust and improve them.

Differences between Children and Adults in Developing Oral Skills

Continuing with the third approach of this literature review, we are going to study Sabrina Peck's proposal who focuses her contributions on the differences between children and adults when learning a second language and developing oral skills. She also suggests some activities and resources to apply in the classroom.

Peck starts stating in this chapter: "In general, children are more holistic learners who need to use language for authentic communication in ESL class" (P. 139)

In fact, she explains that children engage more with songs, stories and games than adults. Therefore, all sorts of materials should be used with them, from toys, stuffed animals, arts and crafts, costumes and so on. Moreover, teachers and instructors should take into account the children's interests and motivations in order to make their lessons effective and meaningful.

Considering and summarizing other authors who have studied how children acquire a second language, Peck highlights important elements to take into account:

- Have a holistic perspective of the teaching – learning process and consider the child learner as a whole.

- Concentrate on meaning and activities without correcting every single error in order to motivate them to participate actively using English.

- Promote collaboration and social development by implementing role-play activities, discussions and debates in the classroom.

- Explore the five senses using movements, objects, textures and pictures as well as a wide range of tasks where children feel really involved and motivated to learn and use English.

- Integrate the four skills in the lesson plans to build a complete holistic process by making them read and repeat a story. Use cardboards and others resources to practice vocabulary and grammar structures.

- Plan your lessons according to their age and interests.

- Enhance the use of English for social purposes in addition to the academic goals.

- Make it a practical tool to participate into authentic communicative situations they can face in real life circumstances.

These guidelines come from a progressive education perspective that is not always followed in schools. In fact, teachers should adapt to the children's developmental level and involve them actively in acquiring a second language.

Under this progressive angle and considering that children have a great ability to play with language and learn it while playing, Peck proposes the following techniques and resources to develop our lessons:

1. **Songs, poems and chants:** Children don't get bored or tired repeating rhythmic texts several times a day and many days a week. They really enjoy this kind of activities. As teachers, we can include movements and gestures as well as alternate them to create a rich repertoire.

Some suggested poems are Mother Goose rhymes and a good compilation of useful

chants are the written collections of children's folklore. Peck states that when it

comes to choose songs, poems or chants, it's important to follow your own taste as

teacher and individual as you will listen to them repeatedly. (P. 141)

2. **Dramatic activities:** Teachers and instructors that usually work with adults should

   consider that children are willing to participate more in a lesson through drama than

   through explanations and instructions, especially shy learners.

   This kind of activities provide several benefits to students not only in terms of oral

   production but also in developing listening skills even if they don't play the main role

   on the plays.

   Some good sources that we can use are the children's magazines: "Plays", "Cricket"

   and "Ladybug" in the United States. (P. 143)

3. **Storytelling:** Stories are a very useful tool to develop all language skills: speaking,

   listening, reading and writing. Moreover, children love to hear the same story many

   times so teachers and instructors can alternate the way of telling stories. Using

   images, puppets, dolls, masks and any other creative object can be very motivating

   for young learners. Involving them by turns to read or tell the story can be very

   practical. (P. 144 and P. 145)

4. **Gesture and movement:** As Peck explains, children need to move more than adults.

   Movements and gestures can be incorporated to one of the resources mentioned

   before (songs, poems, chants and storytelling) but also to make small breaks during

   the lesson to enhance focus and productivity. (P. 145)

5. **Total Physical Response (TPR):** This whole approach is the best known to teach English including movement. Teacher gives and shows a group of commands such as: "Stand up, sit down, pick" and so on to the students who gradually understand and carry them out. It focuses on comprehension and repetition in order to work vocabulary and grammar in an effective way. There are some TPR books with different commands but it is suggested that teachers and instructors develop their own list of commands regarding the context and topic being studied. (P. 145)

6. **Total Physical Response (TPR) Storytelling:** This is another practical and very successful technique that involves movement and gestures such as pantomimes while telling a story. Teacher starts telling a story using special gestures or signs for each word. Then, students practice the vocabulary in pairs or small groups. After, they try to retell the story or event act it out. (P.146)

To conclude Peck's proposal, she explains that there is good variety of strategies available for teachers and instructors to handle errors in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. They can ignore the error, make a mental note, rephrase the sentence said by the child in the correct way and even make a lesson for the whole group later on. These are some of these possibilities. (P. 146)

She also highlights that as ESL teacher for children, you will need to know them, the characteristics and age interests of your group, in addition to the knowledge of the language and previous experiences you may have teaching the language. (P. 147)

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Investigating about the different methods and activities to motivate and improve the speaking abilities of the students of the Teach & Play academy is a complex matter that involves different aspects of the teaching and learning processes. Therefore and taking into account both my personal experience as EFL student and later on as EFL teacher, a qualitative literature study has been conducted to develop this monograph under the Pedagogy, didactic and curriculum line of research.

The target population of this study are the forty-five (45) students from the private academy Teach & Play located in Simijaca – Colombia. Their ages oscillate between 8 and 16 years old. 90% of them are from Simijaca, but also, the academy has students from other neighbor towns: Susa, Chiquinquira and San Miguel de Sema. These students use public transportation to be able to come to the classes.

Teach & Play is a private institution founded to promote foreign languages in the region and encourage children, teenagers and adults to learn them without having to move to other cities like Ubate or Bogota. Students come twice a week for a session of 60 minutes each time. The academy uses the new technologies of information and communication. It has a video beam, internet connection, three computers and comfortable facilities. Students seem motivated to come and take part of the courses.

Although their interest and motivation to learn English, students very often seem afraid to speak English and this happens with young learners as well as with teenagers and adults. Even if they have the knowledge to produce some sentences, they do not it spontaneously. And this is the main reason beyond this monograph. Furthermore, this matter involves not linguistic and pedagogical aspects but also the human nature itself.

This problematic has interested me since I was finishing my high school and of course, it became more and more appealing when I started the B.A. in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. I have been asking myself what we can do as teachers to promote real fluency and mastery when teaching a foreign language in a daily basis in the classroom. And when the time came to choose a topic for my monograph, it was already there and I just had to look into it in a thorough way.

After checking the available literature and previous studies about developing oral abilities in the classroom, I did not found a large number of them. Therefore, I started by taking into consideration different studies conducted worldwide about the matter that showed the main issues happening in the classroom that do not promote speaking. This already gave an idea of what I should focus on.

Then, I reviewed the literature and selected three of the most prominent and complete resources with a communicative approach. Studies have shown that it is pointless to learn a language if you can't communicate with it. Therefore, under this interaction and communicative perspective, I proceeded then to the analysis and comparison of three different pedagogical approaches that contemplate the teaching and learning processes as a holistic development of different aspects. The first is Anne: Lazaraton's pedagogical proposal to teach oral skills through

active interaction among the learners in debates, audio-journals, charades and many other activities in the classroom.

The second is Janet Goodwin's systematic approach that focuses on teaching pronunciation and its different elements as source of achieving real fluency in the target language.

The third is Sabrina Peck's proposition where she explains how adult learners differ from children to acquire oral abilities and how teachers should consider and adapt to those differences in order to create with each group of learners a meaningful process that leads into successful learning and speaking fluently.

To finish this study I suggest not to follow one of the presented proposals but to take into account the different approaches to the reality that each teacher has to face. Each one of them introduces valuable aspects that combined together in our curriculum and lesson plans will helps us enhance speaking in the classroom.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

It is generally accepted that the use of English as a second language (ESL) or foreign language (EFL) in oral communication constitutes a complex challenge that requires consideration as being fluent in the language is capital to face all types of situations of the human nature. Even if a student has a very good comprehension of the language and a deep knowledge in grammar, it is essential for him to be able to speak and make himself understood, otherwise the teaching and learning process is incomplete and meaningless.

In addition to this, many studies around the world have shown that there are not enough possibilities and activities to develop and work the oral activities in the classroom. Relevance is mainly focused on grammar, reading and writing whereas speaking is merely worked with dialogues. There are not extracurricular activities where students have to use English on a regular basis or there are not available at all. And here is where we need to think and consider what we should do to include speaking in our classrooms and work on developing oral abilities.

Moreover, as future English teachers we study a lot of approaches and methods to teach the different linguistic skills but it is capital to understand very clearly what are the most suitable techniques and concrete activities that we can develop in the classroom to help our students in achieving real fluency and accuracy.

The principal aim of teaching speaking is to improve the oral production of the pupils. Hence, language tasks should promote individual use as much as possible but in contextualized situations. As Chaney (1998) explains, this conception differs from the past as the aim was merely focused in the written skills development and the oral abilities were neglected. At the time, it was thought that the cognitive skills involved in writing will automatically transfer to speaking abilities. And this has proven wrong through the years and different studies.

After studying the three different proposals made by Lazaraton, Goodwin and Peck regarding the best methods and activities to promote the development of oral skills in ESL teaching, there are some important and common elements to take into consideration. First, before planning your lessons, it's capital to understand the main characteristics and interests of your group of learners. Then, set clear and realistic goals about the process you are about to begin. Then, choose suitable tasks among the wide variety of activities. Have a clear perspective of what errors are going to be corrected and how. And finally, have a clear idea of how final assessment is going to be conducted.

Another relevant aspect that all three authors highlight it's the importance of teaching the language as a whole in an holistic perspective where all or most skills are developed rather than focusing only on one with isolated topics that don't connect to each other. For this, it's relevant to consider the CEFR standards for all four skills: Listening, reading, writing and speaking in terms of abilities that each student should achieve in each level.

Goodwin concentrates her proposal on pronunciation but through a complete perspective that prepares students to take part in real communicative situations.

Now in terms of the activities proposed by the authors, personally, I have implemented the audio journal technique with my students in Teach & Play from the level A2 until the level

C1 with some variations of what is proposed by Lazaraton. In fact, they have been assigned to record themselves telling the main activities of their day on their cellphones and once they complete a week, they send me all their recordings through WhatsApp. I take the time to listen to each one of them and correct the errors that are really significant, repetitive or directly connected to the topics we have learnt. It has been a very interesting experience as it has helped students to be more confident speaking English and it has also shown us the weak aspects where we should focus without overwhelming our students and guiding them to achieve real fluency and mastery of English.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Speaking in a second language such as English has been a challenge both for teachers and

students. We tend to focus on grammar, reading and writing aspects and we tend to forget the

importance of teaching and developing the orals skills in our learners. Moreover, if we are aware

of its importance, we don't know exactly what methods, approaches and activities to consider

and develop in the classroom.

Taking into account the case of the students of the private academy Teach & Play in

Simijaca - Colombia, we have identified and explored the problem that can be similar to some

other public and private institutions not only in this country but around the world where English

is taught as a second language. After realizing the difficulties and general fear of speaking

English by all kinds of students of the academy, we have studied three different proposals that

not only suggest some useful techniques to develop oral skills in the classroom but that promote

an holistic perspective of the teaching – learning process where students should play an active

role and not merely be recipients of our knowledge.

Some of the recommended techniques are audio-journal activities, debates, discussions,

drama, charades, role-play, storytelling, total physical response (TPR), jokes, poems, chants,

songs and even, cartoons, drawing and physical movements. What and how to choose among

them? You have to take into account your group of learners' characteristics and interests as well

as the different objectives you want to achieve with them. The context features are also important. There is not a unique and universal solution or method that can be applied to everyone in general. What works with one group cannot function with another one. Therefore, it's even suggested to try and make adjustments along the application of one or more of these tasks. And moreover, it's capital that you as ESL teacher or instructor like and enjoy the activities chosen as it will contribute to its successful practice. You have to listen to your own intuition and taste.

Another aspect that has been pointed out by this analysis and especially by Peck's proposal is that it is not the same to teach English to adults than to children. Each age group has different interests and are motivated by different aspects. Children are more likely to learn by playing whereas adults seem more focused on the application and use of the language for professional or personal purposes. You cannot address them in the same way or with the same activities. And you cannot pretend that your knowledge of the language and your previous experiences teaching one of the groups will be enough to teach the other. A previous and deep understanding of your target group is capital to build meaningful and motivating lessons.

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