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DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND ORAL TIERED ACTIVITIES

**Differentiated Instruction and Oral Tiered Activities to Impact A1 Students' English level
in a Multilevel Classroom**

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Research Report submitted

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Directed by Sonia Jimenez

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2016

DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION AND ORAL TIERED ACTIVITIES

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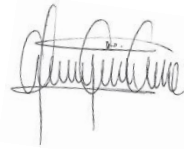
Tiered Activities on Speaking Skills to Help Students Improve their English Level

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Abstract

This collaborative action research project was carried out at a public institution in Bogota called Reino de Holanda. The participants were 25 students from eighth and ninth grades between 13 and 16 years old. The objectives of this research project were to determine the possible impact differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities might have in the improvement of students' English level and to examine the possible benefits (if any), that tiered activities have on students' interest in learning English. The instruments selected to carry out the collection of data were an oral test, a checklist, and students' logs. This implementation was done by increasing the complexity of the activities and focusing on the development of students' oral tasks. The results demonstrated that differentiated instruction and tiered activities improved students' English level, fostered awareness towards their learning process, future goals, commitment and motivation. In this project, some research studies based on differentiated instruction and tiered activities constructs were mentioned, but any of these implemented both constructs to teach English as a foreign language based on oral tasks. That is why, this research project innovates by incorporating both constructs for teaching English as a foreign language based on oral tasks. Additionally, differentiated instruction could be a method to solve the difficulties teachers can find in multilevel classrooms not only in English as a foreign language, but also in other subjects of the curriculum in our context.

Key words: differentiated instruction, multilevel classrooms, oral tasks, tiered activities.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación acción colaborativa se llevó a cabo en una institución pública de Bogotá llamada Reino de Holanda. Los participantes fueron 25 estudiantes entre 13 y 16 años de edad de los grados octavo y noveno. Los objetivos de este proyecto de investigación fueron determinar el posible impacto que la instrucción diferenciada y las actividades orales por niveles podrían tener en el mejoramiento de las habilidades de los estudiantes en inglés y examinar los posibles beneficios (si los hay), que las actividades por niveles tienen en el interés de los estudiantes por aprender inglés. Los instrumentos seleccionados para llevar a cabo la toma de datos fueron una prueba oral, una lista de control, y los registros de los estudiantes. Esta implementación se realizó mediante el aumento de la complejidad en las actividades y centrándose en el desarrollo de actividades orales de los estudiantes. Los resultados demuestran que la enseñanza diferenciada y las actividades orales por niveles mejoraron el nivel de inglés de los estudiantes, fomentaron la conciencia hacia su proceso de aprendizaje, metas futuras, el compromiso y la motivación. En este proyecto, algunos estudios de investigación basados en los constructos de instrucción diferenciada y actividades por nivel fueron mencionados, pero ninguno de estos implementó ambos constructos para enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera basados actividades orales. Es por ello, que este proyecto de investigación innova incorporando ambos constructos para enseñar inglés como lengua extranjera basado en actividades orales. Por último, la instrucción diferenciada podría ser un método para resolver las dificultades que los profesores pueden encontrar en las aulas multinivel no sólo en inglés como lengua extranjera, sino también en otras asignaturas del plan de estudios en nuestro contexto.

Palabras clave: instrucción diferenciada, aulas multinivel, actividades orales, actividades por niveles.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

For many years, education in Colombia has been valued and viewed from two sectors as they are private and public, and has formally been recognized at many stages, but mainly provided, at schools and universities. Private and public institutions are fully committed to English learning. Nonetheless, it is relevant to state that there are also particular private institutions dedicated only to such purpose which endows them with a clear advantage over public educative settings.

Specifically, the group of teachers involved in this research study work for a public institution and remarked the differences and difficulties their pupils face in order to achieve the learning objectives officially set by the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). On the one hand, students that enroll in private institutions to learn English are usually requested to start their process with a placement test that is aimed at classifying their proficiency level of the target language. On the other hand, these institutions set their classes with few students that assure more advantageous interaction and participation for each of the students. That is why, the purpose of conducting the present study in a public institution is due to notable fact, for instance, students do not only attend to learn English but other subjects as well; additionally, they do not take a placement test, which is a key element to determine their proficiency; and moreover, classrooms customarily have up to forty students, making English learning and interaction more difficult. For this reasons, the researchers in this study suggested a possible strategy to cope with these multilevel classrooms.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Currently, foreign language learners face some challenges and difficulties. From this view, the Colombian government adopted an automatic promotion policy, by means of which students were promoted even with low or no abilities just to guarantee a maximum of 5% of students who could eventually fail their current school year. This has brought some major consequences such as, a high number of students who do not know how to read and write properly in primary school, because they have not had an appropriate academic exposure or process of the subject due to many reasons, as lack of parents' support or accompaniment, learning difficulties, environment, teachers that may not be trained to manage these difficulties, negative learning, and some other circumstantial drawbacks that drive pupils into failing the expected accomplishments.

Major consequences for this learning process phenomenon rely on the fact that students struggle to understand some activities in English classes. Correspondingly, two causes have been identified: the lack of exposure to the language and the lack of specific mechanisms to be in a particular grade by merit. In other words, not only classrooms are filled in with students whose English levels are different from one another, but also, it is evident to focus on the different types of learning backgrounds, levels of literacy, the type of learners these students are, their personalities as well as their cognitive styles. According to Roberts (2007), "students in the same English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom, can range from illiterate/low-literate to high academic proficiency" (p. 1). These features could be the reason why an ESL classroom becomes "multilevel".

1.2.1 Needs analysis and problem statement

The present research project was conducted in two groups of high school, eighth and ninth grades with 25 students between 13 and 16 years old, from the public school “Institución Educativa Distrital (IED) Reino de Holanda located at the southeast of Bogota”. Both of these groups had low English level in all skills of the language. According to the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), the basic level is A1 (breakthrough), yet these students do not reach the description of language to this stage.

The problem evidenced in this population was the low English proficiency level in comparison with the CEFR standards for those grades as well as the different multiple English levels encountered within each class. Thus, some students demonstrated certain level of proficiency while in others there was no evidence of English language aptitude. In order to validate the data explained, two research instruments were applied in both groups at the beginning of the second semester of the academic year. Firstly, a twelve-question survey to find out about student’s study habits and preferences concerning the English subject, (Appendix A). Secondly, a proficiency questionnaire with fifty inquiries, from which thirty-five were based on the CEFR A1 level, and fifteen vocabulary questions based on the CEFR A2, levels required for eighth and ninth grades (Appendix B).

The results in the A1 level confirmed the hypothesis formulated about a multilevel classroom, where the percentages definitely showed there were three different levels of proficiency in the classes. In ninth grade, there were 3 students ranking the highest among the participants -although they were not able to complete all the questions successfully-. Furthermore, there were 7 students who obtained lower results than the three mentioned participants, while the remaining participants (a total of 15) ranked the lowest results. As

concerns the eighth grade group, the students' results were similar: 5, 12, and 8 respectively. This evidenced low level of the subject knowledge in these groups. The general conclusion of this needs analysis was that although 8 students scored higher results, still they did not comply with the CEFR A1 descriptors.

Once we gathered the results of the needs analysis, we emphasized on question 12 in instrument one (Appendix A) which indicated that most of the students' preferences as concerns the learning of English, were inclined to oral activities, which purposely, helped us formulate the research question and objectives of this proposal.

As mentioned before and according to the instruments used in the needs analysis, this particular population demonstrated high motivation towards learning English. Although they were very young, they acknowledged English is important for their lives to travel abroad or have better opportunities for their professional lives.

1.2.2 Justification of the problem's significance

Despite the characteristics and students' high motivation mentioned in the needs analysis, there was a gap between high and low achievers. As explained before, this gap contrives a multilevel classroom where teachers can find students with different learning styles, expectations, types of intelligence, and levels of literacy. According to Shank and Terrill (1995), "every class is multi-level because learners begin with varying degrees of competence and then progress at different rates in each of the language skills," (The Multilevel class section. para. 2). Frequently, the activities proposed in class do not take into account low achievers' learning features, leading them, in due course, into a subject failure. For this reason, it is fairly necessary to find out accurate strategies to deal with this issue in order to level all the target population to prevent them from failing the subject.

1.2.3 Strategy selected to address the problem

This project aims to a possible improvement of English level in this multilevel group. It is by addressing differentiated instruction and tiered activities focused on the oral tasks that a leveled classroom may be promoted in terms of English language. From this viewpoint and according to the CEFR standards, such leveled practice can meet the corresponding requirements to be part of a specific school grade through personal achievements, instead of percentages or the system of promotion.

Afterwards, it was necessary to set a plan for these multilevel classes. Therefore, the most appropriate way after analyzing different alternatives is teaching by means of differentiated instruction and applying tiered activities. These two notions are the bases of this study and for the researchers they are the key point to find a possible solution to start leveling students in terms of English requirements and standards for the A1 standards of CEFR.

1.3 Research question(s) and objective(s)

In order to find a possible solution, the following question was posed:

1.3.1 Research question

How might differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities impact A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom?

1.3.2 Research objectives

To determine the possible impact differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities might have in the improvement of students' English level.

To examine the possible benefits (if any), that oral tiered activities have on students' interest in learning English.

1.4 Conclusion

Dealing with a multilevel group implies coping with group management. Berry and Williams (1992) found that “the teacher may work with one small group at a time while the other learners or groups of learners are engaged in independent work” (p. 1). According to Santopietro (1991), “some teachers manage the various groupings by enlisting a volunteer to work with one group while the teacher works with others” (p. 33). On the other hand, Bell (1991) said that “Learners can also act as peer tutors or peer group leaders” (p. 20). As it was stated before, tiered activities could be the core of the multilevel class taking into account different factors mentioned previously such as: learning backgrounds, levels of literacy, among others. That is to say, it is possible to talk about whole group, small group, and pair activities.

There are other secondary concepts which importantly aid to handle every problem that could appear in a multilevel classroom. Some examples are: cross-ability learners, like-ability learners, and self-access materials. These concepts that keep a close relation with the main topic will be expanded in the consecutive chapters.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework & State of the Art

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the four main constructs and bases of this exploration are presented and discussed from a three cognitive perspective: multilevel classrooms, differentiated instruction, and tiered activities. Finally, oral task will be considered due to the fact that it is the core and focus of tiered activities. Consequently, differentiated instruction and tiered activities are linked to find a solution for the problem debated in the previous chapter.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Multilevel Classrooms

The concept Multilevel is presented and addressed by different perspectives. For some theorists, the “multi” is tackled in terms of cultural aspects, and “level” is merely a part of it. In fact, Balliro (1997) announced the perception of this “multi” as the difference existing among various relationships, to illustrate: teachers-students, students-teachers, students-students, social and educational backgrounds.

Richards asserts in her book *Teaching Mixed Ability Classes* that "every class we should ever teach is mixed ability" (as cited in Valentic, 2005). Every class is as varied as students' personalities and from this characteristic a multilevel classroom may be defined. Every teacher is expected to incorporate different features to prepare suitable activities for the students to achieve the goals proposed in the school curriculum. In terms of English teaching, a class is multilevel according to the variety of English levels existing in the same class. Regularly, in a class teachers are challenged to face many characteristics such as students' different types of learning backgrounds, levels of literacy in Spanish as their mother tongue, the expectations and goals each student has, their personalities, age, learning styles and, actual access and exposure to

English outside the classroom. Hess (2001) asserted “since all learners are different in language aptitude, language proficiency, and general attitude toward language, as well as in learning styles, we can probably say that most language classes are multileveled” (p. 2).

Hess (2001) also mentioned an important fact to take into account in a multilevel classroom where big groups tend to be categorized and divided into the advanced learners and the stuck learners. Additionally, the attention focuses mostly on those students that teachers consider are more committed to learning. In this perspective, this constant calling for teachers is an unconscious process due to one reason: they direct their attention to the learner who participates the most. Essentially, this unintentional conduct inevitably brings on shyness or resistance. As a result, students’ stagnation and reluctance become part of a place where the environment might definitely affect their self-esteem (Brown, 1980). In this way, once the emotional component is damaged, participation from those learners is improbable. Brown (1980) also claimed “no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, knowledge of yourself and efficacy” (p.154).

These are features that shape the identity of any group of students, bringing diverse grades of competence in the language skills: listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Nonetheless, based on our educational system or school policies, students are normally placed from basic to advanced levels in the same class of the current academic grade.

Generally, a multilevel classroom is considered as a problematic situation since it would make learning progression difficult, preparation of lessons would take longer, and not all the students would respond to teachers’ demands. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the positive aspects of multilevel classrooms and find ways to engage students’ interest and help them achieve their goals. Looking at the advantages of the multilevel classroom and applying

appropriate strategies might be one of the best forms that teachers can succeed. Here is where a solution comes up and helps deal with a multilevel classroom. This solution is differentiated instruction which would guide the teacher into a proper class where all types of learners would be involved to get the expected results. These construct is going to be addressed in the next paragraphs.

2.2.2 Differentiated Instruction (DI)

This approach is intended for teachers to find a way to individualize instruction and learning by using different materials and establishing actions that involve every single student keeping in mind their different characteristics. Thus, differentiation is a planned way to include all the students, their likes, styles, and needs as to accomplish the objectives proposed by regulating the teaching and learning processes (Tomlinson, 1999).

Differentiated instruction (DI) is an adequate teaching outline that provides a set of options for students to get information and process it in order to get better understanding. Likewise, teachers can develop teaching materials and assessment measures so that all the students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless their differences in abilities, learning styles, and levels of literacy. Bearing in mind what implies a multilevel classroom, DI becomes a possible solution to group all these characteristics since it promotes a student-centered education where all children learn efficiently (Tomlinson, 1999). According to Tomlinson (1999) DI is the process of “ensuring that what a student learns, how he or she learns it, and how the student demonstrates what he or she has learned is a match for that student’s readiness level, interests, and preferred mode of learning” (p. 32)

The idea of DI is to be supported in the theory and research of education, and it needs much practical thinking to provide the different ways for students to learn (Tomlinson & Allan,

2000, p. 16). Similarly, this approach upholds active planning for students' differences in classrooms. In the same way, Tomlinson (2001) asserted that when using DI, a teacher must be aware of the students' needs and in such a way, effective differentiation should be proactively planned to cover a wide variety of learners' requests.

All in all, Tomlinson (2001) stated that DI is more qualitative than quantitative. The idea of DI is not to give more work for some students and less to others. In fact, the author found that "adjusting the quantity of an assignment will generally be less effective than adjusting the nature of the assignment to match student needs as well" (p. 4).

With this in mind, the third characteristic is that DI is rooted in assessment, and it is precisely the way to determine what works better for each learner. To this respect, *assessment* in this approach does not only constitute expected outcomes at the end of the unit to value students' results, but it is also that insightful routine that defines pupils' specific needs to perform the unit's objectives (Tomlinson, 2001).

The most important aspect for teachers to discern is that DI provides multiple approaches to content, process, and product. Tomlinson (2001) identified that "in all classrooms, teachers deal with at least three curricular elements: (1) content—input, what students learn; (2) process—how students go about making sense of ideas and information; and (3) product—the output, how students demonstrate what they have learned" (p. 4). By differentiating these three elements, teachers can actually focus on what students learn, how they learn, and how they demonstrate what they have learned. Thus, Tomlinson (2001) claimed as the image to keep in mind, is how a DI teacher is a very active being able to create varied approaches to content, process, and product, highly considering learning styles, needs, and interests.

Remarkably, DI is student-centered as it encourages students to grow in their own responsibility and account for their own learning. Likewise, teachers in a multilevel classroom normally try to find proper challenging practices to develop all the skills in all the students. All these practices are developed individually, as a group or as a whole- class, depending on the type of activity.

One concept addressed by Tomlinson (2001) is that DI is “organic”, this means that students and teachers are learners at the same time; teachers know more about the language but equally they are learning how students learn. The teacher in DI must be very active to find out problems between learners and learning and make the necessary adjustments. Furthermore, this teacher must know each student’s needs to implement the appropriate activities or tasks according to the students’ English level.

2.2.3 Tiered Activities (TA)

Thinking about how to encapsulate all this theory presented for students to improve their English speaking level by taking into consideration their multi-level characteristics, we suggest using tiered activities covering and gathering all the information offered above as to maximize the impact of the objectives proposed.

Richards and Omdal (2007) defined tiered instruction as “grouping students for instruction based on their prior background knowledge in a given subject area” (p. 424). Hence, tiered activities are used to teach the same concepts, but at different stages of difficulty, and different levels of readiness. Such pragmatical exercise is done by increasing the complexity of the activities. Equally, tiered activities are firstly, planning strategies for a mixed ability classroom and secondly, a way of teaching in order to fulfill all the learners’ needs. Then, these activities or resources may be different depending on the students’ interests, abilities, and

necessities. Concisely, the use of tiered activities: fosters the motivation every student has, improves their skills and, enhances understanding.

Tomlinson (1999) described tiered lessons a bit ambiguously as “the meat and potatoes of differentiated instruction.” Correspondingly, Adams and Pierce (2006) pointed out and gave a solid, concise and focused description of tiered activities, defining them as “ways to have students address the same academic standard or concept, but at varying level of complexity or structure” (p. 29). Therefore, tiered activities look for the students’ best way to learn, to feel comfortable and willing to participate and interact in class by making use of their styles and intelligences.

Tomlinson (1999) also proposed six steps to be followed when designing tiered activities. A summary is presented as follows:

- Select the concept(s), generalization(s), and skill(s) that will be the focus of the activity for all learners.
- Think about the students for whom you are planning the activity.
- Create one activity, or draw on one you have successfully used in the past.
- Think about, or actually draw, a ladder. The top rung represents students with very high skill, while the bottom rung represents low skill.
- “Clone” the activity along the ladder to provide different versions at different degrees of difficulty.
- Match a version of the task to each student based on student’s need and task requirements. (p. 134).

Comparatively, Roberts (2007) proposed a way to establish a category of levels more oriented simplifying the multiple levels into three categories. Firstly, the below level: those

students with low self-esteem, -dependent on friends, attention and help-, and low pace to learn. Subsequently, at level: students who were usually progressing effectively along the lessons; and finally, above level stage: where learners tend to acquire input easier than those at other levels, and due to their solid backgrounds which allow flexibility to assimilate instructions faster, they indicate better achievements. Hereby, Conklin (2007) referred to the same three categories according to Bloom (1956), as an instrument to design tiered activities centered on the three levels (*above, on, and below* grade).

Finally, TA gradually intertwine all stages of the learners' language acquisition. They support, help, and promote an internal change in lessons and awareness of teachers' role as well as provide a pleasant environment of interaction and participation. To make this possible, one element to consider is *oral activities*, explained as follows.

2.2.4 Oral Activities

Willis (1996) defines a task as an activity in which the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome. Likewise, tiered activities can be implemented through the different skills proposing different levels of difficulty so as to foster the improvement of certain skill. After thoughtful consideration, we made the decision to focus tiered activities on oral tasks due to the results obtained in the needs analysis; specifically, those in question 12 in instrument one (Appendix A), which indicated that most of the students' preferences were inclined to oral activities. Bygate (2006) stated that there is a problem in learning a language through oral activities. He claimed that the main concern with speech is the problem of "impermanence". Different from writing and reading, speaking is transitory and impermanent and the concepts that are learned from the speaking skill could be easily forgotten since there is no a record to review and the information basically relies on

memory. Thus, tiered activities enclose a methodology to meet the participants' needs. In the present study, researchers used tiered activities on oral tasks to analyze the benefits for these particular groups of participants. For this reason, this strategy is supported with theory as follows.

To start, speaking is a collaborating procedure of developing significance that conceives creating, getting and handling data. Additionally, a proficient speaker must cope with features such as turn-taking, rephrasing, providing feedback, or redirecting (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Hence, its form and meaning are reliant on the setting in which it occurs, including the contributors, their experiences, the situation, and the aims to express themselves. In summary, it is natural, flexible, and changing (Florez, 1999).

Speaking needs learners' linguistic competence in terms of how to produce specific grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, and also their sociolinguistic competence that implies when, why, and in what ways to produce language (Florez, 1999). As well, we can establish that speaker's abilities and communication ways have an effect on the accomplishment of every conversation (Van Duzer, 1997). Purposely, teachers' role (researchers in this study), is to monitor learners' oral production to determine what abilities and knowledge they already have and what areas need further development (Florez, 1999).

From this viewpoint, oral tiered activities are supported by the communicative approach through real context environments and interactions among students when designing the tiered activities. According to Richards (2006), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is "a set of principles about: the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom" (p. 2).

Besides, Richards (2006) also mentions another useful distinction of CLT that proposes the distinction between three different kinds of practice – mechanical, meaningful, and communicative, which are bases for the tiered activities design. To illustrate, he explains such practices in this way:

Mechanical practice is a type of controlled activity that the students develop satisfactorily without internalizing the target language as a main objective. Meaningful practice is a type of activity that still has control but learners have to execute the practice making significant elections. Finally, communicative practice is a type of more realistic activity, where learners face more genuine contexts as a center of practice by using real language.

When planning the tiered activities we took into consideration the set of activities that are proposed in the CLT. For instance, we used information-gap activities, which are situations where people speak to get facts they do not have. Other examples are task-completion activities (puzzles, games), information-gathering activities (surveys, interviews), opinion-sharing activities (compare, comment), information-transfer activities and role plays.

As stated by Thomas and Inkson (2009), “successful communication occurs when the message is accurately perceived and understood” (p. 87). Therefore, tiered activities focused on oral tasks also offer the students more possibilities to understand the message taking into account students’ preferences and their way to learn. Additionally, Bizzell (1989) indicated that successful communication is context dependent and, hence, surrounded in its specific setting. Throughout the tiered activities focused on oral tasks activities presented, the researchers emphasized on students’ interests and context to soften the impact they could cause on pupils, facilitating successfulness.

One struggling area has to do with oral communication due to environmental factors, language proficiency, preferences, and context. Therefore, the tiered activities proposed for the implementation process were specifically thought and aimed to prepare students to confront these changeable issues in oral tasks. As Iberri-Shea (2009) stated “oral tasks are an easy way to enhance language learning. Once students participate in lively presentations and debates, they develop increased motivation and engagement with the materials” (p. 35). For that reason, teachers’ planning and design of the tiered activities focused on oral tasks will permit students’ gains in terms of English level.

2.3 State of the art

2.3.1 Multi-level Classrooms and Mixed-Ability Classes

Along this discussion, we will address different research studies based on the core constructs mentioned in this chapter. The importance of this proposal lies on the fact of identifying, at a local and international level, studies that permit to illustrate the impact and results after the implementation of these constructs as a means of helping students with different needs.

The multilevel classroom concept is recent and there is not hard research about it. In the researching field, there is material such as books and articles that describe what a multilevel classroom is and give some strategies to cope with this type of classes. It is important to highlight that the use of the multilevel concept is broad and useful for academic purposes, but there are not any research studies that support this evidence in English language teaching. For this study, researchers introduced this concept as a way to identify the problematic presented in the classes.

Most of the information about multi-level classrooms is about how students learn in the United States and the difficulties they have because of their diversity. According to Burt (1997), this lack of hard research is due to the multitude of situations that one can find in the academic field such as: literacy, how to manage students with difficulties in their literacy skills, students who use a different alphabet to read, and those who have high English reading proficiency but do not speak, different learning environments and, learning styles. Although this concept has been attributed to English native speakers, it is relevant for this research study as it encloses significant elements of the real situation our students face.

A related construct is mixed-ability classes in which there is evidence of studies but for different fields and purposes from English teaching. Mixed ability or 'heterogeneous' classes are expressions to describe classes of students of different levels of proficiency. These terms are misleading as no learners are really alike and 'homogeneous' classes do not actually exist (Ur, 1991).

One of the studies that evidence the mixed-ability classes was carried out by Al-Shammakhi and Al-Humaidi (2015) in which the authors investigated the challenges EFL teachers had in fifth grade mixed-ability classes. They also investigated the strategies these teachers used to overcome these difficulties. The participants were 170 teachers who demonstrated they confronted different challenges but they did not apply enough strategies to overcome these problems. At the end of the study, the researchers found that teachers needed to be trained on how to manage the students' different skills as well as how to cope with specific variations and the lack of tools the curriculum provided.

Al-Shammakhi and Al-Humaidi's study has enriched the present research project as EFL teachers must be aware of students' different abilities, have knowledge about their students'

needs and interests, and establish a good relationship with students to reduce their anxiety of learning English.

A research study conducted by Svärd (2006) becomes relevant for this study due to the importance of the role of the teachers with large mix-ability classes in order to improve students' English level, specially the weaker ones. The author presents some challenges not only in terms of mixed ability classes, but also in the different abilities, the ways of learning (weaker students' case) and the atmosphere they need to be surrounded by. Finally, she mentions that when students are motivated, they do not get bored easily.

The fact of grouping students and creating a pertinent atmosphere seem to be a suitable way in spite of the positive and negative factors. Additionally, there are more constructs addressed as important features in that improvement. To start with, developing responsibility for learning; secondly, giving clear instructions and lastly, motivating and differentiating instructions.

Findings and results of this research study showed that the grouping ended up being not worthwhile for students, but for teacher in the lesson planning. The author claims results were not sufficient to state a change or clear finding due to the fact of implementation, however, she points out to be more rigorous when dealing with groups and expand on leveling students according to their proficiency.

This is in fact the most familiar study in comparison with ours as it claims for a similar problem in our context. Differing from this study our population was not limited and it yielded to have more data for the analysis part.

In terms of similarities, these two studies attained that motivation and the sense of awareness (responsibility) are key elements that interfere in that improvement and ratifies the use

of differentiating level to work on specific cases and raise awareness of the hindrances we can encounter when grouping students.

2.3.2 Differentiated Instruction (DI) and Tiered Activities (TA)

It is useful to show how DI works to solve some problems regarding teaching in general. This strategy has been applied and studied numerously by educators, researchers, and psychologists, among others. Furthermore, every DI is accompanied strategically with different tiered activities to sustain the procedure to tier the product, the content, and the process. This means that most of the studies that implement DI complement this process by using TA.

An emphasis on DI with the study carried out by Schmoker (2010) took importance to the practice of using this strategy in the classroom, calling it a “novelty” that unnecessarily complicates teachers’ work. Only after multiple requests he finally received an answer: “There was no solid research or school evidence” (Para. 1).

Another qualitative action research study was held by Bondley (2011), who established the impact of using DI in a math classroom in a middle school. This action research indicated that DI overloaded teachers’ work at the beginning of the implementation. However, there was more time for individual instruction during group work. Finally, at the beginning grouping students was not easy because they were not used to working with this classroom set up, but later they got used to working in small groups. This research project helped us see all the constraints and positive aspects DI has, and according to the results found in this investigation we can modify and adapt strategies to avoid common problems. In the section entitled Reflections and Recommendations for other teachers, the researcher suggested creating an action plan for students that do not accomplish with the classroom expectations. Students need to be occupied

working on a specific task to avoid distractions. These pieces of advice are convenient for this project at the pedagogical intervention stage.

Another research study based on DI was conducted by Andersen (2009), who stated the problem is that teachers face diversity in their classrooms every day. Students come to school with very different backgrounds, cultures, interests, and learning styles. Teachers must teach the same curriculum and in most subjects teach mandated standards to all students no matter their differences. As a result, she said: “I found using differentiated lessons to be a successful technique in my Outdoor Science since everyone is taught the same content but students work at their ability level and nobody complains about how much work each student is responsible for” (p. 37). This research study was relevant to understand that the curriculum can be adjusted according to the students’ needs and level. On the contrary as Andersen (2009) suggested, it is possible to modify the methodology to teach a lesson and choose a technique to perform it, in this case, DI.

Additionally, using action research methods Kirkey (2005) showed that the objective was to explore the advantages of DI. This case study examined the academic, social, and emotional progress when implementing differentiated instruction activities. Students became accustomed to working with others and, as a result a greater sense of community was developed. DI accounted for individual differences. The mixed and flexible groupings allowed students to work in both skill-leveled groups and in groups that were more heterogeneous. This paper demonstrated that DI encourages students towards learning by enhancing their confidence. The conclusion is for teachers to implement the DI strategies as a means of a continuous metacognitive process through the action research approach as to help us raise awareness not only for academic

purposes but also for emotional circumstances that may interfere positively or negatively when implementing DI.

There are some research studies based on tiered instruction not only in Second Language Learning but also in other subjects. One study carried out by Richards and Omdal (2007) included students either in a regular secondary science classroom or in another using the tiered instruction. Three different background knowledge levels were established in order to tier the instruction. In this study seven regular classrooms did not receive tiered instruction, whereas there were seven classrooms that received three levels. The results of this study showed a significant difference between the students who received tiered instruction and those who did not, showing that tiered instruction could be useful for lower level learners. These results are useful for this research project for the significance and worthiness of tiered activities as facilitators of English students' learning.

At a local level DI is a process that has not been implemented deeply. Nonetheless, Pasuy (2013) developed a research study implementing tiered products for DI in reading skills. The purpose of this research study was to analyze the impact that the implementation of tiered products had on the reading comprehension process of 17 elementary English language learners in a bilingual school. The findings in this research project indicated that the use of tiered products during reading instruction enhanced students' reading comprehension skills. These results allowed the researcher to conclude that the implementation of tiered products proved to be an effective strategy to foster reading comprehension skills. Hence, this is the only study that bases its principles on the real context we are addressing this combination of constructs. It is meaningful for our study as both are intimately related in terms of constructs and applicability, demonstrating that the combination of DI and TA is possible in our context.

2.3.3 Oral Activities

Deepa's (2012) study claimed that "oral communication satisfies discipline-specific academic functions" (p.1). She also states that it is necessary for students to learn how to communicate orally, as it offers abilities that they will employ in their daily life. Specifically, speaking is an interaction process that involves different functions such as opine, explicate, and exchange information. If there is suitable instruction and enough chances to practice speaking, the learners will attain a wide range of skills to put into practice when they perform presentations, discuss, and argue an opinion. In fact, this paper gives an orientation and explores the feasibility of task-based approach to teach oral communication skills in an academic context. The results showed that most of the participants learned from the experience and the oral tasks proposed. Participants performed the tasks as they felt they were in a real situation. Then, participants' performances were improving throughout the intervention. The applicability of this paper is focused on the activity/task-based approach potential. Although this paper is descriptive, it contributes to the present research study in applying oral tasks taking into consideration some of the aspects of the task-based approach.

Another study in the field was carried out by Khan and Blaya (2010). This study focused its objectives on three principles, Language Learners Strategies (LLS), Communication Strategies (CS), and Task-Based Research (TBR); besides it intended to value how to examine spoken production and strategies along different oral communication tasks to find what learners do when performing oral tasks. Along the chapters, the researchers explain how language learners produce speech, give characteristics of communications of L2 speakers, and address the field of task based as a construct to fundament spoken production (accuracy, fluency, complexity). After this, the results were given in terms of a comparison between the spoken

production and the strategy used as to answer the research questions posed. This study serves to illustrate the treatments and inclusion of both aspects of oral communication, and the contrast between the actual strategies used and the perceived. As this study, our study also considered relevant to integrate two constructs, where the TA are focused on oral tasks. This illustration guides researchers' tasks applicability to determine strategies in, the actual and the perceived perception after the implementation.

At a local level, a research study was carried out by Stevens, Lasso and Quintero (2012) at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. In this case study the researchers diagnosed, analyzed, and applied speaking activities and strategies to produce oral participation among introverted students. The results showed that the researchers gained more understanding of the function of speaking activities to get more participation from their students. They also found that speaking activities are the base of the participation and the encouragement in the EFL classroom and the use of contextualized material related to students' everyday life in the speaking activities, oral participation was promoted, motivated, and incremented.

Another study in Colombia was carried out by Peña and Onatra (2009) from Universidad Distrital de Colombia in a public institution called Francisco de Paula Santander. The study was focused on how to promote oral productions in 7th grade students by means of activities based on the Task-based Learning Approach. The observation of the importance and motivating elements in this study, addressed the involvement in communicative situations where students have the chance to express themselves freely and spontaneously conveying familiar topics and feelings. Therefore, researchers planned and designed tasks to promote students' oral production. According to Byrne (1991), oral tasks involve the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding. The tasks were based on three phases: pre tasks, task cycle and language

focus. To this respect, findings in the study allowed the researchers to consider one relevant aspect to attain better outcomes. They reckoned the mistakes learners had, allowing them to monitor their own learning process. Finally, they concluded that more than being aware of the pronunciation patterns, vocabulary or oral skills, it is the remarkable fact to bear in mind students' awareness in that learning process.

This study, being similar in terms of the context, population, and environments to our study, is a clear and evident perspective of the situation and characteristics of students in public institutions, specifically regarding oral production. The task-based approach conducted in this study, allow setting conditions and strategies when designing and planning our tiered activities and the importance of our students' awareness on these implementations.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, there is more awareness of the possible constraints and obstacles that may be presented in a classroom full of different styles and preferences, strategies, steps and activities proposed to improve our objectives. Therefore, this state of the art, apart from clarifying and showing what kind of research studies related to DI, it offers guidelines and theories to nurture our research work.

All in all, the summary and compilation of the different studies presented above frame the different approaches and implementation that the constructs in question have been used in different contexts and fields. Although these constructs have been addressed isolated and they have been conducted in different scenarios, the significance of the applicability and the findings have an influence upon the different situations in the process. The aforementioned insights ratify that there have not been sufficient studies on the constructs implicated in this study and, most importantly, it is that none of the international and local studies make a combination of the

constructs for the same purpose, being this research study the first in implementing differentiated instruction and tiered activities in multi-level classrooms with the aim of teaching English as a foreign language.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

This chapter is devoted to explaining different aspects of this research project including the methodology, questions, objectives, context, ethical considerations, instruments, researcher's role, triangulation, validity, and action plan of the investigation.

3.2 Type of study

This research project follows the characteristics of Collaborative Action Research (CAR) which is a systematic process that implies cooperation of researchers to explore questions of common concern through cycles of action, experience and reflection in order to develop insights into particular phenomena, as well as to create frameworks for understanding, and suggest actions which improve practice (Butt, Townsend, & Raymond, 1990, p. 255). The process carried out in this research projects fits CAR because researchers posed a question and cooperatively examined the possible answers throughout two cycles to see the impact DI and TA have in the selected participants.

Principally, CAR has action as its focus. It requires researchers to become involved and to reflectively act in ways that will improve the teaching practices in a classroom or the entire school (Carson, Connors, Ripley, & Smits, 1989, p. 3). Due to such perspective, this methodology addresses the purposes and processes of this research project because as described by Bryant (1995): Educators involved in CAR tend to think about a specific group in a particular setting with the main goal of finding better ways to do their job. CAR takes place when educators initiate and control the research in conjunction with the other day-to-day activities of leading a school or classroom (p. 9). Throughout the two cycles of the intervention, the researchers could experience the cyclical process that CAR proposes because they had to study

and analyze the objectives and the data collections instruments at the beginning of the first cycle; then they took action, collected and analyzed evidence, and finally reflect on the findings. This cyclical process was repeated during the rest of the first cycle and the second cycle with the information gathered.

CAR embraces the principles for professional growth; in the same manner it is also personalized and it offers the possibility to contextualize the participants' learning process (Bryant 1995, p. 5). Teachers and students, in CAR, are the main characters of a process which is applied in a real world context. Herein, we start with the data collection analysis and process that permits to plan interventions that will hopefully improve the teaching and learning environment. From this point, we can set the timelines to implement the action plan observing, co-teaching, and collecting evidence to finally, evaluate the interventions to draw conclusions from data, summarize findings, write and share reports and ask new questions to start the cycle again in order to collect data and analyze it.

CAR, conducted by teams of practitioners, is a process that enables teachers: (1) to improve student learning, (2) to improve their own practice, (3) to contribute to the development of their own profession, and (4) to overcome the isolation commonly experienced by classroom teachers. The process of collaborative action research has five sequential steps: problem formulation, data collection, data analysis, reporting of results, and action planning. (Sagor, 1992, p. 3).

CAR offers an opportunity for teachers to research while being direct participants in the social context of the classroom and the teaching institution; what is more it focuses on issues and problems which are vital in daily teaching practice (Burns, 2003, p. 17).

3.3 Context

This research study was carried out at Reino de Holanda, a public institution in Bogota. This school has elementary, middle and secondary education, with levels ranging from pre-kinder to eleventh grade.

Most of the families at the school face difficulties in their lives because of their lack of a good or formal job. This situation is reflected in the school where social problems like aggression and intolerance are issues that teachers have to constantly deal with.

Regarding English language teaching, it has faced numerous changes throughout the last years regarding its syllabi. Thereby, at the end of every year English teachers set out adjustments according to their class experiences, drawbacks, and students' difficulties in the classroom. This shows evidence of the constant changing nature of the syllabi building up a gap in some students' process. In addition, all the EFL common obstacles that students have to cope with result in a constant use of students' mother tongue increasing the difficulty of the second language acquisition (Brown, 1980).

3.3.1 Participants

The study was developed with 25 student from eighth and 25 from ninth graded between 13 and 16 years old. These groups are A1 level according to the CEFR but their English is low and they do not cope with the description of language proficiency to this stage as they are true beginners that started to learn English a few years ago. Additionally, these students do not have text books or content materials to develop more and different activities.

Since the teachers started working with these students in 2013, they identified the level of the students and their difficulties. As they have some English background, manage basic vocabulary, and they can express some basic information, we decided that it was time for them to

start communicating orally more frequently and naturally. To sum up, this is an impeccable stage to have a real impact on the improvement of students' English level in speaking.

3.3.2 Researcher's role

The researchers in this project are participant-observers since they are part of the context where the research is carried out. Stringer (2007) has reported that: The role for the researcher is not that of an expert who does research but that of a resource person. He becomes a facilitator or consultant who acts as a catalyst to assist stakeholders in defining their problems clearly and to support them as they work toward effective solutions to the issues that concern them. In this way, titles such as facilitator, associate and consultant are more appropriate... (p. 24).

A teacher may become a co-constructor of his/her own professional development through individual and collective actions (Benson, 2007; Ding, 2009, p. 66-67) which will enhance teacher's autonomy (Benson, 2010). In the same line of thought, Lieberman (1995) asserts that if teachers are given opportunities to discuss, think about, try out, and perform new practices, their new role as action teacher-researchers will become not just a professional development activity with a life span of one or two days, but a part of their role and vision of what they do as professionals.

To reach the researcher's role we have to adopt a team approach as facilitators/encouragers. This involves a whole change of attitude in the classroom (Bryant, 1995, p. 61).

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

An ethical protocol refers to the ethical codes that are applied when working on a specific matter. According to Barnes (1980), data should be presented in such a way that respondents should be able to recognize themselves, while the reader should not be able to identify them. In

this type of research in an academic context we have to be aware of the ethics taking into account that children under the age of 18 are involved in this process. For this reason, we started the process sending consent letters to students' parents and the school's principal asking for permission or authorization in order to conduct the research project (Appendices C, D). Consent has been referred to as a negotiation of trust, and it requires continuous renegotiation (Field & Morse, 1992; Kvale, 1996; Munhall, 1988). Therefore, the researchers informed the participants about the right to voluntarily accept or refuse to be in the process.

Ramos (1989) described three types of problems that may affect qualitative studies: the researcher/participant relationship, the researcher's subjective interpretations of data, and the design itself (p. 57). Regarding the data collection instruments used in this research project, the researchers guaranteed the participants' confidentiality maintaining their anonymity and restricted access to the information collected. Moreover, our personal biases and opinions are not reflected in the data gathered with the instruments, and the results accurately represent what we observed or what we were told maintaining scientific impartiality.

3.4 Data collection instruments

The instruments we selected to carry out the collection of data were: an oral interview, a checklist, and students' logs.

3.4.1 Descriptions and justifications

3.4.1.1 Oral interview (Appendix E)

The researchers decided to use this instrument at the beginning of the cycle to have individual contact and, formally establish the entry learner's speaking proficiency and by the end, establishing the outcome learner's speaking proficiency after a series of workshops with DI and TA as the core of the class to examine their impact in students' improvement. As a

qualitative researcher, Weiss (1994) explains it as “To talk to someone who listens and listens closely can be valuable because one’s own experience, through the process of being voiced and shared, is validated” (p.122). Oral interviews are potential sources of information and structure the interaction bringing out precise information from the respondent. Gubrium & Holstein (2002) argue that the interview seems simple and self-evident but in actual practice, this is a hard case. The interview not only produces data but also constructs individual and public opinion simultaneously (p. 12). The type of interview used was structured because this type is formal, sets a questionnaire, and the responses are recorded and transcribed.

3.4.1.2 Checklist (Appendix F)

The second instrument the researchers used was a checklist as a tool to help to identify students’ weaknesses and strengths in speaking while they are answering the interview. Specifically, Morrow, Leirer, Andrassy, Hier, & Menard (1998) describe a checklist as an organized tool that outlines criteria of consideration for a particular process.

Particularly, experts say checklists are tools that help researchers complete an assignment without forgetting important characteristics or exaggerating with less important features. This suggests that if a checklist is constantly used, other researchers could replicate it based on this framework (Morrow et al. p. 233). For these reasons, checklists can help significantly to the development of validity, reliability, and credibility of an evaluation and our knowledge about a domain (Scriven, 2000, p. 4).

We used an evaluative checklist since this can be an important tool in the standardization of evaluation by providing the researchers, with certain guidelines for the assessment, adding further credibility and consistency to the data (Scriven, 2000, p. 2). The checklist that we used is a list of criteria that can be marked as present or absent when evaluating students’ performance

in the interview. It ensures the completeness of all the aspects evaluated in each interview. As we use it twice in this investigation cycle, it helps to keep track of every student's progress and so, we can determine the improvement.

3.4.1.3 Learning Log (Appendix G)

The third instrument used is a learning log that was designed in Spanish to get more accurate information. A learning log is a personal tool of learners' process. It is not a formal pedagogical exercise, it contains some information about learners' thoughts and it helps to record, structure, plan, develop and evidence learners' process.

A learning log as a journal evidences one's own learning and skills development. It is not just a record of "What it has been done" but a reflection of what it has been assimilated ("Benefits of learning journals," n.d.). This means that for this research project, we address the questions to see whether students have learned or not and to see the impressions they have regarding the activities getting students' insights and considerations about their possible knowledge progress in the speaking skill and autonomy.

3.4.2 Validation and piloting

The data collection process was estimated to take three months approximately and piloting the data collection instruments before the implementation process with a group of three students from each level, between May and July 2014, in order to analyze the possible changes or modifications based on the constraints identified. Analysis and triangulation of data were taken into account to achieve validity and reliability. In particular, validity refers to the researcher's responsibility to take precautionary measures to confirm areas of authority within his/her research (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In this case, it refers to the responsibility the researchers must have with the data collected in order to give a possible answer to the research

question avoiding biased assumptions. On the other hand, reliability is a concept to evaluate quality in a quantitative study with the “purpose of explaining” while quality concept in qualitative study has the purpose of “generating understanding” (Stenbacka, 2001, p. 551). After collecting the data we analyzed it in order to answer the research question and assess the objectives proposed. This data were collected and triangulated in the second semester of 2014 with the three instruments in the pedagogical implementation as to offer reliability to the research project. Hence, we wanted to have the opportunity to collect a wide range of data to implement the possible changes based on the failures encountered.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter the methodology intended to achieve the objectives proposed and to answer the research question has been explained in detail. The types of instruments to carry out the process were outlined taking into account important aspects that were implemented along the procedure; also, the population was delimited and described, highlighting the implications that we were expected to consider and the time we invested in each stage to finally, triangulate the data collected aimed to reach reliability.

Chapter 4: Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the pedagogical intervention giving the vision of language, curriculum, learning and classroom. After this, the steps, strategies, activities, and materials that were used in order to carry out the research project effectively are explained.

4.2 Visions of language, learning, and curriculum

4.2.1 Vision of language

Among reason and behaviors, language is one of the most important characteristics in people. We use language to express our thoughts, exchange knowledge, beliefs, opinions, etc. We also use language to learn to communicate with others, fulfill our needs, or establish rules and maintain our culture.

As our research project is focused on speaking, we care for the participants to be able to use all these functions of language adequately so we have considered the vision of language proposed by Brown and Nation (1997) that is:

In speaking classes students must be exposed to three key items: (1) form-focused instruction, attention to details of pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and so forth; (2) meaning-focused instruction, related to chances to produce meaningful spoken messages with real communicative purposes; and (3) opportunities to improve fluency. All of the above elements should be presented throughout any speaking program with emphasis on form-focused instruction at the elementary levels, in such a way; learners develop on meaning-focused instruction at the higher levels.

4.2.2 Vision of learning

We took into account our school syllabus to give continuity to the process established by the institution but with some modifications as mentioned before. Therefore, we focused our intervention on the communicative approach (CA). Communicative language teaching (CLT) best known as CA, emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. In this manner, the CA is based on the idea that learning language comes through communicate real meaning. In fact, Chomsky stated that the structural theories of language could not explain the creativity and variety evident in real communication. Moreover, British applied linguists stated that a focus on structure was also not helping language students for why they proposed to develop communicative skills and functional competence along with mastering language structures (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

In the conduction of this project, we deemed and follow our school approach, meaningful learning. Ausubel (2000) states it as "a clearly articulated and precisely differentiated conscious experience that emerges when potentially meaningful signs, symbols, concepts, or propositions are related to and incorporated within a given individual's cognitive structure" (Takač 2008, p. 26). Within the cognitive theory of learning, based on the theory of human information processing, the three core processes of learning are: *how knowledge is developed; how new knowledge is integrated into an existing cognitive system; and how knowledge becomes automatic.*

The meaningful learning characteristics, in which the sense of discovery and experience underlines the concept, were addressed along the two cycles and the different tiered activities implemented so students had the possibility to learn by performing the activities using the school language focus.

4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

We evaluated and modified the existing curriculum that our school has in order to guarantee that it is associated with the specific goals and objectives our research project provides. Furthermore, we offered a comprehensive curriculum from traditional classroom instruction to hands-on 21st Century activities to certify it accomplishes the participants' needs.

In this sense, our vision of curriculum is one that provides instruction and assessment on the tools and skills we need to foster a creative learning environment. Besides, lesson planning and activities are connected to the research project objectives and are appealing for the student. The intention of our curriculum and lessons is to generate autonomous work in the classroom or in outside hands-on situations.

Accordingly, we followed the stages proposed by Taba (1966) in her model of curriculum development in which she stated that teachers must be involved in it. Thereabout, it constitutes an inductive approach that clearly shows that curriculum and instruction are not independent components. As Taba's model is considered a spiral curriculum, it allows for important content to be reviewed throughout the year. This would work with speaking strategies. As learners speak, they use different strategies so all of them should be constantly reviewed. This model can be applied to improve speaking although this is a challenging skill to enhance since the students have different English level. Nevertheless, they are all to learn the same content. The first stage is to diagnose the students' needs, then, it is necessary to formulate objectives. The next stage relies on selecting and organizing the content, there, the following stage is aimed at selecting and organizing the activities according to needs, objectives and content. Notably, the final stage is to evaluate the process and the cycle starts again.

4.3 Instructional design

4.3.1 Lesson planning

Taking into consideration results obtained in the proficiency questionnaire instrument used in the needs analysis (Appendix B) and explained in chapter one, the participants were classified into the three levels (above, at, and below) stated by Roberts (2007) as follows: from eight grade, 8 students in *below* level, 12 students in *at* level; and 5 students in *above* level. From ninth grade 15 students in *below* level; 7 students in *at* level; and 3 students in *above* level.

To complement this classification we built the process of a class based on differentiated instruction. In a lesson, instruction can be differentiated in content/input, process/sense-making, or product/output. The content is what the teacher plans to teach and the change in the material being learned by the student. The process has to do with how the teacher plans the instruction and how the student accesses the material, individually, in pairs, in small groups, in cooperative groups or as a whole group. Finally, the product is related to the assessment process, how the students show the teacher that they have learned. The teacher can also choose the type of DI according to students' readiness, interest or learning profile. Pierce and Adams (2005) referred to readiness as the students' background, the skills previously taught or prior knowledge. Finally, learning profile denotes students' way of learning shaped by their learning style, culture, preferences, intelligence, and gender.

Remarkably, TA are used to teach the same concepts, but at different stages of difficulty, and it is done by increasing the complexity of the activities.

Cowles (1997) stated that an explicit activity can be subjected to the appropriate modification to achieve the difficulty necessary for the students to learn a topic in the way they prefer and feel comfortable by satisfying their interests. According to it, the lessons in the

intervention were designed with suitable TA, preparing different stages of difficulty, increasing the complexity of the activities, and focusing on the three levels (above, at, and below).

The materials for the intervention were mainly worksheets and flashcards adapted to the contents. When students selected recording as an option to present their product in a lesson, they could use tape recorders, computers or their own cellphones to create podcasts or conversations.

The activities presented in each one of these lesson plans were based on one or more types of tiering an activity (tiering by challenge level, by complexity, by resources, by outcome, by process, by content, or by product), and they were also supported with one or the three practices intertwined (mechanical, meaningful, and communicative) established by Richards (2006).

The lesson plans were designed with specific activities for each level, having in mind the types of tiering an activity. The idea was increase the complexity of these activities, giving the students the opportunity to select the activity or activities to develop, the order in which they wanted to do, and the way to present them (monologs, dialogs, recordings, and podcasts, among others).

The activities per se were addressed to the students with different options, materials and approaches. Once they faced the activity to be developed, they started to make their own decisions based on their interests, skills, preferences, and pace, as it is evidenced on the samples from the lesson plan activities in Appendix H.

4.3.2 Implementation

This research project was developed in three stages. The pre-stage was an insightful period to identify students' needs, learning styles and language interests. We also had the opportunity to set the general horizon of the research study, ranking the student's English level

according to the CEFR. The initial survey to know student's study habits and preferences about English was applied to present the program proposal and to adjust it to the students' needs and interests.

The while-stage was for researchers to apply the instruments to gather information concerning the students' initial state about English speaking skills. We used the oral interview for analyzing their performance with the checklist in order to evaluate and validate collected data by the first instruments. At this stage, we implemented the two cycles using tiered activities and we implemented the learning logs for students to reflect upon their performance. Finally, we validated the instruments used, identified achievements and delays in the project's implementation, and analyzed students' answers.

The post-stage was for researchers to analyze, validate, interpret data collected, and share findings connected to the research questions and the objectives. Everything was planned to achieve all the objectives proposed in the time established (Appendix I).

The subsequent timeline presents the activities, objectives and materials to be applied in each lesson.

4.3.2.1 Timeline

Table 1

Timeline

Date	Objective	Activity	Data Collection Instruments / Materials
May-Jun	Piloting the data collection instruments.	Interview the research participants.	Interview-Checklist
Jun-Jul	Gathering information about the students' initial state.	Interview research participants. Record and analyze students' performance while interviewing.	Interview-Checklist
Aug	Classifying students in levels: above-at-below.	Transcribe interviews. Analyze and validate collected data	Interview-Checklist
Sep 22-26 (3hours)	Implementing the First Cycle using tiered activities and the learning log. Topics: (8 th -grade: Simple present-to be. Wh-Questions. Time expressions. Simple Present Daily routines.) (9 th -grade: Time expressions. Simple Present Daily routines. Frequency adverbs. Past simple-to be).	A conversation A-monolog A-role-play (interviewer and a famous person). • Prepare questions and answers and present • Talk individually (a monolog) about the pictures (progressive). • Record a podcast describing the pictures or performing a conversation.	Flashcards-Worksheets-Tape recorders-Computers
Sep 29-Oct 3 (3hours)			Flashcards-Worksheets-Tape recorders-Computers
Oct 6 – 10 (3hours)	To begin the implementation of the language teaching strategy.	Mechanical practice-Meaningful practice-Communicative-practice	Worksheet time phrases
Oct 13-17 (3hours)	To validate the first instruments. To identify changes in the methodological strategy	Mechanical practice-Meaningful practice-Communicative-practice	Verbs and Other Words Learning Log
Oct 27-31 (3hours)	Implementing the Second Cycle using tiered activities and the learning log. Topics:	• Ask questions of varying degrees of difficulty and select those learners who can answer at each level.	

Nov 3-7 (3hours)	(8 th grade: Present continuous. Simple past-to be.)	Role-play-Information gap-Interviews/surveys Find someone who...	Worksheet Find someone who... activity.
Nov 10-14 (3hours)	(9 th grade: Time expressions. Past simple regular and irregular verbs.)	Role-play Information gap-Interviews/surveys-Find someone who...	Worksheet
Nov 17 – 21 (3hours)	To validate the instruments used. To identify achievements and delays in the project's implementation.	Mechanical practice- Meaningful practice- Communicative-practice	Worksheet Learning Log
Nov 25	To identify students' improvements in the Speaking process.	Interview with the research participants. Record students while they are answering the interview. Analyze performance with the checklist. Transcribe the interviews.	Interview-Checklist

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter described the pedagogical intervention and summarized the visions that the researchers employed during the two cycles. With the results obtained in these two cycles, researches could notice that it is possible to expand the process adding more cycles by implementing the lessons and TA along the whole academic year to get better and constant results. Here researchers described the methodological issues implemented in the performance of the theoretical principles delineated in chapter two. The researchers provided a guideline showing how to cope with tiered activities and the steps to create a lesson. However, modifications are welcome according to the learners' needs and preferences.

Researchers in this study became aware of the possible problems they might face in each of the lessons. It is necessary to be attentive to modify, adapt, or look for appropriate material for the best development of the cycles.

Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the type of approach to analyze the data gathered in this research study as well as the data management and analysis procedures followed to validate the research process. The information gathered from the implementation process is consolidated and analyzed using the principle of Strauss and Corbin (2008) for the data analysis. This data collected was described, coded and categorized in order to triangulate findings and analyze the impact of the results upon the research question formulated. The process carried out to answer the question and illustrate the readers with the way data were treated when identifying meaningful aspects, - related to the importance of using DI and TA in a multilevel classroom-, fills the chapter with a series of steps and procedures that are intertwined along the discussion to validate, show and corroborate the findings.

5.2 Data management procedures

Within the two cycles implemented there were three different instruments to gather information; the learning logs, the oral tests and the checklist as an artifact to assess the oral tests performances. To access and organize each instrument, several strategies were implemented. We started with the oral test and the checklist at the beginning of the first cycle. After, we saved all the interview files in a digital folder. Then, we made the transcriptions and saved them in a different folder with a second copy of both folders in a flash drive. Subsequently, we assigned a number to each participant in order to have a better way to locate them. Each student's checklist has the corresponding number for the process of digitalizing the information. As for the oral tests, students were interviewed and asked different questions on the subject of personal information and topics related to the curriculum, in order to see their initial stage before and after

the implementation of the activities. The checklists were used as artifacts to assess the students' performances when presenting the oral tests. These checklists were provided with some categories and subcategories and descriptors so the process of assessment was fair and objective for all participants.

Regarding the learning logs, the participants filled out this instrument at the end of the first cycle. The formats were stored with the same number assigned to each student in the oral test in order to access the information easily. In this way, all of the information was organized chronologically. The purpose of the learning logs was having the possibility to obtain from the participants their personal perceptions alongside the different implementations of the TA.

As for the second oral test, it was administered at the end of the cycle along with the checklist. Likewise, the second learning log was filled out at the end of the same cycle to observe if the students changed their points of view regarding the process. These documents and data were saved, as the first oral test and checklist, in a digital folder. We made the corresponding transcriptions and saved them in another folder with a second copy of both folders in a flash drive.

Finally, each of the different processes of digitalizing and saving the instruments' data collected was systematized, registered, classified and filed in a Microsoft excel format named as the *matrix*, where every instrument's information was organized and grouped according to the grades and participants.

5.2.1 Validation

This research study is founded on Grounded Theory Approach. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that "a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (p. 23). Grounded Theory is a general research method that helps

researchers with data collection. Thus, this method allows using quantitative or qualitative data of any type, involving the discovery of theory through the analysis of data. Moreover, Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) mentioned that grounded theory is a substantial method of theory generation which is categorized by being inductive and in which everything is combined.

In this study, the first stage is data collection where researchers used different methods. Then, from the data collected the important aspects are highlighted with codes. Afterwards, these codes are grouped in similar categories to make the process easier to organize and collect data. Those categories are the basis for the creation of a theory.

This method could be summarized as follows: *codes* to identify bases that allow the key points of the data that was gathered; *concepts* that are groups of codes with similar content that allow data to be collected; *categories*, or groups of similar concepts that are used to generate a theory and finally, theory, which is a collection of categories that specify the particulars of the subject of the research (Glaser, 1965).

To analyze the data collected, we implemented three basic types of coding: open, axial, and selective. Coding is the basic analytic process engaged in by the researcher (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding techniques executed have a developmental order in terms of a process of analysis from concrete to abstract. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) open coding refers to the process of generating initial concepts from data, axial coding to the development and linking of concepts into conceptual families, and selective coding to the formalizing of these relationships into theoretical frameworks.

The first part of the analysis was open coding. The oral test transcriptions were analyzed, as well as the checklists and the learning logs. The idea was to conceptualize line by line, coding every datum to look for a response to the research question posed. The researchers went back

and forth while comparing data and modifying the emerging theory. When coding, the researchers could find similarities among each instrument sample. The most common similarities were coded by using color coding technique in an excel chart for categorization, to reduce data and create code relations.

For the second part of the analysis, we followed axial coding as Strauss and Corbin proposed in 1990 and defined as "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories." (p. 61). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998), axial coding is the part of the data analysis where connections between a category and its subcategories are established.

At this stage, the researchers established some connections among the incipient categories bearing in mind the research objectives and the patterns which emerged in the open coding procedure. Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommended the use of a paradigm model "in grounded theory we link subcategories to a category in a set of relationships...use of this model will enable you to think systematically about data and relate them in very complex ways" (p. 99).

For the last part of the analysis, we followed selective coding. This stage according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) is defined as the development of selecting the core category, methodically relating it to other categories, and bearing in mind the ones which need further development. At this point, the researchers selected a core category that summarized and clarified the grounded theory completely (Birks & Mills, 2011). Consequently, grounded on the data analysis, researchers can state that the application of TA and DI has been positive, creating an impact on the improvement of students' English level.

5.3 Categories

5.3.1 Overall category mapping

In order to code the information three systematic coding steps were addressed, the open, the axial, and finally the selective as explained above.

In the open coding, researchers explored data finding initial codes that helped to group similar entries. This process was done using the color coding technique, in which each code was assigned a different color to identify its function and commonality with other codes in the matrix.

This can be seen in Figure 1.

2	Como lo aprendí fue:	el teacher nos corregía hasta decirlo	porque el profesor nos explicó como leerlo y quedaron dos puntos pendientes	porque el profesor nos enseñó a hablar en inglés y a pronunciar bien las palabras	repasando poniendo mucha atencion	practicando	escuchando y repitiendo	junto con mis compañeros y trabajo en equipo	leyendo una hoja en ingles
3	Lo que entendí fue:	todo lo de pronunciac ion	como se lee una guía en ingles	entendi a hablar en inglés y maso menos a pronunciar las palabras	lo que un muchacho hizo	que no es sensillo la pronunciac ión	todo	que el ingles no es nada fácil pero se puede aprender	una lectura en ingles
4	Lo que no entendí fue:	a pronunciar las cosas que hizo alguien	como resolver los dos puntos pendientes	no entendí casi la guía porque estaba un poquito dificil	algunas frases	un vocabulari o	entendí todo	algunas palabras de ingles	q ese profe habla muy rápido

Figure 1. Color Coding Technique in Matrix (Learning Logs)

From this color coding technique similar codes were reduced to a number of concepts.

Table 2 illustrates some examples of these codes:

Table 2

Emerging Codes and Concepts

Research question	Concepts
How might differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities impact A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom?	Differentiated content Teacher's help Dependent work Classmates' help Family help Group work Recording Conversations Autonomy Reading Speaking Pronunciation Commitment Awareness Improvement ICT's Perceptions

After having identified the repetitive patterns or codes and listed them, it was the turn to the following step, the axial coding process. Researchers started the process of creating links from the emerging codes in a detailed, selected and permanent analysis of the different patterns and similarities among the concepts. It was made in order to build up different categories and sub-categories taken from the data that was organized in different forms (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 97). At the beginning eleven categories were initially identified by the researchers as Table 3 states.

Table 3

Initial categories

Research question	List of grouped codes	Preliminary categories
How might differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities impact A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom?	Sentence composition	Content
	Spelling	Support
	Differentiated content	Materials
	Daily routine	Ways of learning
	Teacher's help	Autonomy
	Dependent work	Skills
	Classmates' help	ICT's
	Family help	Perceptions
	Interaction	Commitment
	Group work	Improvement
Autonomy	Awareness	

In the discriminating and last coding step, the preliminary categories selection remained in a redefining process of reduction and consolidation, the researchers kept looking for more commonalities among the findings so as to answer the research question. As a result of this selective process, two categories, two subcategories and one core category emerged from the analysis of selection and identification as the Figure 2 shows hereafter.

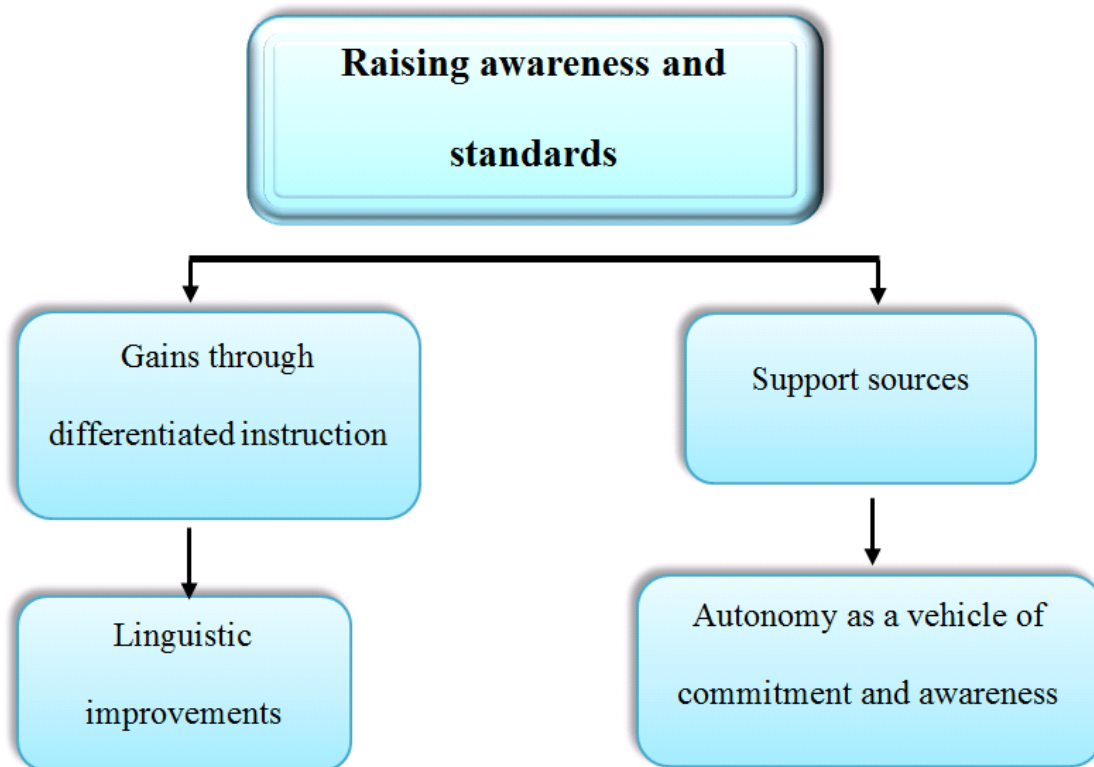


Figure 2. Core category, categories and sub-categories

5.3.2 Discussion of categories

The data collected by the researchers during the pedagogical intervention and the results of the open, axial and selective coding, had two categories and two sub categories that were addressed to the research question and objectives. The information obtained in the triangulation processes of the instruments are described in each category discussed down below.

5.3.2.1 Category 1: Gains through differentiated instruction

This category emerged as an answer to the first objective to determine the impact DI and oral TA had in the improvement of students' English level. In this category researchers had the opportunity to find what Tomlinson (2014) stated, "differentiation is an organized yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning to meet kids where they are and help them to achieve maximum growth as learners" (p. 14). Throughout the DI process carried out in the three

levels (below, at, above), participants first, had a personal impact when realizing they were grouped according to their level. Some of them felt at ease with that organization as they had the chance to work with people at the same level, while some others felt discriminated with the higher level groups, but along the activities they also noticed that there was not discrimination as every group worked with different challenges and opportunities to demonstrate their outcomes by means of different types of sources. The results obtained in the intervention showed that the participants are in the process of growing as learners as they have been improving in terms of communication. This phenomenon will be demonstrated in the figures down below.

Findings in this category allowed the researchers to analyze the information obtained from one perspective expressed as a sub-category: *Linguistic Improvement*. The information provided enclosed the impact differentiated instructions and tiered activities had on student's improvement along the implementation.

5.3.2.1.1 Linguistic Improvement

This sub-category refers to the improvement found in linguistic features of the language in general terms. Following DI and TA theory to see how the linguistic aspect improved, the participants were divided based on their level of readiness to interact with the content. As explained in chapter four and as Pierce and Adams (2005) claimed, "readiness refers to prior knowledge and students' current skills and proficiency with the material presented in a lesson" (p. 144). Similarly, Pierce and Adams (2005) indicated that content in DI is the material that is being presented. Likewise, following Pierce and Adams' (2005) steps when developing a tiered lesson, researchers focused on step five that determined "which part of the lesson (content, process or product) you will tier. When beginning, we suggest that you tier only one of these three" (p. 146). As suggested, researchers tiered content in some lessons in the intervention to

focus learning on the linguistic aspects. At the end of the intervention, satisfactory results were obtained. From figure 4 to figure 9 below, it is possible to observe and compare the increment in the content and grammar areas at the end of the cycle. Students' perceptions and feelings worked as to determine and associate the information. The following excerpts show some reactions of the participants in terms of content gains and use of L2.

Table 4

Linguistic improvement excerpts 1

Excerpt 1 – Learning Log 1 and 2	1. Today I learnt...	3. What I understood was:
Student # 1.	About the routine of a famous person.	About a famous person, then asking and answering questions about him. After, we talked and had conversations.
Student # 35.	To be in past in a good way	English is not easy but can be learnt.

In this sub-category the researchers also evidenced a vast group of elements that made part of the ways the participants interacted with the content. Components of vocabulary, speaking and pronunciation skills were predominant and key aspects when using the content. Notwithstanding, an impediment to get better result according to students' perceptions and results from the oral tests was that they did not understand some vocabulary or found it difficult to pronounce some words, impeding the possibility to answer despite they knew how to solve the activity and what to do with it.

Table 5

Linguistic improvement excerpts 2

Excerpt 2. Learning log 2.	18. The differentiated instructions activities that help me more were:	6. The difficulties I had were:
Student # 27	The spoken performances	I did not understand some words. They are very difficult
Student # 8	The one about practicing with the words and put into practice all learnt because it helped me to improve my English	The weird words I did not know

Although students recognized their improvements, they were also aware of the difficulties when dealing with content and its components. There was clear evidence that many factors influenced their improvement in this area.

5.3.2.1.1.1 Above – At – Below levels Results

As explained in chapter four, at the beginning of the implementation students were distributed in three different levels of proficiency, “**Above**” – “**At**” – “**Below**” (Roberts, 2007).

The gains obtained from these results are significant for this research study because they helped the researchers to establish the impact that differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities had in the participants’ English level. Each one of the processes, classifications, adjustments, and resources helped students raise awareness of the importance of taking advantage of different means to perform any activity, to be part of a specific level, and more important making decisions about the way they want to learn. Kohn (1993) stated, “The way a child learns how to make decisions is by making decisions...” (The Rationale section, para. 5).

The results clearly evidenced that the use of differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities influenced positively the two groups of students’ English level. The results from the

first oral test applied at the beginning of the implementation were assessed by a checklist (Appendix F), which includes five different components (fluency, pronunciation, content, vocabulary and grammar) and their corresponding descriptors.

On the one hand, the results can be evidenced in the following individual bar charts where three different colors, red (for *Below Level*); blue (for *At Level*); and yellow (for *Above Level*) were described in the color coding process in the matrix.

2	Pronunciation	Above Level: Uses clearly articulated words, appropriate pronunciation of unusual spellings and the intonation is appropriate.	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight	Below Level: Doesn't attempt to use English pronunciation patterns and/or uses L1 transference.	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight	Below Level: Doesn't attempt to use English pronunciation patterns and/or uses L1 transference.	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight	Below Level: Doesn't attempt to use English pronunciation patterns and/or uses L1 transference.	At Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight
3	Content	Above Level: Provides pertinent information giving details.	At Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling	At Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling	Below Level: Does not provide any information.	At Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling	Below Level: Does not provide any information.	Below Level: Does not provide any information.	At Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling	At Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling	Below Level: Does not provide any information.

Figure 3. Color Coding Technique in Matrix (Checklist)

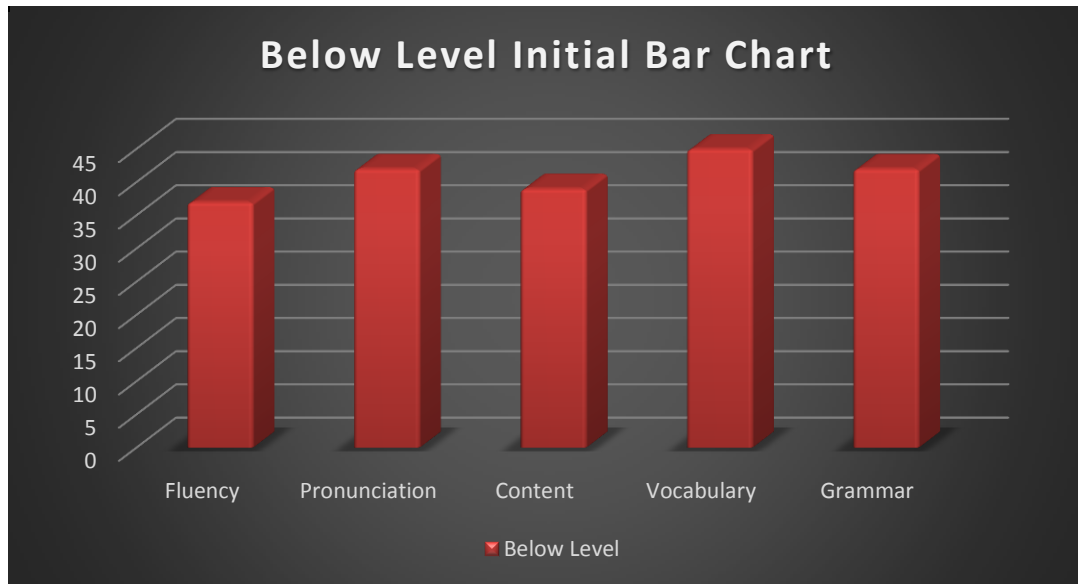


Figure 4. Below level initial bar chart

The *Below Level* Bar Chart shows the initial stage with 37 students at Below level in Fluency, 42 in Pronunciation, 39 in Content, 45 in Vocabulary, and 42 in Grammar.

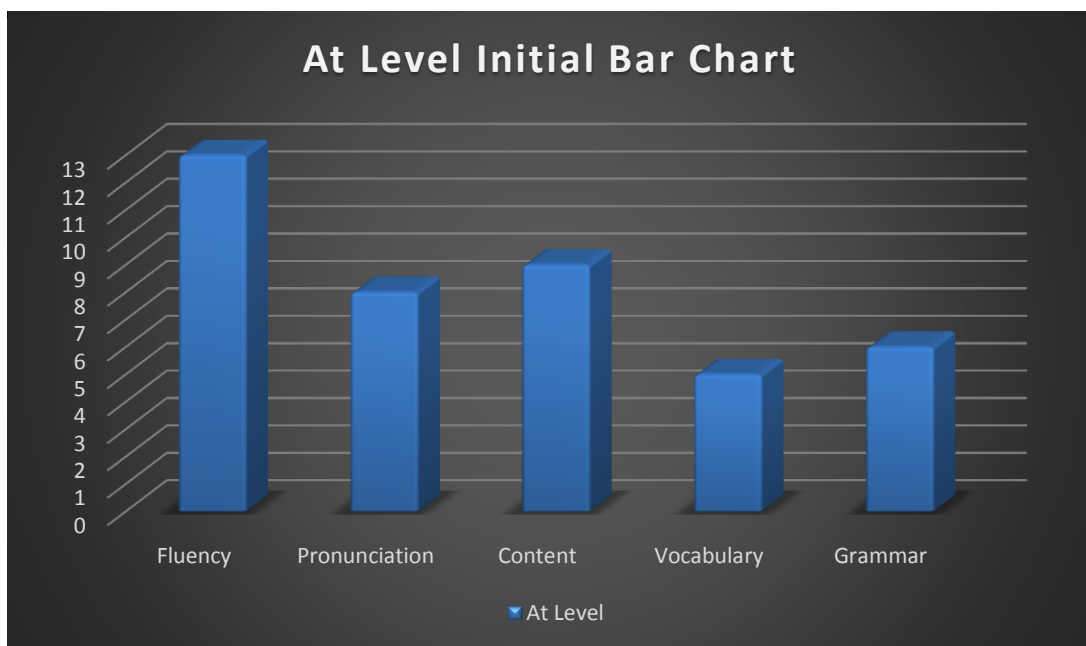


Figure 5. At level initial bar chart

The *At Level* Bar Chart illustrates the initial stage with 13 students at At Level in Fluency, 8 in Pronunciation, 9 in Content, 5 in Vocabulary, and 6 in Grammar.

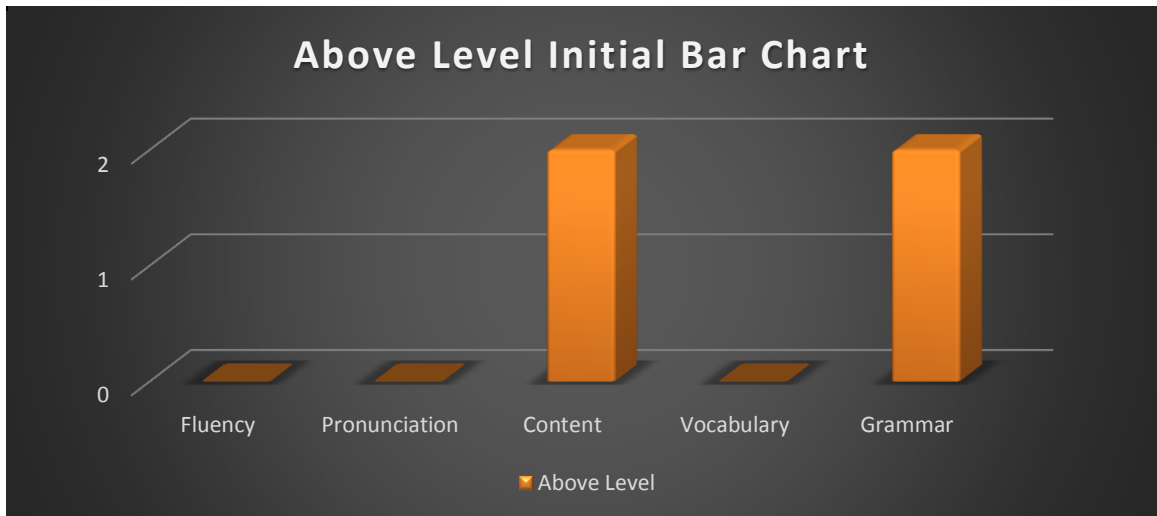


Figure 6. Above level initial bar chart

Finally, the *Above Level Bar Chart* graphs the initial stage with 0 students at the Above Level in Fluency, 0 in Pronunciation, 2 in Content, 0 in Vocabulary and 2 in Grammar.

On the second hand, the following individual charts show the results gathered after the implementation on differentiated instruction, the use of oral tiered activities, and the data analysis of the core category, categories and sub-categories.

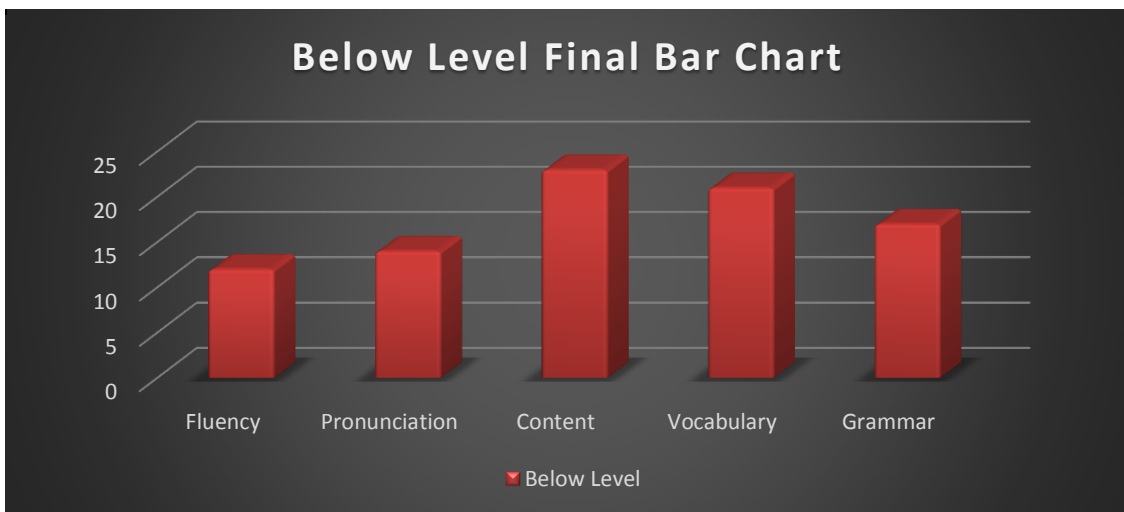


Figure 7. Below level final bar chart

The *Below Level Bar Chart* shows the initial stage with 12 students at a below level in Fluency, 14 in Pronunciation, 23 in Content, 21 in Vocabulary, and 17 in Grammar.

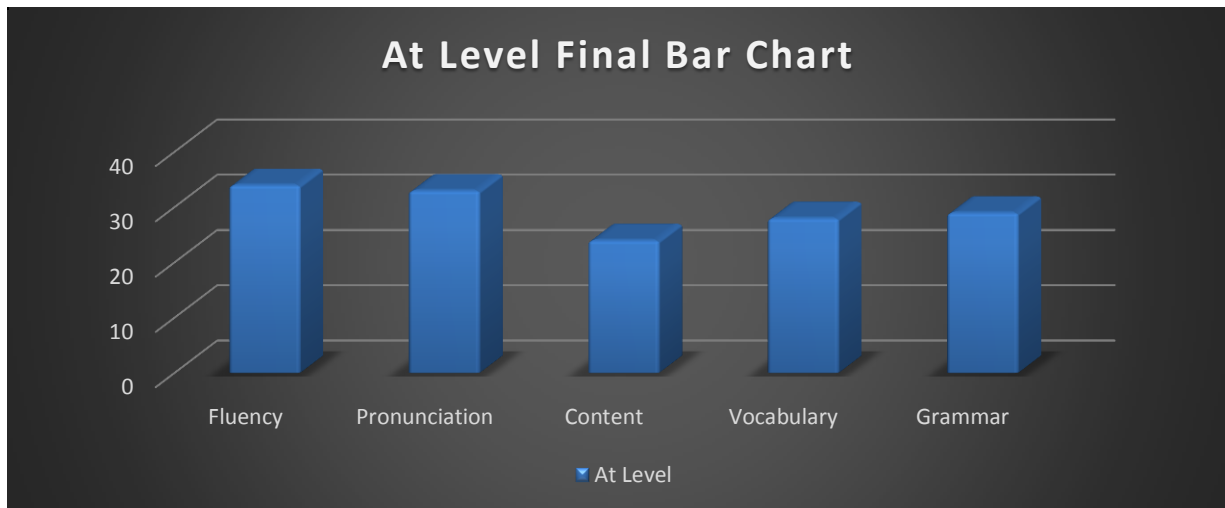


Figure 8. At level final bar chart

The *At Level Bar Chart* illustrates the initial stage with 34 students at At Level in Fluency, 33 in Pronunciation, 24 in Content, 28 in Vocabulary, and 29 in Grammar.

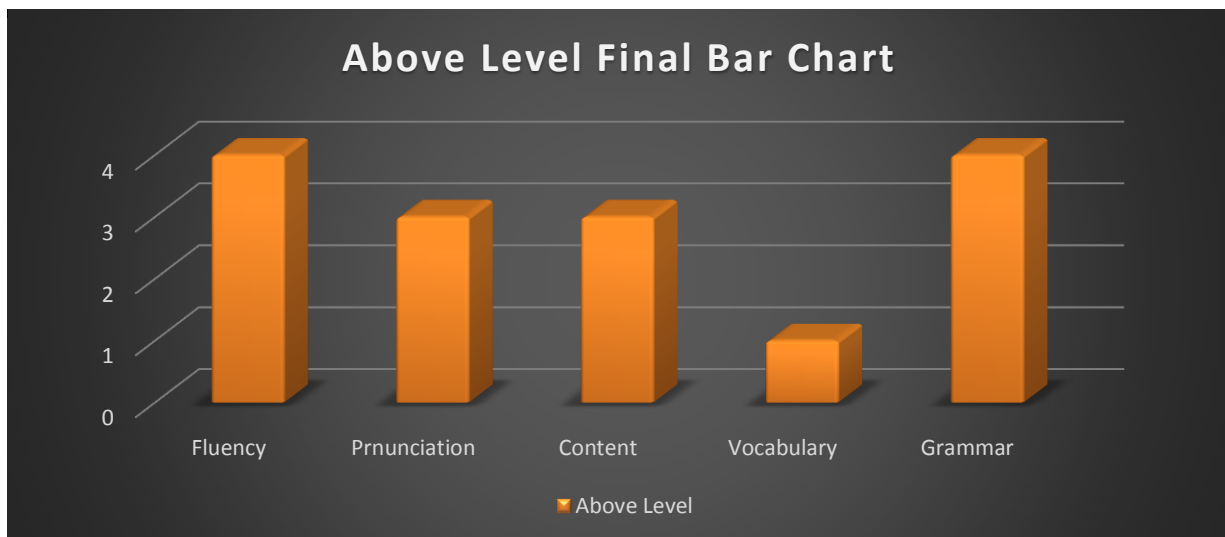


Figure 9. Above level final bar chart

Finally, the *Above Level Bar Chart* graphs the initial stage with 4 students at the Above Level in Fluency, 3 in Pronunciation, 3 in Content, 1 in Vocabulary and 4 in Grammar.

The following charts summarize and compare the initial stage students had in the three different levels with the final finding and results.

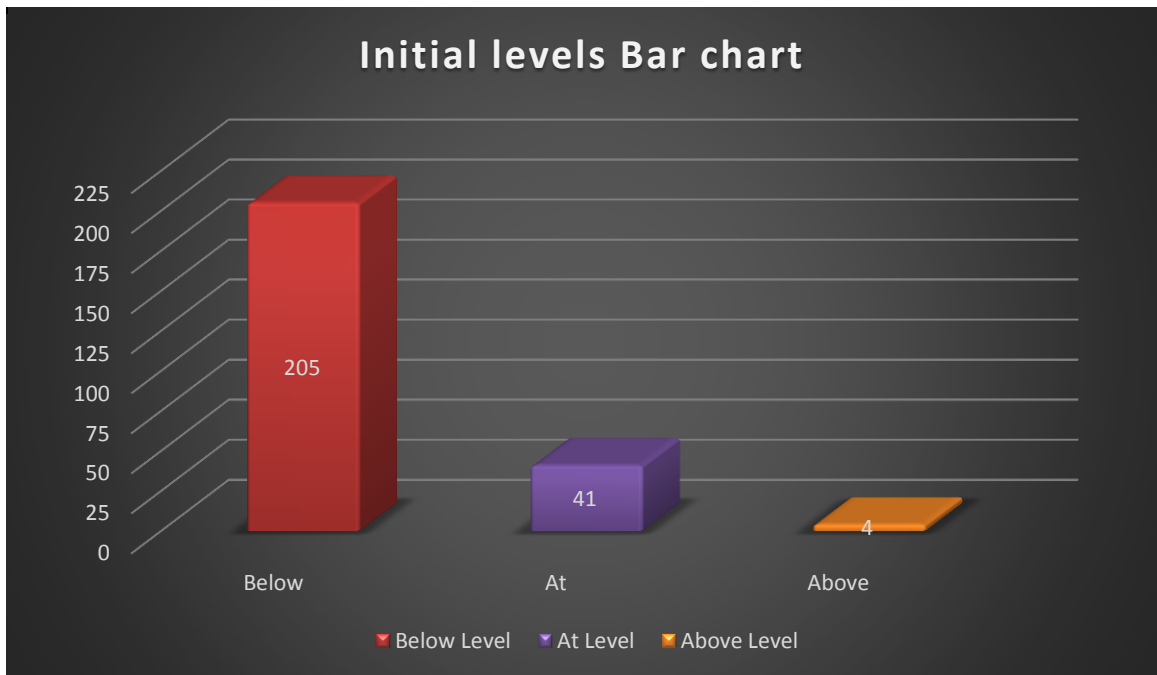


Figure 10. Initial levels bar chart

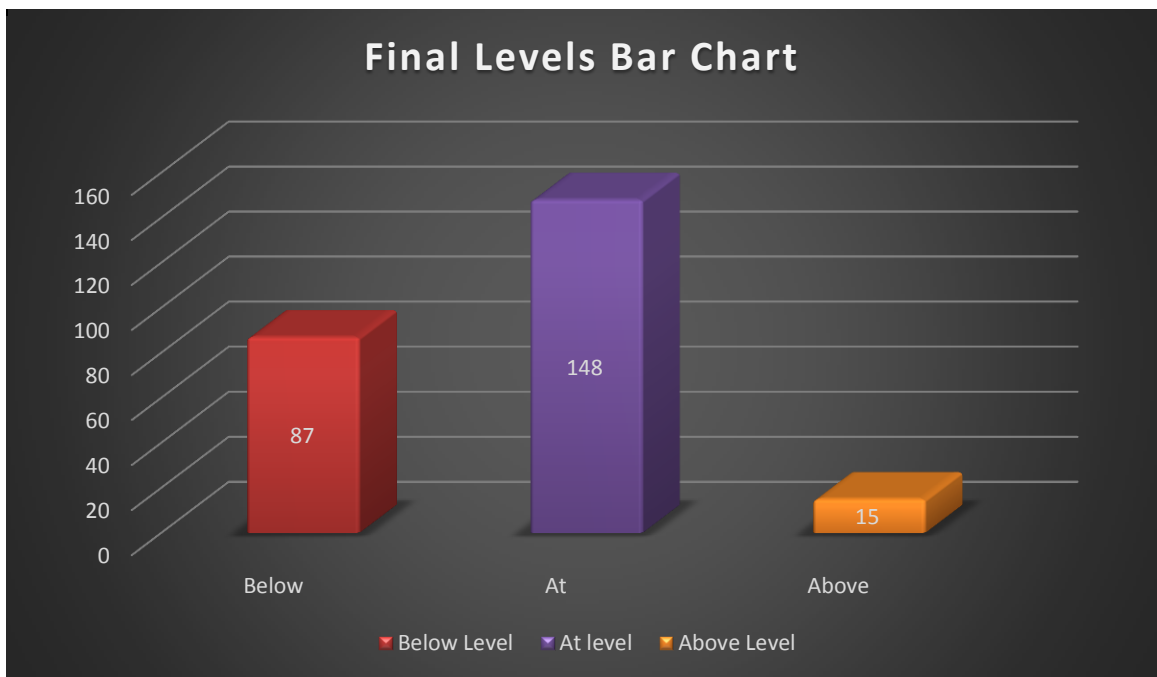


Figure 11. Final levels bar chart

These two final charts clearly evidence the way *below* level students predominated in the first and initial oral test assessment but was reduced in the final results. There was a significant enhancement in *At* Level students in terms of improvement. Finally, although *Below* Level students' advance was slight, it does not reflect stagnation.

Based on these results obtained and shown in figures 10 and 11, it is possible to determine that although the A1 reference points of the CEFR were not achieved, there was a raise in the standards on the students' English level by means of using differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities, which entails stating that an outgoing and persistent implementation of differentiated instruction and tiered activities along the academic year, would represent higher gains and achievements where there might be possibility to attain the CEFR standards not only in the two grades of the implementation, but also in all the grades of the school.

5.3.2.2 Category 2: Support sources

This category emerged as an answer to the second objective to examine the possible benefits (if any), that oral tiered activities have on students' interest in learning English. It refers to all the support students received from their parents, teachers, classmates, and the tiered activities when completing and performing each task throughout the lessons presented.

As Heacox (2012) stated, the teachers' role in differentiated instruction is as facilitators and they have three important duties: giving and suggesting differentiated learning opportunities, establishing students for learning, and using time compliantly. The results evidenced that students felt their teachers were facilitators when developing the tiered activities during the two cycles, as they could develop independence, although sometimes they needed extra help from teachers.

As Tomlinson (2001) indicated the role of the material in differentiated instruction is being a facilitator “at differing levels of complexity and associated with different learning modes” (p.101). Hence, the material designed and provided must be well organized strictly devoted to the three levels established for the content to be understood and the objectives achieved. The material used in the implementation entailed students to be aware of their limitation, weaknesses, and strengths. With the material used in each lesson, participants developed the ability to choose the best alternative to find the way to achieve the goals proposed for the class. Giving students the possibility to choose the material allowed them to monitor and have more autonomous personal options. This choice also encouraged students to show their interests and take responsibility upon them (Hume, 2008).

In this type of lessons, the classmates’ role as Yorkey (1985) claimed, starts from the activities provided that were previously designed to be developed by a group, in this case any of the three levels, in order to practice communication. In this perspective, classmates need to work cooperatively to discover several ways to solve situations such as understand and follow directions in a map, make drawings, understand cartoons, request, and so forth. Therefore, the next excerpts show evidence from it.

Table 6

Support sources excerpts 3

Excerpt 3. Learning logs1 and 2.	8. Somebody that can help me to solve these difficulties is:	13. I could work alone or needed teacher's or classmates' help because:
Student # 30	The teacher or relatives	From the teacher because some activities were difficult.
Student # 17	Some classmates or the teacher	Actually, I need help from people to solve the activities

Table 7

Support sources excerpts 4

Excerpt 4. Learning Log 2	The material or materials I used was/were:	The tiered activities that helped me the most were because:
Student # 43.	Supporting worksheets and computer.	Practicing speaking, recording because they encourage the pronunciation and make me understand better.
Student # 19.	I used a computer to record with my classmate.	The ones that have to do with working in groups.

This perspective was underlined by one sub-category that framed the support and sources throughout the process named as Autonomy as a Vehicle of Commitment and Awareness. Along with the analysis and identification of relevant information, the supporting and helping factors were notorious for the improvement and development of linguistics patterns when dealing with

differentiated instruction. Therefore, having students guided in the process throughout cooperation and support tends to an enhancement in their proficiency level.

5.3.2.2.1 Autonomy as a Vehicle of Commitment and Awareness

This sub-category emerged from the importance of identifying and analyzing the factors that have impeded students to improve their English proficiency level. Throughout the analysis of experiences, processes, activities and performances during and after the implementation, researchers could evidence that a significant part in the use of DI and TA is essential to have willingness, attitude and sense of responsibility. Tomlinson (2001 b) asserted, “Only when students work at appropriate challenge levels do they develop the essential habits of persistence, curiosity, and willingness to take intellectual risks” (p. 5). None of the activities and performances would have been positive if first, the activities and methodology had not affected students’ interest and willingness positively and second, if they had not shown commitment and awareness of the importance of working autonomously.

At the beginning of the implementation, students were reluctant to participate or work at home independently or consult information for personal interests. The excerpts below illustrate this situation.

Table 8

Autonomy as a Vehicle of Commitment and Awareness excerpts5

Excerpt 5. Learning log 1	12. What I do outside the classroom to improve my abilities to communicative is:	14. A proof that I can work autonomously after this type of class is:
Student # 19 - 22	No, because when one is not in class there is not learning or communication	I still have to improve that
Student # 47- 38	Nothing	No I cannot work by myself

Vygotsky and Cole (1978, 1986) asserted that an individual learns in his or her “zone of proximal development.” This idea denotes the phase when a learner understands the content with ability and structure. In this zone, teachers offer students a little more difficult tasks than they can complete independently (Tomlinson & Allan, 2000). After having finished the implementation, the results demonstrated that the tiered activities helped students understand the content more easily and systematically and the levels of difficulty of the activities work as an encouraging factor of independence. Likewise, Tomlinson (2001) reminded educators that “we know that learning happens best when a learning experience pushes the learner a bit beyond his or her independence level” (p.8). This is demonstrated because most of the participants’ perceptions regarding autonomy and independent work were positive.

They became more aware of what autonomy was and felt they could work independently. They also demonstrated that they were more confident working in small groups.

Additionally, it was evidenced a high level of awareness for the language itself, since the participants expressed the importance of learning a second language, and the link it has with other aspects such as professional life and technology. When filling the learning logs, the participants showed interest and responsibility using the computers with a specific purpose without diverting their compromise to fill the learning log in the time given. The excerpts below illustrate these impressions.

Table 9

Autonomy as a Vehicle of Commitment and Awareness excerpts 6

Excerpt 6. Learning log 2	12. What I do outside the classroom to improve my abilities to communicate is:	14. A proof that I can work autonomously after this type of class is:
Student # 19 – 22 - 27	I sometimes study in my laptop and listen to music in English. At home practicing the worksheet and asking my parents for help with the unknown.	Because I understand what I have to do, so I do not have to ask. Now I can choose the activities I like and develop them as I like too.
Student # 47- 38 - 27	Practice with a different person and study. Look for words and video games on internet.	When I work independently, I think and then, I can solve the exercises undoubtedly. Now my abilities are excellent because I understand more English I can work independently.

Finally, it is eloquent to say that commitment and awareness are two important elements to take into consideration when boosting autonomy in the participants since they are the bases of an outgoing process. Positive participants' understanding and satisfaction with their tasks entail higher performance and persistence to continue developing activities and getting involved to improve their English level. In this way, it is evident that TA provided benefits in terms of students' interest when learning English and being autonomous, because the students' perceptions indicated the importance to continue exploring English as a foreign language by themselves. The excerpts below illustrate these impressions.

Table 10

Autonomy as a Vehicle of Commitment and Awareness excerpts 7

Excerpt 7 Learning log 2	17. The tiered activities helped to improve my autonomy because:
Student # 3.	Yes, because when I am professional and I go to the USA I can speak English.
Student # 16.	Because I learn that I do not need others.
Student # 25.	I am responsible and I know what I have to do.

5.3.3 Core category

For the last part of the analysis, we followed selective coding. This stage according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) is defined as the development of selecting the core category. At this point, after analyzing and reducing the data gathered in the open and axial coding process, the researchers selected a core category that summarized and clarified the grounded theory completely (Birks & Mills. 2011). Consequently, the core category that emerged as an answer to the research question of this study was “Raising awareness and standards”. By implementing DI and TA as a possible positive impact in students’ English level, researchers helped students to raise awareness about the importance of using materials effectively with a purpose and interest in mind. Students’ motivation when using a technological tool modeled their performances and increased the level of commitment, and responsibly, became autonomous and reflexive to accomplish the tasks introduced. This core category also evidenced the way students’ final outcome marked a positive turning point in their language improvement by differentiating the activities for the three selected groups. Therefore, the application of DI and TA has been positive, generating an impact on the improvement of students’ English level and awareness.

5.4 Conclusion

For the closing of this analysis, it is important to exalt the relevance all the instruments had to gather the information previously presented. Each of the instruments, as a way to assess students' performance, after implementing the TA, were analyzed as to determine the possible impact that DI and oral TA had upon a positive influence in A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom. Results attained per se in the analysis, invite researchers and readers to have an optimistic vision to the validity and reliability and the opportunity to initiate similar studies.

Finally, the emerging codes that became categories were progressively underlining the path to answer the research question formulated by the researchers. These categories started to yield results that gradually turned into valuable information to find more results than expected. Supported in the final findings gathered, it can be said as stated before, that there was an impact in the A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom due to the implementation of differentiated instruction and oral tiered activities mediated by other findings in interests, commitment, resources and opportunities.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings obtained in the data analysis process, and the limitations. Additionally, further research will be considered in order to provide suggestions based on the teaching and learning process carried out in this research study. Furthermore, it is essential to restate that the intention of this study was to evaluate the impact DI and oral tiered activities had in A1 students' English level in a multilevel classroom. Undoubtedly, based on the data collected and the results obtained, the researchers could validate that this approach produced an impact in the participants' improvement. In fact, students revealed a significant and positive raise in the English level standards, as well as awareness regarding their learning process and autonomy to work more independently.

6.2 Comparison of results with previous studies' results

According to the results obtained in this research project, we can reaffirm what Landrum and McDuffie (2010) concluded when they stated that it is advisable to personalize instruction. Differentiation gives the opportunity to personalize the setting in a multilevel classroom. As in the present study, they also concluded that the emphasis in this type of instruction was the students' learning styles to take more advantage of the learning process. Similar conclusions were drawn by Richards and Omdal (2007) in their research study where they found that:

- (1) professional support for teachers is critical to the success of tiered instruction;
- (2) a strong background in the subject matter and a thorough understanding of the range of potential learning activities appropriate to the targeted levels of learners is essential; and
- (3) the implementation of a change of instructional and classroom organization, pedagogy, and expectations needs to be systematically introduced over time.

Results found in the present study support this third conclusion as it was necessary to change the instructional techniques to make the impact on the participants' English level.

Most of the latest studies show positive results when using DI. For instance, Johnsen (2003) revealed that using DI was appealing, and teachers that were encouraged to use this technique in this research study, provided a rewarding practice. Similarly, Tomlinson (1995) used DI in a case study of one middle school's experience, found initial teacher disagreement toward modifying instruction but later they started getting used to the implementation of this technique in their practices. In comparison with this study, the use of DI was addressed differently, while their instruction was modified, our instruction was selective in three different groups (*Above-At-Below*) and addressed with specific patterns and characteristics for each one. However, all of them yielded positive results.

With regard to TA in the public Colombian education context, Pasuy (2013) concluded that the implementation of tiered products in reading comprehension produced an appropriate identification of main ideas increasing motivation towards reading. This study also showed that the differentiation of the reading instruction fostered active readers. Another conclusion mentioned in this research study claims that DI cares for students' learning styles, preferences, personalities, background knowledge, or experiences. Even though the use of TA in Pasuy's study was addressed to writing, our study also revealed that using TA highlights the student's preferences, learning styles and motivation. Activities promoted active participants aware of the importance of commitment and working with different groups.

In the field of oral tasks, the results affirmed what Deepa's (2012) study claimed that tasks proposed were well accepted by most of the students. They perceived that instruction was gratifying, and academically valuable. They got implicated in the task because of the

genuineness of the activity. At a local level, the present study results supported Stevens, Lasso and Quintero's (2012) that determined that from the data collected they could assure that implementing different types of speaking activities focused on the students' interests and way of learning. Similar in this research study, the implemented activities such as role-plays that produced insecurity and shyness among students, managed to engage students.

6.3 Significance of the results

In general terms, this research study has a significant impact in the educational field. First of all, it is the first time researchers had the opportunity to investigate and apply different pedagogical innovations in the public schools. This study is pertinent because it signifies a revolution at a local level as it is the first time that DI and TA were implemented taking into consideration oral activities. The current study results became a great opportunity to involve teachers in a pedagogical research and knowledge upgrading by transferring conclusions to similar contexts. In this way, the benefits are not only in public population at schools, but it is also applicable for private institutions.

The benefits for the institution implicated in the research study have opened a new vision for the improvement of curricula, lesson planning, and classroom management in order to raise English standards, awareness of the learning process, and the autonomy of the students. The fact of having the opportunity to do research was the chance to observe, investigate, design, apply, implement, and analyze the inner academic situations that teachers face in their daily professional roles, and thereby, find a solution for the problem of multilevel classrooms.

Therefore, the significance of this project is to alert, help, support, and encourage teachers to do research, become researchers, and transform their lessons into interactive places under ongoing processes of updating and optimizing academic innovations. Using DI and TA,

the future researchers can promote, adapt, and modify the process developed in this research study to involve not only oral tasks but also different contexts, language functions and skills.

Finally, this research study exalts the significance of using DI linked to TA with the purpose of positive improvements in English language in multilevel classrooms. This research project as a pioneer in this field in Colombia provides new strategies to address a lesson within a multilevel classroom and narrows the gaps between students' proficiency levels that exist in a class.

6.4 Limitations of the present study

In this research study, there were some limitations that are worth mentioning. First of all, time was an impediment because we planned the cycles for a specific period of time but there were some extracurricular activities at school that impeded the normal development of the cycles. The hindrance we faced was in terms of implementation since by the time we had the opportunity to continue with the cycle planning, the topics according to the lesson plan were different as we had to follow the school syllabus, hence it affected our lesson planning design.

At this point, we had to limit our range of applicability in terms of the topics proposed at the beginning of the implementation. First, because of the experience in the needs analysis phase and the conclusions obtained from it. Moreover, the topics for the school syllabus were more advanced than the knowledge and proficiency level tested with the instrument (Appendix B). As a result of this and in order to keep both, syllabus and implementation, we limited the topics and adapted the amount of material to avoid bias, ambiguity, and false expectations.

Regarding the range of applicability in terms of emphasis for the research study, in the preliminary investigation, there was an erroneous focus on speaking skills because there was a failure to identify specifically what speaking skills were in terms of how they would be

measured/evaluated producing stagnation in the normal flow of the researching. After that, the researchers found that the speaking skill term was used to refer to the activities based on oral tasks, causing confusion to the reader to expect something different from the established.

For the open coding analysis process, we did not take into account the time that transcribing the oral tests and categorization date took. This limitation delayed the process of making connections between categories. When this process was concluded and we established connections among the emerging categories, parallel entries were grouped to a number of concepts, but the limitation was that there appeared several categories that complicated the selective coding procedure when mapping the salient categories. Finally, reduction and consolidation was possible by looking for more similarities and associating the remarkable codes.

Another limitation was regarding technology, since when students needed to fill out the learning logs the computers at the multimedia lab were already booked for activities arranged by the technology teachers or due to extracurricular activities. Consequently, we had to set different days.

Finally, regarding this technological constraint we experienced a technical problem when transcribing ten oral tests. The first time we applied them for 9th graders, the audio failed and the file ended up with no data. They were recorded five days later.

6.5 Further research

The current research study was focused on evaluating the impact DI and TA had on A1 students' English level and, according to the results gathered, the implementation of these methods can be extended to all the language skills in different subjects. Based on the state of the

art results, the research and implementation of tiered activities in different skills is limited and DI is not applied for language improvement.

In relation with theorists in the DI field, this method was mainly intended to participants immersed in different cultural contexts, people from different countries immersed and sharing the same classroom. In our case, we are working with the same culture and regardless the heterogeneity in terms of social human beings, our concept of heterogeneity is regarding the multiple levels of cognition within the same grades. Therefore, it is highly important for further research to extend the application of DI using TA to improve the standards not only in English but also in other subjects of the curriculum.

It is recommended that further researchers focus their attention on a wider overview of the DI and TA methodology to improve linguistic aspects, both from a quality and a quantity perception. As Kingore (2006) suggested “begin or extend your tiered instruction by varying one lesson. Then, reflect upon that success and consider tiering another learning experience” (p. 6). It is not only a matter of identifying the elements of DI, but it is a continuous process of evaluating the process considering both the positive and negative features in the implementation. We recommend elaborating the assessment (formative-summative) part of the process.

Researchers should recognize tasks, instructional material and methods for the progress of students’ oral capacities in the Colombian setting. A study that applies DI and TA in other areas would be useful for investigators and teachers. Likewise, the use of ICTs would motivate students and it could facilitate meaningful learning where learners could practice in authentic contexts and autonomously. A study linking DI and ICTs would be a fascinating area of research.

To have better results using DI and TA, it is necessary to classify the participants in the adequate level; in this case we suggest the ones proposed by Roberts (2007) *below*, *at*, and *above*. It is recommendable to have an instrument according to the skill that the researcher wants to focus on. In conclusion, we strongly recommend having an instrument to classify the participants according to the area to be studied.

6.6 Conclusion

This research study was intended to find a balance in the English level proficiency standards found in multilevel classrooms, especially in public institutions in Bogota, but also considering private institutions. The objectives to find this balance were to determine the impact that DI and oral TA had in the improvement of students' English level and to examine the possible benefits (if any), that oral TA have on students' interest in English.

According to the results obtained, it is possible to mention that these two objectives were achieved since students had the opportunity to participate in a series of lessons based on DI and oral TA along two cycles of intervention producing increment in their English level standards as it was demonstrated with the graphs in chapter five. There, it could be observed the different levels, which students started with at the beginning of the implementation, and the benefits obtained after the application of TA based on students' oral preferences as well as the selected material to accompany this intervention, the different possibilities, and the levels of difficulty to perform the activities. This type of tasks resulted appealing for the participants in terms of the commitment, awareness, motivation and autonomy, expressed throughout the lessons as they conveyed their experiences and perceptions in the learning logs and most of these insights were positive evidencing from this perspective that students enjoyed the instruction, and increased

their awareness towards their learning process. As at the end of the intervention the participants were interviewed, they validated the raise in the initial standards.

Finally, DI and TA have been used for regular classes in the native and second language classrooms. The results of this research project are significant for future researching as they fill the gap between applying DI and TA to teach English as a foreign language. Additionally, these results framed the current situation most of the local public institutions are facing in their classrooms and set the most viable techniques to overcome stagnation, apathy, and reluctance.

DI and TA was and is taught to demand more work for the teacher in order to plan and set activities, but it is worth doing it if researchers and teachers are looking for a solution for heterogeneous classrooms, individualized results and level of students. TA were meaningful for participants and this permits concluding that this strategy can help teachers in different areas and students to find ways to learn better.

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Appendix A: Student's study habits survey**HABITOS DE ESTUDIO DEL INGLÉS**

Nombre: _____ Apodo: _____

1. ¿Le gusta estudiar inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

2. ¿Le gusta la clase de inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

3. ¿Usted cree que el inglés es importante para su vida?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

4. En cuanto a las actividades en clase de inglés:

- a. Las hace todas
- b. Hace algunas
- c. Hace pocas
- d. No hace ninguna

¿Por qué?

5. En cuanto a las actividades en la clase de inglés:

- a. Las entiende todas
- b. Entiende algunas
- c. Entiende pocas
- d. No entiende ninguna

¿Por qué?

6. En cuanto a las tareas de la clase de inglés:

- a. Las hace todas
- b. Hace algunas
- c. Hace pocas
- d. No hace ninguna

¿Por qué?

7. ¿Usa diccionario de inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

8. ¿Tiene libros de inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

9. ¿Tiene alguna persona que le explique o le ayude con las tareas o actividades de inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

10. ¿Ha utilizado páginas de internet para aprender inglés?

- a. sí
- b. no

¿Por qué?

11. En cuanto a las actividades en clase de inglés le gusta más trabajar:

- a. Solo
- b. Pareja
- c. En grupo

¿Por qué?

12. En cuanto a las actividades en clase de inglés le gustan más:

- a. Leer
- b. Hablar
- c. Escribir
- d. Escuchar

¿Por qué?

Appendix B: Proficiency Questionnaire**Straightforward Beginner and Elementary Placement test**

The *Straightforward* test has 50 questions, each worth one point. The first 40 are grammar questions and the final 10 are vocabulary questions. The conversion chart below has been designed to assist you in making your decision but please note, however, that these bandings are a guide.

Total score	Level
0 – 35	Beginner
36 – 50	Elementary

Grammar

- 1 _____'s your name? Thomas Unit 1A
 a How
 b Who
 c What
 d Where
- 2 This is Lucy and her brother, Dan. _____ my friends. Unit 1B
 a We're
 b I'm
 c You're
 d They're
- 3 _____? I'm from Italy. Unit 1B
 a Where are you from?
 b Where you are from?
 c Where from you are?
 d From where you are?
- 4 I'm from Milan. _____ is in Italy. Unit 1C
 a They
 b It
 c He
 d She

- 5 Excuse me, how ____ your last name? R-I-L-E-Y Unit 2A
a spell
b
c you spell
d do you spell
e spell you
- 6 Oh, ____ are my keys! Unit 2B
a This
b These
c That
d It
- 7 I'd like ____ omelette, please. Unit 2C
a a
b the
c an
d two
- 8 And here is your _____. Unit 2D
a desk
b desks.
c a desk
d an desk
- 9 My name's Pete and this is Sylvia. ____ doctors from France. Unit 3A
a I'm
b We're
c She's
d They're
- 10 Sorry, ____ Paul. My name's Eric. Unit 3B
a I isn't
b I is not
c I aren't
d I'm not
- 11 ____? No, he isn't. Unit 3C
a Are they teachers?
b Are you from Italy?
c Is Mr. Banning a teacher?
d Is this your phone?
- 12 ____ is the school? It's 50 years old. Unit 4A
a How many years
b How much years
c What years
d How old

- 13 What is ____?
a job Mary
b Mary job
c Mary's job
d job's Mary Unit 4B
- 14 Your bag is next ____ the table.
a on
b to
c in
d of Unit 4C
- 15 ____ are the keys? On the table.
a What
b When
c Where
d Who Unit 4D
- 16 I go to work ____ train.
a with
b by
c for
d in Unit 5A
- 17 She ____ a dog.
a not have
b don't have
c don't has
d doesn't have Unit 5B
- 18 Stephen ____ in our company.
a work
b works
c is work
d working Unit 5C
- 19 ____ they live in London?
a Are
b Is
c Do
d Does Unit 5D
- 20 ____ to the cinema.
a We not often go
b We don't go often
c We don't often go
d Often we don't go Unit 6A

- 21 When do you play tennis? ____ Mondays. Unit 6B
a On
b In
c At
d By
- 22 What time ____ work? Unit 6C
a starts he
b do he starts
c does he starts
d does he start
- 23 ____ two airports in the city. Unit 7A
a It is
b There is
c There are
d This is
- 24 There aren't ____ here. Unit 7B
a a restaurants
b any restaurants
c any restaurant
d a restaurant
- 25 I'm afraid it's ____ . Unit 7D
a a hotel expensive
b expensive hotel
c expensive a hotel
d an expensive hotel
- 26 They ____ popular TV programs in the 1980s. Unit 8A
a are
b were
c was
d is
- 27 ____ at school last week? Unit 8B
a Do you were
b Was you
c Were you
d You were
- 28 Brad Pitt is a popular actor but I don't like ____ . Unit 8C
a him
b his
c her
d them

- 29 We ____ the film last week. Unit 9A
a see
b saw
c sees
d were see
- 30 He ____ tennis with me yesterday. Unit 9B
a doesn't played
b didn't played
c not played
d didn't play
- 31 She was born ____ May 6th, 1979. Unit 9C
a in
b at
c on
d from
- 32 Where ____ last summer? Unit 10A
a you went
b did you went
c do you went
d did you go
- 33 Were you at the shops at 5 p.m. yesterday? No, I ____ Unit 10B
a didn't
b am not
c wasn't
d weren't
- 34 Excuse me, ____ is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. Unit 10C
a what expensive
b how much
c how many
d how price
- 35 She's only four but she _____. Unit 11A
a can read
b cans read
c can reads
d cans reads
- 36 This party is boring. We ____ a good time. Unit 11B
a don't have
b aren't having
c don't having
d aren't have

- 37 Sorry, I ____ you at the moment. Unit 11D
a can't help
b don't can help
c can't helping
d can't helps
- 38 I ____ my computer very often. Unit 12A
a am not using
b don't use
c doesn't use
d am not use
- 39 It's my mum's birthday next week. I ____ her a present. Unit 12B
a buy
b buys
c am going to buy
d buying
- 40 What ____ do after school today? Unit 12C
a are you going to
b are you
c do you
d you

Vocabulary

- 41 Gina is married to John. He's her ____
a uncle
b husband
c wife
d parent
- 42 We usually ____ the shopping in a supermarket.
a make
b do
c have
d go
- 43 I love this watch! It's ____.
a cheap
b small
c beautiful
d ugly
- 44 He doesn't have a car so he often uses public ____.
a taxi
b transport
c car
d bus

- 45 I don't go to ____ on Sundays.
a job
b office
c factory
d work
- 46 Do you like Chinese ____?
a kitchen
b meal
c food
d cook
- 47 They hardly ____ visit us.
a ever
b sometimes
c never
d usually
- 48 I'm Jeff Caine. Nice to ____ you, Mr. Caine.
a speak
b talk
c meet
d watch
- 49 Can I help you? Thanks, but I'm just ____.
a watching
b looking
c seeing
d shopping
- 50 Mandy is over there. She's ____ a blue T-shirt and jeans.
a having
b wearing
c doing
d walking

Appendix C: School Consent**Bogotá, octubre de 2013****Señora****Flor Nelly Páez****Rectora****ColegioReino de Holanda IED****RespetadaRectora**

Actualmente nos encontramos cursando la Maestría en didáctica del inglés con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo en la Universidad De La Sabana. Durante este semestre comenzaremos a desarrollar nuestra tesis, la cual tiene por objetivos determinar el posible impacto que tienen las actividades de diferenciación en el mejoramiento de nivel de inglés en la habilidad de habla, así como también analizar los posibles beneficios que tienen las actividades de diferenciación en el aprendizaje autónomo de los estudiantes de los cursos 801 y 901 de la jornada mañana.

Este proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las notas correspondientes al curso. Necesitamos recoger muestras del trabajo de los estudiantes para incluirlos en la tesis. Nos gustaría contar con su autorización para recolectar dicha información e igualmente, tener su aprobación para comunicarles a los padres de los estudiantes que se tomarán en cuenta, el tipo de investigación que estoy realizando y así poder utilizar los datos y trabajos obtenidos en el proyecto. Usted puede tener acceso al documento que contiene el material mencionado cuando lo desee.

Agradezco enormemente su colaboración.

Atentamente,

Docentes de Inglés

Appendix D: Parents' consent form**Bogotá, octubre de 2013**

Apreciados Padres de Familia:

Actualmente nos encontramos cursando la Maestría en didáctica del inglés con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo en la Universidad De La Sabana. Durante este semestre comenzaremos a desarrollar nuestra tesis, la cual tiene por objetivos determinar el posible impacto que tienen las actividades de diferenciación en el mejoramiento de nivel de inglés en la habilidad de habla, así como también analizar los posibles beneficios que tienen las actividades de diferenciación en el aprendizaje autónomo de los estudiantes de los cursos 801 y 901 de la jornada mañana.

Dicho proyecto requiere recoger muestras del trabajo de los estudiantes para incluirlos en la tesis. Apreciaríamos su permiso para analizar el trabajo de su hijo y poder incluirlo en la tesis. Dicha información será compartida con fines investigativos y en ella NO aparecerán los nombres reales de los niños, se utilizarán seudónimos para mantener el carácter confidencial. Ustedes pueden tener acceso al documento que recoge el material mencionado cuando lo deseen.

Esta investigación cuenta con la autorización del Rector quien tiene conocimiento del trabajo a desarrollar.

Si está de acuerdo, por favor firme este formato y regréselo. Cualquier duda puede consultarla con nosotros, quienes estaremos dispuestos a resolver sus inquietudes.

Autorizamos utilizar el material descrito en la parte de arriba.

Nombre de los Padres: _____

Firma de los Padres: _____

Nombre del Niño: _____

Docente de Inglés

Docente de Inglés

Appendix E: Oral Test**ORAL TEST 8th**

1. Please introduce yourself, give some basic information about you.
 - a. What is your full name? My full name is:_____
 - b. What is your name? My name is:_____
 - c. What is your middle name? My middle name is:_____
 - d. What is your last name? My last name is:_____
 - e. What is your nickname? My nickname is: _____ / I don't have.
 - f. How old are you? I am _____ years old
 - g. Where are you from? I am from Bogota
 - h. What is your nationality? I am Colombian
 - i. What is your favorite color? My favorite color is:_____
 - j. What is your favorite sport? My favorite sport is:_____

2. Describe both your personality and your appearance.
 - a. What do you look like?
 - b. What are you like?

3. Tell me something about your daily routine
 - a. What time do you usually wake up?
 - b. What do you do at 9:30 a.m.?
 - c. How often do you read?
 - d. What time do you go to bed?
 - e. What do you do after school?

4. Tell me something about your past.
 - a. When were you born?
 - b. Where were you born?
 - c. What did you do yesterday?
 - d. Where did you go last vacation?
 - e. What did you buy last week?

ORAL TEST 9th

1. Hello!
2. How are you?
3. What is your name?
4. What is your last name?
5. How old are you?
6. Do you have brothers or sisters?
7. Where are you from?
8. Where do you live?
9. What is your nationality?
10. What is your favorite color?
11. What is your favorite sport?
12. Describe your physical appearance
13. Describe your personality
14. What time do you wake up in the morning?
15. Do you have breakfast in the morning?
16. What time do you finish class?
17. Where were you born?
18. What did you do yesterday?
19. Did you go shopping last week?
20. Where did you go last vacations?

Appendix F: Checklist**CHECKLIST FOR ASSESSING SPEAKING SKILLS**

Student's name _____

Does s/he use these features when s/he is talking?

Fluency

- Above Level: Can make him/herself understood in very short isolated utterances. Uses normal pauses and hesitations.
- At Level: Uses frequent pauses and hesitations. The utterances are fragmented and reformulation is very evident.
- Below Level: Hesitation is permanent, the use of L1 is frequent and is not able to answer

Pronunciation

- Above Level: Uses English pronunciation patterns but there are minor mistakes. The L1 transference is slight
- At Level: Doesn't attempt to use English pronunciation patterns and/or uses L1 transference.
- Below Level: lacks of pronunciation patterns, is not understandable, there is permanent transference.

Content

- Above Level: Provides enough information but still lacks fulfilling
- At Level: provides slight information in some questions
- Below Level: Does not provide any information.

Vocabulary

- Above level: His/her vocabulary is limited and imprecise, but still uses the appropriate words to answer the question.
- At level: His/her vocabulary is not enough to answer the question.
- Below Level: lacks of vocabulary patterns, is not understandable, there is permanent transference.

Grammar

- Above Level: Attempts to use the appropriate structures, agreement and/or word order but still making some mistakes in one or all them.
- At Level: Doesn't use structures requested. Agreement, word order and/or accuracy are not appropriate.
- Below Level: lacks of grammar structures and statements formulation being influenced by their native language

Adapted from: 2013 Vancouver Community College Learning Center. Student review only

<http://library.vcc.ca/learningcentre/pdf/vccclc/Speaking-ChecklistforImprovingSpeakingSkills.pdf>

Appendix G: Learning Log

LEARNING LOG

Learning Log # _____

Nombre: _____

Fecha: _____

1. Hoy aprendí: _____

2. Como lo aprendí fue: _____

3. Lo que entendí fue: _____

4. Lo que no entendí fue: _____

5. El material o los materiales que use: _____

6. Las dificultades que tuve fueron: _____

7. Puedo solucionar esas dificultades: _____

8. Alguien que me puede ayudar a solucionar esas dificultades es: _____

9. Creo que las actividades (si) (no) me están ayudando a mejorar mi habilidad de habla en inglés porque: _____

10. Creo que mis habilidades para comunicarme fueron: excelentes____, buenas _____, regulares _____ bajas_____ porque _____

11. Creo que puedo _____ no puedo _____ mejorar mis habilidades para comunicarme porque

12. Lo que hago fuera del salón de clase para mejorar mis habilidades para comunicarme es:

13. Pude trabajar solo o necesité la ayuda del profesor o de mis compañeros porque:

14. Una prueba de que puedo trabajar autónomamente después de este tipo de clases es:

(This part is to be asked at the end of the cycle)

15. Pienso que las actividades diferenciadas son:

16. Las actividades diferenciadas me ayudaron a mejorar mi habilidad de *Speaking* porque:

17. Las actividades diferenciadas me ayudaron a mejorar mi autonomía porque:


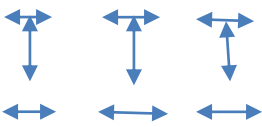
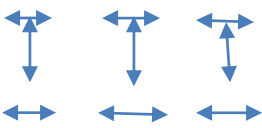
18. Las actividades diferenciadas que me ayudaron más fueron porque:

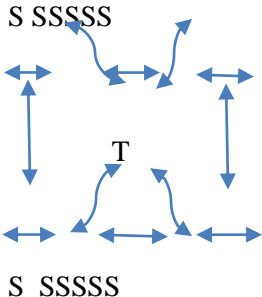
Appendix H: Lesson Plans

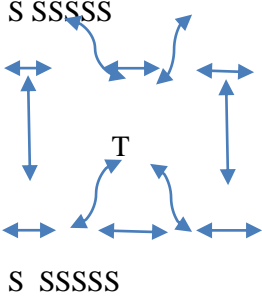
Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
Warm-up	To identify different verbs to express daily activities.	<p>Students are divided into pairs or small groups.</p> <p>They will receive a worksheet (annex 1) where they will have to write the corresponding verb in the corresponding picture. They will follow a conversation model to complete this activity.</p> <p>Student A: For me this is: <u>run</u></p> <p>Student B: Yes, it is correct / No, this is wrong.</p>	<p>10 min</p> <p>S ↔ S</p>
Presentation	To contextualize the topic to the students' reality and present the language aspect.	<p>The teacher shows the people from the previous exercise doing different activities (annex 2). The idea is that the students imagine that what those people are doing is occurring in this moment at school. This activity works to correct the exercise from the warm-up, contextualize, and present the target language because this works as the input for the students since they are going to give examples taking into account the pictures and models provided by the teacher.</p>	<p>15 min</p> <p>S ↔ S</p>
Practice 1	To be able to ask and answer questions related to activities happening	<p>Students now will talk about what some other people are doing at this moment. The teacher now puts some flashcards (annex 3), on the board for students to practice questions and answers in plural.</p>	<p>10 min</p> <p>S ↔ S</p>

	at the moment of speaking.		
Practice 1 Oral	To practice orally the structures studied so far. To classify the activity into levels of difficulty.	Now students will have different options to present what is happening in some pictures (annex 4). They will be able to prepare questions and answers and present the conversation in front of the rest of the class. Another option is that they will have the opportunity to talk individually (a monolog) about the pictures only by describing what it is happening in each one. The final option for risky students is to record a podcast describing the pictures or performing a conversation. If they select this option they can start preparing in this class and record as homework.	15 min S ↔ S
Wrap up	To assess his/her performance in class by applying structures studied to their own life	Students will write ten sentences about what they and their families are doing at that moment.	10 min

Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
		Participants will watch a 3 min video to reinforce and recap the previous lesson.	15 min.

<p>Warm-up Review</p>	<p>To explain the instructions to follow when watching the video. Whole group</p>	<p>The teacher will moderate writing down on the board the instructions (if necessary), so that the students check them when needed. Students will have to describe the routines in third person singular orally.</p>	<p>Video  S SSSSS</p>
<p>Introducti on</p>	<p>Identify through real situation contexts daily routines along the fragment of the video. Three groups (above level – at level – below level)</p>	<p>Learners will be divided according their levels to interact with a 5-minute video chapter where they will have to write in the format positive and negative routines at the end of the fragment. While doing so teacher monitors around the class helping, correcting and modeling the instruction. As soon as they finish, they comment what their finding were in each group starting from the below level</p>	<p>15 min. S SSSSS  S SSSSS</p>
<p>Presentati on</p>	<p>Recognize daily routines through pictures and audio recordings. Couching</p>	<p>A set of 9 pictures are given per group. They are also asked to see the pictures and relate the image with the written expression on the back, then, organize the routines in the day's order according to what they listen to in the 2 min 10 sec audio recording. Listening will have three</p>	<p>15 min. S SSSSS  S SSSSS</p>

		<p>stages: <i>Before listening</i>, students will convey with the images figuring out the proper expressions. <i>While listening</i>, they will cope with the pronunciation, and sequence of events. <i>After listening</i>, learners might have finished organizing the sequence of the pictures and practicing their pronunciation. Each group will explain a stage of the activity.</p> <p>Note: Track will be played 2 or 3 times, depending learners' needs</p>	
<p>Practice</p>	<p>Choosing oral presentation</p> <p>Tiered spoken activity</p>	<p>According to the three activities proposed (video – listening – description) they have to decide which of the three to use. If students pick the videos they have to record a video showing their routines. If it is the listening, they have to prepare a listening activity were they show their routines and finally, if it is a description they have to describe their routines in front of the class.</p> <p>Negotiation, peer correction and coaching are allowed to construct knowledge.</p>	<p>45 min.</p> 
<p>Evaluatio</p>		<p>Students will have the opportunity to show their performance. The same day,</p>	<p>45 min</p>

<p>n</p>	<p>Check comprehension and understanding</p> <p>Oral presentation</p>	<p>they will present their outcomes in class.</p> <p>Progress and evaluation will be taking into account each group level and development.</p> <p>After that lesson students are asked to switch activity and have experiences from the ones that have already presented it.</p>	 <p>S SSSSS</p> <p>S SSSSS</p> <p>The diagram illustrates a sequence of activities. It starts with a single 'S' followed by five 'S's. Below this, there are several horizontal and vertical double-headed arrows. A 'T' is placed in the center, with arrows pointing to it from the 'S' sequence above and from the 'S' sequence below. The bottom sequence consists of a single 'S' followed by five 'S's.</p>
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