

The role of peer feedback in oral communicative tasks for young adult learners

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of peer feedback on lexical variety within oral communicative skills for young adult language learners. Sixteen learners with the language level A2 (according to the Common European Framework) participated in this project. Students worked on different speaking tasks during one semester in which they evaluated their partners' performance by means of specifically designed peer feedback rubrics. Students were involved actively in the process of giving feedback and were to analyze their partners' performance. It was found that peer feedback can be a very effective strategy when learners have the chance to work with feedback from peers who share a common language level. This type of feedback proved to be more understandable for students than teacher correction. However, the results of the project also suggested that students did not feel sufficiently confident to give feedback to their partners because of their own low language level. This action research project also showed that this approach for feedback requires active involvement by learners.

Keywords: peer feedback, oral communicative tasks, communicative language learning, learners' autonomy

RESUMEN

Este estudio investigó los efectos de la retroalimentación entre compañeros en la variedad léxica como parte de las habilidades comunicativas para jóvenes adultos aprendices de la lengua inglesa. 16 estudiantes con el nivel del idioma A2 (según el Marco común europeo de referencia para las lenguas) participaron en este proyecto de investigación. Los participantes trabajaron en una variedad de tareas comunicativas con rúbricas para la retroalimentación entre compañeros, las cuales eran específicamente diseñadas para las tareas. Ellos debían estar involucrados activamente en el proceso de dar y recibir dicha retroalimentación y debían pensar en y analizar el desempeño de sus compañeros. Los datos se recolectaron mediante una encuesta, reflexiones de los estudiantes y grupos focales, y posteriormente se analizó la información teniendo en cuenta la Teoría Fundamentada en Datos (Grounded Theory). Los resultados indicaron que la auto-eficacia de los estudiantes y la efectividad de la retroalimentación entre compañeros están muy relacionados lo que. Además se observó que la falta de la auto-eficacia de los estudiantes fue una dificultad al trabajar de manera más eficiente con la mencionada estrategia de retroalimentación. Por otro lado, el proyecto demostró que la retroalimentación entre compañeros permitió a los estudiantes involucrarse activamente en las tareas comunicativas y ser más independientes en su proceso de aprendizaje.

Palabras claves: retroalimentación entre compañeros, tareas comunicativas, aprendizaje comunicativo de idiomas, aprendizaje autónomo

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Feedback in the English language classroom is a topic which, in general terms, is taken into consideration by many language teachers as it enables learners to work on mistakes or errors. The traditional way of providing feedback is from teacher to student and can be given in the form of affective (learner's utterance is either being accepted or stopped) or cognitive (learner is asked to alter his or her utterance) feedback (Brown, 1998, p. 273).

However, persons other than the teacher can give feedback. Learners can work together on tasks and help each other by providing peers with feedback. This type of feedback is called peer feedback and will be investigated here using action research. The strategy peer feedback was chosen as it allows the learners to get involved in their own learning process instead of relying to the instructor. It has been found it is not recommended to interrupt learners for feedback purposes, especially in the area of speaking. Harmer (2007) states that although "most students want and expect us to give them feedback on their performance, the immediate and constant correction of all errors is not necessarily an effective way of helping course participants improve their English" (p.143). For instance, by a constant intervention in learners' speaking performances, they might be interrupted in their process of gaining fluency skills in their speaking. To avoid this, a series of specifically designed rubrics were used as basic tools. The aim of the procedure is to investigate the effects of peer feedback on oral communicative tasks.

Although a great variety of research projects have been conducted concerning peer feedback, such as those by Rollinson (2005) and Gielen, et al. (2010), these projects were conducted in

relation within the area of writing. This study will analyze how the mentioned strategy to feedback influences oral communicative tasks.

1.1 Problem Statement

Effective approaches for giving feedback have always been a challenging topic in the area of ELT. Lee (2009) mentions this issue in her article “Feedback revolution – What gets in the way?” Although feedback is given in most English language classrooms, it is not clear whether the feedback is effective for learners. In the area of speaking, an abundance of feedback is intrusive to the process of improving fluency skills (Harmer, 2007).

Similar to what happens in language institutions and universities world-wide, the issue of feedback is also a matter of concern at La Sabana University in Colombia. Learners in this context need to improve on weak points in their language learning. Feedback serves as both a necessary and relevant tool to work on those skills. However, in order for feedback to be effective, strategies have to be found which enable learners to efficiently use the feedback as well as to get them actively involved.

Furthermore, language learners tend to have difficulties when it comes to speaking tasks in the classrooms. Learners have problems expressing their ideas using an advanced lexical variety. Initially, this was seen through personal observations of students in the classroom. After these first impressions, a diagnostic test was conducted in which difficulties with the use of lexical variety were found. The test demonstrated that participants repeatedly used the same vocabulary; therefore, there is a need to improve lexical variety. Lexical repetition reduced learners’ oral fluency as they were not able to express their ideas in a varied way.

Furthermore, learners in the above-mentioned context have the tendency to take a passive role when it comes to feedback. They wait for feedback that comes from the teacher without being involved in it. This assumption is based on personal observations in the classroom conducted in June of 2010. Therefore, peer feedback is used in this study to aim for a type of feedback that involves students in an active learning process. Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) illustrate peer feedback or peer assessment as an innovative strategy that aims to empower students and foster active learning. This way of working with feedback can be called innovative especially in terms of speaking. The strategy supports them in working effectively with feedback instead of taking a passive role in the procedure. The difficulties in the area of foreign language learning related to feedback leads to the following action research question:

How can peer-feedback of oral communicative tasks for young adult learners affect their lexical variety in speaking?

1.2 Research Objectives

General

To analyze the effects of peer feedback on oral communicative tasks

Specific

- To observe the effects of peer feedback on lexical variety in oral communicative tasks
- To examine learners' attitudes towards peer feedback in oral communicative tasks

This action research project analyzed the effects of peer feedback in oral communicative tasks for young adult learners. By shifting the importance from traditional feedback towards peer feedback in speaking tasks, the relationship between these two variables was investigated.

Peer feedback provides an alternative to the traditional feedback by allowing students to interact during their learning process and by raising awareness of students' problems in speaking. In other words, the focus of feedback is changed by students' active participation. In this study peer feedback was used to work on learners' fluency skills in terms of lexical variety. The decision to work with peer feedback was based on Boud (1990, as cited in Wen and Tsai, 2006) who argues that alternative forms of feedback should be developed in order to improve student learning. According to this author, alternative methods of assessments including self, peer, and collaborative assessments, are designed to develop active, autonomous, responsible, and reflective learners.

To achieve this, the action research project conducted here was to study the effects of peer feedback that support learners in an actively involved role in the feedback process. Instead of waiting for instructors' comments, learners had to be active in giving feedback to their partners. This helps students reflect about their partners' performance in speaking.

1.3 Justification

Feedback is an essential factor in language learning. This project investigated how peer feedback affects participants' oral fluency in terms of lexical variety. Lee (2009) found that most teachers are aware that feedback is a necessary tool to improve students' language learning

process but the topic is far from simple. Feedback can be quite intrusive for areas of language learning such as speaking, as the learners' process of gaining fluency might be disrupted. According to Brown (1998), too much feedback can lead to "a barrage of interruptions, corrections, and overt attention to malformations often leads learners to shut off their attempts at communication." (p.274) To avoid this, the researcher designed a process by which the students would give and receive feedback to and from their partners. The aim was to have them actively involved in the process of improving lexical variety when conducting oral communicative activities. The need to work on improving lexical variety was identified by a diagnostic test as a problematic area for the learners at La Sabana University. The relationship between oral fluency and lexical variety will be further explained in chapter two.

To work with other forms of feedback on students' fluency, it is not sufficient to make learners work with an alternative strategy to feedback. Providing students with supportive tools may eventually help in this process. For this purpose, specifically designed rubrics (see Appendix E) were used by the students to provide partners with feedback and to think and participate actively in working on specific tasks and activities.

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the constructs of the project will be explained in further detail. The implementation is based on the communicative approach in which learners have the possibility to take an active part in their learning process. Furthermore, according to Brown (1998), “a great deal of the use of authentic language is implied in communicative language teaching, as teachers attempt to build fluency.” (p. 242) As this project is related to participants’ oral fluency, the communicative approach offers appropriate background for this action research project. Learners ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts (Brown, 1998). According to Harmer (2007), the communicative approach aims to involve the learners in meaningful-focused communication tasks in which the teacher should not intervene to stop the activity. However, learners also have to be guided and supported in the communicative approach to take benefit from it. In the implementation of this action research project, the learners themselves were responsible for support and guidance in the speaking tasks. This took place by the use of peer feedback in which the focus lay clearly on the students, who were to provide their partners with constructive feedback. Peer feedback aims for active involvement of the learners, as they are required to think and to assess their partners’ production or performance, and is therefore appropriate in terms of combining with the communicative approach.

Research on feedback in the classroom has been conducted extensively. For example, Lee (2009) searched for strategies on how teachers can apply feedback most effectively. She found that teachers’ readiness towards changes of feedback is necessary to make a meaningful and relevant learning procedure possible. She highlighted that “feedback strategies cannot work without teachers” (p. 10). Lee believes that teachers’ readiness to innovate in their classroom is

essential to find strategies which can be applied in the classroom effectively. This belief represents an essential factor for this research project, as students will work with an alternative to the traditional role of feedback (teacher-student).

There are different strategies within feedback, one of them being peer feedback, which is provided by the learners themselves. This feedback strategy is not only investigated in the context of language learning, but also in contexts such as a technology application course. Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) investigated the effects of peer feedback and found that it was more helpful for learners when they gave feedback than when they received feedback by teachers. Li, Liu and Steckelberg argued that “data analysis indicated that when controlling for the quality of the initial projects, there was a significant relationship between the quality of peer feedback students provided for others and the quality of the students’ own final projects.” (p. 3) Involving learners actively in the process of giving feedback proved to be helpful for their own development. However, they found that, contrary to giving the learners feedback, there was no significant relationship between the peer feedback students received and the quality of their own final projects. Even though these results are from a different context, the similarities to the language context are relevant to this research as Li, Liu and Steckelberg focused on effects of peer feedback on learning behavior. The findings of their project were used to compare and analyze with the ones of the project which was conducted here.

The constructs of this project will be the following: a) feedback, b) peer feedback, c) fluency, and d) lexical variety. Various research studies in the field will also be examined.

2.1 Feedback

Black and William (1998) illustrate that feedback may have more effects on students' work than any other component in the classroom. It allows teachers to improve a learners' production to be either correct in its grammatical form and / or its meaning. Feedback is an important factor in the area of English language teaching and allows teachers to show learners where they have to improve and what they have to work on, which makes it part of formative assessment (Harmer, 2007). In language acquisition, feedback is used to deliver high quality information to students about their learning and "to provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance" (Nicole and MacFarlane-Dick, 2004). According to Siewert, (2011, p. 18) feedback lets students know whether the response was correct and appropriate. Feedback can affect learners positively by being constructive. Here, the learner benefits from precise recommendations which support the student in his or her learning process. Constructive feedback aims for students to be able to perceive their own ability and to make their errors work for them and not against them (Brown, 1998, p. 273). This means that learners must see feedback as a source for improvement in which they see their errors and should proceed on them in order to avoid them in the future. Furthermore, feedback is able to make the students think of their productions. A learner might be asked to adjust, alter, or modify his or her production (Brown, 1998). Teachers can ask their learners to re-think their utterances so that the students themselves have to be aware of their mistakes.

These facts demonstrate that, depending on how it is applied in the classroom, feedback affects language learners. Several researchers have stated that feedback facilitates second language acquisition (Gass, 2003; Gass, Mackey and Pica, 1998; Gass and Varonis, 1994; Long, 1996; Pica, 1994, Pica, 1996). Nassaji (2009) adds that feedback fosters second language acquisition by means of modification and negotiation strategies in the course of communication. However, most research on feedback has been conducted in connection with written tasks.

Through the years, feedback and error treatment have evolved. When feedback was seen traditionally as the avoidance of errors, it developed a more tolerant attitude concerning errors in the learning process (Brown, 1998). One of the first models for communication feedback came from Vigil and Oller (1976). They separated feedback into affective and cognitive feedback. Affective feedback involves the teacher motivating the learner to go on with his/her utterance. This allows the sender to attempt to communicate (Brown, 1998). A teacher might also stop the learner early in the beginning of his/her attempt if the message contains an error.

In the case of cognitive feedback, either the utterance may be accepted or the learner may be asked to alter the utterance. Cognitive feedback has to be well-balanced to be effective; otherwise the learner will be interrupted in his or her process. Brown (1998, p. 274) illustrates this in the following way:

“The most useful implication of Vigil and Oller’s model for a theory of error treatment is that cognitive feedback must be optimal to be effective. Too much negative cognitive feedback – a barrage of interruptions, corrections, and overt attention to malformations – often leads learners to shut off their attempts at communication. (...)

On the other hand, too much positive cognitive feedback – willingness of the teacher-hearer to let errors go uncorrected, to indicate understanding (...) – serves to reinforce the errors of the speaker-learner.”

Furthermore, Brown (1998) distinguishes between corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback. Corrective feedback refers to an ill-formed or incomplete utterance in an unobtrusive way. Metalinguistic feedback describes the act of giving comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student’s utterance.

Most action research projects with feedback as their topic refer to it in relation to writing tasks. Lee (2009) found that teachers need to be more aware of the importance of feedback and should receive specific training sessions in which they gain familiarity with it. In this study, the importance of finding different ways of feedback is shown.

Another finding from Lee’s project was that teachers should be provided with several resources in order to give learners effective and constructive feedback on their learning process. These resources could be scaffolds, rubrics, or evaluation forms for self, peer, and teacher evaluation. In this action research project, a specific peer-correction format (see Appendix E) was used that learners applied to oral communicative tasks. Participants benefited from this format because they were able to give feedback without being restricted to feedback from the teacher. The format used in this project was a rubric designed to make peer feedback tangible for the participants. This rubric was applied to allow learners to assess their partners in the classroom.

2.2 Peer Feedback

In peer feedback, contrary to feedback provided by the teacher, students themselves get involved in the procedure of commenting on their partner's work. This is a specific class of feedback which aims to make learners aware of their own and their partners' learning process. Peer feedback is defined by Liu and Carless (2006, p. 280) in the following words: "a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards". Liu and Carless show that students have to participate with their partners when working with peer feedback. Thus, students can learn from errors committed by peers. Students have to actively think during the assessment and must be willing to listen to critiques by their peers. They will use the critiques to improve weak points in the foreign language. Rollinson (2005), who wrote an article about peer feedback on writing, mentioned that learners are able to give useful feedback to their peers. His results were obtained by taking into consideration other research projects in which comments given by peers were found valid (Rollinson, 1998).

Nevertheless, there is also skepticism towards peer feedback. One of the critical points in working with peer feedback is students' lack of trust in their peers' responses. Zhang (1995) illustrated this: "lack of trust in the accuracy, sincerity and specificity of the comments of their peers" (Rollinson, 2005, p. 24). This demonstrates that peer feedback has a broad spectrum of both positive and negative features. This feedback approach will be investigated in the area of speaking so that a thorough image of the effects of peer feedback on speaking can be obtained. This refers to both positive and negative influences on speaking.

Peer feedback has also been the focus of former action research projects, such as the project “Assessor or Assessee: How student learning improves by giving and receiving peer feedback” by Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010). Cheng and Warren (1999) state (as cited in Liu and Steckelberg 2010) that peer assessment becomes a strategy for formative assessment and a tool for reflection by students. Receiving and especially providing feedback to partners involved in the learning process implies reflection and makes students think of their partners’ performance. This approach is used in this study in order to trigger an active instead of passive role of the learners when it comes to feedback. According to further studies, learners who were involved in related projects stated that peer feedback made them think more about their own and their partners’ development (Stefani, 1994). Advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback will be investigated in this action research project, as well as implications for this approach in order to gain a complete picture of the effects of peer feedback.

Another research project related to the topic of peer feedback was conducted by Rollinson in 2005. The benefits as well as the implications of peer feedback were investigated. Rollinson (2005) claims that in several research projects peer feedback has proved an effective tool in the language classroom. However, there have been also doubts in terms of its use and those are mostly related to the trustworthiness of peers. Learners might think that only a teacher or someone who knows more about the language than themselves is able to judge or give them advice. Nevertheless, there is a variety of reasons why peer feedback is yet used in language classrooms. Rollinson (1998) found in a previous study about peer feedback that 80% of comments by peers were valid, and only 7% were potentially damaging. These results referred to the writing learning process. The focus of this study will be peer feedback in speaking. This

feedback procedure allows a potentially high level of response and interaction between peers (Rollinson, 2005) and allows learners the possibility to negotiate meaning. In his most recent work (2005), Rollinson found that learners can benefit from peer feedback if certain factors are given, including age, cultural background, class size, and interlanguage level.

Wen and Tsai (2006) conducted their research on a related topic. They focused their research project on attitudes of learners towards peer assessment. In their work, they cite Boud (1990) saying that “formative assessment is usually neglected, and alternative assessments should be developed in order to improve student learning” (p. 28). They found that learners’ attitudes towards this strategy of feedback were positive; however, the participants related peer assessment with a technical tool of learning rather than with a learning aid.

One of the alternative forms of assessment mentioned in the quotation is peer feedback which in this case aims to involve the learners in language learning. One of the purposes of this research project is to apply an alternative strategy of feedback to allow learners take an active role in feedback. They are to think and get involved in their partners’ oral productions during the implementation sessions. In their section “Further Research” was stated that the effects of peer feedback on learners’ attitudes are to be investigated to obtain new findings.

Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) pointed out that peer feedback is a process in which students evaluate the performance or achievements of peers. Furthermore, they state that this innovative approach or strategy aims to empower students and fosters active learning. Peer feedback may therefore give language teachers the possibility to trigger students’ reflection on their own language acquisition process.

Another consideration that must be taken into account in peer feedback is of an ethical point of view. Students have to be shown the importance of giving constructive feedback, while at the same time keeping to rules of etiquette. To have an effective feedback process, students need to give their assessments to their peers in a respectful and honest way.

2.3 Findings of other research projects

Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) investigated how students' learning is improved by giving and receiving peer feedback in the context of a technology application course for teacher education students. In their project they found that peer feedback affected the learners' final products significantly. They were able to improve their own products by taking into account their partners feedback. The researchers mentioned assertions that indicated positive influence for active learning during the students' learning process. However, a direct relationship between the receiving of peer feedback and the results of the learners' final products could not be found.

Lee (2009) found in her research project "Feedback revolution" that there is an explicit need to increase teachers' awareness of the importance of feedback. She also stated that more teacher training sessions for the improvement of feedback have to be found. These findings were the basis for the research conducted here, as it reveals common weaknesses in the language classroom concerning feedback. Although feedback is most commonly given in the classroom, the project revealed that it still can and must be improved in terms of usefulness for the learners. Here, one possible way of providing an alternative way of feedback, peer feedback, is to be investigated.

In a project conducted by Rollinson in 1998, it was found that peer feedback on writing provided valid results. Eighty percent of the comments from peers in the classroom were found valid and only 7% were considered potentially damaging for the writing process which illustrated that peer feedback was a helpful tool for the participants in this project.

Another project which was conducted by Rollinson in 2005 showed that peer feedback is a time-consuming activity. However, he pointed out that peer feedback, when the learners have been trained previously, can be an effective tool for evaluating learners. The emphasis lies on the fact that the learners have to become familiar with the procedure. This is accomplished by the instructor explaining and demonstrating the benefits of peer feedback to language learners. This way, learners can see a clear purpose for giving peers feedback. However, the study also mentioned that this type of feedback requires a number of factors to be effective. Some of these factors are classroom size, cultural background, and interlanguage level.

The statements above contradict former doubts about peer feedback that learners might not have the necessary knowledge to give feedback to their peers. Rollinson (2005) mentions that learners tend not to trust a person to correct their own productions who does not necessarily have a higher language level. The results show that this negative attitude towards peer feedback of learners does not always have to apply in praxis. Again, the former findings serve as a basis for this research project.

In a study that compared peer and teacher feedback, Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena and Smeets (2010) investigated whether peer feedback can be an alternative for traditional feedback given by the teacher. They found that the extensions of peer feedback had significant long-term

learning effects, which occurred as the learners gave more attention to the feedback provided. This could be an advantage for the strategy of peer feedback.

Furthermore, Lobatón (2010) conducted an action research project in relation to peer interaction. Although peer interaction is not the same as peer feedback, the focus in both lies in participants who work together. Peers working together represent an important area of the current study. The researcher investigated peer interaction in an English language classroom in a Colombian learning context. One of the findings of this project was that the learners gained vocabulary and pronunciation by interacting with partners. They found meaningful relationships between topics in the language classroom and topics which they were learning in their undergraduate programs. The fact that vocabulary was influenced represents an interesting basis for this action research project.

2.4 Fluency

Fluency is one of the complementary principles of communicative techniques (Brown 1998). It is also one main aim to achieve when learning a foreign language as it enables the speaker to express his or her ideas. This is the process of peripheral, automatic, and attention-processing of the bits and pieces of language and is thus an ultimate communicative goal for language learners (Wood, 2001). By Wood's definition it can be seen that fluency is a complicated part of language learning, especially when it comes to speaking skills. Fluency is also the product of speech and determines how the listener perceives the speakers' performance. This can be subdivided into factors such as speech speed, hesitations in the speech, or lexical variety.

Fluency is influenced by factors such as difficulty of a task (Tavakoli and Skehan, 2005), environmental circumstances, and personal feelings.

2.5 Fluency and Lexical Variety

In this section of the chapter, the connection of fluency to lexical variety will be investigated. First, the connection is not the most common. Several authors (Ano, 1998; Thornbury, 2005) who addressed speaking, explain fluency as something that refers to pauses in speech or the speed of a speaker. Nation and Newton (2009), on the other hand, state that fluency cannot only be measured by the speed of the speech. They argue that increased fluency also involves changes in the nature of the knowledge of language. Nevertheless, fluency has always been a broad topic and that makes it difficult to find a reliable measurement of it. Freed (1995) and Fulcher (1996) state that the definition of fluency is unclear. Tavakoli (2011) defined fluency by the term “global oral proficiency”. Nevertheless, it was essential for this project to measure fluency with a tool that represents it appropriately and is able to give tangible results from participants’ process in speaking tasks. Lexical variety, a part of oral fluency, was identified as a weak area for the participants. Fulcher (1996) mentions that frequent repetitions of lexica are one factor that makes the learner appear less fluent in his or her speech. This shows that the lack of lexical variety is closely related to the speakers’ fluency skills. Another point which influences the speakers’ fluency in oral expression is speech coherence. Speech coherence is affected by the use of connecting words, one of the criteria used in the peer feedback rubrics. In this project, peer feedback rubrics in which both lexical expressions and vocabulary, as well as connecting words, were used to help learners evaluate their partners on the speaking tasks and to involve them actively in the activities.

Fluency, as mentioned above, is a rather broad term but can be narrowed by a variety of categories. Ano (1998) listed some of them in her article “Fluency and Accuracy in the Spoken English of Japanese High School Learners”:

- The total number of words spoken in a fixed time
- The number of silent pauses for thinking
- **The number of repetition of words, phrases, or clauses**
- The number of repair or reformulation for correction
- Mean length of utterance

As highlighted in bold, the item “number of repetition of words, phrases or clauses” is relevant for the issue investigated in this research as it enables the researcher to narrow fluency down to one specific factor to measure.

2.6 Lexical Variety

Lexical variety illustrates the scope of vocabulary that is used by a speaker. A broad lexical variety, therefore, reduces constant repetition in language use. A diagnostic test in speaking, which was conducted in the beginning of this action research project and in which the participants showed their initial level in speaking, demonstrated that participants lacked variety in vocabulary. They had problems with appropriate vocabulary when they spoke. For instance, students repeatedly used the same words to express their ideas. Thornbury (2005) has studied the different viewpoints of the number of words a speaker knows. He makes a difference between words which are actually used (productive vocabulary) and words which are recognized by the learner (receptive vocabulary). By the use of productive vocabulary the speaker has the

possibility of applying the words in the speech and to express his / her ideas with a variety of words. Receptive vocabulary, on the other hand, allows the learner to understand the words used by his or her partner without necessarily being able to use them themselves. One of the goals of this project was for participants to increase productive vocabulary to improve their spoken discourse.

Chapter 3 – Research Design

Action research gives language teachers the chance to find possible ways to improve the problem areas by taking action. It is necessary to think critically about our students' learning process and especially about how we can help them proceed more effectively while acquiring the second language. To begin, the process of action research will be defined here in a more detailed way.

Research has been traditionally based on “formulating hypothesis and testing them statistically, developing scales and questionnaires, attempting to control for extraneous variables by using control groups, and striving to generalize from one sample to an entire population” (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003, p. 8). However, the approaches of conducting research have changed over the time. More recently, the importance of subjective experience diversity has increased in applying research. As quantitative research is not always appropriate for a study, qualitative research has gained in importance, especially in the field of language learning. Qualitative research offers the advantage of taking into account human situations, experiences, and behaviors that are inherently subjective. For this reason, qualitative researchers aim to understand the research context from the inside rather than from the outside, which Burns (1999) describes as the emic perspective. This perspective is mentioned by Watson-Gegeo (1988, as cited in Burns, 1999). Qualitative research is to offer descriptions, interpretations, and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts (Burns, 1999). Furthermore, one important aspect in qualitative studies is to foster insights and implications which provide bases for further studies. Another important difference to quantitative studies is that generalizations are not commonly

obtained. Qualitative studies in most cases refer to a specific context such as a population at a specific institution or university.

Action research started to become popular in the late nineteenth century in education reform movements and other social reform initiatives (McKernan, 1996). Educators who wanted to make positive progress began to challenge the orthodoxy of the scientific research methods in the field of education (Burns, 1999).

Action research does not only give us the chance to look for problematic areas in language learning, but also helps teachers develop professionally. It is used to turn problems into positive rather than negative experiences (Wallace, 1998). There are many ways to search for classroom solutions and action research is only one strategy. One solution could be talking to teacher colleagues as an effective way of looking for answers for issues in the classroom. However, action research supports systematic collection of data in order to analyze and report findings. The findings are used to make decisions for future classes (Wallace, 1998).

Many researchers have defined the terminology in different ways. Carr and Kemmis (1986) stated the following definition:

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162)

In other words, Carr and Kemmis (1986) pointed out that action research is a practical approach of obtaining findings that could contribute to amending the students' learning difficulties.

If we take a closer look at this definition, it is clear that action research implies the following characteristics:

First, the procedure takes place on a contextual, small-scaled, and localized basis and investigates a specific situation (Burns, 1999). Furthermore, it should provoke a reflection on findings that were results from an investigation. Reflection on data-collection is an essential part of research as the results not only show the investigator facts but trigger a critical thinking process about how and why the results appeared.

The findings are to be used for changes in the classroom and should be the motivation for the project. They are the end-product of an investigation the researcher conducted to find possibilities to improve aspects of the classroom praxis. Furthermore, the research should aim to improve the students' results in the classroom.

The present project's goal is to reduce weaknesses in speaking skills in terms of fluency and lexical variety. Constant peer feedback aims to improve participants' speaking skills during work with partners.

3.1 Researcher's role

In this project, the researcher's role is of a constant monitor and instructor who provides the learners with guidelines in their process of speaking. The researcher also observes and analyzes the impact of peer feedback on oral communicative tasks in terms of fluency.

To make this possible, the instructor needed to be sure the criteria for effective peer feedback was given to students. Before starting the implementation sessions, it was essential to make learners familiar with the strategy of peer feedback. Learners were provided with a training session in which the strategy of peer feedback was explained. Furthermore, the use of rubrics to give feedback was explained, so the purpose of the strategy became clear for the learners. One part of the implementation sessions was held at the language resource center "Studium" at La Sabana University. The students worked at these sessions with computers and with the software program Audacity™, which was used to record learners' oral productions. In order to guarantee an effective working procedure, it was important for the instructor to be near the learners to clear up doubts and answer questions concerning the use of the software. Also, observation and monitoring of the participants was essential in order to keep on track of their current learning process.

3.2 Participants

The learners of this group had a pre-intermediate language level and were studying in level three of the university's English proficiency program. The proficiency program consists of levels one to seven, level one being the lowest and level seven being the highest. Level three within this program corresponds to an A2 level according to the Common European Framework.

The learners of this group had different backgrounds as they study various undergraduate programs. The group consisted of 23 students. Six of them were involved in the communication program, eight learners study law, and the rest of the group studies either engineering, psychology, or nursing. They were aged between 17 and 19 years. Most of the learners were in their first or second semester in the university and had some previous knowledge of the English language and had the possibility of studying English in their high schools. However, they were generally used to a passive role in their learning process, which was observed in the first sessions of the class. They preferred to listen to the explanations of the teacher rather than to get involved in an active learning process. This is an attitude that this project aims to change by means of applying peer correction strategies to their speaking skills.

The members of the group had four classes a week, each session took one hour. The material used for this level and for the class was in most cases the course book “Cutting Edge Pre-IntermediateTM by Pearson Education”. Furthermore, the online platform of the university “VirtualSabanaTM” was used for different workshops in order to develop speaking skills.

The syllabus of each of the levels within the proficiency program is designed by the directives of the foreign language department. Exams take place at the end of each of the three terms and include reading, listening, speaking, and writing. Apart from the classes, in which content for the exams are covered, additional materials for the program’s required competencies are to be found on “VirtualSabanaTM”.

In this level, students are to be able to identify and use language structures such as Past Simple, Past Continuous, and Present Perfect. Furthermore, there is the need to express their ideas orally for the purposes of the proficiency program. By working on the participants' oral fluency skills, they had the additional benefit of obtaining higher results on their exams.

The participants in the project interacted when they were explicitly asked to do so; however, they did not tend to speak freely in the second language and were very dependent on the teacher in the classroom. Some of the students had a more advanced level of speaking in terms of pronunciation and fluency than other learners in the group. When the learners of this group were given a task, they worked on it in a group and were generally able to fulfill and understand the tasks.

3.3 Context

Learning environment

The investigation was applied at University La Sabana with young adult language learners. The average age of the learners was 17 – 19 years. Lack of oral communicative skills in the English language is a common problem. The reasons for these difficulties can be very different. On the one hand, as the groups in the learning environment tend to have more than 20 students, several learners may feel intimidated when it comes to speaking. This occurs especially with learners who do not feel secure in the foreign language. The students of the department of

foreign languages and cultures are from different educational backgrounds and therefore the profiles of each of the learners differ to a great extent.

The department sets a focus on the use of technology in the students' language learning process, which involves a constant use of the online platform VirtualSabana™. Technological tools such as Audacity™ were used for the implementation sessions. In these sessions, learners became more familiar with technological tools related to language learning. The use of technology and VirtualSabana™ supported the participants in providing necessary information for their exams.

The learners, after having taken the seven required levels of the proficiency program, are expected to have an upper-intermediate/advanced level of the English language.

3.4 Data collection instruments

In order to collect the data used for this research project, reliable and effective instruments that give clear information about the learners before and after applying the project had to be identified. Different non-observational tools provided the data collection for this project: a) surveys, b) focus groups and c) students' journals. Burns (1999) states that non-observational tools result in data that are essentially introspective, that is, they invite personal and individual accounts of events, attitudes, and beliefs. Furthermore, by means of audio-recordings, the learners' oral productions were documented in terms of a diagnostic test, a final test, and other tests during a variety of the sessions during the implementation of the action research project.

3.4.1 Diagnostic Test

The diagnostic test was applied before the implementation started. The participants were applying a speaking quiz at the end of the first term of the semester, in which a lack of lexical variety was found. The learners worked in pairs and talked about their first vacations when they left home. The instructor had a monitoring role in this process as the participants made questions to each other which their partners answered.

3.4.2 Recordings during the implementation

Participants were working on speaking activities during the whole semester in which the implementation was conducted. Peer feedback rubrics were used in all of these sessions to provide the learners with the necessary tools to give their partners feedback on their speaking performance.

3.4.3 Final Test

In a final speaking test, the learners were given one topic which they had to discuss with one partner. These performances were recorded and transcribed to eventually compare them with the results of the diagnostic test to have a clear picture how the process of the implementation affected the participants' lexical variety in speaking.

3.4.4 Surveys

Surveys could be defined and explained as a tool that gathers a sample of data or opinions considered to be representative of a whole. They are used in order to collect data in a standardized format from a probability sample of the population. In the case of this research

project, surveys are used as a cross-sectional measurement. Survey data will be applied to one specific point in time, not over various points in time.

The objective of surveys is to obtain data for the population investigated. Surveys imply some factors which are to be taken into account when designing them. It is essential that the questions which will be raised, “will lead to the kind of information being sought” (Burns, 1999, p. 129). By means of these questions, data is to be obtained which will relate to the research question. Furthermore, the language level of the learners has to be considered. For that reason, the questions of a survey for learners with a low language level have to be very direct and easy to understand so that misunderstandings can be reduced. Burns states that questions should be as short as possible, so that learners know exactly what they are expected to answer.

As this project was done with a group of learners of a pre-intermediate English level, it has to be considered that while administering the survey to the students there might be problems in understanding. As above-mentioned, the questions used for the survey have to be stated in a very clear and understandable way in order to avoid misunderstandings or confusions.

Surveys require more preparation time than interviews or other non-observational instruments as the researcher needs to be confident that the questions can be interpreted independently as well as easily and unambiguously (Burns, 1999). However, the researcher might save time in the analysis of surveys, as the designed questions have established options. These may make analysis easier than in open-ended question formats, like focus groups or open-ended questionnaires.

This data-collection instrument was used before the practical intervention was started as an initial survey, so students had the possibility to express their feelings and opinions about their general process of language acquisition. It was conducted as an online survey, which learners had to answer at home. During this stage of the implementation, the learners answered an additional survey in which they had to reply to a variety of questions concerning their feelings of their own process in the implementation sessions. The survey was applied in Spanish to make sure learners understood the questions.

This survey was conducted to obtain the participants' feelings and impressions of their process and took place when they had already the possibility to have worked on various implementation sessions. As above-mentioned, the survey was conducted in Spanish in order to guarantee a sufficient comprehension of the questions which should guarantee valid data. A sample of this instrument can be found in the section appendices (Appendices H & I).

During the implementation, it became clear that one additional tool was necessary to obtain data, which would ensure the ongoing learning process of the students. For this reason, students' logs were added to the data collection tools.

3.4.5 Students' logs

The students' logs that were used in this implementation were short reflections of the learners after four of the implementation sessions. They were used to gather the learners' feelings during the process. The students were asked the following questions:

- A) In your opinion, what effect did your feedback have on your partner?
- B) How did you feel when you gave feedback?
- C) Was the feedback from your partner helpful?
- D) Was it helpful for you to give your partner feedback?

Wallace (1998, p. 63) mentions a variety of advantages of logs. These advantages will be listed here:

- They provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners.
- They serve as a means of generating questions and hypothesis about teaching and learning processes.
- They enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns.
- They are an excellent tool for reflection.
- They are simple to conduct.
- They provide a first-hand account of teaching and learning experiences.
- They are the most natural form of classroom research in that no formal correlations are tested and no outside observer enters the classroom dynamic.
- They provide an on-going record of classroom events and teacher and learner reflections.

- They enable the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging from the diaries.

These factors encouraged the researcher to choose students' logs as the data collection method of the implementation sessions. From students' logs it was possible to observe the exact process in a more detailed way directly after the sessions. Although surveys are a helpful and necessary tool for the project, it was more effective to investigate learners' reactions closely during the process.

3.4.6 Audio-recordings

Audio recordings were used as observational tools in an initial diagnostic test, a final test, and in different implementation sessions. They were used to observe the actual learners' performance. Burns (1999) mentions audio recordings as a technique for capturing in detail naturalistic interactions and verbatim utterances. Comparing audio with video recordings, it can be observed that audio recordings do not intervene to such a strong extent in the learner's productions as video recordings do. Carmel Brown (1995, as cited in Burns, 1999, p. 95), points out that "although participants may still be self-conscious about the presence of the recording equipment, audio recording is clearly less intrusive than video recording and familiarity with the presence of the equipment is likely to occur much more quickly." For this reason, audio-recordings were preferred in the implementation of this action research project. The results of these audio recordings of the initial and final test were transcribed entirely and the audio recordings of the implementation sessions were transcribed to a certain extent. During the implementation sessions, one part was recorded in the classroom by the teacher who went to the

pairs working on the tasks and the other part was recorded in the language resource center “Studium” at La Sabana university. The learners had to record their performance with the voice recording software “Audacity”.

3.4.7 Focus Groups

Focus groups are basically very similar to interviews; however, they are applied with more than one person. The importance of focus groups lies on interactional patterns between the interviewed persons. They give several advantages of focus groups when conducting a qualitative research study and they include the orientation to a particular field of focus to generate hypotheses derived from the insights and data from the group.

Focus groups have the aim to gather qualitative data. Furthermore, they achieve in-depth description. As interviews, focus groups enable the researcher to get data out of spoken speech and insights from more informal feelings of the participants, which might not be seen by applying instruments such as surveys. The researcher is able to have direct and personal contact with the class members who are involved in the research project.

Focus groups were used in this action research project in order to collect data after the practical intervention has been completed. Focus groups are used to gather data for impacts from the project noticed by the participants. The focus groups were applied in groups of three people and were an effective way of getting the students’ opinions and avoiding intimidations that might occur with a greater number of students. By applying them in a reduced number, each focus group had a personal touch and resulted in data that is clear and substantial for analysis.

Furthermore, the focus groups (see sample in Appendix K) were held in the Spanish language and can be found in translated excerpts in the chapter “Data analysis and findings”.

3.5 Design and Validation

Before the instruments were used in the implementation sessions, they were reviewed and piloted, taking into account comments by the director of the project and by the research instructor. The first instrument that was designed was the survey. Here, the questions were raised with the help of the mentioned research instructor and were then piloted. This took place by asking the questions to colleagues in the university in order to make sure that they were clearly understandable for the language learners. It was important that the questions were not only clear to the researcher but to the participants involved. These questions were also shown to people who were no professionals in teaching to obtain a neutral view point.

As far as the students’ logs were concerned, it was decided that the students had to have a clear guideline for the use of them. For this reason, they were provided with four questions which were to support the students in writing their short reflections about their process during the implementation sessions. The idea of using students logs occurred within the implementation stage as the researcher realized that there was the need for an additional instrument to obtain data that showed the participants’ current feelings and impressions. Furthermore, these students’ logs allowed the researcher to react on participants’ suggestions or on doubts as they were asked to provide their honest impressions of the implementation. The questions of the students’ logs were revised before the implementation sessions by colleagues to guarantee clarity as it occurred for the surveys.

Chapter 4 – Pedagogical Intervention

In this chapter, the way of applying the strategies used for this project will be looked at with more detail. Observations from the classroom demonstrated that participants had difficulties in speaking because of several reasons. These reasons can be originated from lack of awareness of correct structures; lack of interest in the subject that affects their motivational behavior, and various other impacts. The implementation took place in a pre-stage, a while-stage and a post-stage.

4.1 Pre-Stage

The learners were introduced to the learning strategy of the project and were working on initial activities with peer feedback. Participants were guided towards an approach in which they had the possibility to work with their partners instead of relying on the class instructor. The concept of peer feedback was explained to them and participants worked on first activities in which they could learn how to listen to their partners in order to eventually provide them with feedback.

4.2 While-Stage

Here, the learners were working in most cases in pair work on relevant topics, in which they used specific rubrics to give their partners feedback. Furthermore, the learners were given learning guides in which they were introduced step by step towards the production phase of their speaking performance. The topics were taken according to the course syllabus of La Sabana University to relate the speaking tasks to the extrinsic purposes of the proficiency program. These are to obtain high results in the exams of the corresponding level, which take place at each of the three academic terms of the semester.

4.3 Post Stage

In the post stage, the transcriptions of the participants' speaking productions were collected and organized and learners gave their opinions about their process in the speaking tasks in focus groups. In these focus groups, the participants had the possibility to reflect upon their own process of the explicit work with their partners.

The following chart will illustrate how the implementation was organized. It is divided into pre-stage, while-stage and a post-stage.

4.4 Description of implementation

Stage	Topic	Objective
<i>Pre-Stage (Diagnostic Test)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To tell a first time experience - To tell an anecdote 	Students were to show their initial performances in speaking
<i>While-Stage</i>	- Ambitions and Dreams	Students had to discuss their ambitions and dreams for the future with related vocabulary and were so to become familiar with this vocabulary.
	- The person who I admire the most in my family	Students were to be better able to use vocabulary and expressions concerning an important person in their life.
	- Talk about Bill Gates	Students were to be better able to use vocabulary which had been introduced to them by means of a text about Bill Gates
	- Future Professions	The learners were to be better able to express ideas about their future professions. They were to use expressions and vocabulary related to the subject.
	- Describing a role model	Students were to be better able to use vocabulary and expressions to describe people.
	- Future professions - Describing a role model	In this speaking exam, the students had to show their performances on one of the two topics mentioned.
	- Comparing two cities	Students were to be better able to use comparatives and superlatives with regard to cities.
	- Comparing famous people	Students were to be better able to use comparatives and superlatives in relation with people.
	- Different countries and cultures	Students were to be better able to express ideas about different countries and cultures. They had been introduced to vocabulary related to the topic by means of short articles about different countries.
<i>Post Stage</i>	- Final Test - Focus groups	<p>In the final test, the participants were to express their ideas about a topic that they were assigned to during the test.</p> <p>The participants reflected on their process in focus groups of each 3 to 4 members.</p>

4.5 Educational Background

The project was conducted at University La Sabana. In many cases, the course syllabus designed by the coordinating staff of the department of foreign languages and cultures is based on interactive exercises which allow students to participate actively and teacher talking time can be reduced to a certain extent. However, as the students do not have very extended speaking skills, they feel in many cases intimidated and not motivated to speak in the second language.

4.6 Pedagogical approach

The tasks for the implementation were based on the communicative approach. The goals of this approach lie in all components of language acquisition and are not limited to grammatical or linguistic components (Brown, 1998). The focus of communicative teaching and learning is the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of language for meaningful learning (Brown, 1998.) Tasks in this implementation were to comply with these criteria by relevant topics which the participants could familiarize with.

4.7 Communicative Approach

The approach that was used in this action research project was the communicative approach, on which peer feedback in speaking tasks with the aim of increasing lexical variety and fluency skills has to be facilitated. The participants obtained new insights into their learning process within this approach. Stern (1983, p. 111) describes communicative language teaching with the words: “from the mid-seventies the key concept that has epitomized the practical, theoretical, and research preoccupations in educational linguistics and language pedagogy is that of communication or communicative competence”. The use of lexical variety aims eventually to

improve participants' fluency which affects also their communicative skills as they are enabled to express ideas in communications with appropriate lexis.

The communicative theory aims to present the second language in a more clearly specified social context and situation (Stern, 1983). This means that language learners ought to be given the chance of connecting the meaning of the learned language to meaningful patterns that facilitate the use of it. In this approach, the goals are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence (Brown, 1998); however it can be useful to facilitate the meaning of grammatical or lexical items. While applying this project, the communicative approach was used in order to achieve better results in this area. For the pedagogical intervention, a curriculum based on communicative principles (Stern, 1983) was designed and was to be implemented in the classroom.

The goals of this approach lie in all components of language acquisition and are not limited to grammatical or linguistic components (Brown, 1998). The focus of communicative teaching and learning is the pragmatic, authentic and functional use of language for meaningful learning (Brown, 1998).

4.7.1 Tasks in the communicative approach

We can separate exercises into various steps. A task consists of a goal, input, activity, teacher role, learner role, and setting. Each of these steps is essential for setting an effective task. (Nunan, 1989).

According to Harmer (2007, p. 70), some of the principal ideas of communicative language teaching are:

- **A communicate purpose**

The learners were given relevant topics that they were familiar with in their daily lives. Students, therefore, saw a purpose for discussing their ideas as the topics were based on experiences they had made in reality. For instance, students were to exchange their ideas about their first important vacation experience in which they had the chance to give and hear personal insights from their partners.

- **Variety of language**

As the tasks in the implementation sessions aimed for more lexical variety, the factor mentioned by Harmer is closely related. Students, to comply with communicative purposes in speaking tasks, had to aim for varied language. This is necessary to express their ideas appropriately and fluently. In the implementation sessions, this was aimed for by measuring the variety of lexica that the learners applied. Moreover, participants were to use an amplified variety of connecting words which also supports a communicative purpose. By the use of a variety of connecting words, participants could communicate in coherent speech.

- **No teacher intervention**

Participants had to focus on themselves and on their partners. Although the teacher was near them in order to solve a certain amount of doubts in the procedure of the implementation, the purpose was that participants had to rely on themselves and on their partners. Therefore,

they were to be enabled to work autonomously and solve problems that occurred in the process of the implementation on their own, in order to increase their thinking in the learning process, instead of being provided with ready solutions by the instructor.

These three factors (communicative purpose, variety of language, and no teacher intervention), which were mentioned by Harmer, were crucial in the procedure of the entire implementation. Furthermore, those represent essential items to have in mind when working with the communicative approach.

4.8 Instructional design

Learners in the implementation sessions of this action research project were working in different ways. This section will show how learners were required to work on the different tasks. All of the tasks were based on the above-described communicative approach. In the implementation sessions, the learners were working in pairs on speaking tasks that were in most cases directly related to the course syllabus of the foreign languages and cultures department of La Sabana University. However, there were two different approaches of working on the tasks. In one part of the implementation sessions, the learners were working in the classroom with one partner with the peer feedback rubric, specifically designed for each of the sessions. This was done by taking into account lexica and connectors that were used in each of the modules of the program. The instructor guided and observed the learners by a constant monitoring process. The learners' performance were audio-recorded and, in some cases, later transcribed. In the other part of the implementation, the learners were brought to the language resource center "Studium"

in the foreign languages department, and worked in pairs on one computer. This measure was taken as it was very difficult to monitor all of the learners' processes on the speaking tasks in the classroom. As in the sessions in the classroom, the learners used the peer feedback rubrics to evaluate their partners regarding their lexical variety. Here, the learners were to record their performance on their own by means of the voice-recording software "Audacity". These recordings were sent to the teacher by mail.

The tasks were structured in the following way: Learners were provided with a pre-stage of the activity in which they were introduced to the sentence patterns or key vocabulary to use. These pre-activities were worked on in class in different ways. For instance, the students used learning guides in order to work step-by-step towards their speaking production. In the one of the speaking tasks, for instance, the learners had to describe an important person from their family. In the pre-stage of this task, the participants received a short and simple survey which they were to apply before the class with the corresponding person in the family. They made different questions about facts such as personal achievements or ambitions to the mentioned family member. By this means, they were prepared before working on the speaking task with necessary vocabulary to exchange eventually information with their partner in the classroom.

Concept questions, which were to trigger initial thoughts about the topics were another step within the procedure. Before starting to work on the speaking tasks with their partners, the participants were being made familiar with initial and short discussions about each of the topics. For instance, the participants were being asked about their personal opinions about Bill Gates when the topic of the class was "Bill Gates' achievements". Vocabulary, which was to be used

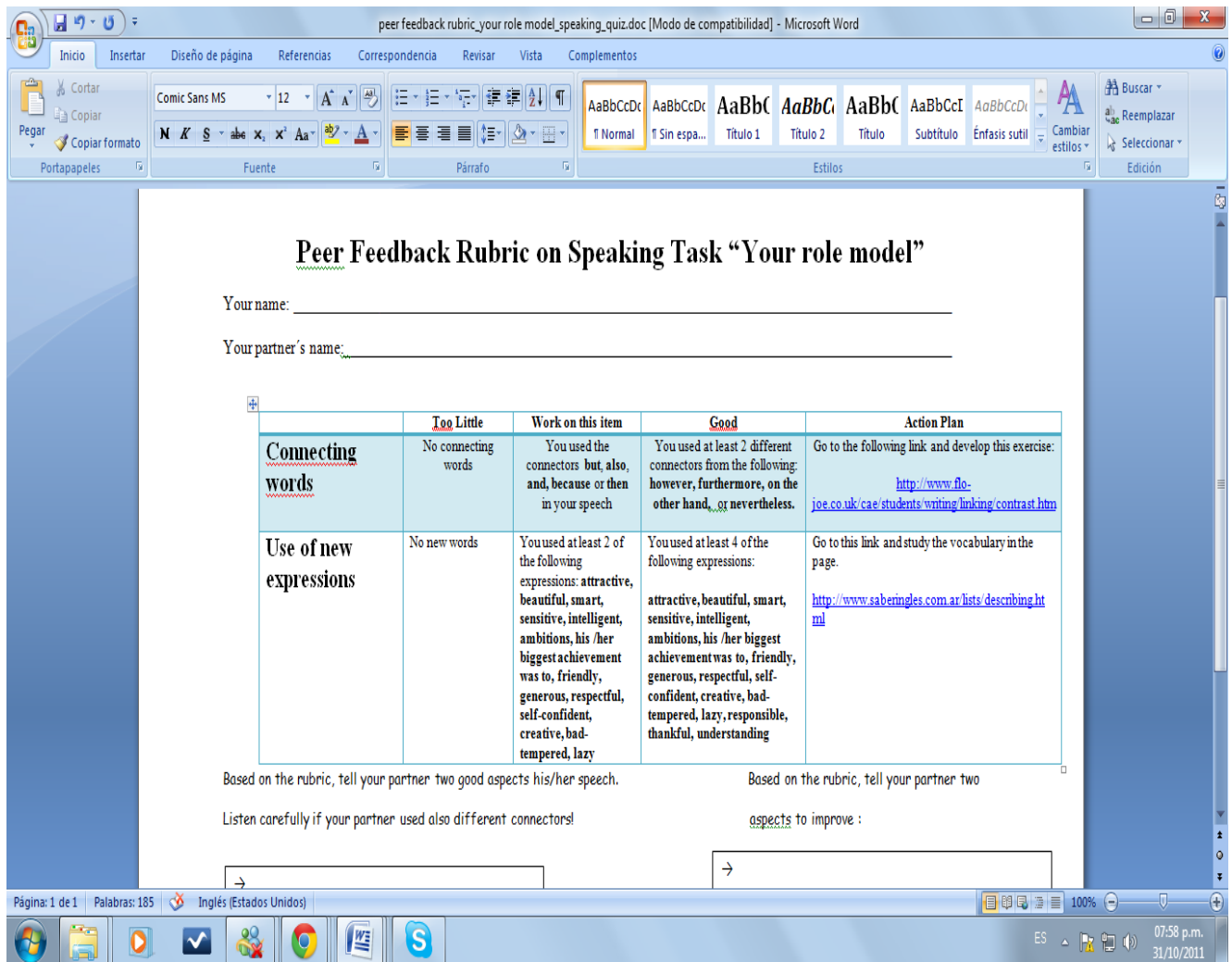
in the later task was to be presented and should be utilized later in the speaking tasks. This provided learners with a sequenced order in their implementation sessions.

After being introduced to the task, the learners started working on the actual exercise. Most exercises dealt with students' experiences such as a first trip to another city or talking about important people in their lives. By this means, the learners were familiar in the case of most of the tasks with the topics in relation with their personal life. The aim of each of the tasks was to have an authentic conversation, which implied to make questions and answers about the corresponding topic, giving relevant information by means of formerly presented vocabulary. It was intended to provide participants with a clear purpose for all of the speaking tasks.

Bygate (1987), cited in the book "Assessing speaking" by Luoma (2004), mentioned a variety of purposes when working on a speaking task. Some of these purposes are "narration", "comparison", and "explanations". These items were taken into account in the actual performance stage of each of the speaking tasks.

Furthermore, in each of the sessions the learners had to evaluate their partners by means of peer feedback rubrics. Each student received a format for peer feedback on communicative tasks, which they had to use for the purpose of peer feedback. After having completed the task, they were to evaluate their peers. On the right side of the template and after each section, there is an action plan that shows what the students have to work on if they show weak points in some areas. The following print screen shows the criteria for the feedback, which were connecting words and vocabulary related to the topic of the class. Two complete samples of the peer

feedback rubrics, in which the action plan as a part of this rubric is visible, can be found in the appendices section (appendices E and F)



This feedback template is to be used by the students for the purpose of giving their partners constructive feedback on their performance. They have to apply the activities and fill in the format. After doing this, they have to concentrate on the action plan.

4.9 Material

The material was the regular course material used in all classes of the proficiency program. This material includes the course book “Cutting Edge”, published by Pearson Education. The textbook uses the communicative approach as background for the presentation of the material. Most of the tasks and exercises support this approach and gave participants the possibility to work on relevant tasks. Students learned by exercises in which they had to participate actively. Furthermore, some of the activities were based on the learning guides which can be found on the online learning platform VirtualSabanaTM.

Chapter 5 – Data Analysis and Findings

In this chapter, the procedures of managing and reducing data will be further explained. Moreover, the exact steps of analyzing the data that emerged from the data collection will be illustrated here. To do this, this section will show which categories emerged from the study and how they are related to each other. This will illustrate the findings of this action research project.

5.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory aims to create theory from data. Strauss (1991) mentions a consistent sequence of steps that helps building of theory to be valid. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), “it derives from qualitative analysis of data” (p. 1). Grounded theory is also related with a reflective inquiry about data, which is to be found on one problem to be investigated. To apply the grounded theory, different steps have to be conducted. These steps that were applied in this project correspond to the different stages of coding. The initial stage of coding is called “open coding”. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), raw data is used here to break it down into delineating concepts. This step will be explained at a later stage of the paper to relate how it was done for this project. These initial concepts are the base to form the categories for a project. Once concepts were found, their relationships were analyzed. In this procedure, which is called axial coding, the concepts mentioned are crosscut, related and categories are built. Afterwards, selective coding was applied. In this procedure, the relationships between the categories are explored and drawn into a storyline. To do this, the core category is first defined. After having defined it, relationships of the components of the category have to be explored to build the storyline.

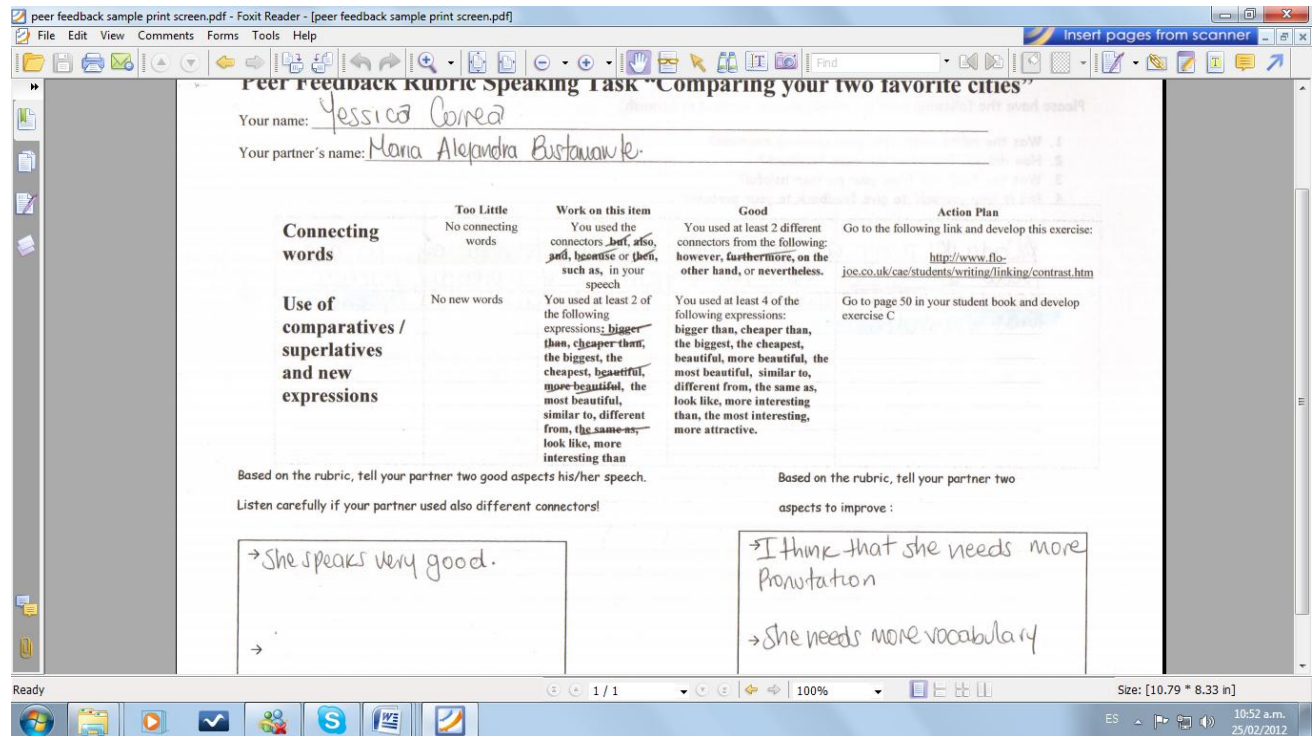
5.2 Design and Validation Process

In this project, the effects of peer feedback on the learners' speaking skills in terms of fluency and lexical variety were investigated. This was done by a variety of data collection instruments.

First, an initial survey was conducted in which the learners had to state their thoughts and feelings about feedback and specifically about peer feedback. This instrument was piloted before the implementation sessions started and was created together with the director of the project. It was aimed to gather impressions and feelings on behalf of the participants regarding peer feedback. Furthermore, the researcher was interested whether the involved learners had previously worked with such an approach or whether it was new for them. It was also to be observed how the learners preferably worked. Participants had to state if they preferred to work in small groups, individually, or in pair work. A diagram which illustrates the percentages of the obtained answers of this survey can be found in the appendices section (see appendix G).

Learners used peer feedback rubrics in the implementation sessions. The peer feedback rubrics were to enable the participants to give each other clear feedback on their performance and were used for each of the speaking tasks during the implementation. In the following print screen, a sample of this rubric can be seen.

Print Screen Peer Feedback rubric



During their use, it became clear that another instrument was needed to obtain learners' feelings and impressions of their own learning procedures as the researcher felt that he needed to follow these impressions during the implementation in order to get insights not only after having finished the while stage of the implementation. It was aimed to be as close as possible to participants' reactions in the speaking sessions. For this reason, students' logs were introduced and used by learners. These instruments were a valuable tool for students to reflect upon their performance. This instrument enabled them to express positive feelings as well as difficulties when working on their speaking skills. The emphasis was here to obtain the participants' feelings during their implementation. They noted if they felt secure during this process or whether they

still felt uncertainties about it. By this means, the researcher could react, according to the learners' impressions, in the time of the implementation process.

Furthermore, during the while-stage of the project, learners filled out a semi-structured survey in which they gave their impressions of the process concerning specific details such as the differences in giving and receiving peer feedback. They had the possibility of giving further comments for each of the questions. The learners had to evaluate their process using scales in which they showed positive, neutral, or negative impressions of the implementation sessions. The researcher considered it relevant to obtain also answers which were given within different options. This made it possible to analyze the data within pre-designed answers. Two samples of this instrument are attached in the appendices (see appendix H & I)

At the end of the action research project, eleven of the sixteen learners participated in focus groups, which were helpful to obtain further data. The reduced number of participants was due to time constraints, as not all of the involved learners were available to participate in the sessions. Here, the students had the chance to interact freely. This allowed for more personal insights from the students.

The speaking tasks were audio-recorded and transcribed. From each student involved, there were three samples taken for the analysis. At a later stage of this report, the exact procedure will be illustrated.

5.3 Procedures for data analysis

In this section, there will be an explanation of the procedures used to analyze the data. As formerly mentioned, grounded theory was used to investigate the data. After collecting the data, a physical file (in the form of a folder) was created, containing the initial survey instruments (including results), all peer feedback rubrics used, the students' logs, the transcripts, and the focus group transcripts. These instruments were filed according to each student and each participant was given a code. The first step of analyzing the data was an initial open coding process. The students' logs were the first instruments that were investigated to obtain initial concepts. Impressions and feelings were labeled with different names and color-coding was also used to manage data and establish lists of concepts. Participants' most frequent ideas were recorded with the aim to obtain concepts that were noted by several of the learners. According to Corbin and Strauss (2008), open coding allows researchers to extract concepts from raw data. In this case, the raw data corresponds to the reflections learners wrote in their students' logs. The list of emerging concepts was included in a MS-Excel™ format and was compiled according to each of the fifteen participants. After that, repeating ideas were listed to determine the relevance and importance of concepts that emerged. Repeating ideas were mentioned as one step of the data analysis procedure by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). According to them and also to Corbin and Strauss (2008), the procedure of analyzing data is based on a variety of steps. To find repeating ideas is one of them.

The same procedure was done for the focus groups (see print screen page 58), which were transcribed beforehand from the audio-recordings. The learners interacted in the focus groups in their native language (in this case Spanish) so they had more freedom to express their ideas.

Repeating ideas were noted down and later analyzed to form concepts. The next step was to analyze the results of the while-stage survey. As the students had to choose between cloze-ended answers, the options were used to build the initial concepts. These were included in an MS-Excel™ document. As in the procedure of the above-mentioned students' logs, repeating ideas were recorded in the format. The following print screen of a MS- Excel™ document will illustrate how initial concepts were formed. (sample focus groups)

Print Screen 1 Focus groups (Part 1)

	PRN	FL	FEEL	VOC	PPA	LPP	EC	LI	PP	VP	PFL	FEEL	IA	LT	CON	FH	AUT	CREA	DTI	LKPF	PS	DFPT
Student 3 (Maria Paula Castro)			X				X	X											X			
Student 4 (Yessica Correa)			X				X					X	X		X					X		X
Student 5 (Jhonatan Gaitan)												X	X		X	X				X	X	
Student 6 (Jose Gomez)							X						X			X						X
Student 8 (Andres Hamon)			X			X	X													X		
Student 9 (Leidy Lopez)																				X		
Student 10 (Laura Marin)			X				X								X					X		
Student 12 (Daniel Pulido)		X	X				X							X						X		X
Student 13 (Fabian Rojas)													X	X						X		X
Student 14 (Laura Rojas)									X				X	X					X			
Student 15 (Angelica Rincon)								X	X											X		X
Student 16 (Carolina Suarez)							X	X					X							X		

An initial version of the categories was taken from the concepts that emerged in compiling the repeating ideas. With the help of the research instructor, the concepts were summarized to an initial version of the categories. These draft versions of the categories were revised and reflected upon until they were summarized to a reduced number of final categories.

Students' speaking performances were analyzed as follows: Three transcripts from each of the 16 participants were copied in a chart with two sections (see appendix M).

The section on the left side included the text of the transcript. The other section (on the right side) contained comments made about the peer feedback that occurred (see Appendix M). The researcher checked whether the learners had used the connecting words, the expressions, and the vocabulary suggested in the rubrics. After analyzing them, the number of expressions and connecting words used in the rubrics in the initial session was compared to the number of the mentioned words from the final session to have an overview of the participants' process of the implementation sessions.

5.4 Data Management

As formerly mentioned, print devices managed the data. Before the implementation sessions started, an initial survey was applied. This survey was conducted online by means of the website www.encuestafacil.comTM. The results and scores represented in percentages were kept in a digital folder. (see appendix G) During the implementation, the learners used peer feedback rubrics that were collected after each session. Moreover, the learners had to answer a variety of questions after the implementation of four sessions. These questions were answered in the

participants' native language (Spanish) to obtain clear data. Another data collection instrument was the while-stage survey, which students were required to fill out during class. It was delivered in a printed format and was collected at the end of the session.

Focus groups (see enclosed sample appendix K) were held after the class sessions and students who participated in them stayed voluntarily. The researcher decided this since it was not possible to cope both with the syllabus of the program and the implementation of the focus groups in class time. For this reason, learners were audio-recorded after the class at the language resource center of the university La Sabana and/or in other classroom facilities available at that time. The audio-recordings were transcribed after recording them as this allowed a clearer picture of the learners' assertions.

All data collection instruments were kept in one digital file. However, data was neither ordered by participants nor by type of instrument. After a session with the researcher's class instructor, organization of the documents was restructured for better data management. The transcripts of the focus groups, the speaking tasks, and the other data were organized by student in alphabetic order.

5.5 Data reduction

Corbin and Strauss (2008) state that the data analysis procedure involves a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning. Here, data analysis was conducted through the finding of concepts. Having found a variety of concepts, these were reduced to the initial version of categories. These initial categories were again revised with the aim of summarizing them to a much-reduced number of final categories. This process is ongoing and

means to re-read the gathered information multiple times so data can eventually be reduced to the amount needed. In the explicit case of this action research project, the research instructor at the time of the data analysis helped to filter out the important information of the data which eventually led to the forming of the final categories of this project.

5.6 Data Display and Verification

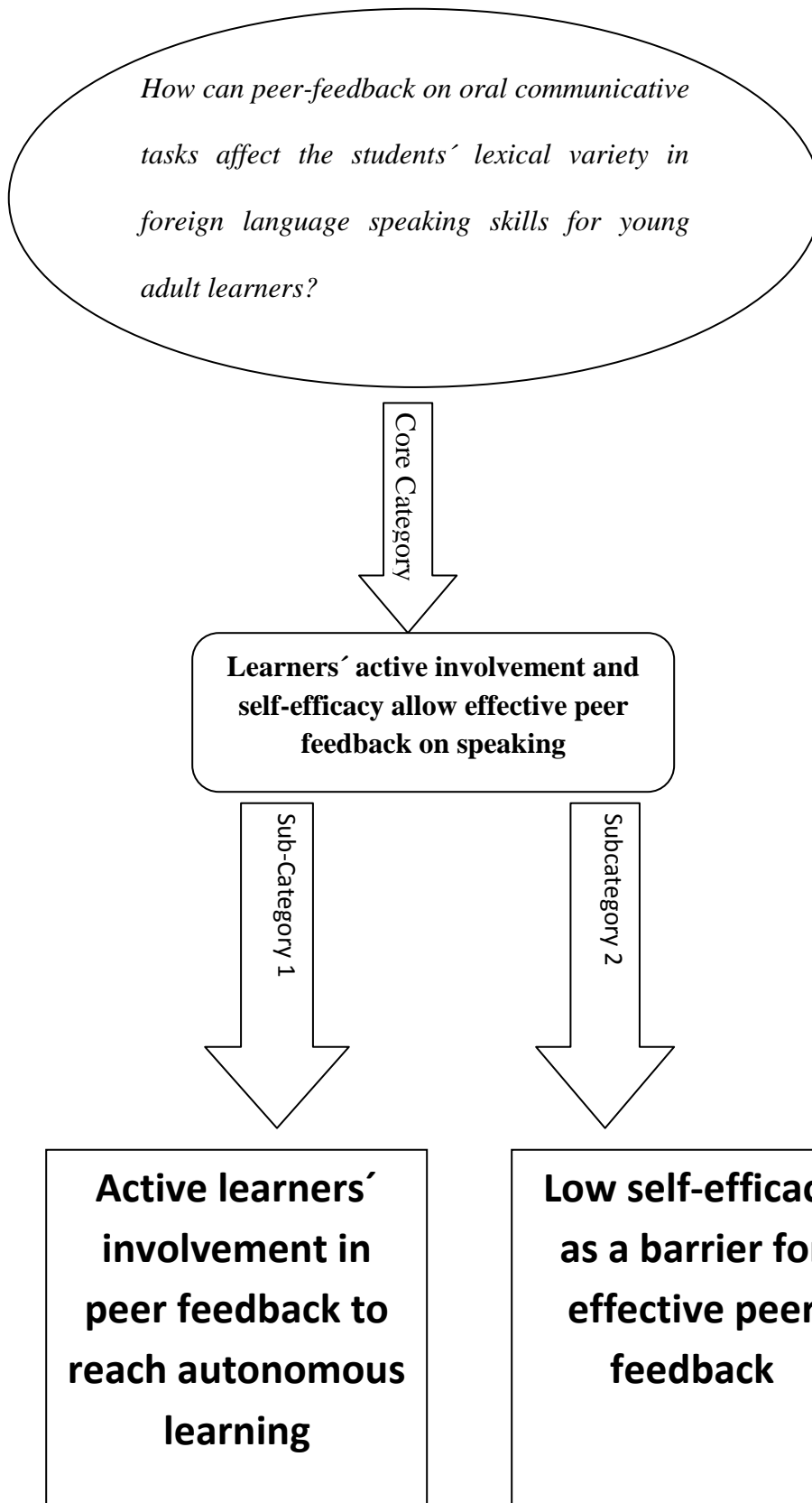
The data was collected and analyzed by different data collection instruments. As Hopkins (1993) mentioned, there are several ways to verify data. One of these methodologies of verification is triangulation, which is explained further in the upcoming section. During the implementation, data was collected by means of a while-stage survey, a variety of students' logs and focus groups (see print screen on page 58 for analysis of focus groups). This was done in order to obtain clear findings of repetitive ideas that emerged from the different instruments. Furthermore, by this approach of collecting and analyzing data, bias was avoided. Ideas not only emerged from one instrument, but also were confirmed in other instruments. Repeating ideas that appeared in one of the instruments could be confirmed in the other instruments that were applied in this project. For instance, it could be observed that the participants perceived that error correction by their peers was helpful. This factor was not only to be observed in one of the instruments, but in both instruments which were based on reflective answers by the learners (students' logs and focus groups). Therefore, results were more reliable than if only one single data-collection instrument was used. Trustworthiness was achieved through the use of a variety of instruments and these provided sufficient repetitive ideas to gather clear findings about the

effects of the implemented stages of the project. The emerged findings made it possible to form concepts by analyzing repetitive ideas. After examining and thinking about relations between these concepts, categories could be built.

5.7 Triangulation

In order to enhance validity of the data, different instruments in the project were used to triangulate the data collected. Burns (1999) mentions triangulation as one of the most commonly used and best-known ways of checking for validity. As the application of only one instrument in most cases is not sufficient, data has to be made valid by means of looking at it from different perspectives. This occurred in the study through the use of a wide variety of data collection instruments in all stages of the project. The most important data collection instruments were the while stage survey, students' logs, and focus groups. These instruments were analyzed after collecting the data, and the resulting data was confirmed by checking its validity by help of the variety of data collection instruments, so that repeating ideas did not only appear in one of the instruments but could be confirmed in several ones. The print screen of the analysis of the focus groups on page 58 shows this procedure and illustrates the initial concepts which were formed into categories after a reflective process in which the similarities of the participants' opinions in the different instruments were analyzed to eventually form the categories of this project. Furthermore, this way of ensuring validity aims at reducing subjectivity in action research, which is less likely to occur when researchers consider the results of various data collection instruments.

The results of the analysis of the students' logs, the while-stage survey, and the focus groups were compared and investigated in order to grasp the relationships between the different concepts by investigating repeating ideas. Furthermore, the results of these instruments were checked in accordance with learners' oral productions so relationships between and within the final categories and the students' productions can be further compared and investigated. The following diagram illustrates the core category and the sub-categories that emerged from data analysis.



In this action research project, a core category and two sub-categories emerged from the data analysis in response to the research question: How can peer feedback of oral communicative tasks for young adult learners affect their lexical variety in speaking? These were “Active learners’ involvement in peer feedback to reach autonomous learning”, and “Low self-efficacy as a barrier for effective peer feedback”. The two categories led to the core category “Learners’ active involvement and self-efficacy allow effective peer feedback on speaking”. This core category was obtained when analyzing the relationship between the two main categories. Peer feedback proved to lead learners to an active involvement in learning. However, data analysis also demonstrated that several learners showed a lack of self-efficacy in the speaking tasks. This led to an obstacle when giving and receiving peer feedback as the learners had doubts about the implementation of the strategy. This influenced the required involvement considerably in a negative way. Learners did not trust their own language knowledge and did not want to confuse their peers. Furthermore, they did not trust their peers’ language knowledge, suggesting that peer feedback may not have been completely constructive for their speaking process. Learners were more comfortable in their role of listening to the comments of the teacher instead of taking an active role in the process. Lack of trust in peer feedback because of a perceived lack of students’ knowledge (both in giving and receiving of peer feedback) was a barrier that hindered a completely independent learning process. Therefore, it was observed that peer feedback is closely related to learners’ active involvement and their self-efficacy in the learning process.

5.8 Active involvement in peer feedback to reach learners' autonomous learning

This category emerged by summarizing a variety of different concepts. Students acknowledged that the process of giving feedback on partners' speaking performance was helpful for their own performance. The participants had the chance to analyze their partners' oral productions and to become involved in the learning process without depending on the instructor. This is shown in the excerpt below:

"It seems to me that these exercises are very interesting because one always has to pay attention (to the partner's performance) with the aim to learn more and to do the things better."

Excerpt from Focus group participant 8

In order to give peer feedback to their partners, students were required to listen and think about the speaking performance of their peers. This supported them in their own productions and promoted an active involvement because learners could not depend on the instructor. Learners had the chance to work autonomously with their partners without being restricted to the instructor's involvement, which could limit the learners in their performance. Consequently, working with peer feedback supported learners' autonomous learning behavior. Holec (1981) describes autonomy in learning as "taking charge for one's own learning." Furthermore, Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) observed that "active involvement in the peer assessment process improves learning, and studies reporting student perceptions that reviewing peers' work facilitated their learning".

Working with peers implies an interaction between learners. Boughey (1997) believes that interaction in speaking between learners constructs meaning. Learners have the possibility to be part of a meaningful process in which they see a purpose: Working on different speaking tasks with topics relevant to them that aim to reach authentic contexts and support effective learning.

Giving peer feedback requires learners to participate and think actively while working on speaking tasks. It was not enough for the participants in this study to only work on tasks given by the teacher; they felt the need to analyze their partners' productions, which made them aware of the importance of being dynamically involved in an activity. Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) found that the process of giving peer feedback contributed to a significant relationship between peer feedback provided and the participants' own productions. They argue that the more constructive the feedback given by a student, the better he/she performs on his/her own tasks. According to the learners' comments, this can be confirmed in the present study as well. Students, when they are ready to let themselves be involved in an active process such as the giving of peer feedback, are more likely to obtain productive results in their own learning process. Another student who was involved in the implementation sessions reported some views in a focus group:

"(...) while one is paying attention to the partner, one is learning and improving at the same time by correcting his or her mistakes while speaking."

Excerpt from Focus Group Participant 6

This shows that learners saw the possibility of learning from their partners, which is possible as their language level is more or less the same. They had the opportunity to understand language that was correctly used, or to intervene as incorrect language use occurred.

It could be observed that learners had the impression that feedback by their partners was helpful for their own learning process. Learners stated that their partners could support them with their feedback from speaking performance. Given that students had a similar language level, feedback provided by their peers was more understandable for the learners than when it came from the instructor. This procedure enabled learners to grasp feedback and improve on issues noticed by their partners. This requires participants being actively involved in the procedure of giving and receiving feedback.

On the other hand, if learners are passive in the classroom (not thinking about their own or their partners' performance) they are unlikely to grasp the concepts because students cannot see a real purpose to the feedback. Harmer (2007, p. 69) illustrates a similar point by saying that "if students are involved in meaning-focused communicative tasks, then language learning will take care of itself."

"When we work on tasks with the teacher, the teacher is there to correct us all the time, so when we are just with our partner, we have to care for ourselves, and have to look to be independent. So, we cannot wait for the teacher's help who is there to help us."

Excerpt from Focus Group participant 5

Learners had to work on tasks with peers instead of having constant support from an instructor. Because of this, the participants had the possibility of relying themselves rather than

being provided with the correct solutions in a moment of doubt. If students work on their tasks while thinking about their performance instead of waiting for instructor's comments, they can gradually become aware of correct and incorrect language use. Nicol and MacFarlane (2006) illustrate that "students develop objectivity in relation to standards which can then be transferred to their own work" (p. 281).

Through the use of peer feedback, students can become involved in their learning process and cannot passively depend on the teacher. In this situation, they work together with their partner and find solutions on their own, which help them in their process of speaking. Through the implementation sessions, students were made familiar with being independent during their speaking sessions. One of the students reported:

"When we are only with our partner, we have to look for the right solutions ourselves, and have to solve problems on our own; we cannot rely on the teacher who is always there next to us."

Excerpt from Focus Group participant 5

The study also revealed that, according to students, feedback coming from a partner who has the same performance level could be clearer to understand than feedback coming from an instructor as illustrated in the excerpt of one the participants below. Gielen, et al. (2010, p. 145) illustrate in their article that feedback coming from the teacher "is often not understood or is misinterpreted by students as it is associated to discourse that is not directly accessible to students." This could also be observed in the data retrieved from the instruments. As the instructor uses very different language than the learners, it can be difficult for students with a

low language level to comprehend clearly the feedback or suggestions coming from the instructor. For this reason, learners have the possibility to communicate on one common language level and to make the feedback provided more comprehensible and therefore, more effective. The excerpt below illustrates one of the learners' comments on this issue.

"(.....), the words used by us are a bit easier to understand, and we from level 3 (A2 according to the Common European Framework) don't use a very advanced language as the language of a teacher. A partner in the classroom, on the other hand, will tell you the things with a language which you really understand and with a vocabulary which you use on a daily basis."

Excerpt from Focus group Participant 8

Data analysis showed that learners, who give each other feedback, use rather simple and direct language. As their language level is similar, they have a common basis to work together that allows a productive learning environment. Students can take advantage of working with a low but similar language level to produce effective feedback instead of being restricted because of students' limited understanding of the instructor's language. Peer feedback can be productive for learners if it is used with simple words that are clearly understood by all of the participants. Gielen, et al. (2010) note that there is a high percentage of meaning-changing revision when peer feedback occurs. While feedback comes from equal partners, revisions and corrections can result in a change of meaning due to participants' low language level. In order for this not to occur, feedback has to be clear, easy and understandable. One of the features that can effectively influence the accurate production of feedback is to implement the process with a group that

shares a common language level. Participants have the possibility of using feedback that is appropriate to their own language level. As the participants in this study shared a common language level, they were able to comprehend feedback provided by their peers. The foregoing aspects were also drawn by Toppings' studies (2003, p. 145):

(...), research in higher education shows that students often perceive peer feedback as more understandable and more useful because fellow students are on the same wavelength”

Students mentioned that interacting with their partners was supportive for their speaking productions. Discussing the difficulties and similarities in their speaking productions let students participate in a meaningful learning process by analyzing their partners' performance and thinking critically about them. This enables them to work in a student-centered interaction process that contributes to a more independent learning style. Interactions are an important requirement for peer feedback since they enable a way of thinking and analyzing that is necessary to make peer feedback possible. This approach of feedback avoids students depending on a teacher or instructor in the classroom, and instead requires learners to take charge of their own learning, which Holec (1981) describes as autonomous learning. Wen and Tsai (2006) highlighted the importance of the relationship of peer feedback and interactions in the classroom. Peer feedback is only possible if students are ready and willing to interact with each other to allow a constructive atmosphere. If constructive interaction is given, peer feedback is more likely to work for students. Learners also felt less intimidated through the use of peer feedback because they did not feel external pressure from the teacher. Rather, they could concentrate on their performances with partners who had a similar language level. Students were not

“criticized” by the teacher who has a more advanced language level and could speak freely. This can be seen in the excerpt below.

“(.....)It (the implementation) is very good because it helps us to lose the fear of speaking(.....)”

Excerpt retrieved from Focus group participant 3

5.8.1 Lexical Variety

The learners’ active involvement contributed not only to participants’ autonomous learning behavior, but increased the number of expressions and connecting words used. As formerly noted in this action research project, the effects of peer feedback on lexical variety in oral communicative tasks were observed and further analyzed. The diagram below illustrates how the use of vocabulary increased after the implementation sessions.

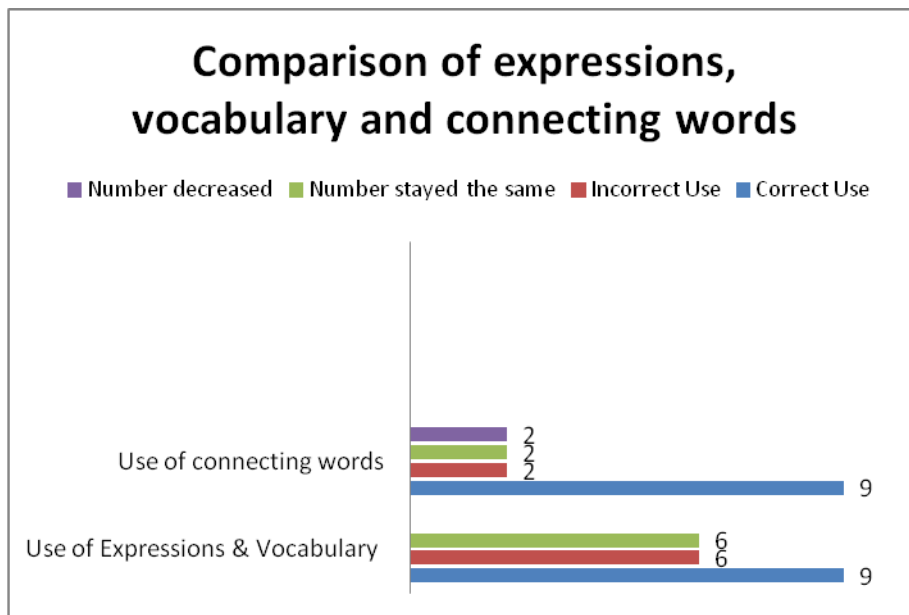


Table 1 – Comparison of expressions, vocabulary, and connecting words

The analysis of vocabulary was divided into two sections. These sections were a) expressions and new vocabulary, and b) connecting words. The analysis showed that students could increase their use of vocabulary since the learners used a higher variety of words from the peer feedback rubrics (Appendix E). This data was found by comparing the initial test and the final test of the implementation. The learners were able to increase their use of connecting words in their spoken language and had therefore better coherence in their speeches. Furthermore, it was observed that learners managed to express their ideas with a higher lexical variety that leads to a better fluency in speaking. The peer feedback rubrics provided learners with a variety of new vocabulary (related to the contents of the proficiency program of La Sabana University) as well as with a choice of connecting words. Although learners could have used connectors that indicate a more advanced level such as “however, furthermore, etc.”, they utilized in most cases basic connectors such as “and, but, also, or, then”. However, these were applied appropriately and participants could therefore make their speeches more comprehensible and coherent. This was an improvement compared to the initial stage of the project. The following excerpt will give one example of the use of a basic, but correctly used connecting word uttered by a learner during the implementation sessions.

*“I chose this career **because** it is important for the society.”*

Retrieved from final speaking test Participant 2

Furthermore, learners were able to take advantage of the implementation sessions with the peer feedback rubrics to increase their variety of lexica in speaking. In the following sample, one of the learners used vocabulary that was part of one of the peer feedback rubrics:

*“(.....) my mother has a lot of **ambitions and dreams** and is very confident.”*

Retrieved from final speaking test Participant 6

5.9 Low self-efficacy as a barrier for effective peer feedback

This category will be described in reference to the way in which learners perceived their own roles. Learners had multiple perceptions of the effect of peer feedback in their speaking process. The discussion will be focused on analyzing how the learners perceived the quality of the feedback they received and provided in their learning process. The researcher concluded that the quality of feedback was important not only to improve the use of the peer feedback strategy, but also to analyze students' reactions to their own performance when giving and receiving feedback.

Learners in this context were used to taking a passive role in their learning process. The learners tended to wait for teachers' comments instead of thinking about their and their peers strengths and weaknesses. As a sample for this, one of the learner's contributions to the focus group will be illustrated below. In this focus group, the student stated that he was not familiar with the new way of working.

“I have not worked in this way in the university before. (.....)”

Retrieved from focus group participant 9

Students were used to a comfortable role in their learning process and relied on the instructor instead of becoming involved in their own learning process. This can also be observed in the

next statement, in which it becomes clear that learners have difficulties in assuming their active role in feedback.

“I am lacking knowledge to give my partner feedback.”

Retrieved from focus group participant 7

Some learners feel it is the teacher’s duty to constantly provide learners with corrections and comments about their learning process. Nilson (2003, p. 35), who conducted research on how to improve peer feedback, claimed that students are not interested in doing the teacher’s work by giving feedback and illustrates this in the following words:

“(....) the problem with peer feedback seems to boil down to three: the intrusion of students’ emotions into the evaluative process, (.....), and their laziness in studying the work and/or the writing up of feedback.”

This can hinder the development of an effective learning environment. Learners are not used to thinking critically during the learning process but depend instead on the teacher who provides solutions for them. The problem here is that learners are not required to think critically. They receive the right solutions for problems without thinking about how to solve the problem on their own.

To work autonomously and participate actively in their productions is something new for the learners; they are not used to a learning approach in which they work without being dependent on the instructor. Therefore, learners stated that they wanted more intervention from the teacher in the classroom. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

“I would like that the teacher gives me more clarity, (...) with a partner I do not have this clarity (...) and I can make more questions to the teacher so that he responds to my questions and I will have fewer doubts”

Retrieved from focus group participant 8

Furthermore, learners do not immediately feel comfortable with the idea of being autonomous in their learning because they are not used to it. Autonomous learning behavior is a constant process that is not possible to achieve without sufficient preparation. The findings from this study suggest that autonomous learning behavior enables learners to work without constant support by a teacher. This gives learners a chance to rely on themselves instead of being dependent on the instructor in the classroom. However, autonomous learning behaviors have to be gradually introduced so learners have the possibility to get familiar with the concept. Otherwise, learners who were used to more passive approaches of learning will feel lost when they have to rely on themselves or on partners.

Language instructors have to provide learners with possibilities to become autonomous. Moreover, an autonomous learning environment has to enable students to learn without depending too much on the instructor. Cotteral (2000) who applied research on how to promote autonomy through curriculum mentions this in the following way:

“The potential for learner autonomy increases as an individual’s learning awareness grows. Therefore activities which prompt learners help to reflect on their learning aim and to enhance learners’ insight into their learning processes.” (p. 112)

This quotation demonstrates that strategies that foster autonomy have to be applied in the classroom. The application of peer feedback in speaking aimed for as much participants' involvement as possible, which allowed for insights on their own and on their partners' learning processes.

Changing learning strategies to have learners become more autonomous is a process that requires time and training. Students, although having positive attitudes towards peer feedback, showed not only acceptance but also a certain amount of skepticism. The analysis of data revealed that the learners were not convinced at times about the quality of peer feedback. This was based on the fact that they did not feel comfortable with the idea of giving comments to their partners. They felt more comfortable listening to feedback that came from someone who had a higher level of language. The target learners did not feel safe enough in the English language to provide their partners with feedback. For this reason, they had a critical attitude towards the strategy, which led to some difficulties during the intervention process. One of the students made reference to this as shown in the excerpt below:

“Actually, I feel not very safe, (...), obviously for my partner this is a disadvantage, because I might correct him in the wrong way.”

Excerpt from Focus group participant 6

Through this excerpt, one could note that students were worried that their knowledge of language might not be sufficient to give feedback to their peers. Such belief limited their performance as they had this opinion in mind. The teacher-researcher had to constantly explain that if the language structures are of a basic level, the use of peer feedback could be more

efficient and it was not necessary for the learners to have the same language level as that of their instructor.

Most of the learners did not trust in the quality of peer feedback. This was observed when they received peer feedback from their partners. Neither did they feel that they had sufficient knowledge to give their partners peer feedback. It was mentioned that students were skeptical when they were given feedback as they did not feel the feedback was reliable. Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010, p. 527) demonstrated a related factor when they reported that “[...] from the perspective of assesses, however, findings are mixed. While students acknowledged the value of peer feedback, some students complained about the poor quality of peer feedback that they received.(...)” This shows that learners do not immediately trust peer feedback as they do not have confidence in their own language knowledge or in the knowledge of their partners. It also shows that learners have a low self-efficacy level. Self-efficacy relates to the action of believing in one’s own capacities to complete a task. Bandura (1977, as cited in Luzzo, 1996, p. 276) stated that “self-efficacy expectations are beliefs about an individual’s own ability to successfully perform a given task or behavior.” Luzzo (1996) reported “low self-efficacy expectations regarding a specific task are likely to lead to avoidance of those behaviors, whereas high self-efficacy expectations regarding a specific task are likely to lead to increases in the frequency of approach versus avoidance behavior.” This was observed in the implementation sessions of this project. Given students’ lack of trust in their own language knowledge, they did not feel secure in providing feedback to partners. Therefore, emphasis in the classroom should be placed on the development of student-centered learning practices in order to avoid learners relying only on comments by the teacher. This will also help students gain more self-confidence

when it comes to their productions in the language classroom. Zhang (1995, as cited in Rollinson, 2005, p. 24) mentioned this feature as the “lack of trust in the accuracy, sincerity and specificity of the comments of their peers.” In this study, lack of trust was one of the most common issues observed in the participants’ attitudes towards peer feedback. Learners were suspicious towards their own skills, which restricts them considerably on working on an effective peer feedback strategy. The fact that students feel more comfortable when receiving comments by their teachers demonstrates that it is essential to put more emphasis on interactive strategies over longer periods of time in order to change this situation. The following excerpt demonstrates the doubts one of the learners expressed about the peer feedback procedures of the implementation sessions.

“(...) When I’m given feedback by my partner, I feel like skeptical because I don’t know if I’m given good feedback. (...)”

Retrieved from Focus Group participant 6

This chapter showed how data analysis was conducted and how each of the categories emerged. Two main categories were mentioned. These were “Active learners’ involvement in peer feedback to reach autonomy”, and “Low self-efficacy as a barrier for effective peer feedback”. These two categories are related, as the effects of speaking were influenced by students’ roles and perceptions of the quality of peer feedback. The learners involved in the project had difficulties in accepting their role of an active examiner. They felt more comfortable when listening to the teacher’s comments. Although the learners improved their use of

vocabulary in terms of expressions and vocabulary, learners felt skeptical in occasions when working without the instructors' constant support. This attitude hindered a more effective feedback with this approach. Lack of self-efficacy and trust in peer feedback built a barrier in the learners' mind that limited participants in the implementation sessions. The implementation of strategies that foster autonomous learning behaviors does not work from one day of training, and therefore students have to be made familiar with them over a longer time period. Furthermore, a significant number of training sessions to raise awareness for peer feedback are needed for a process that aims to make learners more autonomous during speaking tasks.

Chapter 6 – Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

In this last chapter of the paper, the findings and results of the applied action research project will be used to obtain final conclusions. The discussion will also report on the implications of the project and the emerging considerations to conduct further research studies.

6.1 Active learners' involvement in peer feedback to reach autonomy"

The first category called "Active learners' involvement in peer feedback to reach autonomy" examined the influence of peer feedback during the speaking tasks. The intervening factors were a) giving peer feedback, b) receiving peer feedback, c) interaction/less intimidation, and d) vocabulary. Peer feedback requires an active involvement of the learners, which is especially important in giving peer feedback as the students had to pay attention to their partners' performance and think critically about them. In this project, it was observed that the process of giving peer feedback proved to be helpful for the learners as they became aware of the importance in analyzing their own performance instead of waiting for teachers' comments. Li, Liu, and Steckelberg (2010) found that there is a relevant relationship between giving peer feedback and the quality of the end products of learners. However, the process requires that learners get involved in this procedure in order to be successful. Therefore, it is important to make learners familiar with the strategy over a longer period of time in which its significance is to be highlighted in order to achieve positive results.

Furthermore, learners mentioned the importance of receiving peer feedback in the process. Here, the students adopted the role of the teacher and provided their partners with remarks and factors to improve their speaking skills. The students mentioned one significant difference from the feedback provided by peers as opposed to that provided by teachers. They claimed that the peer feedback was supportive because they were provided with feedback by someone who had the same language level as they had. Feedback provided by the teacher might not always be clear for students as the language level of the teacher and learner differ to a great extent. A student with a rather low language level might not comprehend the feedback provided by his/her instructor. Therefore, it is of advantage to provide feedback on the same level of the learners in order for the feedback to be effective. The difference of learners' language level in providing feedback is a feature that has to be carefully considered so learners can obtain the most efficient feedback possible. This can also increase learners' self-efficacy level when they see improvements in their learning process.

Another factor within "Active learners' involvement in peer feedback to reach autonomy" is the importance of interaction among students. By means of peer feedback, learners have more possibilities to interact with each other. Participants think critically to comment and to give opinions about their performance, which requires a constant level of interaction and which is one of the most beneficial factors for learners. This involves them in a student-centered learning approach which leads them to be more autonomous. Participants mentioned that it was helpful for them to interact with their peers. They claimed they felt less intimidated when working with the comments given by their peers than by their instructor; this allowed them to interact freely in English. Again, it is important to make students familiar with the significance of interaction over

a constant period of time in order to shift the focus of their learning to themselves rather than being passive and waiting for their instructor's comments.

Participants' active involvement influenced the use of vocabulary in terms of expressions and connecting words. The learners used a higher variety of words after having worked on the implementation sessions. The peer feedback rubrics used during the implementation sessions supported the learners in the use of the mentioned words, which resulted in a higher variety of vocabulary.

6.2 Low self-efficacy as a barrier for effective peer feedback

Although data analysis showed that learners recognized the positive effects of peer feedback on their speaking skills, they also retained doubts about its use. Students found they were not able to provide their partners with feedback of the same quality as their instructor since they did not always trust sufficiently in their own speaking skills. Furthermore, not all the participants were convinced of the idea of receiving feedback by their partners. Some had the impression that their peers did not have enough knowledge to give them constructive comments on their speaking. Some of the participants limited themselves by having a negative attitude towards the feedback. This attitude is explained by a low self-efficacy level that results in a lack of trust in themselves and their partners' language level. By applying the strategy of peer feedback over a longer period of time, learners will have better opportunities to become familiar with it and so have it become more effective for the learners. As Li, Liu and Steckelberg (2010) illustrated, "students called for more constructive and detailed feedback" in an implementation of a technological course with peer feedback. This was also observed in the present study. Despite of

the positive feelings expressed by participants, some of them had the feeling they could trust their instructor's comments more than their peers. For this reason, it is important to show learners they are able to work with peer feedback. This could be seen when it was mentioned in this paper that it is supportive for learners to have a common language level. Learners have to be shown over a constant period of time that peer feedback can be an effective strategy for them in their learning process.

6.3 Pedagogical Implications

Peer feedback is a strategy which aims to involve students in their learning process. Liu and Carless (2006) describe peer feedback as a communication process through which learners enter into dialogues related to performance and standards. As illustrated by this study, peer feedback offers a possibility of highlighting the importance of students' active involvement. The implementation sessions were aimed to make learners aware of the importance and relevance of this approach of feedback. In contrast to the "traditional" feedback approach, in which the language instructor comments on the work of the students, the learners have to analyze their partners' performance in terms of lexical variety in speaking. It is essential, however, to provide learners with tools to evaluate their performance. These allow learners to assess their peers with clear task requirements, which makes peer feedback tangible enough to work effectively. More guidance on the marking criteria should be given to ensure that all markers can apply previously agreed criteria in a consistent fashion (Sullivan and Hall; et al 1997). This implies that the learners have to be provided with clear guidelines and criteria in the process of peer feedback. Moreover, it cannot be expected that effective feedback can be achieved from one day to the next. It is important to sequentially scaffold learners in the process of peer feedback and to explain clearly the peer feedback instruments used so students gain familiarity and expertise. Participants have to be made familiar with the used tools. For instance, students had to learn about the significance of criteria in the rubrics used for evaluation so they were relevant to them.

6.3.1 Limitations

Although peer feedback has many advantages in the language classroom, there are also factors that limit the approach and that complicate the implementation. First, the learners in the context of La Sabana University, in which the implementation sessions took place, were not used to a student-centered way of working. They were more familiar with taking a passive role in the classroom and depended on the teacher. This is a factor which made it essential to sequentially introduce and explain the assessment instruments and procedures used. As the learners were not familiar with them, they were limited and close-minded in their own attitudes about peer feedback. They thought it was obvious that feedback has to come from the teacher. Therefore, the significance and relevance of this tool had to be illustrated on various occasions. Approaches which make the students think critically and get them involved in their own learning process have to be implemented over long periods of time rather than over a short period such as one semester. If learners are initially trained in the use of peer feedback strategies, further interventions can be effectively carried out. Furthermore, it is essential to explain and show learners the purpose of the selected strategy and corresponding procedures so they know what they are working on and why they are doing it.

As the target group of learners had a low level of English (A2, according to the Common European Framework), it was difficult to assure that all the learners consistently gave their feedback in English. Many of the learners were reluctant to use the L2 because they did not feel comfortable in speaking. Therefore, they had to be repeatedly reminded to express ideas in English.

Moreover, the learners in the project target context do study a variety of undergraduate programs in which they are required to fulfill an extensive work load. Because of this, their attitude towards learning English is not always the best. Learners' priorities are clearly shifted towards their undergraduate programs, which made it difficult to work in a motivated learning atmosphere. Motivation is very important to make a student-centered approach of peer feedback possible. As the instructor does not have the leading role in this procedure, the participants have to take an active part in it. To do so, however, students need to be motivated to work with partners.

Another limitation was the restriction in availability of the language resource center "Studium" at La Sabana University. It was not always possible to carry out the implementation sessions. The center has the necessary computers and the software "Audacity" that was used to record the participants' performance on the speaking tasks. Another advantage of implementing the sessions at the language resource center was that it allowed for improved observation and monitoring of the participants as each pair of them used one computer. This enabled the researcher to have a clear overview on the participants. When it was not possible to conduct the session in the language center, sessions had to be held in the normal classroom. This was possible, but more difficult to apply given the classroom restrictions in resources and organization.

6.3.2 Further Research

This project investigated the effects of peer feedback on lexical variety for young adult language learners. After working on implementation sessions, it became clear that there is a need for research in both similar and different areas. For instance, the same effects could be analyzed over a considerably longer period of time, conducting the action research project in a school in which the learners' group does not change and the teachers have regular groups to be analyzed over time.

Moreover, further research could focus on how to increase intrinsic motivation to learn a foreign or second language to foster the creation of a student-centered and effective learning environment. Furthermore, it would be recommended to conduct further research on motivational issues such as attitudes or interests of learners to make such an effective learning environment possible. In learning contexts such as La Sabana University, it can be observed that one of the biggest issues in the development of English classes is the lack of motivation and interest of learners. Research should search for possible ways to change these attitudes and tackle these difficulties successfully. For instance, research could be conducted on how TV series from English speaking cultures affect the learners' intrinsic motivation. As many of the participants in such a learning environment are adolescents, they watch a variety of, especially North American, TV programs in which the English language is used. To use those programs could affect the learners' intrinsic motivation in order to eventually increase this necessary fact to learn a second language.

Another recommendation for further research is to develop a project about how to increase learners' self-esteem and self-efficacy in the language classroom. Self-efficacy is an important factor when it comes to language learning. It is also essential for learners to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. For this reason, it could be investigated how self-efficacy in the language classroom can be increased by the application of self-assessment strategies. As learners have to think and be aware of their own productions, this strategy could display an appropriate way to increase the learners' self-efficacy as they have to learn to value their own strengths in order to increase their self-efficacy. This could provide them with the ability to be also open to criticism when it comes to the aim of improvement of certain language areas.

Self-efficacy influenced participants' behavior in the implementation sessions. Increasing this factor would give learners opportunities to improve their productions; learners would not be hindered by factors that can be barriers in the classroom. Especially in learner-centered approaches, high self-esteem and self-efficacy might enable learners to have better results when learning a language. This would also be an important basis to make peer feedback more effective and purposeful in the ELT classroom.

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Appendix B

Lesson Plan Sample

Name of teacher: Kai Spies	
Institution: La Sabana University	
Date: 07 10 2010 _____	Length of class 50 min
Class/grade: Proficiency Program Level 3	Room: G-204 / Studium
Number of students: 20	Average age of Students: 18
Number of years of English study (students): 2	Level of students (<i>please delete</i>) Pre-Intermediate
Aims: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students were to be better able to express their ideas about a role model in their life - Students were to be able to apply a variety of vocabulary in order to describe their ideas - Students were to give and to receive peer feedback on the mentioned task 	

Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction	Tutor's comments
<u>Warm-up activity</u>	To make students familiar with the topic "a role model in my life"	Students were to give their ideas who is a role model for them in their life. Short class discussion.	Group – teacher 10 min	
<u>Introducing of vocabulary</u>	Students will be introduced new vocabulary which they have to use later in their speaking task	Students will read a short text about a role model. By this means, the learners are provided with input considering vocabulary which they will use in the upcoming activity.	Students	
Introducing of speaking task			Students	
Giving instructions about the speaking task	Students are to structure their ideas by means of a brainstorming section	Students write their ideas (no complete sentences) on a sheet of paper. Teacher goes around the class and monitors the procedure.	Student-student	
Moving class into the		In this step of the class, the learners are instructed to exchange their ideas of their role-model with their partner. They are		

<p>language resource center "Studium"</p> <p>Speaking task</p>		<p>to make three questions about his / her role model and are to give their partners reasons, why this person is the learners' role model. Vocabulary and connecting words are provided on the peer feedback rubrics, which are to be used for the task.</p> <p>Class is moved into Studium</p> <p>Students work on the speaking task with the instructions provided. Teacher goes around the work stations to monitor the learners. The learners record their voices with the software "Audacity" and send their productions to their teacher. Students give their partners feedback and complete the reflections (in Spanish)</p>	<p>Student-student / Teacher as a monitor</p>	
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Appendix C Timeline for Implementation, Data Collection and Data analysis

Activity	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Febr.	Mar	Apr	May	June
Step 1: Initiation												
Step 2: Preliminary Investigation												
Step 3: Literature Review												
Step 4: Design of an Action Plan												
Step 5: Implementatio n												
Step 6: Data collection												
Step 7: Analysis and interpretation of data												
Step 8: Sharing findings												

Appendix D

Sample Learning Guide



DEPARTAMENTO DE LENGUAS Y CULTURAS EXTRANJERAS

2nd speaking task

Life is what you make it

1. Think of what you like doing at the moment.
2. Think of what you would like to do in the future.

In this activity you will interview your partner about the different aspects in your life.

You will see a diagram about the different aspects in your life. Now, you ask your partner about these aspects and complete the diagram about your partner.

Example:

How much time do you normally spend with your friends?

Now, hands on work. This is the diagram which you will complete about your partner!

Ask your partner questions concerning the aspects you see in the diagram.

Use question structures in the simple present such as:

- **What are your.....?**
- **What about.....?**
- **How often.....?**
- **Etc.**

Afterwards, you speak about the things you would like to have in 10 years. Use the same diagram and discuss the aspects with your partner. Use the following structure to express your ideas:

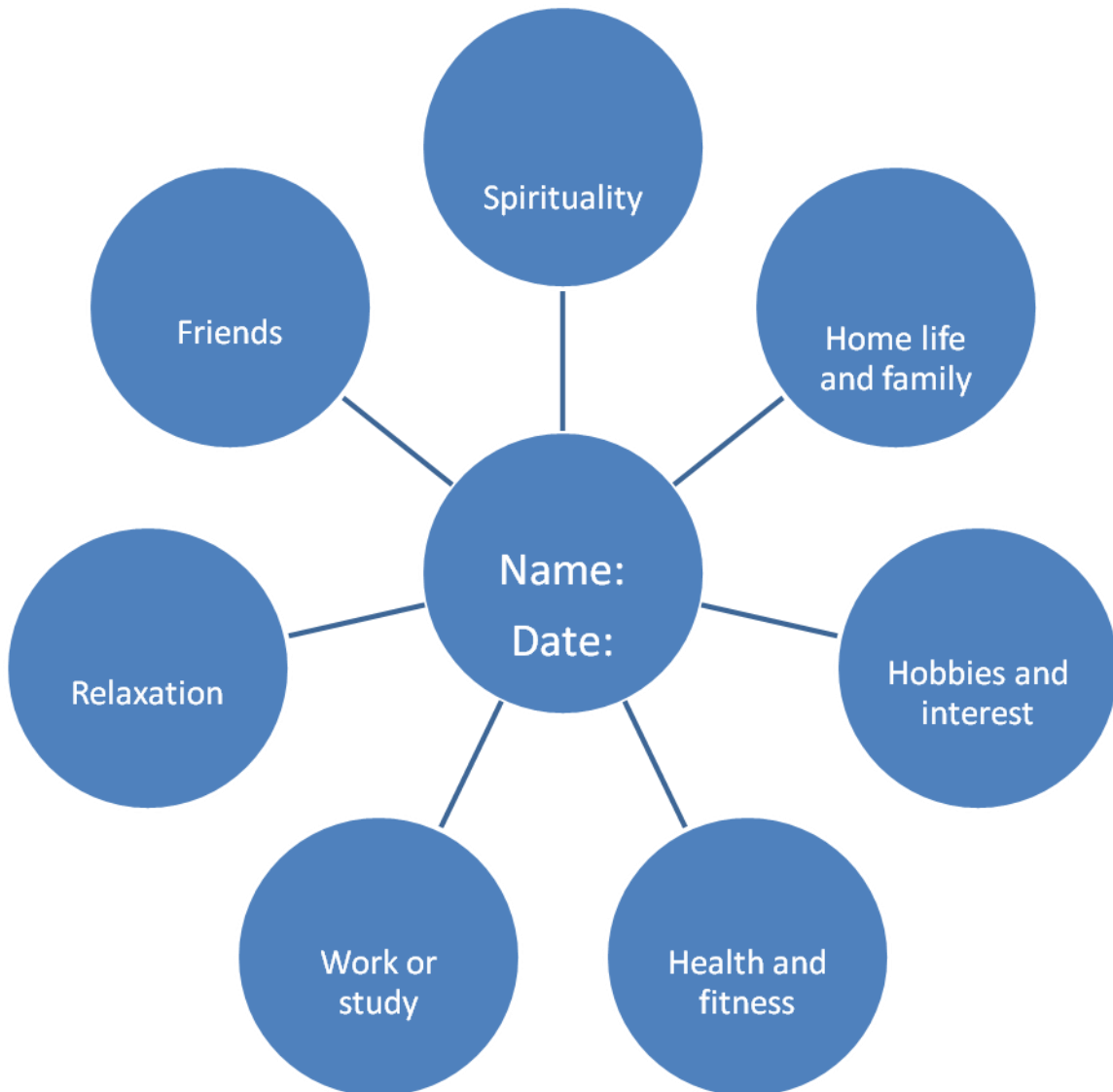
In ten years, I would like to.....

In the future, I'd like to.....

Record your speeches with the software “Audacity” which is available at Studium. Remember to use the peer-feedback rubric and mark the expressions your partner used.

Also, work on the exercises which you find in the action plan.

If you have any questions or doubts, do not wait to ask me!



Appendix E

Sample 1 Peer Feedback Rubric

6th Nov. 10

Peer Feedback Rubric Speaking Task "Cultural Differences"

Your name: LAURA CAMILA ROJAS PINERA

Your partner's name: M^a ALEJANDRA LEMUS / JULY ALVAREZ

	Too Little	Work on this item	Good	Action Plan
Connecting words	No connecting words	You used the connectors <u>but, also, and, because or then, such as</u> , in your speech	You used at least 2 different connectors from the following: <u>however, furthermore, on the other hand, or nevertheless.</u>	Go to the following link and develop this exercise: http://www.flo-joe.co.uk/cae/students/writing/linking/contrast.htm
Use of vocabulary	No new words	You used at least 2 of the following expressions or actions: <u>Behavior, to behave, rules, misunderstandings, foreign, colleagues, guidebook, to give advice, good manners, bad manners</u>	You used at least 4 of the following expressions: <u>Ambitious, attentive, friendly, generous, kind, polite honest, truthful, organized, passionate, respectful, responsible, aggressive, annoying, arrogant, Behavior, to behave, rules, misunderstandings, foreign, colleagues, guidebook, to give advice, good manners, bad manners</u>	Go to Virtual Sabana and develop the workshop "Understanding cultural differences"

Based on the rubric, tell your partner two good aspects his/her speech.

Based on the rubric, tell your partner two

Listen carefully if your partner used also different connectors!

aspects to improve :

→ My partners have a good pronunciation and use a good vocabulary.
→ They use a new vocabulary.

→ But they need expand the expressions.
→ They need expand the connecting words.

Appendix F

Sample 2 Peer Feedback Rubric

Peer Feedback Rubric on Speaking Task "Your role model"

Your name: Ayri Dromay Barca Barca

Your partner's name: Jimena Vargas

	Too Little	Work on this item	Good	Action Plan
Connecting words	No connecting words	You used the connectors but, also, and, because or then in your speech	You used at least 2 different connectors from the following: however, furthermore, on the other hand, or nevertheless.	Go to the following link and develop this exercise: http://www.flo-joe.co.uk/cae/students/writing/linking/contrast.htm
Use of new expressions	No new words	You used at least 2 of the following expressions: attractive, beautiful, smart, sensitive, intelligent, ambitions, his /her biggest achievement was to, friendly, generous, respectful, self-confident, creative, bad-tempered, lazy	You used at least 4 of the following expressions: attractive, beautiful, smart, sensitive, intelligent, ambitions, his /her biggest achievement was to, friendly, generous, respectful, self-confident, creative, bad-tempered, lazy, responsible, thankful, understanding	Go to this link and study the vocabulary in the page. http://www.saberingles.com.ar/lists/describing.html

Based on the rubric, tell your partner two good aspects his/her speech.

Listen carefully if your partner used also different connectors!

→ The person most important is my mother because she is intelligent, confident with me

→

Based on the rubric, tell your partner two

aspects to improve :

→ she has to that speak always in English

she has to do a lot of exercise only in her house

→

FHA Vargas-10

Appendix G

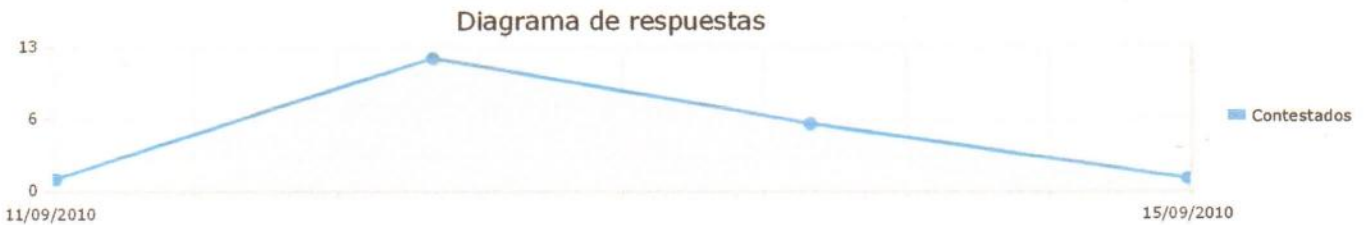
Initial Survey Results



Cambián puedes lanzar encuestas como esta Gestiona GRATIS tus propias encuestas online



Español | English | Português | Italiano | Français



Título: Feedback on your partner

No hay ningún filtro aplicado a los resultados de esta encuesta

15/09/2010 22:27

Cuestionarios contestados: 20
Cuestionarios finalizados: 20

Filtros

Página 1. Cambia este título por el de la página

1. Your full name:

Respuestas recogidas: 19

Preguntas sin contestar: 1

2. What is your previous (=previo) experience with feedback?

	%	Total
Feedback was useful for me.	60%	12
I received feedback but I did not pay attention to it.	15%	3
I received feedback but it was not useful for me.	20%	4
Other (please specify)	5%	1

Respuestas recogidas: 20

Preguntas sin contestar: 0

3. You give feedback on a speaking activity in the English classroom to one of your partners. In your opinion, what can be the effect of this?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Feedback on my partner can be helpful for his/her speaking skills in the English language.	25% (5)	40% (8)	25% (5)	10% (2)	0% (0)	(20)
Feedback on my partner helps me and my partner in speaking in English.	15% (3)	60% (12)	20% (4)	5% (1)	0% (0)	(20)
I don't think that I am able to give feedback to a partner about his/her speaking skills in English.	0% (0)	10% (2)	45% (9)	35% (7)	10% (2)	(20)
I don't think that feedback can be useful when it is not from the teacher.	0% (0)	30% (6)	30% (6)	30% (6)	10% (2)	(20)

Respuestas recogidas: 20

Preguntas sin contestar: 0

4. You receive feedback by a partner on a speaking activity in the English classroom. In your opinion, what can be effects of this?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Feedback by my partner can be helpful for my speaking skills in English.	25% (5)	45% (9)	15% (3)	15% (3)	0% (0)	(20)
Feedback by a partner helps me and him/her in speaking in English.	25% (5)	40% (8)	25% (5)	10% (2)	0% (0)	(20)
I don't think my partner is able (=es capaz) to give feedback about my speaking skills in English.	5% (1)	15% (3)	35% (7)	40% (8)	5% (1)	(20)
I don't think that feedback is useful when it is not from the teacher.	0% (0)	20% (4)	30% (6)	40% (8)	10% (2)	(20)

Respuestas recogidas: 20



Preguntas sin contestar: 0



6. How do you feel when you receive feedback by a partner?

		%	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> I feel good about it as I think I can improve myself.		20%	4
<input type="checkbox"/> I feel good about it as I like to hear opinions by others.		55%	11
<input type="checkbox"/> I feel neutral about it.		15%	3
<input type="checkbox"/> I don't feel good about it as I could feel offended.		5%	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		5%	1

Respuestas recogidas: 20
Preguntas sin contestar: 0

7. How would you like to do speaking tasks in the classroom?

		%	Total
<input type="checkbox"/> In pairs (en parejas)		70%	14
<input type="checkbox"/> In small groups (3 - 4 people)		35%	7
<input type="checkbox"/> In big groups (5 people and more)		5%	1
<input type="checkbox"/> As a whole group		5%	1
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)		0%	0

Respuestas recogidas: 20
Preguntas sin contestar: 0

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TRIFACTORY

Appendix H**While Stage Survey Sample 1**

Nombre y apellido: ANDRÉS RAMÓN SILVA

CUESTIONARIO SOBRE LA RETROALIMENTACIÓN ENTRE COMPAÑEROS

A continuación encontrarás diez preguntas sobre el uso de la retroalimentación en clase como herramienta para ampliar el vocabulario oral. Por favor, marca la opción mas acorde con tu opinión. Recuerda que no hay respuestas buenas ni malas.

1. Como te sentiste cuando tu compañero/a te dio retroalimentación en una tarea de "speaking"?

- Pienso que mi compañero/a no tiene suficiente conocimiento en el inglés para darme retroalimentación.
- Pienso que mi compañero/a es capaz de darme retroalimentación en una tarea de "speaking" y me puede ayudar.
- Mi compañero/a no me puede ayudar porque no es capaz de darme retroalimentación.
- La retroalimentación por mi compañero/a no fue muy clara.
- Pienso que la retroalimentación me ayudó a mejorar mi fluidez en "speaking".
- Otro (Por favor especifique)

2. Como te sentiste al dar retroalimentación a la tarea de speaking al compañero/a?

- Pienso que no tengo suficiente conocimiento en el inglés para darle retroalimentación a mi compañero/a.
- Pienso que soy capaz de retroalimentar a mi compañero/a en las tareas de speaking.
- No sentí ningún efecto porque el propósito de las tareas con la rúbrica no fue clara.
- Pienso que escuchar con atención a las oraciones de mi compañero/a me ayudó en las tareas de speaking.
- Pienso que le puedo ayudar a mi compañero/a a través de la retroalimentación para mejorar sus habilidades en speaking.
- Otro (Por favor especifique)

3. Marca en la siguiente escala la utilidad de la retroalimentación de tu compañero hacia ti en la variedad de tu vocabulario, siendo 1 menor utilidad y 5 mayor utilidad.

1 ninguna utilidad 2 poca utilidad 3 indeciso 4 util 5 muy util

4. Marca en la siguiente escala la utilidad de la retroalimentación que realizas a tu compañero/a en la variedad de tu vocabulario, siendo 1 la menor y 5 la mayor.

1 ninguna utilidad 2 poca utilidad 3 indeciso 4 util 5 muy util

5. ¿Piensas que las actividades te ayudaron a ampliar el vocabulario y así mejorar tu fluidez para hablar?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
Pienso que no podía mejorar mi fluidez en hablar el idioma cuando hablo inglés*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pienso que la fluidez no fue afectada por las actividades.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Pienso que, por el vocabulario y las expresiones utilizadas en las rubricas, podía mejorar mi grado de fluidez en el idioma ingles.*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. ¿Como te sentiste con el uso de la rúbrica para retroalimentar tu compañero/a?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
No me quedó claro y no sabía que hacer.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Me sentí bien pero tenía dudas sobre como utilizar la rúbrica.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. Utilizaste los "Action Plans" que se encuentran en las rúbricas?

- Si
- A veces
- No

10. En tu condición de estudiante, que sugerencias puedes aportar para mejorar el uso de la estrategia de la retroalimentación entre compañero/as (peer feedback) para ampliar tu variedad de vocabulario?

Appendix I

While Stage Survey Sample 2

Nombre y apellido:

Yessica Comea

CUESTIONARIO SOBRE LA RETROALIMENTACIÓN ENTRE COMPAÑEROS

A continuación encontrarás diez preguntas sobre el uso de la retroalimentación en clase como herramienta para ampliar el vocabulario oral. Por favor, marca la opción mas acorde con tu opinión. Recuerda que no hay respuestas buenas ni malas.

1. Como te sentiste cuando tu compañero/a te dio retroalimentación en una tarea de "speaking"?

- Pienso que mi compañero/a no tiene suficiente conocimiento en el inglés para darme retroalimentación.
- Pienso que mi compañero/a es capaz de darme retroalimentación en una tarea de "speaking" y me puede ayudar.
- Mi compañero/a no me puede ayudar porque no es capaz de darme retroalimentación.
- La retroalimentación por mi compañero/a no fue muy clara.
- Pienso que la retroalimentación me ayudó a mejorar mi fluidez en "speaking".
- Otro (Por favor especifique)

2. Como te sentiste al dar retroalimentación a la tarea de speaking al compañero/a?

- Pienso que no tengo suficiente conocimiento en el inglés para darle retroalimentación a mi compañero/a.
- Pienso que soy capaz de retroalimentar a mi compañero/a en las tareas de speaking.
- No sentí ningún efecto porque el propósito de las tareas con la rúbrica no fue clara.
- Pienso que escuchar con atención a las oraciones de mi compañero/a me ayudó en las tareas de speaking.
- Pienso que le puedo ayudar a mi compañero/a a través de la retroalimentación para mejorar sus habilidades en speaking.
- Otro (Por favor especifique)

3. Marca en la siguiente escala la utilidad de la retroalimentación de tu compañero hacia ti en la variedad de tu vocabulario, siendo 1 menor utilidad y 5 mayor utilidad.

1 ninguna utilidad 2 poca utilidad 3 indeciso 4 util 5 muy util

4. Marca en la siguiente escala la utilidad de la retroalimentación que realizas a tu compañero/a en la variedad de tu vocabulario, siendo 1 la menor y 5 la mayor.

1 ninguna utilidad 2 poca utilidad 3 indeciso 4 util 5 muy util

5. ¿Piensas que las actividades te ayudaron a ampliar el vocabulario y así mejorar tu fluidez para hablar?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
Pienso que no podía mejorar mi fluidez en hablar el idioma cuando hablo inglés*	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pienso que la fluidez no fue afectada por las actividades.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pienso que, por el vocabulario y las expresiones utilizadas en las rubricas, podía mejorar mi grado de fluidez en el idioma inglés.*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6. ¿Como te sentiste con el uso de la rúbrica para retroalimentar tu compañero/a?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
No me quedó claro y no sabía que hacer.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Me sentí bien pero tenía dudas sobre como utilizar la rúbrica.*	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Me sentí seguro con el uso de la rúbrica y sentí que sabía lo que tenía que hacer.*

<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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7. Que sentiste con el uso de las expresiones, conectores y el vocabulario que se encuentran en las rubricas al dar la retroalimentacion a tu compañero/a?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
--	--------------------------	---------------------	---------	------------------------------	-----------------

No vi el proposito de las expresiones y del vocabulario.*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Sentí que me sirvió para mejorar mi propio uso de las expresiones y del vocabulario cuando tenía que escuchar atentamente al uso de estas.*

<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Sentí que no me sirvió cuando el vocabulario no me pareció útil*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------------

8. Sentiste que tu compañero/a podía ayudarte cuando te daba retroalimentacion con base en el vocabulario y los conectores de la rúbrica?

	Completamente de acuerdo	De acuerdo en parte	Neutral	No estoy del todo de acuerdo	Nada de acuerdo
--	--------------------------	---------------------	---------	------------------------------	-----------------

Pienso que me ayudó porque me dijo cual del vocabulario y de los conectores utilicé al hacer la tarea de speaking.*

<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
-----------------------	----------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Pienso que no me ayudó porque no vi el proposito de que mi compañero/a escuchara cual vocabulario utilicé.*

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------------

9. Utilizaste los "Action Plans" que se encuentran en las rúbricas?

- Si
 A veces
 No

10. En tu condición de estudiante, que sugerencias puedes aportar para mejorar el uso de la estrategia de la retroalimentación entre compañero/as (peer feedback) para ampliar tu variedad de vocabulario?

Yo pienso que debería enseñarse más vocabulario para aplicar a la hora de la speaking 😊

Appendix J

Students' logs sample

Here you write a short reflection about the activity and how it was to evaluate your partner.

Please have the following points in mind (you can write it in Spanish)

1. Was the rubric useful for your speaking exercise?
2. Have your partner used the words in the rubric?
3. Was the feedback from your partner helpful?
4. Did it help yourself to give feedback to your partner?

About the speaking exercise that's OK, because we used the different obligatory connectors and we had on a good form the structure about the topic.

She used some words about the rubric, and she needs to expand the vocabulary but that's OK.

The feedback with my partner is good because she tells me some mistakes and I learn the correct structure.

And when I do the feedback I tell about the different things she needs to change.

Appendix K

Focus group sample – Transcription

Focus group

XXXXXX, XXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXX y XXXXXXXX

Que piensan ustedes del uso de las rubricas de las tareas de speaking?

XXXXXXXX:

Yo creo deberías dar mas tiempo, no? Porque a veces los análisis que se hacen se hacen muy a la ligera y no hacemos con el análisis que se debe hacer, entonces para muchas cosas había una actitud como “trabajamos bien, nos sentimos bien, me sentí bien con lo que hicimos con mi compañero, PERO hace falta hacer un poquito mas. Creo que cuando venimos aquí a hacer el trabajo independiente era como de muy poco tiempo, a la ligera, teníamos que hacer el trabajo rápido porque había el TOEFL, me parece que por falta de tiempo podríamos hacer un trabajo muchísimo mucho.

Y el proceso de las rubricas y dar feelback a sus compañeros ? Que piensan del vocabulario?

XXXXXXXX:

Yo creo que faltó variarlo. Porque había el mismo vocabulario siempre.

XXXXX:

Si, los conectores eran los mismos pero el vocabulario era variado.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

Y lo mismo de las cosas donde teníamos que escribir deberían cambiar. Que nosotros tendríamos mas opciones de escribir otras cosas. Porque realmente todo el mundo empezó a rellenarlo también por falta de tiempo. Lo que caiga y ya.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

Falto como una variedad de vocabulario también. Porque por ejemplo, tu dabas 5 palabras como opciones pero nosotros necesitaban palabras diferentes y lo alcanzamos grabar y en realidad no podíamos señalar cuales utilizamos porque dijimos diferentes, entonces tenias como la justificación de que dijimos esas, entonces seria interesante si tuviéramos la opción de poder poner palabras también, que quizás estén mal pero por lo menos lo utilizamos.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

Estoy de acuerdo con la acusión de tiempo. Es indispensable contar con un poco mas de tiempo para optimizar la calidad.

XXXXXXXXXX:

Si, y una mejor introducción de lo que vimos. Porque era como hacer la rubrica, sino primero ver que era en la hoja y explicar que era en la rubrica y todo lo que vimos.

XXXXXXX: *Te refieres a las tareas en si mismo?*

XXXXXXXXXX:

No, me refiero a las rubricas, lo que estaba ahí para que servia cada una porque habían unas palabras que no sabíamos.

En su punto de vista, cuales son las ventajas de la retroalimentación entre compañeros?

XXXXXXXXXX:

pues yo pienso que entre compañeros hay una mejor confianza entonces puede ser mas fácil recibir la retroalimentación de un compañero , a veces mas de un profesor.

XXXXXXXXXX:

y aparte, las palabras son un poco mas simples, y nosotros del nivel 3 no usamos un lenguaje muy avanzado como la lenguaje de un profesor, en cambio un compañero te va a decir las cosas con un lenguaje que tu entiendes , si?, con el vocabulario que tu usas diariamente. Y tu puedes decir “ah - fue eso”; pero si un profesor te dice las cosas un poco mas complejo entonces vas a quedar como “que fue lo que hice mal”, y eso es que nos ayuda también.

Y las desventajas?

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX:

el nivel de aprendizaje de ellos es el mismo de el de nosotros. De pronto, ellos también tienen muchos errores y no nos pueden corregir cosas muchas veces.

XXXXXXXXXX:

exacto, el profesor obviamente sabe todo lo que tenemos que saber en este momento. Pero a un compañero se le escapan muchas cosas, y el tiene un cierto concepto de que no esta bien, pero al mismo tiempo puede ser equivocado.

XXXXXXXXXX:

cada quien tiene algo que aportar; entonces si yo se algo que tu no sabes nos podemos ayudar. Por eso, en esa media, si es posible hacer el doble ataque; si trabajamos en speaking, estamos mejorando el speaking, y si estamos construyendo el grupo. Por lo menos cuando yo trabajo con Yessica, ella me dice "como se dice esto" después yo la ayudo, o ella también me ayuda con palabras, entonces yo creo que mas de una desventaja es una ventaja el contruir el sentido de todos ayudarse.

Como se sienten cuando ustedes dan retroalimentación a un compañero?

XXXXXXXXXX:

también depende del tema, no?

YO: en las tareas de speaking

XXXXXXXXXX:

en realidad yo me siento muy poco segura, porque yo sé lo que estoy trabajando, lo poco que sé lo uso en clase, pero hace falta profundizar un poco mas, y esto es una desventaja porque yo estoy utilizando solo que me dan en una clase pero mas alla no estoy dando; entonces mi compañero obviamente esta en una desventaja, porque yo lo que estoy corrigiendo de pronto no esta bien y uno tiene un punto de vista mas avanzado y mas profundo con respecto al tema.

XXXXXXXXXX:

De pronto insegura, porque nosotros simplemente hemos basado en las mismas palabras y nos hemos preocupado por adquirir mas vocabulario. Entonces nos hemos limitado con esto.

Y al contrario, al recibir?

XXXXXXXXXX:

Inseguro, uno se siente mas inseguro.

YO: al recibir?

XXXXXXXXXX:

si al recibir la retroalimentación. Porque según el nivel, porque todos estamos aquí, pero un compañero puede saber mas o puede saber menos y no te califica bien, no te dice exactamente lo que tu esperas, y uno se siente a veces como perdido.

XXXXXXXXXX:

Y como inseguridad se siente. Por lo menos yo, cuando hago el oficio de enseñar algo, sé por lo menos lo que enseño yo enseño algo con la certeza de que eso es. No puedo enseñar algo de que estoy inseguro. Por mi parte, yo me siento bien al dar retroalimentación, porque trato de construir algo con el compañero. Pero cuando me dan la verdad yo si sé soy como escéptico porque no sé si me dan una buena retroalimentación. Es diferente con un profesor la sensación.

Que manera de retroalimentación prefieren ustedes?

XXXXXXXXXX:

yo diría que prefiero la retroalimentación de un profesor porque me da la certeza de que es seguro lo que me están enseñando, en cambio de un compañero que no tenga la certeza de esto, pues voy a quedar en los mismos voy a quedar en como “si sabe o no – no me queda claro si es cierto lo que dice mi compañero”. Y en realidad del profesor tengo mucho mas claridad y le puedo hacer mucho mas preguntas que me puede responder y me van a quedar menos dudas.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

del profesor, para que sean mas claras. Y con un vocabulario mas fácil para que podamos entenderlo.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

Si también del profesor – mas esencial del profesor. Pero yo creo tampoco se puede descartar la del compañero. Pero entonces habría que tener mas énfasis en la del profesor.

Tu te refieres a una combinación de los dos.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

Si, puede ser.

XXXXXXXXXXXX:

es algo parecido a lo que se hace en las demás materias, en las monitorias. No se descarta de que sabe el alumno por ejemplo el alumno esta haciendo una ayuda, pero el profesor es mas vital.

Appendix L

Sample Transcription of a speaking performance while stage

Transcript 14th October 2010

XXXXX & YYYYYY

X: What is your career?

Y: my career its social communication.

X: Why do you choose this career?

Y: Because its different the other career, I like this career and I want to be a good journalist and I wanna be the sport journalist. And no more, it's the interesting of the other careers.

X: What kind of jobs can you get when you end your career?

Y: my objects on in my career its mymy first object in my career is be I wanna I want to be a good journalist and its my first object if I finish the carrer and Iwanna be a in the television and I don't know and in the communication in the society.

My first question is: what are you studying now?

X: im studying industrial ingeneering.

Y: why do you study industrial ingeneer?

X: in this moment, I don't know. Ehm I don't have really a reason, I feel that is a good career, I like much a lot I like this career ehm.....in this moment really I don't have a reason because no I feel nice study this career.

Y: Which are your ambitions?

X: my ambitions. My first ambition is end this career. I would like to do a specialization and I would like get a nice job...is important for the reason I think that all study....for get a good job and no more.

Appendix M

Sample Analysis of 3 transcriptions

Analysis of Diagnostic Test XXXX YYYY

<p>Cindy: What was your important first?</p> <p>A: Why?</p> <p>C: What?</p> <p>C: ehm, because ehm im sorry, important first or anecdote?</p> <p>C: what was your anecdote?</p> <p>Anyi: because ehm the funniest was that the pastor was speaking in English so I didn't understand nothing because anybody said me that these conference was for international people</p> <p>C: who were you with?</p> <p>A: my family, the friends, and the pastor</p> <p>C: why was this your anecdote?</p> <p>A: what? Otra vez?</p> <p>C: which was your anecdote?</p> <p>A: remember when I went to the church with my family for first time, this day was very important for me I feeland full of pace and whats nice and fu?</p> <p>C: when did you go to the place?</p> <p>A: I went to the church in the neighborhood in Bogota?</p>	<p>Not appropriately used connector 1</p> <p>1</p> <p>Problems of comprehension</p> <p>Class vocabulary was appropriately used Lack of connectors for coherence Lack of vocabulary to express idea</p>
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<p>C: where? Was your anecdote?</p> <p>A: in the church</p>	<p>Appropriately used word</p>
--	--------------------------------

Analysis of Implementation Session 11th October 2010

<p>Anyi: When was she work?</p> <p>S: my mother was work for February 60 to What is she done now?</p> <p>A: She is working in a beautiful restaurant. What and were did she study?</p> <p>S: my mother is study secretary and now she wants relax. Where was she worked for life?</p> <p>A: She has been work in Argentin for 4 years. Where has she worked all life for??</p> <p>S: ehm my mother I perdon she wants she has relax and she has learned different courses she has ehm different activities or..i doesn't work What is she doing and is she doing anything do to do as achievement ??? position in her job?</p> <p>A: She is working to this place for have a bigger position in her job.</p>	<p>Appropriately used 1</p> <p>1</p> <p>Wrong word 1 / appropriate use</p> <p>Wrong word 1</p>
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Analysis of Final Speaking Test

<p>Anyyi: What was your important first?</p> <p>Cindy: My important first the travel to San Andres with my family and five friends ehm this travel was very important in my life.</p> <p>Anyyi: Why was this your important first?</p> <p>Cindy: Because this moment was to experience beautiful and I know different sculptures and this place is is beautiful.</p> <p>Anyyi: Who was in your important first?</p> <p>Cindy: my family....and my five best friends and no more.</p> <p>Milton: Tell me about the different activities in San Andres.</p> <p>Cindy: different activities? I talk around the sea and san Andres have many place to dance and the hotel ...was big...and....no more....</p> <p>Milton: Do you have an anecdote to tell?</p> <p>Cindy: Ehm,</p> <p>Cindy: ehm....why you choose this career?</p> <p>Anyyi: I chose this career because I like because is important for the soccity</p> <p>Cindy: what is the most important in your life?</p> <p>Anyyi: the most important is to help the different people who don't cant have a</p>	<p>Correct use of connector 2</p> <p>Superlative correct / correct use of expression</p>
--	--

<p>normal life.</p> <p>Cindy: What you like this career.....?</p> <p>Annyi: I like a lot of thing, for example I like ehm that the psychology study the different process intellectual and of the person and so it study the? also I can help to the people in the future I will be have my mum ..?...</p> <p>Tell me about good things of being a psychologist.</p> <p>Annyi: for example my responsible is I must listening to people and I must help with your problems with different ...?.....</p>	<p>3 connectors</p> <p>Expression not appropriately use/Lack of vocabulary</p> <p>Word taken from the rubric, however, not appropriately used</p> <p>Lack of vocabulary</p>
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