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Collaborative Learning: A Strategy to Promote Speaking Skills in A1 Students from Two
Colombian Public Schools

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Directed by Claudia ACERO

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING TO PROMOTE SPEAKING SKILLS

Declaration

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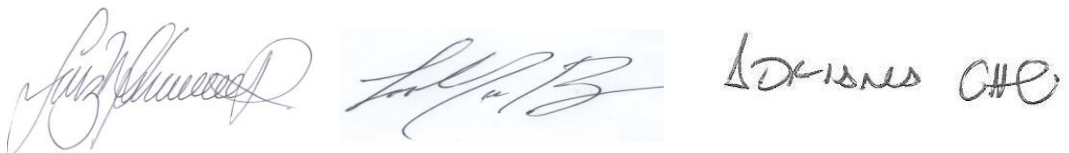
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Abstract

This research follows a qualitative action research approach that took place in two public institutions in Bogota - Colombia. The information was gathered using data collection instruments such as audio recordings of students role plays and questionnaires. The main purpose of this research study was to determine the extent to which the implementation of collaborative learning might foster the development of speaking skills. It was focused on grammatical competence of 54 A1 level students. The analysis of the oral performance involved accurate grammatical rules and appropriate vocabulary when students worked collaboratively. The findings of the research suggest that collaborative learning raised participants' awareness of their language competence, their difficulties, and the way to overcome them through self-correction, monitoring, peer correction, and minimal responses. Additionally, collaboration encouraged learners to be more involved in their learning process and actively participate in the English class.

Key Words: speaking, speaking skill, collaborative learning, social construction of knowledge, and grammatical competence.

Resumen

Esta investigación sigue un enfoque de investigación acción cualitativa que tuvo lugar en dos instituciones públicas en Bogotá – Colombia. La información se recolectó usando instrumentos de recolección de datos como grabaciones de sonido y cuestionarios. El principal propósito de esta investigación fue determinar hasta qué punto la implementación del aprendizaje colaborativo podría promover el desarrollo de las habilidades orales de los estudiantes enfocado en la competencia gramatical en 54 estudiantes de nivel A1. El análisis del desempeño oral de los estudiantes involucra el uso adecuado de las reglas gramaticales y el vocabulario apropiado al trabajar colaborativamente. Los hallazgos de esta investigación sugieren que el aprendizaje colaborativo elevó la conciencia gramatical de los participantes sobre sus dificultades y sobre la forma de superarlas a través de la autocorrección, el monitoreo, la corrección de los pares y las respuestas mínimas. Adicionalmente, la colaboración animó a los estudiantes a involucrarse más en su proceso de aprendizaje y a participar activamente en la clase de inglés.

Palabras claves: expresión oral, habilidades de expresión oral, aprendizaje colaborativo, construcción social del conocimiento y competencia gramatical.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the study

The world is engulfed by a globalisation process that does not only include economic, political and social issues, but also implies language spread. Nowadays, there is an increasing interest in learning English because this language is perceived to give a higher status, eliminate linguistic barriers, and promote cross-cultural communication (McKay, 2002). Those are some of the reasons why learning English has become a trending topic in Colombia as well as in some other Latin American countries.

The Colombian government is promoting English learning in order to embrace new challenges that allow economic growth. Learning this target language has become a need to compete in equal conditions with people from other countries. Subsequently, this trend has reached the educational field in an arms race to get competitive advantage through the acquirement of greater knowledge and skills (Graddol, 2006).

Hence, the implementation of the National Bilingual Programme in Colombia by the Ministry of Education (MEN, for its acronym in Spanish) and the British Council policy promotes a “vision of bilingualism by requiring that by 2019 all school and university graduates should reach a certain level of bilingualism in English and Spanish at the end of their studies (either B1 or B2 as regards English)” (De Mejía, 2011, p. 14). In addition to that, teachers and students’ performance is assessed by the *Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: ¡el reto!* (MEN, 2006), a document that adopts the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR) guidelines and adjusts them to Colombia’s educational setting.

However, there are just six public bilingual schools in Bogota. According to Redacción El Tiempo (2010), Bogota's bilingual pedagogical model for those schools offers students five hours of English class per week and two more of science in the target language; contrary to the large amount of public institutions that just provide three hours of English class per week, which is not enough when the language learning objective is to reach international standards as the CEFR provides. In this context, English teachers' aim is to seek effective strategies that not only foster but also improve students' communicative skills in the target language. They have the responsibility to implement those strategies as well as to raise students' awareness regarding their English learning process in spite of the surrounding constraints.

This research study intends to inform readers about the implementation of collaborative learning to promote the development of the speaking skill in students involved in an EFL (English as Foreign Language) context. The implementation of non-traditional instructional techniques, as it is collaborative learning, might offer students the possibility to explore and construct knowledge with others as well as to interact more with the target language; it means students become more aware on the spoken language features of the target language.

1.2 Rationale of the study

This research study emerged as a strategy to tackle students' speaking struggles with the target language. Learners recognise the importance of communicating appropriately but some of the students find it difficult to develop and promote their communicative competence in the target language. These difficulties are mainly related to a lack of awareness on how English works and to the dissimilarities between English and Spanish.

Although students are capable of fulfilling their duties, most of them show low levels in English performance. In spite of this situation, they have displayed a positive attitude towards the

English subject. Learners give more importance to writing than to speaking because, when they write, students are not as vulnerable as when they speak, standing in front of the class and exposing themselves to the ridicule of their fellow classmates. When writing, they are more confident as they do not attach too much importance to their mistakes. Speaking bears more relevance to their mistakes, they are more conscious of their speaking struggles. These difficulties result from diverse factors: lack of awareness of the English language system, neglected learning difficulties from childhood, laxity of the educational system, lack of interest and autonomy. Additionally, determinations regarding curriculum, pedagogy, materials, evaluation which are decided and selected by teachers. Consequently, students' language learning may be hindered; and that is why it is the teachers' duty to guide that process and find suitable strategies to help learners to actually communicate, interact, and speak in English.

1.2.1 Needs analysis and problem statement

Eighth graders from two public institutions were asked for consent at the beginning of this project. They signed a consent letter (see Appendix A) in which they agreed to be participants of this research study. The researchers conducted a needs analysis to verify the real situation of their speaking skill development. The collected data were gathered from a questionnaire (see Appendix B) and a short conversation whose main aim was to confirm the real necessity of the target population regarding their English speaking performance. The following are the conclusions drawn from the questionnaire (for the complete needs analysis results, see Appendix C):

- 70 % of the learners consider that the English subject is very important, while the 30 % remaining think it is extremely important.

- 60 % of the students admit that speaking is the most difficult but also the most important skill to be developed. In spite of that, they prefer activities focused on writing because they find them easier.
- Although most of the students manifest to be active in class, they consider that their oral performance is low.
- Students feel more comfortable at working in groups because they learn more.

The second part of the needs analysis corresponded to the recording of students' short conversations in English to ensure the purpose of this research. They were asked about their personal information. Then, they worked in pairs and talked based on the flashcards they were given.

Few students were able to actually talk in English. Most of them did not understand or misunderstood questions because they did not know some words, which evidenced students' lack of vocabulary. During the dialogue, some students seemed to be uncomfortable, they could not make simple sentences, questions nor provide information. In some cases, they answered using their mother tongue when they did not know the word or expression they needed, which is very common in students that have an A1 English level.

There are multiple factors that contribute to the low performance of students' speaking skill. To begin with, the lack of practice in and outside the classroom. Furthermore, there is also the students' fear to be exposed or make mistakes. This need analysis demonstrated the immediate necessity of working on the development and improvement of students' speaking skills. As speaking is mediated by interaction in a social construction of knowledge and meaning, collaborative learning is viewed as an appealing strategy for our students to reach a more effective oral production in English.

Taking into account Colombia's EFL setting and the challenges of a Bilingual Programme in which learners do not have enough interaction with the target language, it emerges the need for changing learners' perspectives on how they can overcome their language learning difficulties. Therefore, it is crucial to make students aware of their learning process and focus on the strategies that can help them tackle their speaking struggles. Thus, there will be more possibilities for learners to interact with the target language and actually speak in English.

1.2.2 Justification of problem's significance

The needs analysis results reveal the urgency of promoting speaking skills in the English language instruction of these two public schools. This will allow learners to be ready to compete in equal terms on this globalised world. Nowadays, world boundaries are not only geographical lines separating one territory from another; they are imaginary lines traced by those who have a good command of English and can take advantage of professional opportunities in contrast with those who do not even have the possibility to be trained in learning English as a second or foreign language.

From this perspective, this study intends to offer an alternative to overcome some of the constraints students experience in their current English language learning within the Colombian context. On the one hand, students request more time in speaking sub-skills instruction regarding grammatical competence and vocabulary to effectively communicate ideas, feelings, thoughts, opinions, questions, and worries. On the other hand, the needs analysis showed that students prefer working in groups, but this kind of work is not really promoted due to the fact that most of the time they do not know how to work together. Conversely, the overuse of individual work has been an impediment to learn effectively and to construct knowledge together.

1.2.3 Strategy proposed to address problem

Most of the students used to work individually in the two public school contexts, which indeed reduces their possibilities to interact with the target language orally and, consequently, generates a low level of speaking performance in English. This goes in consonance with the data needs analysis and the students' claim to use new strategies that might facilitate their foreign language learning process. In this regard, the strategy proposed to address the problem, bearing in mind the given context, is the use of collaborative learning as an approach that might serve to ease students speaking skills achievement while working together.

Students received significant input related to accurate grammar rules. They were provided with suitable vocabulary according to their linguistic and cognitive needs for they to construct appropriate speech, so they could achieve tasks that will require from them to work in groups, share previous and new knowledge, negotiate, and communicate to each other appropriately. Likewise, collaboration was implemented as a tool to facilitate tasks completion and achievement by fostering the students' critical thinking and problem solving skills.

1.3 Research question and objective

This research intends to present a new alternative to solve communication difficulties in the field of second language teaching and learning, specifically in the speaking skill development through collaborative learning. Hence, the current research addresses the following question:

How does collaborative learning promote speaking skills in A1 level students in two Colombian public schools?

The general objective of this study is to determine the extent to which the implementation of collaborative learning may foster speaking skills development in A1 level students. The specific objectives of this research study are:

- To analyse the collaborative learning impact in A1 level students' oral production in two public schools.
- To identify the strategies A1 level students use to promote their speaking skills.

1.4 Conclusion

Collaborative learning was chosen as a strategy to contribute to the improvement of the speaking skills of eighth graders at two Colombian public institutions. Working collaboratively has a positive effect on students' learning as they actively interact with the target language. This may enable learners to counteract their speaking struggles by finding and using strategies that enhance their oral production in English as well as their communicative competence.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter proposes a theoretical discussion that revolves around two main constructs: speaking skills and collaborative learning. They constitute the foundation of this research study, which addresses students' speaking development as well as their interaction with others.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Speaking skills

Speaking is a productive skill that entails many factors. Brown (1994) states that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. Similarly, Nunan (2003, p. 48) defines it as the productive aural/oral skill that comprises systematic verbal utterances whose aim is to convey meaning. Another definition is that of Florez (1999), who refers to speaking as an interactive process that requires producing, receiving and processing information. Likewise, the online Oxford Dictionary defines speaking as an action of conveying information that indicates the accuracy degree intended in a statement or the point of view from which it is made. Bygate (1987) highlighted the importance of seeing it as a process differentiated by the knowledge of the language and the skill on using this knowledge. Harmer (2001) also distinguishes these two elements —knowledge of the language features and ability to use this information to communicate— as mental/social processing. With this in mind, speaking is an interactive process in which information is interchanged to convey meaning; hence, in order to do that, it is necessary to know the particular components of the language and be competent to use that knowledge in a communicative context. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the participants needed to learn about the language features while being involved in situations that simulated the real world communication.

Speaking is the most difficult skill to be developed, but, among the communicative skills of second language learning and acquisition, it is the most relevant one for learners (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Nunan, 2003). Some of them could say it is the hardest, and Bygate (1998) agrees when he states that “speaking is a high complex mental activity which differs from other activities because it requires much greater effort of the central nervous system” (p. 23). There are reasons for this statement: while speaking is a real time act, in which a response is immediately expected, reading and writing can be edited and revised when conveying meaning (Nunan, 2003, p. 48). Thornbury (2007) agrees by adding that speech production takes place in real time, and qualifies speech as linear and spontaneous.

Speaking is a very complex act. According to Brown (2007), some of its characteristics are: clustering, hesitation markers, pausing, colloquial language and suprasegmental features. Besides, it is an interaction that includes monitoring and understanding the other speaker, producing, giving and monitoring one's own contribution to the conversation. That is why the development of the speaking skill is difficult and demands more time for second or foreign language learners. Furthermore, speaking also includes sub-skills such as grammatical competence, discourse competence, and pragmatic competence. For the purpose of this study, researchers focused on the learners' grammatical competence performance, specifically regarding grammatical structures and use of adequate vocabulary.

In Thornbury's (2007) point of view, speaking consists of four stages, namely: conceptualization, formulation, articulation and self-monitoring. Conceptualization implies choosing a specific topic with its corresponding syntactical and semantic features. Formulation entails the use of words and phrases to convey meaning. Articulation refers to the speech organs

we use to produce sounds. Finally, self-monitoring involves the users' ability to identify and self-correct their mistakes.

For people who are starting to learn a foreign language it is difficult to communicate properly, and teaching speaking has been a challenge for many teachers. In order to teach speaking, it is necessary to focus our attention not only on the general picture, but also in the small pieces that make part of it, the forms of language and its functions (Brown, 2007). As users of the target language, students should be aware of how English works considering the divergence between Spanish and English, which can be perceived from the systematic form of the language. As a result, teaching speaking has followed two main approaches: the direct and the indirect approach. The former requires teaching to focus on the different elements of the speaking process. There are two conditions for students to speak: having knowledge about the language and being skillful on how to do it (Nunan, 2003; Bygate, 1998; Harmer, 1991). This approach includes activities such as pattern practice drills, analysis of spoken structures, and activities where learners construct rules. The latter refers to teaching speaking as a whole, involving students in meaningful conversations tasks such as discussions, information gaps, simulations, and talking circles.

Students need to be involved in the process of negotiation for meaning, which, according to Nunan (2003), requires an effort to understand and be understood on what is being said or heard. Consequently, it is important to consider the design of guided oral classroom activities for students to practice interactional and transactional speaking. The former entails a social purpose: to establish and maintain social relationships. The latter demands communicating to get something done (Nunan, 2003, p. 56). Littlewood (1991, p. 8) proposes two kinds of speaking activities: pre-communicative and communicative activities. The pre-communicative activities

aim at helping the learners to convey meaning through structural and quasi-communicative activities. Structural activities (drills, verb paradigms) are designed to produce accurate and appropriate language. Quasi-communicative activities (question and answer activities, asking for and giving information) are thought to fostering potential meaning of the language.

Communicative activities include functional activities (identifying pictures, discovering sequences, finding locations, missing information, uncovering ‘secrets’, telling the differences, etc.), and social interaction activities (simulation and role-play activities, discussions or conversations). For the purpose of this study, researchers used both types of communicative activities and selected role-playing as the core communicative activity to gather data, considering it is appealing and useful for students to be engaged in speaking.

To allow A1-level students to succeed in the speaking process and promote them towards greater independence, there are two steps teachers might encourage learners to go through: work with a model and discuss, and plan what they want to say (Edge & Garton, 2009). Nobody can speak in isolation, we all need to interact with others. Brown (2001) remarks on interaction as the core of communication: “interaction is the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other” (p. 165). Thus, as students get more independent and speak, it is advisable to ask them to interact in pairs, as Rivers (1987) asserts: “students should first become accustomed to work in pairs” (p. 34). Then, they will be able to interact in bigger groups. Teachers might encourage pair activities such as two-line question-answer exchanges, in which they can interact while practicing a given structure, vocabulary set, pronunciation topic, and more. Hence, once learners become familiar with pair group, it is possible to arrange students in bigger groups and get them involved in real problem solving or imaginative activities in which role-play can be used as a strategy to promote

interaction. This way, students can reproduce different scenarios in the foreign language classrooms.

2.2.2 Collaborative learning

Considering that collaborative learning was chosen as the strategy to address the problem of this study, the researchers started by defining collaborative learning from different perspectives, and then, describing its advantages to help students foster and enhance the speaking skill in foreign language. Collaborative learning is defined by Gokhale (1995) as an instruction method in which students with various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal. Students are responsible for each other's learning as well as their own. Therefore, the success of one student helps other students be successful. Smith and MacGregor (1992) compare collaborative learning to "an umbrella for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together" (p. 10). However, the prior definitions are not conclusive. Dillenbourg (1999) does not agree with any of them. He considers that there is a broad variety of approaches that can be used with this term and determines *scales of "collaboration"* in the number of participants and time of a situation. Dillenbourg (1999) defines collaborative learning as "a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together" (p. 1). But he emphasises on *two or more* understood as a pair, a small group or a class; *learn something* as *follow a course*; and *together* as different types of interaction such as face-to-face or computer-mediated.

Collaborative learning emerges from two scientific approaches. The first is the socio-constructivist approach from the psychological "Genevan School". It deals with the question of how social interaction affects individual cognitive development, which is the aim, rather than actions. According to Dillenbourg (1999), research evidence has demonstrated that, under

particular circumstances, peer interaction produces high performances. He also inferred from Vygotsky that the socio-cultural approach focuses on causal relationships between social interaction and individual cognitive change.

Learning is an active and constructive process, not only because learners grasp new information and compare it with their prior knowledge, but also because they conceive new ideas. Smith and MacGregor (1992) state that “in collaborative learning situations, students are not simply taking in new information or ideas. They are creating something new with the information and ideas. These acts of intellectual processing, of constructing meaning, or creating something new are crucial to learning” (p. 11). In this regard, this strategy is ideal for the participants of this study in view of the social nature of learning and the large size of the participants’ English classes. Thus, researchers found it interesting to take advantage of the collaborative learning approach to make students construct knowledge and learn together more easily. The following are some of the main advantages collaborative learning may offer for students to learn successfully (Gokhale, 1995; Warschauer, 1997):

- Allows active exchange of ideas within small groups.
- Promotes critical thinking.
- Engages in discussion.
- Students take responsibility for their own learning.
- Learners become critical thinkers.
- Students observed exchanges are real and not pedagogical.
- Students develop free and more spontaneous thought.
- Students express deep satisfaction at being able to manage themselves as leaders and contributors.

Brufee (1993) and Oxford (1997) declared that collaborative learning is based on the principles of social constructivism in which learning is perceived as a social construction of knowledge that encourages acculturation. When students work in groups, they start to become a language community. Human beings are social by nature and, according to the socio-cultural perspective, learners do not learn in isolation (Vygotsky, 1978). An individual's cognitive system is the result of interaction in social groups with more knowledgeable human beings. Each individual increases his potential due to the immersion in social contexts. Accordingly, collaborative learning help students advance in their zone of proximal development (Nikos & Reiko, 1997).

In the classroom setting, learners get more benefits when working in groups where teachers as well as students can act as supporting members for the less advanced students. When students are encouraged to work collaboratively in groups, the exchange produced in the interaction with more advanced students provides opportunities for the less advanced to increase their knowledge and learning abilities. Likewise, the most advanced students might benefit from this mutual exchange by getting new insights about topics and developing other ways of understanding (Warschauer, 1997).

Collaborative learning activities take place in contextualised environments where students develop their creativity through reasoning in order to solve problems. Thus, it involves both learning styles and social learning. For the purpose of this research study, collaborative learning is understood as an interaction among two or more people that positively affects the way humans construct meaning. According to Miranda and Saunders (2003), "acquiring, sharing, and processing information are critical activities for decision making" (p. 87). Such processes define

our perspectives about the world and have a direct impact on our reactions and responses to specific situations.

Collaborative learning also underlies cognitive and metacognitive processes originated from conducted transactions and expressions between the people involved. Those transactions do not only represent social interaction but also negotiate meaning (Lloyd & Fernyhough, 1999), as Vygotsky and Cole (1978) stated “the transition from thought to words leads through meaning” (p. 251). People involved in communicative transactions become autonomous of the communicative practice and begin to understand the required logistics when exchanging information in order to coordinate the transactions and responsibilities taken by means of negotiating and constructing social meaning (Shotter, 1990). Learners who work collaboratively are able to attain better results and enhance their cognitive abilities by being more self-directed and self-empowered while constructing knowledge together in the achievement of a common goal.

2.3 State of the art

This section proposes a further conceptualization of the relation between speaking skills and collaborative learning. For that reason, previous research studies and dissertations have been included as a contribution to the understanding of preceding studies that also support this one.

There have been recent studies that explore the connection of speaking skills and collaborative learning. Freniawati, Nainggolan, and Huzairin (2015) followed a quantitative approach in order to discover if second grade students in a Social Sciences class of SMAN 15 Bandar Lampung had a significant improvement in their speaking skills after they were instructed in collaborative learning. The researchers applied pre and post-tests to assess the students' ability to speak. Freniawati *et al.* (2015) discovered that the implementation of

strategies under the premise of collaboration enables students to “discuss the text with their friends freely. So, if the students find some difficulties in comprehending new words, they will ask their friends and discuss it together. By practicing a lot, there will be an improvement of the students’ speaking skill” (p. 12). Following this quantitative research approach, Rampanniyom and Lornklang (2015) also used pre-tests and post-tests to gather data and promote seventh graders speaking ability with collaborative learning. These researchers found that the elements of collaborative learning process —positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, and individual accountability— provided students with the instruction to work together throughout the lessons by completing activities like speaking games, vocabulary activities, pronunciation exercises, interviewing and simulation activities, which help them promote their speaking ability. The aforementioned studies, especially their methodologies and results, give the foundations for this study: on the one hand, the use of collaborative learning elements —positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, and individual accountability to succeed in the language learning process— and, on the other hand, the implementation of pre-tests and post-tests to achieve validity.

Kuo, Chu, and Huang (2015) studied the learning styles of group members. They designed a learning-style based online collaborative approach for one group and a collaborative learning approach for another. The objective was to compare both groups and analyse their performance. The results showed that:

Relatively, students with different learning styles collaboratively learning and negotiating for consistent answers would not necessarily present the effect of drawing on their strong points. On the other hand, students with the same learning style could easily communicate, negotiate, and achieve a consistent answer (p. 292).

Based on the precedent experience, grouping students in homogeneous or heterogeneous learning style groups does not represent a significant difference in students performance and outcomes when working collaboratively. Then, the researchers of this study find pertinent such result since students should learn to work together with people from the same or from a different learning style.

Pattanpichet (2011) investigated the effects of using collaborative learning to enhance students' speaking achievement. Thirty five undergraduate students from a fundamental English course at Bangkok University participated in this research study by taking a pre and post oral test mediated with instructional speaking tasks that revolved around collaborative learning. This research project collected quantitative and qualitative data to demonstrate that "fruitful collaboration among the students brings about a sense of unity and greater familiarity" (Pattanpichet, 2011, p. 7). Students benefited from continuous peer and self-assessment, they analysed their strengths and weaknesses according to their interaction and negotiation while reproducing a real life situation. The results proved collaborative learning to be an effective instructional method for integrating students and making them more committed to their learning process. Likewise, De Oliveira (2010), who conducted a research study on the collaborative construction of knowledge during students' oral interaction in a foreign language (English) class, affirmed:

I tried to understand how collaborative work and assistance among students, during oral (speaking) interactions provided the building blocks, or scaffolding, for each of the students involved to be able to carry out tasks they would not be able to carry out on their own, which provided for success to happen only through collective learning (p. 88).

Researchers interested in collaborative learning adjust this instructional method to their students' and research needs, so as to promote or enhance what has proved to be an effective strategy that raises students' awareness of their learning process.

In Colombia, there are multiple research studies on the development of speaking skills; however, just a few of them focus on its relation to collaborative learning. Gutiérrez (2005) carried out a research project with 40 ninth graders at the Institución Educativa Distrital Britalia. The project started with a needs analysis which demonstrated that students highlighted the importance of improving their speaking competence in the target language but they needed to work on their oral communication. Questionnaires, observations, diaries, video and audiotapes were used as data collection instruments in this action research study. The pedagogical intervention required the implementation of speaking tasks according to the task-based approach, as it was the strategy developed by the author. Gutiérrez (2005) found that speaking was seen as a social skill in which exposure, interaction, and group work let students rehearse and refine their speech. This, in time, improves their oral communication due to the exchange of information and the negotiation of meaning in their conversations.

Similarly, Urrutia and Vega (2010) implemented a research project with tenth graders who felt inhibited with the activities that required oral interaction. The strategy used to solve the students' speaking difficulties was games. They discovered that the implementation of games involves cooperation, self-confidence, motivation and, especially, an improvement in speaking participation. This project also encouraged teachers to search for alternative activities that helped them enhance students' oral production. Similarly, Peña and Onatra (2010) researched on the promotion of oral production through the task-based learning approach. They gathered data from seventh graders and concluded: "the results of the study let us analyse the different demands of

transactional and interactional activities among novice EFL speakers” (Peña & Onatra, 2010, p. 11). They also noticed that mistakes were the path to learning as students use multiple strategies to maintain communication while interacting with others.

It is inevitable to observe the relation between speaking and interaction. There have been other research studies in Colombia that have integrated collaborative learning to support learners’ development and improvement of their speaking skills. For instance, Lopera (2013) carried out a research project with tenth graders from the Camilo Carrasquilla school in Medellín. The main objective was to discover “factors that hinder the improvement of their English speaking skills, as well as to analyse how collaborative strategies affect students’ performance when developing oral tasks” (p. IV). The analysis of the data gathered through questionnaires, teacher and students’ journals, and interviews showed that the main causes of students’ poor oral performance were the lack of motivation and self-confidence. Once students worked collaboratively, they lost their fear to talk, liked the activities and found support by encouraging each other to learn.

Likewise, Díaz (2014) highlighted the importance of implementing social strategies to improve speaking interaction activities. This research project was developed with undergraduate students matriculated in different programs. Her research study demonstrated that “the students were able to interact, use the language to transmit and convey messages and, improve two linguistic components (vocabulary and fluency) along with their self-confidence when speaking” (Díaz, 2014, p. 2). In turn, Gamba (2014) devised a pedagogical intervention in which students used collaborative learning to prepare or improvise speaking tasks. Students were more enthusiastic during the English class, daring to be risky and speak spontaneously. Learners not

only found support by working in teams, but they also became aware of fluency performance and the need of implementing their own learning strategies.

Rubiano (2014) also investigated about the improvement of ninth graders speaking skills with the implementation of role-plays. The strategy she used was setting real-life situations, pair and group work as pedagogical activities. During the pedagogical intervention, role-plays were used as “an effective method of increasing awareness, enhancing participant analysis of field situations, and familiarizing participants with the roles, aims, perspectives and positions of people whom they will meet in the field” (Bartle, 2010, p. 32). The “results suggest that participants of this study improved their speaking skills in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary. In addition, the use of role-playing in the language classroom promoted collaborative work and interaction among participants”(Rubiano, 2014, p. III). Colombian researchers have just started to study collaborative learning and its relation to the improvement of speaking skills in EFL students. That is another reason why the present work has been designed and implemented.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter provided the theoretical foundations for this research study. It allowed the researchers to consider the previous and current knowledge as well as the possible impact this study might have on international and national educational settings. Framing a theoretical discussion delimited the scope of the study and ensured the recognition of some of the researchers who have investigated about the relationship between collaborative learning and development of speaking skills.

Speaking properly is difficult, especially for people who are starting to learn a foreign language, and teaching this skill has been a challenge for many teachers. It is a complex act that

demands more time for second or foreign language learners and requires two conditions from students: knowledge of the foreign language and ability to use it. To teach speaking, it is necessary to work on the language forms and its functions, without forgetting that it is a social act. In this regard, collaborative learning plays an important role to address the problem of this enquiry, due to the fact that students construct knowledge and find it easier to learn together.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researchers present the design of the research project: the type of study, researchers' role, context, participants, a description of the data collection instruments as well as the study's validity, reliability, and procedures.

3.2 Type of study

This study is a qualitative action research. It is a self-reflective, critical and systematic practice to solve specific problems related to learning and teaching (Burns, 2010). This kind of inquiry requires researchers to work on the improvement of an identified problem in a teaching context by the implementation of an instructional method or strategy. Accordingly, this research project is focused on how to promote the development of speaking skills in beginner learners by means of collaborative learning.

According to Corbin and Strauss (2015), "qualitative research is a form of research in which the researcher or a designated co-researcher collects and interprets data, making the researchers as much part of the research process as the participants and the data they provide" (p.4). In addition to that, Creswell (2009) states that qualitative research is:

A means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particular to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data (p. 4).

This study is a qualitative research as it sought to answer a specific question: How does collaborative learning promote speaking skills in A1-level students in two Colombian public

schools? Then, it requires researchers to systematically use a predefined set of procedures to answer that question such as collecting evidence, producing findings that were not determined in advance, and producing findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). Qualitative research demands an inductive process to understand a specific phenomenon while considering the features mentioned before.

Action research promotes a systematic analysis of a continuous implementation process and, at the same time, determines the validity of a particular methodological approach (Burns, 2010). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) define action research as a form of self-reflective exploration whose participants improve their social and educational practices and the context where they take place. Ebbutt (1985) stated that action research is a systematic study that involves action and reflection with the intention of improving the educational practice through a “small-scale intervention” (as cited in Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 186). In addition to that, Koshy (2010) considers the following features of action research:

- Action research is a method used for improving practice. It involves action, evaluation, and critical reflection, and —based on the evidence gathered— changes in practice are then implemented.
- Action research is participative and collaborative; it is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose.
- It is situation-based and context-specific.
- It develops reflection based on interpretations made by the participants.
- Knowledge is created through action and at the point of application.

- Action research can involve problem solving if the solution to the problem leads to the improvement of practice.
- In action research findings will emerge as action develops. (p. 1)

Qualitative action research, represented as a spiral, follows four cyclic steps: planning, action, observation, and reflection. But once the researcher has achieved actions satisfactorily, he can decide to stop doing them (Burns, 2010). Besides being cyclic, action research is participative, qualitative and reflective. Thus, teachers and students are involved in the research study because both are constantly reflecting upon the language teaching, learning process, and outcomes. The application of this methodological approach provided the researchers with the opportunity to observe, analyse, and reflect upon their teaching practice and their students responses to improve their speaking skills development.

Similarly, collaborative action research, as a new perspective of action research, is the exploration of a particular problem or issue to be solved by a group of researchers. It fosters educational practice research and facilitates its process and outcomes in a critical way (Burns, 1999). In line with this, it is possible to negotiate and complement different points of view, beliefs, and conjectures about the problem. Consequently, being in a researchers' group invites teachers to be reflective practitioners looking for the improvement of language learning difficulties in each one of their contexts. Therefore, collaborative action is empowering as it offers a strong framework for whole-school change (Burns, 2010).

Collaborative action research encouraged the teacher-researchers of this study to be more involved in their professional practice in order to find valuable changes in the curriculum based on their institutional demands and the students' needs analysis. Moreover, the researchers of this project became more aware of their capacities to strengthen their research abilities and

professional growth. Among collaborative research advantages, Kemmis and McTaggart (1982) include the identification of what happens in the classroom and the implementation of actions that entail the betterment of classroom practice through the monitoring of actions and their effects.

3.3 Context

This inquiry took place in two public institutions in southeast Bogota: Institución Educativa Distrital La Belleza Los Libertadores and Institución Educativa Francisco Antonio Zea. In both schools most students belonged to a low socioeconomic stratum. The schools population is integrated by boys and girls. They study six hours a day from 6:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., and attend three English class hours per week.

Most learners have expressed their lack of interest in learning English and that is reflected in the low level of performance in the English class. As a result, their final grades at the end of each term are very low. Students have declared they do not need to learn English. Namely, because, once they have finished secondary school, they will continue working on their parents' occupations or will look for a low demanding job that will not require from them to use the target language. This way of thinking might derive from the students' life models which influence their own life projects.

3.3.1 Participants

The participants were 54 eighth graders, 36 of which belonged to the Institución Educativa Distrital (IED) La Belleza Los Libertadores and the 18 remaining to the IED Francisco Antonio Zea. They were teenagers between 14 and 16 years old. All participants were ranked A1 in English level of proficiency according to the CEFR. Their educational institutions follow the Colombian *Basic Standards of Competence in Foreign Languages: English* (MEN, 2006),

according to which students are expected to achieve a B1 level once they finish high school. Students refer to speaking as the most difficult ability for them to learn. Thus, the researchers intend to work on promoting this skill through collaborative learning.

3.3.2 Researcher's role

In the development of this inquiry, the researchers had the roles of English language teachers and reflective practitioners. As English language teachers and researchers, they were participants and observers. They put into practice the methodological strategy, observed, collected data, analysed and made decisions to deal with the core issue of this study (Burns, 1999). The teachers also worked as facilitators by helping students overcome their speaking difficulties through collaborative learning.

As reflective practitioners, the researchers wanted to improve their teaching practices and strengthen their knowledge regarding language teaching. This contributed to enhance each other's practices given that teachers "reflect with colleagues to improve individual practices" (Holly, Arhar, & Kasten, p. 41). In this collaborative action research practitioners worked individually in their educational contexts and, throughout the process, they shared findings and made decisions in order to achieve the research aims.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

People sometimes do not participate in research studies because they are afraid of being judged or exposed. The researchers made participants aware of the research purpose and their possible contributions to it. The participants understood that their involvement was guaranteed with anonymity, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw at any moment. All of this information was included in the consent letter signed by researchers and participants. This ensured an informed consent that implied "two equally important elements: 'consent', which means asking

people to agree to take part in our research without any coercion; and ‘informed’, which means giving them sufficient information on which to make a realistic on the possible consequences of taking part” (Norton, 2008, p. 181). The consent letter:

- explained the purpose of the research study.
- expressed that participation was voluntary.
- ensured the protection of the participant’s identity.
- asked for permission to include the participant's response in the research study.
- expressed gratitude for students’ possible participation.

3.4 Data collection instruments

This research study gathered information from three different data collection instruments in the middle and at the end of the pedagogical intervention: first instrument, students’ questionnaires; second instrument, teacher’s questionnaire and, third instrument students’ role play audio recordings. This section briefly describes the mentioned instruments.

3.4.1 Description

3.4.1.1 Questionnaires

Brown (2001) defines questionnaires as “any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react, either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (p. 6). There is a questionnaire for students (see Appendix C.1) and another for teachers (see Appendix C.2). Researchers used the students’ questionnaire to collect data about their perceptions on their speaking skills performance in the target language and on collaborative learning. The teacher’s questionnaire was focused on the learners’ speaking performance while role-playing and working collaboratively. These questionnaires helped the researchers collect data that provided answers to the research question

since “questionnaires are well suited to gathering data once the issues, research questions, and specific survey questions have been clearly delineated” (Brown, 2001, p. 78).

Researchers applied the questionnaires twice: halfway and at the end of the pedagogical intervention to contrast students’ perceptions about their speaking skills and their experience with collaborative learning in two different moments. Likewise, teachers had the opportunity to use the questionnaires to analyse students’ oral performance and group work.

3.4.1.2 Audio recordings

According to Burns (1999) an audio recording is:

A technique for capturing in detail naturalistic interaction and verbatim utterances. Used in the classroom, they are very valuable sources of accurate information on patterns of interactional behaviour... recording can be used to obtain general observations and impressions of the classroom or alternatively to focus on specific concerns such as peer work, interaction, the amount of learner talk generated through particular activities or the analysis of critical incidents. (p. 94)

This instrument was applied halfway and at the end of the pedagogical intervention to give the researchers insights on the participants’ speaking skills in English and on how they learn collaboratively. The researchers obtained tangible data from students’ role-play transcripts, and students’ and teachers’ questionnaire used in different stages of the pedagogical intervention as a source of analysis.

3.4.2 Validation and piloting

The three data collection instruments were piloted before they were applied in the pedagogical intervention. The researchers received feedback from fellow colleagues and accepted some suggestions regarding language use in order to make it easier for students to

clearly understand what they were required to do. For that reason, the researchers decided to redesign the students' questionnaire by using their mother tongue. Regarding the audio recordings, the researchers previously recorded themselves in order to revise the quality of the sound and to check which technological devices (tape recorders, smartphones) might be more suitable and more useful. These activities were aimed at analysing the practicability and reliability of the instruments in order to validate their appropriateness and concordance with the research question and objectives.

3.5 Conclusion

The design of this qualitative action research study provided the researchers with the opportunity to reflect on the English language teaching and learning practices. The action research method was implemented to address the problem presented in the research question. This promoted a self-reflective practice in which both teachers and students took part in the investigation of the problem exposed in the research question and its possible solutions.

Chapter 4: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

4.1 Introduction

In this section, the main visions that structure the pedagogical intervention of this study will be presented. The researchers took into account the visions of language, learning, and curriculum, as they are essential elements for the development of the implemented teaching practice and aspects that provide more insights on learning and teaching English as a foreign language. Considering that the main objective is to foster A1-level students' speaking skill through collaborative learning, the researchers designed the didactic units for the pedagogical intervention under the principles of collaborative learning where knowledge is constructed, discovered, and transformed by the students.

4.2 Visions of language, learning, and curriculum

4.2.1 Vision of language

Following the purpose of this study, the researchers conceived language as a vehicle for learning, as cited in Warschauer (1997), "language has two main functions: it allows us to (1) interact communicatively and (2) to construe experience". Language works as a tool in the acquisition of linguistic, communicative and social competences in the English class. This involves the socialisation and the multiple elements of interaction whose final aim is to communicate effectively by means of linguistic negotiation (Brown, 2007). This study was mainly focused on the promotion of speaking skills. For that reason, learners were prompted to use English to communicate and get their message across. This was a step towards effective communication in which students negotiated meaning through transactional interaction. It involved a collaborative activity in which students were given the context of a situation and they had to work on the roles required to developed said situation appropriately.

Most of the time, students rely on their native language (Spanish) to understand the target one (English). As Brown (2007) states, learners “attempt to formulate linguistic rules on the basis of whatever linguistic information that is available to them” (p. 73). For this reason, it is essential for the teachers to design activities that promote meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1963) and encourage students to interact with, learn about, and learn through the target language (Warschauer, 1997).

4.2.2 Vision of learning

There are multiple assumptions about learning. It has been said that people are expected to acquire knowledge and that the teacher provides it through explanations and activities (Brindley, 1984). According to this, the researchers could say that both teachers and learners contribute to the experience of learning from their established roles; the students and teachers’ perceptions and interests determine the classroom practices.

The researchers conceived learning as a social act developed through interaction or social interchanges in order to acquire knowledge. They highlighted the importance of an active type of learning in which students learn from their classmates and are also sources of knowledge for them; thus, learning can have a higher impact when working collaboratively. The researchers’ vision of learning is based on social constructivism (Vygotski, 1978) so that students engage in meaningful learning, a learning that comprehends the use and development of cognitive and social strategies. From this point of view, learning “appeals as a negotiation between individual and social knowledge, whose contributions have a dialectical relationship and cannot be meaningfully separated” (Karagiorgi & Symeou, 2005, p. 18). Consequently, learners become testers of interaction, interpret their own experiences and, eventually, assimilate emerging patterns and consider them satisfactory for their learning process (Perkins, 1991).

4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

Kelly (1983) defines curriculum as “all the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried out in groups or individually, inside or outside the school” (p. 10), which has also an effect on the language program planning. According to Aristotle’s theory of knowledge (Kiefer, 2007), three ways of approaching the curriculum practice can be conceived: the theoretical, the productive, and the practical. The theoretical curriculum (Blenkin et al, 1992) is more focused on the transmission of knowledge, it is strongly directed to the design of syllabi and of the topics that will be developed throughout the course. The productive curriculum, as its name states, is determined by the product as “objectives are set, a plan drawn up, then applied, and the outcomes (products) measured” (Smith, 1996). Finally, the practical curriculum, which is based on the process, is the possibility and means to bring educational proposals into reality and practice (Stenhouse, 1975).

Considering the aforementioned curriculum approaches and the purposes of this research study, a practical approach was assumed for the notional/functional curriculum, as it was concentrated on the students’ oral interchange of ideas and thoughts. It revolved around notions, conceptual meanings, functions and communicative purposes (Nunan, 1988), which required an active oral practice from students and an effective feedback from teachers and peers.

This study proposed the reinforcement of the speaking skill by means of collaborative learning, which emphasised the importance of students’ communicative interchange and the social construction of meaning in order to facilitate a more successful learning process. Considering the purpose of this enquiry, this is an example for the practical approach that requires a learning process from small units of discourse to a more complex conversation. From

this perspective, learning is improved through the application of interactional and transactional skills (Nunan, 2003) that connect thought, language, and learning.

After selecting the curriculum, the researchers planned and designed the pedagogical intervention bearing in mind that students need opportunities to learn by doing, interacting, and speaking. One way to achieve this purpose was to design practical speaking activities by means of collaborative work. That is to say, it required that the teacher works not only as an instructor but also as a designer and facilitator of students' learning construction.

4.3 Instructional design

4.3.1 Lesson planning

An adapted version of the In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching (ICELT) lesson plan format was used to organise the development of the different topics, starting with a warm-up stage followed by a presentation, a practice, and finally a production stage. This lesson plan format was very useful for the researchers to apply in the two schools. It provided a clear description of what was planned to be done in each stage by the teachers and students (see Appendix D). "Since students learn through interacting, lessons should consist of opportunities to communicate in the target language" (Nunan, 2003, p. 50). The researchers considered the communicative approach in the creation of lesson plans, and topics were integrated according to the school's syllabi. For the first term, the English program's content in the two schools was focused on the *simple present tense* as the core matter to be taught. The researchers were interested in bringing it over students in a meaningful way through different topics. The communicative approach allowed the researchers to accomplish both the school's requirements and the research objective. The main goal was to focus on all the components of the

communicative competence (Brown, 2000), which benefits the learning of new grammar structures for communicative purposes.

4.3.2 Implementation

The implementation was done in eight 150-minute face-to-face sessions (one per week) for a total time of four months, from February to May, in which the class activities were developed. This was due to time constraints that participants were not able to elude (National teachers' strike and extra-curricular activities), but those limitations did not stop the intervention nor the data collection. The intervention was divided in three main stages, namely: people around me, preferences, and lifestyle, with two different sessions for each stage (see Table 1).

Table 1

Pedagogical Intervention					
Session	Week	Topics	Sub-topics	Description	H
1 st	February 9-13	First stage: People around me	My family	Vocabulary activity to sensitise students about collaborative learning. The students will bring a family photo and describe it.	3
2 nd	February 16-20		Occupations and jobs	Dialogue	3
3 rd	February 23-27	Second stage: Preferences	Likes and dislikes: food and drinks	Role-play: “At the restaurant”	3
4 th	March 2-6		Sports	Discussion	3
5 th	March 9-13 March 16-20		First Instrument application (middle)	Role-play (prompts)	3
6 th	April 6-10	Third stage: Lifestyle	Shopping	Role-play	3
7 th	April 13-17		Emotions	Conversation	3
8 th	May 4-8		Second Instrument application (final)	Role-play	3

The intervention integrated the direct and indirect approach for teaching speaking (McCarthy & O’Keefe, 2004), considering that the main purpose of this research project is to develop student’s speaking skill while they are working together to achieve an established common goal. Thus, the researchers planned conversation activities that engaged students to

interact. Communicative activities were carefully selected taking into account learners' needs, preferences and these activities included some focus on form to provide students with the language knowledge needed to carry them out. As Nation and Newton (2009) suggested, the language focus must not exceed 25 % of the class as our students' opportunities to practice the language are limited. Therefore, students were provided with the necessary input to understand how language works and to put this knowledge into practice. For the achievement of each final session communicative task, students needed to work together to build and strengthen knowledge regarding the target language. At the beginning, the speaking activities and the collaborative work were more guided until students became more independent, made decisions, negotiated, and had agreements for the accomplishment of the last speaking aim, in which final data was collected.

The first stage of the intervention, *People around Me*, was focused on the strengthening of group skills: positive interdependence, assigning roles to students according to their competence having a common goal to which each participant must contribute; individual accountability, students are responsible not only for their individual performance but also for group's results; promotive interaction, students give each other support to reach a mutual goal; and appropriate use of teamwork skills, in which participants are motivated themselves and motivate others making decisions, communicating and managing conflicts; all the forementioned skills to promote collaborative learning (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994). In classes students were informed about collaborative learning as a strategy to build knowledge together and to learn from one another in the achievement of a common goal. The researchers worked on the promotion of these group skills in order to lead the participants into a process of reflection upon the ways they used to work in groups—in which usually one person worked and the rest spent

their time in other matters. This was a very challenging endeavor since they had to work on setting goals as a team, determining rules for the group members, and establishing roles. Although this stage was more structured, the researchers took advantage of some of the cooperative learning principles stated by Oxford (1997, p. 443): “cooperative learning, as compared to collaborative learning, is considered more structured, more prescriptive... more direct to students about how to work together in groups”. This was to lead the participants in the starting process of changing their group work into a more collaborative one.

The second stage involved *Preferences* related to food, drinks and sports, and aimed to provide students with opportunities to use the language; for instance, to talk about themselves and find common preferences, which would allow them to feel identified with their collaborative group partners and would encourage them to communicate in the target language. This time, students had to exercise their group skills without much structure. For both speaking and collaborative work, the researchers planned less guided practices in which students worked in groups planning and constructing a final speaking activity. The researchers allowed students to work in their groups more freely without asking them to follow any organization nor assigning roles. This stage was more difficult than the first one, as it was observed that some of the groups started to have difficulties and asked for changing groups due to some of the participants’ lack of commitment, abilities, knowledge, or empathy. The role of the researchers was to motivate and encourage learners to find solutions for possible conflicts. The researchers had to be impartial and tried to keep the group together while posing leading questions that might guide the students to find their own problem-solving strategies. As it was planned, halfway the intervention, data was collected using the questionnaires and audio recordings. Students had to role-play a given

situation. Participants prepared and organised their role-plays based on prompts given by the researchers. This is an example:

Situation: Asking for a prize

You and your brother are good students and want a tablet but your parents do not like the idea. Try to convince them to buy one.

- Remember every member of the group must speak the same amount of time. The situation must take at least 90 seconds.

Situation: In the news

You are a reporter and you are going to interview three members of the Colombian soccer team.

- Remember every member of the group must speak the same amount of time. The situation must take at least 90 seconds.

The third stage, *Lifestyle*, was concerned with shopping and emotions. During this third stage, sessions followed the same structure: warm-up, presentation, practice and production. However, less controlled practice activities were planned. Participants had to use their English language knowledge and group potential (group skills) to complete the final speaking activity mostly by themselves. They had to support each other and agree on what to say and how to develop the activity for their oral production. This stage was very rewarding because students were observed to work more productively and reported to have less conflicts. Most of them could perform their oral presentations and reach the goal proposed and in the final reflection, they manifested to have improved their collaborative work and speaking skills.

Final data was gathered at the end of the third stage. Participants presented a role-play in which four scenarios were provided. They were able to choose their group members and the situation to be role-played. Most of the groups did not change their old group members to plan and role-play their selected situation.

4.4 Conclusion

The pedagogical intervention was a valuable opportunity to involve students in a scaffolded process that provided them with meaningful input and stimulated them to become active participants in learning. The researchers incorporated basic grammar structures using the direct and indirect approach to teach speaking. In the first two stages of each lesson, the necessary input was provided to generate some structural output for a final communicative output. The intervention was divided in three different stages in which the researchers gradually let students work by themselves in groups with little guidance. Following the research question, this process allowed students to identify their progress regarding speaking and collaborative learning.

Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the processes undergone to analyse data from the participants of this research study during the implementation stage. The main purpose of this stage was to determine the extent to which the implementation of collaborative learning may serve as a strategy to promote speaking skills in A1 students from two Colombian public schools. The data analysis and coding procedures (open, axial and selective) originated three categories: collaboration, use of language and learning strategies, whose information opened the possibility to answer the research question: How does collaborative learning promote speaking skills in A1-level students in two Colombian public schools?

5.2 Data management procedures

The data of this research study was qualitatively analysed under the principles of the grounded theory. This approach enables researchers to generate theory from the systematic collection and analysis of data in relation to the phenomenon of interest (Corbin & Strauss, 1967). This is a “general method of constant comparative analysis” (Glaser, 1967, p. vii) because “theory evolves during actual research, and it does this through continuous interplay between analysis and data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2003, p. 159).

Subsequently, it was required to gather data first, then label it into codes and categories. This process allowed us to always keep in mind that the findings and results make part of an interpretative work that will respond to the research question. It is imperative that the generated theory is connected to the data and the interactive-comparative process that its analysis entails, which are “systematic statements of plausible relationships” (Corbin & Strauss, 2003, p. 170). The implementation of the grounded theory enhances a dialectical conversation with the data and

a special focus on the research study. Thus, it is mandatory that researchers are aware of their contexts, the possible applications, uses, and understandings of the constructed theory.

The data was organised considering our research questions, because in there resides the main focus of this research study. The data collected from the questionnaires and role-play transcripts were digitally stored in a Spreadsheet Google document in order to favor a collaborative research analysis. These instruments were applied twice during the pedagogical intervention, halfway and at the end of it. The results of the data collection instruments were individually analysed and then compared with each other. These procedures helped the researchers understand what the data meant and be on a continuous reflection process in the search for explanations and patterns (Burns, 2010). While finding connections and patterns among the data, the researchers followed the general framework suggested by Burns (2010): assembling data, coding the data, comparing the data, building meaning and interpretations, and reporting the outcomes.

To analyse data, the researchers also used some of the principles from content analysis. Cohen and Manion (2007) point out the importance of the content analysis technique since it involves coding, categorizing, comparing and linking categories, and concluding. Technology has been useful to analyse data, support the study and enhance validity.

5.2.1 Validation

In qualitative research, “validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved” (Nevo, 1995, p. 97). According to Cohen (2007), the data are descriptive, inductively analysed and presented in terms of the respondents rather than the researchers. Validation is defined by Corbin and Strauss (2008, p. 48) as the revision of the “interpretations with participants and against data as the research moves along”. Hence,

processes are more relevant than outcomes, observing and reporting the situation should be done through the eyes of the participants. The intensive personal involvement and in-depth responses of individuals secure a sufficient level of validity and reliability. Descriptive validation of the data relates to the factual accuracy of the account that it is not made up, selective or distorted; in this regard, validity includes reliability.

Regarding triangulation, Cohen and Manion (1994) define it as “the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspects of human behavior” (p. 254).

Triangulation is a powerful way of demonstrating concurrent validity, particularly in qualitative research (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). In order to accomplish the purposes of this inquiry, the researchers contrasted and compared the data collected by each instrument in the light of the research question. Triangulation occurred when similarities among the data were found and enabled the conversion of connections into patterns. The patterns that emerged were analysed to select repetitive patterns in “a cross-validation process among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 379). This cross-validation process ensured triangulation through an interplay between validity and reliability.

5.2.2 Data analysis methodology

Based on the emerging patterns, the data was coded and categorised. First, the data was classified in line with the concept of *open coding*, which is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, and describing phenomena found (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The data was digitally stored in computer files in order to manage it as efficiently as possible. Several readings of the data were made. The data gathered from each instrument was compared and contrasted to continue the axial and selective coding. The researchers answered

the questions based on the data results and the developing theory from the findings' report (see Table 2).

During this inquiry, the content analysis approach was used to identify fundamental characteristics of the information gathered using the color coding technique (see Table 2). From the perspective of Brenner *et al.* (1985, p. 144), this approach requires the researchers to associate their own experiences with the problem looking for clues from the past, test the hypotheses through the analysis process, and categorise the data creating labels and codes; selecting and interpreting the data and identifying its meaning and implications. The content analysis approach is an unobtrusive technique (Krippendorp, 2004, p. 40) in which the participants do not notice they are being observed. It focuses on language, meaning in context, and it is often used to analyse large quantities of text, which was necessary for the current research.

Table 2

Aprendizaje colaborativo	Trabajar en grupo facilita mi aprendizaje y el de otros	Algunas veces	Siempre	Algunas veces
	Tomo responsabilidad por el trabajo de mi grupo	Algunas veces	Algunas veces	Algunas veces
	Mis aportes impulsan la efectividad de mi grupo	Siempre	Algunas veces	Siempre
	Hago aportes al trabajar en grupo	Algunas veces	Siempre	Siempre
	Me siento más seguro al realizar las actividades con mis	Siempre	Algunas veces	Siempre
	Los aportes de mis compañeros son importantes en el desarrollo de la actividad	Siempre	Siempre	Siempre
	Me siento apoyado por mis compañeros para lograr el objetivo de la actividad	Algunas veces	Algunas veces	Algunas veces
	Me gusta trabajar en grupo	Siempre	Siempre	Rara vez
Habilidad del habla	Utilizo vocabulario acorde a la situación	Rara vez	Algunas veces	Siempre
	Expreso opiniones, hechos, ideas y experiencias	Algunas veces	Rara vez	Algunas veces
	Formulo preguntas	Rara vez	Algunas veces	Algunas veces
	Mi pronunciación es entendible	Algunas veces	Siempre	Siempre
	Comprendo expresiones y respondo a ellas	Rara vez	Algunas veces	Siempre
	Uso nuevo vocabulario	Algunas veces	Algunas veces	Algunas veces

Axial coding was implemented through a comparative process in which the data gathered from each instrument was contrasted in order to find similarities and connections (see Table 3). This comparison was useful to identify emerging patterns that provided insightful information to answer the research question. Once repetitive patterns were discovered through a cross-validation process, selective coding took place to establish the core categories that will be described hereafter.

Table 3

Emerging Categories
Collaboration
Grammatical competence
Speaking accuracy

5.3 Categories

5.3.1 Introduction

In this section the researchers report the analysis and interpretation of the collected data. Then, they identify patterns, emerging categories, and categories based on the data management procedures and category mapping. Open, axial, and selective coding were stages conducted to reduce the data. Categories are supported with excerpts from the participants' utterances and with supporting literature.

5.3.1.1 *Category mapping*

Open, axial, and selective coding were the three stages of analysis that enabled category mapping. Once the data was collected, it was organised into different matrices according to each research instrument and to the time they were applied during the pedagogical intervention. In the open coding phase, the researchers used color coding to identify connections and similarities in the responses provided by the participants. The latter was made in concordance with the research questions.

Then, axial coding was used to associate concepts and categories, to assure that the analysed data was covering the important aspects. This is “a process of reassembling or disaggregating data in a way that draws attention to the relationships between and within categories” (Mills Durepos & Wiebe, 2010, p. 153).

Finally, selective coding endorsed the refinement of the emerging and core categories; it also provided theoretical development as grounded theory was created. The previous stages of analysis were the steps used to guarantee a grounded theory foundation regarding students’ speaking performance in a collaborative learning environment. Due to their common prevalence and relation to the other categories, three categories emerged: *fosterage of collaboration*, *enhancement of grammatical competence*, and *use of learning strategies* (see Table 4).

Table 4

Categories	Subcategories
Fosterage of collaboration	Group work
Enhancement of grammatical competence	Intelligibility
Use of learning strategies	Practice

5.3.1.2 Identification of core category

As stated in Cohen and Manion (2007), the core category covers a great scope of other categories and subcategories incorporated during the data analysis stage that allow us to answer the central question. The data analysis showed three main categories that demonstrated that learners build up speaking skills by means of collaborative learning and use of learning strategies. These categories were put together in only one named Enhancement of grammatical competence through fosterage of collaborative work as a learning strategy, which integrates the findings gathered.

5.3.2 Analysis of categories

5.3.2.1 Description of categories

After the data analysis and the category mapping, three main categories were found: *fosterage of collaboration, enhancement of grammatical competence, and use of learning strategies*. These three main categories were evidenced in response to the research question: *how does collaborative learning promote speaking skills in A1-level students in two Colombian public schools?* The first category, *fosterage of collaboration*, is supplemented by the subcategory of *group work*, in which the participants commented about their preferences and perceptions regarding this concept. Findings also revealed the effectiveness of collaborative learning and the impact it had on the students' development of the speaking skill through support, interaction, and social construction of knowledge.

The second category is *enhancement of grammatical competence*, which is connected to *intelligibility*. The participants demonstrated concern about their grammar and vocabulary use given that speaking in English implies understanding and being understood to favor interaction and effective communication. This category connects students' knowledge of the language —its

functions— to the collaboration exhibited by the participants in order to achieve the tasks assigned.

The third category, *use of learning strategies*, has to do with the speaking strategies, resources or material learners use to demonstrate performance and competence in their English language learning process. Most of them are students who, to a certain extent, do not use learning strategies until they are faced with group activities to reach a common goal.

5.3.2.2 Category 1: *Fosterage of Collaboration*

As mentioned previously in the identification of the core category, the data analysis proved the correlation among the three core categories. The first one is *collaboration*, and it is connected to the premise that students working together and collaboratively learn more and better. The participants related it to group work and the multiple perspectives they had about it. Most of the learners reported their preferences to work in groups as they mentioned it in the questionnaires they also observed that it has some advantages regarding their performance and interaction in class. This is because they are in a reflective dialogue providing mutual assistance and guidance (Oxford, 1997, p. 444) and, as stated in Dooly (2008), “the fact that students are actively exchanging, debating and negotiating ideas within their groups increases students’ interest in learning” (p. 22).

Excerpt 1 - Students’ Questionnaire 2 - Participant D9

“Pienso que el trabajo en grupo en aula nos facilita el aprendizaje y hace un ambiente más cómodo de clase”.

(I think group work in classroom helps us learn and creates a more comfortable environment in class.)

Excerpt 2 - Students’ Questionnaire 1 - Participant D3

“Me gusta mucho trabajar con mis compañeros de clase, ellos me colaboran mucho y juntos hacemos un gran trabajo, nos llevamos muy bien y aunque nos invade la risa y los nervios siempre logramos un trabajo limpio y muy bueno”.

(I really like working with my classmates, they help me a lot and we do a great job working together. We get along very well with each other and, although laugh and anxiety invade us, we achieve a neat and good work.)

Excerpt 3 - Students' Questionnaire 1 - Participant A9

“Las clases son buenas y así nos facilita nuestro aprendizaje trabajar en grupo y nos ayuda aprender más”.

(English classes are good, so in that way, it eases our learning in group work and help us learn more.)

The excerpts above indicate that support and interdependence account for collaboration as they facilitate students' learning through the social construction of knowledge and meaning. The participants also emphasised peer correction as another feature of collaboration. As cited in Rollinson (2005), students feel more confident when corrected by a classmate. Peer correction makes the class more student-centered, transferring roles from the teacher to the learner. As a result, the class environment becomes easy-going and helpful, making students aware of their own learning process.

As shown in excerpts 4 and 5, the participants used collaboration as a strategy to improve their learning. This did not only help students learn more and better but also enhanced the students' social skills and interpersonal relationships. They sought for support and provided contributions including a positive attitude towards group work and interdependence. This occurred because students worked closely with each other to reach a common goal having a

more effective communication. Collaboration served the purpose of promoting a positive environment for the development of the class activities (dialogues, presentations, etc.) and the role-plays used for analysis in this research study.

Excerpt 4 - Students' Questionnaire 1 - Participant D16

“Me parece muy interesante trabajar en grupos porque podemos compartirnos habilidades y podemos quitarnos dudas y preguntas que trabajamos respecto a la clase”.
(I find group work very interesting because we can share our abilities and solve doubts and questions we have regarding the class.)

Excerpt 5 - Students' Questionnaire 2 - Participant L15

“Es mejor trabajar en grupo porque aprendemos de cada uno y nos ayudamos a corregir nuestros errores”.
(It is better to work in groups because we learn from each other and we help each other correct our mistakes.)

5.3.2.3 Category 2: Enhancement of Grammatical competence

The second core category, *enhancement of grammatical competence*, entails having intelligible pronunciation, following accurately grammatical structures, and using an adequate range of vocabulary. According to the analysis of this enquiry, results evolved towards the use of grammatical structures and an adequate lexical range. This might be due to the fact that most of the participants have not been exposed to English language from early ages and, additionally, English language is a school subject that they can take after finishing elementary school but just for three hours a week. They struggled to understand and construct accurate sentences. Under this perspective, the English language instruction they have received has been based on an inductive approach more than on a deductive one. In the inductive approach students received

explanation on grammar rules and then they make sentences using the new language (Nunan, 1991, p. 156).

During the first and second stages of the pedagogical intervention, the researchers integrated the two approaches and students were taught basic grammar with examples for them to practice. Naturally, in the first intervention, it was evidenced the difficulty to make sentences following fixed structures due to the lack of practice, and it took three times more to accomplish the the first task than the second one (four hours). The transcription of a role-play that took place during the first intervention is shown below. In this conversation, one of the participants had difficulties following the grammatical rule (subject verb agreement) because she used a noun (*student*) instead of the suitable verb (*study*). On one hand, this situation may have happened because there is an overgeneralization of a word that refers to the process of extending the application of a rule; on the other hand, maybe she found it difficult to distinguish the verb from the noun as they are similar. Additionally, it is clear that participant D5 in line 10 meant “*What do you want to be?*”; instead of it, she mixed up the present simple interrogative structure between the verb *be* and the verb *want*. The ellipsis and the expression in Spanish denote student’s hesitation. The student might have overgeneralised the use of *is* (*be*) assuming it as part of all sentences in English.

Excerpt 6 – Role-play during first intervention

1 D6: *Good morning!*

2 D5: *What is your name?*

3 D6: *My name is XXXXXXXX.*

4 D5: *Do you work or do you student?*

5 D6: *I am studying.*

6 D5: *Where do you student?*

7 D6: *I am studying at La Belleza school.*

8 D5: *Where is do you what... want to be?*

9 D6: *I want to be a chef,*

10 D5: *What want to be ...me va a quedar horrible (it's going to come out*

11 *awfully).... Where do you want to student?*

12 D6: *I want to student in, at Mariano Moreno university. Can I ask... your a*

13 *question?*

14 D5: *Of course.*

15 D6: *Do you love your job?*

16 D5: *Not really. Because my dream job is to be an artist. (Emphasis was added*

17 *to point out the phenomena mentioned before)*

In contrast with this example, the students showed better understanding and performance when role-playing in the second intervention. Although they still displayed some complications in sentence structure (subject-verb agreement, verb form, vocabulary), their progress regarding sentence construction is evident. As part of the second phase of the intervention, the students were informed about communicative expressions that could work better for them so that they could internalise and use them as their own. Researchers found noticeable changes from the outcomes of the first stage to those of the second stage of the pedagogical intervention, namely because learners could demonstrate their understanding using the structures and expressions from the last role-play performance in the final application of data collection according to their context and experience.

Excerpt 7 – Role-play during second intervention

1 D2: *What would be your dream job?*

2 D3: *I really love what I do but I would like to be a doctor.*

3 D2: *Interesting! And you Juan Quintero?*

4 D1: *I like what I do but I would like to be an astronaut.*

5 D2: *Wow! And you Falcao?*

6 D4: *I really love my job.*

7 D2: *Would you like to go to Soccer World Cup?*

8 D3: *Yes, that would be great!*

9 D1: *I'd love to! Fantastic!*

10 D2: *Bye sportsmen!*

11 D4: *Bye reporter!*

5.3.2.4 Category 3: Use of Learning strategies

Oxford (2013) defines *learning strategy* as specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their L2 learning. A strategy is useful for a student if it fits well to the English language task, to the student's learning style preference, and if it is used effectively by the student. Students are not always aware of the importance of using learning strategies; consequently, they do not take advantage of them to make the second language learning easier, faster, and enjoyable. Making use of learning strategies empowers students to become more successful, independent and self-directed; not to mention that it raises their self-esteem and confidence levels.

Oxford (1990) classifies the learning strategies as cognitive, metacognitive, memory related, compensatory, affective, and social. Learning strategy is relatively connected with

learning styles and can work in agreement or not with instructional methodology (Oxford, 2003). The data analysis revealed the use of certain learning strategies as a salient category. For many students it is essential to know ways that facilitate their learning process once they have realised new ways of acquiring second language concepts. A large number of students claimed for different ways of receiving different class topics delivered by the teacher. The analysis let us know how important it is for students the use of didactic materials such as videos, songs, games, role-plays, workshops, worksheets, as well as the input provided by the teacher. The role-plays were the means by which students could demonstrate the use of learning strategies for speaking such as monitoring, self-correction, peer correction, and minimal responses.

The following excerpt shows an utterance from a conversation where a participant (L1) is talking about his family during the first intervention. This excerpt evidences the way a student checks his performance making use of monitoring as a speaking strategy to communicate well.

Excerpt 8 – Conversation during first intervention

L1: *Nelsy is Daniel wife... Daniel's wife.*

Additionally, students realised the important role they play as subjects of their own knowledge growth and came to understand that their progress depends on themselves. Consequently, a significant amount of learners changed their attitude towards the English class in regard to discipline, class attention, active participation, and self-direction. Likewise, using learning strategies effectively helps students become aware of their strengths and weaknesses and raises their self-esteem, confidence, and to some extent, autonomy.

Excerpt 9 – Comment from questionnaire 1

L3: *“me parece que trabajar en grupo es muy bueno ya que nos apoyamos mucho*

con mis compañeros y se me facilita mucho mas entender los temas”
(I think that working in groups is nice because we support each other and it is easier to me to understand the topics)

Participants manifested their necessity of good practice for acquiring excellent results. The analysis showed that learning strategies are closely related to collaboration; that is, in order to foster and improve their oral communication, students make use of speaking strategies through group work. Hesitations, silences and fillers are part of the monitoring process as showed by participant D16 during the first intervention. In the following excerpt, the strategy displayed is peer correction. As soon as the interviewee (D16) forgets the last word of the answer, his interviewer (D13) replies using the correct one. Once again, silence is part of the internal monitoring process when speaking.

Excerpt 10 – Role-play during first intervention

1 D13: *What is your name?*

2 D16: *Ehh, I am ... is xxxxx. Ehhh, Uh, se me olvidó (Oh, I forgot).*

3 D13: *My name is xxxxx.*

4 D16: *My name is...*

The following excerpt also exhibits the different strategies used during the role-play performance of the last stage of the intervention. The participant used strategies such as monitoring with a pause, self-correction and minimal response to communicate fluently in the target language.

Excerpt 11 – Role-play during second intervention

L6: *Let's go! ... Gentleman! How was the match?*

L8: *Well. It was a little hard, but we were ... (silence) able to overcome the match!*

L6: *and you Pekerman...?*

L7: *It was OK, but ... the competition has not finished yet. We need to keep working.*

L18: *What do you think about the ... work?*

L7: *Excellent game, Argentina is a strong rival, it is an... but it is necessary to be better.*

L18: *What do you think about...?*

At the beginning of the pedagogical intervention, the students included in this study were not highly motivated to study English maybe due to the fact that it is not part of their daily life or context. Participants avoided to speak in English even though it would affect their grades; some of them used to say “*No teacher. I can ’t*” or “*No, teacher. I don ’t want to*”, when they were asked to speak in the target language. The process experienced in the pedagogical intervention gave us evidence of a significant change: students tried to speak, and the learning strategies they used (monitoring, self-correction, peer correction, and minimal responses) gave them the possibility to communicate in a language they thought they were not able to speak. Now they are more keen on speaking.

5.4 Conclusion

The research study and the data analysis provided insightful information about the participants’ speaking performance through collaborative learning. This also helped raise students’ awareness about their language competence, their difficulties and the way to overcome them. The findings revealed the usefulness of the implementation of collaborative learning to foster and enhance speaking skills. As a result, learners have exhibited improvement in the English learning process at the two public schools. This is evidenced through the change of mind

and progress of students. Most of them demonstrated noticeable use of grammar structures and lexis when speaking, which is in contrast with their first oral productions. The collaborative work carried out during the intervention helped them feel more confident and supportive to construct knowledge and convey meaning in the target language. The use of speaking strategies such as monitoring and minimal responses led them to improve the level of accuracy for effective communication.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

6.1 Introduction

This research study was aimed at promoting speaking skills in A1 students from two Colombian public schools through the implementation of collaborative learning. This chapter presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications, and limitations of this study. Those are the result of a systematic analysis based on the findings previously described in Chapter 5.

Conclusions are supported by the comparison between the results of the current research and those of previous studies, considering their significance in the language learning educational field. This section also invites other researchers to deepen their understanding of the relationship between the improvement of speaking skills in the target language and collaborative learning by providing possible topics to be explored and analysed.

6.2 Comparison of results with previous studies' results

The use of collaborative learning was effective to improve students' speaking skills. It also contributed to increase learners' interest and participation in the English language subject, helped them become more aware of their strengths and aspects of improvement, and fostered the use of learning strategies as possible boosters of their speaking performance. Collaboration was a crucial element since students relied on each other to solve doubts and overcome their speaking difficulties, which reside mainly in their vocabulary use and grammatical competence. Students' speaking performance demonstrated that they used learning strategies in order to communicate in the target language and promoted the betterment of their speaking skills.

As noted in this document, previous studies have researched about the impact of collaborative learning. Freniawati *et al.* (2015) found a significant improvement of their students' speaking skills once they were taught collaborative learning. This also occurred in the

current research. When students were trained to work collaboratively, the interaction, exchanges, and negotiation promoted by such strategy were reflected on the learners' speaking performance. It was remarkable to see students' improvement at the end of the pedagogical intervention, given that they used more learning strategies to speak in the target language and make themselves understood. According to Freniawati *et al.* (2015), collaborative learning enabled students to openly discuss and ask their classmates about the difficulties they have to understand or comprehend something. Similarly to this research study, learners sought for other sources of knowledge different from the teacher. They were interested in expanding their knowledge by learning from each other.

Likewise, as Rampanniyom and Lornklang (2015) have remarked, the importance of providing students with speaking tasks and activities should rely on the fosterage of collaboration and interaction. In agreement with their study, the pedagogical intervention stage purposely implemented communicative interactive activities in which learners had to speak in English. This proved to favor positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, and individual accountability. Students were responsible of their learning process and were aware of the contribution their classmates could make to it. While collaborating together, they could find new learning opportunities, which for Pattanpichet (2011) enhanced a "fruitful collaboration" that allowed for a "sense of unity and greater familiarity" (p. 7).

6.3 Significance of the results

Collaborative learning as the strategy implemented for students to promote their speaking skills proved to be successful. It encouraged learners to be more involved in their learning process and actively participate in the English class. Additionally, this study reinforced students' concept of learning community; step by step, they learned to rely on each other, exchange

perspectives, and work together to reach a common goal. This enriched the classroom practice as the research study proposed a student-centered focus instead of the traditional teacher-centered one. Similarly, students were exposed to transactional and interactive speaking tasks that enabled them to communicate in the target language and consider that the mistakes they made were just one more stage of their learning process.

Therefore, the study reported a significant enhancement of students' social and speaking skills. Learners went from a lack of interest in the English language subject to a more committed learning process. During the pedagogical intervention students participated in more communicative and interactive tasks; consequently, speaking in the target language became more meaningful to them. Nonetheless, learners still need to work on their grammatical competence and linguistic repertoire so as to have a better proficiency level in their speaking performance.

6.4 Limitations of the present study

The main drawback of the research study was time. Having three English language hours per week affected the estimated time for the pedagogical intervention. This study was developed in two public institutions and there were some administrative and extracurricular activities that coincided with the class schedule and required the attendance of both teachers and students. Additionally, there was a national public teachers' strike that lasted more than two weeks and entailed stopping regular classes; as a result, the academic year schedule was modified and, consequently, the intervention was postponed.

Despite the majority of participants' willingness to be part of the research project, some of them withdrew on account of different reasons; for instance, sudden change of school, reluctance to continue, and change of school shift, among others.

Considering that the development of the pedagogical intervention lasted 22 hours, it would be advisable to devote longer time in a similar research study to validate collaborative learning as a strategy to improve speaking skills in long term.

6.5 Further research

Those interested in further research might focus on the following suggested areas: first, as the present inquiry provided support to the use of collaborative learning to develop speaking skills focused on the grammar competence regarding structures and lexis, it is advisable to expand research in the field of pronunciation —as it is part of the grammar competence— and go deeper into the reinforcement of this sub-skill. This will enable students to communicate more accurately in real life situations. Second, further research is needed to explore the effectiveness of collaborative learning in consonance with other speaking sub-skills like pragmatic and discourse competence. Studying in detail about accuracy and fluency would make it easier for students to communicate effectively in different contexts. Finally, since the speaking skill was addressed in this research study, it would be interesting if further research studies explored the effectiveness of collaborative learning in public schools regarding the communicative receptive skills, so as to get a broader picture of the impact of collaborative learning in the other skills.

6.6 Conclusion

This research study is a call for pedagogical innovation in language learning. It encouraged the researchers to deeply analyse their students' learning needs with a strategy that had an impact on students' learning process. This enquiry examined the effectiveness of collaborative learning as a strategy to foster speaking skills in A1-learners from two public schools by directing their attention to the use of adequate lexis and correct grammatical structures as part of the grammar competence speaking sub-skill. Researchers found that students

expanded their range of vocabulary and were able to construct accurate utterances to convey meaning orally. Collaboration made this possible providing students with guidance and support to build knowledge in their learning community. In addition, researchers identified the adoption of learning strategies that students used to solve communication problems when speaking in English.

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Appendix A: Consent Letter

Bogotá D. C, Febrero 24 de 2014

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Estimado estudiante, la presente investigación es conducida por Luz Mila Suárez Rodríguez, Diana Lucia Mena Becerra y Adriana María Chaparro Escobar, profesoras de inglés y estudiantes de la universidad de La Sabana en la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo. Usted está invitado a participar en la investigación acerca de la construcción de la habilidad del habla en inglés a través del aprendizaje colaborativo. Su participación será de gran ayuda para tener más información acerca de este suceso.

Si usted accede a participar se le pedirá responder una encuesta y una entrevista las cuales serán usadas como instrumento de investigación para el análisis de información. Su decisión de estar en esta investigación es voluntaria. Usted puede parar en cualquier momento y no tiene que contestar ninguna pregunta que no quiera responder. La negativa a participar o retirarse de esta investigación no supone ninguna sanción. Asimismo, la terminación y presentación de la encuesta se considerará como consentimiento a participar en esta investigación.

Su participación en esta investigación es confidencial. La información de identificación personal no será divulgada ya que su nombre no está ligado de ninguna manera a sus respuestas. Si tiene preguntas, preocupaciones o quejas acerca de la investigación, por favor comunicarse con las investigadoras con cualquiera de los siguientes correos electrónicos luzsuro@unisabana.edu.co, dianamebe@unisabana.edu.co , adrianaches@unisabana.edu.co . De antemano agradezco su participación.

Nombre: _____

Firma: _____

Appendix B: Needs Analysis

B.1 Questionnaire



Instrument research

SECRETARIA DE EDUCACIÓN DISTRITAL

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA DISTRITAL LA BELLEZA LOS LIBERTADORES

SEDE A-B JORNADAS MAÑANA Y TARDE RESOLUCIÓN No. 1821 20 DE JUNIO 2002

N.I.T. 830.079.439-0 DANE 11100116008



**Collaborative Learning: A Strategy to Promote Speaking Skills in A1 Students from Two
Colombian Public Schools**

NOMBRE: _____ GRADE: _____ DATE: ___/___/14

CLOSED QUESTIONNAIRE MULTIPLE CHOICE

Señale con una X la opción (A, B, C, o D) que considere de su preferencia.

1. ¿Qué grado de importancia le doy al inglés?

- A. Extremadamente importante
- B. Muy importante
- C. No tan importante
- D. Indiferente

2. El inglés es una herramienta que me puede ofrecer nuevas oportunidades.

SI NO ¿Por qué? _____

3. Entre las siguientes actividades prefiero

- A. Diálogos
- B. Dictados
- C. Completar párrafos
- D. Talleres de gramática

4. ¿Qué habilidad comunicativa me parece más difícil desarrollar en inglés?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- E. Escribir

5. ¿Qué habilidad comunicativa se me facilita más?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- D. Escribir

6. ¿Alguna vez ha hecho prácticas de expresión oral en clase de inglés?

NO SI ¿Cuáles? _____

7. ¿Cuál de las habilidades considera más importante para comunicarse en inglés?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- D. escribir

8. ¿Cuál de los siguientes aspectos se relacionan con mi actitud frente a la clase inglés?

- A. Activo
- B. Poco activo
- C. Pasivo
- D. Muy pasivo

9. Mi habilidad en la expresión oral en la clase inglés es

- A. Excelente
- B. Buena
- C. Regular
- D. Deficiente

10. En la clase de inglés usted prefiere trabajar:

- A. Solo (a)
- B. En parejas
- C. En grupos de tres o más

11. ¿Cómo cree usted que aprende mejor?

- A. Solo(a)
- B. En parejas
- C. En grupos de tres o más

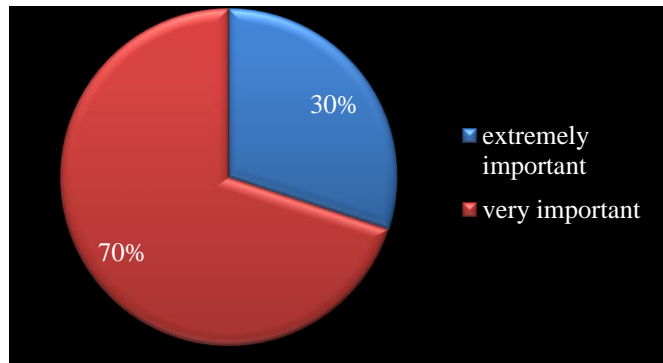
B.2 Questionnaire results

IED La Belleza, and IED Francisco Antonio Zea Needs analysis:

1. ¿Qué grado de importancia le doy al inglés?

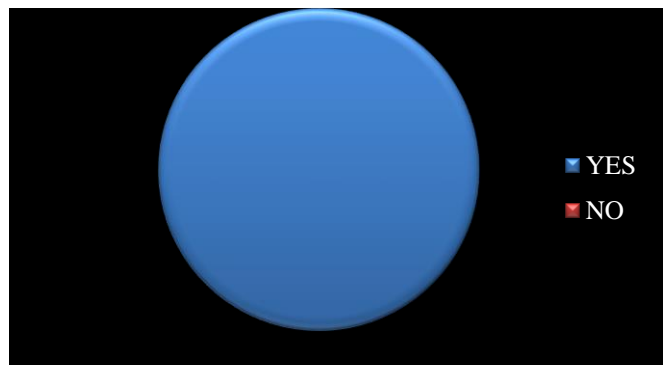
1.

- A. Extremadamente importante
- B. Muy importante
- C. No tan importante
- D. Indiferente



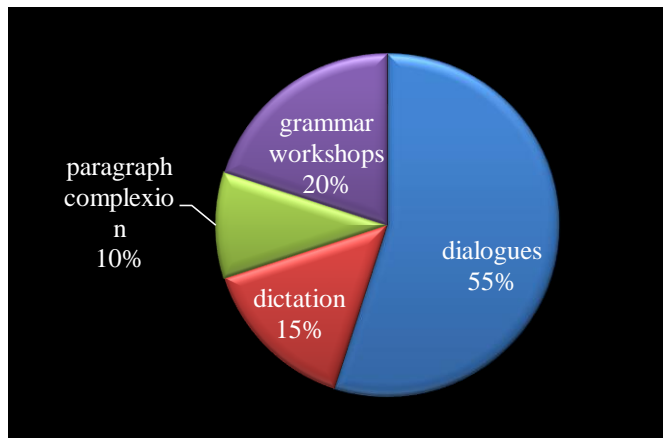
2. El inglés es una herramienta que me puede ofrecer nuevas oportunidades.

- SI
- NO



3. Entre las siguientes actividades prefiero:

- A. Diálogos
- B. Dictados
- C. Completar párrafos
- D. Talleres de gramática



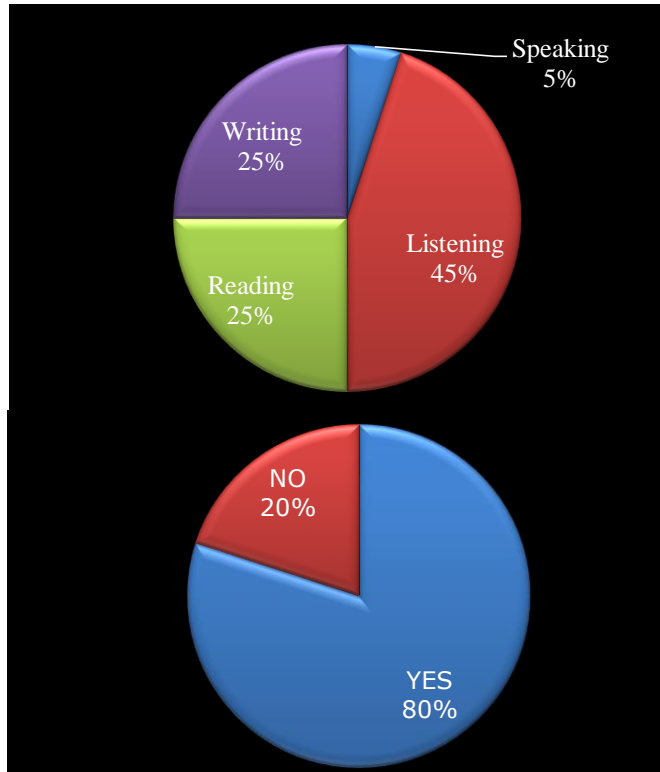
4. ¿Qué habilidad comunicativa me parece más difícil desarrollar en inglés?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- D. Escribir



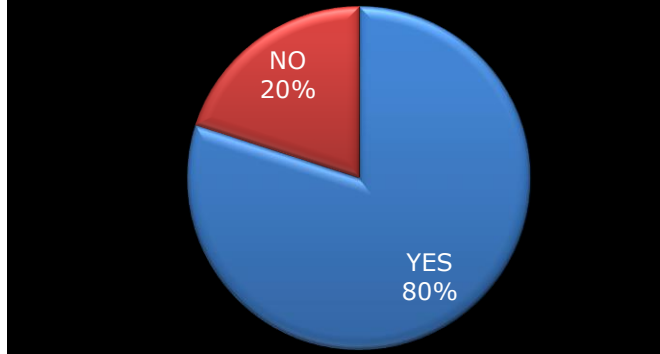
5. ¿Qué habilidad comunicativa se me facilita más?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- D. Escribir



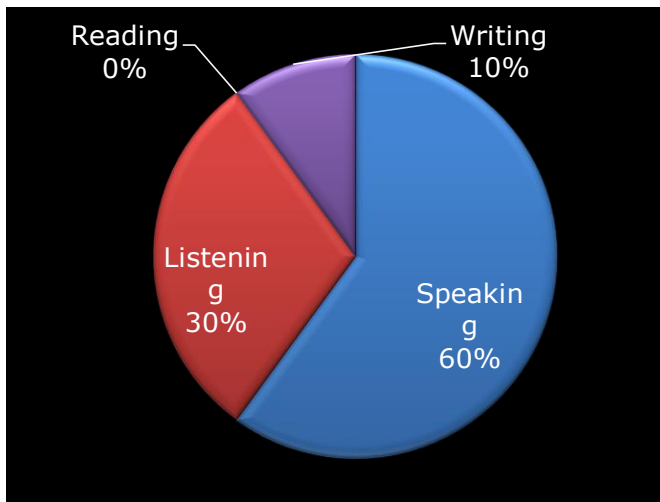
6. ¿Alguna vez ha hecho prácticas de expresión oral en clase de inglés?

- SI
- NO



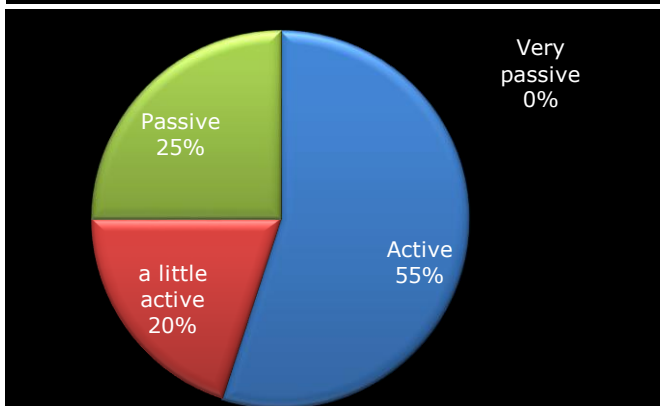
7. ¿Cuál de las habilidades considera más importante para comunicarse en inglés?

- A. Hablar
- B. Escuchar
- C. Leer
- D. Escribir



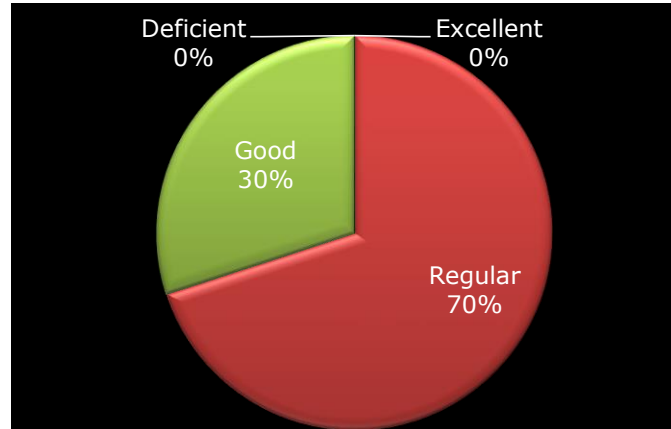
8. ¿Cuál de los siguientes aspectos se relacionan con mi actitud frente a la clase inglés?

- A. Activo
- B. Un poco activo
- C. Pasivo
- D. Muy pasivo



9. Mi habilidad en la expresión oral en la clase de inglés es:

- A. Excelente
- B. Buena
- C. Regular
- D. Deficiente



10. En la clase de inglés usted prefiere trabajar:

- A. Solo (a)
- B. En parejas
- C. En grupos de tres o más.



11. Cómo cree usted que aprende mejor:

- A. Solo (a)
- B. En parejas
- C. En grupos de tres o más.



Appendix C: Data Collection Instruments

C.1 Students' questionnaire

Apreciado estudiante, el siguiente cuestionario tiene el objetivo de recoger información acerca la construcción de su habilidad de habla para comunicarse en inglés. Su participación será de gran ayuda para los propósitos de esta investigación; la información suministrada será utilizada únicamente con fines investigativos por Luz Mila Suárez Rodríguez, Diana Lucia Mena Becerra y Adriana María Chaparro Escobar, profesoras de inglés y estudiantes de la Universidad la Sabana en la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo. Dicha información será manejada con confidencialidad. De antemano, muchas gracias por su participación y colaboración en esta investigación.

Speaking and Collaborative Learning Questionnaire

1. Reflexión del estudiante

Marque sí o no de acuerdo a su opinión acerca de su habilidad de habla en el idioma inglés en la actividad realizada.

Habilidad de habla	Siempre	Algunas veces	Rara vez	Nunca
Expreso ideas con claridad				
Uso nuevo vocabulario				
Comprendo expresiones y respondo a ellas				
Mi pronunciación es entendible				
Formulo preguntas				
Expreso opiniones hechos, ideas y experiencias				
Utilizo vocabulario acorde a la situación				

2. Marque con una X según su opinión y experiencia con el aprendizaje colaborativo en la actividad realizada.

Aprendizaje Colaborativo	Siempre	Algunas veces	Rara vez	Nunca
Me gusta trabajar en grupo				
Me siento apoyado por mis compañeros para lograr el objetivo de la actividad				
Los aportes de mis compañeros son importantes en el desarrollo de la actividad				
Me siento más seguro al realizar las actividades con mis compañeros				
Hago aportes al trabajar en grupo				
Mis aportes impulsan la efectividad de mi grupo				
Tomo responsabilidad por el trabajo de mi grupo				
Trabajar en grupo facilita mi aprendizaje y el de otros				

2. Si quieres hacer algún comentario o extender tus respuestas sobre alguno o varios de los aspectos mencionados utiliza este espacio.

3. ¿Cuál es su percepción acerca de su habilidad para comunicarse oralmente en el idioma inglés? Complete las oraciones.

Tengo fortalezas en:

Necesito trabajar en:

Planeo mejorar mi habilidad de habla en inglés a través de:

C.2 Teachers' questionnaire

The student ...	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Gives clear opinions.				
Makes use of new vocabulary.				
Expresses ideas with coherence.				
Speaks with good intonation.				
Shows confidence when speaking.				
Makes mistakes.				
Pronounces clearly.				
Answers short questions accurately.				
Asks short questions accurately.				
Makes use of appropriate vocabulary according to the situation.				
Is able to discuss own experiences.				
Tries to be sure about pronunciation.				
Provides new ideas when talking.				
Likes group work.				
Takes into account peers' suggestions				
Shows confidence when developing the activity.				

Comments:

Appendix D: Lesson Plan Sample

School	IED La Belleza Los Libertadores, IED Francisco Antonio Zea		Grade	Eighth	Time	150 min
Topic	Sports	Main goal	To interview a famous sportsman or sportswoman.			
		Specific Aims	To relate sports with famous sportsmen and sportswomen. To talk about sports. To formulate and respond questions.			



Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
Warm Up	To introduce the class topic.	Students are divided in two teams, team A and team B. a member of each group will be selected to come in front of the class, pick one of the papers in the bag (see Appendix F1) and mime the sport that appears in it. The other students will try to guess the sport's name and subsequently win more points for their team. The team with more points wins.	20 minutes Ss ↔ Ss
Presentation	To identify famous athletes.	The teacher will organise students in pairs and show them a Power Point Presentation (see Appendix F2) with pictures of famous sportsmen and sportswomen. Students must identify them and write down their names. They must compare their answer with another pair and correct each other if it is necessary.	20 minutes T ↔ S S ↔ S
Practice	To formulate questions.	Students get into groups of four. They must read the interview to Mariana Pajón (see Appendix F3) and use it as a model to create their own questions to a sportsperson. All students must contribute to the creation of at least five questions and think of their possible answers.	30 minutes S S ↕ ↕ S S T ↕↕↕↕ SSSSSS

Production	To ask and respond questions.	Students must work in pairs. They will be arranged in 2 circles around the classroom, a big circle and an inner one. One student will select a recognised sportsperson and assume his role as if he were him or her. The other student will be the interviewer in order to ask and respond questions. Every two minutes the interviewer will rotate and ask questions to another classmate (sportsperson) until the time consider for the activity is up. The teacher will monitor students' work and help them if it is necessary.	20 minutes S ←→ S
Warm down	To get students' opinions regarding their performance in class.	The teacher will ask each pair students to fill in a checklist (see Appendix F4) in which they must analyse their work and performance during the class.	20 minutes Ss ←→ T

Appendix F1

Football	Soccer
Basketball	Tennis
Rubgy	Surfing
Cycling	Climbing
Swimming	Diving
Hockey	Golf

Appendix F2

 <p>Sports A world of games</p> <hr/>	 <p>Sport: • _____</p> <p>Name: • _____</p> <hr/>
<p>Sport: • _____</p> <p>Name: • _____</p>  <hr/>	<p>Sport: • _____</p> <p>Name: • _____</p>  <hr/>
 <p>Sport: • _____</p> <p>Name: • _____</p> <hr/>	 <p>Sport: • _____</p> <p>Name: • _____</p> <hr/>

Appendix F3

Mariana Pajón interview: Life in transition

We grab a chat with Colombia's BMX heroine Mariana Pajón as she prepares for the coming season.

Mariana, what are your objectives for 2013? Do you hope to make more of an impact in the World Cup this season?

Yes, this year is a bit of a transition year, although it is not as hard as other years in which I had to recover from injuries. It will be hectic, but that's what transition years are like...

Has life changed for you since winning Olympic Gold? You were already an icon in Colombia but the attention you've got back home must have gone up a level since?

My life has changed considerably. I have a privileged life now, there are people in the streets at home, that want to hug and kiss me. I also feel I have to be an example for the kids, that you can reach your goal if you really believe in your dreams.

Who do you see as your biggest rival?

Everyone wants to beat each other, but I always race against myself, and nobody else.

What is your second passion after biking?

My dad and my brother are motorsports enthusiasts and race cars and motorcycles, so I love that too – as well as gymnastics.

Who is your hero in another field of sports?

My favourite is Haile Gebrselassie, the Ethiopian long-distance track athlete. He won two Olympic gold medals and four World Championship titles. He's a real hero of mine.

Adapted from: <http://www.redbull.com/en/bike/stories/1331581698942/mariana-pajon-life-in-transition>

Appendix F4

Give the interviewer a score from 1 to 5 considering the following:

Question	Score				
Were the questions clear and easy to understand?					
Were the questions grammatically correct?					
Were the questions appropriate?					
Were the questions interesting?					

Give the interviewee a score from 1 to 5 considering the following:

Question	Score				
Were the answers clear?					
Were the answers grammatically correct?					
Were the answers appropriate?					
Were the answers interesting?					