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ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS through the APPLICATION of COLLABORATIVE
LEARNING STRATEGIES in a COLOMBIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

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Research Report submitted

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in English Language Teaching for Self-Directed Learning

Directed by Martha Isabel ESPITIA

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Declaration

I hereby declare that my research report entitled:

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS through the APPLICATION of COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES in a COLOMBIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL

- is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared and specified in the text;
- is neither substantially the same as nor contains substantial portions of any similar work submitted or that is being concurrently submitted for any degree or diploma or other qualification at the Universidad de La Sabana or any other university or similar institution except as declared and specified in the text;
- complies with the word limits and other requirements stipulated by the Research Subcommittee of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures;
- has been submitted by or on the required submission date.

Date: August 15th, 2013

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Signature: _____

Acknowledgment

This work is dedicated to Joly, my beloved wife. It would not have been possible without your love, support and patience during two years. In those difficult moments when I was about to quit, you were there to push me and make me go on. There, in heaven, you must be happy because I ...WE... finally did it.

Abstract

This action research project was carried out with a group of 10 students in 10th grade at a public school in Medellín, Colombia. It was aimed at discovering factors that hinder the improvement of their English speaking skills, as well as to analyze how collaborative strategies affect students' performance when developing oral tasks. Data were gathered through questionnaires, teacher and students' journals, and interviews. These data were analyzed qualitatively using grounded theory method with open coding to identify categories. Findings showed that the lack of confidence and motivation were the main aspects that cause of the poor oral performance. Similarly, they also suggest that collaborative work and peer interaction helped confidence and motivation grow dramatically.

Key words: collaborative strategies, speaking skills, confidence, motivation.

Resumen

Esta investigación acción se llevó a cabo con un grupo de 10 estudiantes de décimo grado en un colegio público en Medellín, Colombia. El objetivo fue descubrir factores que entorpecen el progreso de las habilidades del habla en el aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. También, cómo estrategias colaborativas pueden causar un efecto positivo para vencer estos obstáculos. Se recolectaron datos mediante cuestionarios, diarios de estudiantes y profesor, y entrevistas. Estos datos fueron analizados cualitativamente usando el método de teoría fundamentada con codificación abierta. Los hallazgos mostraron que la falta de confianza y motivación era la principal causa del pobre desempeño oral. Sin embargo, también mostraron que el trabajo colaborativo y la interacción con pares ayudaron a que la confianza y la motivación creciera dramáticamente.

Palabras claves: estrategias colaborativas, habilidades de habla, confianza, motivación.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching English as a foreign language implies instruction for the development of the four basic skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. Practice and improvement of these skills are important for developing effective use of the target language. However, as Cadavid, McNulty and Quinchía (2004) state, in Colombia “the English that is being taught to children in public elementary school is rather limited, or is comprised of basic vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation” (p. 45). Likewise, in high school, the focus of EFL has been put mainly on the reading skills and learning of grammatical structures while neglecting the other three abilities, not only because there is lack of interest or willingness from the teachers but because there are factors that affect their performance, being one of the most common the need of qualification in the pedagogical aspect and the knowledge of the target language. Many teachers are faced with the task of teaching English without enough knowledge of the language or the pedagogical tools to cope with the mission of having the students learn. Then, in spite of the desire these teachers might have to promote the accomplishment of speaking skills, they are “working against all odds.” (Cadavid et al, 2004, p. 44). As an EFL teacher in a public school for more than six years, I could observe this lack of focus in the oral skills work in the EFL classrooms and confirmed it through questionnaires given to different stakeholders (students, teachers and administrative staff) who highlighted the importance of English as a foreign language but mentioned how the students felt very apprehensive when having to actually communicate in this language: “Es muy difícil cuando el profesor nos habla todo el tiempo en inglés y quiere que nosotros también hablemos en inglés. A mí me da mucha pena hablar con los compañeros”. (S4, J1)

In a questionnaire given to the students to find out their perception of English and their English class, 35 students out of 41 affirmed English was important or very important, whereas 20 of them said they hardly ever participated in the English class, and one even said he never took part in the English class activities. Also, 14 of them said they felt uneasy whenever they had to speak in the target language (see Table 1).

Table 1. STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS. GRADE: 10th (41 students).

Questions	Answers
1. ¿Con qué frecuencia participo en mi clase de inglés?	En todas las clases (8 times) En la mayoría de las clases (12 times) En muy pocas clases (20 times) Nunca (1 time)
2. Cuando participo en mi clase de Inglés lo hago en...	Inglés (12 times) Español (3 times) Español y cuando puedo en Inglés (26 times)
3. ¿Me gusta hablar en inglés?	Si (28 times) No (13 times)
4. ¿Cómo me siento si la profesora/el profesor me habla en Inglés en clase?	Súper cómodo (4 times) Cómodo (26 times) Incómodo (11 times) Súper Incómodo(0 times)

<p>5. ¿Cómo me siento cuando debo hablar en inglés en clase?</p>	<p>Súper cómodo (2 times) Cómico (25 times) Incómodo (14 times) Súper Incómodo (0 times)</p>
<p>6. Mi clase de Inglés...</p>	<p>Me encanta (3 times) Me gusta (26 times) Me parece normal (12 times) No me gusta (0 times)</p>
<p>7. Para mí hablar en Inglés es...</p>	<p>Muy importante (20 times) Importante (15 times) No tiene sentido (1 time) No me gusta porque no lo uso (5 times)</p>
<p>8. Cuando tenemos actividades en grupo pienso que...</p>	<p>Es lo mejor de la clase (35 times) No me puedo concentrar (4 times) No me gusta trabajar con más gente (2 times)</p>

Some of the main problems hindering the development of oral skills in English were clearly identified in this research through data collection tools such as classroom observation, surveys and questionnaires for students, teachers and administrators. The data gave light on the need students had to overcome their lack of confidence and even their dread to speak in the target language to the teacher and/or to their peers. Therefore, this study intended to discover evidence to analyze how the use of collaborative strategies can

overcome the hindering factors found by giving the learners the chance to help each other in a comfortable environment.

Statement of the Problem

The type of interaction that was taking place in my classes was identified as one of the causes for the students' lack of confidence when using the target language in the classroom. This was because in a large group with 41 students, they would not have the opportunity to speak very often. They could even hide behind the others to avoid having to interact whether with the teacher or their peers.

The identification of the problem also evidenced that students found speaking important for their present and future learning, they were aware of the importance of English for acquiring new knowledge and interacting with the world. 35 students out of 41 thought English was either important or very important (see Table 1).

The development of the speaking skill appears to be one of the most challenging tasks in the EFL classrooms in Colombia. At the school where this study took place, speaking and developing communicative competences in English was particularly relevant, since the administrative staff and faculty were interested in giving this language a special emphasis due to the need for bilingual citizens in the current society. To make the mentioned process effective, it was important to identify what students' learning problems might be. Listening to the students' voices to get to know how their real feelings, needs and interests could lead to more meaningful strategies that would empower learners to become more responsible of their own knowledge, and teachers to use and implement valuable strategies in the EFL classroom. By considering this reality, this action research project sought to answer two questions that guided the study:

- What factors hinder the improvement of the speaking skills in 10th grade students in Camilo Mora Carrasquilla School?
- To what extent does the implementation of collaborative strategies shape students' oral performance in their EFL class?

Speaking has been considered an essential skill to consider somebody is proficient in a second language. However, as stated before, it has also been the skill that causes the biggest difficulties for high school students, because agreeing with Nunan (1999) “in authentic discourse, the interlocutors have a great deal of work to do to ensure that they are talking about the same thing” (p. 227). Thus, the project’s research objectives were to identify those aspects that might hinder the improvement of the speaking skills in EFL learners, and to help students to improve oral production and then to encourage them to efficiently communicate in English. Different activities were implemented to make the students feel more relaxed in the English class, taking into account their context, feelings and background. We set up situations they could easily cope with in real life, this way each team shared ideas and experiences and put them all together to reach a common goal. In order to achieve these research objectives, the implementation of collaborative strategies has proved to be efficient. About collaborative learning, understood as equals to collaborative strategies in this document, Brown (2011) states:

Collaborative learning CL has many benefits, such as improved learning skills, as well as some negative aspects, such as difficulty in getting some students to participate. The negative aspects can be successfully dealt with. Although, there is no ‘the perfect methodology’, CL is one instructional method that significantly facilitates the acquisition of academic, social and generic skills. (p. 14)

The purpose of the implementation of this method is to provide learners with strategies so that they can use English in real communication, which might lead to the development of speaking skills while contributing to creating a stress-free atmosphere as learners work cooperatively and become more self-directed learners.

Theoretical Considerations

The Article 21 of the General Law of Education (Law 115 of 1994) states that all the schools must offer their students the opportunity to learn a foreign language from the basic level. Thus, the Ministry of Education of Colombia took the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as a reference for the National Bilingualism Program in order to set goals and performance standards for high school learners.

Consequently, this study looks for new approaches to identify the aspects that hinder the improvement when learning English in Colombia, focusing on the oral skills, and for the implementation of different strategies to enhance language skills when learning English. Then, given that collaborative learning was the strategy implemented to see how it affects the improvement of speaking skills, I will talk about two main factors concerning this strategy: what has been written about the role of speaking in the EFL settings, as well as how teachers and students' interactions can affect the performance the students in the EFL classroom.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) see collaborative learning as a strategy “that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing” (p. 2). The fact that students get involved and make an effort to understand what they are doing, make them more aware of their knowledge, and then more responsible for it. Collaborative learning

was implemented to analyze to what extent collaboration can give students the chance to beat the factors that hinder the improvement of oral abilities in the high school EFL classrooms. Brown (2011) studied his students' perception on collaborative learning and found out that it "definitely enhances learning in several ways. Students in this study acknowledged the many benefits they derived from the practice to include academic, social, among others" (p. 13). As part of this study, the feelings the students have towards the strategies implemented affected the results that might emerge in the students' attitude toward the English class and the importance of speaking the target language. It provides students with the chance to work in pairs or groups to achieve their goals together while helping each other, without the pressure of having to speak in front of the whole group or to the teacher. Also, while working collaboratively, students are encouraged to share ideas with the others; within this process it is important to consider that "in learning, students should be given opportunities to explore and share their ideas with the rest of their classmates" (Osman, Nayan, Mansor, Maesin & Asmaak, 2010, p. 119). It is of paramount relevance to listen to the students' voices in order to know what their needs and interests are and what the perception they have of the English class is.

The role of Speaking in the Classroom

Speaking English in the EFL classroom involves the implementation of appropriate strategies for school contexts in order to achieve the goals stated in the curriculum. As teachers, we are called to find most appropriate ways to ease the language teaching-learning process that better fit the context our students have to live in.

For this reason, the teaching of English is of great importance in Colombia. However, this is not a simple task. Being competent in another language different from the mother

tongue can be a puzzling and incremental time-consuming process. Rubin and Thompson (1994) recognized language learning as a long process (p. 9). For many years researchers and teachers have been incessantly working to discover effective teaching methods. Moreover, Richards and Renandya (2002) highlight the fact that the nature of speaking along with a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic factors involved in producing fluent and appropriate language need to be understood and classroom activities should be carefully selected, considering learner's experience and the kind of interaction such activities provide:

A good teacher is seen as one who analyses a situation, realizes that a range of options is available based on the particular class circumstances, and then selects an alternative which is likely to be most effective for the circumstances. (p. 23)

Richards and Renandya (2002) also argue that the vast majority of language learners study English with the purpose of developing proficiency in speaking in order to communicate effectively.

Controversially, the learner's reluctance to speak in English within the language classroom is a problem commonly seen in EFL contexts. Research has shown that quiet learners develop more negative attitudes to school and are likely to lack motivation to put more effort in it. "Persons who have a low willingness to communicate tend to be less successful at achieving the benefits of communication". (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991, p. 3). On the other hand, learners who usually maintain a positive attitude towards the language learning process and make the effort to communicate in the target language, usually experiment less language learning anxiety and encounter more opportunities to participate actively in learning tasks.

Students who consider the learning of English as a positive and rewarding experience are less likely to suffer from foreign language anxiety. By contrast, they usually have higher levels of motivation, willingness to participate, and high language performance. (Tsiplakides & Keramida, 2010, p. 1).

For EFL learners, developing the speaking skill in a foreign language can be stressing, and the role of the teachers and the implementation of activities may have a bigger influence on the student's attitudes. As revealed in Young's (1990) study, "student's anxiety level was not based on the speaking of the foreign language (a task that is, itself, highly conducive to anxiety) but speaking in front of the class" (p. 545). Therefore, dealing with speech anxiety has become a major concern of teachers (Ellis 1994; Young 1990; Verderber & Verderber 2003). Different studies in language learning, like Hinkel's (2001), Bonwell and Eison's (1991) and Brown's (2011), have addressed the necessity of classroom interaction or students' oral participation in class. Hinkel (2001) says that in addition to being an important skill, oral production in EFL settings can be difficult for foreign language learners, the difficulty of learning to speak accurately and fluently can be observed in the different sub skills such as the ability to respond to different functions of the language like asking and responding to requests, apologies, invitations, among others, that are corporate in the oral production.

Viafara (2008) argues that during the process of learning how to write in a foreign language, learners must become responsible of their own learning and that the role of the teachers is to facilitate the process (p. 76). The same can be affirmed when talking about the role of teachers and learners in the development of speaking skills in the classroom where collaborative strategies are used. This role must switch, since the teachers have to

become facilitators through the implementation of activities that foster language development, motivating the learners to play a more active part in their own learning process. According to El Karfa (2007), teachers “need to create a relaxed and safe atmosphere in the classroom where students share responsibility for conducting classroom interaction and management” (p.40). In other words, implementing strategies that help learners to increase their self-confidence is necessary when promoting a safe environment in the EFL classroom. However it is important to keep in mind that, as Ayala and Buitrago (2008) stated, this ideal learning environment is not possible in spite of the teachers’ willingness and efforts (p. 34).

Likewise, when teachers promote an agreeable classroom environment there is a reduction of learners’ anxiety. Taking into account a study by Tanveer (2007), learners identify a strict and formal classroom environment as a cause of language anxiety. A pleasant setting, at the same time, increases confidence (p.41). It is also important to highlight the role of teacher as motivators in the learning process. As stated by El Karfa (2007) “The teacher’s ability to motivate is important because it creates a stress-free atmosphere and establishes a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation” (p. 41). This is something that remarks the role that cooperation and interaction plays for improving not only classroom practices but attitudes as well.

Thus, teachers and learners are responsible for the creation of pleasant and secure settings that reduce the anxiety in the classroom. This way, motivation to interact orally with both the teacher and peers will grow. If the students feel more motivated, there will be more interaction which might derive in more confident learners who will collaborate to each other to improve their skills.

Interaction

Regarding interaction, Chanthiramathi (2011) asserts that “the role of interaction in the classroom to enhance the speaking skill comes from the understanding of its main types: teacher - learner interaction and learner-learner interaction, where negotiation of meaning and the provision of feedback are highlighted” (p.1). The encouragement of activities and classroom practices by EFL teachers should motivate learners to improve their learning practices inside and outside the classroom keeping in mind the different types of interaction as well as the way to promote a constant reflection on the daily teaching practices for enriching EFL contexts.

The role of teachers and learners in the development of speaking skills in EFL contexts deals with a number of features such as models, monitors, instructors or facilitators, where, as argued by different authors like El Karfa(2007), Tanveer (2007), Ayala and Buitrago (2008), Chanthiramathi (2011), both actors (teachers – students) should work in a collaborative way to continuously foster EFL teaching and learning practices enriching foreign language settings with appropriate learning opportunities.

Vygotsky (1978) said that learning occurs through social interaction between a novice and a more knowledgeable person, and also mentions that learning can occur when interacting with a more knowledgeable person and with other novices and properly designed materials. Then, interaction is the origin of learning, and providing the students with activities that promote the exposure to contextualized language; and then with situations that foster the creation of language according to their linguistic and socio cultural level might lead to successful EFL learning.

Interaction in the EFL classroom tends to change, as Rance-Roney (2010) mentions, “the importance of learner interaction in acquiring a second language has made the *teacher-directed student-centered* classroom the standard for effective instruction.”(p. 20). This trend to make the classroom more student-centered has led to favoring group work, where students work together to increase their learning through cooperative interaction. However, this is something that has to be done very carefully, because students may neglect the work, and do not do what they are supposed to do. Thus, Rance-Roney (2010) suggests to have into account the following items: how many students in a group, whether the groups should be fixed or flexible, how to group students; she also recommends to assign group roles, but having them all take active participation in the task development. (pp. 21-23) Then, group work is a great strategy to have students interact, but it cannot be left to chance, it must be carefully planned to make the best of it.

It is important to consider how student-teacher interaction impacts the development of second-language speaking skills. There are several ways teachers usually choose to have the students interact among themselves and with the teacher. The Initiate-Respond-Follow up exchange (IRF) is one of the most common interaction patterns in public schools in Colombia. In the IRF exchange a person (usually the teacher) initiates the dialogue, another (the student) responds, and the first one follows up the conversation. However, since one of the objectives of this study is to find out new strategies to foster improvement of oral skills. IRF exchange just has the student respond with set patterns without generating real communication. Instead, in collaborative learning activities, the students had the responsibility to find the way to communicate assertively. Thus, we used contingent interaction implement in which there are no set patterns to keep the conversation

going but set situations to have the students figure out the best way to communicate, constructing their own knowledge.

Herazo (2010) differentiates strategies that foster authentic oral communication from those that do not. He shows role plays as an example of those activities that do not help much on oral communication when they are done by heart, following a script. Nevertheless, when activities such as situations to be played without a script or surveys are applied, more real communication is reached, because the learners are given the chance to be more spontaneous, and to make decisions on what to say and how to say it. This kind of approach can lead to peer-correction and to raise awareness of each other's interlanguage. Accordingly, the strategies to achieve this kind of interaction during this study were: role-plays based on situations, small talks emerging from board games, mingle, information gap and problem solving.

Contingent interaction instead of IRF exchange was chosen because the former is closer to the way people usually communicate in an everyday situation. Herazo also mentions how the interaction in Colombian schools between teachers and students usually follow the IRF exchange. This kind of exchange gives the teacher the control of the interaction, meaning students have very little chance for interacting. Therefore, he suggests contingent interaction that has "no certainty as regards the direction the talk will take, for it depends on the local, moment-to-moment positions and contributions of each of the participants" (p. 59) as a better way to give students more chances to interact.

Ayala, de Cervantes, González, Romero and Mugford (2011) also mention "small talk", short non-planned dialogues, as a way to allow students to interact more meaningfully. They call it phatic talk, and focus on how it develops interpersonal relationships. Self-

disclosure (talking about personal facts and feelings), and face boosting (motivational utterances) ways, not to teach, but to give opportunities to get skills. The use of these small talks in the group under research is a good tool to encourage students to reveal aspects about themselves and make interaction more personal.

In short, learning a language occurs when the individual is faced with communication, but this interaction goes beyond the simple pattern of question-answer. Interaction has to do with the views and reactions speakers have towards the facts, ideas and feelings present at the moment of the conversation.

When students like their English class, they feel motivated to learn every day and the language interaction and acquisition is more effective. However, it is important to say that being motivated and finding the target language useful do not guarantee the success in the second language learning and teaching processes nor the development of the oral competence and this is why this study included learning collaborative learning strategies to analyze to what extent students' oral performance can improve through the use of the strategies.

Research Design

This action research project was conducted during the second semester of 2012 in Camilo Mora Carrasquilla School, a small public school outside Medellín, Colombia. Students belong to working-class neighborhoods which, in spite of being near some zones considered dangerous because of the presence of gangs, are quiet and there is respect towards others.

In the school there are about 600 students from pre-school to 11th grade, between 40 and 45 students in each group; there are not many bibliographic or technological resources for English classes, just a TV, a video beam and a laptop that are shared with content teachers as well, so the teacher must make use of copies or downloaded material for class. SABER-ICFES test is a standardized test used by the government administration to evaluate the education in Colombia. According to the results of the SABER-ICFES test the English level of former students in the school has been low, usually A- or A1 in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, there have eventually been some students that reach A2 level. The students are usually reluctant to speak up in class. However, most of them usually show a good attitude towards the English class, especially when they are asked to work in teams to interact with their peers. (See Table 1)

This research project was conducted with a sample of 10 out of 41 students of 10th grade. These students were selected among those who regularly attended classes and that agreed to be part of the research project. The first decision I had to make was which students to choose to undergo this study. The first factor I considered was that they did not often miss classes; then that they agreed to be part of the research, which left 6 of them out of the possible participants. I wanted to have diversity in this group in order to have the chance to group them in different ways, but at the same time I wanted to prevent labeling them from the beginning, or, willingly or not, choosing only the most active and manageable ones. Besides in agreement with what Nunan and Bailey (2009) suggest, randomization also prevents lack of validity provoked by external variables like preexisting differences that influence the result of the study; that is the reason why the selection of these ten students was done at random, picking out their names from a paper bag. Among

these ten, there were some who were very committed and showed some interest for the English class, as well as some who did not work hard enough in the class or had actually expressed their apathy towards English. It is important to mention, however, that all of them stated their willingness to participate in this study, and also that none of them had any English learning background different from the school.

Type of Study

According to Nunan and Bailey (2009) action research “consists of the same methods as regular research, that is, question, data, and interpretation. What makes classroom action research unique is that it is conducted by classroom practitioners investigating their own practice” (p. 17). Therefore, this is an action research, since the teacher himself, after making a needs analysis of the group, conducted an implementation of collaborative strategies in the classroom, playing different roles such as instructor, model, monitor, facilitator or encourager, with the purpose of finding a new alternative to help students to improve their oral performance in English.

Since all the participants were minors, it was necessary to ask for their parents’ approval before starting this study. Thus both the students and their parents signed an informed consent letter (see appendix B) where they stated their willingness to be part of the study and the researcher promised not to mention their real names in the paper.

Similarly, taking into account the importance of triangulation to validate the analysis of the data gathered, tools like questionnaires, surveys, teacher and students’ journals and interviews were used. Triangulation was important because with it, “many points of view can be brought to the analysis” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009, p.163) which gave more validity to

the results of the study. Using the grounded theory, defined by Nunan (1992) as “the practice of deriving theory from data rather than the other way around” (p. 57), to analyze the data I managed to come from very open findings to more precise ones about the factors that hindered the students’ development of speaking skills, as well as the results of the implementation of collaborative strategies like role-plays, mingle, small talks and problem solving. Some instruments that will be mentioned later were used to gather data that helped reach the objectives on this study: to identify aspects that might hinder the improvement of speaking skills and to figure out how collaborative strategies may affect the enhancement of oral production. The following are the instruments used to gather information in the two stages of the study: needs analysis and implementation and analysis:

Instruments for the needs analysis.

It is very relevant to keep aware of the need of English as a universal language, not only in English speaking countries; and of the difficulties high school students have to cope with oral interaction. It is also important that teachers become aware of this needs so that they can find new ways to help the students solve them. The instruments used for the needs analysis stage were:

- A survey to identify the students, teachers and administrative staff’s views and attitudes towards the English class. The answers gave light about the problem to be investigated, showing how the feelings and likes can affect the process of becoming skillful when speaking in the EFL setting.
- A learning style questionnaire which provided evidence about the participants’ profiles. It allowed me to be aware of the advantages or limitations some students

may have when trying a new approach that requires speaking a lot, and also to think carefully when planning the activities to be developed in class and how to present this activities to the group.

The information analyzed helped me understand some of the reasons why the students felt reluctant to interact in the classroom using the target language. Based on these results I implemented some collaborative strategies that led to the answer to the research questions.

Instruments for the implementation and analysis

- Students' journals which clarified the perception, ideas and feelings the participants had of the activities performed in class. They showed how the learners reacted to some situations, it showed the apprehension or confidence they had when performing orally in class, and how these reactions began to change due to the implementation of the planned lessons.
- Interviews that helped a lot to contrast with the journals, the results allowed the researcher to identify real feelings and perceptions students have of the strategies implemented during the study.
- The teacher's journal which unveiled the perception of the teacher-researcher about the EFL class and which gave lights about how the students and the teacher himself reacted before the activities done in class.

Table 2 shows the steps followed during the study process and the instruments used for each one of them, as well as the time-line indicating how long each process took. It is relevant to mention that the group met for English class once a week during two hours.

Table 2. Research Project Steps

Moment	Step	Instrument
Initial 3 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diagnosis of students' attitude toward speaking activities in class. • Random selection of 10 students as active participants of the study. • Permission of the students' parents to get evidence of the implementation. • Recognition of the participants' learning styles. • Implementation of a diagnostic activity to have a clear idea of the students' speaking ability. 	<p>Observation.</p> <p>Survey (See Appendix A)</p> <p>Consent form (see Appendix B)</p> <p>Learning style survey (see Appendix C)</p> <p>Lesson plan (see Appendix D) and rubric (see Appendix E)</p>
Ongoing 6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of six lesson plans based on collaborative strategies. • Writing of journals 	<p>Lesson plans (see Appendix F)</p> <p>A journal model (see Appendix G)</p>
Final 4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi structured Interview. • Final testing activity. • Qualitative analysis of the data gathered. 	<p>Model of questions (see Appendix H)</p> <p>Lesson plan (see Appendix I) and rubric (see Appendix E)</p>

As Charmaz (2000) suggests, the following were the steps followed, using grounded theory as the framework for the data analysis. First, I collected, coded and analyzed data, starting with general ideas and themes to reach more specific categories. This way I could get to some important findings about the factors that hinder improvement of oral skills and how collaboration influences this improvement.

Findings

In order to identify emergent categories through grounded theory, I used coding as an analytic strategy to categorize data. I looked into the data for common ideas, feelings and beliefs related to the roles of the teacher and learners in the EFL class. Aspects that impeded the improvement of the speaking skills in the group under study were identified as well as the pros and cons of the strategies implemented in the classroom and how they might affect the oral performance of students. The first factors discovered were very general ideas about active participation, lack of motivation, self-confidence, interaction and motivation which, then, led to more selective categories: anxiety and lack of motivation as factors that might hinder the improvement of speaking skills in the students; and interaction and motivation as the results of the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.

(See Table 3)

Table 3. Categories identified and conclusions

Categories	Conclusions	
	Aspects that hinder the improvement of the	How the implementation of

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

	speaking skills in 10 th grade students in Camilo Mora Carrasquilla School	collaborative strategies affected students' oral performance in their EFL class
Anxiety (hiding) Interaction (constructing)	Speaking skills are usually hindered by the fear of making mistakes and being mocked.	Working collaboratively in small groups cause the learners to feel more confident, since they do not have to speak directly to the teacher or the whole group. Besides they support and encourage each other.
Lack of motivation (fearing) Motivation (trusting)	If a student does not like what he/she does, he/she will not offer more than what is required. Motivated students, on the other hand, will be willing to enrich the classes.	Having the feeling of improvement when communicating with others and losing the fear to make mistakes have made the students like the activities more.

The following are the final categories discovered after the analysis

“Hiding”

A survey conducted before starting the implementation of collaborative strategies in the classroom showed that, although the students acknowledged learning English as a very important factor in their future professional lives and they would like to learn it, they refrained from participating actively in the classes due to their fears to make mistakes and to be mocked. However, only eleven students out of 41 expressed they felt uneasy when the teacher talked to them in English, and fourteen said they felt bad when they had to speak; also, it is important to mention that six of the learners stated English had no sense for them or was useless (see Table 1).

The students sometimes felt shy and embarrassed when they had to speak using the target language whether with the teacher or in front of the group, which makes it difficult for them to communicate in English. “Es muy difícil cuando el profesor nos habla todo el tiempo en inglés y quiere que nosotros también hablemos en inglés. A mí me da mucha pena hablar con los compañeros” (S4, J1).

As many teenagers, some of the students were very self-aware and self-critical, which made them easily embarrassed in front of the others, and therefore, anxious to participate in the speaking activities in the English class. They tended to think they had to understand everything in order to take part of the activities without making any mistakes. They had difficulties to express themselves because of the anxiety itself or the lack of linguistic knowledge necessary to speak as well as they would desire. “Me pareció un poquito difícil preguntarle al compañero las preguntas en inglés, y además entenderle a él lo que me preguntaba” (S1, J3).

There was also a problem of socialization that caused stress and affected the development of oral skills in the classroom. Although the students might get along well with all their peers, if you gave them the chance to choose groups, they would look for their closest friends to work with. And they felt uneasy when having to work with peers that did not belong to their circle of closest friends. “el profe me puso con unas personas que no son mis amigas. Entonces yo me sentí mal para hablar con ellos” (S6, J1).

The anxiety in the English classroom was a problem that hindered the improvement of the oral skills in the target language, and, at the same time, caused students to feel they could not manage to achieve the goals proposed, and lead to another problem: lack of desire to continue trying.

“Fearing”

In the survey given at beginning of the study, thirteen out of forty-one students (almost a third) explicitly mentioned they did not like to speak English (see Table 1). This might be due to the stress they felt as mentioned in the previous section, and also the fact that some of them did not find English really useful or meaningful for their daily routines.

During the application of the collaborative strategies the students also felt a bit uncomfortable in the English class because of the lack of focus some of them experienced from time to time, caused when they spoke in Spanish or did not follow instructions properly. This situation distracted those who were really willing to follow the instructions and work steadily, causing them to feel uneasy. “A veces es maluco trabajar en equipo, porque los muchachos no se concentran bien en lo que hay que hacer y además hablamos mucho español cuando el profe no está cerca” (S2, J1).

Besides, the teacher had difficulties to monitor the activities continuously in such a large group, which allowed students to use L1 instead of the target language when the teacher was not around. The fact that they still needed a teacher around most of the time to keep trying in spite of the linguistic resources they had showed they were not totally convinced of the purpose of the collaborative learning activities. “La clase estuvo bien, aunque los compañeros con los que trabajé hoy no la tomaron muy en serio, y hablaron siempre en español” (S1, J4).

However, this bad attitude towards the collaborative learning activities started changing little by little. The benefits will be analyzed in the next sections.

“Constructing”

Collaborative learning was implemented in the classroom, planning pair and team work with activities that had them construct and share their knowledge of the language. These kinds of activities led the students to focus mainly on having a message understood by others and understanding others’ messages instead of focusing on structures. They also allowed students to share with small groups and then with the whole group, which gave them the chance to take an active role in the implementation of the activities, sharing knowledge and encouraging each other to keep trying no matter that it was sometimes very hard for some of them to keep track with the activity. Even those who were usually reluctant to speak in front of the group or to the teacher made an effort to participate, because they felt they did not have to worry about making mistakes as long as they had their ideas understood.

“Me siento con más libertad cuando me expreso y con muchísima más confianza y así he logrado cosas que años atrás no sabía que podía” (S6, I). Although they sometimes used the L1 when they felt unable to express what they wanted to say using the target language, they would also use their own interlanguage, which can be defined as the language the learner produces while acquiring the target language. The students combined Spanish and English to have ideas understood and accomplish the task assigned. Losing the fear to speak using the target language gave more confidence to participate and create knowledge:

“I feel really pleased to see that most of the students are committed to the activities, even if they speak Spanish sometimes or use “Spanglish”, they do it for the sake of accomplishing the task and having their ideas understood by the others” (Teacher, J6).

Students showed more responsibility for their own learning process as well as for their peers’. They showed a big sense a commitment with the activities and supported each other greatly: “Hoy hablamos en equipos haciéndonos preguntas sobre distintos temas según donde cayera después de tirar el dado. Los compañeros tenían que colaborarle a uno y uno también a ellos. Así aprendimos mucho”. (S5, J4).

The activities assigned allowed the class to be more learner-centered. The students were asked to share information, negotiate meaning and help each other to achieve the goals proposed. Collaboration became important for the achievement of both individual and collective goals. And, although at the beginning the students felt a bit uneasy to socialize with others different from their closest friends, they were more willing to join forces with each other to construct their knowledge.

“La verdad las clases son las mejores porque no son monótonas, en cada clase hacemos algo diferente y muy dinámico, nos hacemos en grupos a hablar siempre en inglés y es muy divertido” (S2, I). “A uno le da un poquito de pena cuando le toca hablar en inglés con otras personas, pero uno se va acostumbrando con el tiempo y puede aprender de los otros” (S6, I). When the students interacted with each other, they seemed to feel freer and more willing to learn new things. They were aware they were not facing an expert but just another person who was also in the process of learning. In their journals and personal interviews, the students expressed how appealing the activities were and how they helped them to participate actively. Additionally, they identified positive results of their work; they felt less anxious and more confident when interacting in L2.

“Es muy bacano uno poder hablar y notar que ya le entienden lo que uno quiere decir” (S3, J6). During the process, the students were encouraged to discover and share their knowledge of English with their peers and teacher. Thus, the activities fostered their willingness to take more responsibility and active roles in their own learning which would facilitate their construction of knowledge.

“Para mí todas las actividades que hemos realizado tienen un gran contenido de aprendizaje y compartir con mis compañeros me ha ayudado a perder el miedo de participar y preguntar cuando no entiendo” (S6, I).

“Trusting”

By observing the active participation of the students, they seem to like the activities and tried hard to achieve the goals proposed. Moreover, participants expressed they were losing the fear of making mistakes and being mocked, which facilitates their learning of the

language. The activities proposed in this intervention were intended to foster communication, so although the learners were encouraged to use the appropriate structures, they knew what really mattered was to have their ideas understood by others. Also, they became aware that learning a second language implies making mistakes and correcting them, and that the grade given at the end of the academic period did not depend mostly on how well or badly they performed in a test, but on the construction of knowledge throughout the course, with active participation and willingness to follow instructions and take the risk to speak English while learning with the help of the teacher and their peers: “Si me equivoco sé que no tendré inmediatamente un uno como resultado, si no que puedo corregirlo y solucionar las dudas que yo tenga respecto a cualquier tema. Ya no me da miedo pronunciar el inglés” (S7, I).

As learners felt more motivated, they participated more and their anxiety in the classroom lowered which made them feel they could improve their speaking skills. It was also noted that both academic and social anxiety decreased. The students expressed how they got used to interacting with others different from their closest friends, when the teacher organized the teams differently every class: “al principio, el relacionarse con otros que no son tus amigos si es algo maluco, pero ya después uno se va acostumbrando” (S6, J5).

The learners said they felt more confident when understanding what they were expected to do. They were more willing to participate and learn. “He aprendido mucho con estas clases, hoy en una actividad le preguntaron a Johan, y yo levantaba la mano para participar, cuando siempre trataba de esconderme para no participar. Pero hoy sabía algo de lo que estamos haciendo” (S4, J4).

Some students who hardly ever participated in class, even when they were asked directly, used to keep quiet. After four weeks of working in teams and pairs, their attitude changed dramatically, and although they were still often quiet, they started making a great effort to take an active part in the classes, sometimes making mistakes, but usually receiving support from their peers and teacher: “Today’s class was especially motivating for me, since some students who are always very reluctant to participate because of shyness or lack of motivation did participate actively in the task. Everybody congratulated them after the class had finished.” (Teacher, J4)

It was clear that some changes happened during the implementation of the collaborative strategies in the group. A student-centered approach showed how those aspects that hinder oral communication in the classroom, such as fear and lack of interest, changed the attitude of the students. A new attitude led to more risk-taker students who did not fear to interact in the target language.

Conclusion

According to McCroskey and Richmond (1991) “Oral performance is threatening to all children at one time or another” (p. 46), so it is normal students feel nervous when having to participate in class. Also, there are levels of anxiety some of the students can manage, but some others feel unable to do it. Most of the students under study showed some kind of apprehension towards speaking English in class because speaking can be threatening and because using the target language implies making mistakes and producing sounds that may be weird and even funny: “El profe me puso con unas personas que no son mis amigas.

Entonces yo me sentí mal para hablar con ellos. Yo no sé cómo expresarme en inglés” (S6. J1).

However, similarly to the results of the study made by Brown (2011), the implementation of the collaborative strategies chosen for this study brought a relevant impact in the attitude of students and the teacher towards the English class. The students, at the beginning, felt English was a difficult or even meaningless language but, after the implementation of collaborative strategies, they became aware that they can use it to actually make their ideas understood by the members of the working team while they understand the others as well. This fact makes willingness grow, and therefore participation as well. McCroskey and Richmond (1991) state:

Many teachers have students work routinely in groups to complete an assignment. This effective method of instruction is particularly beneficial to the student with a high level of communication apprehension. In the small-group environment, apprehensive students are much more likely to talk than when they are forced to address the class as a whole; they are also much more likely to be encouraged by their peers to talk. (p 50)

In agreement with some previous studies like McCroskey and Richmond's (1991) and Buitrago and Ayala's (2008), motivation has demonstrated to be one of the most important aspects to learn a language. Once the students feel they want to do something and have fun when doing it, they work harder to achieve the goal. Moreover, the fact of interacting among peers bring about a sense of responsibility that causes construction of knowledge and willingness to both learn from the others and help them to do so. The learners felt more

confident and willing to share ideas and information to negotiate meaning using the target language.

After the implementation of these collaborative strategies, the learners felt more willing to strive for communicating in English: instead of just learning about English in the classroom without developing real speaking skills, they began to speak English while learning about it.

Collaborative learning was identified as an approach to give the students the opportunity to feel safer when learning English, daring to participate more actively and constructing and sharing their knowledge with others while building confidence. Also, similarly to the conclusion Tsiplakides and Keramida (2010) reached after their study, the implementation of collaborative strategies helps students “feel that their language output is not constantly assessed” (p. 3).

Further Research

Since the ministry of Education of Colombia intends to promote bilingualism in the country, this kind of research should be implemented more deeply. As for this study, I only implemented 6 lessons based on collaborative strategies, and it showed relevant data that uncover some of the reasons why students do not achieve any proficiency in oral skills in EFL, as well as how collaborative strategies can be a way to overcome those aspects that hinder this achievement.

It would be interesting if this study were taken as a basis to start analyzing what is going on in the EFL classrooms in the different regions of Colombia to come to conclusions about the work that is being done to enhance oral skills in our students. This would bring about a wider knowledge of the students we have in our classes, what would

generate in a more realistic and productive view when designing the syllabus we implement in the classroom.

However, for future research on this field, it would be very advisable to devote longer time to the process of data gathering in order to validate the results not only in short term but also in long term. Also it would be of paramount relevance to triangulate the final results from different schools along the Colombian territory. This way, in spite of following the same collaborative strategies as a basis for a new national EFL program, each school, or region would discover what works for them, and what does not.

Moreover, talking about collaborative learning demands further study on other aspects that surround it, such as how to group students for an ideal work, considering there are many types of personality, cultural, background among other differences in each classroom.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey about experiences in the EFL classroom

Apreciado estudiante,

El propósito de este cuestionario es explorar y reunir información sobre tu experiencia en tus clases de inglés. El objetivo principal es contar con respuestas sinceras que permitan conocer tu experiencia cuando participas en tus clases de inglés. Por favor selecciona una respuesta para cada una de las siguientes preguntas de forma individual:

1. ¿Con qué frecuencia participo en mi clase de inglés?

En todas las clases En la mayoría de las clases En muy pocas clases Nunca

2. Cuando participo en mi clase de inglés lo hago en...

Inglés Español Español y cuando puedo en Inglés

3. ¿Me gusta hablar en inglés?

Sí No ¿Por qué?

4. ¿Cómo me siento si la profesora/ el profesor me habla en Inglés en clase?

Súper cómodo Cómodo Incómodo Súper Incómodo
¿Por qué?

5. ¿Cómo me siento cuando debo hablar en inglés en clase?

Súper cómodo Cómodo Incómodo Súper Incómodo
¿Por qué?

6. Mi clase de Inglés...

Me encanta Me gusta Me parece normal No me gusta

7. Para mi hablar en inglés es...

Muy importante Importante No tiene sentido No me gusta porque no lo uso

8. Cuando tenemos actividades en grupo pienso que...

Es lo mejor de la clase No me puedo concentrar No me gusta trabajar con más gente

Appendix B: Informed consent

**DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING
IN COLOMBIA RESEARCH PROJECT
CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO PARA PARTICIPAR EN UN ESTUDIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN**

Medellín, 9 de julio 2012

Señores:

Estudiantes Grados 10º

Institución Educativa Camilo Mora Carrasquilla

Apreciados estudiantes:

Actualmente estoy realizando una investigación que hace parte del proyecto: *Enhancing speaking skills in EFL learners through the application of language learning strategies in the Colombian context*. Este estudio busca identificar aspectos que pueden dificultar el aprendizaje y desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas orales en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera. De la misma forma, el estudio busca implementar estrategias de aprendizaje para brindarles a los estudiantes la posibilidad de mejorar sus habilidades comunicativas orales en inglés. Cabe anotar que dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado de la Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés para el Aprendizaje Autodirigido –Programa Virtual- de la Universidad de La Sabana.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración como participantes de mi propuesta de investigación, que se llevará a cabo durante Julio y Agosto del presente año. Esto implica la planeación e implementación de actividades en la clase de inglés y la recolección de datos durante 6 semanas en las cuales ustedes responderán cuestionarios, completarán ejercicios de reflexión en relación con las estrategias utilizadas en las actividades de clase y presentarán dos exámenes que medirán su comunicación oral en inglés, uno al comienzo y otro al final de la investigación, los cuáles no tendrá incidencia en las notas de clase.

Igualmente, se les garantizará el uso de seudónimos para mantener su identidad en el anonimato en todas las publicaciones que la investigación origine. Cabe anotar que el proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las evaluaciones y notas parciales y/o finales del curso, por tal razón si usted firma la carta de consentimiento acepta voluntariamente participar del proyecto de investigación. Así mismo, usted puede decidir rehusarse a responder, participar, o abandonar el proyecto. Sin embargo, su participación voluntaria será de gran ayuda para llevar a cabo este proyecto de manera exitosa.

Agradezco de antemano su valioso aporte para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Atentamente,

EDWIN LOPERA PIEDRAHITA

Acepto participar

Nombre _____

Appendix C: Learning Style Survey

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE

Learning Style Survey*:

Adapted from: Assessing Your Own Learning Styles

Andrew D. Cohen, Rebecca L. Oxford, and Julie C. Chi

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ INSTITUTION: _____

Este estudio está diseñado para evaluar su enfoque para el aprendizaje. Éste no predice su comportamiento en cada caso, pero es una indicación clara de sus estilos de aprendizajes en general.

Para cada ítem, encierre con un círculo la respuesta que represente su enfoque. Complete todos los ítems. Hay once actividades principales que representan doce aspectos diferentes de su estilo de aprendizaje. Cuando usted lea los enunciados, trate de pensar en lo que usted normalmente hace cuando está aprendiendo. Este estudio toma aproximadamente 30 minutos para ser completado en su totalidad. No invierta mucho tiempo en un sólo ítem - indique su respuesta inmediata y pase al siguiente ítem.

Para cada ítem, encierre con un círculo su respuesta:

0 = Nunca

1 = Raramente

2 = Algunas veces

3 = Con frecuencia

4 = Siempre

Parte 1: CÓMO USO MIS SENSACIONES FÍSICAS

1. Recuerdo mejor las cosas si las escribo.
2. Tomo apuntes detallados durante las clases.
3. Cuando escucho, visualizo imágenes, números o palabras en mi cabeza.
4. Prefiero aprender a través de la televisión o el video en lugar de otros medios.
5. Uso el código de colores para ayudarme mientras aprendo o trabajo.
6. Necesito instrucciones escritas de las tareas.
7. Tengo que mirar a las personas para entender lo que dicen.
8. Entiendo mejor las clases cuando los profesores escriben en el tablero.
9. Los cuadros, diagramas, y mapas me ayudan a entender lo que alguien dice.
10. Recuerdo las caras de las personas pero no sus nombres.

A - Total _____

11. Recuerdo mejor las cosas si las discuto con alguien.
12. Prefiero aprender escuchando una clase más que leyendo.
13. Necesito instrucciones orales para desarrollar una tarea.
14. Los sonidos de fondo me ayudan a pensar.
15. Me gusta escuchar música cuando estudio o trabajo.
16. Puedo entender lo que las personas dicen aun cuando no puedo verlas.
17. Recuerdo los nombres de las personas pero no sus caras.
18. Fácilmente recuerdo chistes que escucho.
19. Puedo identificar a las personas por sus voces.
20. Cuando enciendo la televisión, escucho el sonido más que las imágenes de la pantalla.

B - Total _____

21. Prefiero comenzar las cosas, más que poner atención a las instrucciones.
22. Necesito descansos frecuentes cuando trabajo o estudio.
23. Necesito comer algo cuando leo o estudio.
24. Si tengo que escoger entre sentarme o pararme, prefiero pararme.
25. Me pongo nervioso cuando permanezco sentado por mucho tiempo.
26. Pienso mejor cuando me muevo (Ej.: zapateando).
27. Juego o muerdo mis lapiceros durante las clases.
28. Manipular objetos me ayuda a recordar lo que alguien dice.
29. Muevo mis manos cuando hablo.
30. Dibujo muchas imágenes (garabatos) en mi cuaderno durante las clases.

C - Total _____

Parte 2: CÓMO ME DISPONGO PARA LAS SITUACIONES DE APRENDIZAJE

1. Aprendo mejor cuando trabajo o estudio con otros que cuando lo hago yo mismo.
2. Conozco nuevas personas fácilmente involucrándome en su conversación.
3. Aprendo mejor en el salón de clase que con un tutor privado.
4. Es fácil para mí acercarme a extraños.

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

5. Interactuar con muchas personas me da energía.
6. Primero experimento las cosas y luego trato de entender.
- A - Total _____
7. Me siento energético con el mundo interior (Con mi pensamiento interior).
8. Prefiero las actividades y/o juegos individuales.
9. Tengo pocos intereses, y me concentro mucho en ellos.
10. Después de trabajar en un grupo grande, me siento exhausto.
11. Cuando estoy en un grupo grande, tiendo a guardar silencio y escuchar.
12. Me gusta entender bien algo antes de llevarlo a cabo.
- B - Total _____

Parte 3: CÓMO MANEJO LAS POSIBILIDADES

1. Tengo una imaginación creativa.
2. Trato de encontrar muchas opciones y posibilidades del por qué pasa algo.
3. Planeo cuidadosamente los eventos futuros.
4. Me gusta descubrir cosas por mí mismo en lugar de que todo se me sea explicado.
5. Aporto muchas ideas originales durante las discusiones en clase.
6. Estoy dispuesto a recibir sugerencias de mis compañeros.
- A - Total _____
7. Me concentro en una situación más que pensar en cómo podría ser.
8. Leo los manuales de instrucciones (Ej.: Para computadores o DVDs) antes de hacer uso del aparato.
9. Confío más en hechos concretos que en ideas nuevas o no probadas.
10. Prefiero las cosas presentadas paso a paso.
11. No me gusta cuando mis compañeros cambian los planes de un trabajo.
12. Sigo instrucciones cuidadosamente.
- B - Total _____

Parte 4: CÓMO MANEJO LA AMBIGÜEDAD Y LOS LÍMITES

1. Me gusta planear las lecciones de estudio del idioma cuidadosamente y hacer las lecciones a tiempo y temprano.
2. Mis notas, folletos, y otros materiales de escuela son cuidadosamente organizados.
3. Me gusta estar seguro de los significados en el idioma extranjero.
4. Me gusta saber cómo son aplicadas las reglas y por qué.
- A - Total _____
5. Pospongo las fechas límites si tengo otras cosas por hacer.
6. Dejo que las cosas se acumulen en mi escritorio para organizarlas después.
7. No me preocupo por comprender todo.
8. No siento la necesidad de llegar a conclusiones rápidas sobre un tema.
- B - Total _____

Parte 5: CÓMO RECIBO INFORMACIÓN

1. Prefiero respuestas cortas y simples más que largas explicaciones.
2. Ignoro detalles que no me parecen relevantes.
3. Es fácil para mí ver la idea general de un plan.
4. Obtengo la idea principal de algo y con eso me basta.
5. Cuando cuento una vieja historia, tiendo a olvidar muchos detalles específicos.
- A - Total _____
6. Necesito ejemplos específicos para entender completamente las cosas.
7. Pongo atención a información o hechos específicos.
8. Soy bueno para aprender nuevas palabras o frases que escucho.
9. Disfruto actividades donde completo espacios en blanco con las palabras que escucho.
10. Cuando trato de contar un chiste, recuerdo los detalles pero olvido la frase clave.
- B - Total _____

Parte 6: CÓMO PROCESO INFORMACIÓN NUEVA

1. Puedo resumir información fácilmente.
2. Rápidamente puedo parafrasear lo que otras personas dicen.
3. Cuando creo un esquema, primero considero los puntos claves.
4. Disfruto actividades donde tengo que agrupar ideas.
5. Mirando toda la situación, puedo fácilmente entender a alguien.
- A - Total _____

6. Me cuesta entender cuando no conozco cada palabra.

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7. Cuando cuento una historia o explico algo, me toma mucho tiempo.
8. Me gusta enfocarme en las reglas gramaticales.
9. Soy bueno para resolver misterios o crucigramas.
10. Soy bueno en observar aún los detalles más pequeños en una tarea.

B - Total _____

Parte 7: CÓMO EJERCITO LA MEMORIA

1. Trato de prestar atención a todas las características de un nuevo material a medida que aprendo.
2. Cuando memorizo diferentes partes del material del idioma, puedo recuperar estas partes fácilmente-como si las hubiese almacenado en compartimientos separados en mi cerebro.
3. A medida que aprendo nuevo material en el idioma extranjero, hago distinciones entre sonidos, formas gramaticales, palabras y frases.

A - Total _____

4. Cuando aprendo nueva información, puedo agrupar los datos eliminando o reduciendo las diferencias y enfocándome en las similitudes.
5. Ignoro distinciones que podrían hacer más exacto lo que digo.
6. Los recuerdos similares se hacen confusos en mi memoria, uno nuevas experiencias con antiguas vivencias.

B - Total _____

Parte 8: CÓMO MANEJO LAS REGLAS DEL IDIOMA

1. Me gusta ir de lo general a ejemplos específicos.
 2. Me gusta comenzar con reglas y teorías más que con ejemplos específicos.
 3. Me gusta comenzar con generalizaciones y luego encontrar experiencias que se relacionan con esas generalizaciones.
- A - Total _____
4. Me gusta aprender reglas del idioma indirectamente trabajando con ejemplos de estructuras gramaticales y otros rasgos del idioma.
 5. No me preocupo si escucho una regla establecida ya que no las recuerdo de todos modos muy bien.
 6. Descifro reglas basadas en la manera como veo el comportamiento de las formas del idioma.

Parte 9: CÓMO MANEJO LOS APORTES MÚLTIPLES

1. Puedo extraer información importante dentro de un contexto aún cuando se encuentren distractores dentro del mismo.
 2. Cuando produzco un mensaje oral o escrito me aseguro que esté correcto gramaticalmente.
 3. No sólo presto atención a la gramática, también presto atención al nivel de formalidad y cordialidad.
- A - Total _____
4. Cuando hablo o escribo, un enfoque en la gramática sería en la atención al contenido del mensaje.
 5. Es un reto para mí enfocarme en la comunicación o escritura y al mismo tiempo poner atención a la coincidencia gramatical (Ej. persona, número, tiempo, o género).
 6. Cuando estoy haciendo oraciones extensas en el idioma extranjero, me distraigo y rechazo aspectos gramaticales.

Parte 10: CÓMO MANEJO EL TIEMPO

1. Reacciono rápidamente en situaciones donde hago uso del idioma extranjero.
 2. Juego con mis instintos en el idioma extranjero.
 3. Me detengo, veo que pasa, y hago correcciones si es necesario.
- A - Total _____
4. Necesito pensar en las cosas antes de hablar o escribir.
 5. Me gusta mirar antes de seguir cuando debo decidir qué decir o escribir en el idioma extranjero.
 6. Trato de encontrar material de apoyo en mi mente, antes de hacer uso del idioma.

B - Total _____

Parte 11: CÓMO TOMO LITERALMENTE LA REALIDAD

1. Me doy cuenta de que construir metáforas en mi mente me ayuda a entender el idioma (Ej. ver el idioma como una máquina con partes que pueden ser desarmadas).
 2. Aprendo cosas a través de metáforas y asociaciones con otros elementos. Las historias y los ejemplos me ayudan a aprender.
- A - Total _____
3. Tomo el aprendizaje literalmente y no hago uso de metáforas.
 4. Tomo las cosas por su valor real, me gusta el lenguaje que dice las cosas directamente.

B - Total _____

ANÁLISIS DE PUNTAJES TOTALES

Una vez totalizado los puntos, escriba los resultados en los espacios correspondientes. Encierre con un círculo el mayor puntaje en cada parte.

Part 1: Part 5: Part 9:

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A ____ Visual A ____ Global A ____ Independiente
B ____ Auditivo B ____ Particular B ____ Dependiente C ____ Kinestésico

Part 2: Part 6: Part 10:

A ____ Extrovertido A ____ Capacidad de síntesis A ____ Impulsivo
B ____ Introverso B ____ Analítico B ____ Reflexivo

Part 3: Part 7: Part 11:

A ____ Casual- Intuitivo A ____ Pensamiento agudo A ____ Metafórico
B ____ Concreto - secuencia B ____ Equitativo B ____ Literal

Part 4: Part 8:

A ____ Perseverante A ____ Deductivo
B ____ Abierto B ____ Inductivo

Appendix D: Lesson plan for diagnosis

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN COLOMBIA RESEARCH PROJECT PART 2 (On-going Work) 2013

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE FOR INTERVENTION

Adapted from Dr. Joan Rubin's Lesson Planner, ICELT lesson plan template and Weekly Planner 2012-02 Department of Languages and Cultures, Universidad de La Sabana

Name of co-researcher: Edwin Lopera Piedrahita University Code Number: 201111452	
Institution: I.E. Camilo Mora Carrasquilla	
Date of Class: August 2nd	Time of Class: Thursday, 10:10 A.M. Length of class: 1 hour
	Time Frame: One 55 minute class period
Class/grade: 10th grade level	Room: Classroom
Number of students: 45	Average age of Students: 15-17
Number of years of English study: 5 years	Level of students: A1
Lesson Number Diagnosis activity	Research Circle Leader: Martha Isabel Espitia Cruz
Set Lesson Goals ✓ Make arrangement for a future event. ✓ Use role-plays as a collaborative strategy to strengthen confidence when speaking L2	

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

<p>Language Goal ✓ The students will be able to speak about future plans using “going to”</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria The teacher will observe the interaction among the students, as well as their use of the language and their capability to follow the instructions given.</p>
<p>Learning to Learn Goal ✓ The students will be able to interact with the others using simple language. ✓ The students will work collaboratively to agree on better ways to use language.</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria The teacher and the students will have a short evaluation of the activity, in which the students will assess themselves and each other.</p>
<p>Topic for the lesson Making arrangements</p>	
<p>Materials and Resources</p>	
<p>Material 1 name: Role-play cards.</p>	<p>Rationale: This cards of will show a situation to prompt dialogue between two people.</p>
<p>Assumed knowledge The students have the basic knowledge of the grammar topic treated in this activity, as well as some common vocabulary.</p>	
<p>Anticipated problems and planned solutions</p>	
<p>Unknown vocabulary</p>	<p>Some expressions will be taught at the beginning of the lesson, as well as brainstorming of vocabulary will happen in small groups. The teacher will be around helping out.</p>
<p>Use of L1 in group work</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring of the activity.</p>
<p>Description of language item / skill(s)</p>	
<p>Form</p>	<p>Immediate future “going to”</p>
<p>Meaning</p>	<p>Planning</p>
<p>use</p>	<p>Planning</p>
<p>Skills and subskills</p>	<p>Speaking</p>

Sequence the lesson to accomplish your goals

Teacher's role	Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Interaction	Time
Instructor	Lead in/Preparation	To review and learn vocabulary about group events	Brainstorming of vocabulary, and roles for planning a party.	T-S	10 min.
Model	Presentation Modeling	To give students a clear example of the activity.	The teacher will speak about his own plans, emphasizing on the structure "going to". The students will be given a role-play card each with some tasks to develop to arrange a party: make invitations, download music, buy food, decorate room, etc.	T-S	10 min.
Monitor	Practice	Students will develop the activity following the explained steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will get in groups of four with peers who have the same card. • The students will brainstorm on actions and language they will use during the role-play. • The students will get in group with classmates with a different role each. • The students will perform a role-play planning a party. 	S-S	20 min.
Facilitator	Learner self-evaluation	Students will get feedback about the practice step.	The class will analyze the activity development, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T-S S-S	5 min.

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Encourager/Monitor	Problem Identification/ solution	To develop the activity according to the time and teamwork specifications.	During the activity development, the teacher will be encouraging students to manage the time according to the steps.	T-S	During the whole class.
Assessor	Wrap up	To give students feedback about the activity development.	The teacher will analyze and give students general feedback about the activity development, taking into account strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T	5 min.
Instructor	Expansion/ Independent Study	To invite students to reflect on their diaries about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill.	The teacher will ask students to write a short reflection about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill. For writing this reflection, students will take into account these questions: How was the activity? How did you feel during the activity development?, To what extent is this activity helping you to develop your speaking skill?.	T-S	5 min.

Appendix E: Rubrics

Name: _____ Date: _____

Activity: _____ Score: _____

CRITERIA:

RATING:

The student participated actively in the activity.	5	4	3	2	1
The student followed instructions accurately.	5	4	3	2	1
The dialogue was coherent and consistent.	5	4	3	2	1
The speech was clear with appropriate volume and inflection.	5	4	3	2	1
The students use an appropriate range of vocabulary.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix F: Lesson plans for interventions (sample)

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN COLOMBIA RESEARCH PROJECT PART 2 (On-going Work) 2012

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE FOR INTERVENTION

Adapted from Dr. Joan Rubin's Lesson Planner, ICELT lesson plan template and Weekly Planner 2012-02 Department of Languages and Cultures, Universidad de La Sabana

Name of co-researcher: Edwin Lopera Piedrahita			
University Code Number: 201111452			
Institution: I.E. Camilo Mora Carrasquilla			
Date of Class: September 13th		Time of Class: Thursday, 10:10 A.M.	
		Length of class: 1 hour	
		Time Frame: One 55 minute class period	
Class/grade: 10th grade level		Room: Classroom	
Number of students: 35		Average age of Students: 15-18	
Number of years of English study: 5 years		Level of students: A1	
Lesson Number			
Research Circle Leader: Martha Isabel Espitia Cruz			
1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8

<p>Set Lesson Goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Talk about personal information using simple tenses. ✓ Use mingle as a collaborative strategy to strengthen confidence when talking about themselves and asking about the others. 	
<p>Language Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The students will be able to use simple tenses to talk about themselves. ✓ The students will ask simple yes/no questions about personal issues. 	<p>Assessment Criteria</p> <p>The teacher will observe the interaction among the students, as well as the information about themselves and their classmates they gathered during the speaking activity.</p>
<p>Learning to Learn Goal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The students will be able to interact with the others using simple language. ✓ The students will correct themselves and each other during the activity. 	<p>Assessment Criteria</p> <p>The teacher and the students will have a short evaluation of the activity, in which the students will assess themselves and each other.</p>
<p>Topic for the lesson</p> <p>Simple tenses</p>	
<p>Materials and Resources</p>	
<p>Material 1 name:</p> <p>A sheet of paper with a list of some common activities</p>	<p>Rationale: This list of activities will prompt conversation while they share information about themselves.</p>
<p>Assumed knowledge</p> <p>The students have the basic knowledge of the grammar topic treated in this activity, as well as some common vocabulary.</p>	
<p>Anticipated problems and planned solutions</p>	
<p>Unknown vocabulary</p>	<p>The new vocabulary will be introduced by using flashcards, as well as a model of the language to be used will be demonstrated.</p>
<p>Use of L1 in group work</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring of the activity.</p>
<p>Description of language item / skill(s)</p>	
<p>Form</p>	<p>Simple tenses</p>
<p>Meaning</p>	<p>Asking and giving personal information</p>
<p>use</p>	<p>Sharing personal information</p>
<p>Skills and subskills</p>	<p>Speaking</p>

Sequence the lesson to accomplish your goals

Teacher's role	Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Interaction	Time
Instructor	Lead in/Preparation	To review known vocabulary about usual activities	Brush up on vocabulary using flashcards	T-S	10 min.
Model	Presentation Modeling	To give students a clear example of the activity.	The students will be giving a checklist with usual activities for them to put their names in front of the ones that fits them. The teacher will do the activity along with them. Then the teacher will ask some students questions to find some who share the same activities as his.	T-S	10 min.
Monitor	Practice	Students will develop the activity following the explained steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will mingle to ask each other questions, writing the names of those who share the same activities. A student can write a peer's name only once. • Some students will share the information they gathered with the group. 	S-S	20 min.
Facilitator	Learner self-evaluation	Students will get feedback about the practice step.	The class will analyze the activity development, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T-S S-S	5 min.

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Encourager/Monitor	Problem Identification/ solution	To develop the activity according to the time and teamwork specifications.	During the activity development, the teacher will be encouraging students to manage the time according to the steps.	T-S	During the whole class.
Assessor	Wrap up	To give students feedback about the activity development.	The teacher will analyze and give students general feedback about the activity development, taking into account strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T	5 min.
Instructor	Expansion/ Independent Study	To invite students to reflect on their diaries about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill.	The teacher will ask students to write a short reflection about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill. For writing this reflection, students will take into account these questions: How was the activity? How did you feel during the activity development?, To what extent is this activity helping you to develop your speaking skill?.	T-S	5 min.

Annex 1:

FIND SOMEBODY WHO...?

Answer Yes or No to the following questions. Then, walk around the room and find people who share the same information as you, and write their names in front of the activity you share. Do not write the same name more than once.

Activity	Me	Classmate's name
Do you have a cat pet?		
Do you take a cold shower?		
Do you usually go dancing?		
Are you an only child?		
Are you good at math?		
Were you born in Medellín?		
Were you late for class today?		
Did you drink coffee for breakfast today?		

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Did you go to the beach last vacation?		
Did you watch TV last night?		
Will you play soccer after class?		
Will you study law at the university?		
Will you dress up on Halloween?		
Will you go swimming this weekend?		
Will you do math homework after class?		

Appendix I: Lesson plan for final assessment

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN COLOMBIA RESEARCH PROJECT PART 2 (On-going Work) 2013

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE FOR INTERVENTION

Adapted from Dr. Joan Rubin's Lesson Planner, ICELT lesson plan template and Weekly Planner 2012-02 Department of Languages and Cultures, Universidad de La Sabana

Name of co-researcher: Edwin Lopera Piedrahita University Code Number: 201111452	
Institution: I.E. Camilo Mora Carrasquilla	
Date of Class: March 15th	Time of Class: Friday, 10:10 A.M. Length of class: 1 hour
	Time Frame: One 55 minute class period
Class/grade: 11th grade level	Room: Classroom
Number of students: 42	Average age of Students: 16-18
Number of years of English study: 5 years	Level of students: A1
Lesson Number Assessment activity	Research Circle Leader: Martha Isabel Espitia Cruz
Set Lesson Goals ✓ Talk about situations involving persuasion, protests and complains. ✓ Use role-plays as a collaborative strategy to strengthen confidence when speaking L2	

<p>Language Goal</p> <p>✓ The students will be able to language expressions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complain and scold: why do you...? I (don't) want you to... don't... you'd better (not)...? • Persuade: Please...; I don't mean to...; I promise...; if you... I will... 	<p>Assessment Criteria</p> <p>The teacher will observe the interaction among the students, as well as their use of the language and their capability to follow the instructions given.</p>
<p>Learning to Learn Goal</p> <p>✓ The students will be able to interact with the others using simple language.</p> <p>✓ The students will work collaboratively to agree on better ways to use language.</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria</p> <p>The teacher and the students will have a short evaluation of the activity, in which the students will assess themselves and each other.</p>
<p>Topic for the lesson Complaining, persuading</p>	
<p>Materials and Resources</p>	
<p>Material 1 name:</p> <p>Role-play cards.</p>	<p>Rationale: This cards of will show a situation to prompt dialogue between two people.</p>
<p>Assumed knowledge The students have the basic knowledge of the grammar topic treated in this activity, as well as some common vocabulary.</p>	
<p>Anticipated problems and planned solutions</p>	
<p>Unknown vocabulary</p>	<p>Some expressions will be taught at the beginning of the lesson, as well as brainstorming of vocabulary will happen in small groups. The teacher will be around helping out.</p>
<p>Use of L1 in group work</p>	<p>Continuous monitoring of the activity.</p>
<p>Description of language item / skill(s)</p>	
<p>Form</p>	<p>Expressions to complain and persuade.</p>
<p>Meaning</p>	<p>Complaining and persuading.</p>
<p>Use</p>	<p>Complain and persuade</p>
<p>Skills and subskills</p>	<p>Speaking</p>

Sequence the lesson to accomplish your goals

Teacher's role	Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Interaction	Time
Instructor	Lead in/Preparation	To review and learn vocabulary about problems in the group	Presentation of language chunks about complaining and persuading.	T-S	10 min.
Model	Presentation Modeling	To give students a clear example of the activity.	The students will be giving a list of expressions they can use, and a clear example of how to use them. The students will be given a role-play card each.	T-S	5 min.
Monitor	Practice	Students will develop the activity following the explained steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students will get in groups of four with peers who have the same card. • The students will brainstorm on attitudes and language they will use during the role-play. • The students will pair with a classmate who has a card that complements his/hers. • The students will perform the role-play according to the previously planned. • Some students will share their performance with the rest of the group. 	S-S	25 min.

ENHANCING SPEAKING SKILLS THROUGH COLLABORATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES

Facilitator	Learner self-evaluation	Students will get feedback about the practice step.	The class will analyze the activity development, taking into account the strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T-S S-S	5 min.
Encourager/Monitor	Problem Identification/solution	To develop the activity according to the time and teamwork specifications.	During the activity development, the teacher will be encouraging students to manage the time according to the steps.	T-S	During the whole class.
Assessor	Wrap up	To give students feedback about the activity development.	The teacher will analyze and give students general feedback about the activity development, taking into account strengths and weaknesses for the improvement of the speaking skill.	T	5 min.
Instructor	Expansion/Independent Study	To invite students to reflect on their diaries about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill.	The teacher will ask students to write a short reflection about the activity development and how it has helped them improve their speaking skill. For writing this reflection, students will take into account these questions: How was the activity? How did you feel during the activity development?, To what extent is this activity helping you to develop your speaking skill?.	T-S	5 min.

Annex 2:

ROLE-PLAY CARDS

Younger sister. You are a 14-year-old girl, who is a girl of fashion. She doesn't allow you to take her clothes but you cannot help yourself, so you sneak them. The problem is that you aren't very neat, that's why from time to time you spoil her things. Today you are going to a disco, but you have nothing to wear. You know that your sister has a perfect dress for this occasion. So you go into her room, take that dress and ... whoops! She sees you!!!

Elder sister. You are an 18-year-old girl and you have a younger sister. She's 14. You are crazy about fashion so all of your clothes come from expensive boutiques. Your younger sister adores wearing your clothes and takes them without your knowing. But every time she takes your clothes she spoils them. One day you see her taking your favorite dress. You are furious. Persuade her not to take your things anymore.

Teacher. You are teaching in a high school. One of your students cheated at the exam and you want to see his parents to talk to them about it. Talk to the student and arrange the time for this meeting.

Student. You are a 16-year-old boy. You were a slacker during the semester, that's why you decided to cheat at the exam. And the teacher saw it. Now she wants to talk to your parents. If they find out, you will never get the bike you want. Persuade her not to talk to them.