ROLE PLAY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AS STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE THE SPEAKING SKILL IN TOURISM AND LANGUAGES STUDENTS AT INSTITUCIÓN TECNOLÓGICA COLEGIO MAYOR DE BOLIVAR.

JUAN FERNANDO SÁNCHEZ BETANCUR

LIZETH VERGARA CABARCAS

LISBETH POLO JULIO

TUTOR: MG. ABRAHAM SIR BARRIOS

FUNDACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA COLOMBO INTERNACIONAL

ESPECIALIZACIÓN EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS

CARTAGENA DE INDIAS

2015

Table of Content

	Page
Introduction	4
2. Theoretical Framework	7
3. Methodology	11
4. Data Analysis	14
4.1. Field notes before the pedagogical interventions	14
4.2. Surveys	15
4.3. Field notes during the pedagogical interventions	17
4.4. Video clips	17
4.5. Oral tests	22
4.6. Interviews	23
Conclusions	25
References	29
Annexes	31

Abstract

This small scale research was developed at Institución Tecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolivar, with third semester students from the tourism and languages program. The main objective of this project is to improve the speaking skill of the students through the implementation of role plays and discussion questions.

To develop this research we started with the identification of the problem; then the collection, organization and interpretation of data in order to plan actions that help us achieve the objective, and finally we wrote some conclusions according to the results.

We found out that both role plays and discussion questions can serve as vehicles to enhance the student's speaking skill, especially if, when implemented, those strategies are applied in accordance to the findings of this paper.

Keywords: Speaking, role plays, discussion questions, improvement, class participation.

Introduction

This chapter has three sections. The first one introduces context information derived from a community visit around Institución Tecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolivar. The second one deals with a critical needs analysis conducted in the Institution through the use of surveys and classroom note taking. Based on the community visit and the needs analysis, the third section presents the statement of the problem for this research.

Institución Tecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolivar is a higher education institution which offers technical and technological programs. This public University aims to provide education to people who belong to level 1, 2 and 3 of social stratification. The university is located downtown, one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the country. Surrounded by five star hotels, gourmet restaurants and fancy stores, and different touristic places. Colegio Mayor the Bolivar stands as a public University offering low cost education to poor communities. Privileged by its location. Students of Colegio Mayor de Bolivar have the opportunity to interact with the context they are going to work in. In addition to that, students are constantly in contact with English, given the fact that many of Cartagena's visitors are foreigners, who speak English to communicate in the city, especially around the context of study.

One of its programs is Tourism and Languages, developed through six semesters and considered one of the most demanded programs in Cartagena, since the city, as stated above, has a strong tourism oriented industry.This research will be focused on third semester students of the tourism and languages program who get to the institution with the purpose of learning languages in order to have a good performance in the touristic labor context. The group is integrated by twenty five students, four male and 21 female. Students are between sixteen and twenty years old. Most of them are from Bolivar, hence they share a very similar cultural identity. The English

subject is mandatory, it is developed in four months; classes take place three days a week, two hours per day. This adds up to a total of 96 hours per semester.

In this community there is a need for learning communicative English, focusing on the speaking skill. The institution has strong ties to the touristic industry, as it was the first University to offer a major in Tourism and languages. Therefore, Colegio Mayor de Bolivar has the responsibility of training students with the necessary abilities demanded by the market.

In order to identify students' needs, a survey was applied to the group about their preferences an interests related to the language skills with a special emphasis on the speaking one, this survey was answered by twenty five third semester students of tourism and languages at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar. The questions asked to participants are in annex 1.

As the survey was analyzed, some conclusions arose: A large part of the students decided to study English to get a good job, which is an important motivation to learn. Most of them do not have any preference about working in groups, individual or in pairs. They would like to have more speaking and listening activities in class instead of grammar and written exercises. As an extra practice outside the classroom they prefer listening activities, and they do not work much on the speaking skill, even though they think that is the skill they must improve. Most of them just practice speaking during the class, and they do not feel comfortable when they have to speak. Finally they think the skill they will use the most when they finish their major is Speaking.

Although Tourism and languages students will interact with people from different places, based on the needs analysis, it is clear that students are usually afraid to speak in English.

Therefore, it is of great importance toimplement different strategies in order to help themacquire the oral skills to communicate effectively in the context.

Kayi (2006), states that through several strategies, i.e. role play, discussion questions, brainstorming, storytelling, interviews, among others, the speaking skill can be improved. She also claims "Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. In brief, ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language". (p. 1). According to this theory and based on the needs analysis, this research will be focused on the improvement of the speaking skill through Role plays and Discussion questions as classroom activities.

Since there is a special necessity about the improvement of the speaking skill, we wonder: *How can role play and discussion questions be implemented to improve the speaking skills in third semester tourism and languages students at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar?*

In accordance to this question, our main objective is to improve the speaking skill in third semester tourism and languages students at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar through the implementation of role play and discussion questions.

2. Theoretical Framework

There are four main skills that students have to master in order to become proficient in any given language: Writing, reading, listening and speaking. Each one is as important as the other, and most of the time more than one skill is taught in the same class. Even though all four skills have some level of difficulty, Speaking "is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use language appropriately in social interaction" (Shumin, 2002, p.204).

It is a common place for English teachers to hear students complaining about their evident inability to express themselves in English, even in those cases when they seem to understand the language quite well. Students struggle when they have to orally produce it themselves. Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997; Chaney 1998, define speaking as an interactive process of constructing and sharing meaning in different contexts, which involves the production, reception and processing of information. During the interaction, if it occurs at all, is when students fully realize to what extent speaking poses the biggest difficulty in the communication process.

We as teachers witness in our classrooms the constant problems students have when they are developing speaking activities. According to Ur (1991, p.121) "inhibition, nothing to say, low or uneven participation and mother tongue use" are some of them. Dealing with these problems is something that has to be done effectively, as to ensure that students acquire the confidence and the skills to communicate with others. This communication has to be understood in terms beyond the fact of expressing oneself. It is not enough that a student can say what he or she wants to say, it is also necessary that the meaning is clearly understood.

The functions of spoken language are Interactional and Transactional. The first one is communicating with someone for social purposes, and the latter involves communicating to get something done, the message and making oneself understood clearly and accurately is the central focus. (Shumin, 2002; Bailey, 2003; Richards, 2008). We developed this study keeping the transactional aspect of spoken language into consideration, given that our students will be exposed to environments in which they have to be not only polite but also accurate.

As we said before, developing the speaking skills demands several problems that should be addressed and dealt with. To do so, several strategies can be used. Ksayi (2006, p.1) states that "Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. In brief, ESL teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language". By simulating real-life situations, students are presented with situations similar to those they are likely to face, thus having the chance to taste in a safe environment the reality outside the classroom.

The activities must promote oral language, and interaction must be a goal in itself while developing communicative skills. Teachers have made use of many strategies and activities to achieve that goal. Among others, role plays and discussion questions are well known tool and are widely used nowadays.

Kusmana (2011, p. 4) claims that "A Role play is a highly flexible learning activity which has a wide scope for variation and imagination. It uses different communicative techniques and develop fluency in the language, promotes interaction in the classroom and increase motivation". As we can see from this statement, the use of role plays in classrooms serves the purpose of

promoting speaking. Role plays are an excellent strategy to get the students to talk as well as to create the confidence they need to do so.

It is widely believed that role plays consist in memorizing a particular text, rehearsing and then acting in out in front of a class, and though this is true in many cases, it does not necessarily have to be like that all the time. Spontaneous role plays are a good way to ensure certain degree of non-rehearsed responses in the students. Spontaneity does not mean poor planning. On the contrary, it requires even more preparation. Students have to receive the input they need to complete the task. Once they have the information, clear instructions have to be given. Roles have to be assigned and a topic defined.

There is where the similarity with traditional role plays ends. In spontaneous role plays the students have to act out a situation but the dialogue is not scripted, but rather a semi natural conversation derived from the situation.

Discussion activities, in which discussion question are included, also serve the purpose of improving students speaking skills. According to Segura (2012, p. 53) "The Discussion activities give learners the opportunity to speak more freely and express themselves. It is helpful to structure a discussion activity by giving learners enough information about what they will be talking about and giving them enough time to think about what they want to say."

Both discussion questions and role plays are excellent strategies to create an environment in which speaking happens in a more efficient manner. Getting the students to talk can be achieved not only by using these two strategies, but they are certainly quite useful to achieve that goal, provided they are properly and consciously applied.

We intend to make use of these strategies in our context, in order to increase the students' participation in class. By developing role plays and discussion questions the students will experience a taste of real world tasks. This, in turn, will motivate them to learn, as they realize that what they learning is something they are going to use in their future jobs.

3. Methodology

This study takes place at Institución Tecnológica Colegio mayor de bolivar with students from third semester. The group is integrated by twenty five students, four of them are male and twenty one female. This population was chosen since they already have some Basic English knowledge and taking into consideration that following semester they must start their hotel internships, and have oral interaction with foreign people, the third semester is a crucial moment to enhance the speaking skill.

The main objective of this study is to improve the speaking skill in third semester tourism and languages students at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar through the implementation of role play and discussion questions.To achieve this objective a qualitative research was conducted, which is usually implemented in order to study the behavior of a specific community or subject.Mason (2002) states that "Through qualitative research we can explore a wide array of dimensions of the social world, including the texture and weave of everyday life, the understandings, experiencesand imaginings of our research participants, the ways that social processes, institutions,discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings thatthey generate"(p. 1). This research paradigm was chosen in order to analyze the problems students have to communicate orally and look for strategies to help them develop and improve their speaking skill.

The type of study is Action Research, defined as a process in which you can examine your own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. If your practice needs improvement, then it is necessary to implement an action plan, and produce evidence to show results. (Ferrance 2000; McNiff& Whitehead, 2002).We decided to work this type of research, taking into consideration that the purpose of the study is to analyze the English

teaching process of our context in order to improve our teaching practices and student's abilities to communicate orally. To develop this research we started with the identification of the problem; then the collection, organization and interpretation of data in order to plan actions that help us achieve the objective, and finally we wrote some conclusions according to the results.

The data has been collected through a four-stage investigation.The first stage consisted of class observations before the planned interventions, in order to analyze students and teacher's behavior during the English class, and identify the strategies and activities implemented to improve the language skills. Four classes were observed and we used field notes to collect and organize information.

As a second stage a survey was applied to the twenty five students, the objective was to identify the students' preferences an interests related to the language skills with a special emphasis on the speaking one. We used a structured questionnaire as an instrument to collect information, formed byone open questionand seven closed questionswhich deal with students perceptions about their needs related to language skills. (See Annex 1)

The third stage comprised the Pedagogical Interventions. Five classes were taught to 25 students from third semester, developed from April 1stto May 7th, 2015. Even though classes had a special focus on speaking, the other skills were also practiced. The topics introduced were related to the touristic labor context: hotel services, the check in and check out process in a hotel, touristic places, dealing with customers' complaints, and food.

Lessons were designed with a similar structure (See Annex 3), class must start with a discussion question asa warm up about the topic to present. Then teacher introduced the topic but keeping the interaction with students. They had listening or reading exercises as activities to

practice, sometimes the teacher played a video and students had to answers questions orally or discuss about the situation presented. At the end of each class students had to present a role play related to the lesson in order to show they really learnt and also practice oral communication in simulated real life situations. The role plays were spontaneous. Students chose a paper from a bag, which described a specific situation, and they had to play that role immediately, in front of the class. These activities were assigned in pairs and the situations required were based on tourist labor context, such as hotels, agencies, among others. We have some video clips as evidence of those activities and some scripts are presented in the document. A homework was assigned in all classes, they were focused on writing activities and free production about a given question or situation.

To evaluate the process an oral test was applied before and after the pedagogical interventions, based on a rubric and the grading standards established by the institution. (See Annex 6)

Finally, the last stage was based on students' interviews, a focal group was the strategy to achieve our objective, identify students' perceptions about the pedagogical interventions and improvement of their communicative skills, specially the speaking one. The focal group was integrated by ten students, seven open questions were asked to themin a written (See Annex 7) and oral way.

The data collected has not been modified, and students participated in the process voluntarily and were fully informed about the aims and objectives of the study.

4. Data Analysis

In order to collect data, different techniques were implemented. The following is the report, description and analysis of data.

4.1. Field Notes before the Pedagogical Interventions:

We used field notes asan instrument to report the observationsmade before and during the pedagogical interventions. They are presented as evidence from the first and third stage of the research process.

The first stage was the observation process. The objective was to analyze students and teacher's behavior during the English class, and also the kind of activities and strategies used in the class. We observed four classes, and the following aspects were identified:

- Students did not participate much in class
- They looked afraid to speak in English
- The activities were mostly based in reading and writing.
- Oral communication was not emphasized.
- The book was strictly followed and there was no room for extra material.
- Speaking activities were highly controlled.
- Students seemed to feel at ease during the class.
- Students worked in groups and there was order and closeness among them.

It is important to mention that classes took place from 11 to 1 pm. The students start their classes at 7:00 am. Therefore, when they had the English class they seemed tired and even

hungry. It was normal to see them asking for permission to buy something in the cafeteria or to go to the bathroom. Some students even stayed outside the classroom for long periods of time.

All of those aspects reflected on the class performance. After observing the classes and analyzing the findings, we decided to apply a survey to the students, in order to gain a deeper knowledge about their perceptions of the English learning process.

4.2. Surveys

Taking into consideration the data collected from the observation, the second stage of the study was focused on students' surveys; we used this technique in order to know students perceptions about their needs and interests related to the English leaning process.This was useful to confirm the aspects observed. The results were the following:

The first question is focused on students' reasons to study English. Thirteen of them 52% claimed they are studying English to get a good job, seven 28% are studying English because they like it; three 12% mentioned other reasons, and two of them 8% stated that somebody- parents mostly- want them to study that.

The second question aims to identify students' preferences about group or individual work. In this part, twelve 48% do not have any preference about working individually or in groups, seven 28% prefer to work in groups, four 16% chose the option in pairs, and two of them 8% feel better working individually.

The third question is about the kind ofactivities they would like to have in their English class. Eighteen of them 38% like Role plays, eleven 23% prefer discussions activities, ten of them 21% chose listening exercises, four of them 8% prefer reading comprehension activities,

three 6% like written grammar exercises and two of them 4% prefer the writing of short paragraph.

Questions number four is about the activities they do outside the classroom to practice English. According to their answers nineteen 76% listen to English music, eleven 44% watch English films, ten 40% talk with friends in English, five 20% read English books, and one 4% does nothing to practice.

Question number five is focused on identifying the language skill students think they need to improve. Seventeen of them 68% chose speaking, six 24% think they need to improve listening, and two 8% believe that writing is the skill to improve.

The sixth question refers to the speaking practice. According to their answers sixteen of them 64% practice English only in the classroom, four 16% use English in and outside the classroom, three 12% do not practice English in any place, and two of them 8% just outside the classroom.

Question number seven is about how they feel speaking in English during the class. Sixteen 64% do not feel comfortable, but nine of them 36% do.

Finally, question number eight aims to identify the skill students will use the most when they finish their major. For this question twenty one students 84% answered the skill they will use the most is speaking, three of them 12% chose listening, and one of them 4% answered writing.

4.3. Field Notes During the Pedagogical Interventions

We used this instrument to collect the information observed during the development of the pedagogical intervention. The following are the main aspects extracted from it:

- Student's participation in terms of speaking improved as they were asked to express themselves orally about a particular topic.
- Students-students and students-teacher interaction increased.
- Though all four skills were addressed, the speaking skill was emphasized during the class.
- Discussion questions allowed the students to freely participate, without being asked to, therefore their confidence improved.
- Role plays performed during the class not only showed that students had understood the topic, but also created an atmosphere of joy.
- Even the students who were not actively participating in role plays paid attention to their classmate's performances.

The pedagogical intervention made a positive impact in the classes. This can be evidenced when we compare the field notes taken before and during the interventions. For both teacher and students the class seemed to be more productive and enjoyable.

4.4. Video Clips

We made use of role plays and discussion questions to foster oral communication among students. During the pedagogical intervention, we recorded their performances and the following scripts are examples of what they did in class.

Script 1. Discussion question sample.

What kind of food you should and should not eat to stay healthy?

Student 1: You should eat less sauces and fast food because they have high calories and is not healthy.

Student 2. You should eat more salads and grains. You shouldn't eat fast food they have high calories.

After a few more interventions, the students were asked to make recommendations to one of their classmates.

Students 3 to student 4: I think you should it more healthy food. You shouldn't eat hot dog, pizza, fried chicken, and etcetera. These food is unhealthy and it had high calories, and also you should drink soda, avoid soda…

Student 5 to student 6: you shouldn't eat red meat because they have high calories. Have fruits like apple… etcetera, rather than fast food.

Student 7 to student 8: if you want to lose weight, you should drink green tea accompanied with fruits in the morning and milk is a good option also. In the lunch try to reduce to portions and please avoid the empanadas.

Student 9 to student 10.If you want to have a good body you should …if you want to good look good you should drink water several times a day. If you don't look fat, you should walk and run every day. You should to visit your doctor regular and don't eat fast food regular.

Several other participations occurred during this exercise, to the point that it took longer than anticipated. Students felt confident while expressing themselves. Involving the students and having them direct the advice to a particular person, seemed to work as a motivator.

Discussion questions about a new topic activated previous knowledge. It was easier to introduce new vocabulary and even grammar after students answered a question related to the topic, due, in part, to the fact that students with a higher level of English made use of some the vocabulary that was going to be taught in the class.

Script 2. Role play sample.

This strategy was key to achieving our goal. We implemented spontaneous role plays instead of controlled role plays. Students were given a situation in which they had to represent a character. Before getting to the task, students received all the necessary input. How they used it and to what extent, depended entirely on the students and on how the situation evolved. Had the students had time to prepare the role play, as it happens in controlled role plays, their performance would have probably been much better. Since they were told to engage in a conversation right after knowing what the situation was, the amount of language produced was not abundant, however, it clearly resembled a real life conversation, in which prior preparation is not possible.

Role plays one and two were set in a hotel, between a receptionist and a guest, who was complaining about a problem he or she had in the room. Role play number 3 was set in a touristic information office, between a clerk and a visitor, who wanted to know about the main touristic attractions in the city. The following are the scripts of some of the role plays.

Role play 1.

Guest: Hello, good morning.

Receptionist. Good morning. What can I help you?

Guest. My name is Laura from room number (unintelligible) I have a problem

Receptionist: What kind of problem?

Guest: In my room the internet connection doesn't work very well

Receptionist: Is not working?

Guest: No

Receptionist Ok I´m gonna send …check

Guest: Ok. Thank you.

Role Play 2.

Guest: Hello Sir. My name is Jherals Salcedo I'm calling from the room 605 and I have problem.. My room is dirty, so dirt.

Receptionist: Mr. Salcedo

Guest: What I can do?

Receptionist: How can be…

Guest: Well you should send me a person for clean the room

Receptionist: Ok. Ok

Guest: you can do it right now, but right now, now now, there isn't nobody, anybody.

Guest: I need cleaning the room myself. That's bad service, man. What's happening?

Guest: No, no, you know what, (expletive) men.

Receptionist: I can't help you.

Role Play 3.

Clerk: good morning miss, what can I help you?

Visitor: Good morning. I need to know about the places to visit in the city.

Clerk: Yes. There are many places in Cartagena. You can go to the torredelreloj, or the walls. Also, you can visit the san Felipe castle.

Visitor: what is the san felipe castle?

Clerk: is a military building very old, like 400 years.

Visitor: is it near here.

Clerk: Yes. But you should take a taxi.

Visitor: and how much it is the tickets?

Clerk: 20.000 pesos.

Visitor: thank you, sir.

Clerk. You're welcome.

Role-plays encouraged students to talk. Even when mistakes were made, communication was still possible. There was also something that called our attention that can´t be seen in the transcripts. That is the interest the whole class showed when their peers were performing. In

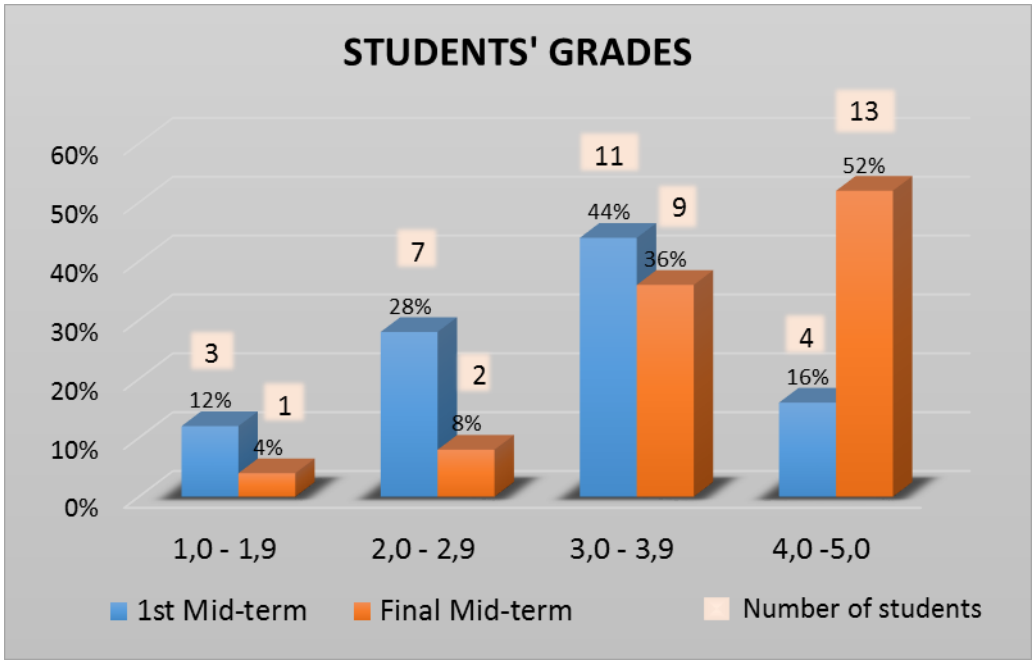
some audios it is possible to hear them correcting their partners as they speak. All in all, role plays served their purpose.

4.5. Oral Tests

During the semester students have to take three oral exams, which are graded from one to five, depending on how well students perform and whether or not they achieve the competences set for each exam. Theses competences are mostly based on fluency, accuracy, vocabulary and grammar.

This study was conducted right before the second midterm oral exams. We decided to compare the results obtained in the first and the final exams because at the time the second midterm had not yet taken place.

The following graph shows the results of the twenty five students' oral tests before and after the pedagogical interventions.



The results shown in the graph before the intervention evidence that many students did not achieve the competences, while just a few were above the average. 3 students 12 % had scores between 1 and 2; 7 students 28 % between 2 and 3; only 4 students 16 % had scores in the 4-5 range. The great majority of students 44 % got scores that placed them in the middle of the scale.

On the other hand, the exams made after the intervention show that most of the students (13) achieved the top of the scale. While before the intervention only 4 students had this level of competence, the number increased in 9 students after the intervention was applied. Moreover, the number of students at the bottom of the scale was reduced, from 3 to 1, and from 7 to 2, in the 1-2 and 2-3 grade range, respectively. The number of students in the middle of the scale showed less variation, passing from 11 to 9.

The final exam was conducted by the researchers, who followed the rubric and the grading standards established by the institution.

4.6. Interviews

Once the pedagogical interventions finished, a written interview was applied to a focal group of ten students, aiming to identify the students' perceptions about the pedagogical interventions trough a set of seven open questions.

The first and second question referred to whether or not they liked the activities in the four classes and why and how they felt during the intervention.All of the students said they liked the activities. Some mentioned that classes became less boring and more dynamic. "I like the classes, they were really fun...". To most of them the class was "easy to understand", which in turn, made them feel more confident.

The third question dealt with the improvement they experienced during the intervention.Mostly, the students said they were able to speak and communicate more, as one student put it “I lost shy”

Questions four and five specifically referred to the students’ opinion about the implementation of role plays and discussion questions during the classes.Students said both strategies helped them “participate more” and “understand the topic even better”

In the sixth question the students were asked whether they would like to have more classes like the ones that were implemented and why.All of them answer positively. Several reasons were provided. “Classes are more interesting and exciting” said one student”; “we use a different methodology and classes are less monotonous” said another.

Finally, students were told to give any suggestions about other strategies that could be used to improve their speaking skills.The use of videos, music and more role plays prevailed in their answers. “Videos and more role plays” and “activities with songs…” were some of the answers.

Conclusions

We as teachers are familiar with the problems students face when they are learning English. First they complain about how little, if at all, they can understand the target language. Once they receive enough input and understanding becomes easier, expressing themselves, that is, producing language orally, turns into the next big challenge. One they do not overcome easily.As Shumin (2002, p 204) states speaking "is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use language appropriately in social interaction"

Since oral communication is so important, and unfortunately, equally difficult, based on the problem identified at InstituciónTecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolivar, this study aims to improve the speaking skill in third semester tourism and languages students through the implementation of role play and discussion questions.

After observing some classes, it was evident that students lacked the skills to communicate their ideas orally and confidently. It was common to hear them complain "I know what to say, but I do not know how to say it in English". This was, of course, said in Spanish. In part, this was so because students were not used to speak in English and also because they felt somehow afraid of making mistakes.

Our first impression was confirmed later on, when a survey applied to the group showed that they did not feel comfortable when they had to speak in English. However, that same survey showed that students were well aware of how important it was for them to develop the speaking skill, which they considered was the one they had to use the most in future real life situations, especially in their jobs.

Once the problem was clearly identified, the following step consisted in defining the best way to address it. Therefore, a pedagogical intervention was required. One in which several strategies and activities had to be applied in order to foster oral communication and also, to create an environment that stimulates speaking.

Having the students to talk requires that they feel confident, first, and second, that they have the necessary input to complete the task. As a catch 22, one follows and depends on the other. One can only give what one has. If students lack knowledge they will not be able to produce it, and insecurity follows.

This study took place in third semester students, which already had some knowledge of English. Moreover, some of them were above the average. That is why we decided to start the intervention using discussion questions. Through this strategy, previous knowledge is activated and students are encouraged to participate. Another strategy fundamental to our study was the implementation of Role Plays. By simulating real life situations, motivation and interactionare encouraged.

Taking into account the benefits that both strategies may bring into the classroom, we wondered about *how can role plays and discussion questions be implemented to improve the speaking skills in third semester tourism and languages students at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar?*

Implementing the discussion questions at the beginning of every class was decided by the researchers, as said before, to activate previous knowledge and to engage the students into participating. Throughout the investigation, several discussion questions were asked, and we observed that students participated more and gave more accurate answers when the discussion questions covered certain features, such as:

- The question must be directly related to the topic being taught.
- It must be an open question.
- Both previous and new vocabulary must be included in the question.
- Paraphrasing the discussion question is advisable to make it understandable.
- The discussion questions should generate controversy in order to foster student-student interaction.

When we formulated the questions complying with the features given above, the students participated even more, and at one point the answers were directed toward another student or the class in general, and it was the teacher's job only to keep certain order in the student's interventions and provide scaffolding, but the motivation came from the question and the class itself.

During the observations of the classes prior to the intervention, we identified that, even though speaking activities took place, they were also highly controlled, that is, the teacher intervened in all of them, correcting at every stage and making sure his directions were followed to the letter. There was a lot of imitation, but not real communication.

We decided to give a different focus to the activities, especially to the role plays. There were directions, as to make sure students understood what they were expected to do. Other than that, students had the freedom to make mistakes and to choose what the best way to approach the task was. Putting them in charge also created a sense of responsibility and cooperation.

After seeing how the role plays best served their purpose of improving the students' speaking skills, we now can say that role plays should be implemented in accordance to the following guidelines:

- They must be implemented at the end of the class, after students have the necessary input.
- Situations and the roles must assigned by the teacher, but the speech must be constructed entirely by the students.
- More attention must be paid to the communication goal, rather than grammatical or lexical aspects.
- Whenever some mistakes are detected, if these do not impair communication, they must be corrected at the end of the exercise.
- If during the role play communication reachesa stalemate, the teacher should and must scaffold the process.

The video clips evidence that students actively participatedand they were interested in the activities, even when they were not performing in front of the class. We observed that some students orally corrected their peers when they were making mistakes, without this being considered rude or causing lack of confidence. Since all of them were involved in the process, peer correction seemed more natural.

To sum up, these speaking enhancing strategies proved their value when oral exams were applied at the end of the semester. The students showed more knowledge and confidence when speaking. There was more negotiation of meaning between the teacher and the students, who managed to make themselves understood. This improvement was also observed during the subsequent interventions, which got better and better as the strategies were regularly applied.

References

Bailey, K.M. (2003). Speaking. In D. Nunan (Ed.), *Practical English language teaching* (47-66). New York: McGraw-Hill Contemporary.

Brown, H.D. (1994). *Teaching by principles: an interactive approach to language pedagogy.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Reents.

Burns, A. & Joyce, H. (1997). *Focus on speaking*. Sydney: National Center for English Language Teaching and Research.

Chaney, A.L. & T.L. Burke. (1998).*Teaching oral communication in grades K-8*.Boston: Allyn and Bacon

Ferrance, E. (2000).*Action Research.* Providence RI: Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University.

Kayi, H. (2006). Teaching speaking: activities to promote speaking in a second language. *The Internet TESL Journal,* Vol. XII, No. 11. 1-5. Retrieved from http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Kayi-TeachingSpeaking.html

Kusmana, A. (2011). *The Influence of role play and drills in stimulating students' motivation for learning English conversation (a case study in the first grade of SMP Darussalam Jakarta Selatan).* (Doctoral thesis). UIN Syarif Hidayatullah, Jakarta. Retrieved on August 1st 2015, from http://repository.uinjkt.ac.id/dspace/bitstream/123456789/4952/1/101231-ANDI%20KUSMANA-FITK.pdf

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching. (Second Edition).* London: SAGE publications.

McNiff, J. & Whitehead, J. (2002). *Action Research: Principles and practice. (Second Edition).* London: Routledge.

Richards, J. (2008).*Teaching Listening and Speaking, from Theory to Practice.* NY: Cambridge University Press.

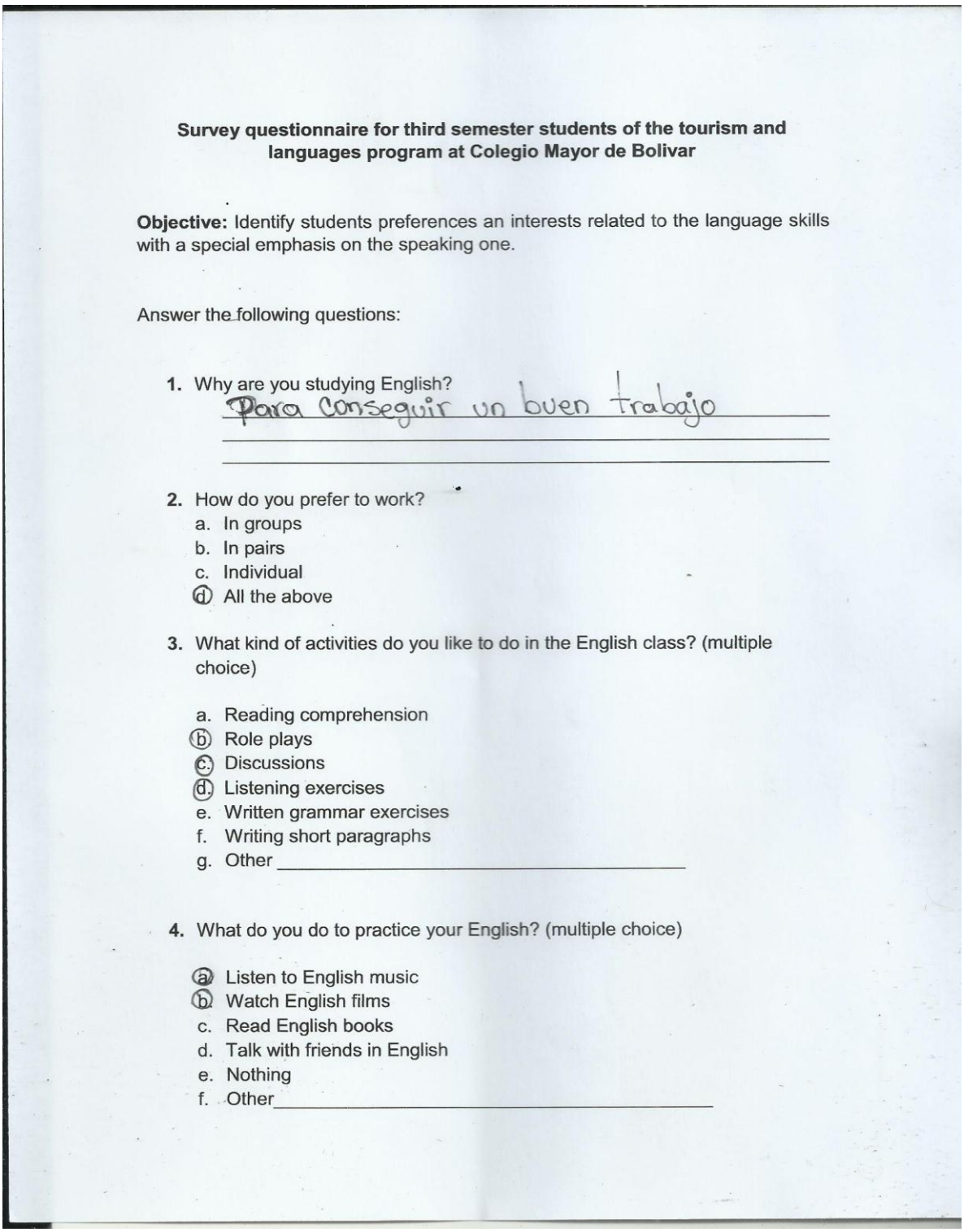
Segura, R. (2012). the importance of teaching listening and speaking skills. (Master thesis). Universidad Complutense de Madrid, España. Retrieved on August 1st 2015, from http://www.ucm.es/data/cont/docs/119-2015-03-17-12.RocioSeguraAlonso2013.pdf

Shumin, K. (2002). Factors to consider: Developing adult EFL students' speaking abilities. In J. C. Richards, & W. A. Renandya (Eds.*), Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice* (204-211). NY: Cambridge University Press

Ur, P. (1991). *A course in language teaching, practice and theory.* NY: Cambridge University Press.

Annex 1

Students Survey



Survey questionnaire for third semester students of the tourism and languages program at Colegio Mayor de Bolivar

Objective: Identify students preferences an interests related to the language skills with a special emphasis on the speaking one.

Answer the following questions:

1. Why are you studying English?
   Para conseguir un buen trabajo

2. How do you prefer to work?
   a. In groups
   b. In pairs
   c. Individual
   d. All the above

3. What kind of activities do you like to do in the English class? (multiple choice)
   a. Reading comprehension
   b. Role plays
   c. Discussions
   d. Listening exercises
   e. Written grammar exercises
   f. Writing short paragraphs
   g. Other _____

4. What do you do to practice your English? (multiple choice)
   a. Listen to English music
   b. Watch English films
   c. Read English books
   d. Talk with friends in English
   e. Nothing
   f. Other_____

5. Which language skill do you think you need to improve?
   a. Writing
   (b) Speaking
   c. Reading
   d. Listening

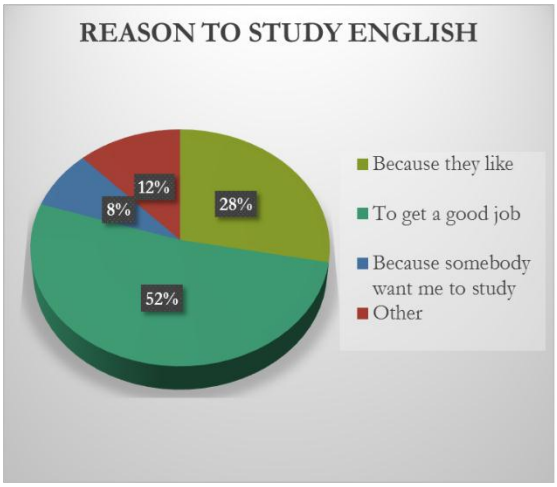
6. Where do you practice the speaking skill?
   (a) Only in the classroom
   b. Outside the classroom
   c. In both places
   d. In neither place.

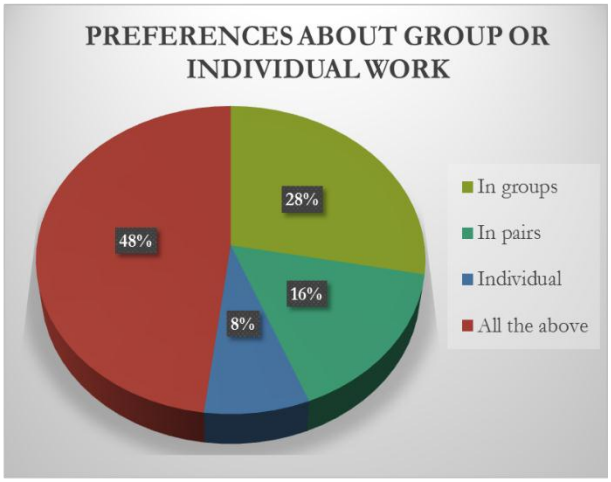
7. Do you feel comfortable speaking in English during the class?
   a. Yes.
   (b) No.

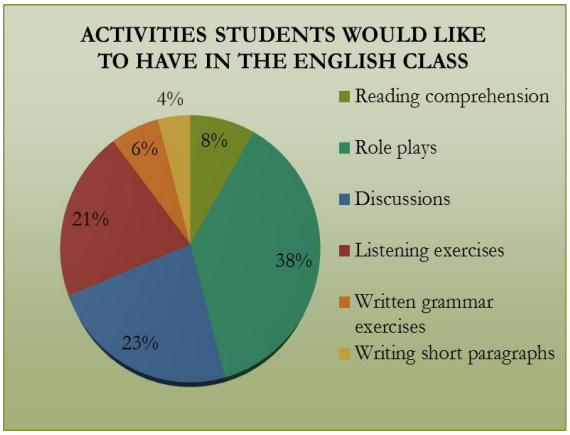
8. What do you think is the skill you will use the most when you finish your major?
   a. Writing
   (b) Speaking
   c. Reading.
   d. Listening.

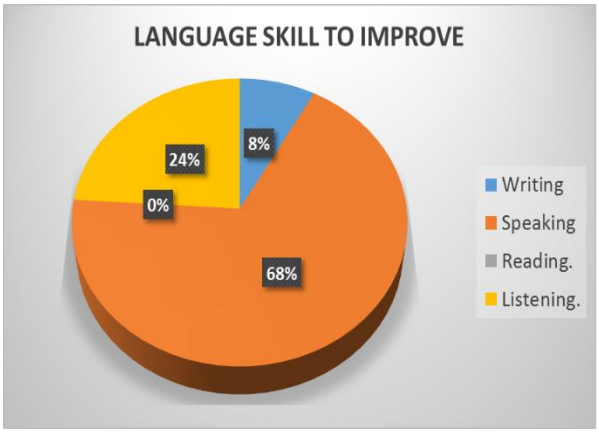
Annex 2

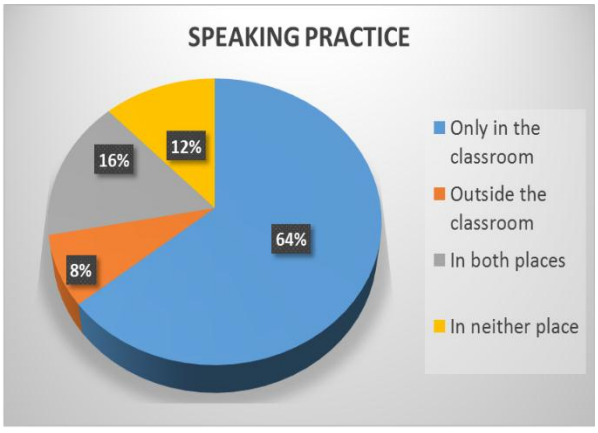
Survey Results

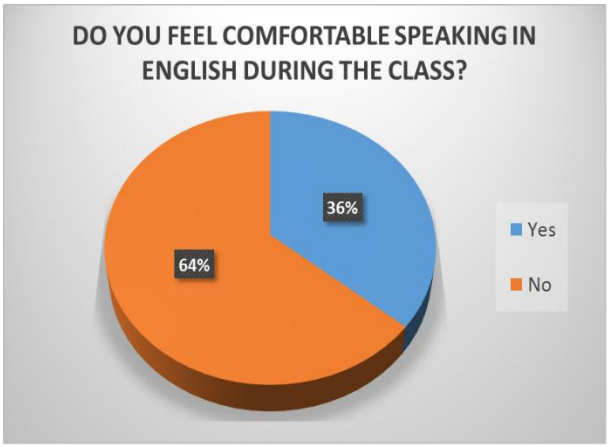


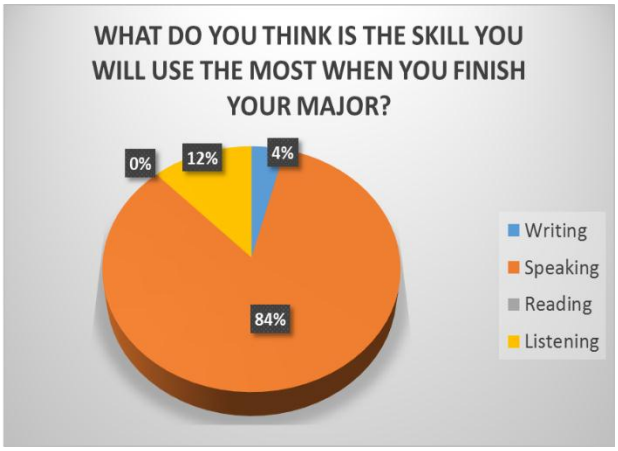









DO YOU FEEL COMFORTABLE SPEAKING IN ENGLISH DURING THE CLASS?
36%
64%
Yes
No


WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE SKILL YOU WILL USE THE MOST WHEN YOU FINISH YOUR MAJOR?
0%
12%
4%
84%
Writing
Speaking
Reading
Listening

Annex 3

Lesson Plan Sample

INSTITUTION: COLEGIO MAYOR DE BOLIVAR

Teacher's name:	**Semester:**	**Term:**	**Date:**	**Allocated time:**
Juan Sanchez Lizeth Vergara Lisbeth Polo	**III**	First Term	April 16th	Two hours

Topic of The Lesson	Food

Goals:	**Terminal Objectives:**	**Enabling objectives:**
Students will be able to use language to talk about food.	• Students will be able to talk about the food they like and dislike. • Students will be able to identify healthy and unhealthy food. • Students will be able to interview a tourist about food.	• To talk about international food • To make a brainstorm about food students like and dislike • To read about healthy food/answers questions about it • To watch a video about food and have them answer questions about it. • To use the vocabulary learnt in a conversation

Key Words: Healthy, unhealthy, delicious, disgusting, like, vegetables, fruits, fast food,diet.

Materials/equipment: Video beam, speakers. Videos from YouTube. Board. Handouts.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROCEDURES

Lesson Stages	**Interaction**	**Skills involved**	**Time**
Warm up: First, pictures of different international restaurants will be shown to the students. (specially Chinese restaurants). Teacher will ask students a discussion question related to the topic:	Teacher- Students. Students- Students.	Speaking and listening.	15 Minutes.

If you travel to China, would you like to try their food? Explain your answer.			

Teaching procedures			
Brainstorm: Students will be asked about the kind of food they like and don´t like. The vocabulary produced will be written on the board.	Teacher-students.	Speaking and listening.	15 minutes.
Reading: Students will be given a handout about healthy food, Which they will read and then answer teacher's questions about the reading, orally.	Teacher-students	Reading, listening and speaking	30 minutes.
Video: Play a video about people asking for food in a restaurant. Have students answer questions about it.(Orally) Video Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVl5ma6gD9U Write the questions and predict the possible answers.	Material - Students Teacher - students	Listening and speaking	15 minutes

Assessment:			
Role play: Have students recommend their classmates a diet by talking about food they should have for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And general food they should not eat.	Students – students	Listening and speaking	30minutes

Closure
Students will be given feedback at the end of each group presentation and also a general feedback at the end of the class. **Homework:** Make an interview to tourist people. (Teacher will give students the questions and they will have to add an extra one).

Annex 4

Field Notes: Observation before the Pedagogical Interventions

Institution	Institución tecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolívar
Date	March 19th, 2015
Time	11:00 am

Class Development	Mainly reading and writing based class were noticed, despite the communicative approach of the institution. The content of the class was presented by the teacher directly and literally and Very few interaction among peers was noticed. The activities were all written on text books or worksheet and learners were very little encourage to speak .Students were picked up to answer questions or share the results of assignments Teacher spoke more than students in general
Teacher's Behavior	The teacher was a very active participant during the class. He conducted the class, developed the content, give examples, asked questions. He looked more like the center of the class
Students' Behavior	Students were less active participants during the class They were shy to express orally in front of others and seemed to be afraid of making mistakes while talking. Students were not spontaneous when asked so waited to be picked up to answer.

Annex 5

Field Notes: Observation during the Pedagogical Interventions

Institution	Institución tecnológica Colegio Mayor de Bolívar
Date	April 23rd, 2015
Time	11:00 am

Class Development	The class was spiking based. The content was presented in a more dynamic way first introducing the discussion question as a warm up and closing with a Role play. There was more interaction between teacher- students and students – students. Although the focus of the class was on the speaking and listening skills, different activities based on reading and writing were also implemented.
Teacher s Behavior	Teacher is not the center of the class, but just a facilitator. He conducts the class but also facilitates students' interaction and stimulates speaking.
Student s Behavior	Students feel free to answer questions and share the results of their assignments. Students now speak more in class becoming active participants. They enjoy role playing and the interaction with their peers and the teacher. Learners feel more comfortable to express orally in front of others. Now they are spontaneous when asked.

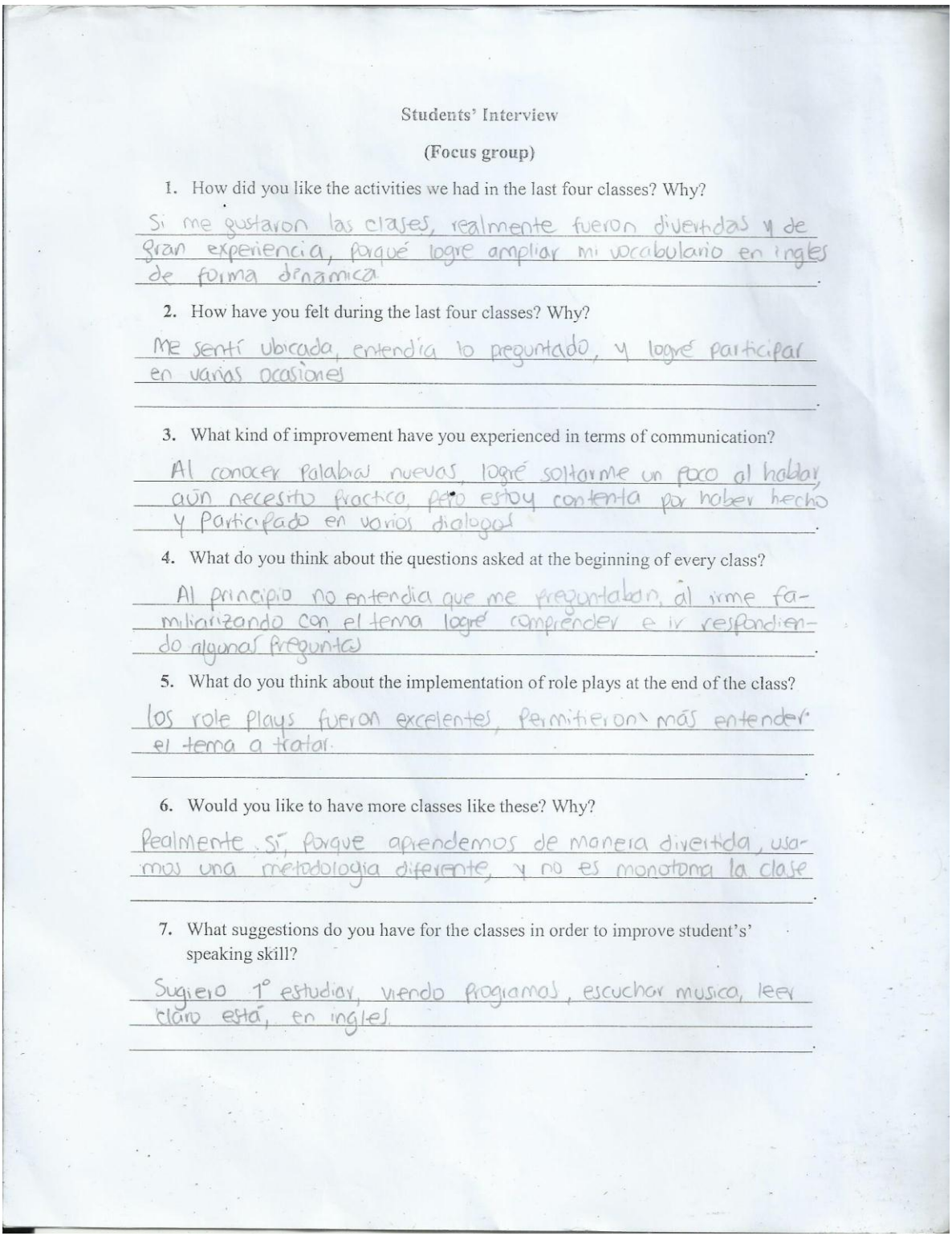
Annex 6

Oral Test Rubric

Category	Failure 1,0 - 1,9	Poor 2,0 - 2,9pts	Satisfactory - Good 3,0 - 3,9	Very good - Excellent 4,0 – 5,0	Grade
Grammar	Student was difficult to understand and had a hard time communicating their ideas and responses because of grammar mistakes.	Student was able to express their ideas and responses adequately but often displayed inconsistencies with their sentence structure and tenses.	Student was able to express their ideas and responses fairly well but makes mistakes with their tenses, however is able to correct themselves.	Student was able to express their ideas and responses with ease in proper sentence structure and tenses.	
Pronunciation	Student was difficult to understand, quiet in speaking, unclear in pronunciation.	Student was slightly unclear with pronunciation at times, but generally is fair.	Pronunciation was good and did not interfere with communication	Pronunciation was very clear and easy to understand.	
Vocabulary	Student had inadequate vocabulary words to express his/her ideas properly, which hindered the students in responding.	Student was able to use broad vocabulary words but was lacking, making him/her repetitive and cannot expand on his/her ideas.	Student utilized the words learned in class, in an accurate manner for the situation given.	Rich, precise and impressive usage of vocabulary words learned in and beyond of class.	
Comprehension	Student had difficulty understanding the questions and topics that were being discussed.	Student fairly grasped some of the questions and topics that were being discussed.	Student was able to comprehend and respond to most of the questions and topics that were being discussed.	Student was able to comprehend and respond to all of the questions and the topics that were being discussed with ease.	
Fluency	Speech is very slow, stumbling, nervous, and uncertain with response, except for short or memorized expressions. Difficult for a listener to understand	Speech is slow and often hesitant and irregular. Sentences may be left uncompleted, but the student is able to continue.	Speech is mostly smooth but with some hesitation and unevenness caused primarily by rephrasing and groping for words.	Speech is effortless and smooth with speed that comes close to that of a native speaker.	
Total					

Annex 7

Students' Interviews



Students' Interview

(Focus group)

1. How did you like the activities we had in the last four classes? Why?

Si me gustaron las clases, realmente fueron divertidas y de gran experiencia, porqué logré ampliar mi vocabulario en ingles de forma dinamica.

2. How have you felt during the last four classes? Why?

ME sentí ubicada, entendía lo preguntado, y logré participar en varias ocasiones

3. What kind of improvement have you experienced in terms of communication?

Al conocer palabras nuevas, logré soltarme un poco al hablar, aún necesito practica, pero estoy contenta por haber hecho y participado en varios dialogos

4. What do you think about the questions asked at the beginning of every class?

Al principio no entendía que me preguntaban, al irme familiarizando con el tema logré comprender e ir respondiendo algunas preguntas

5. What do you think about the implementation of role plays at the end of the class?

los role plays fueron excelentes, permitieron más entender el tema a tratar.

6. Would you like to have more classes like these? Why?

Realmente, Sí, porque aprendemos de manera diveitda, usamos una metodologia diferente, y no es monotona la clase

7. What suggestions do you have for the classes in order to improve student's' speaking skill?

Sugiero 1° estudiar, viendo Programas, escuchar musica, leer claro está, en ingles.