

COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN PROMOTING SPOKEN ENGLISH

The role of cooperative learning in promoting spoken English with ninth grade students at Isaias

Hernan Ibarra public school in Cali

María Fernanda Rincón Rivera

Universidad Icesi

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Notas de autor

María Fernanda Rincón Rivera, Facultad de Educación, Universidad Icesi

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La correspondencia relacionada con esta investigación debe ser dirigida a nombre de

María Fernanda Rincón

Universidad Icesi, Cl. 18 #122-135, Cali, Valle del Cauca

Contacto: fercha542002@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is an instructional method that has had an impact on research literature about education and teaching practice. Cooperative learning (CL) is defined as “the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1994, p. 4). CL method is more than simply group work, which may not be cooperative in itself. Learning is dependent on the students' interaction, their accountability and motivation to increase their mutual learning outcomes (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, in Richards & Rogers, 2001). This research project was focused on the use of CL to promote spoken English production in a group of ninth-grade students from the Isaias Hernan Ibarra public school, branch of Gabriela Mistral school in Cali, Colombia. This study undertook action research as the method of inquiry. The problem area identified was the ninth graders’ lack of spoken production in English as a foreign language due to the lack of practice of speaking in class. The data collection instruments were quantitative through three surveys: communication strategies in oral English, group work participation and favorite activities for English learning. The qualitative methods were: Teacher’s diary, classroom observation, classroom documents, video tapes and photographs. The results of the surveys plus the literature review inspired the action plan made up of eight lessons to foster speaking through CL principles and techniques. The results proved the effectiveness of CL in promoting speaking skill development. Ninth graders produced spoken English through words, phrases, sentences and short texts in English.

Keywords: Cooperative learning – instructional method – students’ interaction – cooperation – mutual learning outcomes – action research - spoken English production

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Chapter I

Introduction

Agua Blanca District in Cali, Colombia has commonly been considered a complex teaching context. That may be because this part of the city has been stereotyped as violent and dangerous, so it is believed that students from there fight to survive in a difficult environment and do not value studying this foreign language. In this way, teaching English in this context may be a challenge. Hinkel (2017) asserts that L2 speaking instruction and interactional skills “usually play a more prominent role in English-speaking settings than in those where English is taught as a foreign language” (p.1). He believes that one reason for that situation is the traditional use of the grammar-translation method which still dominates English teaching in various places around the world. Moreover, he considers that “L2 speaking and interactional skills can be slighted where many EFL learners simply do not have a practical need for L2 speaking.” (2017, p. 1). Based on Hinkel’s statements, although the context of Agua Blanca seems to be not very encouraging, this final report in conducting action research aims at focusing on changes by working on four basic themes: "Empowerment of participants, collaboration through participation, acquisition of knowledge, and social change" (Ferrance, 2000, p. 9).

Gutiérrez (2005) states that factors such as the number of students in the FL classroom in Colombian public schools, the lack of teaching resources, and the exaggerated overuse of grammar approaches affect students’ development of the four skills, listening, speaking, reading and writing and make them feel discouraged towards their learning of English. As a result, students face many difficulties, especially in their oral production skills and communication. Since speaking is needed in academic and professional settings, the public school students’ lack of oral production skills is a marked disadvantage compared to private school students. Thus,

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according to Ferrance (2000), as educators, it is necessary to examine the teaching practices in the school setting, inquire more on educational questions that arise, research and look for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced at schools.

I became a public school teacher in 2010 when I was named by the Municipal Secretary of Education of Cali to work in Gabriela Mistral public school as an English teacher. It is located in commune 14, Bonilla Aragón neighborhood, Agua Blanca District, Cali, Colombia. In 2013, I was moved to Isaias Hernán Ibarra School - branch of Gabriela Mistral. I teach English there from sixth to ninth grades. I am the only English teacher in this school branch. The student population at Isaias is about three hundred students. I am in charge of 90% of the secondary students, so I teach an average of two hundred seventy students.

The previous English teacher at this school was a sociologist with some knowledge about English, but he was not qualified enough for teaching the four skills in English. There was a lack of an English teacher and that need forced the coordinator and principal to assign him to teach this subject in high school from sixth to ninth grade. It seems to be a common situation in many public schools from Agua Blanca district in Cali. Most of the students did not like the English class and maybe, that is the reason why they did not understand the importance of studying this subject. In 2014, I was changed from the main branch of Gabriela Mistral to this branch. I started by changing the English teaching there, focused more on the communicative approach according to the institutional area plan for English and my teaching style. The dynamic of work for the English classes in sixth to ninth grades was modified changing the traditional translation-based activities and moving to classes where the students had other learning perspectives such as content-based learning. Thus, they learned vocabulary, reading, writing through grammar activities in context, some listening and speaking practice, games, interactive activities, culture

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awareness, projects, and some informal cooperative learning activities, among others. In this way, I started to promote a different way of teaching English at Isaias to enhance more communicative competence in the students in response to the municipal Secretary of Education and the National Bilingualism Program.

Speaking in English is considered as one of the most important skills to master according to several scholars (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Farabi, Hassanvand & Gorjian, 2017; Pattanpichet, 2011; Redondo, 2012). Ninth grade learners at Isaias may not feel confident to speak in English, and if they do it, they only produce isolated words and disconnected phrases that make their production poor and meaningless. They do not feel able to communicate effectively and intelligibly with others. I have also self-assessed my teaching practice, and I consider it has to promote the oral skill practice more to help my students develop more oral production. In this way, increasing ninth grade students' oral production at Isaias School is a challenge and a priority to improve their communicative competence in English.

Consequently, it is very important to take into account the socio-cultural context and the teaching-learning factors from Isaias Hernan Ibarra School branch for this master's report. They have to be also aligned with the institutionally mandated Critical-Social approach which looks for students with a more critical view of their learning to work cooperatively in transforming their environment (Freire, 1972, in Arizabaleta, Monsalve, Guerrero & Amaya, 2019). Changes in the pedagogical practice, in the teacher's role, the classroom techniques, and teaching method as well as in the students' attitudes toward their English learning and spoken production are expected by the end of this project. Finally, I anticipate that the learning outcomes of this action research may positively influence ninth-grade students' expectations and perspectives towards

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English learning - present and future - as many of them make the difference and have expressed their interest for English learning in class discussions.

Finally, I want to say that with the final product of this master report I plan to impact the school community in Isaias Hernan Ibarra branch and also in Gabriela Mistral school main branch, sharing with my colleagues the results of this research to exceed the boundaries of traditional methods for teaching English and to challenge ninth grade students to overcome their fears to use this language and make it possible as a means of cultural expression and openness to other people's worlds and cultures.

Considering this, how can cooperative learning be used with ninth graders to promote their spoken English production? This master report in TEFL aims to implement an action plan to improve my teaching of English and develop more EFL oral production in a group of ninth grade students through the cooperative learning method.

Justification

Taking into account the national and local education policies in English teaching-learning, through the National Program of Bilingualism, the final goal of English instruction is to develop communicative competence in English in the students to reach the level B2 in eleventh grade (Common European Framework). This goal seems to be far away from reality in most public schools in Agua Blanca, Cali, and in my school context particularly. Rather than just dealing with theoretical frameworks, action research becomes an alternative for English teachers to address their concerns and make a change to improve their instruction and increase student achievement in English class. This is not only individual work, but it can be often collaborative among the school community members to change the school environment. Conducting action

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research responds totally to the teaching-learning necessities I have in my school teaching context, for improving my teaching qualification and for my students' benefits.

First, I want to develop this action research to update and keep improving my teaching practice. I have not done any research since 2012 when I made a Diploma in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and I got an international certification from an American university. At that time the students benefited were also ninth graders from Gabriela Mistral main school. It was a great experience and the aim of that research was to transform the dynamic of work in English class from a grammar-translation-based teaching to an integrated skills class to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing. It was successful. Ninth graders liked the change and enjoyed having a different class dynamic where the emphasis was less grammar and more practice of the four basic skills in English.

Second, I am a teacher who likes to self-assess my teaching practice and my students' results. I consider I make a lot effort in my classes to offer a good quality of teaching to my students. However, I believe that the spoken English practice in my classes has not been enhanced enough, and ninth graders' oral production is very little according to the level they are and the requirements from the Colombian Ministry of Education through the National Bilingualism Program. Therefore, I decided to do this master's degree in teaching English as a foreign language to improve my qualifications as a teacher, to strengthen my teaching practice, to innovate it and encourage my students' English learning.

Third, I believe that although several of my students do not understand the importance of studying English, many more of them are open minded to change their perception about this learning, want to learn more and improve it every day. My main aim in this school has been to make students believe and experience that speaking English is possible and for real life, relevant

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at school and in the personal and social context. English may be strategic for people to have better personal and professional projection in Cali, Colombia, and in a globalized world. If students realize that speaking English is a possible task and it may be useful to reach many academic and personal goals in life, then they may understand more the importance of their learning and make more effort in improving their language proficiency, particularly, the oral skills.

As already said, I have self-assessed my teaching practice and my students' oral production performance. I realized that my classes were more oriented to the learning of vocabulary, reading and writing focused on grammar in context according to the topics studied. I did include a few activities for listening and speaking production, games, scoring games and some cooperative learning activities by developing some tasks in small groups as a strategy of work in class. The emphasis on reading and writing skills through a grammatical focus responds to the institutional policy of making improvement plans with students in order to increase their performance in English in the Saber test for eleventh graders. However, I want my students to produce more oral English and not to be only focused on reading and writing skills development with a vocabulary and grammar focus.

Fourth, after working for almost six years at Isaias Hernán Ibarra public school, I became disturbed by the fact that my students have a good English background in reading, grammar and vocabulary, but their oral production is poor. Therefore, I decided to focus this Master's final report on the role of cooperative learning to help ninth graders improve their oral production in English. I chose cooperative learning because it is aligned with my school pedagogical approach, Critical-social, and because my students and I are used to include some informal cooperative learning in class when they work in small groups. I picked ninth graders because they are the

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ones who are leaving the school branch next year to continue tenth and eleventh grade at Gabriela Mistral main school. As they are the students who have been in my English class for almost four years, it seems to be more achievable for them and for me to reach the goals set for this action research project because they have more knowledge, training in cooperative work activities and maturity in English class compared with the lower grades.

Fifth, the literature review for this report is going to provide the pedagogical tools to improve my teaching practice through the implementation of an action plan according to the ninth grade students' necessities observed and the data collection gathered. The outcomes generated will help impact and improve my teaching practice and my ninth grade students' spoken production in English and in benefit of other school community members such as colleagues and ninth graders from the other school branches.

Considering the data base of master reports at Icesi University, I only found one research study on cooperative learning to promote speaking skills (Galeano, 2016), which makes this study valuable in terms of the contributions it will make to this area of research in learning English as a foreign language within the public sector education in Cali.

Identification of the problem

Action research is enhanced by analysis, reflection and development of an action plan to change a situation. However, there must be much monitoring and observation time before planning and implementing a change (Waters-Adams, 2006). The first phase in conducting action research is the identification of a problem area which should be specific, meaningful, doable in the teacher's daily work, interesting and worthy to spend time and effort to research about it (Ferrance, 2000).

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The starting point for the development of this Master's report was the ninth graders' small amount of spoken production in English as a problem area identified according to the grade they were in and the English level they should have. That problem area was also identified in the very little practice of this skill in the English class since reading and writing skills focused on grammar activities have been more practiced to prepare students for the Prueba Saber in eleventh grade, considering the institutional requirements to improve in this exam. Other influencing factors for this problem area were the lack of suitable resources for English class, the students' fears to speak in English due to their poor pronunciation and lack of self-confidence, the average number of students in class which makes speaking activities time consuming and do not facilitate the training in oral skills. Consequently, the ninth graders' spoken English was very poor, some isolated words and phrases, and did not correspond with the oral communication skills demanded by the local and national authorities in Education with the Bilingualism program in our country.

It was also important to consider another antecedent to conduct this study. It was a project developed by the ninth graders last year where they had to research about green areas and ecological parks in Cali. Each student chose one park or a green area freely, researched about it, made a mind map and a flyer to present in class to his/her classmates and teacher. That was the plan of work. All the students presented the written work, but from a group of 35 students, just five students prepared the oral presentations of their work and did it in front of their partners and teacher. The rest of them did not feel comfortable to do it and preferred to have a bad grade. Although it was a first step in promoting oral activities different to dialogues and role-plays in class, the results were few and evidenced the need of more practice of spoken English production. Consequently, I did not fail these students because they did not present their work

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orally as most of them did not feel the confidence to do it, but I got concerned about the necessity of working more on ninth graders' speaking skill development.

Once the problem area for this research was identified, two surveys were applied in February this year to gather information about ninth graders' problem areas in their oral communication strategies and in their participation in group strategies. A third survey was also applied to know about their favorite activities for learning English, which is useful for the action plan.

On the other hand, the potential of cooperative learning was considered as an important part of the Critical-social institutional approach which is familiar to ninth grade students in their dynamic of work in English class. However, it had not been used to enhance their oral production in this language. Previous to this study, the students expressed that they felt comfortable and they liked the informal cooperative learning activities used such as working in groups for several classes to develop tasks, dividing the work and working together to achieve the same goals. They facilitated their English learning. Taking into account the reasons above, the needs analysis for this master's report was oriented towards the necessity of improving ninth graders' oral production in English by means of the cooperative learning method. Thus, the research question that arose for the development of this project was about role of cooperative learning in promoting ninth graders spoken production in English.

General objective:

To develop more spoken English production with ninth graders at Isaias Hernan Ibarra public school through the use of cooperative language learning method.

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Specific objectives:

- To explore ninth grade students' individual and group interests through the application of surveys about communication strategies in English oral language, about group work participation and about their favorite activities for English learning.
- To promote speaking skill through the development of the basic elements and techniques of cooperative learning method in ninth grade students via cooperation and interaction.
- To include more communicative speaking activities in the English class based on the results of the surveys and the cooperative learning method.

Now that the topics, aims, context and justification of this research project were introduced, this report will include the review of the literature about cooperative language learning and speaking skill, methods for data collection, action plan, results and discussion, and finally conclusion of this study.

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Chapter II

Review of the Literature

Introduction

Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) is sometimes thought of simply as group work, but a group of students working together may not be working cooperatively. There is much more to cooperative learning than that. Groups must be carefully structured to promote an effective cooperative interaction (Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017; Johnson & Johnson, 1984, 1999; Johnson, Johnson & Holubec 1994; Nastasi & Clements, 1991). Learning is dependent on the social exchange among the group participants and their accountability and motivation to increase their own learning and that of others (Olsen & Kagan, 1992, in Richards & Rogers, 2001). Students' goals are more achievable if all in the learning group reach their goals, so the outcomes are mutually beneficial (Johnson & Johnson, 1984; Johnson et al., 1994). "Cooperative learning (CL) is an instructional strategy that employs a variety of motivational techniques to make instruction more relevant and students more responsible" (Panitz, 1999, p. 59). Inspired by other scholars, Ghahraman and Tamimy (2017) posit that "It is believed to be one of the most influential contemporary educational transformations in terms of both research and practice" (p.89). To sum up, cooperative learning is much more than having students working in groups; it is a transformative method of class work based on cooperation and developed through the interaction among group members to achieve mutual learning goals.

The reasons exposed above and some previous informal experience with the use of cooperative learning strategies in English class have inspired me to research on the cooperative learning method to promote spoken English with a group of ninth grade students from the public

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school where I currently work, plus the fact that cooperative learning fully corresponds to the Critical-social pedagogical approach established in this school.

Public school education in Cali is not really focused on the development of speaking skill, but reading and writing skills in response to the government requirements of the Prueba Saber in eleventh grade. This national evaluation is the scale to measure students' English level at the end of high school instruction. However, although the National Bilingualism Program desires the development of communicative competence in English at that level, it does not happen in most of the student population of the city, and probably in the country, as it was mentioned before. Speaking skill development requires more attention and effort in class activities to promote more spoken English production in students. As a public school teacher, I want to innovate in my teaching practice by working on this skill development in class inspired on cooperative work techniques. First of all, the aim of this review of the literature on cooperative language learning is to learn more about this teaching method through a general overview and its appropriate use in English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (FL) class. Secondly, I aim to review the speaking skill. Finally, I plan to use this knowledge in benefit of a group of public school ninth graders to develop an action plan based on this teaching method strategies to help them develop more spoken production in English class.

This review of the literature is basically organized in four stages. The first part is the introduction with the revision of the concept of cooperative language learning; CL importance and influence in second language and foreign language learning; CL background. The second part develops the theoretical foundation of cooperative learning, types of cooperative learning, basic elements of cooperation, CL techniques (formal and informal), the role of the teacher, the

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learner and the instructional materials; benefits of CL, CL limitations. The third part talks about cooperative learning to improve speaking skill considering psychological processes of it. The fourth and last part talks about the definition of speaking, the importance, characteristics, problems and psychological factors associated to this skill development and speaking activity types. In short, this is the macrostructure of the literature review proposed for this research study.

To begin with this review of the literature, I will start by defining what cooperative language learning is, its background, importance and influence of this teaching method in second language and foreign language learning.

Definition: What is cooperative language learning?

There are several similar definitions for Cooperative learning (CL) as an instructional approach in education and with regard to second language (L2) learning and foreign language (FL) learning. Widely recognized as foremost authority on cooperative learning research, Slavin (1995) posits that cooperative learning refers to “a variety of teaching methods in which students work in small groups to help one another learn academic content” (p.2). Johnson et al. (1994) assert that cooperative learning is “the instructional use of small groups through which students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (p. 4). According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), cooperative learning belongs to a more general instructional approach, Collaborative Learning (CL). They similarly define cooperative learning as “an approach to teaching that makes maximum use of cooperative activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in the classroom” (p.192). To sum up, cooperative learning is defined by some researchers as a teaching approach and by others as a method which maximizes the use of cooperation among learners, working together in pairs or small groups and helping each other

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to achieve a specific task. I will use the concept of teaching method in this study inspired by the practical application of this approach in the SL/FL classroom to promote spoken English.

Other perspectives similar to the definitions above give special characteristics and qualities that highlight CL. Johnson and Johnson (2002) in Yassin, Razak and Maasum (2018) emphasize on the responsibility of each learner for his understanding and the others' for the success of the team. A reward may be part of the cooperative work maximizing team members' effort and motivation for mutual success (Alrayah, 2018; Dornyei, 1997; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Slavin, 1995; Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2010). These scholars focus on social skill development thanks to student cooperation (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Likewise, Panitz (1999) defines CL as a motivational strategy where learners are interdependent for successful completion of the objective. CL is one of the most researched areas in educational psychology thanks to its high effectiveness in classroom instruction and motivational system through peer cooperation (Dornyei, 1997; Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 2007). CL is a successful strategy with small teams of students of different levels of ability (Prieto, 2007) and equal opportunities to participate and interact creating the output. Nastasi and Clements (1991) state that CL enhances cognitive, social-emotional competence and inclusion by integrating handicapped students into regular education. Panitz (1999) also asserts CL establishes social inclusion of students who have difficulties outside class with family, friends, peers, etc. Pair work is also essential to encourage and benefit the practice of the language through oral communication (McGroarty, 1989; Yassin et al., 2018). Therefore, considering the multiple benefits of cooperative learning, this literature review aims to discuss its role as an effective instructional method in language learning to promote oral production skills in English with a ninth grade group.

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Importance of cooperative learning in second language and foreign language learning

Cooperative learning has been increasingly used in the process of learning and gained popularity in the field of education and research in the last decades (Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010). Dornyei (1997) asserts that “Cooperative learning (CL) has been found to be highly effective instructional approach in education in general and this has been confirmed with regard to second language (L2) learning as well” (p.482). For him, the instructional use of cooperative learning has produced an almost unprecedented impact in education. Khan and Akhtar (2017) also acknowledge the importance of this teaching method used in the world for several decades thanks to its positive effectiveness in many areas including English language. Moreover, CL is welcome in classes with a wide range of performance levels from homogeneous to heterogeneous groups, making diversity a resource more than a problem. This characteristic has made CL increasingly important in classroom instruction (Slavin, 1995). CL enhances language learning thanks to peer interaction by communicating and sharing ideas inside and outside the classroom, intensifying learning. In addition, it is considered an effective student-centered method to be used in second language classes (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010). I think that cooperative learning is a promising teaching tool for diverse teaching contexts, particularly those of second language or foreign language learning as it offers students greater opportunities for interaction with their peers and teacher through mutual cooperation. This is what I aim when I chose cooperative learning to help my ninth grade students develop more spoken English production.

Considering the arguments presented above, the question that arises is how can cooperative learning be used with a group of ninth grade students to promote their spoken

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English production? Cooperative learning promotes spoken production as students feel that working together is easier for the achievement of the oral tasks in class, especially speaking activities where they experience a lot of foreign language anxiety (Dornyei, 1997, Horwitz, 2001). My public school students feel more confident to work and participate in oral activities through cooperative learning dynamic of work. They usually express they feel more self-confident when they are interacting with their peers in groups helping each other to achieve the class goals.

Besides, they get more engaged, motivated and positive to participate as they feel they have their team support. As their teacher, I observe that when they are asked to work cooperatively in pairs, groups or teams with clear goals and my monitoring, the class turns more dynamic, productive and student-centered. Cooperative learning is very consistent with the teaching context for the public school Isaias Hernan Ibarra and it is a fundamental component of its Social Critical pedagogical model. As I said, this review of the literature will provide tools to work on cooperative learning more effectively in benefit of the ninth grade students' learning process.

The next section provides a brief review of the history of cooperative learning method, its theoretical foundation, types of learning groups, the basic elements of cooperation, CL techniques, roles of participants and instructional materials, and benefits of using it in classroom instruction.

Background

Cooperative learning history dates back hundreds of years and longer (Alipour, 2016; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Yassin et al., 2018). It may be dated to the first century

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as peer work. However, its real development started centuries later, especially in the 18th century in schools as peer learning groups (Yassin et al., 2018). Slavin (1995) endorses this statement considering that cooperative learning is an age-old technique used since immemorial time. “It is not a new idea in education, but its popularity has grown progressively at every grade, to teach every content (p.2)”. Richards and Rodgers (2001) join the discussion talking about the antecedents of cooperative learning as peer-tutoring and peer-monitoring which go back hundreds of years. These researchers acknowledge that early in the twentieth century, this teaching approach gained its reputation with the American educator John Dewey (Alipour, 2016) who promoted the idea of cooperation in classroom instruction. It became more popular in the 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. with the fall of intrapersonal competitive learning. Teachers were concerned with a teaching method that favored most students through the social integration of majority and minority students in order to help minorities improve their performance at school. Thus, in the 1970s, cooperative learning was adopted and its techniques were improved. Later on, it was adopted by educators not only at schools but at college level.

Cooperative language learning theoretical foundation

Approach. Cooperative language learning is inspired in a wide group of theories such as Social Interdependence Theory (Alipour, 2016; Ghaith, 2002; Johnson et al., 2007; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wang, 2009; Yassin et al., 2018), Behaviorism, Cognitivism and Constructivism (Alipour, 2016; Clements & Nastasi, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wang, 2009; Yassin et al., 2018). This section discusses these theories as part of the theoretical framework for this research.

Theory of language. Cooperative language learning is founded on the interactive/cooperative nature of language and language learning. It is used to support structural,

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functional and interactional models of language since the activities developed in it may be focused on the development of particular language forms and functions. Learners develop communicative competence thanks to conversational activities in social or pedagogical situations (Alipour, 2016; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Theory of learning. Cooperative learning is theoretically based on the work of the psychologists Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky who discuss the central role of social interaction in learning (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

Piaget's theory, Behaviorism, is focused on three elements, stimuli, response and reinforcement (SRR). First, students receive a stimuli which they respond, then they receive reinforcement. Drilling and using cooperative strategies are positive for the groups who discuss to give the right response and get benefit from the mutual interaction (Yassin et al., 2018).

Cognitivism, also Piaget's theory, focuses on the mental process of learning. Learners' needs are the basis in their acquisition and retention of knowledge in their brains (long-term memory and short-term memory). Cooperative learning activities give learners the chance to revise and build up their knowledge (Slavin, 1995; Wang, 2009; Yassin et al., 2018).

Constructivism theory, established by Piaget and followed by Vygotsky, talks about the process of building knowledge, individually or cooperatively through interaction. Culture and social interaction are key to build up knowledge. Therefore, cooperative learning by group work interaction becomes a great asset in the construction of knowledge (Alipour, 2016; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Slavin, 1995; Wang, 2009; Yassin et al., 2018; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018). However, there is another theory of cooperative learning that opposes constructivism. That is the theory of Socio-culturalism. Being both important in cooperative learning, they oppose the

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conception of the construction of knowledge for more effective learning in class. In this way, constructivism focuses on the conceptual building of language learning, while socio-culturalism focuses on the role of culture and the participation of students in class in the construction of knowledge. Although different, both are necessary components of cooperative learning approach (Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014).

In my opinion, the theoretical foundations presented above give legitimacy to cooperative learning as an approach to teaching that promotes active learning via interaction and cooperation among members of a group or team, who mutually benefit to achieve the proposed learning goals.

According to several scholars (Alipour, 2016; Alrayah, 2018; Gaith, 2002; Johnson et al., 2007; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Wang, 2009; Yassin et al., 2018), Social Interdependence theory is the base theory of cooperative learning. The foundation of this theory focuses on the interaction between the members of a group or team, which helps to obtain better outcomes for cooperative learning thanks to the importance given to each member. In this way, when sharing common goals, individual achievement is affected by the actions of the other this theory summarizes the favorable conditions for effective cooperative learning and has been validated in many research studies as its foundation.

Social interdependence theory may be positive or negative. Positive interdependence aims towards the achievement of a common goal thanks to the group or team members' mutual cooperation. Conversely, negative interdependence looks for the individual achievement in a competitive environment where one's success is the product of others' failure (Alrayah, 2018; Ghaith, 2002; Johnson et al., 1994; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Yassin et al., 2018). A third possibility appears, that is called no interdependence. This claims

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for the individual goal achievement, no matter if others in the group achieve or not their goals. It is the product of the absence of interaction (Alrayah, 2018; Ghaith, 2002; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007). This theory in practice must be validated by sufficient accuracy to achieve the desired goals when working with cooperative learning to enhance real cooperation.

Types of cooperative learning groups

Placing people in the same group and calling them cooperative does not always make them work cooperatively. The nature and organization of groups is the essence of cooperative learning. For this reason alone, group dynamics must be carefully established by the teacher in order to enhance the student learning outcomes thanks to cooperative work (Dornyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1984, 1999; Johnson et al., 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yassin et al., 2018). The emphasis is again on placing students together in groups with clear instructions of which are the principles of a real cooperation in order to achieve the desired learning goals established by the teacher.

Johnson and Johnson (1994, 1999) point out the importance of knowing how to differentiate when a group is cooperative and when it is not using learning groups effectively. Owing to this, they list four types of groups to understand the difference of a real cooperative group dynamics. The first one is the Pseudo learning group that refers to students working together without any interest in cooperation, but individualism. The second one is the Traditional classroom learning group where although students accept to work together, they still work for individual outcomes with unequal performance of team members. The third one is the Cooperative learning group where “students work together to accomplish shared goals. Students seek outcomes that are beneficial to all” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p.68). The last one is the

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High-performance cooperative learning group with the highest level of commitment for successful cooperative work, although few groups achieve that level. As a result, it is extremely important to reflect on the true purpose of cooperative work in class in order to obtain the desired learning outcomes and guarantee the effectiveness of this teaching method.

Some researchers posit three main types of cooperative learning according to different purposes. Formal cooperative learning refers to groups that last one class period to several weeks. Group members share the same learning goals and work together to complete a task or assignment. It is optimum for cooperative learning if the teacher organizes and monitors groups based on the principles of this approach. Informal cooperative learning consists of group work from few minutes to a class; share the same learning goal and are assigned to focus students' attention or direct teaching. The last one is Cooperative based groups which are long-term groups helping each other with a lot of commitment and encouragement to succeed academically. These favor the development of social skills (Alipour, 2016; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yassin et al., 2018). As a result, teachers definitely need to have clear learning goals and desired outcomes to determine what kind of cooperative learning to implement in class according to their students' characteristics and the particularities of their teaching context.

The basic elements of cooperative learning

According to Johnson and Johnson (1984, 1999), Johnson et al., (1994, 2007), Alrayah (2018), and Yassin et al. (2018), interaction between individuals is the potential element for cooperation. However, certain essential elements that constitute the basis of the theory of social interdependence are required to develop and achieve cooperative learning. Similarly, other scholars (Alipour, 2016; Altamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Azizinezhad, Hashemi, & Darvishi, 2013;

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Kagan & McGroarty, 1993; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yavuz & Arslan., 2018) support this argument and all of them agree about the five basic elements of this theory. They are positive interdependence, individual accountability, promotive interaction, social skills and group processing. In short, if there is no interaction, there is not cooperative learning work.

The first and main element for cooperative learning is positive interdependence. In the words of Johnson et al. (2007, p.23), it is “the heart of cooperative efforts”. Interdependence refers to the situation where once the goal and the task are established, each team member is responsible for his/her own learning and in turn, must be concerned and committed to the learning of the other members of the group or team, guaranteeing this way not only their own success but also that of others. These researchers describe it as “students must believe that they sink or swim together” (p.23). This assertion was also posited by them in an earlier research study in 1994. In this way, the efforts and contributions of each member are indispensable for the success of the whole group or team.

The second element is individual accountability. It refers to the individual assessment of each team or group member’s learning. The purpose of it is to make each member’s performance stronger thanks to the feedback provided by the teacher. Then, the whole group needs to be aware of its members’ performance in order to help each other with support, assistance and encouragement.

The third element is face-to-face promotive interaction. It exists when team or group members encourage, help, support and praise each other’s efforts to learn and achieve the goals. The quality of the group interaction process leads the members’ exchange of ideas, materials, information and feedback for the mutual challenge in order to work harder to complete the tasks and achieve the group or team’s goals. It can be a powerful support for insecure learners (Zhang,

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2010). In this way, the face-to-face interaction requires good communication where every member is committed to the others and to the mutual goal of learning.

The fourth element that is very important for cooperative work is the development of social skills through interaction (Dornyei, 1997; McGroarty, 1989; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Panitz, 1999; Zhang, 2010). Social skills for effective cooperative learning do not magically appear when cooperative lessons are employed. These skills must be taught to team or group members just as purposely and precisely as academic skills to potentiate the quality of their cooperation. Leadership, decision-making, trust-building, communication, and conflict management, among other skills, empower students to manage both team work and task work successfully.

The fifth element of cooperative work is group processing. Group processing exists when group or team members discuss their performance in the achievement of their goals and keep effective relationships. This can be also conducted by the teacher in large and small groups in action making emphasis on the group skills based on their interaction, then feedback is provided in a large-group session and by small-group discussion (Johnson, Johnson, Stanne, & Garibaldi, 1990). Thus, members revise their actions, helpful and unhelpful, to the goals and attainments and make decisions about what behaviors to continue or change. An on-going improvement of the learning outcomes is the result of a careful analysis of how members are interacting and working together and determines how the effectiveness of the cooperative work can be enhanced to increase students' use of the targeted skills.

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Techniques of cooperative learning

There is a wide variety of cooperative learning methods and activity types presented by several researchers to foster peer-interaction (Alrayah, 2018; Clements & Nastasi, 1991; Kagan, 1993; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Coelho, 1992 and Olsen & Kagan, 1992, in Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995). As they are large in number, Nastasi and Clements (1991), inspired mostly by Slavin's research work, have classified them into four major types. Some of the scholars' contributions mentioned above have also been considered in this section to complement Nastasi and Clements' classification. The techniques selected were: Team Learning, Expert Groups, Collaborative Task Completion and Collaborative Problems Solving or Investigation.

Team learning. As the name says, this method requires students to work in teams directed by the teacher to learn the assigned material and retake it in order to assist their other teammates in their learning. Teams receive rewards according to the individual performance of each member. Learning is assessed individually and as a group thanks to the rewards received. Examples of this method are Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD) (Alipour, 2016; Kagan, 1993; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014;; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Slavin, 1995; Yeung, 2015; Wang, 2009) and Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT) (Johnson et al. 1994; Slavin, 1995). In STAD, teacher uses quizzes to assess students individually on the material studied, while in TGT, students are assessed through their performance in academic games by competing with other team members with similar performance level. In both methods, success is measured based on individual improvement compared with previous performance. These techniques can be implemented in a variety of content areas and in both, elementary and secondary grades. They also have positive effects on students' learning especially in basic skills,

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social outcomes and better attitudes toward subject matter. This is a very good type of cooperative learning method via team work cooperation.

Expert groups. This method is very representative of cooperative learning and has been mentioned in several research studies (Alipour, 2016; Alrayah, 2018; Kagan, 1993; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Johnson et. al, 1994; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Prieto, 2007; Slavin, 1995; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wang, 2009). It requires students to receive teaching material in order to develop expertise in an area, and they prepare to teach it to other group members. First, the given material is divided. Each member of the group is responsible for learning a specific part of the topic. Second, they come together into expert groups to discuss the same material. Third, they return to their own groups to teach their peers the material they mastered in the expert groups. Finally, group members are quizzed on all topics. Some examples of this cooperative teaching method is Jigsaw and Jigsaw II. These cooperative methods help group members understand they are essential elements of a group and enhances cooperation in the learning situation promoting improvement on achievement. The Expert Group method helps students empower knowledge interacting as teachers and as students though cooperative work.

Collaborative task completion. This method became an innovative variation of cooperative learning developed by Johnson and Johnson at the University of Minnesota. It involves students working in small groups on assignment sheets. Group members decide how to accomplish the task assigned based on the teacher's instruction. Thus, they decide their group dynamic of work and assign roles to individual members. Groups receive awards and are assessed based on their group product (Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Johnson et. al, 1994; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Richard & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995). Some examples of this cooperative method are Learning Together or Learning Circles through

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discussion groups and group projects. This method benefits students' learning and cognitive development, enhances motivation, positive attitudes towards learning and positive interdependence among group members, and can be used in all academic domains. Thanks to this method, cooperative learning can be available to any teacher who wishes to innovate in teaching practice and learning gains through a better learning environment for his/her students.

Collaborative problem solving or investigation. This cooperative learning method challenges students to work together to investigate or solve an assigned or self-selected problem. The teacher's intervention is minimal, so group members are autonomous and responsible for every step of their investigation or problem-solving procedures and strategies used. This method was formulated by Shlomo and Sharan (1976, in Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Johnson et al., 1994). It is common that group members plan how to research their topic and divide the work among themselves. After that, investigation is carried out individually and then group members join their efforts, synthesizing, summarizing and presenting their final product to the rest of the class. Finally, they also assess the success of their efforts and learning outcomes. In this way, intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards are obtained. This cooperative method is beneficial in the improvement of higher-order skills promoting comprehension in social studies and English as a SL curricula. Moreover, it benefits social-emotional development, motivation and interpersonal skills. This is a challenging method that demands more cognitive and interpersonal effort from the members of the groups to work together to reach their goal.

This research project included the use of Team Learning, Collaborative Task Completion and Collaborative Investigation in the action plan developed according to ninth graders and the teaching context necessities.

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Informal methods. According to Slavin (1995), there are other informal cooperative techniques also used to enhance cooperative learning. They are: Spontaneous group discussions, Numbered Heads together (Alrayah, 2018; Kagan, 1993; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Prieto, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wang, 2009), Team Product, Cooperative Review and Think-Pair Share (Alrayah, 2018; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Prieto, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Wang, 2009). Spontaneous group discussions refer to students organized in teams or groups in a typical lesson or class. In this way, they are asked by the teacher to discuss a subject from a few minutes to a full class session. Numbered Heads Together is a variant of group discussion where students are numbered, discuss together a subject and get ready when teacher asks a question and calls a numbered student to answer it. Team product refers to group members working together to do an assigned task and present a final product such as an essay, an oral presentation, a mural, a worksheet, etc. Cooperative Review is a technique where group members make up review questions previous to an exam. Groups ask questions to each other scoring points for the right answers, and groups that complement them also receive points. Think-Pair-Share was developed by Frank Lyman of the University of Maryland (Slavin, 1995). Students work in pairs in their groups to work on a class assignment. First, they work individually and then share with a partner to reach consensus and report to the rest of the class. Informal methods become also a good alternative to promote cooperative learning in the classroom.

This research will implement the use of some of the main informal cooperative methods such as spontaneous group decisions, Numbered Heads Together and cooperative review, among others in the action plan to enhance student interaction and cooperation, although some of them might have slight modifications according to the learning goals and students' needs. It is

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important to clarify that there are other informal cooperative learning methods and techniques, but I will only focus on the above mentioned for the action plan.

Teachers, learners and instructional materials are fundamental elements in the successful implementation of cooperative learning methods and techniques in the SL/FL classroom. The main characteristics of their roles in a language class, focused on cooperative learning, are described below.

The role of the teacher

Cooperative learning method requires a redefinition of the traditional role of the teacher in classroom instruction. (Alipour, 2016; McGroarty, 1989; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). First of all, the teacher has to make several pre-instructional decisions in order to make a well-organized cooperative lesson plan. By doing this, he/she has to decide the objectives, plan and structure tasks, create well-balanced groups (size, students' level) assign student roles, set the time, the classroom organization and select the suitable materials to conduct the lesson. Second, he/she must become a learning facilitator, instead of the absolute owner of knowledge, the main authority or solo-teacher (Alipour, 2016; McGroarty, 1989; Nastasi & Clements, 1991). He/she must explain the academic work to students making emphasis on positive interdependence and individual accountability, social skills and the criteria for success. Thus, he/she must promote high levels of thinking skills to promote learning and cognitive growth (Nastasi & Clemens, 1991). Other teacher's roles are moving around monitoring groups, supporting their learning difficulties when necessary, and intervening in case conflicts arise to increase group work effectiveness. Finally, the teacher has to assess the individual and group learning process (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yassin et al. 2018). To sum up, the teacher's role has to be transformed from teacher-centered to student-centered fostering a new

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vision of curricula design, teaching practice and classroom work focused on interaction and cooperation.

The role of the learner

McGroarty (1989) asserts CL requires students who are active participants in their “acquisition of knowledge and language skills, and encourage themselves and each other as they work on problems of mutual interest” (p.138). She emphasizes that this method requires efforts and considerable time for students to develop the norm of cooperation and understand the multiple roles and functions they have to assume. Likewise, Yassin et al. (2018) describe several learner’s roles in the cooperative classroom such as facilitator, keeping students on tasks; recorder, writing group decisions and answers; summarizer, summarizing groups answers; reporter, giving group report to other groups; time-keeper, managing the group time to develop tasks; questioner, asking questions and praiser, encouraging group members (Yassin et al., 2018). Richards and Rodgers (2001) believe that the primary learner’s role is as a group member in collaborative work with others, developing teamwork skills and autonomy of work to enhance his/her own learning and that of others, through active involvement and participation. Consequently, learners need practice and time to understand and internalize that CL demands active participation and commitment, assuming several roles for the mutual construction of knowledge by means of cooperation.

The role of the instructional materials

Materials play an important role in a lesson focused on cooperative learning. Johnson et al. (1994) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) agree to consider that materials for any kind of lesson can be used with cooperative learning method because the important thing is how it is

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used and distributed among students to promote cooperative learning. Thus, students may receive individual or group set of materials (Johnson et al., 1994). These can be designed specifically for cooperative purposes, adapted from others or just borrowed from other subject areas. This is another factor that makes cooperative learning more attractive to be used in a variety of lessons and teaching techniques.

In addition to all the information discussed above to make a general overview of cooperative language learning, I consider it very important to mention the advantages of cooperative learning use in classroom instruction to benefit students' achievement of the learning goals, but also it is necessary to talk about some of limitations to this method and eventual pitfalls in order to avoid failures when using it in classroom instruction.

Benefits of cooperative language learning

The multiple benefits of using cooperative learning in any teaching context have been widely recognized thanks to hundreds of studies that certify the effectiveness of this teaching method, if it is used properly. In this way, there are many positive outcomes of cooperative learning in classroom instruction compared with competitive and individualistic learning situations (Alipour, 2016; Ghaith, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 1984; Johnson, Johnson, Roy & Zaidman, 1985; Johnson et al., 1990, 1994, 2007; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Wang, 2009).

These are higher achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 1999) and greater retention of learning, higher-level thought processes, greater motivation (Dornyei, 1997; Panitz, 1999; Yassin et al., 2018), more positive attitudes toward the instructor and subject area (Dornyei, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Panitz, 1999), more positive relationships among students, regardless heterogeneity (Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Johnson et al., 2007), higher levels of self-esteem and

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greater psychological health (Panitz, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Johnson et al., 2007; Yassin et al., 2018), greater cognitive and emotional perspective, less competitiveness, greater collaborative skills and social skills development (Johnson et al., 2007). Johnson et al. (2007) endorse these benefits and add effort to achieve the development of civic values to increase the quality of life within the community. Furthermore, Yassin et al. (2018) emphasize on psychological advantages such as lowering anxiety (Dornyei, 1997; Panitz, 1999) and development of sense of belonging and self-confidence, equal participation and the improvement of language skills. Nastasi and Clements (1991) declare “Cooperative learning seems to have universal application for promoting cognitive development and academic learning, as well as social-emotional growth” (p. 113). In sum, based on the literature, cooperative language learning is a teaching method that offers many benefits to the students in their process of language learning inside the classroom. These gains have been widely proved by many research studies in different learning contexts.

CL promotes social interaction skills. “Cooperative learning establishes inclusion, creating a learning atmosphere in which learners feel respected and connected to one another. It creates a strong social support system” (Panitz, 1999, p. 61). Pattanpichet (2011) also asserts that CL provides a more inclusive and dynamic education for diverse students. What’s more, it promotes compassion, caring for others, trust, appreciation of ethnic, cultural, language, social class, ability, and gender group diversity, conflict management, constructive controversy, negotiation and peer mediation, among other benefits (Johnson et. al. 2007). Cooperative learning as a means of instruction for public education may offer many advantages for this teaching sector and fit with diverse students’ needs, both academic and emotional, to make more

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sense of learning this language and working together to learn how to resolve social problems that may arise in and outside the classroom.

Limitations of cooperative learning

Despite the increased popularity of cooperative learning as an effective instructional method in education, there are also some teaching constraints regarding its use in second language and foreign language field. For a start, Dornyei (1997) comments that “CL has only recently become an area of major interest in the L2 field” (p. 482). That may be because typical small group work had been in L2 teaching methods long time ago and CL seemed to offer no innovative change in education. Liang, Mohan, & Early (1998) endorse the same position with regard to CL. Ghahraman and Tamimy (2017), quote Slavin (2010) who states that “CL is still at the edge” and Gillies and Boyle (2011) who claim that “Despite the well documented benefits of CL, many teachers are still reluctant to use this pedagogical practice in their classes.” (p. 90). Richards and Rodgers (2001) also talk about criticism that CL has received such as its use with learners who have different language proficiency levels because some of them may benefit more than others in their interactions. Moreover, CL demands considerable effort on teachers to adopt this method in their classes. I might add that other scholars report that most of the limitations of CL come from the ineffective implementation of this method attributed to not being able to use the techniques and principles well. For instance, aspects such as teacher’s expertise, wrong grouping techniques, inequitable interaction among high achievers vs. low achievers (Johnson et al. 2007; Slavin, 1995), time constraints, intragroup processes, assessment, language use, and culture (Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017; Khaghazinezhad & Kaashef, 2014). Interesting points of view, but these topics have been debated by the abundant research studies that legitimize CL affective and cognitive effectiveness in the language classroom

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(Dornyei, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 1984; Johnson et. al., 1985, 1990, 1994, 2007; Kagan, 1993; Panitz, 1999; McGroarty, 1989; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995). Apparently, the key is in the right application of the cooperative method guided by the interaction and cooperation principles.

Cultural diversity is a primary factor that requires a lot of attention to verify the effectiveness of CL. The different ways of seeing the world influenced by the cultural context from which each one comes from can cause great discrepancy among the members of a group and affect the effectiveness of their cooperative work. “Social skills may need to be taught; simply placing students in a learning group and expecting them to cooperate effectively may not be successful” (Dornyei, 1997, p. 484). Alrayah (2018) also has a similar argument. Research studies on the subject (Dornyei, 1997; Liang et al., 1998; Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017) make a call to carefully consider the ethnic, educational background and cultural heterogeneity of group members because this dissimilarity can strongly affect the quality of their interaction, cooperation, individual accountability, language goal-orientedness, leadership, decision making, communication, trust, and conflict resolution skills. As CL has been conducted in many countries, it still requires more research about the cross-cultural validation of the Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson et al., 2007). Nevertheless, Ghaith (2002) argues that as most of the empirical research related to the social support and academic achievement benefits of CL comes from American settings, it is necessary to examine the generalizability and applicability of this method in other linguistic and cultural contexts. Ghahraman & Tamimy (2017) claim that not only the teacher training is responsible of failures in CL as the literature suggests, other variables like culture must be considered and require more research studies. To sum up, cultural

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diversity is a very important factor that needs to be researched carefully to validate the effectiveness of CL in all teaching contexts.

Liang et al. (1998) call for more attention to examine the quality of the language produced among learners to enhance proficiency. Literature about this aspect suggests that CL maximizes SL/FL learning by providing many opportunities of interaction and production. However, there is little research about the kind of discourse produced in small group interaction. Consequently, according to these authors, the claim is to analyze if the language produced in CL groups is high-order or low-order, academic language or just basic conversation.

After completing this general overview of cooperative learning, the next section will discuss cooperative learning as an instrument to improve oral communication skills (speaking).

Cooperative learning to improve oral communication skills

Speech ability is a fundamental component in teaching and learning a language. The limited exposure to the language and the limited opportunities of practice in class are two of the main causes that do not favor the development of speaking skill in language learning. Therefore, the challenge of developing this skill has led multiple research studies focused on effective teaching methods that promote and help learners develop and strength this skill in classroom instruction (Pattanpichet, 2011). Cooperative language learning is considered as a potential teaching method to promote oral skills of SL/FL learners thanks to the students' interaction in small groups has a positive effect on the language skills development (Alrayah, 2018; Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Zhang, 2010).

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Cooperative learning in promoting speaking skill

Based on a wide variety of research studies, cooperative language learning is considered a suitable teaching method for enhancing speaking skills. McGroarty (1989) asserts that cooperative language learning offers “increased frequency and variety of second language practice through different types of interaction” (p. 127). This researcher emphasizes that the variety of empirical findings based on theoretical foundations and applied in diverse teaching contexts support cooperative learning as a transforming method of student learning and teacher pedagogical practices in second language learning. Cooperative learning in ESL instruction provides more opportunities of verbal skills practice and interaction, through positive relationships among students from heterogeneous groups (McGroarty, 1989; Pattanpichet, 2011; Yassin et al., 2018). CL increases the student talk in the target language thanks to group work interaction which helps students improve their language skills by listening, talking, discussing, and expressing ideas and opinions (Alrayah, 2018; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Dornyei, 1997; Yassin et al., 2018; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018; Zhan, 2010). Moreover, CL improves students’ communication and academic achievement by leading the development of academic and social language (McGroarty, 1989; Prieto, 2007; Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010). In short, there is an extensive body of research on cooperative learning and its positive impact on oral skills development which considers that cooperative learning by small group interaction enhances language learning development more effectively and improves social relationships among learners.

Psychological processes in cooperative learning to enhance speaking skill

Cooperative learning lowers students’ anxiety and increases their self-confidence and motivation to participate which has a positive effect on the language skills performance. CL

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promotes a relaxed, supportive and motivating climate in the classroom that reduces students' fears of failure to use the language, which increases their self-confidence and self-esteem to participate using the target language and developing more oral language proficiency in this way (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Dornyei, 1997; Panitz, 1999; Prieto, 2007; Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010). Nastasi and Clements (1991) point out the existence of several research studies that endorse consistently that cooperative learning environments enhance higher levels of motivation, goal orientation and better self-concepts in learners than individualistic classrooms. CL promotes a friendlier classroom environment to engage learners to challenge their fears and take risks with the use of language thanks to the small group interaction and mutual support with peers.

I definitely think cooperative learning method is very positive to be used with a variety of student populations, especially with high school students from public schools whose language proficiency is limited to provide them more possibilities of developing and strengthening their speaking skills.

Since the main aspects of cooperative learning have already been discussed, I will now focus in the next section on discussing relevant aspects concerning speaking skill from the perspective of the ESL/EFL learning context.

Oral production skill: Speaking

Definition of speaking skill. There are many definitions of the word “speaking” given by scholars in language learning context. Leong and Ahmadi (2017) and Abrar, Mukminin, Habibi, Asyraf, Makmur, & Marzulina (2018) agree on the speaking definition from two perspectives. The first ones, Leong and Ahmadi (2017), inspired by Burns & Joyce (1997), define speaking

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skill as a process of interaction in order to make meaning through the production, reception and processing information. The second ones, Abrar et al. (2018) define speaking based on Chaney and Burk (1998), as a process of creating and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in diverse contexts. Speaking is also called oral production (Hinkel, 2017). Prieto (2007) and Redondo (2012) refer to Chastain (1998) in their research studies to define speaking as a multi-component productive skill, which is more than producing sounds, words and grammar correctly. For Farabi, Hassanvand and Gorjian (2017) speaking is the means of communication to express opinions, intentions, hopes, and viewpoints. Considering these points of view it can be said that speaking is an interactive process of making and sharing meaning to communicate information.

The importance of speaking. Speaking is often viewed as one of the most important language skills to be developed in language learning. First of all, this is the most frequent skill used in human interaction, in most of settings. Second, from the four skills, it is seen as the most important one required for effective communication and it is the main reference to be considered as language speakers. Third, speaking helps learners develop the other language skills (listening, reading and writing) in an integrated process that also reinforces this skill (Farabi et al., 2017; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Stanescu, 2015). Fourth, speaking is a skill that deserves the same importance of literacy in native and FL learning (Redondo, 2012). Fifth, speaking a language is of great importance outside the classroom. It provides speakers more job, educational and promotion opportunities (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). In short, speaking is a salient skill to carry out communication in a language via interaction.

Developing the speaking skill becomes a priority in SL/FL programs. Considering the arguments raised, these validate the importance of this research study focused on promoting the

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development of oral proficiency in English with ninth grade students through cooperative learning in the context of public education where there is a great flaw in this regard.

Characteristics of speaking. Speaking is a challenging skill for learners to master. Fluency and accuracy are important elements of speaking skill to develop communicative competence. At the same time, it requires to develop competence in other areas of knowledge. The first one is the linguistic competence that refers to the correct use of grammatical structures, suitable vocabulary and good pronunciation of words (Abrar et al., 2018; Farabi et al., 2017; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). In addition, learners should develop knowledge of sociolinguistic (knowledge of sociocultural rules of language use), discourse (speech cohesion and coherence in diverse types of texts), pragmatic (functional use of language) and strategic competence (compensatory communication strategies) (Abrar et al., 2018; Farabi et al., 2017; Hinkel, 2017; Prieto, 2007; Purpura, 2008; Savignon, 2017). For these reasons, speaking is a challenging skill that demands time, practice and effort to master it and develop communicative competence.

Speaking problems. Students' poor mastery of English speaking skill maybe attributed to several factors. One of the main factors is the teaching instruction focused on grammar-translation method which still dominates L2/FL teaching around the world (Farabi et al., 2017; Hinkel, 2017; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Savignon, 2017). Speaking is often ignored in class so students do not have enough practice to develop this skill. Listening and speaking are rarely practiced in traditional teaching systems as the emphasis is on reading and grammar. Inhibition (stopping yourself from doing what you want), lack of topical knowledge, low participation and mother tongue use are common problems students face up to speak in class (Farabi et al., 2017; Leong & Ahmadi, 2017). In addition, there are several psychological factors that also affect speaking skill development such as motivation, attitude and anxiety (Abrar et al., 2018). Since all

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the factors mentioned slow the development of English speaking ability, they require attention from the teacher to reduce their impact on students' oral performance.

Psychological factors affecting speaking. Motivation, attitude, self-confidence and anxiety are considered predominant affective factors that cause difficulties in speaking skill learning and development according to several research studies. Motivation is defined as “the attribute which moves an individual to do or not to do something” (Abrar et al., 2018, p. 130). Motivation is an essential component for making speaking activities successful (Stanescu, 2015). It may be instrumental which refers to the learner’s communicative needs for language learning and integrative, that is the learner’ attitude towards the target culture and language community (Dornyei, 1994; Gosiewska-Turek, 2018). The second factor is attitude, defined as “an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent” (Gardner, 1985, in Bartram, 2010, p.34). In the context of language, attitude is “a construct that explains individuals’ linguistic behaviors” (Abrar et al., 2018, p. 130). Thus, learners’ positive attitude towards learning benefits the process and negative attitudes make learning difficult, including, speaking skill (Abrar et al., 2018; Gosiewska-Turek, 2018). The third factor, self-confidence is defined as “the belief that one has the ability to produce results, accomplish goals or perform tasks competently” (Dornyei, 1994, p. 273). The lack of self-confidence may obstruct communication and speaking skill development (Gosiewska-Turek, 2018). The last but not least influencing affective factor in speaking skill is anxiety. It is defined as “the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with the arousal of the autonomic nervous system” (Spielberger, 1983 in Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986, p.125). Other researchers have also used Spielberger’s words to talk about anxiety (Gosiewska-Turek, 2018, p.94; Horwitz,2001, p. 113; Oya, Manalo &

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Greenwood, 2004, p. 843). A specific construct called Foreign Language (classroom) Anxiety (FLCA) makes students feel uncomfortable in their language classes, especially when participating in oral activities. “FLCA affects all foreign language users when they use the target language, but it is typically highest for speaking” (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, in Dewaele, 2012, p. 50). A supportive and constructive classroom environment may decrease student anxiety levels (Horwitz, 2001). It can also increase student’s performance in oral activities through a higher motivation to participate, enhance positive attitudes and strength self-confidence to use the language.

Oral activities to promote speaking skill. The choice of activities for oral English practice depends on the students’ level and the learning objective. From a communicative perspective, speaking activities range from Pre-communicative to communicative activities (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this way, pre-communicative activities demand a controlled practice (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Prieto, 2007; Stanescu, 2015) of the language to improve the use of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation as the focus is on accuracy (Structural activities). The aim is to develop a command of the linguistic system more than enhancing communication. Repetition, modeling dialogues, types of drill and question-and-answer practice are common in these activities (Littlewood, 1981; Prieto, 2007). There are also some of these activities that link with functional meanings, so as they connect the structures with communicative purposes they are called “quasi-communicative”. These may be semi-controlled practice activities (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015). The second group, the communicative activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) enhance a more creative and freer use of the language focusing on fluency development (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Littlewood, 1981; Prieto, 2007; Stanescu, 2015). They integrate the pre-communicative

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knowledge and skills to communicate meanings. Typical communicative activities can be information gap, role-plays, simulations, discussions and games (Prieto, 2007; Stanescu, 2015). They are subdivided into Functional communication activities (task-based functional use of the language) and Social interaction activities (socially contextualized). Categories and subcategories relate each other depending on the learners' proficiency level, emphasis and orientation of the class.

This literature review aimed to analyze the role of cooperative language learning as an outstanding teaching method that promotes better learning environments for ESL/EFL classrooms, via interaction and cooperation and particularly, it may be beneficial for the development of speaking skill as this is a very difficult ability for language learners to master.

Considering that very little research at Universidad ICESI has addressed the use of cooperative learning in public schools in Cali, this research study aims to integrate the aspects analyzed and discussed to the public teaching context of the Isaias Hernan Ibarra School with two purposes. The first one is to gather data about the problem area detected in a group of ninth grade students for the need analysis as an important step in deciding the actions to be taken. The second step is to design an action plan that will allow me as their teacher to make changes to improve my teaching practice and help them develop their oral production skill in English through cooperative learning strategies and techniques.

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Chapter III

Methods for Data Collection

As the purpose of this master report, this paper undertook action research as the method of inquiry. “Action Research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully using the techniques of research” (Ferrance, 2000, p. 1). There are different types of action research depending on the participants involved. However, Ferrance (2000) clarifies that although there are many types of research, action research refers to: A disciplined inquiry done by a teacher with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future. This research is carried out within the context of the teacher’s environment- that is, with the students and at the school in which the teacher works – on questions that deal with educational matters at hand (p. 1).

Gutiérrez (2005) asserts that action research refers to a process of understanding, changing and innovating classroom procedures through data collection in a spiral. She adds that “Action research allows teachers to inquire about learning problems and reflect on their pedagogical practice. Action research is an ongoing process of continuous reflection, redesigning and rethinking to improve pedagogical practice in each cycle” (p.85). Waters-Adams (2006) also compares action research as a process of spirals where no matter how carefully planned research is, it may produce unpredictable outcomes.

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Research setting and population

School description. Isaias Hernan Ibarra is a monolingual public school, a branch of Gabriela Mistral public school. This branch is located at the east of city, in Las Orquideas neighborhood, commune 14, Agua Blanca District in Cali, Colombia. The socio-economic strata is 1-2. It is an Ethno-educational school where the student population is mostly Afro-Colombian but there are also white, indigenous and mestizo students. Inclusive education is promoted here, so students who are older than the average in each grade are accepted. The average number of students per group there is 35. The total number of students is 300 approximately. High school courses are in the morning. The English class has three hours a week in all groups.

According to Gabriela Mistral School PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional), the school pedagogical approach is the Critical-social. It is a relevant approach for the institution and the socio-cultural context of the community. Based on Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970, in Arizabaleta, Monsalve, Guerrero, & Amaya, 2019) it promotes the struggle for the transformation of the social context. In particular, it seeks to promote in the student an integral education that enables his or her intellectual, affective and ethical development in such a way, that the student becomes a subject with more autonomy and has new perspectives towards the search for knowledge. Teacher and students learn together and learn from each other. Both are co-creators of knowledge. One of the principles of this pedagogy is cooperation which stems from communion and is based on dialogue and communication. It is very important to emphasize that this approach also promotes freedom of thought, the possibility of criticism and dialogue in the classroom within a climate that favors human development and development of social skills.

The institutional PEI of Gabriela Mistral seeks inclusion and ethno-education as main axes of the institutional philosophy; therefore, the Critical-social approach seeks to integrate

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education of knowledge with the right to difference, singularity and the transformation of the social context.

In this way, one of the main teaching-learning strategies is cooperative work to help students refine their work and provide mutual support to engage in the solution of community problems. Therefore, dialogue and reflection are integrated into the pedagogy of the question and the critical expression.

In sum, considering the institutional philosophy of the Gabriela Mistral School, this Master's report is aligned with its pedagogical approach and with the guidelines of the Municipal Secretary of Education and the Ministry of Education regarding the requirements of the basic standards of competences in English as a foreign language and basic learning rights. By this I mean that, when conducting this research project the main goal is to promote cooperative learning as a key tool in the transformation of the English teaching practices to provide more opportunities to develop spoken English in class. Moreover, the aim is also to impact the students' thinking about English learning, particularly, to overcome their barriers and limiting factors to make verbal communication in English an achievable goal.

Class description. The students observed for this classroom research were boys and girls from ninth grade whose ages range from thirteen to seventeen years old. Thirty-six students participated in this project, 17 boys and 19 girls. Most of the group is made up of Afro-Colombians and Mestizos, but there is also a minority that comes from indigenous groups.

Students live in Agua Blanca District, mainly in Las Orquideas neighborhood, but some of them live in other nearby neighborhoods such as Pizamos, Decepaz, Marroquin, Manuela Beltrán, La Casona, Bonilla Aragón and Potrero Grande. They share the same socio-economic level (1-2).

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These ninth graders are characterized mostly for being cheerful, friendly, funny, creative, and respectful if you know how to address them, dynamic, sociable, participative and above all, many of them are willing to try new things to improve their English level.

Fifty percent of the students in this group have been taking English class with me since sixth grade. The rest started in eighth grade, and this year there are seven new comers from schools close to Isaias Hernan Ibarra School, one from Gabriela Mistral, one from Elias Hernan Ibarra school branch and two students who came from Venezuela. Some of the old students were moved from this class to the other ninth grade and vice versa by their homeroom teachers to balance students with academic and behavior problems.

Talking about my personal teaching experience with this course I have to say that most of them have a good behavior in English class. If some of them misbehave, they assume proactively the observations I make. Every school year we sign classroom rules for academic and behavior matters. We socialize them from the first class, discuss them and this year we signed them as a contract for the work in English class every session. They have been very positive for the classroom dynamic of work, responsibility and coexistence in English class. Both students and the teacher respect each other and that has been valuable and coherent for the work in the English classroom and the English class.

They had a good academic and behavior record according to the evaluation and promotion meeting with the coordinator, their homeroom teacher, their other teachers and based on their academic reports. This is very positive for me as their English teacher and positive for this research. This is a group with good learning conditions to develop projects. I chose this group because not only they had a good academic record and behavior, but also because I know most of them quite well; it is mostly made up of a group of boys and girls motivated towards

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English learning and willing to improve their spoken production in this language. They accepted the challenge of going beyond their fears and working cooperatively to improve their spoken English. This is the most important reason why I decided to work with this group.

Teacher description. I have been an English teacher for about nineteen years, in part-time and full time jobs in Cali, Colombia. I worked ten years in private bilingual schools and eleven years in an English institute. I have worked mainly with kids and teens and I had the opportunity to work with adults in 2008. Then I started to work with the government at Gabriela Mistral Public school. I worked three years there, and I moved to Isaias Hernan Ibarra school branch where I currently work. I have taught English there for 6 years. As a teacher, I love my profession and I try to give the best of myself to my students to guide and help them make progress in their learning. English has also helped me teach the institutional values to them which are responsibility, respect and tolerance; it is very important to promote in them the development and strength of social skills because there are many social problems in their sociocultural context. In sum, I consider myself a fortunate teacher because I have in my hands the opportunity and the great responsibility to help in the integral training of my students both academically and personally. Thus, I can contribute from my profession in the construction of identity and better human beings in the social context where I work.

Data collection instruments for the needs analysis

According to Ferrance (2000), the second phase in the Action Research Cycle is the collection and organization of data. This is a very important step to make decisions about the action needs. Data has to be chosen according to the issue to be researched. It must be organized in a way it facilitates to identify trends and themes in the study. For Waters-Adams (2006), collaboration is extremely important in action research. Thus, in order to seek validity in the

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reflection, “action researchers should seek the views of others as to the meaning of the data they have collected” (p.7-8). In this way, the action research could be seen as a scientific process that requires collaboration in the interpretation of the data gathered. Ferrance and Water-Adams agree that the most important criterion for choosing data collection instruments in action research is to select the method that provides useful information about the subject researched.

Both authors posit that for having a wider scenario of the situation analyzed and in order to seek evidence with more effectiveness, the teacher has to look at the situation from different perspectives and it is necessary to employ a triangulation of data gathering methods. This study undertook triangulation through quantitative and qualitative research methods. For the quantitative research methods I used surveys and for the qualitative ones, I used a diary, open observation, videotapes, classroom documents and photographs. Each one of them provided support to have a different perspective of the problem area.

Quantitative research data. Qualitative research methods are predominant in action research. However, although most of the analysis of the data gathering methods may be qualitative in nature, numbers and statistics may also provide valuable information for this process (Waters-Adams, 2006). Quantitative research methods are focused on statistics with an analytic-deductive design and these become the data (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).

As was said, the needs analysis of this project used quantitative research methods through surveys.

Surveys. Surveys are “any procedures used to gather and describe the characteristics, attitudes, views, opinions, and so forth of students, teachers, administrators or any other people who are important to a study. Surveys typically take the form of interviews or questionnaires or both” (Brown & Yule, 2001. p.142). Similarly, Jordan (1997) posits that surveys can be given

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directly to students as questionnaires to research about their language and skills use and problem areas. If their content has a sufficient large scale of information, they can provide to the searcher a wide picture of the learners' needs.

In addition to questionnaires, surveys may be done by using forms or checklists with rating scales that have to be ticked, circled, etc. They can also ask students if they can do certain tasks by yes/no answer, by grades and also, to list the students' language areas to practice (Jordan, 1997).

According to Brown and Yule (2001) surveys are administered in written forms to individual or groups to be answered in class time. They usually are made up of closed-response items such as Likert scales, multiple choice, yes-no, and ranking. For large groups of people, questionnaires are a more efficient way of gathering information. For Seligner and Shohamy (1989) surveys are useful for gathering data for large groups of people. The items in surveys vary according to their level of explicitness in the data collected and the degree of specificity in the items formulated. These items may be questions or other stimuli that frame the responses to a narrow range of possibilities or maybe they allow other possibilities.

This research project used three surveys of self-assessment to make a diagnostic about the ninth graders' strengths and weaknesses of communication strategies in spoken English, their participation in groups (cooperative learning activities) and their favorite activities for learning English. They were applied to a group of 33 ninth grade students, 19 boys and 14 girls, who range among fourteen and sixteen years old. Three students missed class that day. The surveys were answered on February 26th, 2019 in real time of the English class.

The surveys conducted for this project took the form of self-assessment in order to respond to the needs-analysis. Students were asked to assess themselves about their oral

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language skills, group work strategies and favorite activities to work in English class to detect their strengths and weak areas.

The formats used for the first two surveys applied were two self-assessment questionnaires, one for communication strategies in oral English and the second one was for measuring interaction and participation in groups (cooperative learning). The third self-assessment survey was a check list to inquire about favorite activities to learn English. The three of them were aimed to provide the input for the needs analysis of this research in the aspects mentioned above, specifically to gather information about ninth graders' oral communication skills in English and to know how they interact in group work since this study researches the role of cooperative learning in promoting spoken English in ninth graders. Likewise, the third survey provided useful information for the action plan activities.

The first survey was a structured self-assessment questionnaire made of seven closed-ended items with three choice of answers, in a rating scale of frequency ranging from never, sometimes and often. Students had to underline their choice. It was answered by thirty-three ninth grade students who attended class on February 26th, 2019.

The second survey was also a structured self-assessment questionnaire but made of nine closed-ended items with three choice of answer in a rating scale of frequency ranging from rarely, sometimes and often and some space to write comments. Students had to tick their choice. It was answered by the same group of ninth graders on February 26th, 2019 too.

The third survey was a self-assessment checklist of favorite activities to learn English. It was made of 25 options of activities for students to tick the ones they liked the most and/ or they felt more identified with and it provided some space to write other possible activities that were

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not in the list. It was also answered the same thirty-three ninth grade students on the same date as the others.

The teacher's role in the process of answering the three surveys was as a facilitator of the activity providing words or expressions that the students did not know or understand to clarify the meaning of the questions.

Results of needs analysis. The results obtained in the surveys were analyzed, described and included in this part of the method section and not in the chapter of results because they are a very important input for the design of the action plan of this research. Nevertheless, this study will also describe the general final results of the whole research project in the corresponding chapter to wrap-up all the findings obtained.

The items for the survey about communication strategies in oral English and strategies of participation in groups were classified into two categories: The first one considers individual strategies used by students while the second one measures their cooperative learning strategies used. These two criteria facilitated the analysis of results for the action plan to be implemented.

Self-assessment questionnaire on oral communication strategies. The first data collected was through the survey which was a structured self-assessment questionnaire of oral communication strategies in English. From a group of 33 ninth graders surveyed, this is the quantitative descriptive analysis:

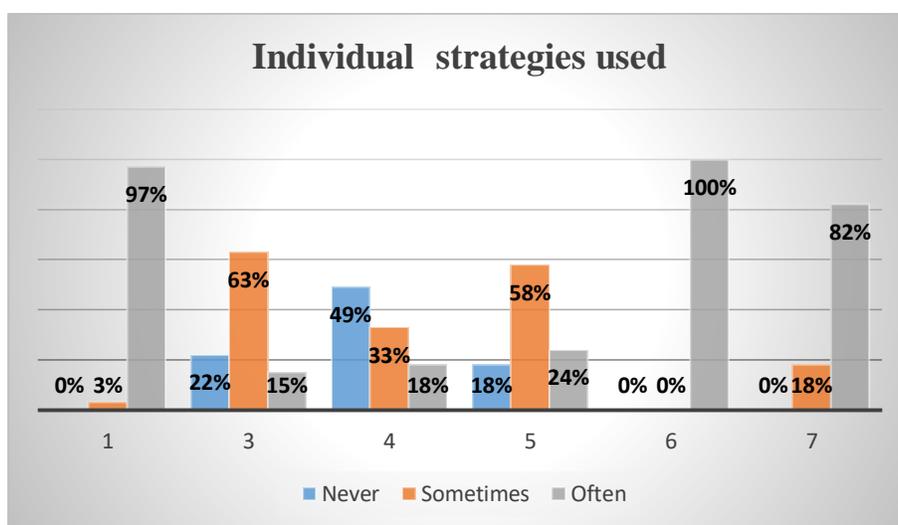
The opening statement for the survey was “*When I have problems talking in English I...*”. The seven statements given as strategies and their three choice answers in a rating scale of frequency from *never*, *sometimes* and *often* were grouped considering the individual strategies used and cooperative strategies used when asking others for support to communicate orally in

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English. These strategies were divided into these two categories to compare CL situations with individualistic learning situations as there is considerable evidence on literature research studies that CL promotes higher achievement in learners as all the group members work together to achieve the same learning goals mutually, while in individual learning each one works for his or her own learning outcomes lonely regardless the other classmates' goal attainment (Alipour, 2016; Ghaith, 2002; Johnson & Johnson, 1984, 1999; Johnson et al., 1985, 1990, 1994, 2007; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Wang, 2009).

I considered six of the statements first, grouped according to the individual strategies:
 Statement 1: Use my native language; Statement 3: Use gestures or facial expressions (body language); Statement 4: Avoid communication totally or partially; Statement 5: Use a synonym, a description or an idea to express the word I do not know; Statement 6: Make up (invent) a new word; Statement 7: Simplify what I want to say.

The following graph illustrates how the students responded:



Graph 1. Survey: Self-assessment of communication Strategies – oral language

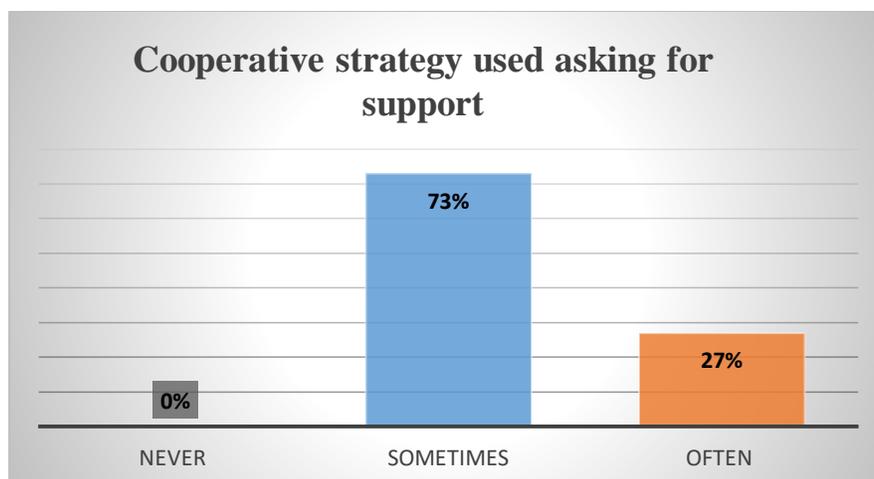
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The statistic results for the individual strategies were:

- Strategy one: 97 per cent of the students (thirty-two) often use their first language while 3 per cent (one person) sometimes do it.
- Strategy three: 63 per cent of the students (twenty-one) *sometimes* use gestures or facial expressions and 15 percent (five) *often* do it, while 22 percent (seven) *never* do it.
- Strategy four: 49 per cent of students (sixteen) *never* avoid communication totally or partially. However, 33 per cent of them (eleven) *sometimes* does it and 18 percent *often* (six) do it either.
- Strategy five: 58 percent of the students (nineteen) *sometimes* use a synonym, a description or an idea to express the word they do not know. 24 per cent of them (eight) *often* do it and 18 per cent (six) *never* do it.
- Strategy six: 100 per cent of the students *often* make up (invent) a new word.
- Strategy seven: 82 per cent of the students (twenty-seven) *often* simplify what they want to say, while 18 percent of them (six) *sometimes* do it.

The statement 2: Ask for help (partners/teacher) was let alone as a cooperative strategy used in interaction with others. This graph shows students' responses:

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Graph 1.1. Survey Self-assessment of Communication Strategies – Oral language

The statistic results of the strategy of interaction with others (cooperative) were:

- Strategy two: 73 per cent of the students (twenty-four) *sometimes* ask for help to a partner or teacher while 27 per cent of them (nine) *often* do it.

There is an absence of the item **never** in the statement number one related to the use of the native language; the statement two related to ask for help (partner/teacher); the statement six related to make up (invent) new words and the statement seven related to simplify what the person wants to say. In addition, there is absence of item *sometimes* in statement number six (make up new words).

Based on the data provided by this survey of communication strategies in oral English, these are the most important findings observed:

Ninth graders seemed to be more intrapersonal than interpersonal in the use of strategies to communicate more effectively in oral English. Thus, the highest scores of strategies they use showed that they support on using their native language (97% often), making up new words

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(100% often) and simplifying what they want to say (82% often). These strategies are good to some degree but, they show that ninth graders need to strength their oral communication skills to produce more spoken English and improve their level of proficiency in the language.

The second highest score was for the strategy that has to do with asking for help (partners/teacher) to communicate (73% sometimes). This strategy is positive related to cooperative language learning strategies which will help them strengthen their interpersonal skills to interact more with others in group by developing positive interdependence and social skills, cognitive outcomes, among other advantages (Alipour, 2016; Alrayah, 2018; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Yassin et al., 2018; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018). Moreover, cooperative learning enhances language development thanks to the student-student-interaction by speaking using the target language (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Ghaith, 2002; Khan & Akhtar, 2017). CL provides more opportunities for communication (Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010).

In the third place, it was positioned the use of gestures or facial expressions (63% sometimes), and in the fourth place, the use of synonyms, ideas or descriptions of the unknown vocabulary to express themselves (58% sometimes). Both strategies are positive because they show that students seem to be minimally recursive in their attempts to use English orally.

Finally, although oral English is a skill that usually generates foreign language anxiety in learners (Horwitz et al., 1986; Horwitz, 2001; Gosiewska-Turek, 2018; Oya et al., 2004), the statement number four “avoid communication totally or partially” indicated that 49 per cent of students *never* avoid communication totally or partially, 33 per cent of them *sometimes* do it and 18 percent often do it. These results were interesting and fit one of the major research subjects

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for this study, oral English production. Ninth grade students are not reluctant to communicate, so cooperative learning will help them strength their intrapersonal and interpersonal strategies by promoting more interaction in groups and teams in the classroom activities. Consequently, this interaction will help them increase the use and practice of more spoken English.

Self-assessment questionnaire on participation in groups. The second data collected was a survey by means of a structured self-assessment questionnaire of participation in groups (cooperative learning). This is the quantitative descriptive analysis:

The opening question for the survey was “***How often do you do the following things in your group?***”. There were nine statements given as strategies and their three choice answers in a rating scale of frequency from *rarely*, *sometimes* and *often* were also grouped considering the strategies to work cooperatively when using individual strategies and cooperative strategies when interacting with others as in the survey No. 1.

Initially, the four statements grouped according to individual strategies were: Statement 4: I give information; Statement 5: I give an opinion; Statement 8: I participate actively; Statement 9: I lead the activity to do.

The following graph shows how the students responded.

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Graph 2. Survey Self-assessment of participation in groups

The statistic results for the individual strategies were:

- Statement four: 58 per cent of the students (nineteen) *sometimes* give information. 24 per cent (eight) *rarely* do it and the 18 per cent (six) *often* do it.
- Statement five: 55 per cent of the students (eighteen) *often* give an opinion. 33 percent (eleven) *sometimes* do it and the 9 percent (four) *rarely* do it.
- Statement eight: 58 per cent of the students (nineteen) *often* participate actively. 36 percent (twelve) *sometimes* do it while six per cent (two) *rarely* do it.
- Statement nine: 45 per cent of the students (fifteen) *often* lead the activity to do. 33 per cent (eleven) *sometimes* do it while 22 per cent (seven) *rarely* do it.

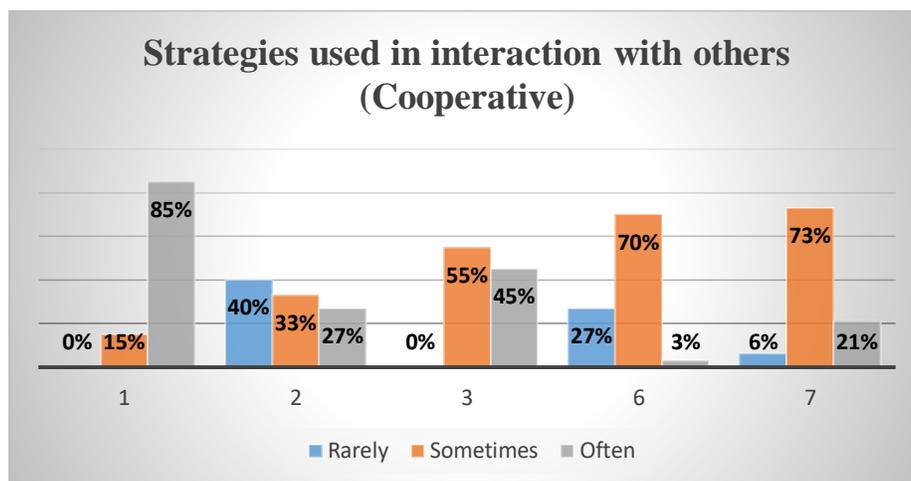
There is an absence of the item **rarely** in statements number one related to listening to others in their group and the statement number three related to asking for information.

There were five statements grouped according to the use of strategies in interaction with others (cooperative), which were: Statement 1: I listen to others in my group; Statement 2: I

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summarize what other say; Statement 3: I ask for information; Statement 6: I agree or disagree; Statement 7: I ask for clarification.

The following graph presents the students' answers.



Graph 2.1 Self-assessment of participation in groups

The statistic results for the strategies of interaction with others (cooperative) were:

- Statement one: 85 per cent of the students (twenty-eight) **often** listen to others in their group while 15 per cent (five) **sometimes** do it.
- Statement two: 40 per cent of the students (thirteen) **rarely** summarize what other say. 33 per cent of them (eleven) **sometimes** do it. 27 per cent (nine) **often** do it.
- Statement three: 55 per cent of the students (eighteen) **sometimes** ask for information while 45 percent (fifteen) **often** do it.
- Statement six: 70 per cent of the students (twenty-three) **sometimes** agree or disagree. 27 per cent (nine) **rarely** do it. 3 per cent of them (one person) **often** do it.
- Statement 7: 73 percent of the students (twenty-four) **sometimes** ask for clarification. 21 per cent (seven) **often** do it while six per cent (two) **rarely** do it.

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Based on the data provided by this survey of participation in group strategies, these were the most important findings observed:

The items related to strategies of giving information and participating actively registered homogeneous results with 58% in the answer choice sometimes and often respectively. They were followed by the strategy of giving an opinion (55% often) and leading the activity to do (45% often). These findings indicated that 9th grade students have to strengthen the teamwork feature related to individual accountability (Alrayah, 2018; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Johnson et al., 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Yassin et al., 2018), which promotes both the role of individual and collective performance to achieve the proposed goal. They will have to work more on their own active role when working in groups by giving information, giving opinions, participating actively and leading more the activities to do to achieve the desired goal or goals.

Ninth grade students were more dominant in the strategies that have to do with the interaction with others (cooperative) according the highest statistical scores registered in these statements. This is a favorable factor for the proposal of this research study that promotes cooperative language learning. Therefore, the characterization of groupwork reflected the greatest strength in terms of active listening (statement 1, 85% often), negotiation skills such as agree and disagree (statement 6, 70% sometimes) and clarification when the message is misunderstood (statement 7, 73% sometimes). Asking for information strategy followed with a 55% use (statement 3, sometimes) and summarizing what other say (statement 2) was the least interpersonal strategy in use with 40% in the answer choice “rarely” which means that ninth grades do not use it so much.

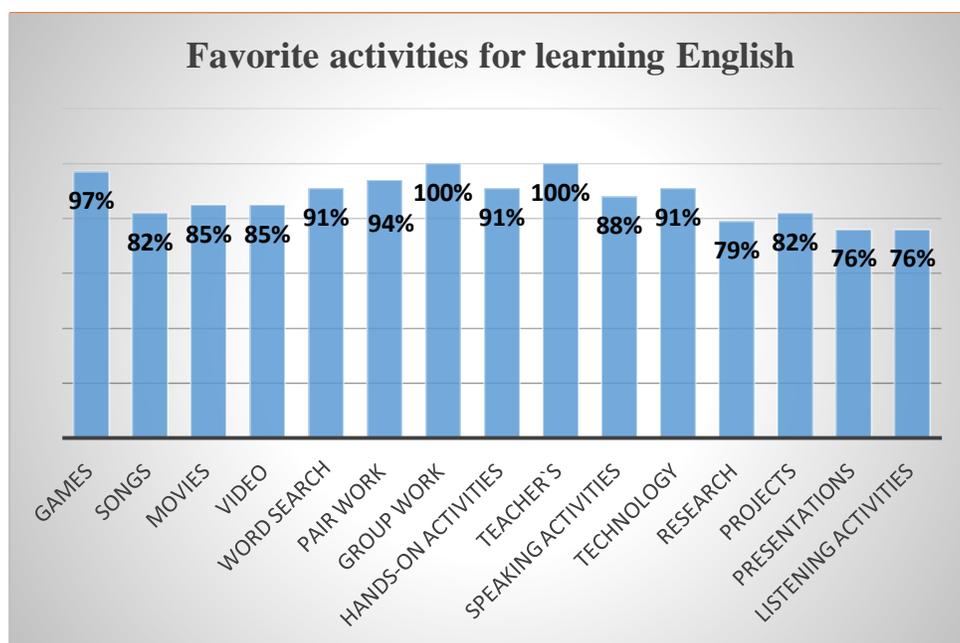
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When analyzing the results of the survey one and two in a comparative way, it can be observed that these could be seen as complementary. The strength of survey one was in intrapersonal strategies, but these were very weak for greater production of spoken English. For its part, survey two reflected that the strength was on the interpersonal strategies promoting social skills development. This is a very positive factor for group and / or team work. Nevertheless, ninth grade students will need to strengthen their individual contributions as well.

The general results of surveys one and two show the strengths and weaknesses that characterize the ninth grade course chosen for this research. It is clear to state that cooperative learning will surely be of great nutrition to improve the ninth grade students' oral performance in English and strengthen their personal and social skills to interact with others in the search for collective goals.

Self-assessment survey on favorite activities. The third data collected was the survey of a self-assessment checklist of favorite activities to learn English. The twenty-five options of this survey were: Games, songs, movies, video, puzzles, word search, projects, pair work, group work, translation, workshops, role-plays, technology, quizzes, tests, homework, presentations, research, teacher's explanation, speaking activities, grammar, writing activities, hands-on activities, reading activities and listening activities.

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Graph 3 Self-assessment of favorite activities for learning English

From the options above, these were the fifteen activities with the highest statistical scores which for their homogeneity were considered as the ninth grade students' favorite:

- Group work: 100 per cent of the students (33 students).
- Teacher's explanations: 100 percent of the students (33 students).
- Games: 97 per cent (32 students).
- Pair work: 94 per cent (31 students).
- Hands-on activities, word search and technology: 91 per cent (30 students).
- Speaking activities: 88 per cent (29 students).
- Movies and videos : 85 per cent (28 students).
- Projects and songs: 82 per cent (28 students).
- Research: 79 per cent (26 students).
- Presentations and listening activities: 76 per cent (26 students).

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Based on the data provided by this survey, these results will be especially considered as the input for the design of the lesson plans that will constitute the action plan for this study. It was a priority to take into account the students' opinion in the choice of favorite activities for learning English. Accordingly, the approach was personalized and student-centered favoring motivation, which is an important element for individual and collective work in any classroom.

The teacher's explanation and group work were the two activities that all the students liked. That means that students are willing to work on cooperative learning, but they need to be empowered to become more autonomous learners, assuming more responsibilities in their learning process as active learners in cooperative groups. The use of pair work, games, hands-on activities, word-search and technology is fundamental to be included into the action plan. These elements connect very well with cooperative learning strategies. The rest of the activities could be also a good complement to make an innovative action plan for the ninth grade students' improvement in their spoken English through cooperative learning strategies of work in class.

Qualitative research data

Seliger and Shohamy (1989) state that "Qualitative research is a research method concerned with providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally, without the intervention of an experiment or an artificially contrived treatment" (p.116). This method presents data in the way it happens and the role of the researcher is not to affect the normal behavior of the subjects. It has been increasingly used in second language acquisition research, especially because the data collected is not controlled or artificially produced as in experimental settings but helps understand those phenomena in second language behavior from the participants in the classroom interaction.

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For the qualitative research, I analyzed, compared and triangulated the research methods used. As mentioned, the instruments were a teacher's diary, classroom observation, classroom documents, video tapes and photographs. This section provides a description of each one.

Diary. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) describe diaries as a research method to gather data in studies about students or researchers' experiences in SL instruction. According to Jordan (1997) diaries are a research method that can be written in a variable period of time depending on the researcher's purpose for the study. They allow introspection and reflection methods of collecting data and provide information about difficulties and attitudes in the process observed.

I used a teacher's diary in this study to record my self-reflection, class observation and class anecdotal records about the most important events (strengths and weaknesses) registered in class in every cooperative learning activity developed as part of the action plan to promote spoken English production in the ninth graders. At the end of each class I registered the date and the description of the most important events related to the students' process to produce spoken English. Moreover, comments about the effectiveness of the activities developed and the progress in the students' skills in oral communication or those aspects that needed more practice and/or to be improved.

The diary was written after the class activities developed on Tuesdays and Fridays according to the ninth grade week schedule. It was in the form of a descriptive journal which included the date, the activity description with the comments of the events observed. It started on March 26th, 2019, and ended on September 6th. 2019 with the speaking activity about singing the song "Tell Me All about It". It was a listening and speaking activity that helped us recap the project developed about the family.

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The time for each entry was as soon as possible after each lesson/event happened. It also was used to note the class observation to capture the development of the action plan implemented, strengths and weaknesses of the group in reaction to the activities planned and developed and the progress observed. In short, the diary was very useful as it captured important events, reflections, ideas, thoughts, insights for this study that complemented the activities designed as lesson plans for the action plan of this research project. The summary of the diary was included in the appendix section of this research study.

Open observations. Observation can be done in a classroom related to observable learning situations (Jordan, 1997). When this observation is developed without determining in advance particular aspects to be observed, it is defined as open observation. It has a lower degree of explicitness and it is more general. It can be developed by a participant observer who participates in the observed situation but in a discrete way, so the other participants do not realize it, or it can be made by a non-participant observer who records in detail the main observable learning situations or behaviors which take place in the classroom. Observation is very common in qualitative research. The researcher's role can be as an insider or outsider of the learning situation (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989).

Open observation was a primary research method in this research project. It was focused on the different learning situations concerned with the role of cooperative learning in promoting spoken production in English with 9th grade students. My role was as a participant observer of every situation and behavior during the activities used as part of the action plan for this research. The observation comments were recorded in the diary used as part of the qualitative data collection. The main aspects observed in every learning situation were related to the students' behaviors in every speaking activity such as attitudes, interests, feelings, emotions, opinions and

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perceptions towards English learning and particularly to oral activities; mutual respect, commitment, responsibility, motivation, participation, cooperation, coexistence and effort to improve their oral production by means of the cooperative work. Moreover, the knowledge, preparation and use of English for their oral performances were also key part for the main observable learning situations and behaviors in this research.

Classroom documents. Samples of students' work, projects, performances, syllabus guidelines, textbooks, lessons plans, class materials and others may be very useful for collecting data (Burns, 2010, Ferrance, 2000). This project took into account the written part about the project "My Family" where students designed and made their own family collage with the photos and names of their family members and they also made their family trees. For the family trees they made the description of their family on their father's side, their mother's side or both, considering who were the closest to them in that way, the most meaningful. They wrote sentences using the possessive 's to express those family relationships. Firstly, most of the students made a draft of their work and submitted to the teacher's revision, then they made the correction and the final version of their work. Secondly, they prepared the oral presentation of this project to their classmates. Most of the students used the vocabulary and the grammar in context thanks to the previous written activities developed in class such as a grammar and a reading and vocabulary activity. The written part of this project helped them to have more confidence when they talked about their family. The hands-on activity immersed in this project was very motivating for the students as it is one of their favorite activities for learning English according to the third survey done. Moreover, the family collage and the family tree helped them a lot as a visual aid and support for the oral presentation of their families.

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For the final project of the second term, “Colombia is Passion”, students worked in groups to talk about Colombian natural regions. They had to research and make posters about different aspects of the region assigned randomly. Then, they submitted the draft of their research and based on that, they made their posters. Finally, they prepared the oral presentation of their work. Once again, the poster helped them perform better in their oral production.

Videotapes. Videos are part of the sources of data for a research to decide the actions to be taken (Ferrance, 2000; Gutiérrez, 2005, Waters-Adams, 2006). First, some short videos were recorded to explore the students’ beliefs, feelings and perceptions about their English learning, cooperative learning previous knowledge and initial performance in some oral pre-communicative activities. Second, I recorded some videos about the students’ performance in the activities developed to promote spoken English during the action plan development. These data were very important for the needs analysis and the action plan implemented. Some samples of the transcriptions about the ninth grade students’ oral production were included in the appendix section.

Photographs. Photos are also part of the sources of data collection used in a research (Burns, 2010; Ferrance, 2000; Waters-Adams, 2006). This study used photographs to complement the evidence of the students’ performance in the oral activities done during the cooperative work activities of the action plan. These photos also evidenced the members in each team, the team organization in the classroom and the visual aids they made to support the oral presentations. Some pictures were included in the appendix section of this research.

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Analysis of qualitative data collection

The qualitative data collection methods were triangulated in order to provide more input for the final results and conclusions of this study. Firstly, I analyzed the most relevant information described in the diary through a summary of it where I established the following categories: The class activity – the cooperative activity used – the oral technique implemented – the oral production observed and the affective factors observed (see appendix L). The open observation was integrated into the diary entries. Both instruments provided information of the ninth grade students' performance in the speaking activities developed and the cooperative work techniques used. Secondly, the videos recorded evidenced the students' spoken production in the cooperative activities developed. The improvements observed were progressive as the cooperative activities and the speaking practice were more demanding step by step and students got more self-confidence to use the language, getting more engaged in the tasks proposed and interacting with more positive interdependence with their partners to achieve the goals proposed for each speaking task. Thirdly, the classroom documents elaborated were a good support for the students' spoken production and they were evidenced in videos and photographs taken. The photographs and videos were also instruments to evidence the groups of work organized. Altogether, the triangulation of the qualitative and qualitative data collection methods helped me report the final results, implications, draw the conclusions and limitations of this research project.

Action research

The information provided by the data collection instruments and the current literature review about the subject of study help in the design of an action plan. Changes are implemented and their results are studied according to the research problem (Ferrance, 2000). Thus, the

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information provided by the surveys and the literature review about cooperative learning method and the speaking skill were the starting point to design the action research based on the design of lesson plans about cooperative learning and speaking techniques to promote the ninth grade students' spoken production. The diary, the open observation, the videos, the classroom documents and the photographs were carried out during the development of these lessons plans to collect qualitative data about the students' spoken production during the cooperative work done in every class.

This section provides the description of the activities for the action plan which included the main cooperative principles, strategies and techniques and the speaking activities used with the ninth graders to promote spoken English.

Lesson plan 1. This lesson plan was developed on March 26th, 2019. The topic was "Dates and birthdays" and it implemented the use of interactive activities. The aim of this lesson plan was to introduce and prepare students for cooperative language learning activities to promote spoken English.

First, a role-play through practice-pairs conversation strategy was implemented because students were familiarized with it in previous experiences and this advantage made them feel more comfortable with the oral production task. Role-play is a speaking technique (Richards & Rogers, 2001) but it is also considered a cooperative learning strategy to foster peer interaction for the development of communicative language. "Role-Play gets participants actively involved communicative tasks" (Alrayah, 2018, p.26).

This first activity was pre-communicative (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rogers, 2001) as it was controlled using the dialogue from a book as a pattern without any changes. Students

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listened, modelled and practiced it focused on pronunciation. Their interaction in pairs was a cooperative strategy (Alrayah, 2018; Richards & Rogers, 2001).

Second, the use of technology through interactive activities (vocabulary, grammar in context, games, music) from a CD-ROM became a learning task to stimulate positively affective factors that may influence students' speaking production such as motivation, attitude and reducing foreign language anxiety to participate in English class. In short, these learning activities and strategies used responded to the ninth graders' interests as they were part of their favorite activities to learn English from the survey 3 of the needs analysis. More detailed information on all of the lesson plans can be found in the appendices.

Lesson plan 2. This lesson plan was developed on March 29th, 2019. The topic was "Birthdays". The aim of this lesson plan was to foster cooperative learning strategies through practice pairs to promote spoken English.

Using the students' previous knowledge, students developed more self-confidence to be engaged in the oral activity proposed for this class. Students interacted again with the same dialogue pattern from last class, but this time the activity was semi-controlled (Littlewood, 1981, Richards & Rogers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015) as students used their own information about their birthdays. The game "Hot-Potato" with music was also used as a facilitator of the communicative activity since it was familiar to the students. Pair work practice and the game used responded to the students' favorite activities to learn English from the survey 3 of the needs analysis, and helped them again to develop more self-confidence to perform in the speaking activities.

Lesson plan 3. This lesson plan was developed on April 5th and April 9th, 2019. The topic was "Family" and the subtopic was "Family relationships (family tree)". This lesson plan

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aimed to prepare the scenario for a more formal cooperative learning method such as cooperative projects and served as an introduction from controlled to freer communicative practice (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015).

Students participated actively in an speaking activity asking for and answering for their personal meaning of the word “Family” through the question “What does family mean to you?” which was the initial activity of the project about the family. This speaking activity was developed as speaking activities were in the list of the ninth graders favorite activities for learning English from the survey 3 of the needs analysis. They accepted the challenge of communicating a short opinion in English without the teacher’s intervention and making themselves understood by others producing words, phrases and short sentences. The variation of responses referring to their personal opinions about family concept and the whole group interaction among participants, speakers and listeners, were a good step in cooperating to structure the group learning of a new topic and getting students more engaged in freer oral communicative tasks.

Lesson plan 4. This lesson plan was developed on May 14th and May 17th, 2019. The topic was “Family project” (oral presentations) and the subtopic was “family relationships” (family tree).

Similar to the previous lesson, this lesson plan aimed to engage more students in the development of the cooperative project about the family topic and more communicative tasks. This lesson was to do oral presentations about each student’s family collage and family tree, which were elaborated at home. Previously to the class teacher explained to students the characteristics of the visual and written work and how to do their oral presentations more effectively. Students had to do the draft of their work and present it to teacher for approval and

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received written and oral feedback. Then, they made the corrections and elaborated the final version of their projects, including a portfolio to start collecting their pieces or work. For the written part of the project, students used grammar in context writing sentences with possessive 's and possessive adjectives to describe their family relationships. Each student made the oral presentation in front of his or her peers and by the end of it, he or she gave again his or her personal concept about the meaning of the word family.

Oral presentation is a technique that helps EFL learners improve their speaking skills. Sharing ideas, mutual active listening, enhancing communication, interest, participation, motivation towards English learning and promoting more real English use are some of the multiple benefits of oral presentations to help learners develop their language skills (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; King, 2002). Oral presentations in English class promote oral proficiency development in learners.

According to Farabi et al., (2017), oral presentations can be guided or free. In guided oral presentations students are oriented by their teacher about the topic to present and the techniques about how to do the presentations. These are suitable for lower-intermediate to intermediate students in the language level. In free oral presentations, students choose their topic, but they also need to be guided about how to present in a suitable way. Both kinds of oral presentations help learners improve their speaking skills if they are set up properly

According to Brooks and Wilson (2014), Farabi et al. (2017) and King (2002), oral presentations that are guided and organized correctly provide a beneficial, meaningful and productive experience for learners to use the language; they also promote cooperative work and autonomy. However, these scholars also assert that they may be highly stressful and intimidating for students if they are not well prepared and guided. Thus, it is very important to

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establish clear guidelines for oral presentations to help learners achieve their oral production goals in a comfortable and low-threat leaning environment.

This lesson plan was designed for students to do guided oral presentations to promote spoken English production. The activity was also cooperative as students helped each other through practice pairs strategy before going to the front of the class and supported each other holding their visual aids. Speaking activities such as oral presentations and the development of projects and hands-on activities were included in this lesson plan because they were chosen by ninth graders in the list of their favorite activities for learning English of the see survey 3, in the data gathering for the needs analysis of this research project.

Lesson plan 5. This lesson plan was developed on June 11th, 2019. The topic was “Family project” (oral presentations) and the subtopic was “family relationships” (family tree). This last lesson of the family project aimed to wrap up all the previous activities developed to review, strengthen and integrate in one lesson cooperative learning and strategies to promote speaking skill development in ninth graders.

This class was recorded as an evidence for this master and for the Diagnostic-formative evaluation 2019 for Colombian public school teachers. The activities designed were cooperative by having students working in teams and included the development of several tasks to foster spoken English production. The basic elements of cooperative learning, positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and group processing (Alipour, 2016; Alayah, 2018; Altamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Johnson & Johnson, 1984, 1999; Johnson et al., 1994, 2007; Kagan & McGroarty, 1993; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yavuz & Arslan., 2018). were discussed previously to this class to raise students’ awareness about what cooperative work means and make it more effective and

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productive for each team. The teacher organized four teams of work -Teacher-selected groups (Johnson et al., 1994) - randomly and assigned them a representative color and mascot. Thus, team one was blue, team two red, team three was green and team four was orange. Their mascots were little frogs with their same color. Their performance was registered on a scoring game called “Climbing the Tower” (Phillips, 1993).

“Climbing the Tower” was the scoring game used to motivate teams’ participation in every task. It consisted of a picture of a tower with a ladder. Frogs were set on one side of the ladder. The team to perform better in the first task moved its frog to the first rung of the ladder. Teams participated actively in each task and moved their frogs according to their performance. The first team frog to arrive to the top was the winner.

This project included games, speaking activities, listening activities, team work, teacher’s explanation, projects, video and technology as they were in the list of the ninth graders’ favorite activities to learn English (see survey 3, data analysis). Cooperation was a great tool to motivate students to participate and engage them in the speaking activities developing more self-confidence to produce spoken English.

Lesson plan 6. This lesson plan was developed on June 21st, June 25th, June 28th and July 3rd, 2019. The topic was “Project Colombia is passion” and the subtopics were the Colombian natural regions: Caribbean – Pacific – Andean - Orinoquia and Amazon. The aim of this lesson plan was to work on formal cooperative language learning activities to promote spoken English.

The new project “Colombia is Passion” took ninth graders to a higher level of cooperation through the strategy of group investigation (Johnson et al., 1994; Slavin, 1995). Groups were teacher-selected. Colombia was the general topic of the project. The subtopics,

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Colombian natural regions, were assigned randomly to each group. Teacher gave groups the outline of the research project for each region as a guide of their research work and oral presentations. As it was mentioned, guided oral presentations have to be structured, organized and guided by the teacher to be more effective and less intimidating for students (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; King, 2002). CL helped group members develop more autonomy by planning and organizing their research work, dividing the subtopics among themselves enhancing face-to-face promotive interaction (Zhang, 2010). Each group member researched individually at home and brought his or her piece of work next class promoting positive interdependence (Johnson et. al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 2007), individual accountability and group accountability (Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Johnson et.al, 1994). Teacher checked groups' information individually and cooperative and gave oral and written feedback for the elaboration of visual aids such as posters and guidelines for their oral presentations.

This research work was totally cooperative, more demanding and enhanced more learners' autonomy. Cooperative work commitment through group investigation, active participation, motivation, attitude, interest, effort and the speaking production performance in English in the oral presentations were assessed. Once again this assignment promoted projects and oral presentations because they were the list of the ninth graders' favorite activities for learning English of the needs analysis.

Lesson plan 7. This lesson plan was developed on august 9th, 2019. The topic was "Making predictions". This lesson plan was designed for ninth graders to work cooperatively making oral predictions about the pictures on the slides of a Power Point presentation with zoom effect.

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Students were teacher-selected keeping the same team members from the project “Colombia is Passion”. This freer oral practice served as instrument to make students produce spoken English in a more spontaneous way. In this way, this communicative activity engaged learners in cooperative work to make oral guesses and learn from their errors; take advantage of their previous knowledge of vocabulary, appropriate the new words and use a variety of social skills (Dornyei, 1997; McGroarthy, 1989; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Panitz, 1999; Zhang, 2010) such as negotiation, agreement and active listening to achieve the goals desired. Key words were provided for facilitating the predictions. The activity was attractive, motivating and engaging for students who were challenged to risk themselves using new words to make predictions (communicative activity).

This activity was selected because it made use of technology through a Power-Point presentation with slides that kept students really engaged in what was coming next, surprising them with an unexpected turn in the situation posed by each slide. Technology was also one of the ninth graders’ favorite activities for learning English according to the survey 3 for the needs analysis. This visual material motivated them to speak in English.

Lesson plan 8. This lesson plan was developed on August 20th, August 27th, August 30th, September 3rd, September 6th and September 20th, 2019. The topic was “interactive activities”. The aim for the last lesson plan of this research study was to work cooperatively using the informal method “Numbered Heads Together” (Alrayah, 2018; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995) to maximize ninth graders’ participation in their team work.

Students in each team were numbered. Teacher asked a question from the interactive activities selected for this lesson plan. Students got together to discuss their answers and made sure all team members could answer. Then, when teacher called a number, all the team members

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were ready to give the answer. That strategy made more visible all team members' participation, interest and engagement in each activity generating more individual and group accountability and positive interdependence (Alrayah, 2018; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Yassin et al., 2018) for their cooperative work.

The use of technology through interactive activities (Role-play, filling in the gaps, matching, sentence scrambling, guessing and spelling, crossword, multiple choice, concentration, quiz show, singing) was again a very positive success to encourage group work, increase the students' motivation, interest, positive attitude of working in class and risk participating when participating orally in English.

In this chapter I discussed the quantitative and qualitative research methods used as instruments for the data collection to make the action plan with the purpose of promoting spoken English in the group of ninth-grade students through the cooperative learning method. Next chapter, I will report the final results found of the whole research process, discussions and give the conclusions, implications and limitations of this study.

Chapter IV

Results and Discussion

Results

The information provided by the data collection instruments implemented and the action plan developed with the ninth grade group intervened provided the following results by the end of this study.

Most importantly, considering that the general objective for this research project was to develop more spoken English production with a ninth grade group at Isaias Hernan Ibarra public school through the use of cooperative language learning method, this objective was achieved. Ninth graders were able to produce words, phrases, sentences and short oral texts in the speaking activities developed during the action plan, which were focused on CL learning.

Based on the class observations done, the group responded positively to CL dynamic of work used in class through informal and formal cooperative learning groups, working together to accomplish the shared goals. The students accepted this new method of work with openness to change without major difficulties, accepting each other in the groups assigned by the teacher. They showed a positive attitude towards cooperative learning work and there were not major conflicts presented in their interactions. They liked it since the first day it was implemented in English class as they expressed CL facilitated their learning thanks to their peers' support.

As the essence of cooperative work is the effective organization of the groups, the informal and formal cooperative learning groups organized by the teacher produced heterogeneous and balanced groups in terms of academic and behavior to have better

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possibilities of mutual achievement of the CL basic elements, techniques, and the desired learning outcomes in speaking production.

My teaching role as facilitator was essential to guide students to achieve the shared learning goals in each cooperative task assigned by setting clear objectives for each activity proposed, explaining the tasks and the cooperative learning principles required to work on real cooperation, monitoring students' learning and the task development, promoting group interaction and interpersonal skills, evaluating students' learning and helping group members assess their performance. This teacher's assistance was very important for the groups of work during this study to learn to be more cooperative. That was coherent with one of the items of the survey three applied where 100% of the students chose the teacher's explanation as one of their favorite activities to learn English. In fact, students in a normal class are usually dependent on their teacher's guidance. However, I decided to make some changes to promote more student-student interaction and more leadership thanks to the CL method. These were intentionally implemented as students needed to strengthen their leadership when working with others, according to the survey two. Thus, step by step, I enhanced more autonomous work in class to help group members assume different roles and more responsibility towards their work, make decisions and solve any conflict when it occurred, becoming more independent learners and strengthening the development of more social skills through cooperative learning interaction to be aligned to the Critical-social approach from the school.

Student participation and interaction in the groups gradually consolidated as the essential elements of cooperative learning strengthened. I observed a good balance between individual and group strategies when the members of each group interacted. There was a positive integration of the results of the survey one and two that measured the individual and group strategies used by

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the students when having difficulties in expressing themselves orally in English and seeking support from their classmates or teacher as well as their group work strategies used. In this way, I observed good active listening, information exchange, leadership development, not in all but in a representative number of students, and individual and group accountability strengthening. In this last aspect, some students had to be intervened because they did not initially take the individual and collective work with seriousness and responsibility to carry out joint tasks and contribute to the well-being of the group. Fortunately, that situation was manageable. There was never a need to change group members and I did not have to intervene due to serious conflicts presented. Group members were changed by the end of each cycle of tasks developed with every topic in order to enhance the whole group interaction and energize new groups.

The first two lesson plans based on speaking activities were developed in class in pairs and whole group work. They were pre-communicative and informal cooperative learning which served as the scenario for preparing students for the formal cooperative work of the next lessons and more communicative tasks which are essential to achieve the main objective for this research study. The activities were selected based on the results of the third survey of ninth grade students' favorite activities for learning English. Those elements enhanced most of students' participation, although a minority continued to be shy about participating and they did not do it in these initial speaking activities developed. Nevertheless, as these activities were pre-communicative and controlled, the majority of the students participated due to the fact that they were used to these kinds of activities in previous learning situations. Something to highlight was that the informal cooperative learning work done motivated three students to say something in English spontaneously, for the first time in class, about the work done. They said:

S1: "Activity is good!"

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S2: “Activity is interesting!”

S3: “Activity is fun!”

This first experience confirmed that cooperative learning favored the students’ desire to take risks and participate in oral production activities and say something in English spontaneously and without the teacher’s intervention. This first student initiatives were product of the informal CL method applied and they responded to the objectives of this study.

The third lesson plan about speaking activities was also developed to enhance students’ communication in English through the question *What does family mean to you?*. Initially, ten students wanted to give their answers spontaneously and voluntarily, step by step more students joined giving their short ideas, some were repeated and others were new ideas. They produced single words, phrases and short sentences. For instance:

Teacher and Ss: What does family mean to you?

S1: My name is.... *My family is beautiful*. Today is happy birthday my sister.

T: Oh! Today is your sister’s birthday! Ok, nice, nice, cool!

S2: Hello!

Teacher and Ss: Hello!

S2: My name is My family “for me” is *support and love*.

T: Support and love, ok!

More students were engaged in using spoken English to communicate in this activity, overcoming their fears of using the language. From a group of 36 students only six did not want to participate. Informal cooperative learning provided the scenario for that achievement and created a low-threat classroom environment where students felt more self-confident to participate in speaking activities (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Dornyei, 1997;

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Panitz, 1996; Prieto, 2007; Yassin et al., 2018; Zhang, 2010) lowering their anxiety to produce spoken English. Another aspect that also helped students was the teacher's instant feedback provided after this activity and the other speaking activities done (Jones, 2005). That strengthened their self-confidence and motivation to keep improving and challenged them to produce spoken English in the next speaking activities.

The fourth lesson plan about oral activities also used informal cooperative learning and enhanced spoken English production by doing short guided oral presentations about the family. Students worked in pairs to rehearse their oral presentations and performed them individually. The oral production observed was spontaneous and communicative. Students supported their oral presentations with the elaboration of their family collage and family tree. These hands-on activities corresponded to the ninth graders' favorite activities for learning English according to the survey three. These visual aids facilitated their oral production. From the group of 36 students, only two students were not responsible with their work and did not do their oral presentations. The oral production was words, phrases and short sentences with some Spanish word transference. Based on the survey one of strategies in oral English, it was observed that they did not invent words to express themselves, but summarized their ideas. They did not ask others for help or support to express their ideas. The students who had not participated in the previous oral activity giving the meaning of the word *family*, participated this time. For instance:

S1: Good morning!

Teacher and students: Good morning!

S1: This is "mi" father_____. This is "mi" mother_____. This is "mi" brother_____.
This is...

Teacher: This is me.

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S1: Yes, this is me!

Teacher and students: What does family mean to you?

S1: Family is love, union.

Next, the fifth lesson plan developed to wrap up the family project used formal cooperative learning groups and techniques. The whole class was developed cooperatively and I observed that most of the students interacted productively during the development of that class in their groups of work. Their oral production was words, phrases, short sentences. Considering the results of the survey one, they did not use Spanish or invented words to express their ideas, but simplified them to facilitate their expression. In addition, some of them asked the teacher for support using the expression “Teacher, how do you say... in English?” to accomplish their ideas. This compensation strategy and others were introduced by the teacher previously to facilitate oral communication. This was the first time that group members used them to achieve their written and oral tasks. For instance:

Teacher: (Talking to Team 1 Ss) You discuss what you consider is important... very good!

S1: Teacher, how do you say is “*bendición de Dios*” in English?

Teacher: ok, very nice you’re using English... *God’s blessing*, like this (writing on the board). Look, God’s, capital letter, God’s blessing, also the possessive’s. If you need some vocabulary tell me, *teacher, how do you say...?*, I can help you, Ok?

S2: How do you say, “*sagrada familia*” ?

Teacher: *Holy family*... (Writing on the board)

Furthermore, the characteristics of a more structured formal cooperative work were observed in this class and all of students worked positively evidencing positive interdependence. 80% (29 students) of the group members participated in this class saying something in English related to the topic. The rest of them worked cooperatively to achieve the tasks assigned, although they did not produce spoken English. In general terms, progress was again made in the

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scope of the general objective proposed for this study to develop more spoken production in ninth graders through cooperative learning.

The sixth lesson plan developed with the project *Colombia is Passion* made students work again in formal cooperative groups selected by the teacher. Projects were an activity selected from the survey three of ninth graders' favorite activities for learning English. Group members divided their research work about the Colombian natural region assigned randomly and prepared guided oral presentations. However, although the task and the goals expected were clearly explained, not all the groups were committed with the project and the oral performance during the presentation was not what was expected. This was also due to the fact that during the development of that project, the students were also busy preparing other activities for the school cultural week and maybe this distracted them from better preparing for the presentation of the English project. Therefore, only two groups, Caribbean and Pacific regions achieved the task acceptably, but the rest, Orinoquia, Amazon and Andean region oral presentations were not satisfactory and students' oral production needed to improve. Although they had previously been monitored by the teacher and had received recommendations to improve, they failed in their individual and group accountability for contributing to achieve the goals set for the task. There was lack of preparation and remarkable improvisation during their oral presentations which increased their anxiety for the oral production. Cooperative learning demands time and preparation for all the group members and that is why this method has received some criticism due to the time constraints (Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Ghahraman & Tamimy, 2017). Consequently, although these students tried to express their ideas, these were not so clear affecting the intelligibility.

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Finally, the project was carried out and all the groups presented their regions. From 36 students, 33 talked during the presentations. Despite the shortcomings evidenced, it was observed that cooperative learning work promoted spoken production in English and most of the students used the language to communicate going beyond their fears of using the language. In this way, the general objective of this research project was reached again. Students produced longer sentences and short texts with some Spanish interference. According to the survey one of strategies for oral English, they did not invent new words; they simplified their ideas and used body language; they did not ask for support from the teacher, but from their partners. The communication was not avoided and the interaction was through questions. For instance:

Teacher: Let's move to the Pacific region. We start with the location of the Pacific.

S1: eh, good morning.

Teacher and Ss: Good morning.

S1: "*La*" Pacific region is conformed "*por*" *el* Choco, *el* Valle del Cauca, Cauca y Nariño.

Teacher: Ok. What is the most important capital city in the region? Ciudad capital.

S1: We have Cali. "*En*" Choco, Quibdó, "*en*" Valle del Cauca, Cali, "*en*" Cauca, Popayán y Nariño, Pasto.

Teacher: Ok, thank you so much. What about the traditional food in the Pacific region?

S2: Traditional Colombian...

Teacher: No, _____, speak louder please, we cannot listen to you.

S2: The tradition, traditional Colombian Pacific region food are... Pusandado de bagre, pusandado de pescado, arroz piangua. Traditional drinks Pacific region are: viche curado, arrechon, and...

Teacher: What about the traditional music in the Pacific region? Music?

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S3: The traditional music, the traditional music is Currulao, Fuga and Abosao.

Groups were asked to prepare better and repeat their presentations in the audiovisual classroom. This time they made a banner (hands-on activity) to support their oral work. They did it well and their oral production was of sentences and short texts. I observed that there was more individual and group accountability in most of the group members' performance.

The seventh and eighth lesson plans were interactive through the use of technology again. These activities were also inspired in the ninth graders' favorite activities for learning English of the survey three. They were also developed through formal cooperative learning groups and I observed they increased students' motivation, interaction and cooperation to produce spoken English. The informal cooperative method *Numbered Heads Together* (Alrayah, 2018; Kagan, 1993; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Prieto, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Wang, 2009) increased group members' participation, individual and group accountability, as each member was more visible to represent his/her group. The lesson seventh, that included the use of a power point presentation called Zoom, made students work on oral predictions producing words, phrases and short sentences in English. The lesson plan eighth included the use of interactive activities from the same CD-ROM mentioned in the first two lesson plans reported, but for a different unit. These activities were to review the family topic with pair work interaction in role-plays, games, grammar in context, vocabulary practice, and music. Students produced words, phrases and sentences in their group interaction. The CD-ROM also had the song "Tell Me all About It" where students practiced listening comprehension and speaking skills and were able to sing a song in English class for the first time, without feeling overwhelmed about their pronunciation errors, but willing to risk themselves and produce oral English by singing. For instance:

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Ss: Tell me about your father.

Ss: He's a doctor and he's very tall.

Ss: And how about your mother?

Ss: She's a lawyer. That's her picture on the wall.

Ss: Tell me about your brother.

Ss: He's an actor and he's twenty-three.

Ss: And what about your sister?

Ss: She's an artist. Don't you think she looks like me?...

According to a video recorded, students interacted singing individually and in their groups, boys and girls and the whole group together. They had the opportunity to practice breathing and voice preparation strategies led by a professional singing teacher, who also spoke English, from the program of the Municipal Secretary of Education, *Mi Comunidad es Escuela*. That professional intervention helped with the development of more self-confidence in the ninth grade students and increased their motivation to sing in English. That was a successful and amazing work never experienced before in English class which was evidenced in the video.

To sum up, the general and specific objectives of this study were reached. Based on the diary, the open observations and the videos recorded, it was evidenced that cooperative learning helped ninth graders produce spoken English through words, phrases, sentences and short texts according to the task developed thanks to their interaction via cooperation and the development of the basic elements and techniques of this method. They stopped inventing words and used better the vocabulary for each topic, balanced the use of Spanish, kept simplifying their ideas and used compensation strategy through the expression "teacher, how do you say... in English?".

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CL created a low-threat environment in the classroom that helped students overcome their fears to use the language, lowering their anxiety to participate in the speaking activities and developing more self-confidence to do it. In addition, based on the students' comments, they expressed that their interaction and cooperation strengthened their interpersonal relationships and enhanced their level of affiliation. I also noticed it in our class interaction as their teacher and supporter. This factor also helped them reduce their levels of anxiety in oral activities.

The next section provides the discussion of the results obtained in this study according to the general and specific objectives proposed and the research question.

Discussion

Cooperative language learning did serve as a method of strategic work in class to promote the production of spoken English in the ninth grade group for this study. The students' oral productions were at the level of words, short phrases, short sentences and short texts in English on the themes proposed in every lesson plan. Some of these productions were spontaneously through opinions on the new learning experiences and others were product of planned guided oral presentations in English on topics assigned individually or in the formal cooperative learning groups. The ninth graders produced spoken English thanks to the cooperative learning work and the activities implemented to enhance this oral skill. Firstly, the students were not very convinced that they could express their ideas in English, but thanks to CL techniques and shared efforts, they managed to develop self-confidence, increased their motivation and challenged themselves to do so in front of their classmates and teacher.

The pre-communicative and controlled oral activities such as short conversations and drilling practice, performed initially by ninth graders in this research, were easier for them as they had already practiced these activities since sixth grade. However, the novelty of this study

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showed the possibility of carrying out much more communicative activities thanks to the CL benefits in the classroom.

Cooperative learning resulted in more commitment in a certain group of students who were normally passive and little engaged to the demands of the English class, promoting a pleasant and conducive class environment to achieve the proposed learning goals; generating better interpersonal relationships among students, strengthened the social skills of solidarity, tolerance, respect, better conflict-management, inclusion, respect for difference and coexistence. The impossible achievement for many of them with regard to spoken English became reality and they were able to go beyond their own learning limits. Not all produced oral English with the same level of ability, but all were exposed to experiment with spoken English thanks to the basic elements of CL and techniques to achieve the proposed common learning goals.

The findings of this research study revealed positive outcomes for my pedagogical teaching practice improvement and for my students' speaking skill development in English through cooperative language learning use in the classroom instruction. Based on these research findings and some other similar studies in the literature review about this method, there is valuable evidence that CL offers all the guarantees to favor the learning of a foreign language, particularly favoring the development of the oral ability through interaction and cooperation in the classroom, in the search of common learning goals and setting better learning environments, both academic and emotional, for language learning.

The impact of these results can be extended to the use of CL method not only for the development of speaking skill, but listening, reading and writing into an integrated skills class that strengthens ninth graders' language proficiency in English and it may be also applied to the rest of the student community of the Isaias Hernan Ibarra school branch in elementary and high

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school education, in the morning and afternoon classes. CL belongs to the Critical-Social teaching approach from Gabriela Mistral, so these positive results are a worthy evidence that it needs to be incorporated and practiced as an institutional teaching method with the right CL types, the basic elements of cooperation and the CL techniques that guarantee its effectiveness in the English class instruction in our school context. That opens a wider perspective about the implementation of this teaching method in all Gabriela Mistral school branches either.

CL becomes a promising method of teaching English as a foreign language with ninth grade class and other grades in my public school Isaias Hernán Ibarra, in the other branches of Gabriela Mistral Public School and in the other public schools from the district of Agua Blanca, in Cali, Colombia, in response to the learning necessities of this difficult and complex socio-cultural context for teaching English. It fits to diversity of teaching contexts; it is highly flexible, easily adaptable to the learners' needs and any educational environment where it may be used, especially because it does not require a particular language syllabus or curriculum design and the use of teaching resources is up to any lesson plan (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). These characteristics make CL more attractive for this teaching context as it demands practical and effective teaching methods for English instruction due to the lack of resources and the low academic outcomes in this subject, both in Gabriela Mistral School branches as in the rest of public schools from Agua Blanca according to the annual reports from the Municipal Secretary of Education.

Teaching English to teenagers from 13 to 17 years old is not an easy task, especially in the context of this research study. They are not often exposed to the use of this language in the real context and if they do through music, internet, movies, video games, etc., their purpose is not mainly focused on the self-improvement of their English language proficiency. For this

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reason, CL provided a friendlier scenario for promoting the development of the speaking skill, enhancing student motivation to use the language. This was challenging as speaking in English generated a lot of language anxiety initially and discomfort to perform oral activities. That feeling made them experience communication apprehension sometimes and affected their self-confidence, preferring not to risk themselves to speak in English and keep quiet instead. These research results evidenced that this group of ninth graders were not reluctant to the practice of speaking skill, but the teaching method used in class did not help them increase their motivation and self-confidence to speak. CL helped them low their level of anxiety and raise their self-confidence to use the language speaking in English to communicate ideas and not only drill words. Therefore, as this research and the action plan were developed, CL method provided new elements and techniques of work in English class, which based on interaction and mutual cooperation made speaking production possible and meaningful for this group of ninth grade learners.

The progress in the ninth grade students' oral production needs to be socialized with their English teacher in tenth grade to keep the cooperative work strategy as an instrument that facilitates and conducts their oral production improvement in English, so that the process can be continued next year with a greater scope, to enhance the development of more communicative competence in this foreign language.

Establishing and developing the five basic elements of cooperative learning of positive interdependence, individual and group accountability, face-to-face promotive interaction, social skills development and group processing (Alipour, 2016; Altamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Azizinezhad et al., 2013; Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Kagan & McGroarthy, 1993; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018) with the students was not simple. It

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took time for students to understand what a real cooperation means. Thus, moving from traditionally individual and competitive learning environment to a cooperative work method was not easy either. It demanded time, effort, teacher's dedication and learners' will to change. In Johnson et al. (1994)'s words, "they are a discipline that must be rigorously applied to produce the conditions for effective cooperative action" (p. 11). In short, regarding the results of this study, although these principles were highly promoted, they still require an on-going practice and strengthening to achieve their maximum profit.

The results of this study surpassed my achievements as an English teacher at Gabriela Mistral public school and at the Isaias Hernan Ibarra school branch in particular, in terms of the development of the oral ability of ninth grade students. Proof of this is the fact that last year only five ninth-grade students were able to perform oral presentations from a group of 35, since they were not exposed to the CL method and did not feel able to present their work orally, even though for not doing so, they would get a bad grade. They preferred not to do it. I did not fail them, but it made me reflect about how to do things differently. CL learning became an alternative to achieve that desired teaching goal and learning outcome. This year, most of my ninth grade students were able to produce spoken English through words, phrases, sentences and short oral texts in oral presentations and other tasks, without being pushed or intimidated with a bad grade. That achievement is positive for me as their English teacher and beneficial for their language proficiency development according to the local and national government policies for English learning.

Finally, the next section of this research project provides the final conclusions, implications and limitations of this research project in terms of the role of cooperative learning

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to promote spoken production in English in a ninth grade course from the Isaias Hernán Ibarra Public School.

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Chapter V

Conclusions and Implications

This research project aimed to develop more spoken English with a group of ninth grade students at Isaias Hernan Ibarra Public School, branch of Gabriela Mistral School, in Agua Blanca district in Cali, Colombia, through the use of Cooperative learning method. The basic elements of CL and techniques that were implemented to enhance the spoken English production of this group of students produced positive learning outcomes for their both academic and emotional growth as well as for the improvement of my teaching practice.

In the literature of research studies about CL, it is considered an outstanding teaching method that promotes better learning environments for ESL/EFL classrooms, via interaction and cooperation and particularly, it is considered highly beneficial for the development of speaking skill as this is a difficult ability for language learners to develop. The results of this research project endorse the effectiveness of CL mentioned in those studies as this teaching method helped the ninth graders reduce their anxiety to speak in English, increased their motivation and self-confidence to use oral language, promoted their spoken English production thanks to their interaction and cooperation in class, created a low-threat environment and also enhanced the development of social skills for better interpersonal relationships.

CL cannot be interpreted as the simple act of working in groups. It refers to the interaction among pairs or small group members working together and helping each other to achieve mutual learning goals. In this way, cooperative learning groups dynamic must be carefully settled and with clear objectives to obtain positive results. Teachers and learners must differentiate what makes a real cooperative learning group. If the basic elements that constitute

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the essence of cooperative work are not applied, this method ends up being ineffective for the benefit of language learners. If there is not an effective interaction, there is not a productive learning work. These principles were enhanced during this research process and although they require discipline to be incorporated efficiently in daily CL instruction, ninth graders developed most of them to a certain degree that helped them improve their spoken production in English.

CL has been recognized in literature for being effective in the field of education in general and particularly in ESL/EFL instruction, improving language skills. CL depends on interaction among learners which helps them improve their level of communication and speaking skills. In this research study, this method had a very positive impact on the academic and behavioral performance of ninth graders helping them to develop the self-confidence to experience using English orally and overcome their fears and own learning limits.

The fundamental principle of CL is the achievement of a common goal thanks to the mutual help and cooperation. If this main ingredient fails, cooperative learning does not work. CL helped ninth graders to work together and gradually learn to cooperate to achieve their learning goals in every task of the action plan developed for this research. Several students asserted that cooperative learning helped them take risks using oral English thanks to group support and they felt that the tasks were shared facilitating the reach of the proposed learning goals.

Every teacher has to implement the right CL methods and techniques according to his/her students' leaning necessities and teaching context. This research project focused on formal cooperative learning groups with formal and informal CL techniques during the lesson plans developed as part of the action research which worked successfully, especially the method of

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Numbered Heads Together that maximized group member participation, individual and group accountability in the tasks developed.

During the action research development, more responsibilities were assigned to ninth graders to make them become more autonomous learners and thanks to the possibility of sharing responsibilities among group members, they divided the work and made efforts to achieve the learning tasks proposed.

CL does promote social interaction skills. This type of teaching method enhances social inclusion with great effectiveness in heterogeneous classrooms with mixed-ability students, students with behavioral problems, diverse ethnicities, social status, age, gender, handicapped, etc. It fosters equal opportunities of participation and interaction creating a strong social support system. This year we had two new students coming from Venezuela, one student who was moved from Gabriela Mistral School and another from Elias Salazar School, branch of Gabriela Mistral School too. In addition, other seven new comers joined the group. Boys and girls, aged from 13 to 17 years old, all made a heterogeneous group, with different levels of language ability and without major problems of integration and behavior when working in the cooperative learning groups thanks to the opportunities of interaction.

Speaking was not an easy skill for ninth grade students to develop. This ability was not usually widely practiced in the classroom instruction and that made it even more difficult. The ninth graders' interaction, cooperative work and positive interdependence among them contributed to the achievement of the speaking activities planned. It diminished the psychological factors that inhibited their oral participation and production in speaking activities in English class such as foreign language anxiety, increased their motivation and self-confidence and enhanced better learning attitudes towards spoken English thanks to interaction and

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cooperation in the CL groups of work. Ninth graders were able to produce words, phrases, sentences and short oral texts in English. That was meaningful as they previously produced very little English. Especially, they were scared of making oral presentations. During this study they were able to do them and that experience changed their perceptions about oral activities. CL created friendlier and more supportive environments for the speaking activities. It promoted not only academic achievement in this ninth grade course' oral performance, but emotional gains.

The pedagogical implications of this research project are relevant for the Icesi University as in its data base of master's research projects there is only one study (Galeano, 2106) focused on this same subject of investigation. Likewise, this research project is important for the Isaias Hernan Ibarra Public School teaching context where this study was developed. CL learning is a fundamental component of our Critical-social approach. This instructional method fits with the necessities of our school community and especially with its socio-cultural particularities. This study opens doors of a better understanding of what cooperative learning is and what it is not, from a perspective based on the literature about research studies conducted in different contexts, learning needs and student population. The results obtained, mostly successful, confirm the effectiveness of CL. They particularly support the institutional pedagogical approach that looks for new educational practices with social inclusion that benefit not only minorities but all the student population. English learning is a desired outcome here, but students need to be better educated. Academic achievement is pursued, but also the construction of a better community and city project with critical students who develop social skills for a better coexistence as citizens of a complex socio-cultural environment that may change.

Elementary and high school teaching staff from Isaias Hernan Ibarra school branch and from Gabriela Mistral school need to be trained in the right use of the basic elements and

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techniques of CL. Therefore, the information from this research project might be used as input for training in this teaching method. Considering that the expertise in the CL method takes time and effort and cannot be rushed or forced to guarantee its effectiveness. Gabriela Mistral may take its time to become a cooperative school starting by Isaias Hernan Ibarra School branch. This research study and my self-improvement as English teacher thanks to this experience may lead the change with other colleagues in this school branch as the starting point for an institutional improvement plan. In addition, this study could inspire other public schools from the District of Agua Blanca in Cali to transform their pedagogical practices in English teaching as many of them are still very influenced by the traditional methods based on translation tasks. What's more, CL method may become a powerful tool to motivate students to learn English and understand the importance of this learning in the academic, job and social interactions with other people and cultures in a globalized world.

Chapter VI

Limitations and Final Remarks

Despite all the advantages offered by cooperative learning, this method also had some constraints during the development of this study. First of all, CL did demand me extra time and dedication to be able to implement the cooperative learning principles and techniques taken from the literature review carefully to success with the objectives of this research project with the nine grade students and not fall into a simple group work.

Second, there were limitations in time management since cooperative learning and speaking activities demanded and took extra time. I needed to ask other colleagues for some of their hours to finish some of activities planned in the action research.

Third, the strategic organization of groups in the English classroom and the audiovisual classroom was sometimes complicated because of the lack of space, so I had to be very creative as students had to be organized in their groups to promote face-to-face interaction and avoid showing a disorganized classroom.

Fourth, the intragroup processes were initially complicated as not all group members were committed with their group work. Thus, I observed that some students did not work so much but wanted to simulate as if they had done it, while another group partner or a few of them were committed and worked responsibly. This aspect definitely generated conflicts in the groups but fortunately in this study, these initial conflicts were manageable and could be overcome thanks to the students' will to improve. It changed gradually as students interacted more in their groups of work and with my assistance to promote individual and group accountability and check if all of them fulfill their part of the work. However, this aspect cannot be neglected or made

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invisible; the teacher must monitor the group work in every task or the cooperative work may fail and just to become simple group.

Fifth, there was some initial disparity with some of the students' cultural diversity and education background. That was because two students were from Venezuela, one student came from Gabriela Mistral school branch, one student came from Elias Salazar school branch and seven students were new comers with a different dynamic of work from the schools where they came from. Many of them were used to work individually and had to adjust themselves to this new method of work.

Finally, assessment was a little complicated sometimes because of the process of assessing was formative, not summative, in each activity and project developed checking the individual and group work. These processes demanded extra time and more teacher's effort due to they were a large class. Time management in all of the aspects mentioned above could be easier with a smaller class and considering that three-hour English class per week is not enough.

If the rest of the educational community of the Isaias Hernan Ibarra and Gabriela Mistral school want to implement this method of work in the other grades and areas of study, administrators and teachers should take these limitations into account and take the necessary measures to make cooperative learning work satisfactorily to achieve the expected scope for the benefit of classroom teaching practices, the students' learning and strengthening of institutional Critical-social pedagogical approach.

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Appendices

Appendix A. Survey 1



**SURVEY 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN
ENGLISH ORAL LANGUAGE**

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher researcher: MARIA FERNANDA RINCON RIVERA

Underline the answer that shows how often you use the following strategies in oral English.

When I have problems talking in English I...	
Use my native language.	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Ask for help (partners/teacher)	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Use gestures o facial expressions (Body language).	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Avoid communication totally or partially.	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Use a synonym, a description or an idea to express the word I do not know.	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Make up (invent) new word.	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN
Simplify what I want to say.	NEVER SOMETIMES OFTEN

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Appendix B. Survey 2



SURVEY 2: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PARTICIPATION IN GROUPS

Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher researcher: MARIA FERNANDA RINCON RIVERA

How often do you do the following things in your group?

- ✓ Check in the box that best describes your response and add comments if necessary.

TASK	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	COMMENTS
I listen to others in my group.				
I summarize what other say.				
I ask for information.				
I give information.				
I give an opinion.				
I agree or disagree.				
I ask for clarification.				
I participate actively.				
I lead the activity to do.				

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Appendix C. Survey 3



<p>SURVEY 3: SELF-ASSESSMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR ENGLISH LEARNING</p>
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Name: _____ Date: _____

Grade: _____

Teacher researcher: **MARIA FERNANDA RINCON RIVERA**

- ✓ Check your favorite activities for learning English in the list below:

Games	Quizzes
Songs	Tests
Movies	Homework
Video	Presentations
Puzzles	Research
Word search	Teacher's explanation
Projects	Speaking activities
Pair work	Grammar
Group work	Writing activities
Translation	Hands-on activities
Workshops	Reading activities
Role-plays	Listening activities
Others...	

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Appendix D. Lesson Plan 1

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>Review: Asking for and answering about birthdays.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">A: When's your birthday?</div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;">B: My birthday's on ____.</div> <p>Teacher reviewed these questions with students to practice orally asking for and answering about birthdays.</p>	<p>Checking previous knowledge: Oral review</p> <p>(Critical-Social approach strategy)</p>
Pre-Teaching	Students listened to the audio of the conversation to focus on pronunciation.	Focus on pronunciation.
While-Teaching: Presentation	<p>Teacher showed to the students the slide of the conversation: "Ask about birthdays" for students to listen, model and practice. Whole group practiced, then boys group and girls group practice.</p> <p>Conversation:</p> <p>A: When's your birthday?</p> <p>B: On July 15th. When's yours?</p> <p>A: My birthday's in November. On the 13th.</p>	<p>Cooperative work strategies:</p> <p>Practice pairs (Johnson et al., 1994)</p> <p>Role-play (Alayah, 2018)</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p> <p>Role-play</p>

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		Pre-communicative activity, controlled Practice Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001)
Practice	<p>Practice pairs. Students listened, modelled and practiced the conversation pattern in pairs to role-play it.</p> <p>Students answered orally different activities from the CD-ROM (fill in the gaps, matching, sentence scramble, guess and spell, crossword, multiple choice, concentration, quiz show) to review orally days of the week, months, ordinal numbers and prepositions of time. Open participation to all the students. The activity turned cooperative because all helped each other to answer the activities.</p>	<p>Informal cooperative strategy: Cooperative review (Slavin, 1995).</p> <p>Pair work practice facilitates student interaction and gets them involved in communicative tasks (Alrayah, 2018).</p>
Post-teaching:	<p>Whole class feedback about the oral work. Class discussion about the class activities as many of them corresponded to their favorite for learning English (see survey 3, data analysis). Very positive comments. Students shown motivation and engagement with their learning.</p>	<p>Importance of providing instant oral feedback to students about their performance for major effect</p>

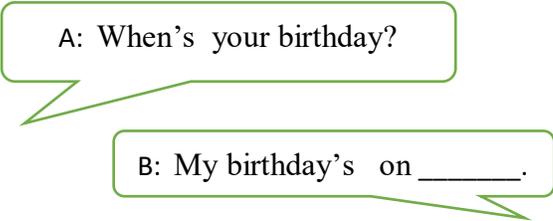
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Wrap up	Homework: Students had to practice the conversation at home with their own information to present next class.	and improvement (Jones, 2005; Johnson et al., 1994).
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Appendix E. Lesson plan 2

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>Activity: “Musical Hot Potato”. Teacher showed students flashcards about months of the year and ordinal numbers (1st to 31st) to remember the vocabulary studied in previous classes. Next, teacher explained students that some music would be played and six balls would rotate while it was playing. Students holding the balls when the music stopped had to interact asking for and answering about their birthdays in English.</p>	<p>Checking previous knowledge: Oral review (Critical-social approach strategy) Based on my teaching experience, the use of games to facilitates learning and promotes a friendlier learning environment.</p>
Pre-Teaching	<p>Review. Asking for and answering about birthdays:</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>A: When's your birthday?</p> <p>B: My birthday's on ____.</p> </div>	<p>Reviewing previous knowledge (Critical-social approach strategy)</p>

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	Teacher reviewed these two questions for students' oral practice.	
While-Teaching: Presentation	<p>Teacher showed again students the slide of the conversation model: "Ask about birthdays" for students to listen, model and practice. This time they replaced the information underlined with their own information and perform it with a partner in front of the rest of the class.</p> <p>A: When's your birthday?</p> <p>B: On <u>July 15th</u>. When's yours?</p> <p>A: My birthday's in <u>November</u>. On the <u>13th</u>.</p>	<p>Cooperative work strategy:</p> <p>Practice pairs</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p> <p>Role-play</p> <p>Semi-controlled</p> <p>(Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015).</p>
Practice	<p>Pair work. Students practiced the conversation model in pairs to role-play it. Some music was played and students moved around the classroom. When the music stopped, students made pairs with a person next to them and practiced the conversation. Then the music played again and they moved around. The music was played several times for students to develop self-confidence practicing the conversation model.</p>	<p>Cooperative work strategies:</p> <p>Practice pairs</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p> <p>Role-play</p> <p>(Semi-controlled)</p>
	<p>Activity: "Musical Hot Potato". Teacher explained students that the game from the beginning of the class would be played again. This time students holding a ball when the music stopped, made pairs. They had some minutes to decide their roles, prepare and role-play the conversation "Ask</p>	<p>Cooperative work strategies:</p> <p>Practice pairs</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p>

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<p>Post-teaching:</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>about birthdays” for the rest of the class using their own birthday information. Then, music was played again and so on. The game developed in this way until all students participated. Whole class feedback about the oral work was provided.</p>	<p>Role-play (Semi-controlled conversation)</p> <p>Importance of providing instant oral feedback to students about their performance.</p>
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Appendix F. Lesson plan 3

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>Previous to this class students were asked to think of the question:</p> <div data-bbox="488 816 992 911" style="border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> What does FAMILY mean to you? </div> <p>And prepare a short oral report for the rest of the class.</p>	<p>Cooperative work strategies:</p> <p>Group discussion</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p> <p>freer communication</p> <p>(Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015)</p>
Pre-Teaching	<p>Introduction: Teacher showed a family picture to the students to introduce the concept FAMILY.</p>	<p>The use of visual aids helped to promote oral production in English.</p>

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<p>While-Teaching:</p> <p>Presentation</p> <p>And</p> <p>Practice</p>	<p>Asking for and answering about FAMILY concept. Teacher showed this question to the students:</p> <div data-bbox="521 464 1031 579" style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;"> <p>What does FAMILY mean to you?</p> </div> <p>Teacher asked volunteer students to go to the front and share their self-concept about their meaning of the word FAMILY.</p>	<p>Speaking technique:</p> <p>Class discussion</p> <p>Students' own motivation and risk-taking to participate in the oral activity spontaneously.</p>
<p>Post-teaching:</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Whole class feedback about the activity performance was given. Students were motivated to participate spontaneously giving their opinions about the topic, the experience and their feelings.</p>	<p>Importance of providing instant oral feedback to students about their performance for major effect and improvement.</p>

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Appendix G. Lesson plan 4**CLASS DESCRIPTION**

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	Teacher provided some oral tips to students about how to make their oral presentations more productive and effective.	Oral presentations, if properly guided and organized, are beneficial in promoting speaking skills (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al., 2017; King, 2002).
Pre-Teaching	Introduction: Teacher wrote on the board some reminder expressions for the oral presentations such as: -This is my... / He is... / She is... -These are my... / They are... -Use of possessive adjectives and possessive 's in context.	Guided oral presentations: Teacher's input to Strength learners' performance.

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	It was pointed out and modelled the most difficult family members vocabulary for students to strength their pronunciation.	
While-Teaching: Presentation And practice	<p>Pair work practice. Students worked in pairs to rehearse their oral presentations and ultimate the last details before performing in front of their peers and teacher.</p> <p>Each student made the oral presentation introducing the members of his/her family with the pictures (collage and family tree) made.</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategy: Practice pairs</p> <p>Speaking technique: Guided oral presentations (Brooks & Wilson, 2014; Farabi et al. (2017); King, 2002)</p> <p>-Communicative activity (Al-tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Littlewood, 1981; Prieto, 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Stanescu, 2015)</p> <p>-Freer communicative activity</p>

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Post-teaching: Wrap up	Teacher gave oral affirmation and developmental feedback about the students' performance (Jones, 2005) in terms of more real production and communication. Students also had the chance to express their feelings and opinions about the activity.	Importance of providing instant oral feedback to students about their performance.
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Appendix H. Lesson plan 5

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>Reflection phrase: “<i>Family is not an important thing, family is everything</i>”. Michael J. Fox.</p> <p>Teams discussion. Oral report about the meaning of this phrase related to the family subject.</p> <p>Game: <i>Hot Potato</i> to review the vocabulary about family members. The winner team moved its frog in the scoring game.</p>	<p>Cooperative Learning strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Team learning (Alipour, 2016; Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Kagan, 1993; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Slavin, 1995; Yeung, 2015; Wang, 2009) -Spontaneous group discussion: informal method (Slavin, 1995) -Team-Game-Tournament (TGT): Game (Johnson et al.,

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		<p>1994; Slavin, 1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Checking previous knowledge to enhance team oral production (Critical-social approach) -Cooperative review: informal method (Slavin, 1995)
<p>Pre-Teaching</p>	<p>Oral review about the family members studied in this topic. Emphasis on pronunciation. Teams' oral production modelling the right pronunciation of difficult family words with the teacher's support.</p> <p>Review of the concepts: FAMILY and FAMILY TREE.</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Team learning -Cooperative review <p>Speaking technique:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Controlled pre-communicative activity (Al-Tamimi & Attamimi, 2014; Littlewood, 1981; Prieto, 2007;

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		Stanescu, 2015; Richards & Rodgers, 2001)
While-Teaching: Presentation And practice	<p>Grammar in context: Teacher reinforced the use of Possessive's to express family relationships with the example of the Williams' family tree, taken from the student's Book English, Please! 1, page 3, Ministry of Education (MOE).</p> <p>Practice: Team work activity. Teams made written sentences according to the part of the Williams' family tree given. Then they gave the written and oral report of their work. The team with more right sentences moved the frog in the tower.</p> <p>Oral discussion: What does family mean to you?. Teams participated giving their concepts. Free oral discussion.</p> <p>VIDEO: What does family mean to you? . Team participation giving their opinions about the video content and their family concepts: similarities and differences. Team analysis and reflection.</p> <p>Positive and negative concepts about FAMILY relationships. Team work discussion and oral report. Activity taken from the students' Book, English, Please! 1, activities 1 and 2, p.21, MOE.</p>	<p>Cooperative Learning strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Team learning -Collaborative task Completion <p>(Khaghaninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Johnson et al., 1994; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cooperative review -Spontaneous group discussion -Team product (Slavin, 1995) -Spontaneous group discussion <p>Speaking technique:</p>

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		<p>-Communicative activity</p> <p>-Teams' freer oral discussion and report.</p>
<p>Post-teaching:</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Cooperative final work. Teams wrote their own concepts about FAMILY (positive and negative aspects) making a poster to report their opinion orally to the rest of the class. Final reflection about what family means.</p> <p>Scoring game revision.</p> <p>Oral feedback about the cooperative work and oral production performance in each task:</p> <p>Conclusion: More speaking production and more authentic communication thanks to team work strategies.</p> <p>Group Processing: Students also self-assessed their cooperative and speaking performance in the project and gave immediate feedback to their peers (Al-Tamimy & Attamimi, 2014; Johnson et al.1990).</p>	<p>Cooperative Learning strategies:</p> <p>-Cooperative review</p> <p>-Team product</p> <p>-Collaborative Task Completion</p> <p>Speaking technique:</p> <p>Teams' freer oral discussion and report.</p> <p>Affirmation and developmental feedback was given to assess team member' performance (Johnson et al., 1994; Jones, 2005)</p>

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Appendix I. Lesson plan 6

CLASS DESCRIPTION

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>June 21st: Cooperative oral activity 1. Teacher asked students:</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> What is <i>CULTURE</i>? </div> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> What does <i>CULTURE</i> mean to you? </div> <p>Short general group discussion. Group members gave their ideas orally about culture concept.</p> <p>Student's book English, Please! 1, activity 3, page 89, MOE. Students read the definition about culture and confirmed how similar or different their predictions about it were.</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategy: Spontaneous group discussion.</p> <p>Speaking techniques: -Communicative activity -Oral predictions (Freer speaking activity)</p>
	<p>Introduction. Cooperative activity 2. Teacher asked students:</p> <div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid green; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 10px auto;"> What are the Colombian natural regions? </div>	<p>Cooperative learning strategies: -Collaborative investigation (Khaghaninezhad</p>

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<p>Pre-Teaching</p>	<p>Teacher talked and explained to students about the project “Colombia is Passion”. Groups worked on subtopics related to each region location, departments and capital cities, traditional food, music, dances, population diversity, tourist places and representative famous people.</p>	<p>& Kaashef, 2014; Khan & Akhtar, 2017; Johnson et al., 1994; Nastasi & Clements, 1991; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995)</p> <p>-Cooperative project</p> <p>-Team product</p>
<p>While-Teaching</p>	<p>June 21st. Preparation: Cooperative work.</p> <p>Students were divided into five groups of eight members. Colombian regions were assigned to groups: Caribbean (Insular), Pacific, Andean, Orinoquia and Amazon.</p> <p>Introduction: Groups discussed, planned and divided their work to bring their drafts next class.</p> <p>Extra activities developed to introduce the topic of the project “Colombia is Passion”. Groups worked on activities 5 and 6, page 90, Student’s book English, Please! 1, MOE. Activity 5 was to match the names of the Colombian regions with their location in the Colombian map. Activity 6</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategies:</p> <p>-Teacher-selected groups</p> <p>-Collaborative investigation</p> <p>-Cooperative project</p> <p>-Team product</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p>

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<p>Presentation</p> <p>And</p> <p>practice</p>	<p>was to read the text “Colombia: A country of festivals”. Groups read the texts and matched them with the names of the festivals given. Finally, oral group report of the work done.</p> <p>Next two classes: June 25th and 28th. Revision of the group members’ information about their Colombian region assigned. Teacher provided effective feedback for each group member to decorate stands for the oral presentations.</p> <p>July 3rd. Project presentation. Organization and decoration of stands about the Colombian regions. Cooperative oral presentations of the work done (guided). The audience was the students from ninth-one grade. They also had previous knowledge about the project and topics to facilitate their understanding.</p>	<p>-Communicative activity: Group discussion</p> <p>Cooperative learning strategy:</p> <p>-Collaborative investigation</p> <p>-Effective feedback</p> <p>Speaking techniques:</p> <p>-Communicative activity:</p> <p>-Guided oral presentation</p>
<p>Post-teaching:</p> <p>Wrap up</p>	<p>Teacher’s oral feedback about the groups’ performance. The audience, ninth-one students also gave their oral feedback of the activity to their peers as part of the assessment of the project.</p> <p>However, although most of students performed the activity, the results were not the expected.</p>	<p>-Affirmation and Developmental feedback</p> <p>-Peer assessment</p> <p>(Jones, 2005)</p>

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	<p>Teacher asked students to repeat and improve their oral presentations (August 1ST) for promoting more spoken English production.</p> <p>Groups prepared a banner with the name of their region and made the oral presentation of it. This time no special guests were invited.</p>	
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Appendix J. Lesson plan 7**CLASS DESCRIPTION**

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	Teacher explained to students the cooperative activity thinking about: what is the zoom in a camera or cell phone? What is the function of it?	Cooperative learning strategies: Communicative activities: -Group Brainstorming , freer discussion Cooperative strategy: Spontaneous Group discussion
Pre-Teaching	Oral predictions about the first slide. All team members got together to make their first choice. They were kind of baffled, but then they got it. Team members got engaged and challenged with the next slide coming.	Cooperative learning strategies: -Group brainstorming, Spontaneous Group Discussion Speaking technique:

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		Predictions, free oral discussion
While-Teaching: Presentation And Practice	<p>The next round of the activity was for each team to participate individually.</p> <p>Teams started to participate actively. Teams members got together to make their choice of vocabulary. They gave the words in English using strategies such as using cognates (words that are similar in Spanish and English), previous knowledge of words, guessing or looking up in the dictionary.</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Collaborative task Completion -Group brainstorming - Spontaneous Group Discussion <p>Speaking techniques: Free oral discussion and participation</p>
Post-teaching: Wrap up	<p>Teacher's oral feedback about the teams' performance. Very good work in terms participation, oral production and cooperative work. More students risked themselves to choose and pronounce new words without teacher's instruction and developed more autonomy to use English. The winner team was the one with more correct predictions made.</p>	Affirmation and Developmental feedback

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Appendix K. Lesson plan 8**CLASS DESCRIPTION**

Stage	Procedure/Activities	Pedagogical justification
Warm-Up	<p>Preparation: Students were selected by the teacher and organized into four teams (eight students in each team). Each team chose a leader and a secretary to score the points in each task.</p> <p>Next, team members were numbered from one to eight. Team members participated in each task as soon as teacher called their number. The rest of team members supported their partner's answer if he/she did not know.</p>	<p>Cooperative learning strategy: Numbered heads Together (Alayah, 2018; Kagan, 1993; Khaghanninezhad & Kaashef, 2014; Prieto 2007; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995; Wang, 2009).</p> <p>Speaking techniques: -Communicative activity -Freer practice activity</p>

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		-Risk taking activity. (Richards & Rodgers, 2001)
Pre-Teaching	The first activity was an oral interaction through a short conversation about the topic FAMILY . All students listened, modelled and practiced the conversation.	Speaking technique: Pre-communicative activity: controlled role-play
While-Teaching Presentation	Students number one, from each team, interacted to role-play the previous conversation. Teams' performance was scored not to promote competition but active oral participation and engagement in the interactive oral task.	Cooperative work strategies: -Numbered heads Together Speaking technique: -Quasi-communicative activity Role-play
	Team members interacted orally the diverse activities from the CD-ROM to review orally the Family topic. The participation was cooperative according to the number called out to participate.	Cooperative work strategies: -Numbered heads Together

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Practice	<p>The last activity from the CD-ROM was the song “Tell Me All About It”. Students copied in their notebook three listening comprehension activities about the song to develop in the audio-visuals classroom. Teams listened together to the song and worked together to complete each task. Cooperative revision of the answers to score points.</p> <p>Speaking activities:</p> <p>Pre-singing steps. Students made moving exercises for a proper body posture, oral exercises to breath correctly and to warm-up their voice.</p> <p>Singing the song. Team members practiced the lines of the song individually, then cooperatively. First, they read out every line of the song and then they added some music as a chant; next, they sang every part of the song rehearsing several times in groups, boys and girls and the whole group. They made emphasis on the chorus. They were asked to be attentive to the song melody and to imitate the singers being as expressive as possible. Finally, they sang the song with the lyrics and the karaoke version of it.</p>	<p>Speaking techniques:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Communicative activities (functional communication activities) -Social interaction activities <p>(Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 2001)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Singing
Post-teaching:	<p>Whole class feedback about the oral work. Class discussion about the interactive activities as many of them corresponded to the ninth graders’ favorite activities for learning English (see survey</p>	<p>Affirmation and Developmental feedback</p>

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Wrap-up	3, needs analysis): speaking activities, listening activities, grammar and vocabulary in context, songs, pair work, group work and technology. Very positive comments. Most of students showed motivation and engagement with their learning and oral production, especially with the singing experience.	
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Appendix L. Diary summary

DATE	SUMMARY: DIARY ENTRIES INTO FIVE CATEGORIES				
	CLASS ACTIVITY	COOPERATIVE STRATEGY	ORAL TECHNIQUE	ORAL PRODUCTION	AFFECTIVE FACTORS
March 26 th , 2019	Short conversation: “Ask for birthdays”	Pair work	Pre-communicative activity. Controlled speaking activity: Listen, model and practice.	Drilling the conversation lines.	Initial inhibition, anxiety of making mistakes and discrete participation.
March 26 th , 2019	Interactive activities from a CD-ROM (review)	Team work. Teacher’s feedback	Quasi-communicative activity. Free practice.	Production of words, phrases and short sentences.	Higher student motivation, participation, excitement, engagement and risk-taking in the activities thanks to the use of technology.
March 29 th , 2019	Short conversation “Ask for birthdays”	Pair work. Ss’ feedback – Teacher’s feedback	Semi-controlled speaking activity: Ss modified the conversation by using their own birthday dates. Freer practice.	Oral Production of the conversation lines contextualized to Ss’ own birthday information.	More self-confidence to participate in the oral interaction thanks to the previous practice. Three students risked to express their

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					feelings in English by giving their comments about this oral experience. That was a short but, spontaneous production.
April 5 th , 2019 – April 9 th , 2019	Short individual oral presentations about the question: “What does family mean to you?”.	Whole group interaction, preparation for more formal cooperative work. Teacher’s affirmation feedback.	Interaction through question and answer. Freer practice: spontaneous answers.	Production of words, phrases and short sentences about family concept. Students tried to give some ideas in English by short sentences to talk about the activity.	Active student participation. More confidence to participate voluntarily. Reduction of anxiety. However, Six students did not want to participate. Four gave short ideas and feelings as a reflection and reaction to this activity in Spanish.
May 14 th , 2019,	Activity: Project “My Family”.	Whole group interaction, preparation for	Freer practice. Guided oral presentations.	Production of words, phrases and short	More self-confidence to speak in English

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May 17 th , 2019	Ss' oral presentation about family collage, family trees and English portfolio (previous presentation of the drafts of their work).	more formal cooperative work. Pair work and whole group interaction. Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Oral presentation rehearsal in pairs.	sentences about family, family tree and family self-concept.	thanks to the peer interaction and the familiarization with the topic. Ss expressed they felt they had improved their oral production thanks to the experience of working in this project and by interacting with their partners cooperatively. These strategies helped them reduce their anxiety to participate in oral activities.
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June 11 th , 2019	VIDEO for the 2019 Diagnostic-Formative Evaluation of Colombian public school teachers. Topic: Family concept, family relationships (family tree)	Formal cooperative learning groups. Cooperation by working in teams. Teacher's affirmation feedback about team work.	Freer practice and production Spontaneous production. Functional communication activities. Social interaction activity (group discussion).	Ss progress was outstanding as they were from words to little longer sentences expressing more deep ideas about what family meant to them (positive and negative concepts). They used classroom language such as the expression: "How do you say _____ in English?" to ask their teacher for support in their construction of their ideas.	Evident Ss' self-confidence to participate actively in the video activities thanks to the cooperative work and their previous knowledge about the topic. Positive attitude, Personal satisfaction, higher motivation, self-esteem and mutual trust. Result: Reduction of anxiety to produce oral English. Positive interdependence and individual accountability for performing in the oral tasks.
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June 21 st , 2019	Family Oral presentations of the students missing.	Whole group interaction. Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Guided oral presentations. Freer practice.	34 students did their family oral presentations. 2 students did not do it. Production of words, phrases and longer sentences about family, family tree and family concept.	More self-confidence to spoken English thanks to the peer interaction and the familiarization with the topic. Anxiety was reduced. Motivation and self-confidence increased to produce spoken English.
June 21 st , 2019	Socialization, planning and organization of the project: Colombia is Passion. Classroom research about Colombian natural regions: Caribbean, Pacific. Andean, Orinoquia and Amazon	Formal cooperative learning groups. Cooperative project by researching about Colombian regions. Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Guided oral presentations. Freer practice. Social interaction activity.	Moderate oral interaction in English.	Positive attitude, higher engagement and commitment for the new project. Development of more group's autonomy to work together and make decisions about their oral task thanks to cooperative work.

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June 25 th , June 28 th , 2019	Teacher's revision of the information researched by the team members about their region.	Formal cooperative learning groups. Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Guided oral presentations.	Teacher-students interaction in English and Spanish.	Higher engagement and commitment by groups in charge of Caribbean and Pacific regions. The rest had to improve their work.
July 3rd, 2019	Presentation of the project "Colombia is Passion". Colombian regions: location, food, music, dances, population (ethnics), famous people, tourist places.	Formal cooperative learning groups. Cooperative project presentation Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Guided oral presentations: Ninth-two graders presented their work to the teacher and ninth-one graders. Stands decoration as visual aids for the oral presentations. Freer practice and social interaction activity.	Production of words, phrases and a little longer sentences about Colombian regions description. Ss did not have time to rehearse with their partners or teacher. They were also busy in the preparation of other activities for the school cultural week. That maybe affected their	From 36 Ss, 33 did their oral presentations. The best attitude, responsibility, commitment and self-confidence in the activity was for Caribbean and Pacific regions. There was a good attitude and commitment in the activity, but the other activities planned in other subjects for that cultural week affected Ss' self-

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				oral performance.	confidence for the oral presentations and their anxiety to present their work increased.
August 1 st , 2019	Second oral presentation about the Colombian regions to reinforce the work done in the first presentation of the project Colombia is Passion.	Formal cooperative learning groups. Cooperative project presentation Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Guided oral presentations: Ninth-two graders presented their work to teacher and partners. No special guests invited. Elaboration of banners as visual aids for the oral presentations. Social interaction activity.	Production of words, phrases, sentences and short oral texts about Colombian regions description. The work did not improved significantly compared with the previous oral presentation. Caribbean and Pacific regions performance was highlighted again.	Attitude and risk-taking were highlighted. However, it missed more responsibility and commitment to improve the performance in the oral activity. Anxiety reduced as they presented to their partners and teacher and because of their previous knowledge.
August 9 th , 2019	ZOOM. Cooperative oral interactive activity	Formal cooperative learning groups.	Oral predictions based on the slides of the power point	Oral production of new words and phrases.	Positive attitude, motivation, engagement and

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		Team cooperation.	presentation called ZOOM. Freer practice and social interaction activity.		risk-taking in the activity.
August 20 th , 27 th , 30 th ; September 3 rd , 6 th and 20 th , 2019	Second opportunity working on interactive activities of the Ss' book CD ROM used to review previous topics integrating technology. Outstanding last interactive activity: Singing the song "Tell Me All about It". Topic: Family Source: Saslow, J. & Ascher, A., (2011). <i>Top Notch: English</i>	Formal cooperative learning groups. Team cooperation through the technique Numbered Heads together (Alayah, 2018;; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995). Teacher's affirmation feedback.	Functional communication activity. Freer practice Social interaction activity.	Good oral production but it was still by words, phrases and short sentences. Singing the song by applying breathing techniques, reading out the song lyrics with emphasis on pronunciation and intonation. Next, getting the song rhythm and finally, singing the song with the lyrics and the karaoke version.	Increased motivation thanks to the use of technology, active participation, risk-taking and engagement in the activities. Ss' attitude, motivation and engagement in singing the song was awesome!!. It was the first time singing a song with in class. The experience was very emotive.

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	<i>for Today's World Fundamentals.</i> New York: Pearson				
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Appendix M. Transcription of the first communicative speaking activity focused on oral production: Expressing family concept.

This extract illustrates the initial 9th graders' oral production during the development of the first communicative speaking activities. In this free speaking activity students began to explore their spoken English production through the open question: "What does family mean to you?"

Speech Sample	Comments
<p>Teacher (T) and students (Ss): What does family mean to you?</p> <p>S1: My name is -----. My family is <i>beautiful</i>&. Today is <i>happy birthday my sister gr/wo</i>.</p> <p>T: Oh! Oh! Today is your sister's birthday! Ok, nice, nice, cool!</p> <p>S2: Hello!</p> <p>T and Ss: Hello!</p> <p>S2: My name is -----. My family <i>for me wo</i> is support and love.</p> <p>T: Support and love, ok!</p> <p>S3: Good morning!</p> <p>T and Ss: Good morning!</p> <p>S3: This is "<i>mi</i>" father _____. This is "<i>mi</i>" mother _____. This is "<i>mi</i>" brother _____. This is...</p> <p>T: This is me.</p> <p>S3: Yes, this is me!</p> <p>T and Ss: What does family mean to you?</p>	<p>Ninth grade students were not used to speaking in English spontaneously in front of others. This was the first time that the 90% of them came to the front, introduced themselves and said their own opinion about the question posed. Although their oral production was short and with mistakes, they risked themselves to prepare some short report about what family meant to them. This activity was more challenging for them as they were used to drill the teacher's model or just repeat, rehearse and reproduce controlled speaking activities such as short dialogues.</p>

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<p>S3: Family is love, union.</p> <p>Teachers' feedback: so far you made your try and it's good, it's good as soon as you express your ideas...</p> <p>The idea is every class you motivate more to express. The idea is you don't feel scared to express your ideas. Yes, sometimes you could make some mistakes but those mistakes are normal in the process of speaking. But the thing is, the positive thing is that most of you wanted to do it and that is wonderful. Ok, congratulations everybody!.</p> <p>Conventions¹</p> <p>----- protected information</p> <p>& mistaken pronunciation (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>¿ misunderstood word (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>Wo wrong order</p> <p>gr grammar mistake</p> <p>... pause (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>“ ” Expression in Spanish (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p>	<p>The activity was pre-cooperative because students did not work directly in pairs or small groups, but there was peer interaction when students and teacher asked the question to the student who went to the front of the class and answered. I think that the friendly classroom environment created gave most of them the self-confidence to go to the front and express themselves.</p>
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¹ Some of the conventions for appendices M, N and O were taken from Gutierrez (2005)'s transcription work. The rest of them were created for this study.

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Appendix N: Transcription of the class video (Diagnostic-Formative Evaluation of Colombian public school teachers) focused on cooperative learning to promote spoken English: Talking about family meaning, family relationships and family positive and negative concepts.

This extract illustrates ninth graders' oral production during the video focused on cooperative language learning to promote more spoken English.

Speech Sample	Comments
<p>The teacher introduces the activity about making the own family concept cooperatively.</p> <p>Teams worked together integrating their previous knowledge.</p> <p>T: (Talking to Team 1 Ss) You discuss what you consider is important... very good!</p> <p>S1: Teacher, how do you say is "<i>Bendición de Dios</i>" in English?</p> <p>S2: ok, very nice you're using English... God's blessing like this (writing on the board) Look, God's, capital letter, God's blessing, also the possessive's. If you need some vocabulary, tell me "teacher, how do you say...?", I can help you, Ok?</p> <p>S3: How do you say, "<i>sagrada familia</i>"?</p> <p>T: Holy family... (writing on the board) ok?</p> <p>S4: Teacher.</p>	<p>In this video students integrated their previous knowledge about the family topic and their experience working in teams to produce more oral English. They also seemed to have more self-confidence to participate. There was some interference from Spanish into English pronunciation of some words, but in general there was a positive oral interaction among team members and between teacher and students.</p> <p>The video evidenced that thanks to cooperative work, Ss showed major self-confidence to produce oral English by using words, phrases and short sentences.</p>

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<p>T: Yes?</p> <p>S4: How do you say “<i>fuera</i>” in English?</p> <p>T: “<i>Fuerza</i>”, very good, strength, wait a minute, strength (writing on the board). This is... strength...</p> <p>Conventions</p> <p>----- protected information</p> <p>& mistaken pronunciation (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>¿ misunderstood word (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>Wo wrong order</p> <p>gr grammar mistake</p> <p>... pause (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>“ ” Expression in Spanish (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p>	
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Appendix O. Transcription of the first speaking activity focused on oral production by means of cooperative work: Project Colombia is Passion

This extract illustrates ninth graders' oral production during the development of cooperative project "Colombia is Passion". Students researched and prepared oral presentations about the Colombian region assigned. This speaking activity was guided by the teacher but students worked cooperatively to make decisions about their oral presentations with a freer oral practice that became it more communicative and productive.

Speech Sample	Comments
<p>T: Let's move to the pacific region. We start with the location of the Pacific.</p> <p>S1: eh, good morning.</p> <p>Teacher and Ss: Good morning.</p> <p>S1: "La" Pacific region & is conformed & "por el" Choco, "el" Valle del Cauca, Cauca "y" Nariño.</p> <p>T: Ok. What is the most important capital city in the region? Ciudad capital.</p> <p>S1: We have Cali. "En" Choco, Quibdó, "en" Valle del Cauca, Cali, "en" Cauca, Popayán "y" Nariño, Pasto.</p> <p>T: Ok, thank you so much. What about the traditional food in the Pacific region?</p>	<p>In this project Ss researched and prepared their part of the oral presentation about their Colombian region. Some of them had a better pronunciation as evidence they prepared their oral work at home. Some others limited to research and read pronouncing words in English as in Spanish, which made their comprehension difficult. Some presenters had a low tone of voice which made difficult understand what they said.</p> <p>The oral production was spontaneous as Ss did not have time to rehearse in class. They produced longer utterances and in general, the</p>

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<p>S2: Traditional Colombian...</p> <p>T: No, ----, speak louder please, we cannot listen to you.</p> <p>S2: The <i>tradition&, traditional&</i> Colombian Pacific region food <i>are gr...</i> Pusandado de bagre, pusandado de pescado, <i>arroz¿</i> piangua. Traditional drinks Pacific region are: viche curado, arrechon, <i>and...¿</i></p> <p>T: What about the traditional music in the Pacific region? Music?</p> <p>S3: The traditional music, <i>the&</i> traditional music is Currulao, Fuga and Abosao.</p> <p>T: Ok. Currulao, Fuga and Abosao, very interesting. Famous people in the Pacific region?</p> <p>S4: Famous people important celebrities are Katherine Ibarguen, <i>¿Renteria,</i> Andrade Mosquera. They represented our country <i>with&</i> pride.</p> <p>T: Ok, excellent, what is missing? It's missing the population. Ok? What kind of people can we find in the Pacific region? Las razas del Pacifico.</p>	<p>message was transmitted to the audience.</p> <p>Cooperative dynamic of work made the development of this project possible. It was the first oral guided presentation performed by ninth graders.</p> <p>There was some transfer from Spanish, especially in pronunciation but most of students made their effort to communicate in English with phrases, short and longer sentences. There was avoidance of making up words. This activity demanded more oral production in English by means of cooperative work and most of Ss achieved it. That evidenced their progress.</p>
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<p>S5: The <i>majory</i>& population Afro forty percent&, “<i>indigenas</i>” forty <i>percent</i>& and mestizos forty <i>percent</i>&.</p> <p>T: Ok, -----, what about you?</p> <p>S6: <i>¿¿¿</i> (reading, not clear at all!)</p> <p>T: Ok, thank so much. Is missing something, -----?</p> <p>S7: Tourist places.</p> <p>T: Tourist places?</p> <p>S7: San Antonio, touristic place in Cali... Island& Malpelo...its natural beautiful <i>¿¿¿</i> (outside noise)</p> <p>T: Ok, thank you so much, an applause for the Pacific region.</p> <p>Conventions</p> <p>----- protected information</p> <p>& mistaken pronunciation (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p><i>¿</i> misunderstood word (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>Wo wrong order</p> <p><i>gr</i> grammar mistake</p> <p>... pause (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p> <p>“ ” Expression in Spanish (Gutiérrez, 2005)</p>	
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