Role plays for Speaking Fluency

Jaidy Liliana Vargas Pacheco

Thesis Director: Julio César Gómez Barón, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This research study intended to improve the speaking fluency in fourth graders through worksheets based on role plays at Santo Tomás de Aquino school. The participants were 22 students, aged 8 to 10 years. This study is a qualitative action research that allowed me to identify the students' needs, collect information and analyze data. The instruments for data gathering were students' artifacts, field notes, focus groups interviews, audio-recordings and video-recordings. After analyzing the data, I concluded that materials had a positive impact on students' language learning in terms on interaction and group work, as well as they captured the students' attention and allowed them to make connections with their reality. The learners demonstrated an active engagement in the activities, assuming their roles and making connections with actual scenarios. Aspects of their speaking like fluency, speed, and natural discourse were improved through the performances in the role-plays. This research study had meaningful pedagogical implications on the students' speaking skill, on the ELT community of teachers, and on me as a teacher, researcher and materials developer.

Keywords: materials development, role-plays, speaking fluency, group work, interaction

Resumen

Este estudio de investigación pretendía mejorar la fluidez de la expresión oral en el cuarto grado a través de talleres basados en juegos de roles en la escuela Santo Tomás de Aquino. Los participantes fueron 22 estudiantes, de 8 a 10 años. Este estudio es una investigación de acción cualitativa que me permitió identificar las necesidades de los estudiantes, recopilar información y analizar datos. Los instrumentos para la recopilación de datos fueron artefactos de los estudiantes, notas de campo, entrevistas de grupos focales, grabaciones de audio y grabaciones de video. Después de analizar los datos, concluí que los materiales tuvieron un impacto positivo en el aprendizaje de idiomas de los estudiantes en términos de interacción y trabajo en grupo, así como captaron la atención de los estudiantes y les permitieron establecer conexiones con su realidad. Los estudiantes demostraron un compromiso activo en las actividades, asumiendo sus roles y haciendo conexiones con escenarios reales. Aspectos de su habla como la fluidez, la velocidad, el discurso natural se mejoraron a través de las actuaciones en los juegos de roles. Este estudio de investigación tuvo implicaciones pedagógicas significativas en la habilidad oral de los estudiantes, en la comunidad de profesores de ELT y en mí como docente, investigadora y desarrolladora de materiales.

Palabras clave: desarrollo de materiales, juegos de roles, fluidez del habla, trabajo en grupo, interacción

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Description

This research study intended to improve the speaking fluency in fourth graders through five worksheets based on role plays at a private school. The type of study is an action research in which the grounded approach to conduct data analysis. The instruments used to collect data were: student's artifacts, field notes, audios and videos recordings and focus groups interview. The theoretical constructs that supported this study were materials development, role plays and speaking fluency. The most relevant scholars consulted in the Materials Development construct were Núñez and Téllez (2009), Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2013), Tomlinson (2001), Tomlinson (2009). Regarding role plays, I had Harmer (2007), Cho (2015), Kodotchigova (2002). Concerning to speaking and speaking fluency, they were Fillmore (1979), Bailey (2003), Bygate (1987), Nunan (2003). As conclusion, it is worth to say that the design and implementation of materials based on role plays improved student's speaking fluency.

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Content

This research study consists of five chapters. The first one states the research problem, the statement of the problem, the research question, the general and specific objectives, related studies, setting and rationale. The second chapter contains the literature review, and theoretical constructs. The third chapter addresses the methodological design, research design, methodological approach, type of study, participants, data gathering instruments, instructional design, the pedagogical intervention, instructional objectives, intervention as innovation, theory of language, the methodological approach, and instructional stages. The fourth chapter focuses on the data analysis procedure, research categories and subcategories. The fifth chapter reveals the conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations and questions for further research.

Methodology

This research study is based on qualitative research approach since there was a direct relation between the researcher and the subject matter in a natural setting that allowed observation and the use of data instruments. The type of study that suits this inquiry is action research, which is defined by Mills (2003) as "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that the particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn" (p. 4). The instructional design covered a pedagogical intervention and a methodological approach taking into account instructional phases and implementation. Data collection was done using student's artifacts, field note, focus groups interview and audio and video recordings. The data emerged findings that were compiled into categories and subcategories.

Conclusions

I concluded that working with the speaking skill was a challenge, but at the same time a rewarding experience that permitted fourth graders from Santo Tomás de Aquino school to improve their fluency and confidence. I could achieve the purpose of this research study by means of contextualized material that allowed students to learn English in a different way and; more specifically, to enhance their speaking fluency. Besides, the implementation of role plays led the students to develop other skills like interaction and group work, as well as it developed learning in a fun way.

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Introduction

Communication is the basis of every human process as it allows individuals to get to know their environment and exchange information with others. Among communication skills, speaking is the one that we use the most because we learn it naturally throughout our lives and it permits us to express ourselves quickly.

However, getting students to speak and use English requires a clear input. As Bygate (1987) asserted, teachers need "to prepare learners to be able to use the language" (p. 3). Therefore, it is important that before developing this skill, students recognize some basic vocabulary and structures so that they are able to convey messages.

In Colombia, the relevance of the communicative competence has been highlighted in the Curricular Guidelines (MEN, 1999), where it is established that students need to explore "this competence to communicate in other languages, within their own limitations, as they already know how to do in their mother tongue" (p. 10). In consequence, the school where I conducted this study -Santo Tomás de Aquino- intends to follow these language policies and help the learners to develop the communicative competence by means of different strategies in the English classes.

Having this in mind and based on a needs assessment conducted with fourth graders at Santo Tomás de Aquino School, I realized they had some difficulties regarding the speaking skill. Taking into account the children's age, interest and likes, I decided to provide them with a comfortable environment that strengthen their confidence when speaking. Under such circumstances, this research study describes the importance of using materials based on role-plays to improve fourth graders' speaking fluency at Santo Tomás de Aquino School.

This document is divided in five chapters. The first one describes the research problem. The second chapter presents the literature review that supports the three main constructs: materials development, role-plays and speaking (fluency). The third chapter deals with the methodological and instructional design. The fourth chapter embraces the data analysis, which includes the findings, research categories and sub-categories. Finally, the fifth chapter presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations and questions for further research.

Chapter I

Research Problem

Statement of the Problem

In an English as a Foreign Language classroom, one of the most complex and challenging skills is speaking because there are many factors that prevent students from participating in oral activities. For instance, some learners are shy to speak in front of others and sometimes either they are not sure about what they are saying or they feel that their speech is not good. Besides, for most of the students, the classroom is the only place where they can practice what they learn.

Based on my class observations, I noticed that fourth graders at Santo Tomás de Aquino School had difficulties when they were asked to work on activities that implied talking to others. They preferred to speak in Spanish or simply not to speak, which according to Febriyanti (2011), might be due to their fear to make mistakes. On the contrary, the students demonstrated more interest and self-assurance when they had to do reading, listening or writing activities.

Moreover, I administered a survey (See Appendix A) in which most of the students stated that the skill they considered the most difficult to develop was speaking. Likewise, colleagues teaching in the same level pointed out that they had observed similar difficulties when implementing speaking activities in their English classes.

In light of the information previously mentioned, I opted to focus this study on creating activities that allow students to improve their speaking fluency. To begin with, I decided to use role-plays as a tool to encourage the fourth graders to communicate in English orally. I chose this strategy because the learners indicated in the survey that they wanted to have this kind of activities in class. Besides, doing role plays with children might be a fun and engaging way to make them use the target language.

As well as this, I decided not to use the textbooks that children have for their English classes, but to implement new and customized materials since I consider that teachers are public intellectuals and thinkers who need to make decisions based on their daily experience and the students' needs. To this respect, Richards (1998) stated that "the teacher-as-thinker metaphor captures the focus on how teachers conceptualize their work and the kinds of thinking and decision making that underlies their practice" (p. 65). Thus, I created five innovative and contextualized worksheets that captured the students' attention and took into account their interests and likes.

Research Question

How do the design and implementation of worksheets based on role plays contribute to the improvement of fourth graders' speaking fluency at a private school?

Research Objectives

General objective: To analyze the improvement of speaking fluency in fourth graders through worksheets based on role plays at a private school.

Specific objectives: (a) to assess the suitability of worksheets based on role plays in speaking fluency; (b) to determine how speaking fluency is improved through role-play activities in fourth graders at a private school; and, (c) to analyze the effectiveness of role plays in the improvement of students' speaking fluency.

Related Studies

Conducting this study implied not only identifying the students' hindrances and proposing different strategies to overcome them, but also making a research on previous related studies that enlightened me on the path that I should follow and the aspects that I needed to take into account. With respect to materials development, Leguizamón (2016) carried out a

qualitative action research centered on the enhancement of interaction skills through materials based on role-plays. This study took place at a bilingual private school located in Bogotá, Colombia with 11 students from fourth grade. The researcher used field notes, video recordings, rubrics and a questionnaire as instruments for data collection. The main findings revealed that materials based on role-plays permitted students to improve their interaction skills and increase their vocabulary. Additionally, the worksheets implemented led the learners to boost their confidence and better their teamwork. This inquiry is pertinent to the present study because it focuses on developing materials based on role plays to improve speaking.

Another related study concerning materials development was conducted by Rodríguez (2015), who resorted to role plays as a pedagogical strategy to enhance the speaking skill in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. This action research study involved a group of eighth graders from a public school in Bogotá. The information was gathered by means of video-recording, field notes, and questionnaires. Rodríguez found that role plays aided the students to enhance their speaking skills in a fun way and those creative materials called both the learners' and teachers' attention. Besides, the students felt more motivated to participate in the English classes and teachers were interested in adapting the materials in their lessons. This study is relevant to my research because it showed how the implementation of materials based on role plays can enhance EFL students' speaking fluency.

In terms of role plays, Cárdenas and Robayo (2001) carried out a research study to determine the effect of role-plays in students' speaking and the factors that influenced their willingness to dramatize. The participants were third graders from a public school named Centro Educativo Distrital San Luis S.O located in the Southeast of Bogotá, Colombia. The researchers used direct observation, questionnaires and videos to collect the data. It was concluded that role

plays and dramatizations are suitable activities that develop the speaking skill in a fun and interesting way because they let students use the language in communicative situations related to their lives. This study contributed to my inquiry as it demonstrated that the implementation of role plays can be effective to improve the learners' speaking skill. Moreover, it showed that role-plays permit the students to represent real life situations and it is a good strategy to capture the learners' attention.

In the same line of thought, Eklová (2007) conducted an action research study based on role-plays to identify their contribution to the learners' communicative skill. Eklová designed six role-plays for ninth graders (aged 14 to 15) in a Czech Republic school following the principles of role plays. The researcher concluded that role-plays are useful for motivating students to communicate orally in the foreign language and for improving their interaction. Besides, their structure helped the participants to communicate with other English speakers. This research is relevant to my study since it shows that role-plays are an adequate technique that facilitates the development of the students' fluency.

Concerning the speaking skill, Silva (2012) carried out an action research study to improve the sixth graders' oral interaction by means of curricular units centered on task-based learning in a public school in Barrancabermeja, Colombia. The researcher used informal discussion, video tapes and field notes as data gathering instruments. The information was divided into categories to answer the research question. The findings revealed that, thanks to the curricular units, there was a change from teacher-student interaction to student-student interaction. Besides, these units led the learners to identify their weaknesses and take different roles in their English learning process. This study contributed to my enquiry because it confirmed that the students' oral interaction might be increased through different strategies.

In the same vein, Nopiani (2014) worked on an action research study that intended to develop the learners' speaking skill through role plays. This study was developed with seventh graders from a school located in Denpasar, Indonesia. The researcher employed pre-test, post-test and questionnaires to collect the data. The findings showed that the participants' speaking skill improved significantly thanks to the role plays performed in class. It was also noticed that students had a positive attitude towards the class and increased their motivation when participating and speaking in the role plays. This study is pertinent to my research because it is focused on the skill that I want the fourth graders from Santo Tomás de Aquino School to improve (speaking fluency), as well as it entails the implementation of role-plays.

Having described the related studies that informed me on the aspects that I should bear in mind to conduct this study and the suitability of using materials based on role plays to improve the students' speaking fluency, I will present the setting in which this pedagogical intervention took place.

Setting

This research study was carried out at Santo Tomás de Aquino School. This is a private and catholic institution of Dominican priests that was founded in 1573; it is named "The dean of schools in Bogotá". It is located in the north of the city and it has around 940 students divided in pre-school, primary and high school. Its mission is to educate integral, Christian and ethic individuals who are innovative, researchers and socially responsible (Colegio Santo Tomás de Aquino, 2016). The school is interested in developing English as a foreign language, that is why it started a bilingual program five years ago and each grade has seven hours of English class a week. The English program is framed by the communicative approach that strengthens the speaking, writing, listening and reading skills, as well as it permits students to know and value

other cultures and understand scientific and technical information in English. This approach

develops the communicative thinking in a foreign language and opens new possibilities for

interaction in the globalized world. Accordingly, the school's English program guides the

projects of immersion and summer camps outside Colombia (Colegio Santo Tomás de Aquino,

2012).

Rationale

To begin with, I expect that this research study aids fourth graders both to improve their

speaking fluency and to increase their self-confidence when expressing their ideas and thoughts

in English. This experience might also help me to grow professionally because it challenges me

to be innovative and create new resources that facilitate the students' learning process. In this

case, I opted for designing worksheets based on role plays so that students feel encouraged to use

the foreign language.

In the same way, this study can contribute to the improvement of the English general

level at Santo Tomás de Aquino School as it presents a different way of teaching and practicing

the speaking skill in the classroom. This study can also demonstrate the importance and necessity

of implementing role plays with children because, as Harmer (2007) ascertained, they can be fun

and motivating.

Similarly, this study may be a useful source for the EFL community and teachers who are

interested in developing materials for enhancing the speaking fluency through role plays.

Besides, it might be relevant to the research line on Materials Development and Didactics

ascribed to the research group: Critical pedagogy and Didactics for Social transformation since it

encourages teachers to become researchers and materials developers that take into account their

students' learning styles and interests. What is more, this pedagogical intervention could

enlighten teachers on how to create innovative materials on the basis of an MD framework and the SLA principles.

Under these circumstances, I consider pertinent to mention that the cornerstone of this research study were the principles suggested by Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2013): "Justice, equity and inclusion, empowerment and autonomy, and quality assurance and professional development" (p. 6) given that I designed the worksheets by keeping in mind the learners' needs and likes. Bearing in mind the principle of justice, equity and inclusion, the materials were designed in the same way for all the participants fostering their participation despite their differences in terms of knowledge and abilities. In addition, the activities in the materials were intended to foster students´ autonomy to develop their own work and empower them to control their learning process. Undoubtedly, getting involved in the design and the implementation of materials fostered my professional growth as a materials developer and teacher.

The following chapter explores the theoretical framework that supports the constructs underlying this study and their relevance to the pedagogical intervention.

Chapter II

Literature Review

Taking into account the research question, it is important to explain the three main constructs that guide this study: materials development (MD), role plays and speaking. First, I describe materials development as a field of study. Then, I describe some requirements and components of MD. Subsequently, I present a definition of materials, the SLA principles and frameworks of MD. In regards to role plays, I explain the advantages of this strategy, the types of role plays, and how to use them in second language teaching. Finally, I present the concept of speaking and some principles for teaching speaking fluency.

Materials Development

Nowadays, teachers use different types of materials that may be created by them or provided by a publishing house (textbooks). Tomlinson (2001) stated that "materials include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinesthetic" (p. 66). In fact, there is a wide variety of resources that teachers can employ depending on the purpose of the class, the context, the language level, students' skills, learning styles and competences, among others.

Materials development (MD) has been considered both a field of study and a practical affair. As a field of study, it takes into account the "principles and procedures of the design, implementation and evaluation of language teaching materials" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 66). This means that MD involves creating materials on the basis of certain guidelines and stages that ensure their effectiveness. As an affair, it includes the "production, evaluation and adaptation of language teaching materials" (Tomlinson, 2001, p. 66). In other words, MD as an affair entails not only creating and implementing materials, but also making adjustments.

Materials development as a field of study. MD has become a field of study given that there are more teachers and researchers who are interested in investigating about the influence of materials on the language teaching. However, it is essential to mention that, according to Tomlinson (2001), MD is a recent phenomenon that years ago was conceived a part of the methodology and teachers did not even consider its principles and procedures.

In the same line of thought, Núñez and Téllez (2015) asserted that "language pedagogy and applied linguistics have recently recognized that MD is a field of study focused on the effect of materials on the teaching-learning process of a foreign language" (p. 57). Thus, MD has been accepted as a field of study because of its significant contribution to understanding the impact of materials on the students' language learning.

Additionally, MD as field of study involves a structured methodology that is efficient in language learning. To this respect, Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2013) affirmed that "MD as a field of study, demands an informed methodology that allows validating the efficiency, appropriateness and relevance of materials within the context of learning a language" (p. 10). In this sense, MD takes into account aspects such as the suitability, adaptability, and importance of materials in the language learning-teaching process.

Components, requirements, demands of MD. Teachers or designers need to bear in mind certain components so that materials are meaningful to the students. For instance, it is paramount to consider the principles of second language acquisition (SLA) suggested by Tomlinson (1998) and follow a framework that embraces some procedural stages because, as stated by Graves (1996), a framework of components "provides an organized way of conceiving a complex process" (p. 12). It is worth mentioning that the frameworks proposed by scholars such as Graves (1997), Jolly and Bolitho (1998), Nuñez, Pineda and Téllez (2004), Nuñez,

Téllez, Castellanos and Ramos (2009) and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012), among others, begin with a needs assessment or needs analysis and end with an evaluation of the process.

In the same vein, materials developers need to bear in mind other components like the learning strategies, the methodological approach, the nature of language and language teaching and learning, and definitely, innovation. Likewise, Núñez and Téllez (2009) highlighted the relevance of taking into consideration the students' needs, predilections, desires, and expectations, as well as they claimed the necessity of keeping a balance between these issues and the institutional requirements.

By the same token, it is essential that teachers create materials that stimulate agreeable learning environments in which motivation, interaction and permanent learning can be promoted. Besides, Núñez and Téllez (2009) argued that materials developers must be "reflective, resourceful and receptive (RRR)materials must be useful, significant and encouraging for students so that they are effective; that is why" (p. 174), especially in their teaching practice.

Defining Materials. There are several definitions about materials; for example, Brown and Mishan (as cited in Harwood, 2010) use the term materials to refer to the texts and their language learning activities in terms of tasks; these texts can be presented in a paper-based, audio or visual form. Tomlinson (2001) added that materials can also be presented in a kinesthetic way which includes live performances or physical activities. Besides, he affirmed that materials can be instructional, experiential, eliciting or exploratory. In consequence, materials can be any resource that teachers present in class and whose purpose is that students either learn or practice the language.

Along similar lines, Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2013) sustained that "materials are socio-cultural resources that facilitate not only linguistic interaction but also cultural exchanges

between the various human groups" (p. 10). In other words, materials go beyond teaching the

formal aspects of a language as they also foster the students' interaction with other cultures and

people.

   Types of material (authentic and non-authentic). Language teachers can work with

different kinds of materials as long as they help them to reach the teaching and learning goals.

These materials might be classified into authentic and non-authentic. Gilmore (2007) explored

some definitions about authenticity and he noticed that some of them were related to the texts,

others to the learners, and others to the contexts or to the communicative act. Based on this,

Gilmore (2007) defined authenticity as "an authentic text is a stretch of real language, produced

by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some

sort" (p. 4). Consequently, authentic texts are the ones produced by native speakers or writers

whose only intention is to transmit a legitimate message.

   Despite authentic materials can be used in class to show students how language is used in

real contexts, according to Montijano (2014), they are not necessarily made for language

teaching goals. On the contrary, non-authentic or inauthentic materials are those adapted by

teachers to meet the learners' needs and facilitate their language understanding; for instance,

textbooks and worksheets. In this regard, Richards (2006) claimed that it is not compulsory to

use authentic materials in all classes since there are learners who are not able to interact with

them due to their level. In such cases, teachers can modify these materials according to students'

characteristics and proficiency. Teachers can always adapt the reading passages or listening and

writing activities, adjust the spoken dialogues, and change the length of the texts.

   To sum up, both authentic and non-authentic materials can be used by language teachers

in their classes according the students' needs, contexts and levels. To this respect, Widdowson,

Clarke and Cook (as cited in Gilmore, 2007) stated that authenticity does not mean "good" just as non-authentic does not mean "bad" (p. 5), the important issue is that students achieve the communication goals.

Based on what has already been argued, we can conclude that the materials implemented in this study were non-authentic as I designed five worksheets related to the topics proposed for the fourth grade English program and in accordance with the learners' needs and interests.

SLA principles. As previously stated, materials designers must consider the language acquisition principles suggested by Tomlinson (2009). I focused on six main principles that support the design of my pedagogical intervention. The first one emphasizes on the importance of providing students with experiences that allow them to be in continuous contact with the foreign language. The purpose of this principle is that learners understand most of the language features by practicing them many times; hence, materials must include several written and spoken samples and exercises. Moreover, materials should be contextualized so that it is easier for the students to understand how the language is used in real settings.

The second principle lies on the relation between affective and cognitive feelings. This means that, when learning a language, students should feel positive emotions that facilitate the achievement of high language skills. To accomplish this principle, materials should promote thinking processes that permit the learners to be conscious about what they are doing and generate good feelings in regards to the EFL class.

The third principle proposed by Tomlinson (2009) involves the positive attitude that learners need to have towards the language learning since in this way they can reach a better communicative competence. For this reason, materials and activities should be interesting, amusing and pleasant so that learners feel comfortable in class. Besides, it is vital to provide

students with language activities that motivate them and increase their self-esteem. This can be

done by asking the students for the topics that they would like to work in class.

The fourth principle entails the connection that language learners should make between

the mental resources they use in the L1 and L2. According to Tomlinson (2009), the activities

could be focused on working the "inner speech", "mental imaging" and "personal

interpretations" (p. 6). Although this connection might be difficult for L2 learners, the resources

implemented in class must ensure that students improve progressively their L2 performance. In

light of this, materials can include reflective exercises that aid students to deepen their inner

speech in written or spoken texts.

The fifth principle highlights the benefits that learners gain when they are aware of the

main language features and are engaged affectively and cognitively to the texts. For example,

when the students recognize some language characteristics, they will want to know their

function, which will help them to acquire the knowledge in a better way. Finally, the sixth

principle deals with the relevance of giving learners enough opportunities for practicing the

foreign language, thereby reaching communicative goals. In this way, materials should provide

activities and exercises in which students can interact with the language appropriately and

effectively.

Role Plays

Role plays are used in the classrooms to enhance oral interaction among students. This

technique fosters the use of the foreign language in similar contexts to the real life because the

students have to play a specific role. As Harmer (2007) affirmed:

Role-plays simulate the real world in the same kind of way, but the students are given

particular roles - they are told who they are and often what they think about a certain

subject. They have to speak and act from their new character's point of view. (p. 125)

In this sense, when implementing role plays in the classroom, it is paramount to include

settings that as real as possible. Besides, this is an adequate technique to improve the speaking

skill as it encourages learners to assume a role and act it in the best way they can. What is more,

Richards (2008) stated that role plays, as a communicative resource, may provide students with

the opportunity to practice the language since they need to share and obtain information from

other learners, performing real life situations. Certainly, with role plays students boost their oral

interaction and develop their negotiation skills.

Along similar lines, it is important to clarify the difference between simulations and role

plays. Harmer (2007) defined the first ones as the activities in which students simulate real world

situations (a business meeting, an interview, a conversation in a specific place) an act out as

themselves. On the contrary, role plays imply taking the role of a specific character and perform

with his/her feelings and thoughts. In role plays students need to be more conscious of the

character they interpret; that is why, teachers' guidance is of great importance. In this regard,

Richards (2008) proposed some steps that might be followed to practice real world situations in

role plays: "preparing, modeling-eliciting and practicing-reviewing" (p. 31). In the preparing

step, the participants review the vocabulary, content and context they have to present. In the

modeling-eliciting step, students propose the stages of the role play by obtaining suggestions

about the language discourse. Finally, in the practicing-reviewing step, students start practicing

by using cue cards.

Types of Role Plays. It is worth mentioning that role plays as part of "drama activities may be classified into three main types: scripted role play, semi-scripted role play and non-scripted role play" (Cho, 2015, p. 38). In the following lines, I will present each category.

Scripted role play: This type of role play offers students a great help in terms of language use. Harper-Whalen and Morris (2005) sustained that in scripted role plays, students are given all the words they have to say; hence, they only need to read or memorize their script, which is either presented in a textbook or written by the teacher according to the purpose of the class. The main purpose of this scripted role play is to transmit the meaning of language elements in a significant and accurate way. Since this type of role play is so controlled, it could be useful for learners that are beginning a second language acquisition process.

Semi-scripted role play: This type of role play gives students the possibility to integrate in the scripts both their knowledge of the language and their creativity. In Livingstone's words (as cited in Cho, 2015) in semi-scripted role plays, the learners are given an incomplete script and they have to fill it out with appropriate words according to the situation. With this kind of role play, students can create their own dialogue and practice what they have learnt in class. In consequence, the teacher or the textbook provide the linguistic input and students may expand it with real conversations based on their interests and context.

Non-scripted role play: In this type of role play, students are provided with something that researchers like Holden, Littlewood and Dickson (as cited in Cho, 2015) called "cued dialogues" (p. 38), which involves giving students some information about the situation, the topic or the goal of the role play. With these cues students may create their own dialogues by using both their knowledge and speaking skills. Davies (1990) pointed out that "thoughts, feelings, and the language arising from them are emphasized in improvisation, and learners

create people and relationships by acting out situations using speech and movement, but without a preconceived plan" (p. 94). Therefore, the purpose of this kind of role play is that students improvise, produce spontaneous messages, and perform the physical and personal aspects related to the character they have represented. In this research study, the idea was that students created their own script at the end of the implementation of materials to develop their creativity.

How to teach using role plays. Carrying out a role play that benefits the language learning and the students' speaking skill implies taking into account certain steps. In the subsequent lines, I describe the stages suggested by Kodotchigova (2002).

A situation for role play. When implementing role plays, teachers should include situations that are based on students' needs, interests and language level so that they practice all the topics they have learned in class. To make role plays interesting for students, teachers should allow them to choose the setting or give them some suggestions about the situations they can act.

Role play design. After choosing the context, students have to design their role play taking into account how the situation could be developed and the kind of language they need to include. In this step, the teacher's role is fundamental since he/ she knows the students' language skills and proficiency, and can provide the learners with tools to improve their communicative competence.

Linguistic preparation. In this moment, students need to prepare the language and dialogues they will present in their role plays. These dialogues should be in accordance with the learners' language level; thus, the more advanced their level is, the more complex structures and vocabulary they need include. As in the previous stages, teachers can aid the students by revising their work and giving suggestions so that they feel fearless when performing their role play.

Assigning the roles. In this stage, students are assigned the role they will play. It is relevant that learners identify themselves with their characters and assume their roles in terms of personality and physical appearance. Students can use cue cards with detailed information so that they play their characters with more confidence.

Factual preparation. In this phase, students start rehearsing their role plays either in the classroom or at home; sometimes teachers may choose a role and act it out as a model. Students can make a role play in which the whole class participates, or they can make groups and present different ones. If the role plays are presented as a whole class, it is necessary that students act short roles so that all of them can participate; however, it is better to use this technique with small classes. If the role plays are performed by groups, it is essential that each of them has mixed students, thereby having different abilities and personalities. Finally, it is recommended that teachers do not intervene with corrections while the role play is being performed.

Follow-up. When the role plays finish, it is crucial to have some time for providing feedback not only for pointing out the mistakes that the learners need to correct, but also for asking the students what they have learned. To this respect, scholars such as Milroy, Horner and McGinley (as cited in Kodotchigova, 2002) stated that follow-up refers to asking every student his/her point of view about the role play and welcoming their comments. It this sense, it is also important to ask students about their impressions and feelings while acting in their role plays.

Use the role plays in second language teaching. Role plays are used to enhance the students' oral speaking skills, as well as to motivate the learners to express themselves in the foreign language. This kind of technique, as a category of drama activities, has a lot of advantages that allow language learners to improve their language level in a different way. Desiatova (as cited in Zyoud, 2010) argued that role plays permit that students use the language

for natural communication and real-life purposes, generating a need to speak. When students

assume a role, they can escape from their everyday identity and take ownership of their

characters, which might reduce their shyness. Another advantage of role plays is that they offer

the possibility of including cross-curricular topics; hence, learners can work on real issues from

other subjects, as well as develop their imagination and creativity. Likewise, role plays simulate

the way in which individuals naturally acquire the language through role-playing games and

meaningful interaction.

In the same line of thought, role plays create a more enjoyable learning environment. In

this regard, Desiatova (as cited in Zyoud, 2010) mentioned that learning becomes more

meaningful if students are exposed to interesting activities and direct experiences. Similarly, the

author emphasized that "when students dramatize, they use all the channels (sight, hearing, and

physical bodies) and each student will draw to the one that suits them best" (p. 3). Hence, role

plays stimulate different senses in a natural way.

In short, role plays might develop several areas concerning the students' language

learning, and definitely, it can improve the learners' speaking fluency, which is the purpose of

this research study.

Speaking

Speaking is the skill that allows people to express orally and in real time their ideas,

thoughts, opinions and feelings. Bailey (2003) affirmed that in speaking the person does not have

the opportunity to check what he or she says. The act of speaking is immediate because, in a

conversation, there is always another person who is waiting for a response. In this sense, time is

a factor that makes speaking different from the others skills. In addition to this, Burns and Joyce

(1997) stated that speaking is an interactive process of building meaning that involves producing,

receiving and processing information. First, the speaker produces systematic verbal statements to transmit meaningful messages; then, he/she receives an answer and processes the information that is been produced and received.

In this way, speaking as an oral process requires at least two people who interact, thereby becoming a mutual act. Bygate (2001) affirmed that "speaking is typically reciprocal: any interlocutors are normally able to contribute simultaneously to the discourse, and to respond immediately to each other's contributions" (p. 16). In this regard, one of the main characteristics of the speaking interaction is that when the speaker talks, he or she waits for an answer and makes a contribution to the discourse.

In terms of language teaching, Bailey (2003) claimed that the language skills can be practiced either in a "receptive" or in a "productive" way. When the language is produced by the learner, as in the case of speech, it is called "productive". On the contrary, when the language is addressed to the learner, it is called "receptive". In light of this, according to the author, "speaking is the productive aural/oral skill" (p. 48). In other words, through speaking, individuals produce sentences, ideas, opinions or expressions; and the channel that is used to transmit all this production is the voice and ear. Since the skill that is developed in this research study is speaking, students will be producing language all the time through the expression of their opinions and ideas in an aural/oral way.

With regard to teaching speaking in a foreign language, Bygate (1987) asserted that it is necessary to have not only the knowledge about the language but also the skill to use it. He stated that "we would find it most difficult to describe and explain all the decisions we take when we speak. So knowledge is only a part of the affair: we also need skill" (p. 4). Thus, in addition to knowing the language, the speaker needs the capacity to use it and adapt it in accordance to

the context. This implies making decisions quickly and employing correct sentences depending on the conversational situations. In English classes, teachers should create activities to foster students' capacity to use the language in any context, therefore role plays were chosen as a strategy to provide them with different situations where learners had the opportunity to use the target language in a real context.

Second language teaching speaking. As it was mentioned before, speaking is the skill that allows individuals to interchange meaning by producing, receiving and processing information in a specific context. This skill requires that students take into account not only aspects like grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, but also the right moment to intervene in a conversation and the way to do it in terms of language (Nunan, 1999). The goal of teaching speaking is that learners improve their communicative skills and use their language abilities in real contexts.

Under these circumstances, Nunan (2003) pointed out that teaching speaking means that second language learners must develop some specific skills such as producing speech sounds and patterns, using adequate sentence stress, intonation and rhythm, choosing the best words and sentences according to the situations, establishing coherent thoughts in a logical sequence, using the language to express values and judgments; and finally, using the language rapidly and surely. All of this makes individuals practice their knowledge and speak fluently.

As it is well-known, teaching speaking requires that learners interact with their classmates in the foreign language; therefore, teachers should provide students with appropriate communicative activities and environments that foster communication among them. As Febriyanti (2011) asserted that "teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral

language" (p. 3). To do so, teachers can select topics that are related to the students' context, making them feel more confident to speak.

In classroom interaction, students have the opportunity to exchange their experiences, feelings, thoughts and ideas with the teacher or with their partners by using what they have learned. To this respect, Rivers (1987) affirmed that: "through interaction, students can increase their language store as they listen to or read authentic linguistic material, or even output of their fellow students in discussions, skits, joint problem-solving tasks, or dialogue journals" (p. 4). Correspondingly, classroom interaction enhances the students' language knowledge as they either receive or produce authentic linguistic material.

Furthermore, classroom interaction is essential for language students since it provides all the necessary conditions to learn, participate and make productions in the foreign language. Ellis (as cited in Tuan & Nhu, 2010) asserted that interaction "is concerned as the discourse which is jointly constructed by learners and their interlocutors and output is the result of interaction. It facilitates language learning, engages students in participating language learning activities and makes more outputs of the language" (p. 39). In this sense, classroom interaction is a must in EFL classes because it permits individuals to understand and produce their own messages, which is the ultimate purpose of learning a language. One purpose of the implementation of materials based on role plays in this research study was for students to create their own language and conversations to communicate their ideas related to a specific topic.

Principles for teaching speaking. In relation to the aspects that need to be taken into consideration when teaching speaking, Bailey (as cited in Nunan, 2003) suggested the following principles: First, teachers must "be aware of the differences between second language and foreign language learning contexts" (p. 54). On the one hand, a second language context is where

the target language is the one is spoken in the society and students have the opportunity to practice it both inside and outside the classroom. In this case, it is easier for learners to acquire a language and practice it orally. On the other hand, a foreign language context is where the target language is not spoken in the society; therefore, it is more challenging for students to learn it since they do not have more spaces to practice the language apart from the classroom. For this reason, teachers have to create good communicative classroom environments.

Concerning the second principle, Bailey (as cited in Nunan, 2003) mentioned that teachers need to "give students practice with both fluency and accuracy" (p. 55). The author defined accuracy as the scope in which learners' talks are precise according to real speech, while fluency is understood as the scope in which learners use language in a rapid and confident way with few doubts. When teaching speaking, teachers must implement activities that constantly develop these two abilities, as well as they need to be aware of the fact that learners can make mistakes while they are progressing in their language learning process.

Finally, in regards to the third principle, Bailey (as cited in Nunan, 2003) claimed that teachers also need to "provide opportunities for students to talk by using group work or pair work, and limiting teacher talk" (p. 55). To foster speaking, it is important that students spend a great percentage of the class practicing the target language; to do so, students can work in groups or pairs. In view of this, Choudhury (2005) argued that pair and group work promote communication and prevent students from only interacting with the teacher by means of question-answer conversations. In fact, interacting with their classmates makes students feel confident and establish more natural conversations.

Interaction through pair work and group work. In this kind of interaction, students work with peers or in small groups to construct knowledge while they participate in learning activities.

This strategy leads the students to develop a collaborative work in which the teacher is only a leader and they can manage their own talk. Brown (2001) defined group work as "a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language" (p. 177). It is pertinent to mention that, at the beginning, students may be afraid of talking to their classmates in the foreign language; thus, teachers must set the tone for initiating an interaction among learners.

Conversely, when students work in pairs, they have more opportunities to participate in talks because they may take turns in communication activities. In this sense, Kumpulainen and Wray (2002) declared that "working in collaborative peer groups is reported to help the students to construct and become aware of their own thinking processes" (p. 15). In consequence, students should be encouraged to take advantage of pair work as it not only gives them the possibility to practice the language at their own pace, but also helps them to become aware of their language learning process.

In essence, both group and pair work activities have a positive influence on the improvement of the speaking skill because they create a comfortable environment, promote interaction, reduce learners' fear to speak and allow them to practice what they have learned. The idea of working with role plays is to provide students with a pleasant classroom environment to facilitate the improvement of their speaking.

Speaking fluency. Fluency is one of the most challenging speaking skills that students need to face when learning a foreign language. Hartmann and Stork (1976) defined fluency as the capacity to use language structures with precision in an automatic way and with a normal conversational speed. In line with this point of view, Fillmore (1979) proposed four aspects that have an impact on fluency in terms of abilities: spending time talking, talking with coherence,

using appropriate words and expressions in different contexts, and being ingenious and

innovative when using the language. In this regard, Brumfit (1986) proposed four sets of abilities

that are part of a person: "psychomotor, cognitive, affective and aesthetic" (p. 54), as well as he

affirmed that fluency has to do with the natural use of language. These definitions of fluency are

also connected to accuracy in terms of using the language precisely and coherently. In fact, the

purpose of this research study was to improve students' speaking fluency in terms of using the

appropriate language with coherence in different contexts, taking into account normal speed and

the flow of a conversation.

Lastly, Richards, Platt and Weber (1986), defined fluency as "the features which give

speech the qualities of being natural and normal, including native-like use of pausing, rhythm,

intonation, stress, rate of speaking, and use of interjections and interruptions" (p. 108). In light of

this, fluency involves more than just using the language properly and in a natural rhythm, as it

was mentioned, it also entails the pauses and interruptions that characterize a normal

conversation. Teaching speaking to children involves creating opportunities to use the language

and face natural challenges as they attempt to develop certain skills such as fluency. For this

reason, teachers should consider that learners can make mistakes as they try to communicate

their ideas. Then, it is necessary to find appropriate strategies to develop this kind of skill while

allowing them to use language in a comfortable environment and in this way speaking

production could be more natural and precise.

All in all, this chapter described the main characteristics of Materials Development, Role-

plays and Speaking (fluency) along with the contributions of different scholars in regards to

these constructs. The next chapter describes the methodological and instructional design, the type

of study and the participants.

Chapter III

Methodological Design

This chapter consists of the research and instructional design of my study. The research design embraces the approach, the type of study, participants and data gathering instruments. The instructional design encompasses the pedagogical intervention, the objectives, the study as innovation, the nature of language and language learning, the methodological approach, the connection of research question with the pedagogical intervention and the instructional phases.

Research Design

This section deals with the research approach and the type of study. It also presents the participants including the students and the teacher as researcher, as well as it describes the data gathering instruments.

Approach. The approach that best suits this study is qualitative research due to its objectives and features. Denzin and Lincoln (as cited in Guest, Namey & Mitchell, 2013) stated that "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible" (p. 3). Thus, in qualitative research, the connection between the researcher and the subject matter is essential to have a clear knowledge and understanding of the world. Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) asserted that, due to the interpretive and naturalistic nature of qualitative research, the information that the researcher obtains of the world can be collected by means of field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos.

In the same way, Richards (2003) claimed that the main aspects of this research approach can be summarized as follows: it could be worked on natural settings and everyday context, one of its objectives is to identify participants' viewpoints, it allows to work with a small number of

participants, researchers can use different methods, it allows the analysis on several features; and, it makes use of quantification only for specific purposes. As a result, qualitative research allowed me to identify a problematic situation in my teaching context and propose a strategy to improve it. Besides, it permitted me to examine and interpret the students' behavior, opinions, improvements, strengths and weaknesses along the pedagogical intervention.

Type of study. The type of study that suits this inquiry is action research, which is defined by Mills (2003) as "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that the particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn" (p. 4). In this sense, action research is conducted by teachers who want to analyze and solve a problem related to the students' learning process.

In the same line of thought, Wallace (as cited in Donato, 2003) affirmed that action research "is conducted by teachers and for teachers. It is small scaled, contextualized, localized, and aimed at discovering, developing or monitoring changes to practice" (p. 1). Accordingly, this type of research is intended for teachers to improve their practice, thereby benefiting the students' learning process. What is more, teachers can conduct an action research based on their daily experiences in the classroom. For instance, this study emerged after identifying the fourth graders' difficulties in regards to speaking; hence, its main aim is to improve the students' speaking fluency by means of materials based on role plays.

Carrying out this type of study implies following a cycle that, in Richards' (2003) words might be called "the action research spiral" (p. 24). This cycle consists of four stages: reflecting: which is related to identifying a problem or needs analysis; planning: refers to thinking about the way that the researcher is going to develop the research study; acting: deals with the researcher implementing an intervention in the practice; and observing: refers to the analysis of results and

see if it is necessary to modify or complement the intervention. It is worth noticing that these

stages can be repeated if the researcher considers it is necessary.

Participants. The participants of this study are the students and the teacher as a

researcher and materials developer.

Students. This study involved the participation of 22 fourth graders from Santo Tomás de

Aquino school. These students are between eight and eleven years, and most of them have a

good English level. Besides, some of these students have had the opportunity to travel abroad

and practice the foreign language in real contexts. Fourth graders receive seven hours of English

and three hours of Science class per week; hence, they are in contact with the language 10 hours

a week.

The participants were selected through the convenience sampling technique which,

according to Patton (as cited in Flick, 2007), "refers to the selection of those cases that are the

easiest to access under given conditions" (p. 28). This kind of sampling is used when resources

like time and people are limited, leading the researcher to conduct the study with individuals

within his/her reach. As a result, I decided to carry out this research with my current fourth grade

students.

Teacher-researcher and materials developer. I also performed three roles throughout the

implementation of this pedagogical intervention: a teacher, a teacher-researcher and a materials

developer. As a teacher, I planned my classes and guided the students in their learning process.

As a teacher-researcher, I conducted an inquiry and followed the stages suggested by Donato

(2003) that are related to thinking about practice, compiling information, making decisions and

establishing action plans. Furthermore, given that one of the aims of action research is to make

changes in the teaching practices, I decided to use role plays as a technique to enhance students'

speaking fluency. Finally, as a materials developer, I designed some worksheets by keeping in

mind the SLA principles, the MD framework, and the nature of language and language learning.

Data gathering instruments. Thanks to the data collected, I was able to evaluate the

fourth graders' improvement in terms of speaking fluency. Saldaña (2011) stated that data are

"anything that informs a study, be it interview transcripts or related fiction or the researcher's

experiential knowledge base, has active contributions to make toward our understanding of a

phenomenon" (p. 26). According to the previous statement, data refer to all the things that can

help the researcher to draw a pretty close picture of the phenomena under study. Bearing this in

mind, the instruments that I used to collect data were: students´ artifacts, field notes, focus

groups interviews, audio-recordings and video-recordings.

Students' artifacts. This instrument involves all the physical evidence that shows the

students' advances along the pedagogical intervention; for example, samples of worksheets or

workshops, posters, and all the material elaborated by students. Lankshear and Knobel (2004)

argued that artifacts "are concrete evidence and can alert researchers to useful avenues of

investigation and provide additional insights into participants' everyday lives" (p. 235). In this

way, the artifacts of this research study correspond to the worksheets that I designed as they are

the physical evidence of students' work in class (See Appendix B). I also collected data from the

posters and charts made by the students during the implementation.

Field notes. This instrument is used by researchers to record their observations while

students work on the activities proposed. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) asserted that "field notes

comprise finely detailed written accounts of what was observed" (p. 229). When observing, the

researcher must take notes of all the situations that take place in the classroom, especially those

related to the subject matter. According to Mack et al. (2005) and Lankshear and Knobel (2004),

field notes should: be written legibly, keep regular records of time, use certain codes or key

words, employ a shorthand language, and draw maps and classroom layout diagrams. In this

study, I used field notes to register the different attitudes, behaviors and comments of the

participants in regards to the pedagogical intervention (See Appendix C).

     Audio-recordings. With this instrument, the researcher has the opportunity to collect

more reliable data; therefore, it can be used to complement the field notes and the direct

observation; as Burns (2009) affirmed, audio recordings capture the oral expressions in the way

that participants say them. When using this kind of instrument for collecting spoken data, the

researcher needs to: prepare the whole equipment and make sure it works, locate the recorder in

a strategic place to get as much data as possible, choose if the whole sessions will be recorded or

only some parts of them, and decide whether all the students will be recorded or only some of

them. This instrument was used in this research study to complete the information gathered with

the field notes. Also, it was important to collect data related to the spoken activities or small role-

plays performed by the students.

     Video-recordings. Given that this study is focused on speaking and the implementation

of role plays, I employed video-recordings to obtain more complete information about the

students' performance. To this respect, Lankshear and Knobel (2004) asserted that "video

recordings can identify speakers and capture gestures accompanying speech that inflect the

speech and make it possible to derive enhanced meaning from spoken data" (p. 197). In view of

that, video-recordings allow the researcher to catch both spoken and visual aspects that might

provide more accurate information. In this study, I used video-recordings in some sessions to get

information about the students' process in the pedagogical intervention –especially during the

presentations of the role plays- and identify the speaking and visual aspects that I could not notice with the other instruments.

Focus groups interviews. I also used focus group interviews (See Appendix D) to ascertain students' opinions about the intervention and the materials implemented. Mack et al. (2005) defined a focus group interview as a method in qualitative data collection that consists in a meeting between the researcher and the participants to discuss a given topic. The researcher starts the discussion by asking some open-ended questions and the students have the opportunity to answer them spontaneously. Likewise, Stringer (2007) stated that "focus questions should follow the same rules and formats as those used for interviews, employing neutral language and maximizing opportunities for participants to express themselves in their own terms" (p. 74). Hence, this type of instrument is similar to the interviews in terms of its format and procedure; their difference lies in the quantity of people who participate in them. In short, the main purpose of focus group interviews is that students express their points of view and attitudes without any restriction. It is pertinent to mention that these interviews may be either tape-recorded or video-recorded. I employed this instrument after the pedagogical intervention to discuss about the learners' perception with respect to the materials and the implementation of role plays as a way to improve their speaking fluency.

Instructional Design

The instructional design is composed of the instructional strategy and objectives, the intervention as innovation, the nature of language and language learning, the methodological approach, the connection between intervention and the research question, and the suggested instructional phases.

Pedagogical intervention. The pedagogical strategy that frames this study is the design

and implementation of worksheets to contribute to the development of fourth graders' speaking

fluency through the use of role plays at a private school.

The implementation of role plays permitted the fourth graders to use English in different

settings based on real situations, thereby preparing them for future experiences in which they

may need to use the foreign language. In this sense, Nunan (2003) argued that "role plays are

also excellent activities for speaking in the relatively safe environment of the classroom" (p. 57).

This means that role plays is one of the strategies that teachers can employ to provide a favorable

environment in which the students can speak and interact with others as in real situations. In

Trivedi's (2017) words, "the role play is an ideal activity in which students could use their

English creatively and it aims to stimulate a conversation situation in which students find an

opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill" (p. 1178). In other words, role

plays are considered as an innovative activity in which students have the chance to practice and

improve their English speaking skills by creating conversations based on their interests and

context.

Furthermore, role plays might be an adequate tool to develop the speaking fluency since

they require that students assume a specific role and use the language features of this character as

in a real situation. Some scholars like Littlewood, Harmer, Rivers and Temperly (as cited in

Bygate, 1987) suggested that role plays promote language learners' interaction skills and develop

their oral abilities. Thus, teachers should take the most advantage of this strategy and encourage

students to practice what they know and explore their creativity.

Under these circumstances, I designed five worksheets based on role plays to help fourth

graders speak English fluently. Besides, I included the three types of role plays mentioned in the

literature review: scripted, semi-scripted and non-scripted. The first two worksheets were focused on scripted role plays, the next two were based on semi-scripted; and the last one, on non-scripted role plays. In this way, students could develop their own role plays progressively starting with a script given by the teacher; and then, creating their own script, which could be presented with the help of cue cards.

The topics that students worked in their role plays were basically the ones presented in the course textbook. Each worksheet had an input with a vocabulary section in which students could practice the expressions and words that they would use in their performance. Moreover, the learners had the opportunity to practice short dialogues and conversations before performing their role play; this allowed them to feel more confident and self-assured at the moment of speaking. Finally, each worksheet had a self-assessment section in which students evaluated both their process in terms of their speaking fluency and the relevance of the materials implemented.

Acknowledging that materials should me contextualized and motivating, so that they have a significant impact on students' language learning, it is vital that teachers keep in mind the principles for second language acquisition suggested by Tomlinson (as cited in Nuñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009). Accordingly, I chose six of these principles because I consider they are the most relevant to my study.

The first principle highlights aspects such as novelty and variety. Hence, materials need to be innovative and interesting, so that they attract the learners' attention and awaken their curiosity. The second principle is related to the learning environment in the EFL classroom. It is essential that students feel comfortable and relaxed when learning a language; otherwise, the materials will have a negative impact on students' willingness to participate in the activities.

Concerning the third principle, Tomlinson (as cited in Nuñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009) claimed that "Materials should help learners develop self-confidence" (p. 43). It is important to clarify that developing the learners' confidence does not mean giving them simple activities that they can solve easily. On the contrary, it implies providing tasks that are in accordance with their level and challenge them to achieve a higher goal.

The fourth principle has to do with the relevance and usefulness of materials. It is vital to know what students want to learn, so that teachers can develop materials based on their likes, interests and context. This will most likely ensure the learners' participation and interest in class.

The fifth principle, according to Tomlinson, entails facilitating "student self-investment, which aids the learner to make efficient use of the resources to facilitate self-discovery" (as cited in Nuñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009, p. 43). Similarly, Tomlinson (1998) asserted that materials can help students "to achieve this by providing them with choices of focus and activity, by giving them topic control and by engaging them in learner-centered discovery activities" (p.11). In light of this, teachers can stimulate self-discovery by giving learners the opportunity to choose the topics they would like to work and the languages features they would like to learn. This principle, lead students to build up autonomy and become aware of their learning process.

Finally, I took into account the principle where Tomlinson remarks the importance of providing "opportunities for communicative purposes in L2, fostering thereby language use, not just usage" (as cited in Nuñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009, p. 44). This tenet is closely related to my research study because it intends to develop the students' speaking fluency and motivate them to use the language for both interacting with their classmates and negotiating meaning.

Instructional objectives. The main instructional objective of this intervention was to develop and implement worksheets based on role plays to improve speaking fluency in fourth grade students.

The three specific objectives are: a), to provide students with different material that help them to improve their speaking fluency; b), to develop students' awareness of the importance of speaking fluency in their foreign language learning; and c), to create an enjoyable environment through role plays where students can use English in a confident way.

Intervention as innovation. Nowadays, teachers need to provide students with diverse environments that lead them to explore their creativity and learn in a better way. To do so, it is paramount that teachers propose innovative strategies based on the students' needs and interests.

Many authors have defined innovation highlighting words such as: new, improvement, change or development. For instance, Carless (2013) pointed out that innovation is "an attempt to bring out educational improvement by doing something which is perceived by implementers as new or different" (p. 1). The word "new" implies something different in education both for teachers and students. In line with this point of view, Markee (2001) underlined that innovation has to do with making changes in terms of the resources, approaches and values that are used in language teaching, as well as he stressed that these changes have to be new for learners.

In the same line of thought, Rich (as cited in De Lano, Riley & Crookes, 1994) mentioned that "by innovations, we mean any new programs, organizational changes, or modifications in the teaching-learning process that mark a departure from existing practices" (p. 488). In other words, innovation involves replacing the teaching practices and methodologies that are common for learners. Any adaptation or change in our educational context might be considered as innovation. It is also worth noticing that, besides benefiting students' learning

process, innovation should also have a positive influence on teachers' perspective about

education. As Karavas-Doukas (1998) stated, with innovation teachers have to change their

beliefs, behaviors, principles and techniques.

Regarding innovation in English classes, Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2017a) affirmed

that "English teachers have the ability to innovate in their pedagogical practice" (p. 38).

According to this, English teachers develop certain abilities like creativity to adapt materials and

lessons to their practices since they have to look for innovative activities and strategies to teach

the language. As an English teacher, I feel successful when my students like an activity and they

find it innovative.

In relation to my research study, the implementation of worksheets based on role plays

may be considered as innovation since this kind of activities are not common in the English

classes. Despite students have a textbook, it does not propose enough oral activities to do with

students; correspondingly, it was necessary to design a set of worksheets to develop the students'

fluency. This is also new for the students because they were used to working most of their

classes on the activities presented in the book.

Finally, this intervention was a new experience for me because I had never developed

materials on the basis of language acquisition principles and the MD frameworks previously

explained. Besides, this is the first time I conduct a research study and analyze its results to

improve both the students' process and my teaching practices.

Theory of the nature of language and language learning. Teaching a foreign language

implies being up-to-date with the theory that underlies language learning. According to Tudor

(2001) there are four main visions of the nature of language: linguistic perspective, functional

perspective, self-expression perspective, and culture and ideology perspective. The English

program at Santo Tomás de Aquino school is based on the functional perspective, whose main

goal is to use the language for communicative purposes. In this way, the school expects that

English serves as a functional tool that contributes to the students' personal and professional life.

In addition to considering this vision, I took into account the self-expression perspective because

role plays let the learners express their feelings, interests, preferences; and most importantly,

establish relationships with their classmates.

In regards to language learning, Tudor (2001) advocated four visions: Experiential

learning, analytical learning, habit formation (developing automaticity), and the role of affect.

The visions that best meets the requirements of the school and my pedagogical intervention are

the experiential learning and habit formation: developing automaticity.

Experiential learning is closely related to the functional perspective explained above as it

considers the communicative purposes of the language. Role plays permit teachers to focus on

the two main issues of this vision: First, learning by doing, which means that all the

communicative experiences that take place in the classroom help students to learn and strengthen

their knowledge; and second, learning a language to make a pragmatic use of it.

Lastly, habit formation: developing automaticity suits my pedagogical strategy because

this vision is centered on the knowledge of the language and the ability to use it in a fluent and

automatic manner, which is the main objective of this study. This vision also highlights the

importance of a certain degree of habit formation in linguistic competence.

Methodological approach underlying the pedagogical intervention. The

methodological approach that frames this pedagogical intervention is the Communicative

Language Teaching (CLT) that, according to Richards and Rodgers (1986), intends to "a) make

communicative competence the goal of language teaching and b) develop procedures for the

teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication" (p. 66). In consequence, the main purpose of this approach is to develop the communicative competence and promote the development of the four language skills to achieve communication.

The CLT approach is related to the structural and functional views of language because, as stated by Littlewood (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001), "One of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (p. 155). Therefore, the CLT approach focuses not only on the grammar aspects, but also on the semantic and communicative dimensions of the language.

By the same token, Finocchiaro and Brumfit (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2001) presented the main characterizing features of CLT. This approach focuses on communicative functions and from the beginning of the process seeks to engage participants in communication. It also looks for tools to help students to learn according to their age and interests. The teacher is a promoter that motivates language learning. Fluency precedes accuracy and interaction is attained through pair or group work. These aspects were relevant to me because my pedagogical intervention was designed by keeping in mind the learners' necessities, interests and language level, as well as it aimed at fostering the students' speaking fluency through group work and the performance of role plays.

With regards to the materials and activities implemented in CLT, Richards and Rodgers (2001) asserted that this approach makes use of: text-based, task-based and realia. Role plays are considered task-based activities as they require that students do meaningful tasks based on real situations by using the target language. As stated above, I developed materials based on role

plays to improve the speaking fluency of fourth grade students, thereby enhancing their communicative competence too.

Connection of the pedagogical intervention with the research question. This pedagogical intervention that is supported by a theoretical framework, the SLA principles, the CLT approach, and the theory of nature of language and language learning, has a direct connection to my research question in the following ways: First, the implementation of role plays as a strategy that improves speaking fluency in fourth grade students; second, the use of innovative material based on role plays to stimulate speaking in learners; and finally, the development of the speaking fluency by means of the CLT approach, whose main goal is to achieve a communicative competence.

Suggested instructional phases. The suggested instructional phases include the proposed materials development framework, the informed consent, the sensitization, and the implementation of materials.

Proposed material development framework. Some scholars like Graves (1996), Masuhara (1998), Jolly and Bolitho (1998), Nuñez, Pineda and Téllez (2004), Nuñez et al. (2009), and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012) have proposed some MD frameworks, which have certain similarities and differences. For instance, all the authors coincide that the first stage for developing materials is a needs analysis, in which the teacher identifies the students' necessities, interests and expectations. To begin with, Graves (1996) declared that an MD framework must include the following stages: "needs assessment, determining goals and objectives, content, selection and developing materials and activities, organizing content and activities, evaluation and finally, resources and constraints" (p. 13). According to this scholar, using a framework is essential because it establishes an organized way to develop a complex

process. Also, he mentioned that the students' needs and contexts determine which stage demands more attention and time to work on.

Besides, most of the authors consider that after identifying the students' needs, the teacher must set the goals and objective; although Núñez et al. (2009), and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012) proposed that before setting the objectives, it is necessary to identify the method and the approach that underline the materials.

Moreover, some authors like Masuhara (1998) considered that, after establishing the objectives, teachers must plan the syllabus and reflect upon the contents and activities that could be included in the materials. However, Jolly and Bolitho (1998) also proposed to take into account the context and the course texts when preparing the topics to be included in the materials. The next stage varies depending on the scholar; for example, Nuñez et al. (2009) suggested continuing with the creation and adaptation of materials. Conversely, Graves (1997) and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012) stated that it is better to continue organizing the contents and activities. Jolly and Bolitho (1998) called this stage "pedagogical realization" and "physical production" (p. 97) in which the teacher finds the appropriate activities and adapts the materials.

Another stage that these authors have in common is the assessment and evaluation of materials, which is necessary to receive feedback and determine their suitability. Besides this, Nuñez et al. (2009), and Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012) drew attention on the importance of piloting the materials to make adjustments for future implementations.

According to the previous theory, I proposed the following framework to develop and implement my materials: needs assessment, setting objectives, content and activities selection; creation, piloting and, implementation of materials; and finally, assessment and evaluation. I

consider that with these stages, teacher and students develop a favorable process that lead to achieve the objectives proposed in this instructional design. All in all, following an MD framework is paramount to create meaningful and effective materials that meet the students' needs and preferences.

Informed consent. Before starting with the pedagogical intervention, it was necessary that parents and students knew about this research study and the activities it involved. For this reason, parents were sent a letter consent (See Appendix E) in which they were informed about the purposes and objectives of the study, the process in which their children were invited to participate, and the way the data would be collected. Besides, they were explained that all the information gathered would be confidential. After this, parents gave the authorization to conduct the study with their children.

Sensitization. Before starting with the pedagogical intervention, it was fundamental to have a sensitization process with the learners, so that they could understand the benefits of the study, which can be summarized in the improvement of their speaking fluency. In this stage, the participants were motivated to make a great job, favoring their language learning process. Lastly, it was crucial to clarify that the students' performance along the implementation would not affect their academic grades; on the contrary, it would help them to improve their English skills; especially, their speaking fluency.

Implementation of the materials. The role plays were based on some topics taken from the course textbook that students have. Given that, I designed five worksheets (See Appendix B), I selected five main topics that were studied in the second semester of the year. Therefore, I planned the implementation taking into account that students needed to work on one topic per worksheet as it is shown in the following table:

Table 1

Topics, vocabulary and grammar worked in each worksheet.

Topic	Vocabulary	Grammar
1. Let's buy a ticket	• Train station vocabulary • Prepositions of time • Telling the time	• Present simple • Future (going to)
2. Let's play detectives	• Parts of the body • Colors • Adjectives	• Expression: used to • Simple past tense • Past continuous
3. An unusual animal!	• Animal bodies • Adjectives • Descriptive words	• Simple present tense • Comparatives and superlatives • Expression: look like
4. Let's talk about music	• Instruments and types of instruments (classification)	• Simple present tense • Possessive pronouns • Expressing opinions
5. An encounter with an alien!	• Planets • Space words	• Future time (will) • Future time expressions • Adverbs of manner

Sample of Lesson. A sample of one of the worksheets can be found in Appendix B.

This chapter of methodological and instructional design and pedagogical intervention finishes with the implementation of materials. Chapter four is related to data analysis, categories and subcategories with the corresponding evidences.

Chapter IV

Data Analysis

Data Analysis Procedure

This chapter describes the methodology that I used to analyze the data collected in this qualitative action research study. Similarly, it describes the findings that emerged from the data analysis. These findings were divided into categories and subcategories supported by the evidence taken from the different data collection instruments: students' artifacts, field notes, audios, video-recordings and focus groups interviews. The findings reveal the improvement that students had in terms of their speaking fluency thanks to the materials implemented and the use of role plays.

One of the most common approaches to analyze data in qualitative research is the grounded theory that, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a "general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analyzed" (p. 273). Hence, with this approach, the researcher is able to create theory based on the findings. Considering this, the grounded theory allowed me to organize the information in categories and subcategories of analysis.

I started the analysis by systematizing the data, which involves taking information from the field notes, the open and close questions in the self-assessment questionnaire, the audios and transcriptions of interviews, and the videos of the role plays. I also resorted to some data reduction techniques that, as stated by Miles and Huberman (1994), help to organize, focus, select, simplify and transform the data. Among these ways to reduce data we can find: writing summaries, coding, teasing out themes, making clusters, making partitions and writing memos.

I started the analysis by revising the field notes and using the color-coding technique, which allows the researcher to tag key themes and manage data to define categories (Taylor & Renner, 2003). As a result, I highlighted sentences or phrases related to each construct of my research study. It is worth mentioning that I used a different color for each one of the constructs, so that I could discover common patterns. To this respect, Stottok, Bergaus and Gorra (2011) asserted that "this method follows the steps of Grounded Theory coding but uses colors to reflect the code, concept, and finally category to which a piece of text is assigned" (p. 1). In this way, I could visualize the relation among the concepts, codes and categories that emerged from the field notes. After that, I continued using the color coding technique when analyzing the other instruments that I employed.

Subsequently, I used the triangulation method to confirm and validate the patterns and the possible categories and subcategories established when I analyzed the field notes. According to Guion, Diehl and McDonald (2011) triangulation is "a method used by qualitative researchers to check and establish validity in their studies by analyzing a research question from multiple perspectives" (p. 1). Moreover, these researchers claimed that there are various types of triangulation: data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and environmental triangulation. I centered my analysis on the methodological and theory triangulations.

On the one hand, methodological triangulation refers to the use of several qualitative or quantitative methods to compare the results and identify if they are similar (Guion, Diehl & McDonald, 2011). These results can be obtained through the data gathering instruments applied during the implementation; as Denzin (1978) affirmed, triangulation may be understood as a process of data integration taken from different sources. In light of this, the data triangulation

allowed me to compare the information obtained from the different instruments and determine

their relation. As well as this, it permitted me to keep the relevant and consistent aspects, and

discard the ones that were not meaningful.

On the other hand, theory triangulation entails the use of theoretical perspectives

concerning a group of data to have different points of view about one finding; and in this way,

validate the information. In the following lines, I present the categories and subcategories that

emerged from the data analysis process.

Research Categories

After completing the data analysis described above, I found three main categories with

their corresponding subcategories, as shown in table 2. Each category is related to one of the

constructs that underlie the research question. In the next paragraphs, I will describe each

category and subcategory with different evidence and theory that support the findings.

Table 2

Categories and subcategories

Research question: How do the design and implementation of worksheets based on role plays contribute to the improvement of fourth graders' speaking fluency at a private school?	
Categories	**Subcategories**
Positive impact of the materials in terms of engagement and group interaction.	Making connections to learner's reality: capturing their attention and interest through materials. Engaging in interaction and effective group work through activities.
Clicking with the essence of role plays and their scenarios.	Active and meaningful performance in the role plays by embracing their roles. Dealing with actual scenarios through the topics of the role plays.
Impact of strategies and tools on students' fluency.	Neglecting pronunciation or grammar accuracy to keep conversation flowing. Improvement of some aspects of speaking. Natural flow of speech impacted by script dependence.

Positive impact of the materials in terms of engagement and group interaction. One of the purposes of MD is to create innovative and interesting materials. This goal was accomplished every time the students demonstrated their pleasure when working on the activities proposed, especially those that involved group work. This issue has to do with one of the principles mentioned in the instructional design that has to do with the relevance of making "sure the texts and tasks are as interesting, relevant and enjoyable as possible so as to exert a positive influence on the learners' attitudes to the language and to the process of learning it" (Tomlinson, 2009, p. 5). It was evident that each of the activities from the worksheets allowed students to learn new concepts and encouraged them to practice the language when they had to rehearse and present their role plays.

Additionally, the implementation of contextualized materials was a new experience for the students since they were used to working on the activities from the textbook. This had a positive influence on the students' learning process because their interests and expectations were taken into account. At the same time, the worksheets based on role plays strengthened the learners' team work and increased the support they gave each other. To this respect, Brown (2001) declared that "group work is a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language" (p. 177). It was demonstrated that group work was an appropriate strategy for helping students to feel more confident when participating in speaking activities.

This first category is divided into two subcategories: (a) *making connections to their reality: capturing learners' attention and interest through material;* (b) *engaging in interaction and effective group work through activities.*

Making connections to their reality: Capturing learners' attention and interest through materials. This subcategory is related to the fact that students could establish connections with their reality through the topics proposed in the worksheets. Despite the fact that the topics chosen by the students were related to the units of the textbook, they were interesting and captured the children's attention. Ramos and Aguirre (2014) pointed out that "the tasks proposed in the materials developed by teachers can entail topics closely related to students' context such as their home, community, school norms, and knowledge" (p.140). In this sense, one of the main characteristics of the worksheets was that they provided students with the possibility to link the topics to real situations from their daily life, which engaged them to work on the activities.

The following excerpt taken from the artifacts shows that materials created opportunities to make connections with the learners' world as they could express their likes and opinions about music, a topic that is very close to children:
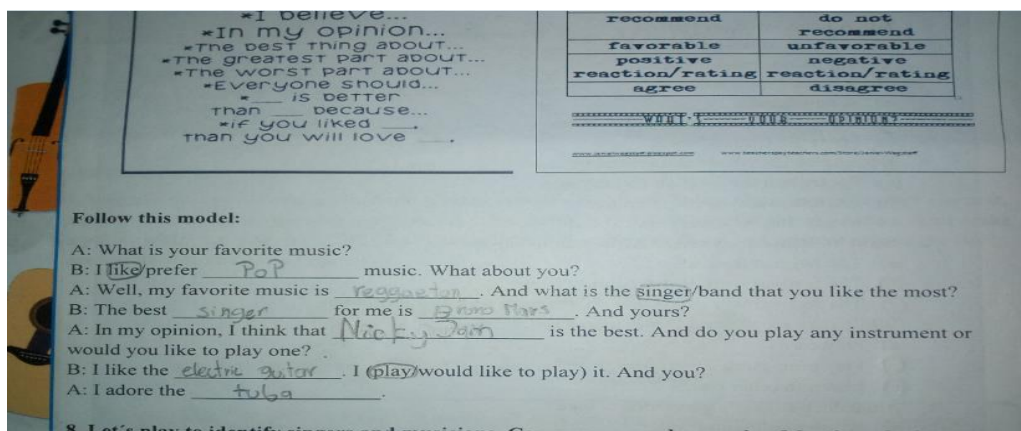
(*Students' artifacts, Worksheet N•4)*

In this sample it is also possible to observe how students prepared a short dialogue about their opinions on favorite music, singers or bands. In this case, students included information about Nicky Jam and Bruno Mars, as well as they mentioned the instruments they liked the most.

The fact that students made connections to their reality was also observed when they answered the open questions from the self-assessment included in the worksheets. With respect

to the question that inquired about the learners' perception concerning the materials, some of the

wrote the following answers:

> Students #1 "I can use it in the real life". [sic]
>
> *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 1)*
>
> Student #2 "It teaches me to know what to say in certain situations". [sic] *(Assessment form, students'*
>
> *artifacts, Worksheet No 3)*
>
> Student #3 "That I can use it in everyday life". [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No*
>
> *5)*

In these excerpts, it is possible to see that students reflected upon the way in which the

worksheets offered them certain expressions that could help them to deal with real

communicative situations. In this regard, Montijano (2014) asserted that teacher-made resources

"are undeniably the best materials that students may enjoy: personalized, as they cater for

different learning styles, and relevant, because they respond to the learners' needs as no other

material can do" (p. 281). This is why, the worksheets were based on the learners' preferences

and they provided the students with the possibility to express their likes and experiences.

To corroborate this finding, the following excerpt from the field notes shows the

connection that students made with their reality when they were doing an exercise that required

them to order some actions that people do when they take a train:

> here the teacher explains that when we buy a ticket for a train, this one has a seat number, so people have to
>
> look for the seat and Brayan says "como en los aviones" and the teacher says "yes, exactly, like in the
>
> airplanes". [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No 1)*

In this field note, it is clear the way a student linked the fact of buying a ticket for a train

with his experience of buying a ticket for an airplane. Maybe, they have never traveled by train,

but they made the relation with a more common context according to their experience.

In regards to the fact that capturing the students' attention and interest implies creating an adequate environment that promotes learning, Zhao (2014) argued the following:

The foreign language teachers are required not to follow the teaching materials blindly, but they shall create different teaching contexts based on teaching content and make the students participate in, so as to arouse their enthusiasm and learning interest maximally. (p. 309)

One of the topics that called the participants' attention the most was music. Working on this issue increased the children's motivation and participation in class. The following excerpts exemplify that students were highly interested discussing about this topic:

The teacher starts reading the title of the worksheet and asks students if they like music. Most of them answer that "yes" and they start talking about their preferences and start naming some singers and bands. [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No 4)*

This example demonstrates that when kids really like a topic, they want to talk about it all the time, thereby improving their speaking skill. The students showed their interest in the topic from the beginning of the session and they wanted to express their preferences about types of music and singers. This created a suitable and comfortable environment and encouraged the children to speak in English without any effort.

In line with this point of view, I display another instance that confirms the impact of the materials implemented on the students' interest in the class:

María José: The most that I liked was the one about the instruments, because I like all about music. In general, the topics were nice and each one had a specific topic for example the one about comparatives. [sic] *(Focus interviews, group No 2)*

In this example, the student mentioned her favorite topic from the worksheets, as well as she established a connection with her likes.

All in all, this subcategory evinces that taking into account the students' likes and context not only makes the materials more significant for the students, but also increases their interest and willingness to participate in class. The next subcategory explores the role of materials to improving interaction and group work.

Engaging in interaction and effective group work through activities. The materials implemented fostered interaction among students because they had to work in groups to present their role plays. Brown (2001) claimed that interaction refers to "the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other" (p. 165). This means that even a conversation between two people generates interaction as it produces a mutual effect of answering and transferring ideas. Similarly, Brown (2001) affirmed that group work is a teaching technique where more than two learners work together in autonomous way to accomplish a determine task related to language learning. Clearly, interaction also takes place in group work because its members need to exchange ideas and make agreements.

Some of the activities proposed in the worksheets allowed students to interact with their classmates by means of group work. I show an example of this:
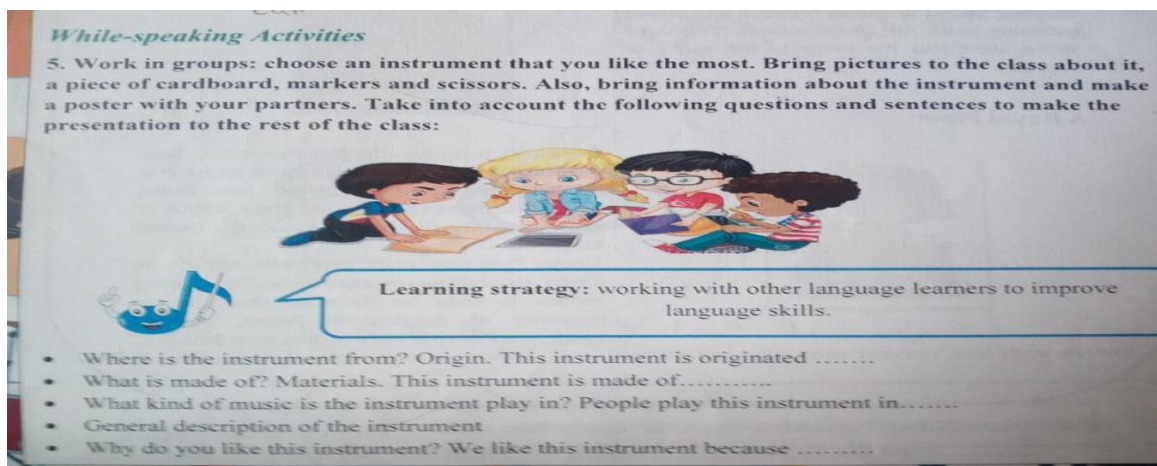
(***Students' artifacts, Worksheet N° 4)***

In this activity, the students had to make a poster in groups about the instrument they liked the most, as well as they had to present it to their classmates. They had to agree in the group on which instrument they would choose and collaborate to make the poster. These are some of the final posters they made:
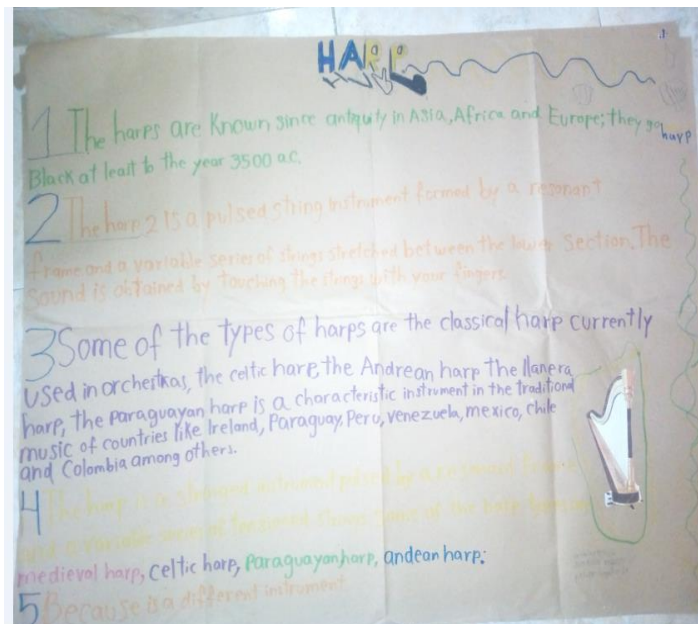
(*Students' artifacts, Worksheet N°4*)
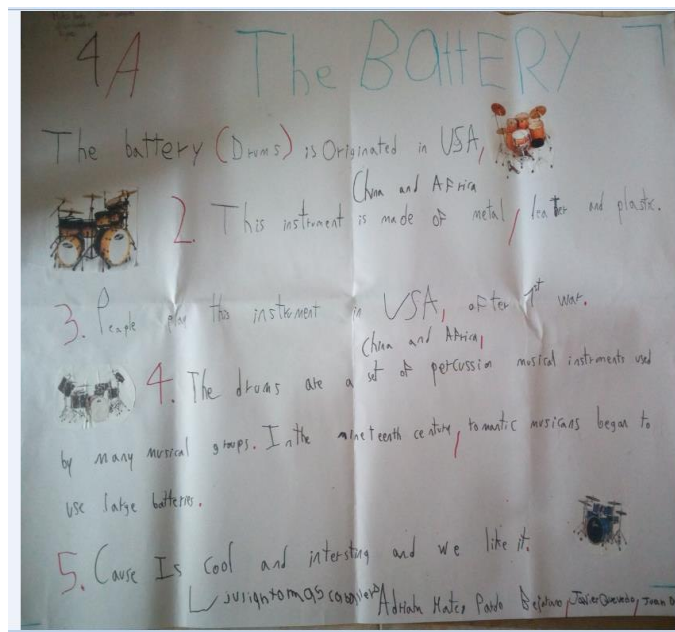
(*Students' artifacts, Worksheet N°4*)

The students brought to class the necessary information and materials to make the posters. In the oral presentation, each member of the group talked about one of the components of the poster. This was an excellent exercise that engaged fourth graders to work in groups.

Likewise, students expressed that the group work activities included in the worksheets boosted their interaction, as can be observed in the following examples:

"I could interact with my classmates" [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 1)*

"It helps me to interact with my friends" [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 5)*

In these excerpts, the learners stated how working in groups allowed them to feel more confident when interacting with their classmates. Based on Harmer's (2007) views, "group work and pair work, both foster cooperative activity in that students involved work together to

complete a task" (p. 43). In other words, when students have a common goal, they work

cooperatively and support each other to finish the task.

In another piece of evidence taken from the field notes, we can see that students helped

one another to verify their answers in some exercises. It was noticeable that students felt more

self-assured when comparing their work with others'; that is why, they even asked their

classmates about the meaning of the words, as it can be seen in the subsequent example:

> Some students like Miguel, Freddy, Sebastian and Tom start to share their answers to verify if they are ok.
>
> Some others ask to their partners about the meaning of the question or any word, they help each other. [sic]
>
> *(Field notes, Worksheet No 4)*

In this case, students demonstrated that they did not depend on the teacher to solve the

activities. To this respect, Harmer (2007) affirmed that group work leads learners to develop a

more autonomous work without the constant teacher's supervision. Therefore, group work

motivates the students to start making their own learning decisions. The next instance shows the

students' perceptions about group work:

> Teacher: How do you describe the interaction and the work with your classmates? Tomás: I found it very
>
> good to work in groups because what we did not know, the other suddenly knew and each one gave his/her
>
> idea to do things, their costumes ... and when it was time to perform, well…we felt very confident because
>
> we knew that his/her partner was going to help us. [sic] *(Focus interviews, group No 3).*

This excerpt evinces that students felt both comfortable and self-assured when working

in groups as they could support each other. According to this, Brown (2001) sustained that

"small groups provide opportunities for student initiation, for face-to-face give and take, for

practice in negotiation of meaning, for extended conversational exchanges, and for students'

adoption of roles that would otherwise be impossible" (p. 178). Consequently, group work

permits the learners to initiate conversations in which they negotiate, give and provide

information, and assume specific roles.

All these pieces of evidence show the positive impact that materials and group work had on the learners' interaction, as well as it demonstrates that topics related to students' setting capture their attention and interest. The next category has to do with the second construct of this research: role plays.

Clicking with the essence of role plays and their scenarios. This category comprises the importance of role plays and their scenarios in the improvement of students' speaking; and in general, in their English language learning. One of the purposes of using role plays in the classroom is that students assume a different role and perform it in a specific situation or scenario. Trivedi (2017) considered that role play "is an ideal activity in which students could use their English creatively and as it aims to stimulate a conversation situation in which students find an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill" (p. 1178). Thus, role plays are an appropriate way to develop and improve the speaking skills since they permit students both to recreate conversations that may take place in their daily lives, and to express their ideas, opinions and feelings. In this regard, Ments (1999) stated that "by devising scenes of everyday life, in particular those situations which make use of the vocabulary to be learnt, the students can be encouraged to use language in a free and interesting way" (p. 19). Hence, one strategy to motivate students to use the language is to offer them familiar situations or scenarios where they can use the vocabulary and expressions naturally.

This category is composed of two subcategories related to role plays and scenarios: (a) *active and meaningful performance in the role plays by embracing their roles,* and (b) *dealing with actual scenarios through the topics of the role plays.*

Active and meaningful performance in the role plays by embracing their roles. This subcategory describes the way in which students assumed their characters in the role plays. The success when assuming the roles relied on two main aspects: First, students understood the goal

of the role plays; and second, they prepared their script by taking into account the characters'

voice.

It is pertinent to mention that, as previously stated, students worked on the three types of

role plays suggested by Cho (2015): scripted, semi-scripted and non-scripted. The aim of

working with the three of them was to observe the learners' process when creating their own role

play scripts. The following samples show the progress that learners had from the first worksheet

to the lasts one:
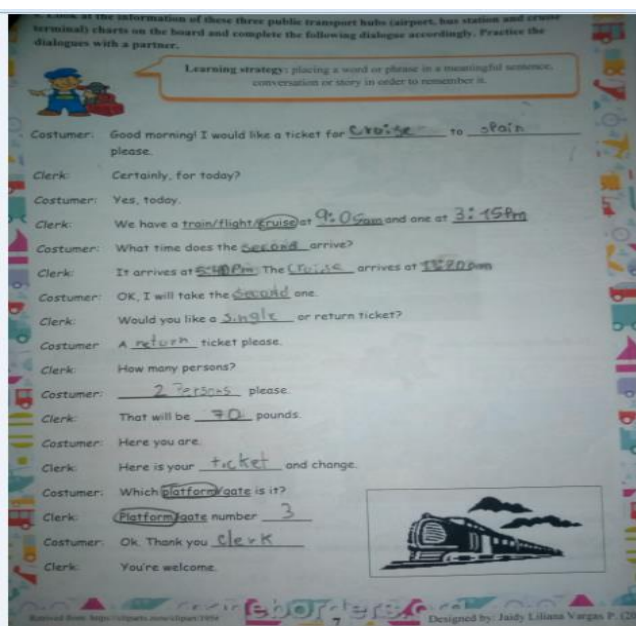
(*Students' artifacts, Worksheet N°1*)   (*Students' artifacts, Worksheet N°5*)
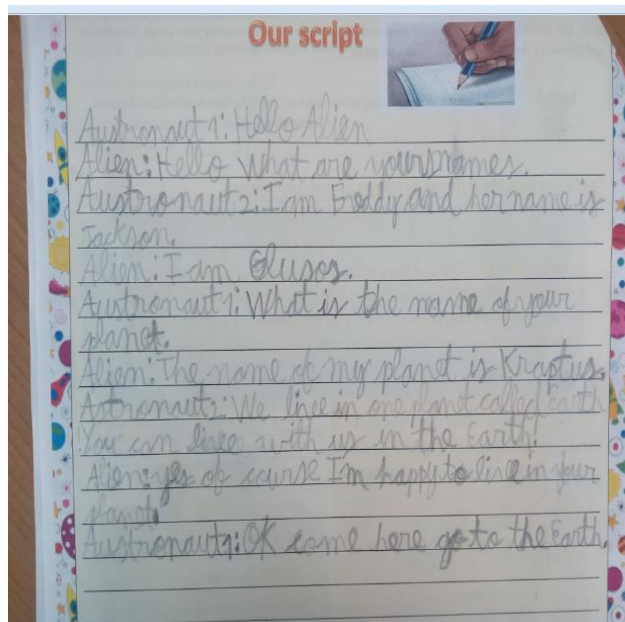
The example on the left corresponds to a semi-scripted role play since students were

given some information and they had to complete it. On the contrary, the sample on the right

represents a non-scripted role play as the students had to write all the script according to their

knowledge and some cues given by the teacher. It was observed that the learners engaged with

their roles from the very moment they started writing their role play scripts. They started to

embrace their roles creating what they wanted to say and preparing themselves for their actual

role play performance. In reference to this preparation, Davies (1990) asserted that students

should be "asked to study and prepare for their roles so that they can identify with the

personalities behind the roles and move towards characterization" (p. 94). In this way, one

significant aspect that made role plays successful is that learners really adopted the characters

that they had to perform. In the subsequent excerpts, we can appreciate that the students felt good

performing their roles as they were meaningful to them:

> We could feel like other people. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 1)*
>
> Assume the role respectively. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 4)*

It is clear that students enjoyed playing their roles and that this technique had a great

influence on their language learning experience. Concerning this issue, Dorathy and

Mahalakshmi (2011) argued that:

> Role play can improve learners speaking skills in any situation, and helps learners to interact.
> As for the shy learners, role play helps by providing a mask, where learners with difficulty in
> conversation are liberated. In addition, it is fun and most learners will agree that enjoyment
> leads to better learning. (p. 3)

Based on the author's view, I consider important to highlight that role plays promote

participation and interaction no matter the abilities or personal characteristics of each student.

Since the learners have to perform a different character, they put their shyness aside and enjoy

the activity. This engagement can be observed in the following excerpt from the field notes:

> The fifth group is formed by Sebastian, Tomas and Jonhatan. At the beginning of the role play, they
> represent the scene of the robbery and this part is not in the script. They want to be creative adding another
> part to the role play. [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No2)*

This role play was about an interview between a detective and some witnesses who were

at a crime scene, which in this case was a robbery. The script given by the teacher did not have the scene of the robbery; however, the participants of this group wanted to recreate it. They got so involved in the role play that they wanted to present this scene too.

Similarly, the next example demonstrates that students enjoyed performing their role plays. A student answered in the focus group interview that one of the most interesting aspects of the role plays was the dialogues and how they imagined their roles:

> What things did you find interesting about role plays, that is, what was the most interesting thing for you about having done this role-play? Neytan: what I found most interesting about the role plays were the dialogues, which were very expressive and very striking and also that we could imagine what we could do and when we could talk, we felt good. [sic] ***(Focus interviews, group No 2)***

In terms of imagination, Ladousse (1987) affirmed that "perhaps the most important reason for using role play is that is fun. Once students understand what is expected from them, they thoroughly enjoy letting their imagination rip" (p. 7). According to these insights, role plays are implemented in the EFL classroom because they not only permit that students learn in a fun way, but also lead them to explore their imagination and create new characteristics for their roles, which is what fourth graders did along the pedagogical implementation.

The next subcategory is related to actual scenarios from the role play's topics.

Dealing with actual scenarios through the topics of the role plays. This subcategory emerged from the way students made sense of the topics of the role plays and integrated them to their knowledge of the world. Moreover, it shows that the learners understood the relevance of the expressions and vocabulary employed in the different scenarios of the role plays as they could be useful for real future situations that required the use of English. This idea is closely to Zyoud's (2010) insights when he stated that "by simulating reality, role play allows students to

prepare and practice for possible future situations" (p. 6). In this way, role plays offer students

the possibility of being prepared for real situations that might happen either in the present or in

the future.

The following excerpts from the self-assessments demonstrate the students' opinion in

regards to the usefulness of working with role plays and their contribution to their learning

experience:

> Student #1: When I go to a country that speaks English, I can speak with ease. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 1)*
>
> Student #2: To learn a lot because I can interact with people who speak English. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 2)*

This first student was thinking about a future scenario in another country where he could

use English. Besides, he expressed that he felt more confident when speaking English thanks to

the role plays performed in class. The second student stated that role plays helped her to learn

how to use the language to interact with other people that speak English.

In the next example, it is possible to appreciate that students got involved in an actual

context (music) that encouraged them to assume their roles properly:

> Students prepare the scenario that is like a TV reporter set. Tom assumes the role of a reporter; he has a microphone and makes the intonation when he introduces the singer in the program. Matthew also assumes his role as a singer and speaks in a natural way. [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No 4)*

These notes show that when students assumed their roles, they imagined the whole

scenario of a TV set and acted like a reporter and a musician. They also changed their voices and

said expressions that artists use when they speak. This was a likeable topic for the students

because they are always in contact with music, so it was familiar to them. Moreover, this topic

allowed participants to speak with ease and to forget about the mistakes they could make.

By the same token, the learners expressed that the role plays performed in class provided them with practical vocabulary and tools that they could use when traveling to other countries. Take, for example, the following excerpt from the focus interview:

> How do you feel performing in the role plays? Jack: Well fun, I really liked the role plays, they will help me if at any time I go to other countries, there I can use the vocabulary I used in role plays to speak English. [sic] *(Focus interviews, group No 3)*

As can be observed, in addition to considering role plays fun and enjoyable, this student recognized that the vocabulary and expressions used in the dialogues could help him in another scenario like English speaking countries. As stated by Livingstone (1983), role plays can help recreate the language students practiced in different contexts, the kind of language students will probably need outside the classroom.

In addition, the topics chosen for the role plays were associated to actual scenarios like music, animals, public transportation, among others. These topics allowed students to feel like in a real situation; that is why, they could convey their ideas easily. To this respect, Kodotchigova (2002) asserted that "role play prepares L2 learners for L2 communication in a different social and cultural context" (p. 1). Therefore, this is an excellent strategy to help learners develop their communicative skills; specially speaking that is the one we use most of the time.

The next category is related to the strategies and the tools that students used to improve their speaking fluency.

Impact of strategies and tools on students' fluency. This category entails the different strategies that students used to keep conversations going along their performances, which contributed to the improvement of their speaking fluency. Ladousse (1987) argued that "role play is one of a whole gamut of communicative techniques which develops fluency in language students, which promotes interaction in the classroom, and which increases motivation" (p. 7).

Indeed, role plays fostered interaction among the learners and increased their motivation towards the language learning; but most importantly, they enlightened students on several ways to improve their speaking fluency.

As it has been already mentioned, I resorted to the implementation of role plays to enhance the fourth graders' speaking fluency. According to Richards (2006), "fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns" (p.14). Role plays comply with all these characteristics as they create the perfect scenario for students to interact with their classmates and exchange information.

Three subcategories emerged from this category: a) *neglecting pronunciation or grammar accuracy to keep conversation flowing,* b) *improvement of some aspects of speaking,* and c) *natural flow of speech impacted by script dependence.*

Neglecting pronunciation or grammar accuracy to keep conversation flowing. This subcategory deals with the fact that students did not pay attention to the pronunciation of words when they performed their role plays, neither did they focus on accuracy in terms of grammar structures. Nevertheless, they felt there was an improvement in respect of their speaking fluency, as it is exemplified in the following excerpt.

> Student #1: I noticed that I can speak more fluently although I forget what I was going to say. [sic]
> (***Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 2)***

One advantage of role plays is that it helps learners to improve their flow while speaking. Zyoud (2010) argued that "the main benefit of role play from the point of view of language teaching is that it enables a flow of language to be produced that might be otherwise difficult or

impossible to create" (p. 7). This might be due to the fact that students get so involved in the role

plays, that they forget they are in class.

In the subsequent instance, it can be seen that learners disregarded some sentence

structures in an attempt to keep the conversation going in one of the role plays created by them:

> They speak remembering their dialogues. Jonhatan has some grammar mistakes but he continues speaking
>
> in a natural way. [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No 4)*

It is possible that this student has realized that he was making some mistakes, but he gave

more importance to the message he was transmitting. In this case, fluency predominated over

accuracy since learners wanted to accomplish a task and maintain a conversation, rather than

using accurate words (Ladousse, 1987).

In line with this point of view, the following example displays that although students

made grammatical mistakes, they kept the dialogue in the role play:

> Detective (student #1): Don't worry, I can help you with some questions. We are…eh/ he are tall?
>
> Witness (student #2): Yes… he is tall
>
> Detective (student #1): What kind of hair, he are?
>
> Witness (student #3): the type of hair is short and he has grey hair. [sic] *(Role play video recording,*
>
> *worksheet N• 2)*

In this dialogue about detectives, it can be observed that the student who performed as a

detective made some mistakes in the use of the verb to be, but his classmate (the witness) did use

correct grammar. However, despite the mistakes, they continued their dialogue because they

wanted to show that they were able do it.

With respect to pronunciation, the next example demonstrates that although students had

some difficulties to say the words properly, they carried on their conversation:

Which difficulties did you find in the performance of the role plays? Mariana: Ah ... well, some words I did not know them or they were very difficult to pronounce for me, but ... but no more. [sic] *(Focus interviews, group No 1)*

This evidence reveals that some students had difficulties with pronunciation, not with the dialogues or conversations they were holding in their role plays. Once again, the learners' priority was to maintain the interaction with their classmates.

The next subcategory covers some of the improvements that students had in terms of the speaking skill.

Improvement of some aspects of speaking. This subcategory emerged from the evidence that shows students' improvement in some speaking aspects thanks to their performance in the role plays. Among these aspects, students enhanced their fluency, pronunciation, conversational discourse and natural interaction. Dorathy and Mahalakshmi (2011) avowed that "role play can improve learners speaking skills in any situation, and help learners to interact" (p. 3). This was confirmed along the implementation of this pedagogical intervention as role plays had a positive impact on the students' speaking skill. Let me display an example that evinces the learners' perception about their speaking fluency:

Which other aspects of your speaking fluency have changed?

Student #1: Be more fluent in English. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 1)*

Student #2: I already know how to pronounce better and faster. [sic] *(Assessment form, students' artifacts, Worksheet No 2)*

In these open questions from the self-assessments, it can be noticed that students recognized their improvement in terms of fluency and pronunciation. This progress was achieved after repeating and practicing the same topic and vocabulary several times in the different worksheets.

In the same line of thought, after implementing the 5 worksheets, the learners were able to maintain a conversation without using any Spanish; and most importantly, they communicated coherent ideas. Accordingly, Trivedi (2017) asserted that "role play is a technique which develops students' fluency in target language, promotes students to speak or interact with others in the classroom, increases motivation and makes the teaching-learning process more enjoyable" (p. 1183). Definitely, role play benefits the speaking skill at many levels: fluency, interaction, motivation, participation, etc. The following note is an example of how fourth graders managed to express all their ideas in English:

> Then, Jackson makes his presentation about the guitar. His presentation is short but all the time he speaks in English. His speech is good, with good pronunciation and rhythm. [sic] *(Field notes, Worksheet No 4)*

As it can be appreciated, this student was able to present all the characteristics of the guitar with a good pronunciation and appropriate speed. This demonstrates that having practiced the vocabulary in previous exercises aided the students to face speaking tasks. In fact, this student did not even use a script or a cue card to guide himself. To this respect, Bailey (2003) stated that fluency is "the extent to which speakers use the language quickly and confidently, with few hesitations or unnatural pauses, false starts, word searches, etc." (p. 55). Thus, it can be affirmed that most of the learners improved their fluency as they felt more confident to communicate orally and they spoke at a faster pace in accordance with their knowledge.

Likewise, it was observed that most of the learners focused their fluency improvement on their speed; thus, they tried to say more consecutive sentences as it is illustrated in the subsequent instance:

> What aspects of your oral fluency have you noticed different after having done the worksheets?
>
> Sara: now I can speak faster and more often with slightly longer sentences. [sic] *(Focus interview, group No 1)*

This example demonstrates that, after having worked on the 5 worksheets and performed the corresponding role plays, the fourth graders were able to create longer sentences and produce them faster than at the beginning of the implementation.

The next subcategory describes the dependence that some students had on the usage of the script in their role play performances.

Natural flow of speech impacted by script dependence. This subcategory addresses the fact that some students used their role plays scripts in the performances, which prevented them from speaking naturally. Just as several participants spoke spontaneously in their role plays, there were some other students who depended on their script; therefore, what they did was to read their dialogues so as not to forget what they had to say.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that these students were interested in their role play performance and they were aware of the necessity to learn the dialogues so that they were able to act out in a better way. Here there is an example of this:

> Learn more the dialogues and the words, so that the role does not go wrong. [sic] ***(Assessment form,***
> ***students' artifacts, Worksheet No 4)***

For this student, the success of a role play relied on learning the words and the dialogue to act out more naturally. For some authors like Jones (1982), role play not only means to act or play a role, it involves that learners recite their dialogues, which is considered part of the role play. From my point of view, despite the fact that some students did not learn their dialogues, they were interested in participating in the role plays and always showed a positive attitude towards the class.

What is more, an aspect that led some students to use their scripts is the length of the dialogues. In the following pieces of evidence from the field notes, it can be appreciated that

short dialogues were easy to remember; thus, in this case it was not necessary to look at the script; but the students who had to learn a longer speech sometimes used their script to remember what they had to say:

> Neytan knows his dialogue but Freddy has to look at the worksheet to remember what he has to say, especially the hours of the travels. Jack's dialogue is shorter so he knows it. To look at the worksheet don't allow Freddy to act in a natural way. [sic] ***(Field notes, Worksheet No 1)***
>
> They both use the worksheet to guide them but Santiago reads all the time the script so he cannot perform in a natural way. Jackson sometimes looks at the worksheet to help himself to remember the sentences but he acts in a more natural way, he tries to perform his role. [sic] ***(Field notes, Worksheet No 2)***

In these examples, it is possible to observe that the length of the scripts sometimes determined the students' necessity to read the scripts. In these cases, they preferred to read the scripts to keep the conversations and perform the role play in front of their classmates. As mentioned above, in the first two worksheets students had to complete a scripted role play and learn what they should to say. In such cases, the learners were not that free to create their own dialogue. If they forgot their lines, they could not make up something different; thus, they had to read the script to continue their role play.

Another reason for students to read the scripts is that they did not want to make mistakes when speaking. In this case, Harper-Walen and Morris (2005) suggested that teachers need to create a safe class environment where the learners feel comfortable and fearless of taking risks and making mistakes. It is pertinent to clarify that for some students being confident about themselves can take more time than for others.

The following excerpt exemplifies that the factors explained above sometimes led students to read the script:

What difficulties did you find in the performance of the role plays?

Mónica: Well, that sometimes I had to read or, in some of them, I learned the dialogues. [sic] (***Focus interviews group No 1)***

This instance may lead us to think that reading the scripts was not a problem related to attitude; instead, it was the consequence of factors such as the length of their lines or a lack of confidence that prevented students from speaking naturally. Besides, it is evident that this student noticed that the dependence on the script did not allow her to act out spontaneously. Most of the children were conscious of the fact that when they learned their dialogues, they could act out easier than when they were reading the script.

Having described and exemplified the categories and subcategories that emerged from this study, the next chapter presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations and possible questions for further research.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

This chapter comprises the conclusions in regards to the research question: How do the design and implementation of worksheets based on role plays contribute to the improvement of fourth graders' speaking fluency at a private school? It also describes the pedagogical implications on the teacher as a researcher and material developer, on the institution, and on ELT community. Finally, it presents the limitations and further research questions.

Conclusions

After doing this research study, I concluded that working with the speaking skill was a challenge, but at the same time a rewarding experience that permitted fourth graders from Santo Tomás de Aquino school to improve their fluency and confidence. I could achieve the purpose of this research study by means of contextualized material that allowed students to learn English in a different way and; more specifically, to enhance their speaking fluency. Besides, the implementation of role plays led the students to develop other skills like interaction and group work, as well as it developed learning in a fun way.

Materials had a positive impact on students' language learning in terms of interaction and group work. As Harmer (2007) asserted, group work is a cooperative activity that permits students to complete a task and interact with each other; in this case, students were willing and interested in carrying out all the activities presented in the worksheets. Moreover, materials were something new for the participants; so, they enjoyed working on the activities and interacting in groups.

Materials also allowed students to make connections with their reality. The topics included in the worksheets captured the students' attention since they could express their likes,

opinions and ideas about them. Besides this, the topics were related to the learners' daily life; for instance, buying a ticket in a transport hub, talking about animals and pets, discussing about favorite music and singers, among others. This motivated the students to work on the material and participate in the activities. In light of this, it was accomplished one of the Tomlinson's (2009) principles, which deals with the fact that teachers need to make sure that all the tasks implemented with their students should be interesting and have a positive impact on students' learning process.

Concerning the role plays, I concluded that assuming specific roles was a key factor for students to get engaged with their performance. Students demonstrated a high level of participation and even considered aspects such as the costumes and props for their presentations. Students enjoyed preparing the role-plays; they laughed and had fun with this technique. As established by Dorathy and Mahalakshmi (2011), role-play is a fun way of language learning that can help shy students to speak. Indeed, all the students were interested in participating in the role plays disregarding their fears of talking in public.

Another conclusion that is associated to role-plays is that students made sense of the different scenarios that were presented through the topics of the role-plays. These topics were so real and actual for the students, that they found the connection between them and future situations where they could use the language practiced during the role-plays. To this respect, Zyoud (2010) stated that role-plays simulate reality and allow students to prepare for future situations where they have to use English. in this sense, the learners expressed the usefulness of working with actual scenarios in the role-plays since this helped them to feel more confident to speak in English.

Regarding speaking, it was evident that most of the students wanted to keep the conversations in the role-plays; that is why, they neglected aspects such as the pronunciation of words and correct grammar structures. In this case, fluency predominated over accuracy (Ladousse, 1987); the priority was to accomplish a task and keep a conversation, rather than using accurate words. Besides, I found that some students occasionally depended on their scripts, which prevented them from speaking naturally. This was due to the fact that either the learners forgot the long dialogues, or they did not want to make mistakes.

Furthermore, role plays aided the students to improve their speaking skill in terms of speed, fluency, conversational discourse and natural interaction. According to Trivedi (2017), role plays develop the students' fluency, promote interaction and increases motivation to speak. The implementation of role-plays permitted students to enhance their speaking skill and most of them realized that their fluency is now better than at the beginning of the implementation. Lastly, it is pertinent to mention that the learners felt confident in the classes and this permitted them to have a better speed and fluency when speaking.

Pedagogical Implications

This research study had a positive impact on fourth grade students since it helped them to realize that they could work in groups to reach a common goal. Besides, they could actually improve some speaking aspects like their fluency and pronunciation. With regard to my colleagues, they felt motivated to work with materials different from the textbooks provided by the school. This study might also provide some guidance to ELT teachers who want to develop speaking skills in their students by using a drama technique like role-plays.

For me as a teacher, this study helped me to realize that we can find other ways to motivate students' language learning. At the same time, I recognized the relevance of taking into

account the students' needs when planning the classes and I learnt how to conduct a systematic

research study to improve a problem related to the students' learning process. In general, this

research study gave me the opportunity to grow professionally and personally and to improve my

role as a material developer which is something that we, as teachers, need all the time to create a

better learning environment for our students.

Limitations

Certainly, the main limitation during the implementation was the time. The institutional

activities in the school did not allow me to implement the initial six worksheets that I had

planned. Several times, it was necessary to postpone the activities of the worksheets for the next

class and the last two worksheets were developed in the last school days; thus, it was a little

difficult to complete all the activities in the students.

Further Research

Since this study opens the possibility to continue with other further research, I suggest the

following research questions for colleagues who are interested in improving speaking skills:

How do the design and implementation of contextualized materials based on different drama

techniques foster students' speaking accuracy? How do the design and implementation of

materials based on role-plays improve grammar use in students' speaking?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Needs Assessment Survey

Colegio Santo Tomás de Aquino

Educational Research Survey

Fourth Grade

Choose the best option:

1. Which skill is more important for you?

| Listening | Reading | Speaking | Writing |

2. How important is the speaking ability to you?

| Very important | A little | Not at all |

3. How often do you speak in English to communicate ideas in classes?

| never | sometimes | often | usually | always |

4. How do you feel when you have to speak in English?

| enjoyable | worried | nervous | confused |

5. Evaluate how is your speaking in this moment

Good   Regular   Need to improve

6. How would you like practicing speaking in English classes?

Individually   By pairs   In small groups   with the whole group

7. What kind of activities would you like to do in groups?

Presentations   Interviews   Role-plays

Discussions   Debates   Simulations

Appendix B: Students' Artifacts

2. Use words from the vocabulary to complete the sentences:

Learning strategy: placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation or story in order to remember it.

Example:

He is _bald_ and he has got a _moustache_
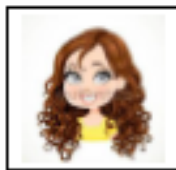
She has got _____ and _____ hair.

She has got _____ eyes.

He is _____ and _____

He has got _____ hair.

He has got _____ and _____ hair. He has got

_____ears and a _____ nose.

She has got _____ and _____ hair.

She is _____.

He is _____ and _____. He has got _____

and _____. He has got _____ hair.

He wears _____.

3. Now, draw the people according to each description. Don't forget to color them.

Learning strategy: relating new language information to concepts in memory by means of meaningful visual imagery, either in the mind or in actual drawing.

a) She is short and fat. She has got short, curly and dark hair. She has got big and green eyes and a small nose.

b) He is tall and slim. He has got dark moustache and beard. He has got brown eyes and a big nose. He is bald and wears glasses.

c) She is young and thin. She has got pigtails and her hair is red. She has got a small nose and she has freckles. She has got big teeth and a big mouth.

Remember that to make descriptions, you can use the verb "to be" or the verb "to have" according to the adjective. Examples:

She *is* tall and slim. I *am* fat and short. You *are* young.

She *has* long hair. I *have* small nose. He *has* big and green eyes.

3

Designed by: Jaidy Liliana Vargas P. (2017)

While-speaking Activities

4. Watch the following video to better understand the use of adjectives. Which one of the men could be the guilty? Give his description.

Learning strategy: using print or non print resources to understand incoming messages or produce outgoing messages.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxghO-CQlfA

5. Work in pairs, practicing descriptions. Describe to your relatives using different adjectives and according to the previous examples and explanations. Use and show the pictures that you bring.

Learning strategy: combining elements in new ways to produce a longer sequence, as in linking one phrase with another in a whole sentence.

Ask and answer questions about relatives' physical description following the model. Then, switch roles:

A: What does your father look like?

B: He is _____

A: How about your mother?

B: Well, she _____

6. Read the following mystery story and then make the corresponding description of each one of the suspects and the victim:

Learning strategy: placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation or story in order to remember it.

WHO IS THE KILLER?

Once upon a time, there was a rich man in London. Somebody killed this rich man at his house on a rainy day. So, the policemen and The Inspector George Brown came to that house. They started an investigation to find the murderer. At first, they understood that someone at home killed the rich man. There were 4 people at home when the man was killed. So, they asked some questions to the people one by one. At the final, Inspector Brown thought about the evidences and he found the murderer easily. What about you? Can you find the murderer?

Designed by: Jaidy Liliana Vargas P. (2017)

Suspect N°1

Billy West – his son

Example:
Billy West has short straight dark hair. He has big eyes and wears glasses. He has big nose and big teeth.

Suspect N °2

John – the gardener

_____
_____
_____

Suspect N°3

Amelia – the cook

_____
_____
_____

Suspect N° 4

Sally – his wife

_____
_____
_____

The Victim

William West

_____
_____
_____

7. Now, read the questions that the detective did to each one of the suspects and their answers. According to this, tell other classmates about your opinion of which of the suspects may be the killer.

Learning strategy: relating new language information to concepts already in memory.

The Inspector asked Sally West some questions:
The Inspector: What were you doing when your husband was killed?
Mrs. West: I was sitting in front of the window and reading my newspaper in the living room.
The Inspector: Newspaper? But you have some eye problems according to the doctor reports.
Mrs. West: No, I used my glasses and I read my newspaper easily.
The Inspector: When was the last time you saw your husband?
Mrs. West: He said: 'I will have a shower' and he went to have a shower.
The Inspector: Hmm. What happened then?
Mrs. West: I wanted a cup of coffee from the cook and then started to read my newspaper.
The Inspector: Ok. Thank you Mrs. West.

The Inspector asked Billy some questions:
The Inspector: What were you doing when your father was killed?
Billy: I was in my room. I was listening to music.
The Inspector: Are you sure? What were you doing in front of the bathroom?
Billy: I wanted some money from my father and he didn't give me money.
The Inspector: Did you kill him because of this?
Billy: Of course NO! I got angry but I didn't kill him. I went my room and watched the people running under the rain front of the house.
The Inspector: Hmmm..
Billy: I said that I didn't kill him

The Inspector asked Amelia some questions:
The Inspector: Where were you when Mr. West was killed?
Amelia: I was sleeping in the kitchen.
The Inspector: Himm, What time did you prepare coffee to Mrs. West?
Amelia: I think at about 13:30. I'm not sure...
The Inspector: What did you do after you prepared the coffee?
Amelia: I gave the coffee to Mrs. West and I turned back to the kitchen.
The Inspector: Did you see anything suspicious?
Amelia: I only saw Billy in front of the bathroom and he looked nervous.
The Inspector: Himm. Ok. Thanks Amelia.

The Inspector asked John some questions:
The Inspector: Where were you John when Mr. West was killed?
John: I was in the garden as usual.
The Inspector: What were you doing in the garden?
John: I was watering the flowers in the garden. Mr. West loved that flowers very much! :(((
The Inspector: Don't cry John! Did you see Mr. West at home?
John: No, I didn't even enter into the house.
The Inspector: Hmmm... Thank you John.

The Inspector: Did you find the killer??? Who was the killer?? I thought about all the evidences and I found the killer of Mr. West. The killer is .... :)

Example: I think that the killer could be _____ because _____

Remember the use of past simple and past continuous:

'when' + short action (past simple tense)
'while' + long action (past continuous tense)

I was watching TV when Jim knocked the door.

	I was watching TV	when	Jim knocked the door.
When	Jim knocked the door	,	I was watching TV
	Jim knocked the door	while	I was watching TV
While	I was watching TV	,	Jim knocked the door

8. Answer the following questions about the previous mysterious story. Compare them with your partner.

> **Learning strategy:** combining elements in new ways to produce a longer sequence, as in linking one phrase with another in a whole sentence.

1) Where was Sally West? _____.
2) What was she doing when his husband was killed?_____.
3) Where was Amelia? _____.
4) What was she doing in the kitchen when Mr. West was killed? _____.
5) Did she see anything suspicious? _____.
6) What was Billy doing? _____.
7) Why did he get angry to his father? _____.
8) Where was John? _____.
9) What was he doing? _____.
10) Did he enter the house? _____.
11) Did The Inspector find the killer?_____.
12) Who was the killer? I think _____.

9. Choose one of the following crime situations and complete the dialogue accordingly. One of you is going to be the detective and the other the witness. Give the physical description of the guilty according to the pictures that your teacher provides you:

> **Learning strategy:** placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation or story in order to remember it.

My friend Jack was walking home a few nights ago and a couple of men attacked him in the street and took his wallet and his mobile. They pushed him to the ground and hurt his arm. The police haven't arrested the thieves because they don't have any clues. Jack caught up with the thieves.

Somebody broke into the Vicky's house. He climbed through a window. He didn't steal anything but smashed some chairs and tables. He was looking for something.

A woman stole jewelry worth 100 pounds from a shop in the town center. She asked to see some necklaces and earrings, and then put them into her bag while the shop assistant wasn't looking her and then she ran out of the shop.

A gang of criminals robbed a bank in the city center yesterday. They went it to the bank with guns and asked for all the money. People couldn't see them clearly because they wore some masks but they had some especial features.

C:\Users\LILIANA\
caba1b0fdb26ddc!

Detective: Hello Mr./Mrs. _____You are the only witness. that we have. I'm going to ask you some questions.

Witness: Oh yes, I was in the place of the crime.

Detective: Can you tell me exactly where the crime occurred?

Witness: Yes of course, it was _____

Detective: What were you doing there?

Witness: Well, I was _____

Detective: Could you see the _____?

Witness: Mmmm, I could see him/her/them, but I don't remember exactly how he/she/the look like?.

My friend Jack was walking home a few nights ago and a couple of men attacked him in the street and took his wallet and his mobile. They pushed him to the ground and hurt his arm. The police haven't arrested the thieves because they don't have any clues. Jack caught up with the thieves.
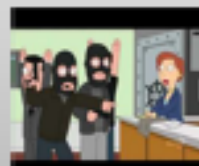
Somebody broke into the Vicky's house. He climbed through a window. He didn't steal anything but smashed some chairs and tables. He was looking for something.

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Witness: Oh yes, I was in the place of the crime.

Detective: Can you tell me exactly where the crime occurred?

Witness: Yes of course, it was _____

Detective: What were you doing there?

Witness: Well, I was _____

Detective: Could you see the _____?

Witness: Mmmm, I could see him/her/them, but I don't remember exactly how he/she/the look like?.

Detective: Don't worry, I'm going to help you with some questions. How tall is/are he/she/they?

Witness: Well, he/she/they _____

Detective: What type of hair does _____ _____ ?

Witness: I think he/she/they _____

Detective: Any other physical characteristic that you remember?

Witness: Yes. _____

Detective: Ok. Mr./Mrs. _____. With these clues I can investigate. Thanks so much for your cooperation.

10. Practice the dialogue with your partners; prepare the costumes and the scene.

Learning strategy: working with other language learners to improve language skills.

Now, we need to rehearse the dialogue, put our costumes and prepare the props!

11. Perform your role play

Learning strategy: practicing the new language in natural, realistic settings.

... AND ACTION!

Post-speaking Activities

12. Answer the following questions:

a. Do you like to play detectives? _____

b. Write the name of a famous detective that you know _____

c. Write five words related to crime: _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____.

d. Do you like crime stories? (Yes/ No) why?_____

_____.

13. Self-assessment: Cross out the face representing your level of satisfaction and answer some questions.

Learning strategy: evaluating one's own progress in the new language.

The worksheet (La guía)	
The worksheet is attractive, innovative and useful. *La guía de clase es llamativa, novedosa y útil.*	😊 😐 ☹️
The worksheet includes a variety of activities that I like and enjoy a lot. *La guía de clase incluye una variedad de actividades que me gustan y disfruto mucho.*	😊 😐 ☹️
The activities encouraged me to interact with my classmates. *Las actividades me animan a interactuar con mis compañeros.*	😊 😐 ☹️
The images and pictures help me to understand the meaning of words. *Las imágenes y dibujos me ayudan a comprender el significado de las palabras.*	😊 😐 ☹️
The worksheet promotes the use of learning strategies that help me to understand the activities and develop them. *La guía promueve el uso de estrategias que me ayudan a entender las actividades y a desarrollarlas.*	😊 😐 ☹️
Any other comment about the material. *Otro comentario sobre el material.*	

The role play (el juego de roles)

The role play teaches me vocabulary that I can use in real life situations. *El juego de roles me enseña vocabulario que puedo usar en situaciones de la vida real.*	☺ 😐 ☹
It promotes a friendly atmosphere in the English class. *Promueve un ambiente agradable en la clase.*	☺ 😐 ☹
It relaxes and helps me learn in an easier way. *Me relaja y me ayuda a aprender de una forma más fácil.*	☺ 😐 ☹
Performing in a role play, motivates me to speak in English *Actuar en un juego de roles, me motiva a hablar en inglés.*	☺ 😐 ☹
I can have a creative performance in the role play. *Puedo tener una actuación creativa en el juego de roles.*	☺ 😐 ☹

What importance did the role plays have in your learning experience? *¿Qué importancia tuvo el juego de rol en su experiencia de aprendizaje?*

Speaking fluency (Fluidez en el habla)

The oral activities encourage me to speak in English. *Las actividades orales me animan a hablar en inglés.*	☺ 😐 ☹
It implies well sequenced speaking activities. *Presenta actividades de habla de una manera secuenciada.*	☺ 😐 ☹
It let me use the appropriate words and vocabulary. *Me permitió usar las palabras y el vocabulario adecuado.*	☺ 😐 ☹
It let me use long phrases and a good speed without pausing. *Me permitió usar frases largas y una buena velocidad sin hacer pausas.*	☺ 😐 ☹

What other aspects of your speaking fluency have or not changed? *¿Qué otros aspectos de su fluidez verbal han cambiado o no?*

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Appendix C: Field notes format

FIELD NOTES FORMAT – WORKSHEET N°1

DATE:_____   WORKSHEET'S NAME: _____

SESSION: _____   TIME: _____

ACTIVITY	FIELD NOTES	ANALYSIS/COMMENTS

Appendix D: Interview Schedule Focus Group

Interview Schedule Focus Group

1. ¿Cómo se sintieron en los Role Plays?

2. ¿Encontraron alguna dificultad en la realización delos Role Plays?

3. ¿Qué cosas les parecieron interesantes de los Role Plays?

4. ¿Qué aspectos de su fluidez oral han notado diferentes después de participar en los talleres?

5. ¿Qué beneficios obtuvieron por medio de la realización de los Role Plays?

6. ¿Cómo describirían la interacción y trabajo con sus compañeros?

7. ¿Cuál es su opinión de las guías usadas en la implementación?

8. ¿Qué opinan de los temas seleccionados para las guías?

9. ¿Cuál de las estrategias de aprendizaje usadas en las guías les llamó más la atención?

10. ¿Hay algo más que quisieran agregar?

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

Bogotá, agosto de 2017

Señores
Padres de familia y/o acudientes curso 4A
Ciudad

Asunto: Formato de consentimiento

Cordial y afectuoso saludo. Con el fin de mejorar y apoyar la producción oral de los estudiantes en el área de inglés, la docente Jaidy Liliana Vargas Pacheco se encuentra adelantando un proyecto de investigación, el cual hace parte del programa de Maestría en Educación con Énfasis en Didáctica del Inglés en la universidad Externado de Colombia.

El objetivo principal del estudio es describir y analizar como el uso de talleres basados en juegos de rol "role-plays" ayudan a mejorar la fluidez verbal en Inglés como lengua extranjera en los estudiantes de cuarto de primaria del Colegio santo Tomás de Aquino. A través de estos talleres se pretenderá que los estudiantes se sientan inmersos en un ambiente donde ellos puedan adquirir nuevo vocabulario, expresar sus ideas en Inglés de una manera espontánea y explorar sus habilidades artísticas.

Para el proceso de recolección de datos, los estudiantes serán filmados y grabados en el desarrollo de sus trabajos y este material solo será de uso instrumental para analizar los resultados. A todos los participantes se les garantizará:

- El uso de nombres ficticios para mantener la identidad del estudiante en el anonimato.
- Estricta confidencialidad con la información que se recolecte.
- Los participantes estarán en plena libertad de abandonar el proceso en cualquier momento sí así lo desean.
- Los resultados y la participación en el proyecto, no afectarán las valoraciones que se hacen en el proceso académico del colegio.
- Se brindará la posibilidad de conocer los resultados a padres y estudiantes que así lo deseen.

Apreciaría sinceramente su autorización, con el fin de poder contar con su hijo (a) como participante para el proyecto.

Cordialmente,
Jaidy Liliana Vargas Pacheco
Docente de Inglés, Colegio Santot Tomás de Aquino
Estudiante de Maestría en Educación
Énfasis en Didáctica del Inglés

Autorización

Yo _____ y _____ como padres y/o acudientes, confirmamos que hemos leído el procedimiento descrito arriba y conocemos la finalidad del proyecto mencionado. Voluntariamente damos nuestro consentimiento para que nuestro hijo(a) _____ del grado _____ participe en el estudio sobre el uso de materiales basados en juegos de roles para el mejoramiento de la fluidez verbal en inglés.

_____   _____   _____
Firma del padre   Firma de la madre   Firma del acudiente
C.C. _____   C.C. _____   C.C. _____