

Oral participation of 9th grade students from a private school in Pereira.

**ORAL PARTICIPATION OF 9TH GRADE STUDENTS FROM A PRIVATE
SCHOOL IN PEREIRA (RISARALDA): FACTORS THAT AFFECT IT AND
CHARACTERISTIC OF TEACHER'S METHODOLOGY.**

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RESUMEN

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo el estudio de cómo los factores afectivos influyen en la participación de los estudiantes en las actividades orales que propone el profesor en la clase de inglés. Este estudio también describe algunos aspectos de la metodología que el profesor utiliza en las clases destinadas a desarrollar las habilidades de producción oral.

Este estudio se llevó a cabo en un colegio privado de la ciudad de Pereira. Los participantes fueron cuatro estudiantes de noveno grado y sus profesores de inglés. Esta investigación es cualitativa por ser interpretativa y descriptiva. Los instrumentos utilizados para la recolección de datos fueron: entrevistas, observaciones y la escala de autoestima de Rosenberg. Este estudio produjo los siguientes hallazgos: la nota como el factor más motivante en las actividades orales; la influencia de la autoestima en la participación de los estudiantes en las actividades orales; el comportamiento de los profesores y compañeros de clase, y la falta de conocimiento del inglés como factores que provocan la ansiedad de los estudiantes durante la práctica de la habilidad oral; la habilidad oral como estrategia para evaluar la comprensión de lectura; el uso de actividades que no tienen un fin comunicativo para practicar la habilidad oral.

Durante el desarrollo de este estudio encontramos algunas implicaciones para la enseñanza, las cuales son: existe una gran necesidad de implementar actividades orales que tengan como fin lograr la competencia comunicativa; la motivación se debe tener en cuenta en la metodología que se utiliza en clase; juegos, actividades comunicativas y el uso de temas apropiados para provocar interés, deben ser empleados en clase para incrementar la autoestima de los estudiantes; los profesores deben estudiar y repasar con sus estudiantes el vocabulario y/o gramática que los estudiantes puedan necesitar, con el fin de facilitar la actividades orales; el trabajo en grupo puede ser usado para generar un buen ambiente de aprendizaje, y así disminuir la ansiedad de los estudiantes.

Finalmente, como implicación para la investigación, consideramos que se debe realizar más investigación en el campo de los factores afectivos, ya que son de gran importancia en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

ABSTRACT

The aim of the present study is to have an insight of how the affective factors, such as motivation, self-esteem, and anxiety, affect the students' participation in the oral activities proposed by the teacher in an EFL classroom. This study is also concerned with the methodology that the teacher employs in the classes that are intended to help students develop the speaking skill.

Our research was developed with four students from 9th grade and the teachers of the English class of a private school in Pereira. This research is framed in the interpretative and descriptive qualitative paradigm. The instruments used for data collections were interviews, observations and the Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale. After analyzing the data, we were able to identify the following findings: the grade as the most motivating factor for students' participation in speaking activities; influence of self-esteem in students' participation during speaking activities; teachers' and classmates' behaviors and lack of knowledge in the foreign language provoking anxiety on students during their oral participation; speaking used as an assessment strategy for reading comprehension; non-communicative activities employed in the oral skills practice.

During the development of the study we found some teaching implications, which are: motivation should be taken into account in the methodologies used by the teacher; games, communicative activities and the use of interesting topics for the students should be employed in the class in order to increase students' self-esteem; teachers should facilitate the speaking activities by studying and reminding in advance the vocabulary and/or grammar that students may need; cooperative work should be used to create a friendly environment in the class, and thus, be able to decrease levels of anxiety on students; the great necessity of implementing speaking activities that aim to reach communicative purposes.

Finally, as research implication, we consider that further research should be done in the field of affective factors, due to the importance that it has during the development of learning a foreign language.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays, due to economic, cultural, and political factors, the global community has realized the necessity of being able to communicate in more than one language. For this reason, the development of communicative competences in at least one foreign language is considered essential. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defends the importance of learning other languages, and considers “promoting language as an essential part of intercultural education, to encourage understanding among peoples and build respect for human rights” (Taken from UNESCO website).

The Colombian government, aware of the situation above described, has established the National Program for Bilingualism (NPB), designed and implemented by the Ministry of Education. This program aims at raising the communicative competence in the English language across the Colombian educational system with the purpose of increasing national competitiveness in our country as well as abroad. In order to achieve this goal, the role of the teachers and all the institutions for education is decisive as they are the ones in charge of making these policies reality. In this sense Dörnyei (1994), Williams (1994) and Skehan (1991) claim that it is necessary for institutions of higher learning to keep the students motivated in the learning of a foreign language, so they can compete academically and professionally in a global way.

Being competent in a foreign language involves the development of 4 skills: writing, reading, listening, and speaking and although the four skills are equally important for being considered communicatively competent, being able to communicate orally is considered of utmost importance. As Hughes (2003) proposes, speaking, as an innate capacity of the human being, is developed by people in the societies before any other skill.

In the foreign language learning field, according to Harmer (2009), speaking gives the learners the opportunity to practice what they have learned through different activities represented in daily life situations.

Teachers have an important role in the development of the speaking skills; however, they find some obstacles in the achievement of this task. According to Al-Badi (2006), the general difficulty that EFL teachers find in the process of teaching English is the apathy that the students show for this language. Research studies like the one developed by Urrutia and Vega (2010, p.12) with teenager students from a public school in Bogotá, show that the students “had difficulties with their speaking production because they looked apathetic and inhibited in activities which involved oral skills. Many of them felt afraid of being criticized and humiliated in front of their partners. As a result, they avoided being part of this kind of activities”. This kind of personal feelings such as of lack of confidence, fear of being humiliated, lack of motivation, and inhibition are known in the EFL field as “affective factors” and are individual for each learner. Experts in the educational field, as

Lightbown and Spada (2004) suggest that the affective factors have an influence on the acquisition of a foreign language. Al-Badi (2006, p. 48) emphasizes that:

“It is essential that greater awareness is created among teachers of the effect that learners’ views of their own abilities have on their motivation to speak English. By being encouraging and supporting, and helping learners believe in their own potential, teachers have a key role to play in enhancing learner motivation and enabling them to develop not just their oral skills in English but their proficiency in the language generally”.

Considering that in our context, there are few studies describing what attitudes and affective factors may appear in students when they are involved in oral activities, this research project aims to explore students’ learning behavior in oral activities and its relationship with affective factors so that greater awareness about these issues is raised among teachers in the Colombian context.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How do affective factors affect the oral participation of the students in activities proposed by the teacher?
- Which are the main characteristics of the methodology employed by the teaching during the development of the oral activities with 9th graders?

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

GENERAL OBJECTIVE

- Explore the factors that may influence 9th grade students' participation in oral activities in a private school in Pereira.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- Observe and analyze 9th grade students' participation in oral activities presented in the class.
- Relate students' participation in oral activities with affective factors.
- Describe the teaching methodology implemented by the teacher to promote oral skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to explore the different factors that affect the oral participation of 9th grade students in an EFL classroom, it is necessary to start by examining the most important issues related to the topic, which we consider to be the following:

The communicative aspect of the language, speaking (Functions of speaking, reasons for learners to speak the foreign language, reasons for teaching speaking); Krashen's affective filter hypothesis; affective factors (motivation, self-esteem, anxiety); teacher's role in the speaking classroom and teacher's methodology.

The communicative aspect of the language

It is important to clarify the term "communicative", which is used in our research. We decided to draw our attention to the language employed for interactive communication, as Brown (2007, p. 218) maintains, the focus of researchers of language lays on the "discourse, interaction, pragmatics, and negotiation".

When we refer to communicative activities, we refer to the social and functional use of the foreign language, understanding it as Littlewood (1981, p. 43) proposes: "Learners must pay greater attention to the social as well as the functional meanings that language conveys". The use of communicative activities should, in this case, stimulate "the social roles involved in the interaction".

Although the teachers' role is to prepare the students for social interaction outside the classroom, it is important to mention that, according to Littlewood (1981), the classroom is also a place where real social relationships take place. It means that it is a real social context for interaction, however, activities that promote this kind of communication need to be offered by the teacher. Morozan (N.D.) presents some characteristics of the communicative activities. Communicative activities should promote the "desire to communicate", also, they must have a "communicative purpose" and be "centered on the content" of what it is being said. Morozan also states that oral communicative activities provoke communication between students or/and teacher and can be: "Reaching a Consensus; Discussion; Relaying Instructions; Communicational Games; Problem Solving; Talking about Yourself; Simulation and role play".

Speaking

According to McDonough and Shaw (1993), speaking is the linguistic knowledge that creates an oral message for communication and self-expression. The spoken form has generally been regarded as the primary form of language upon which the written form is essentially dependent. Hughes (2002) says that one of the essential reasons for this is that in the absence of pathological reason to prevent it, all

humans develop the capacity for speech and it is only later in literate societies (and in the history of humankind) that the skill of writing develops.

Xiaohong (1994, p.31) goes further along and emphasizes the significance of the speaking skill by identifying it with language proficiency: “Oral communicative competence is important for EFL learners. It is one of the most necessary language skills for displaying their language proficiency”.

However, developing the speaking skill is not an easy achievement. Bailey and Savage (1994) cited in Lazaraton (2001, p. 103) affirm that “speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills”. Lazaraton (2001) suggests that perhaps the most difficult aspect of spoken language is that it is almost always accomplished via interaction with at least another speaker. This means that a variety of demands are in place at once: monitoring and understanding the other speaker, thinking about one’s contribution, producing that contribution, monitoring its effect and so on.

Harmer (2009) presents other characteristics that are important in the development of the speaking skills, for instance that the learners must be aware of two types of knowledge necessary for successful interactions: extra linguistic knowledge (knowledge related to the topic, culture, context, and the other speakers) and pragmatic knowledge, that involves being able to use the language appropriately according to the context and rules of the language.

Functions of speaking

People use oral communication in different ways depending on the purpose, context, and other speakers. According to the characteristics of the interactions, Richards (2008) identifies three main functions of speaking: talk as interaction, talk as transaction and talk as performance.

- Talk as interaction: its function is to fulfill a social role; it is what we normally know as a conversation, in which the speaker's goal is to present him/herself to the other speaker.

Richards (2008 p. 29) affirms that teaching talk as interaction is particularly difficult since "it takes place under the control of unspoken rules". This author explains that the best option for the teacher in this case is to give models of what could be included in a normal conversation, for instance how to open and close a conversation, how to show agreement etc. Also, the teacher could present examples of small talks about the weather, traffic and so on.

- Talk as transaction: the focus of this type of talk is on the message given by the speaker while the social interaction remains in the background. Richards (2008) states that this mode of talk can be easier to teach by using role plays, information-gap activities and group discussion where students can share and obtain information from their interlocutor.

- Talk as performance deals with the kind of talk that is carried out in front of an audience, like speeches and presentations; it usually takes the form of a monologue instead of a dialogue. This type of talk is usually previously prepared, and form and accuracy have as much significance as the meaning itself. To facilitate this task, the teacher can provide the students with examples of speeches, oral presentation, stories, and even video, audio or written models.

Reasons for learners to speak the foreign language

As we already mentioned, in the process of learning of a foreign language, it is important to develop the four skills; however, depending on the learners' wishes and needs, some skills may be felt more relevant than others. Terrell (1986) cited in Weissberg (1988, p. 6), gives us four reasons which provide us with information about why it is particularly important for learners to speak the foreign language.

These are:

- (1) "By speaking to others, learners will provoke their conversation partners to *generate the input* they need for acquisition to take place.
- (2) By attempting to keep up their end of the conversation with a more fluent partner, learners provide the data necessary for their partners to gauge the appropriate input level. This enables partners to make their input *comprehensible* to the learner.
- (3) Conversation permits learners

to *test hypotheses* they have formulated about how the language is put together and to receive feedback on the success of their attempts. (4) Speaking with natives or fluent not natives allows learners to *match up their own output* with that of others, thus helping them to form a realistic picture of their own developing communication skills”.

Equally important, our project also deals with the affective filter hypothesis and the affective factors, concepts that will be defined and described next.

Affective filter hypothesis

As it is well known in the foreign language teaching and learning field, Prof. Stephen Krashen proposed the Natural Approach to language learning, where he includes, as one of the central ideas, the importance of the learner’s feeling in the process of acquiring a foreign language.

Richards and Rodgers (2001, p.183) explain Krashen’s theory when they argue that “the affective filter hypothesis states that acquirers (of a foreign language) with a low affective filter seek and receive more input, interact with confidence, and are more receptive to the input they receive”. It means that the emotional aspect of

a student could affect the development of the learning process of the foreign language.

Richards and Rodgers (2001) report that Krashen offers three different affective factors that are relevant to this hypothesis, which are motivation, self-confidence (self-esteem), and anxiety. These factors will be explained below.

Affective factors

Affective factors constitute important aspects for a successful language learning process because, for students, this learning process is influenced not only by the content of the class but also is influenced by personal and individual factors which take place inside of the students, as Caine & Caine (1991, p. 82) cited in Ming (2007) “We do not simply learn, what we learn is influenced and organized by emotions and mindsets based on expectancy, personal biases and prejudices, degree of self-esteem, and the need for social interaction[...]”. This means that the feelings of the learners towards the subject, the teacher, and even by their classmates, could be a key factor in their learning process. If the emotions are negative, there could be fewer possibilities of positive results in the process.

Next we will consider three most affective factors observed in this study.

Motivation:

Motivation is defined by Brown (1994) as “the goals that you choose to pursue and the attempts and effort you make in order to reach those goals”. This means that in order to have satisfactory results in any learning process, it is necessary to have motivation of any type. Nation (1975, p. 115) presents two types of motivation, the first one is the *primary motivation*, “in which the interest comes from the learner himself”, it means that the learner does not need any external incentive because the motivation comes from an inner desire for learning, but sometimes it also can be generated by the teacher through interesting materials and tasks that encourage learning and engage learners’ attention. The second one is the *secondary motivation* which is described as “the feeling of the learner that he must learn in order to pass a test, to avoid punishment, or to please his parents and teachers”. This secondary motivation is mostly evidenced in adolescents, who in great majority are not mature enough to be stimulated in a different way and constantly need to feel that they will be compensated with a better grade or some kind of award given by the teacher in the class. Both types are very useful because at the end the aim of the teacher is that the students feel comfortable in the class. We can take the students’ motivation as one of the main factors needed in order to achieve a goal, in this case the speaking proficiency of a foreign language.

Anxiety:

According to the online dictionary of psychology, anxiety is defined as “an unpleasant emotional state resulting from stress or conflict and characterized by fear and apprehension”. However, anxiety is not only found in this field, it is also found in the educational field. Many researchers suggest that anxiety as an affective factor in a learning process could be evidence of how the development of the learning process is, and what the result will be. Jones (2004) cited in Buitrago (2008, p. 28) defines this phenomenon in the language learning process “as a fear provoked when the learner is asked to speak in the second or the foreign language in public, with the risk of social embarrassment”. Also, Von Worde (2003) concludes in his research that anxiety has a negative effect in language learning. Fears, nervousness, insecurity and lack of self-confidence are related to language anxiety.

Self-esteem

De Andres (2002) cites Coopersmith (1967), defines self-esteem as “a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in attitudes that the individual holds towards himself, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes in himself to be capable, significant and worthy”, so, we can understand that self-esteem is how we judge what we are capable of doing in any matter. Brown (2007) also

mentions that self-esteem is a factor that influences the performance of a person in the development of any kind of activity. Furthermore Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003) take self-esteem to the language learning field and explain that self-esteem can be found in the classroom setting when the students are put in a situation where they have to compete academically against their partners, Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003, p. 84) emphasize that this circumstance “provokes feelings of success and failure”.

Teacher’s role in the speaking classroom

The teacher has a relevant role to take in the development of the speaking skills of the learners. He is the one in charge of different tasks related with this process, An example of this is presented by Lazaraton (2001, p.104) who suggests that the role of the teacher should be to encourage students “to initiate communication when possible, to determine the content of their responses or contributions and to evaluate their own production and learning process”.

Now, taking into account the role of the teacher in relation to the affective factors of the students in the teaching speaking classroom, it is important to mention that the teacher has to face many issues related with the affective factors, for instance unmotivated or anxious students. The learning environment in which learners are is very important, so the teachers’ role should be, making the environment comfortable and enjoyable and where students can express their feelings and

experiences. According to Higashi (1988) if in that environment the students feel uncomfortable or tense, the input that they receive from the teacher will be unproductive.

Teachers should take into account affective factors when they are trying to teach any subject, in this case the speaking skills, because those affective factors can take place either positively or negatively; consequently, affective factors need to be an integral part to the teaching methodology because the ignorance of this would affect the learning process. As Fandiño (2008, p.197) states:

“The inadequate familiarity with LLS (language learning strategies) and the negligible awareness of affective factors that EFL students have are issues that Colombian EFL teachers need to address in order to aid their students in mastering English successfully; indeed, it is a tool that can assist them in satisfying certain personal, social, professional and cultural needs, wants, and goals. If Colombian EFL teachers want their students to develop their inherent potential to learn, affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, beliefs and attitudes can no longer be denied and the inner needs of their learners can no longer be neglected”.

The whole process of the development of the speaking skills in the learners is connected with many other factors, such as the methodology used by the teacher in the speaking activities.

Teacher's Methodology

Harmer (2008) proposes a teaching sequence that includes exposure, motivation and opportunities for language use, elements that must be included as much as possible in the foreign language class. The three elements of the sequence are *Engage, Study and Activate*.

In the *Engage* moment of the sequence students must be mentally and emotionally engaged to the activity. To achieve such engagement it is suggested that the teacher proposes games, exercises related to music or stimulating pictures, and discussions interesting for the learners. When students feel engaged and interested it is more possible that they keep involved in the subsequent activities.

In the *Study* moment, the teacher presents and explains new information such as vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation to the students about the foreign language. This stage also includes practicing what has been explained.

In the *Activate* moment the students have to use the language knowledge they have spontaneously to complete the activities. The purpose is to focus on the general use that students give to the language they already possess, and not so much in particular structures or vocabulary.

In this chapter we have presented all the concepts that were relevant for the understanding and development of this research study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, some studies related to the topics we involved in our research are presented in order to gain insight on what it has already been found in the EFL field.

Urrutia and Vega (2010) conducted their research study “Encouraging teenagers to improve speaking skills through games” in a public high school in Bogotá, Colombia, with students from 10th grade. In the research they wanted to find what kinds of games can we use to improve students’ speaking skills and what happens to students’ oral production when they are engaged in games. In order to collect the data, Urrutia and Vega used video recordings, the teacher’s journal and questionnaires.

When researchers mentioned the importance of the oral participation in the development of the speaking skills, they maintained that students had difficulties with their speaking production because they looked apathetic and inhibited in activities that involved oral skills. In addition, Urrutia and Vega (2010) proposed the implementation of games in order to explore the possibility of solving a problematic aspect, namely the low level of students’ participation in oral activities.

The research presented by Diaz (2011) studied the strategies that 8th and 12th grade students from public, semi-public and private schools from Chile use to develop their oral communication skills. The researcher highlights the importance of the speaking strategies as a way to achieve and encourage effective spoken communication. Likewise, Diaz (2011) emphasize that the teacher has the role of facilitating the strategies in order to help students develop the oral skills. In this sense, study's results showed that in several occasions the language curriculum leaves speaking as a secondary skill. Teacher must analyze students 'needs in order to find out more about their speaking needs, which may lead also to students' motivation in the speaking activities. This study evidenced teachers' necessity to include, in the methodology they use in the EFL class, speaking strategies that aim at "practicing and developing oral communication".

In relation to affective factors, Madrid, Ortega, Jiménez, Pérez, Hidalgo, and Fernández(1993) argued that students' motivation plays a primary and determining role in learning a foreign language. Considering the variables that may affect the process of learning a foreign language (classroom methodology, the textbook, the English teacher, the environment, students' personality), researchers point out different factors that may influence high school students' motivation. The researchers found some sources of motivation, such as: the awareness of the

importance of English in society, the EFL teacher's qualities and the activities he/she proposes, or the desire to integrate English-speaking communities.

Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003) conducted the research study "How teachers' attitudes and methodologies affect students' self-esteem as regards learning the English language" in a public high school in Bogotá, Colombia, with students from 8th grade. In their research, they wanted to find out in what way teacher's attitudes affect the students' self-esteem in the process of learning English. The researchers' reason for making this study was their experience as EFL teachers. They noticed that students with low self-esteem had difficulties when they had to interact with their partners. In order to collect the data, Sarmiento and Sanabria used questionnaires, interviews and the Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale, which the researchers present as an instrument used to give support to the findings.

Researchers maintain that teachers play an important role in what concerns students' self-esteem when they treat the students with respect and show appreciation for their participation and opinions. Also, Sarmiento and Sanabria found that when students feel frustrated, they are less likely to have a good performance because the level of self-criticism increases while their motivation decreases.

Results in the same study also showed that participation of students' raises when games and communicative activities related with topics interesting for them are used in the class, situation that makes them feel "confident and important",

therefore with a higher self-esteem. In contrast, repetitive classes and activities in which they cannot express themselves produce lack of motivation in students.

In the study “Overcoming fear of speaking in English through meaningful activities” made by Buitrago and Ayala (2008), the researchers chose the tenth grade students from a public school at Bogotá, Colombia. The researchers wanted to implement different meaningful activities that could promote oral participation. Such activities were also intended to create a good and relaxing atmosphere for the students in order to reduce the anxiety generated by fears and insecurity that generally appear when students have to speak in the foreign language.

In order to collect the data, Buitrago and Ayala (2008) employed surveys that helped them to collect information of the students, such as needs, likes, experiences and emotions in the EFL class. Then, observations were made during the classes in which the pedagogical design prepared by the researchers was used.

According to the review that the writers made on the topic, they classify the different causes that may provoke fear and anxiety in the EFL classroom in categories that give our research insights on some factors that affect the oral participation of the students. These categories are:

- Psychological, which includes lack of affective support, frustration, stressful classroom, lack of self confidence, low self-esteem.

- Methodological, which is divided in Motivational and Pedagogical. The first one includes monotonous classes, boring classes and little student involvement. The second embraces promoting competition, lack of speaking practice, and evaluation and grades.
- Cognitive, presented when the students do not have enough knowledge of lexis and grammar to form structures and long sentences, or when there is lack of planning and goal definition.
- Social affective, which involves friend's and teacher's judgment, public embarrassment risk, and the indifference of some peers.

The results of their study showed that when the students have more opportunities for practicing the foreign language, confidence increases and may be reflected in the oral and communicative activities. The research highlights the importance of group work in the oral communication practice in order to achieve good results.

Another study on anxiety is the one carried out by Von Worde (2003). This researcher identified the factors that may produce anxiety and those that could reduce it with the purpose of generating a better understanding of how this factor affects the learning process of a foreign language. Von Worde (2003) conducted an interview to learners of foreign languages at a university. The researcher found that the students reported different experiences and emotions product of those

experiences. Emotions caused by “painful and exasperating situations” were easily noticed by the teacher. Those experiences influenced in the long term the learning language process of the participants.

In her study, Von Worde (2003) also found that anxiety appears when the students must participate in speaking activities because of: the students’ immature vocabulary or limited grammatical knowledge, or merely when the teacher asks the students to participate orally “whether they are prepared or not”. The way in which the teacher conducts the class was presented as another factor that produces anxiety, precisely when the teacher moves the class so quickly that the students have not enough time to comprehend rules and vocabulary. The author also noticed that the teachers’ comments and relationship with the students caused impact on learners’ anxiety. If the students feel lack of respect, apathy or indifference on teacher’s behavior, it is less likely that the students even try to participate orally.

In the same study, Von Worde (2003) pointed out some factors that may help to reduce anxiety. Once more, group work was recommended in order to get the students to feel comfortable in the oral activities. Related with methodologies, the writer established that fun activities and relevant and interesting material is also a good way to reduce anxiety. However, findings in the same study reveal that the

attitude of the teacher may be more important for the students than the methodologies used in the class. Von Worde (2003) cite Price (1991) who in her research obtained a similar finding, “instructors had played a significant role in the amount of anxiety each student had experienced in particular classes”, this indicates that the atmosphere created by the relationship between teacher and students is a factor that must be considered in EFL classrooms.

METHODOLOGY

Type of Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the different factors that affect the participation of students in the speaking activities. This study follows the paradigm of the interpretative qualitative research. According to Creswell (2009, p. 17) a qualitative research (1) “collects participant’s meanings”, i.e., feelings, behaviors and points of views of the students and teachers, (2) “focuses on a single concept or phenomenon”, which in this research is the students’ participation in oral activities and they relationship with affective factors, and (3) “studies the context or setting of participants”, i.e. the EFL classroom.

Our research is also a qualitative-descriptive research since as Bickman, Rog& Hedrick (1998, p. 14) state “The overall purpose of descriptive research is to provide a “picture” of a phenomenon as it naturally occurs”, it means bringing to the reader a clear and accurate description of the phenomenon in its natural setting.

Context

The research was conducted in the 9th grade course of the Benedetti¹private school, which is located in the city of Pereira.

¹ Pseudonym is used as school’s name.

The school owns 4 sport fields, spacious classrooms, a church, a coliseum, a theater, laboratories, cafeteria, bathrooms, and also offers special services for the benefit of the students like psychology, nursing, and odontology.

The school offers education from kindergarten to eleventh grade and has a total of 75 teachers and 820 students, who in a great proportion have a wealthy economic status.

Setting

There are a total of six English teachers, three for primary and three for secondary. All the students take the English course and are exposed to 4 hours per week to the language.

Each English language course is divided into three levels of proficiency; these are: elementary, intermediate, and advanced. All students belonging to a particular course (let us say 9th grade) must take a placement test at the beginning of the course, and according to their results, students are included in one of the subgroups and receive classes separately from the others.

Our study focuses particularly on the students belonging to the advanced level of 9th grade.

The three English teachers assigned to secondary education work cooperatively in a rotation system in which each of them is in charge of a competence or skill: reading, grammar, and listening. It means, for instance, that while the elementary

level is taking class with the grammar teacher, the intermediate level is in a reading class and the advance level in a listening class.

The speaking skill (which is the focus of this research) is integrated with all the other competences, meaning that there is not a single teacher in charge of the speaking skill but that all of them must include this skill in their classes.

Participants

The participants of our research are two of the English teachers (the ones in charge of the listening and reading skills) and four 9th grade students (2 males and 2 females) whose ages range from 14 to 16 years and who belong to the advanced level group.

This is a typical purpose sampling because according to Merriam(1998, p.62) “it reflects the average person, situation or instance of the phenomenon of interest”.

We chose the advance level because according to a preliminary exploration, we had detected that the students in that level have the competences necessary for performing orally in the foreign language. Listening and reading classes were selected because they fit appropriately with the time available of the researchers.

The codes we used to denominate our participants are E1, E2, E3 and E4 (for students). For the teachers the codes are T1 and T2.

Researcher's Role

The role that the two researchers assumed while collecting information was complete observer. In this type of role, according to Gorman and Clayton (2005), the researcher is present in the setting, but he does not interact with the participants. His role is merely to listen and observe, It means that our presence did not affect in any way the regular processes or situations that the students and the teachers carried out in the EFL classroom.

Consent forms and ethical considerations

Before starting with the observations the participants were informed about the characteristics of the study and obtained their consent to be included in the research. (See appendix 1). We also informed the entire classroom about what our role as researchers would involve when observing them.

Data collection instruments

Merriam (1998, p. 103) states "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis". So, in order to gather the data we used the following methods: observations, interviews, and the Rosenberg self-esteem Scale (see appendix 2) as translated and adapted by Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003).

Observation

Observations are used when the goal is “seeking to explore the natural scene, the qualitative researcher aims to be as unobtrusive as possible, so that neither research presence nor methods disturb the situation”(Woods &Pratt, 2006). We considered that the best way to see the students’ attitudes and behaviors when confronting speaking activities was through observation.

The observations were documented by both researchers through field notes, in which the descriptions of participants’ attitudes and behaviors as well as activities were as detailed as possible. Besides, Merriam (1998, p. 106) states “an important component of field notes is observer commentary”,so we decided to include our perceptions, feelings, reactions and preliminaryhunches about the observed data.

We made a total of 7 observations of 80 minutes each one.

After each observation, both researchers shared their notes and completed them when necessary with details that hadn’t been recorded previously.

Interviews

In order to gain insight about teachers’ and students’points of view, we made use of interviews,instrument that allows participantsto discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view (Cohen, Lawrence & Morrison, 2000), in this case, the

interpretation of teachers and students about speaking activities and their feelings for them.

We decided to make use of interviews in our research because as Merriam (1998, p. 72) declares “interviewing is necessary when we cannot observe behavior, feelings or how people interpret the world around them”. Thus, to collect teachers’ and students’ points of view we interviewed all the participants of our research.

The purpose of interviewing the students was to know about their feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and experiences in relation to the speaking activities, and the purpose of interviewing the EFL teachers was to have a general view of how the teachers perceive the students in those activities.

The interviews were **semi structured**. Merriam (1998) states that the questions of semi structured interview are more flexibly worded, so the participants could understand the questions to give a pertinent answer about what he/she was asked. Also as the questions were **open-ended**, the researcher could act according to the situation or the answer that the participants gave (see appendix 3). The interviews were conducted individually and were audio recorded.

Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale

This instrument is used to measure the level of self-esteem that the students have. We employed the scale adapted in their research by Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003). The scale ranges goes from 1 to 30, scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range and scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem.

Sarmiento and Sanabria(2003 p. 84)cite Rosenberg (1965) when clarify that the scale “does not asses students’ self-esteemcompletely”, so its results must be correlated with the ones from interviews and observations.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data collected through the different instruments, the following findings emerged in relation to our first research question: How do affective factors affect the oral participation of the students in activities proposed by the teacher?

The grade as the most motivating factor for students' participation in speaking activities

The analysis of the data collected for this study showed that in the greater number of participants, the aim of the students' performance in speaking activities was to achieve a good grade. It might mean that the participants were not motivated by the task; they were more interested by the results of it. A piece of evidence that supports our interpretation is the following excerpt taken from the observations:

OBS 7:

T2 asks the students to get in pairs for answering orally some questions related to the book "The last of the Mohicans".

When E4 finished talking, he immediately asked T2 for his grade

In the data presented above, participant E4 seemed particularly interested in knowing the result of his performance in the oral test since he asked right away for his grade. Our interpretation of his interest was later confirmed by his answers in the interview:

E4's Interview:

I: cuando el profesor propone actividades de participación oral ¿participas por gusto o porque te sientes obligado?

E4: "normalmente porque me siento obligado [...] más que todo por la nota"

The previous sample presents evidence of student's motivation in his own words. As we can see, he recognized that his main reason for participating in the oral activities is not the activity itself but the grade that he will get, so when there is no grade, probably he will not feel compelled to participate.

Another piece of evidence that corroborates our interpretation can be seen in the following sample taken from participant E3's interview:

E3's Interview

E3: "pues no siempre nos ponen nota... entonces por eso muchos no participan"

As we can see, participant E3 associates the lack of participation of the students in the oral activities with the grade that they can get for that participation. This would mean that if the task was not graded, the students would not feel motivated to perform it.

According to the data collected, we can consider that for most of our participants the only motivation they have at the time to participate in the speaking activities is the grade assigned by the teachers, which evidence secondary motivation. So, we may affirm that when there is no grade, the lack of motivation becomes evident in the low participation of the students in this kind of activities.

Nevertheless, one of the participants showed us a different type of motivation in the oral activities proposed by the teacher. This participant maintained a high level of participation in the activities, which can be interpreted as a good motivation level. We observed that in one of the sessions the participants were involved in a debate in order to practice the speaking skill. The following data exemplify how the participant seemed motivated to participate in the debate:

OBS. 5:

Previously to starting the debate, T1 shows the students a 30 minutes long video about heroin. Then, the teacher organizes the group in a semi-circle and asks a general question to open the debate.

E2 raises her hand to participate. Her opinion is longer than the ones of her classmates.

In the observation, we could notice the participant's high level of motivation because she did not wait to be called by the teacher as the rest of her classmates did; instead, she raised her hand in order to participate in the activity. Besides, this particular student took more time in order to express her opinion than the other participants; it means that her opinion was more elaborated.

Furthermore, in another session, we could also perceive how the attitude of this participant in the oral activity confirmed her motivation to be involved in this kind of activities as it is seen in the sample below taken from the observations:

OBS 6:

This time the activity is a contest between groups of 4 students. One group has to select another group and asks them a question about the book "The Last of the Mohicans" (that they were reading at the beginning of the class).

E2 is paying attention to the other groups' performance; she looks attentive to the questions and when another group is not able to answer, she gives the right answer for her group. She seems in charge of answering the questions addressed to her group since the other students wait for her to answer and do not try to answer themselves. E2 answers the questions asked to her group with enthusiasm because she smiles while she does it.

In this sample we can see that the participant was an active member of her group, she paid attention to what her classmates said so she could be ready to give the answer, which we interpret as motivation. Our participant confirmed in the interview that the oral activities are entertaining for her:

E2's Interview

I: Cuando el profesor te propone actividades de participación oral, ¿participas por gusto o por obligación?

E2: por gusto

I: ¿Por qué?

E2: porque hablar inglés es chévere, hablar es chévere

In the sample above, the participant affirmed that she actually liked speaking and enjoyed participating in oral activities, which evidence primary motivation of the participant. We can infer that the way our participant thinks was the factor that motivated her when she participated orally in class.

We can conclude that two different types of motivation are presented in students. In participant E2 we found primary motivation, which is described by Nation (1973) as the learner's inner interest for learning, it means that the motivation is not influenced by any external factor, contrary to secondary motivation, which was observed in the majority of the participants. Here, the external factor that really motivated the students to participate in the oral activities was the grade given by

the teacher. This finding differs from the one obtained by Madrid et al (1993), which stated that the students' motivation can come from their awareness about the importance of speaking English in the actual society. The participants from Madrid's study see learning English as a requirement to be able to integrate themselves in foreign countries. This fact is what motivates Madrid participants' for learning English, which contraries to what we found in our research, where the majority of the participants seem to obtain their motivation from an external factor, the grade. Such difference between both findings may be caused by the fact that Madrid participants' live in a country (Spain) that conforms the European Union. It means that there are greater possibilities for the students to travel to countries where other languages are spoken, while the immediate need of our participants may be to get a good grade in order to pass the subject.

Influence of self-esteem in students' participation during speaking activities

The current study showed that during the oral activities implemented by the teacher, most of our participants portrayed a low self-self-esteem while one of them showed a high level of self-esteem.

According to the analysis of the data, the level of self-esteem affects participants' participation in the class. In the following extract of data taken from teacher's interview, he expressed his awareness of this issue:

T1's Interview

I: ¿consideras que la autoestima afecta la participación de los estudiantes en las actividades orales?

T1: indudablemente... el estudiante sin una buena autoestima [...] es un estudiante que mantiene frustrado o que cree que no tiene las capacidades aun así las tenga [...]

In the data presented above, the teacher expressed his opinion in relation with the self-esteem in the students; the teacher stated that if the students do not have self-esteem, frustration will be generated, and then they will not be able to have a good performance in the oral activities.

The teacher concern is confirmed by the sample below taken from E1's interview, in which the participant argued that his lack of participation was due to his feeling that his contribution was unimportant:

E1's Interview

I: ¿cuando no participas en clase, porque lo haces?

E1: me da pereza hablar

I: ¿te da pereza hablar? ¿Por qué?

E1: porque emmm... no siento que lo que vaya a decir vaya a cambiar mucho o ayude mucho, porque es algo que el profesor o alguien mas ya debe haber dicho

I: o sea, ¿no crees que tu respuesta pueda ser relevante?

E1: sip

The previous sample presents evidence of the student's beliefs. As we can see, he mentioned that his main reason for not participating in the oral activities is not the activity itself. The participant considers that what he has to say is not relevant.

Participant E3 manifested a similar opinion in his interview:

E3's Interview

I: ¿cuando no participas en clase, porque lo haces?

E3: pues... a veces cuando no creo pertinente... pues, que no creo importante lo que voy a decir, entonces no lo digo.

As we can see, participant E3's answer was similar to the one given by participant E1. In this case E3 mentions that the reason for not participating in the oral activities is that he considers that his opinion is not important. Also another sample related to E1 and E3's opinions is the answer given by participant E4:

E4's Interview

I: ¿cuando no participas en clase, porque lo haces?

E4: no le veo utilidad y me da pereza

I: ¿Qué te da pereza exactamente?

E4: no pues... no me parece que lo que yo diga sea interesante para los demás... solamente por participación [...] prefiero no hacerlo.

One more time, we found that the participant agreed with participants E1 and E3, when he considers that what he has to say is not meaningful for the listeners.

Our interpretation of the behaviors of participants E1, E3 and E4 suggests that they have low self-esteem. This analysis was confirmed by the students' score in the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Questionnaire. As it was already explained, when the results of this test range between 15 and 25, they are considered normal; when the score is below 15, it suggests low self-esteem.

Participant E1 scored 13 points, participants E3 and E4 scored 14 points each; according to the Rosenberg scale those scores indicate low self-esteem.

In contrast, one of the participants showed a different behavior in relation with self-confidence in the oral activities proposed by the teacher. This participant maintained a high level of self-esteem through the oral tasks. The following data exemplifies how the participant showed a high self-esteem while she participated in a debate:

OBS 5:

The participants are enrolled in a debate in order to practice the speaking skill. Previous to start the debate, the teacher shows the students a video about heroin of 30 minutes long. Then, the teacher organizes the group in a semi-circle and asks a general question to open the debate.

E2 looks at the teacher in the eyes and also looks at his classmates, she smiles while talks.

In the observation we could notice a high level of self-esteem in E2, because while she was talking she was confident, smiling and establishing eye contact with the facilitator and her partners while the rest of the participants avoided the eye contact.

In this case, our interpretation of her behavior was also later confirmed by the student's score in the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Test. Participant E2 scored 25 points what indicates a high level self-esteem, and shows a marked difference with the rest of our participants' scores.

In the evidence presented above, the lack of self-esteem or a high presence of it, affects the students' participation in oral activities. Personal beliefs of the students' about how meaningful they consider their own opinions influence their participation in the speaking activities.

There is a direct relationship between self-esteem and participation in a positive or in a negative way. This participant expressed that her participation in the oral activities is due to the fact that she believes that what she has to say is important.

This finding aligns with Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003), whose research, conducted with 15 year old students (similarly to the age of our participants), showed similar results to our study. In their findings, these authors state that participation of students' raises when they feel that their contributions are significant, therefore with a higher self-esteem. As it can be appreciated in the evidence provided for illustrating this finding, students argued that the reason for not participating in the oral activities is the value that they give to their own opinions; it means that when the level of self-esteem is low, the oral participation of the students in the speaking activities is negatively affected.

Lack of knowledge in the foreign language and teachers' and classmates' behaviors provoking anxiety on students during their oral participation

Anxiety also influences negatively students' behavior in the speaking activities. Although it is common that the students get anxious in this kind of activities, the reasons that cause such anxiety can vary depending on: personal features like

students' self-esteem, students' competence in the foreign language, the topic, the learning atmosphere and teacher behavior towards the student.

In the interviews, the teachers confirmed that in oral activities, anxiety was present on students. Furthermore, the participants specified to the researchers the causes of such anxiety.

The teachers are aware of the stress that the oral activities may generate on the students, and of the situations in which anxiety emerge, as it was reported in the teacher's answer to one of the questions of the interview:

T1's Interview

I: ¿Cómo reaccionan sus estudiantes cuando en clase usted propone una actividad de participación oral?

T1: "bueno... normalmente participar en forma oral genera estrés para los estudiantes... especialmente el estudiante que no tiene un buen vocabulario... porque generalmente el problema no es de estructura sino de vocabulario"

In the data presented above, the teacher explained a common situation that may produce anxiety in the students. The teacher is aware that the lack of vocabulary is a factor that stresses students. This lack of knowledge of the students about the

foreign language causes fear when the learner must participate orally, as it was found in the following extract from one of the interviews:

E1's Interview

I: ¿Qué es lo más difícil para ti de participar en inglés en clase?

E1: mmmm, algún vocabulario que no sepa... algunas palabras

I: ¿y ya?

E1: pues sí, y otras veces también la estructura de las oraciones, que no sé muy bien

I: y en cuanto como a lo personal, ya que no tenga que ver con estructura y eso, o sea, que te parece difícil, que tengas que hablarle a un público o que te vayas a equivocar y se rían

E1: no, más que todo es vergüenza de no saber alguna palabra o algo.

We noticed that the participant's answer agreed with the statement given by the teacher in the data mentioned above. The participant affirmed that lack of vocabulary or structures in the foreign language produced him anxiety during the oral activities. However, this is not the only motive that causes anxiety. The students are influenced by the behavior of partners' and teachers' while the oral tasks are developed. Teachers are also aware of this issue, as it is evidenced in the following data taken from the interview to one of the teachers:

T2's Interview

I: ¿Cómo reaccionan sus estudiantes cuando en clase usted propone una actividad de participación oral?

T2: “[los estudiantes] siempre piensan nooo profe, me van a gozar, se van a reír de mi porque no se decir esto, me van a criticar por no tener una buena capacidad oral”

From the teacher's perspective, it is evident that the students fear their classmates' reaction when they must participate orally. This fact is also supported by one of the participants, as it can be seen in the following sample taken from the interview:

E1's Interview

I: ¿Cómo te sientes cuando el profesor te pide que hable?

E1: No, normal, tratando de responder y ya... Pues un poquito de nervios pero ya

I: ¿Nervios por qué?

E1: Porque todo el mundo voltea a mirar

I: ¿te da pena hablar frente a tus compañeros?

E1: sí, porque de pronto se ríen o hacen caras

The participant expressed that he feels anxious when he has to participate in oral activities because his classmates are looking at him and he may feel embarrassed if they laugh or make faces while he talks.

Nevertheless, classmates' behavior is not the only factor that may produce anxiety on students. In the data, we found that teachers can also cause anxiety during the speaking activities, as it was observed in one of sessions where the students had to answer to some questions about the book "The Last of the Mohicans". Our participant seemed to manifest the anxiety through his body language:

OBS 4:

This time, the participant and one of his partners are placed in front of the teacher and without the attention of the rest of the classroom.

E4 touched his head, closed his eyes, scratched eyes and neck as a sign of anxiety.

The participant's body language could be an expression of the anxiety caused by the fact that the teacher was trying to make eye contact with him while he talked, as we could verify in the following sample taken from the interview made to the same participant:

E4's Interview

I: ¿Qué es lo más difícil para ti de participar en inglés?

E4: lo más difícil... que el profesor lo esté mirando a uno

I: ¿qué pasa cuando él te mira?

E4: me pone nervioso... porque si me equivoco me rebaja

In the data mentioned above we can verify that what caused anxiety in the participant is the presence of the teacher and the grade. However, the teacher could, unconsciously, provoke this feeling in the participant, since he was aware of the teacher's task, which was to assign him a grade according to his performance.

In relation to anxiety, we found three factors that provoke anxiety in the students. Lack of vocabulary or structures when the students must express orally may cause anxiety. Also, teacher's and classmates' reactions when the students are participating in the speaking activity influence students to the point of causing anxiety. The factors we found fit into the classification made by Buitrago and Ayala (2008) in their research, in which they point out several factors that causes anxiety, among them cognitive factors (the lack of knowledge about the language), and socio-affective factors, (the feelings of fear and embarrassment caused by partners and teachers).

Our findings align with the findings by Von Worde (2003), where the researcher established that students generate anxiety during the oral activities because of their insufficient vocabulary or grammatical knowledge. This is relevant because it shows a lack of preparation for the oral activities. Before such activities, the teachers should present and remind the students the vocabulary and grammar structures that they may need during the development of the oral activities. When the students feel that they are not prepared to be involved in an oral activity, their performance will be affected by the anxiety that this situation causes, and as a consequence, the students' performance will not have positive results. To avoid anxiety caused by the factors presented in this finding, Von Worde (2003), as well as Buitrago and Ayala (2008), suggest that teachers must propose group work and a friendly environment in the EFL classroom.

Speaking used as an assessment strategy for reading comprehension

After the analysis of the data, it was evidenced how the methodology used by the facilitator is not centered in the speaking skill as a communicative tool of self-expression. In this sense, in the majority of the observations, the methodology employed by the facilitator aimed to simply assess the reading comprehension. It means that the speaking is in charge of evaluating what the students know in

relation with the book previously read. This kind of methodology is evidenced in the following sample taken from the observation:

OBS. 4:

Ss arrived to the classroom and while they are sitting, T2 reminds them that it is the day of the oral test. Students have the first hour to read, in groups, chapter 2 and 3 from the book. In the second hour T2 place the students in pairs and starts making question about the book to each couple”

In the data mentioned above, we noticed how the first part of the activity was focused on the reading comprehension; the students had to read some chapters from the book in order to move to the second part of the activity which consisted in answering some questions related with the book. In the oral test we can see how the speaking skill was focused on evaluating the students' knowledge in relation to the book. In order to expand the idea presented above we can observe in the following sample variation in the organization of the steps of the activity but within the same methodology:

OBS. 7:

This time the students are not organized in a semi-circle so, in order to make the oral evaluation about some chapters of the book by questions, the students (in pairs) must step outside of the classroom with the facilitator who has the list that contains the grades of the students in his hands

The previous sample presents evidence that shows how in spite of the changes in the organization of the oral test, the methodology employed for evaluating the reading skill is the same, it means that speaking is the strategy for evaluating reading comprehension. In addition, in the interviews we can see how one of the students expresses their opinion in relation to the purpose of the speaking skill in the methodology used by the facilitator:

Interview E3:

I: ¿te gusta el libro que están leyendo...TheLast of theMohicans?

E3: no que pereza...nada que ver.

I: ¿pereza? ¿Por qué?

E3: porque emmm... el teacher siempre pone a leer esos libros para preguntarnos cosas tan obvias, como mirando si nos leímos el libro o no, me gustaría participar mas en las preguntas si fueran de opinión personal.

As we can see the participant E3 expresses displeasure for the book because the facilitator always uses the same methodology to assess it. It means the facilitator employed speaking for evaluating the knowledge in relation to the book and not for expressing personal opinions.

Richards (2008) affirms that the speaking can be used in real life for three different functions: interaction, transaction and performance. The speaking as interaction is

used for casual conversations, for example when sharing personal recounts. The speaking as a transaction is used when the focus of the situation is on what is said or done, for example in hands-on activities like classroom group discussions, problem-solving activities and class. Finally the function of the speaking as a performance is used when the speaking refers to public talk, such as classroom presentations, public announcements, and speeches.

The importance of not using the speaking skills in order to assess another skill (for example reading), is pointed out by Urrutia and Vega (2010 p. 22), who state “The students who did not like to speak or participate during the oral activities increased their level of participation and lowered their tension and anxiety when they use the speaking to take part of games”. We can see how this study differs from our study when they pointed out the importance of employing strategies like games for developing the speaking skills and not the use of one skill to assess another.

Urrutia and Vega (2010 p. 20) maintain “when we asked students about favorite strategies to employ for developing the speaking in the English class, 58% of the students expressed that they preferred games and highlighted advantages of playing them”. The previous study suggests that games have been and will always be an important part of learning a second or foreign language, thus, highlighting the importance of using games in the English learning process for motivating students to develop the speaking skills in a fun and comfortable way; In Urrutia and Vega’s study, the students who did not like to speak or participate during the English classes lowered their anxiety when they participated in the games. In this

sense, the methodology used by the teacher generates the complete opposite reaction in the participants of our study, who feel tense, anxious and reluctant to participate in class activities.

Non-communicative activities employed in the oral skills practice

As it was explained in the research design chapter, the methodology used to teach English in Mario Benedetti School consists in dividing each course in three different groups according to the level of proficiency in the foreign language, and the skills oriented class (grammar, listening and reading). The speaking skill is supposed to be included in the three classes. However the analysis of the data collected through the observations done in the listening and reading classes suggest that the teachers of these skills do not employ communicative activities in order to teach speaking.

In several sessions, we were able to identify a recurrent pattern in the sequence employed by the teacher for the development of the speaking activities. The speaking activities proposed by the teacher did not seem to have communicative objective, as it can be seen in the following sample taken from the observations:

OBS 2:

T2 divided the time of class in two parts. In the first one the students had time to read, and in the second hour it was time for the speaking activity.

T2 asks students to make a circle, then, T2 starts to ask punctual questions about the book randomly to each student. For example “Who was David Gamut?”

As the objective of the activity was to check if the students had read the book, rather to ask them for their opinions or to start an interaction with them, we can conclude that it was a non-communicative activity because the answer to the question is known for everybody included the teacher, so there is no gap in information. There is a single correct answer. The teacher regularly applies this kind of activities in the practice of speaking skills as we could observe in the following sample taken from the observations:

OBS.6:

This time, the students –in groups- are the ones in charge of asking the questions to each other. It is a contest based on what they have read, so the groups must compete each other:

The first hour ends and the T2 writes down on the board the rules of the contest, which are: -each group has 1 minute to answer, you can't look at the book and when the time is over, other group has the chance to answer.

T2 enumerate the groups from 1 to 5. He says: “Ok, group #1, chose a group and ask then a question”

The speaking activity proposed by the teacher seemed to have as principal objective, checking the reading comprehension skill, not to practice the speaking skill. Again the type of answers that students can give are limited to the factual events of the book, there is not real interaction or the need of clarifying or negotiating meanings. As we can see, this activity can perhaps be useful for checking reading comprehension but it is far from being of any real use in everyday speaking interaction. Apparently, some students prefer this kind of activities, in which they do not have to express opinions or give arguments, as it is noticed in the answer given by one of the participants in the interview:

E1's Interview:

I: “¿en qué clase de actividades relacionadas con la habilidad oral te gusta participar?”

E1: preguntas y respuestas

I: ¿por qué esa sobre las demás?

E1: porque me interesa más que todo si es algo que sé y puedo decir y puedo decir algo más exacto y no me tengo que expresar tanto...”

Although the participant expresses his comfort when participating in this kind of activities, he seems to be conscious of the lack of real communication involved in them, which makes them easier for him. We found a similar answer in the following sample of the interview to participant E4:

E4's Interview

I: "¿en qué clase de actividades relacionadas con la habilidad oral te gusta participar? : Juegos de rol, presentaciones, debates, concursos de preguntas y respuestas u otros.

E4: preguntas y respuestas

I: ¿sobre qué temas?

E4: no, cualquier tema

I ¿y por qué preguntas y respuestas, por qué no un debate?

E4: no se, la verdad un debate no me gusta casi... no me gusta argumentar"

For participant E4, activities where he does not have to debate ideas are the kind of activities in which he prefers to participate. This may be due to their lack of familiarity with this kind of activities or simply to the fact that supporting a position and giving arguments is a more demanding type of activity.

In the teacher's interview, he seems to have a different perspective about what type of activities students prefer. The teacher expressed an opinion that not only differs from what he actually does in his class in relation to the speaking activities but also disagrees with the answers given the students also in regards with the speaking activities as it was shown in the previous samples:

T2's Interview

I: ¿en qué actividades de participación oral ellos participan más?

T2: "Les gusta más que todo role plays y los debates son los que más les gusta a ellos participar... o sea a ellos les gusta las actividades orales pero dinámicas... o sea no les gusta como sentarse y hablemos y hágame preguntas. No, por ejemplo en el juego de roles donde tengan que actuar les gusta mucho o en el debate donde se pueda generar discusión y expresar las opiniones"

As we can see from his words, the teacher affirms that the students enjoy and prefer oral activities that generate discussion and self-expression. However, the sessions we observed showed lack of this kind of activities. In fact, the teacher, in order to teach speaking, did not use communicative activities, thus, the communicative use of the language was not practice. The only types of activities employed by the teacher in the classes observed were non-communicative. It is

thus a matter of perplexity for us why if his appreciation is the one he expresses, the activities presented in class are so different.

Practicing speaking in a foreign language includes more elements than just having knowledge on grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation (Bygate, 1987). Diaz (2011) maintained that practicing speaking should also include being able to interact with other speakers in the target language. In his research, Diaz (2011) claims that to achieve interaction it is necessary to practice speaking using communicative activities. According to this researcher, it is teachers' responsibility to help students to find speaking strategies that may lead to classroom oral interaction. Nevertheless, the methodology used by the teacher in our research differs from what Diaz proposes, since we observed that non-communicative activities in order to accomplish the practice of speaking are used in the class. The use of non-communicative activities affects not only the students' aim of reaching communicative skills in the foreign language, but also the student's motivation and anxiety during the activities. The motivation decreases when repetitive activities, where the students are not able to self-express or to interact with their classmates, are constantly proposed by the teacher in the class. For this reason, we agree with Diaz (2011) when he concludes that teachers must analyze students' needs in order to find out more about their speaking needs, which may lead also to students' motivation in the speaking activities. Also, Buitrago and Ayala (2008) suggest that providing the students with more opportunities for practicing the foreign language

(using communicative activities), the students will feel more comfortable, thus, less anxious.

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PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our research shows that there is an influence of student's self-esteem during speaking activities. We strongly believe that the facilitator must be aware of self-esteem as an aspect that affects the oral participation of the students during the development of the speaking activities. Thus, we as teachers should not forget this aspect in order to include activities in the methodology that may help students to develop self-esteem as Sarmiento and Sanabria (2003) also suggested in their research. The researchers maintain that the implementation of games, communicative activities, or the use of interesting topics for the students in the English class, make the students feel "confident and important", which increases students' self-esteem and self-confidence so they will be more likely to participate in the activities proposed in class.

Anxiety, as self-esteem, is a personal factor that affects the students' oral participation in the class, as this study suggests. In order to low the levels of anxiety, particularly those caused by insufficient vocabulary or structures, teachers should facilitate the speaking activities by proposing preliminary activities where the vocabulary and/or grammar that students may need is presented or practiced.

Besides, teachers should be aware that by constructing a classroom environment where students feel comfortable with their classmates and with the teacher, the levels of anxiety may also decrease. For this, we as teachers should include in our

methodology cooperative work activities that lead to friendly relationships between the students.

The use of speaking as an assessment strategy is not a viable way to motivate students to participate in oral activities. Therefore, our project suggests the great necessity of implementing a methodology in which the aim of the oral activities allows students to use speaking for communicative purposes, and thus increase their competence in the speaking skill.

This study suggests that in the learning process of a foreign language it is crucial that the facilitator include strategies that help increase students' primary (in a higher level) and secondary motivation. Thus, we consider that maintaining students motivated during the development of the classes is a factor that needs to be taken into account in the methodologies used by the facilitator, for example, the choice of topics and book interesting for the young learners, and even the use of dynamic activities to practice the speaking skills can motivate the students.

RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Through the process of carrying out this study, we could be witnesses of how challenging a research on affective factors can be. It can be difficult for us as teachers to interpret and to associate some attitude, or body language with a determined affective factor. For this reason, we consider that, in our teaching field, further research must be done on affective factors such as motivation, anxiety, self-esteem and self-confidence, factors that may influence students' process of learning a foreign language and that also may become an obstacle to the development of the language classes.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

During all the process of making this research, we found some limitations, mainly related to teachers' methodologies, which need to be addressed because of the influence that they may have had on the findings.

Such difficulties were external to the researchers' decisions.

In order to answer one of the research questions, we needed to observe the students' participation in the oral activities as well as their behavior during these activities. However, the methodology used by the teacher in the oral activities made that most of the time the students had to participate not by their own initiative but as a requirement to fulfill a classroom assignment. It means that the students' participation was not, in most of the cases, spontaneous, which could be an obstacle in order to appreciate the influence of the affective factors in the students. For this reason we were forced to reconsider the first research question.

Besides, we as researchers consider that several opportunities to observe students' behaviors in the speaking activities were lost due to the fact that although the listening teacher announced at the beginning of the class the development of speaking activities, (which were to be the focus of this study), sometimes the classes finished and the speaking activities remained undone.

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this study, we aimed at studying the influence that affective factors had on students' participation in oral activities in an private EFL class in Pereira.

After collecting and analyzing data through observations, questionnaires and interviews we found that the grade is the most motivating factor for students, that self-esteem greatly influences students' participation, and that issues like lack of vocabulary and grammar structures generate high levels of anxiety in students.

It was also found that the methodology employed by the teachers does not encourage real communication in the classroom and it is also a factor that triggers students' anxiety since it is employed for assessment purposes instead of for actual interaction.

The results of this study highlight the need of: implementing speaking activities that aim to reach communicative purposes, including motivation in the methodologies used by the teacher, using games, activities where the students can interact with each other in the foreign language and the use of interesting topics in the class to increase students' self.-esteem, facilitating the speaking activities by studying and reminding in advance the vocabulary and/or grammar that students may need, creating a friendly environment in the class through cooperative work to lower levels of anxiety on students.

This work underlines the necessity of carrying on research in the field of affective factors, in order to gain awareness of these issues in the EFL classroom.

APPENDIX 1

Carta de Consentimiento

Consentimiento para participar del proyecto de investigación

Estudiantes de noveno grado y profesor(a) de Inglés del colegio Benedetti de Pereira

Introducción

Lo invitamos a participar en el proyecto de investigación conducido por Alejandra Flórez Ramírez y Karen Restrepo Franco, estudiantes de noveno semestre de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. Este proyecto de investigación es requisito de grado para las investigadoras. Esperamos encontrar en usted un voluntario para ser participante de la investigación.

Propósito

Observar la influencia que tienen los factores afectivos en el desarrollo de la habilidad oral de estudiantes de noveno grado.

Procedimiento

-Los estudiantes y el (la) profesor(a) que participen de esta investigación serán observados durante las clases de inglés. Al final de este proceso de observación los participantes deberán responder a algunas preguntas en forma de entrevista la cual será filmada individualmente.

-No existe posibilidad alguna de que una persona diferente a las investigadoras Alejandra Flórez Ramírez y Karen Restrepo Franco tenga acceso a las entrevistas filmadas y/o las filmaciones de clase.

Riesgos y Beneficios

Al ser partícipe de esta investigación usted estará beneficiando el estudio de fenómenos que ocurren en el salón de clase donde se enseña una lengua extranjera.

No existe ningún riesgo al participar de esta investigación.

Derechos de los participantes

Al leer esta carta usted tiene derecho a participar o no de esta investigación.

Sus datos personales serán privados, y en cualquier material escrito o publicado su nombre será cambiado por un seudónimo.

Si tiene alguna duda, pregunta o comentario puede contactar a las investigadoras cuyos datos aparecerán a continuación.

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Firma del (la) Profesor(a)

Firma del Estudiante

APPENDIX 2

ROSENBERG SELF-ESTEEM SCALE

(Rosenberg, 1965)

Con este cuestionario intentamos conocer algunas de tus actitudes en general hacia tí mismo.

Si estás completamente de acuerdo, marca CA. Si estás de acuerdo, marca A. Si estás en desacuerdo marca D. Y si estás completamente en desacuerdo, marca CD. Marca una sola respuesta.

	1 Completamente de acuerdo	2 De acuerdo	3 Desacuerdo	4 Completamente en desacuerdo
1 Siento que soy una persona que vale mucho o al menos que tengo el mismo valor que los demás.	CA	DA	D	CD
2 Siento que tengo muy buenas cualidades.	CA	DA	D	CD
3 Usualmente siento que soy un fracaso.	CA	DA	D	CD
4 Soy capaz de hacer las cosas tan bien como los demás.	CA	DA	D	CD

5	CA	DA	D	CD
Siento que no tengo mucho de qué sentirme orgulloso.				
6	CA	DA	D	CD
Usualmente, tomo una actitud positiva hacia mí mismo.				
7	CA	DA	D	CD
En general, me siento satisfecho conmigo mismo.				
8	CA	DA	D	CD
Desearía poder tener más respeto conmigo mismo.				
9	CA	DA	D	CD
Algunas veces siento que soy inútil.				
10	CA	DA	D	CD
Algunas veces pienso que no soy del todo bueno como persona.				

APPENDIX 3

Preguntas entrevista de estudiantes

- Cuando el profesor propone actividades de participación oral, ¿participas por gusto o por obligación?
- ¿Cómo te sientes cuando el profesor te pide participar en clase (en inglés)?
- ¿Eres consciente de las reacciones de tus compañeros cuando participas oralmente en clase?
- ¿Cómo te sientes cuando, por ejemplo, para la clase siguiente la tarea es hacer una presentación oral frente a la clase?:
 - Motivado
 - Ansioso
 - Inseguro
 - Confiado
 - Avergonzado
 - Otra¿Por qué?
- ¿Cómo crees que el profesor ayuda a realizar las actividades orales?
- ¿En qué clase de actividades relacionadas con la habilidad oral te gusta participar?:
 - juegos de rol
 - presentaciones
 - debates
 - concursos de preguntas y respuestas
 - otros¿Por qué?
- Cuando no participas en clase ¿Por qué razón no lo haces?

- Me da pereza hablar.
- El tema no me interesa.
- La actividad no me gusta.
- La clase de inglés no me interesa.
- Me da vergüenza hablar en inglés en clase por mis compañeros.
- Me da vergüenza hablarle al profesor en inglés.
- Desconozco el tema tratado en clase.
- El profesor me hace sentir incomodo.
- No le veo la utilidad.
- No me siento seguro de mi pronunciación.
- Siento que tengo poco vocabulario.
- Se me olvidan las estructuras que necesito cuando voy a hablar.
- Me pongo muy nervioso cuando voy a hablar y se me olvida lo que quiero decir.

¿Qué es lo más difícil de participar en la clase de inglés para tí?

Preguntas entrevista de profesores

- ¿Cómo reaccionan sus estudiantes cuando en clase, usted propone una actividad de participación oral?
- ¿Qué haces para facilitarle a tus estudiantes este tipo de actividades?
- ¿Consideras la ansiedad de tus estudiantes cuando deben participar en actividades orales?
- ¿Consideras que la autoestima afecta la participación de los estudiantes en actividades orales?
- ¿Utilizas alguna estrategia para intentar disminuir el filtro afectivo de tus estudiantes?

- ¿En qué actividades de participación oral participan más los estudiantes?

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