

IMPLEMENTING COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING IN A PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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PRIMARY CLASSROOM

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2. Abstract

This classroom project aimed to implement communicative activities for teaching speaking in a third grade course of thirty students from Sur Oriental School in Pereira. It relies on applying different teaching activities such as miming, role plays, and storytelling in order to improve all the communicative skills in learners, making a stronger emphasis in speaking.

The project was developed under the influence of some authors specialized in the field of English language education, whose contributions allowed us to build a theoretical support and a structured implementation where the results were very significant for the purpose of this work since some important outcomes related to communicative activities were grasped in order to improve during the implementation of this project. Additionally, the result of applying the strategies and techniques to teach English in a more communicative way allowed us to get a glimpse of what should and what should not be done when planning language lessons.

Given the above, it is essential to stress the importance of teaching English with communicative purposes through planning different teaching strategies that engage the students in the lessons, making them more open and willing to cooperate with the facilitator in order to improve their abilities in the English language.

It was found from the experience and the reflections made by the teacher, that the use of communicative activities for teaching speaking is highly important since it not only opens a window of creativity for both the teacher and the student, but also proves to be significant at the time of creating rapport with the class. Learners showed more understanding as the weeks passed by and were able to follow commands and instructions easier. In addition, their speaking

skill improved greatly from what they knew at the beginning of the course; the importance of including these techniques in the English classes and that are not underestimated or ignored when teaching English, is granted.

3. Introduction

Bilingualism and having a standardized knowledge on a foreign language are a must for today's society since it empowers and provides people with better job and educational opportunities. In this sense, English is widely regarded as the main language for communicating in the world. It is considered as a lingua franca, so its importance in the international scenario is undeniable. However, according to the CEFR, learning a language involves many aspects that can be categorized in different areas, competences, and skills. The latter must be developed in order for a language user to be competent in a particular language. Therefore, the Colombian government has focused its efforts on establishing policies and programs to promote, support, and improve the teaching and learning processes regarding the English language. It is also important to point out that In Colombia, learners are expected to achieve certain levels regarding the speaking. Statistics have not shown the expected results in terms of the development of their oral production.

In this sense, this classroom project consists of the implementation of communicative activities for teaching speaking in primary students in order to provide them with a lesson alternative for encouraging the use of their oral language and oral participation. Some of these activities include role plays, guessing games, miming, among others.

The following sections will develop the main aspects, concepts, and information that will be covered through this project such as conceptual framework, justification of the project, problematic situations, methodology, instructional design, reflection models, and evidence of implementation, among others.

The major concept that guides this project is *speaking* which involves other components such as fluency, accuracy, range of vocabulary and pronunciation. All of these will be developed through the contributions of several authors that will guide us in the development of a clearer conceptual framework, and therefore allowing the reader to have a deeper understanding on what we want to do. Additionally, the other main concept that is developed in this paper refers to *communicative activities for teaching speaking*, which include role play, miming, storytelling, and guessing games.

In the next section, we are going to discuss the methodology that was implemented along this project. The main aspects that will be analyzed are the context, participants involved in the project, design, reflection stage, and resources. Regarding the context, this project was conducted at Sur Oriental institution, which is a public state school in the urban zone of Pereira, and it was implemented with third graders whose ages range between 7 to 8 years. The implementation was developed by adapting a series of communicative activities for teaching speaking, following the PPP model (presentation -practice - production).

Along the implementation of this classroom project, there were some major areas of reflection that evidence the impact of the project on learners' learning process as well as teachers' professional development. Some of these areas include: students' responses, professional growth, and linguistic outcomes. These were approached by the analysis of critical incidents that took place along the implementation, and that served as a mean of reflection for future interventions.

Along this project, many areas will be explored and developed which will contribute to the understanding of the project itself. It will provide a clearer idea on why we are implementing

communicative activities for developing students' oral production, and the reasons and issues that give purpose to this work. In addition, it will give a detail look on how the project will be implemented in terms of the instructional design. Finally, the impact of the implementation of this project will be evidenced showing an objective view on what happened in terms of students' responses, professional growth, and linguistic outcomes.

4. Justification

The internationalization era has brought a set of demands and requirements when it comes to the way the world communicates nowadays. Being bilingual and having a standardized knowledge on a foreign language are practically a must for today's society since it seems to empower and provide people with better job and educational opportunities, intellectual development, access to other cultures and information, and economical exchanges, among others aspects that may be reflected on a better quality of life (Kachru, 2006). Therefore, learning a foreign language and maximizing people's skills and competences on this field is widely accepted and regarded of great importance nowadays. Likewise, Karahan (2007) states that the English language is the most extensively taught foreign language in the world; as a result, most of the governments of the world implement policies in this field to provide their citizens with the skills and resources required to suit the demands of today's world in terms of international competitiveness in different areas.

Learning a language involves many aspects that can be categorized in different areas and skills. According to the CEFR (2001) learning a language implies developing different competences that must be achieved in order for a language user to be proficient. They are aligned with some standards which are used to describe what a learner should be able to do at each particular stage regarding the distinct competences and skills.

In the same fashion, the Colombian government by means of the Ministerio de Educación Nacional has focused its efforts on establishing policies and programs such as the National English Program 2015-2025, COLOMBIA very well! in order to promote the conditions to transform, support, and improve the teaching and learning processes regarding the English

language coherently with what Colombia and its people require to develop the necessary competences for being proficient in English in accordance to international standards and requirements presented in the CEFRL.

Regarding the speaking skill in Colombia, learners are expected to achieve certain competences and to be able to perform particular actions. The latter is specified in the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages (Guia No. 22). Given the fact that learners are categorized in distinct levels and grades, we will only focus on third graders since they are the subjects of this classroom project. According to Guia 22, primary students that attend the third grade must achieve an A1 level (CEFR), and a B1 level when finishing high school.

Accordingly, this proposal will be developed considering what third graders are expected to do and achieve when it comes to the oral production. It is established that they must be able to do the following in respect to the speaking skill, which is divided into monologue and conversation. From a general perspective, they are expected to be able to use words, and short and isolated sentences to express their ideas and feelings about familiar topics. Answering basic questions about themselves, places and objects in their environment, among others things.

Despite the efforts the Colombian government has made to promote and improve the teaching and learning processes in relation to the English language education, the programs and policies have not shown the expected results in terms of the students' competences, neither the speaking skill nor the other ones evidence significant advances. According to some statistics provided by ICFES in 2013, only 6% of students in eleventh grade reached the B1 level or more when it comes to proficiency in reading, grammar and writing .Even worse, ICFES (2013) showed that 59% of students from public schools have the same results to those who have never

been exposed to a foreign language, which implies that the instruction of English as a foreign language in public schools has had slight success. On the other hand, it is important to mention that the speaking skill is not evaluated in the ICFES tests, so the specific results on this area are uncertain.

Another important issue pointed out by Gutiérrez (2005) has to do with the oral production in English. The author mentions that most of the public schools in Colombia do not center enough attention in the development of the speaking skill in the classroom. Thus, students are not achieving the competences and standards that are expected by the MEN. Gutierrez attributes this problem to certain causes such as the lack of proper teaching sources in the schools, and the large amount of students that teachers have to guide in the classrooms. Additionally, this problem is also evidence by statistics provided by Colombia Central Bank. They show that 93% of high school graduates speak no English, 5% speak basic English, 2% have an intermediate level and just 1% have advanced.

From a more local perspective, according to a study developed by Arias, Ramos, and Cardenas (2012) in Risaralda, it can be inferred that the low level that students achieve when it comes to the oral production is caused by several factors such as the way the teaching of English is addressed in the classroom. This article points out how much lessons focus almost exclusively on lexical and syntactical knowledge of the language, grammar structures, vocabulary memorization, and translations. Therefore, the language learning process is developed from a structuralist paradigm that tends to focus mostly on grammar and structures, rather than the use or development of the oral language in the classroom.

Considering the problematic situations mentioned above, from a general to a more local perspective, our proposal consists consequently of the implementation of communicative activities for teaching speaking to primary students in order to provide them with a lesson alternative for encouraging the use of their oral language and oral participation. In this sense, it is expected to avoid the excessive use of teacher-centered practices when it comes to talking time and interaction in the classroom setting.

In this sense, the use and incorporation of communicative activities can be supported by what is stated by Klippel (1985) where she states that the teaching of a foreign language should aid students to attain some level of communicative skill in the target language. The teachers must incorporate activities which resemble real-life situations in which communication occurs naturally; this is the main characteristic of the communicative activities that we will develop in our project. In the same fashion, the following are some other theoretical ideas that support the use of these activities to encourage and develop speaking.

In accordance to what is developed above by Klippel (1985), Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby,(2005) , Colon-vila (1997) , and Ladousse (2004) there is enough evidence to conclude that these activities are valid for our proposal since they have a vast spectrum of applicability when it comes to learners' characteristics, English level , individual and group work, adaptability, among others aspects. Besides, their impact and connections with promoting oral production is evident. Given the fact that these activities involve both individual and group work, their versatility is remarkable since they incorporate cooperation between learners while providing opportunities to express their own ideas, beliefs and thoughts freely and sincerely. The

latter means that some activities are strongly related to students themselves, so they involve their personal feelings and thoughts as part of what is required to develop these exercises.

5. Objectives

5.1 Teaching Objectives

General objective.

- To implement communicative activities to promote oral production in learners.

Specific objectives.

- To portray teaching practices when it comes to activities that rely on oral production and fluency
- To describe how the implementation of communicative activities have an impact on primary English courses

5.2 Learning Objectives

General objective.

- To describe how communicative activities encourages learners' oral participation.

Specific objectives.

- To describe primary learners' oral performance by the use of communicative activities such as miming, role play, guessing game, and storytelling.
- To characterize learners' attitudes towards communicative activities.

6. Conceptual Framework

Throughout this paper we will develop several concepts that will underline this project and that will be useful for understanding and contextualizing the purpose of it. In this sense, speaking will be the main term in this study, which will be explained and developed through the contribution of several authors and the conceptualization of its components, and other terms that are directly related to the project to provide a more holistic vision. The concepts are the following: Speaking, which is defined as the action of conveying information while expressing one's feelings and ideas in oral speech, will be explored by the definitions by Carter and Nunan (2001), Celce-Murcia (2001), Hayriye (2006); and Communicative Activities which is defined as any activities that encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners, it will be explored by the definitions by Klippel (1985), Colon-Villa (1997) and Cohen and Cowen (2007).

6.1 Speaking

Speaking is a productive skill and therefore it is more complex than it seems, for it is more than just pronouncing words. For Cunningham and Edmonds (1999) it means that the speaker must be able to choose the proper words in accordance to the situation, considering stress and intonation, proper use of grammar forms, and use of the suitable vocabulary that is understandable for the listeners. Carter and Nunan (2001) and Celce-Murcia (2001) add that speaking is a linguistic activity which, like language itself, consists of several elements such as pronunciation (sounds), morphology and lexis (words and their parts), grammar and syntax (structure), semantics, discourse (conversation and utterances), pragmatics (usage and its rules),

fluency (ease of speech, confidence, coherence, and speed). As such, teaching speaking involves dealing with all or one and more of the above (Bygate 1987, 2001; Jassem 1994; Dugas, DesRosiers, and Gaskill 2010). Moreover, Hayriye (2006) contributes by stating that ‘speaking is an essential tool for communicating, thinking, and learning. It shapes, modifies, extends, and organizes thought’ (p.1). Additionally, it is the foundation of all language development, and therefore it is the base for the other language strands. Through speaking, students can learn concepts, develop new vocabulary, and perceive the structure of the English language all of which are essential components of learning.

6.2 Components of Speaking

The speaking skill is made up of several components. According to Syakur (1987), speaking is a complex skill because it has five essential components that make up the whole skill: accuracy, range of vocabulary, coherence, interaction, and fluency.

6.2.1 Range of vocabulary.

It refers to the extent of words, concepts, and meanings, which an individual needs in order to be able to communicate properly. The lack of sufficient vocabulary can affect effective communication or the expression of ideas in both, oral and written forms. Having a small range of vocabulary can be an obstacle that can prevent learners from learning a language. Wilkins (1997) states that “...while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (pp. 111-112). According to the CEFRL (2001) range refers to the users’ flexibility when reformulating ideas in differing linguistic forms to convey meaning in

more precise ways, emphasizing, differentiating and avoiding ambiguity. It means the extent of words and linguistic structures an individual has at his/her disposal when communicating, and the appropriateness of its use by employing it coherently with what is required in communicative terms.

6.2.2 Coherence.

According to (Johns, 1986) coherence is defined as the organization of discourse with all elements present and fitting together logically. This denotes that it is achieved when sentences and ideas are connected and flow together smoothly. The CEFR (2001) agree and provide a similar definition stating that being coherent is the ability to create coherent and cohesive discourse making full and appropriate use of a variety of organizational patterns. Moreover, Slawson (2011) adds that a speaker without coherence can inhibit a listener's ability to understand the ideas and main points of the discourse. Coherence basically means that language users must follow a pattern when communicating so that the message does not lose its sense.

6.2.3 Fluency.

Hartmann and Stork (1976) provided a definition concerning fluency. They define it as the ability that a speaker has when using the correct structures of the language at normal speed; this means to be able to speak naturally while concentrating in the delivery of the message and the form. Brumfit (1984) concurs with Hartmann and Stork in the sense that it means "to be regarded as natural language use" (p. 56). In the same fashion, CEFRL (2001) defines fluency as the ability a language user has to express him/herself spontaneously at length with a natural

colloquial flow without much hesitation or stuttering. Therefore, fluency is defined as the rate of speech a language user has when communicating verbally.

6.2.4 Accuracy.

Accuracy refers to the precise use of the structure of the language in a conversation. It is needed in order to arrange correct sentences when speaking. According to Heaton (1978) it involves the speaker's ability to control the structure of the language and disguising appropriate grammatical form. Additionally, he suggests that grammar is useful in order to gain expertise in a language in oral and written form. In addition to this definition, CEFRL (2001) refers to the term as maintaining consistent grammatical control of complex language. Accuracy is then considered as the use of grammatically correct sentences in a conversation.

6.2.5 Interaction.

Ellis (1999, p.1) defines interaction as “the social behavior that occurs when one person communicates with another” so it involves the activity of being with and talking to other people, and the way that people react to each other. On the other hand, the CEFRL (2001) refers to interaction as the ability to interact with ease and skill, by using non-verbal cues without making so much effort. It also implies the capacity a language user has to interweave his/her contribution in to the joint discourse with natural turn taking, referencing, allusion making, among others.

6.3 Communicative Activities for Teaching Speaking

In order to promote and encourage speaking among learners in the classroom setting rather than forcing them to memorize words or sentences without a communicative aim, several communicative activities for teaching speaking will be implemented in this project. According to

Klippel (1985), they are activities that focus on promoting and developing the use of oral language among students. Klippel adds that they take advantage of the natural use of language that occurs in real life environments and integrate situations that emulate or encourage the implementation of this use. From this definition, we can say that communicative activities for teaching speaking relate to activities that expose students to situations where they are elicited to use their oral language. These situations resemble real life communication which provides students with a meaningful context to use language in a more natural way. These activities can be listed and characterized as follows:

6.3.1 Guessing game.

Cohen and Cowen (2007) define it as ‘a game in which the object is to guess some kind of information, such as a word, a phrase, a title, or the location of an object’ (p.267). These authors suggest that the game consists of one person who knows something and another that wants to find it out, so it involves the participation of at least 2 people in order for the game to be conducted. Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2005) state how beneficial these games are when it comes to developing speaking and fluency. They claim that games like these provide a context for meaningful communication which is helpful in regards to oral production. Additionally, we can conclude that expressing yourself spontaneously is the natural way in which oral production occurs, so this kind of activity resembles real life communication.

6.3.2 Miming.

This activity is characterized by the use of gestures, movements, and facial expressions in order for someone else to guess what the miming is about. According to Klippel (1985) it is

useful for developing oral fluency because it encourages improvisation and a real interest among students in order to know the answer or truth behind the miming. Case (2008) argues that miming is a communicative activity that can help students with speaking problems since it elicits oral language from learners.

6.3.3 Role play.

This activity involves acting out short scenes, simulating realistic or fictional situations. According to Brown (2001), "role-play minimally involves (a) giving a role to one or more members of a group and (b) assigning an objective or purpose that participants must accomplish." (p. 183). The author suggests that this kind of activity can be developed by an individual or several people as long as they perform a role previously assigned. Ladousse (2004) states that role play is a communicative technique that has a huge impact on developing learners' speaking since it encourages interaction and motivation among students.

7. Literature Review

In spite of the fact that the communicative activities used in this classroom project were three, it is important to show the current state of the art in what has to do with their implementation in the English-language classroom. In order to show the results of previous integration of role-plays and guessing games, two studies are going to be presented. The first was conducted by Irianti (2011) who found that many students experienced improvement in their language proficiency and in other aspects as a result of participating in role playing. In the same fashion, similar results were obtained by Herliani (2011) who conducted a study related to the implementation of guessing games to enhance and promote students' oral ability and participation in the classroom and who found that the affective factors of students were affected positively.

In the first study, Irianti (2011) conducted a research on knowing whether there was a significant improvement of the students' speaking ability after they were taught by using role play activities. This study was conducted in second-year students in a school in Indonesia during the academic year 2010/2011, involving 36 students. The data of the research were collected by using speaking tests, questionnaires and observation formats. Additionally, this research used Classroom Action Research, and it involved four phases which were: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Based on the research findings, it can be said that using role play technique in teaching speaking is successful since the criteria of success were achieved. The criterion of action success showed that 75% of students achieved the target score of the minimal mastery level criteria. The

findings related to the test and observation results showed that the students were braver and more confident when speaking. It was evidenced when they participated in class and conversations. Finally, in relation to the questionnaire results, it is proved that the response of the students towards the teacher professionalism and their interest in learning speaking using the role play technique is 75.00% and 78.57% that means it falls into the strong and very strong category. Most of students perceived that their speaking ability improved in general terms, too.

In the study conducted by Herliani (2011), he aimed at finding out results of the use of guessing games to improve student's speaking skills. To develop the study the author presented two research questions: 'What are the advantages and disadvantages the use of guessing games to improve student's speaking ability? How do students perceive the use of guessing games?'

The research was conducted in one junior high school in Badung, and the seventh grade of a junior high school was chosen as participants. There were a total of 40 students, both male and female between the ages of 12 and 13 years old. All of them originally from the Sundanese ethnic group in Indonesia. Some principles that were used in the design focused on accuracy and fluency, intrinsically motivation techniques, the use of authentic language, and the encouragement from the tutor to develop speaking strategies. The researcher explains about procedure of teaching speaking using guessing games. The procedure was divided into four stages: socializing guessing games, individual or group work, card games, and asking and providing answers. The researcher gave a speaking skill test before the presentation of lessons material (pre-test). Following, she provided a post-test, then made some calculation of result from both test. Based on this method there were some advantages and disadvantages.

One of the advantages of using guessing games for teaching speaking was that learners found more engagement by doing this than from regular activities in class. It created a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. One of the disadvantages in using guessing game was that the teacher needed students who were skillful formulating question from dialogue. In teaching speaking through guessing game, the teacher had to know the purpose of using this method, the procedures of teaching, the techniques that would be applied, and the evaluation accomplished. The use of guessing games gave learners a chance to use English orally without worrying about being in the spotlight and therefore reducing stress. Learners felt more open to practice with their peers than with other kind of activities.

8. Methodology

Throughout this section we are going to discuss the methodology that will be implemented along this project. The main aspects that will be analyzed are the context, participants involved in the project, design, reflection stage, and resources.

8.1 Context

This project was conducted at Sur Oriental institution which is a public state school in the urban zone of Pereira. The English teaching principles that are implemented in this school regarding its methodology and the teaching approach have not been clearly established by institution, for they leave these aspects to teachers' criteria and perspectives. Evidence of this is that there is no an English curriculum available neither for the teachers of the school, nor the practitioners. The English subject is only regulated by a table of content in which isolated topics are specified for each grade. In this sense, the school's curriculum still has a lot of gaps and uncertainties. However, the teachers by themselves do plan their classes based on what the Ministry of education proposes regarding the basic standards of competence in foreign languages and what is defined by the Guide 22. It is important to clarify that there was no a school curriculum at the moment of this classroom project implementation, but the teachers somehow follow the standards.

The school's syllabus is divided into four periods of nine weeks each. It includes some standards that are established in order to evidence that students are accomplishing the learning goals. These standards focus on the four skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing. They

also involve some general and specific competences, which describe what learners should be able to do at a particular stage or level for each skill. The syllabus is composed by three main aspects. First, it establishes a general competence. Second, it includes the performance aspects (ser, saber, hacer) where it is specified what learners should do cognitively, procedurally and attitudinally. In addition to this, there are some performance indicators that provide evidence that particular conditions or results have or have not been achieved. Finally, the topics of the syllabus are selected by the tutor along each week. They are expected to be coherent to the competences and skills that have to be achieved and developed respectively. However, there is no clarity to what should be done or covered. It is up to the teacher's choice.

Some of the limitations, in the first place, that could be found in the implementation of this project might involve aspects such as language barriers (lack of students' language proficiency) since they might prevent the successful applicability or development of certain activities. Secondly, given the short time that is assigned to implement the project, the evidence of the actual impact could be uncertain or scarce. Thirdly, the possible interventions, inconveniences and difficulties that could emerge from external factors might affect the smoothness, and successful development of the project, such as teachers' strikes, holidays, in-service teachers' interventions, and lack of cooperation from the school for having access to certain areas or resources. Finally, the gaps in the school curriculum might not provide us a clear path concerning the topics, approaches and methodologies we should follow to suit the institution demands.

8.2 Participants

This project was implemented with third graders whose ages range between 7 to 8 years. The classroom consisted of a total of 30 students, 14 girls and 16 boys, most of them live in the city of Pereira. The project was developed with students whose level was approximately A1 since they were able to understand some basic language in regards to their family, friends, and known places if they are presented in a simple way; they were also able to understand simple commands if they were said slowly and with a clear pronunciation. On the other hand, it was evident that most learners were visual and kinesthetic due to the fact that they enjoyed and were engaged in activities that involved visual material and games. Most students were active participants and they expressed joy towards topics related to sports, music, and cartoons. Additionally, some of them expressed delight concerning learning English while a small percentage expressed discomfort.

In regards to teachers' roles, both tutors had different functions. In and outside the classroom, both practitioners were involved in the design and planning of the lesson plans that will be implemented. However, within the classroom they were in charge of distinct tasks, one of them conducted the actual lessons and was directly involved with the children along their learning process while the other was in charge of collecting data and observing the major issues that occurred during the teaching and learning events in the classroom. Both teachers had to reflect on these events using a particular model and type of reflection.

8.3 Design

This classroom project was developed by adapting a series of communicative activities for teaching speaking with the objective of promoting oral production and encouraging learners' oral participation, and also of describing primary learners' oral performance when exposed to activities such as miming, role play, and guessing game, among others.

The instructional design of this project intended to provide the tutors with efficient and understandable instructions. Additionally, it was divided into several lesson plans which incorporated different communicative activities into the lessons. These activities were implemented taking into account the learners' cognitive ability, level, age, grade, among other factors that were essential for developing the class consequently with our project. Additionally, the teaching model implemented into the lesson plans was the PPP model (presentation -practice - production) which was the pattern that drove all the lessons. They began with the input stage where learners were presented to language components that are useful for the subsequent activities. Some of these components included grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, intonation, and content awareness. This also included other skills different from speaking (listening, reading, writing). The second stage was the practice stage where students took the previous input and used it along activities to reinforce or strengthen their abilities for the final stage.

Finally, during the third stage the communicative activities, that are the focus of our project, were incorporated into the lessons. At this point learners were expected to have enough language exposure for them to be able to participate in activities such as miming, guessing game, and role play which were adapted according to their level.

In addition to this, certain strategies were used during the implementation of the techniques. Firstly, learners went through a process of scaffolding where they were given sufficient support to prepare them with the skills and concepts that they would need for the subsequent tasks. Secondly, each technique was modeled by the tutor for learners to have a clearer idea of what they had to do. Monitoring was an important aspect since it allowed the teacher to follow learners' performance and process and be able to identify their weaknesses and strengths. Finally, all students were provided with feedback for them to become aware of their own mistakes and to find a solution for them. The feedback students received was provided in two main ways. Each student received individual feedback sessions where they were made aware of their individual mistakes. Teacher used notes he took while observing students' performances. Additionally, teacher also provided feedback and made students aware on their mistakes in group form while the activities were ongoing in order for all students to learn not only from their own mistakes , but also from their classmates' mistakes.

The activities developed along this project do not only have one version, but they can have several variables or variations that can be implemented. Therefore, the form in which they are described here is not a final one. It is important to highlight that as learners' linguistic level increases, so will the complexity of the activities. According to Klippel (1985), these activities can be adapted to suit the needs and characteristics of a particular group of students as it was stated in the previous paragraph.

The general procedures for these activities have certain steps that should be included in order for the activities to be developed successfully. They are described as follows:

Miming

According to Klippel (1985) miming activities must be developed in this way :

1. They must be developed in pairs or in groups.
2. Flashcards or pictures of animals, people, objects or actions will be distributed among the group or pairs.
3. Each student receives one flashcard or picture.
4. One student will have to do the miming while the other will guess what it is about by using single words.
5. Once students find out what the mime is about, they will alternate roles. Both the guesser and the one who performs the mime.

Variations.

1. In more advance stages the guesser will use questions as a way of eliciting information or clues from the person who is doing the mime. (is it animal ? is it an object ? is it big/small?)
2. Instead of using images or pictures, teachers will write down a sentence in piece of paper for learners to act and guess (the elephant stomps, the monkey swings)

Guessing Game

Wright, Betteridge, and Buckby (2005) agree that in general terms guessing games must follow this pattern :

1. Before trying out guessing games with a class, teachers must make sure that learners know all the words and structures necessary for developing the activity.
2. This kind of activity must be implemented in pairs, groups, or as a class.

3. The teacher must organize the activity in order to guarantee that as many learners as possible are actively participating most of the time.
4. The outcome of the game has to be uncertain until the last moment, so the activity must be full of suspense. The teacher should conduct the activity one step at a time.
5. Flashcards, images, physical objects, text, or drawings must be shown partially while eliciting for information that would help learners find out the answer.

Variations.

1. Teacher can divide the class into several groups and attribute them with points every time they make a correct guess. Making a contest to encourage the groups to have a real urge to find out the answer.

8.4 Resources

We used several resources during the implementation of our project such as handouts, for we can keep a written track of the students' process along the practicum: Flashcards, because providing a visual representation of words, objects or a concept is helpful for their learning process, videos since technological instruments are important in the contemporary English teaching scenario, and audio recordings and real life objects were incorporated into the classroom because we considered the different learning styles, multiple intelligences; additionally, we wanted to exposed students through all their senses.

8.5 Reflection Stage

In this classroom project, we adopted the definition provided by Barlett (1990) where he refers to reflection as process an individual has when recalling a past experience in order to evaluate it and consider it as a source for future planning , and this way , having a new approach regarding a specific practice, action or situation.

Throughout the implementation of our classroom project we used the type of reflection proposed by Schon (1987) in which he proposes reflecting in-action and on-action. During the in-action stage we will make reflections by means of observing, listening, or feeling unexpected events that could take place during the process of accomplishing the task that is being developed at the moment, focusing on gaining a new perspective that will help to reshape what we are working on and find a convenient solution on the spot. During the on-action stage we reflected on what we have done along the process, we considered particular incidents that happened in the classroom in order to have a better understanding of the whole causes and outcomes.

The Model of reflection that we applied was the action research model since we found that the stages were well organized, clear and followed a very structured pattern which facilitated the reflection process. Additionally, it aided us to recognize particular incidents more easily. In this sense, our reflection process was conducted throughout 4 stages which were the initial reflection, the planning and action, the observation, and the reflection.

The instruments that we proposed from the area were the following:

A reflective journal that contained the following stages: the initial reflection where we described and explained the problem. Then, we included planning and action towards that particular problem. After this, we observed the impact of that action , and finally we reflected upon the different aspects, events, and effects of the implementation . We also used a reflection format, which is a form that was divided into 3 categories: First, the students' responses regarding the implementation of our classes. Second, the description of the critical incidents, and finally the reflection where we evaluated and analyzed these critical incidents in order to set up future action plans and make reference to theory.

Additionally, we implemented voice memos, which are voice recordings captured by a digital device in order to make reflections, comments, and point out things to consider at the precise moment they occurred.

9. Results

9.1 Professional Growth

Professional growth is an important reflection area in teachers' lives. It is the means by which teachers will continue learning and growing personally and professionally, so they can stay competitive in their field. This is done by the use of self-reflection which provides insightful sources to grow professionally as the tutors have to deal with aspects such as lesson planning, material design, and content to be included in their classes. In this section we will talk about the strengths and the challenges that we as practitioners faced during our classroom implementation and what we learned from them. The aspects to be discussed under this category are: Sequencing of the lesson and having communicative activities for teaching speaking in the productive stage, designing of lesson plans based on the students' characteristics, and recycling vocabulary as strengths, and adapting material to students' language level and learning characteristics, being flexible grouping and controlling misbehavior as challenges.

9.1.1 Strengths.

The sequencing of the lesson and the stage where you develop or introduce certain activities along a learning- teaching experience are important aspects to consider inside every classroom. These aspects relate to the appropriateness and benefits of using a specific kind of activity in certain lesson stage rather than in other, so students can have the most possible linguistic resources to carry out the further activities successfully and to be able to achieve the learning aims of the lesson. During our classroom project, we found that one of our strengths was the way we introduced the Communicative Activities for teaching speaking in the productive

stage of the lessons. This was strength since learners were guided through a scaffolding process, where they took input from initial stages and used it along the further activities to reinforce or strengthen their abilities for the productive stage. Finally, during this phase the communicative activities were incorporated into the lessons. At this point, learners were expected to have enough language exposure for them to be able to participate in activities such as miming, guessing game, and role play which were adapted according to their level and characteristics. This was evident in a particular session that had to do with learning wild animals and describing their characteristics and actions. Learners had to act like certain animals, and the others had to guess what animal it was and what it was doing. The latter can be evidenced in the lesson plan 14th (See annex 1- lesson plan 14th) in which we had the communicative activities in the productive stage. Some of the examples in the scaffolding part of the lesson were flashcards, songs, videos, etc. The activity ended with the productive stage in which the types of activities mimicking and guessing game. We learned from this that in order to construct a lesson incorporating communicative activities for teaching speaking, we have to provide a logical sequence to the exercises and activities for the lesson, so students can go through a more logical learning process, while learning and obtaining all the resources and tools they will need to be able to develop a more demanding and higher mental process such as producing actual language in the productive stage of the lesson.

Another strength had to do with the fact that we were able to consider students' level and interests. At the beginning of the course we made a short analysis of learner's interests by asking them several questions in Spanish regarding their favorite shows, animals, sports, among other things that aided us in the development of the lesson plans. This led to a more flexible lesson

planning since we were aware not only of the type of language we should use in the classroom, but also of how to prevent misunderstandings by avoiding some 'big words' that learners would not understand. The learners' level at this point was not very good and, therefore, all the material was carefully selected and adapted according to their level and characteristics such as age and learning styles. Videos, audios, big and colorful flashcards linked to students' interests are some examples of the material used in order to engage and keep their motivation at all times. This can be evidenced in the lesson plan 9th (See annex 2 – lesson plan 9th) in which we used several tools and material designed to fit and engage students' interests, likes, motivation cores, creativity, and use and role of imagination. This particular lesson involved real dolls and action figures, songs while performing movements related to body parts, projected images, monsters pictures, and finally the use and creation of customized monsters by the students themselves using their imagination and the vocabulary and linguistic input learnt in the first stages of the lesson, which were mainly related to body parts. The activities performed with students reflect not only their suitability to their age and proficiency level, but also to the learning strategies given the variety of activities: touch-and-sing songs, realia, construction of figures, etc. This can be compared to what Halliwell's (1992) states; he suggests that children's instinct for play and fun and the role of imagination in the learning process can be turned into a great advantage since aspects such as fantasy, students' likes, and imagination help young learners to make sense of the world, so we learned that as teachers we can use this instincts and learners' characteristics to incorporate elements and activities that are connected to students' perception of the world and their mental development, so we can use them for maximize their learning process. As a result, we can conclude from this part that it is very important to have variety in the activities part of the lesson in order to be able to address all of the learning styles that a teacher finds among students.

Additionally, we learned that by knowing students' interests, characteristics and level, planning classes becomes less complicated and learners have more chances to improve in their English more easily since they are legitimately interested on the topics.

Recycling vocabulary was another strength worth mentioning since we reused the materials that were utilized in some previous lessons for reviewing the vocabulary that students had already learnt. In order to support the learning process of a specific group of students, it was necessary to invest time and efforts to adapt resources and use audios, texts, and visual aids for vocabulary and topics that had been already developed. As a result, we made an effort to use vocabulary and material that could be implemented in different lessons and stages of the class and for a variety of interactions and activities. An example of this reusable vocabulary and themes is evidenced in the lesson plans 8th, 9th, and 10th (just to provide examples) since most of the lessons developed along the course were linked and articulated somehow, so students were able to practice and use vocabulary already learnt in more demanding tasks and lessons while they were advancing through the course (See annex 3 – Lesson plan 8th, 9th, 10th) All these lessons include or articulate activities that involve colors, numbers, vocabulary related to parts of the body, varying in complexity and style, such as matching activities, listening audios and dictations, following oral commands, drawing and following written instructions among other kind of variables. These activities differ in complexity and style, but coincide in articulation of themes, vocabulary, and final purpose. The Purpose for the 10th lesson plan was that students were able to draw monsters following particular and specific instructions; for doing so , they needed to know colors, numbers, parts of the body , among other related vocabulary, so they were able to create their own version of the monsters by following directions. Each of these three

lessons reinforced the vocabulary and added something new to contribute to the final task, using everything what was developed along them. Halliwell (1993) claims that teachers can use the same material to provide a completely different lesson around the same topic and vocabulary. As teachers, we do not need to reinvent the wheel each single session.

We learned that most of students recalled a considerable percentage of the topics and vocabulary that were used through the lessons. This was a good surprise as it indicates that the content students were exposed to before was reviewed without struggling much. We found this really convenient to get an effortless transition to the subsequent topics, the ones that would be developed in the coming classes.

9.1.2 Challenges.

Since the beginning of the implementation, we encountered a challenge with the fact that the target population was starting to learn English, had a very limited command of this language and had had a reduced exposure to it. This demanded from us as practitioners to explore a variety of resources and adapt them to students' needs and characteristics. This was a challenge since it was difficult to find materials that were actually appropriate for this level and also since learners would only speak Spanish in the classroom. When we started the course, we attempted to develop a speaking activity, but it could neither be finished nor properly developed; it had to be postponed. Some students spoke in Spanish, some were silent, and three or four students tried to use English but with other topics that were not connected to the activity. Therefore, the task involved searching and reviewing numerous files, modifying the amount of discourse in the activities, looking for supporting visual materials and using a

number of digital tools to adapt the materials found to what we actually needed. All these activities demanded a great investment of time.

We learned that looking for appropriate material can be very challenging and time consuming, especially when working with young learners. A way to overcome this problem is by going through a process of scaffolding where it is necessary to start from very simple language and to go on from there. Additionally, we learned that from the very lesson planning we need to consider, prepare, and use the most suitable material and language to match students' level and characteristics.

Another challenge that we faced was the fact that students were not able to work in groups. They would misbehave, fight with their friends, or would just sit and stay quiet. This was challenging for us, for we could not make the most of it from the group activities that we implemented in the classroom. This can be supported from a particular class where learners had to describe their family to their peers. Our reflection at the end of the class was: "The activity could not be developed successfully because the topic presented to the groups perhaps was not of the children's interest. Additionally, the teacher allowed students to choose their own group members, which led to them choosing their own friends that opened up a gap for students to be able to misbehave. On the other hand, students did not seem used to work in groups, at least in English class, most of the time students use to be placed in a traditional setting arrangement, where strict and static chair positions must be kept in accordance to the institution teaching practices".

We learned from this that teachers should consider looking for appropriate strategies to handle group activities in order to improve the learners' ability to work in groups. Some of the strategies: grouping students according to level of proficiency, or having special arrangements for students who usually misbehave, will grant that students have more chances for learning and less for misbehaving. In addition, we concluded that the grouping awareness should be evident in the design of the lesson plans by reflecting on how and why and activity must be developed in pairs, in groups or individually.

9.2 Students' Responses

In this section we will present the main issues that constituted strengths and challenges in relation to learners' responses to our implementation. The aspects to be discussed under this category are: Students' involvement, participation and enthusiasm regarding kinesthetic activities and audiovisual material. More specifically, we will present evidence of development of students' self-confidence and self-esteem as strengths, and students' responses towards reading and writing activities, students' behavior in regards to group activities, and pupils' rejection of authentic aural materials as challenges.

9.2.1 Strengths.

One of the strengths that has to be mentioned is the students' enthusiasm, participation and involvement regarding audiovisual material and kinesthetic activities. We think that this fact was not casual since we did a meticulous analysis to look for activities that would actually encourage that behavior, reactions and predisposition to get involved in the lessons what were planned along the course. In this sense, we would have more chances to encourage students to

use the language, especially the speaking skill, which was the focus of this project. Additionally, we noticed that learners were considerably more participative and enthusiastic during activities where they had to do physical movements, singing, acting, and moving around among others. We consider that the audiovisual materials we used during the implementation of our classroom project also contributed to students' involvement, predisposition to participate and willingness to use the language along the activities we proposed. This was evident in the lesson plan 14th (See annex 1 – Lesson plan 14th) where most of the students were highly participative. This lesson began with the use of Zoo Animals flashcards for introducing vocabulary, continuing with physical imitation of animals sounds and movements, singing the 'let's go to the zoo song' where learners had to imitate the movements of animals while singing, the lyrics related to the way the animals moved, for example the elephant stamps, the monkey swings, the kangaroo jumps, etc. At the end of the lesson, students participated in an activity that combined a miming and a guessing game, where they had to act and guess animals by using oral language for providing clues and asking questions to their classmates, using what they learnt along the session.

We learnt that exposing students to lessons where they actually engage and participate in kinesthetic activities supported by audiovisual material can contribute to for students to have a more cooperative attitude regarding the English class and to get involved more easily in the planned activities, resulting the latter in increasing the chances of achieving the learning aims of the lesson and of using the language more significantly in the classroom setting, especially the speaking skill. As Arias, Ramos, and Cardenas (2012) state, in the Colombian context, the low oral production in English is caused by several factors such as the way the teaching of English is addressed in the classroom. The language learning process is mostly developed from a

structuralist paradigm that tends to focus mostly on grammar and structures, rather than on the use or development of the language and students' active role. As a result students do not feel interested to participate since they find the English class complex, boring, and passive in terms of their involvement, resulting this in a low participation, cooperation, and enthusiasm.

Another strength had to do with the development of students' self-confidence along the course. We noticed that as the classes were passing learners became more confident and willing to work with their peers and with their tutor; most of them seemed to feel more secure to take risks and less embarrassed regarding making mistakes. The rapport between students and teacher, and the friendly and respectful way of letting and helping students know their mistakes, definitely had a positive impact for them to feel more confident and willing to participate since the punitive connotation of correcting mistakes was removed and turned into an opportunity for students to learn. We consider that the latter had to do with the creation of a positive atmosphere in the classroom setting, and the interaction between teacher and students since the very first class. This can be compared to what Brown (1994) states; he says that learners with high global self-esteem take more risks, and tend to have less inhibitions to participate, so teachers should encourage risk-taking behavior and to provide the conditions for students to feel confident and comfortable in the classroom. We learned that creating rapport, knowing your students and letting your students know you, not only as their teacher, but as a person, and establishing clear ground rules in regards to behavior, interaction between students, and procedures in the classroom can set up the principles to incorporate respect as a mandatory need, and promote students' self-esteem along the course. We think that the students' self-confidence to take risks was directly related to their self-esteem and the way learners perceived themselves and their

classmates and teacher in the English class. The more comfortable they feel regarding the whole learning experience and the variables it involves, the more secure they feel to take risks and participate.

9.2.2 Challenges.

Along the course when encountered several challenges in consideration with students' responses. The first challenge we will talk about is related to the learners' response towards activities that require writing or reading. The participation and work of the students was minimum, and learners showed little or no interest in working when presented with material that only involved words and phrases. However, we also evidenced that learners enjoyed writing or reading that was accompanied by appealing images and follow-up activities that involved drawing or coloring afterwards. This was evident in an activity in which learners had to match the parts of the body, and then had to color them (see annex 3.3 – Lesson plan 10th). As we grew more aware towards the success of implementing these tasks, we began to make use of them more often. We learned from this that there are many ways of presenting writing/reading activities to learners, not just the traditional way (writing sentences, using verb to be to create a coherent sentence, reading a phrase, etc. We can now say that at this age learners are more attracted to learning with material that includes colorful pictures or drawing something. A way to overcome this problem is by creating material that can help learners develop their writing, reading, and creative skills at same time. They will enjoy them more and they will be more likely to be successful in their English learning process.

Another challenge was related to failure to work in group activities. Activities that required students to work together were difficult due to the fact it demanded frequent movement from both students and furniture with consequent noise and disturbance. As a result, the implementation of the planned activities such as board racing (learners had to run to the board, write a certain word related to a topic learned in class, and give the marker back to their peer and so on) or bang bang (one student from each team had to come to the front of the class, and pretend they were cowboys, following the teacher showed them a picture or say a word in their native tongue and learners had 'draw' their pistols, and say the word in English) brought some behavioral problems. Students energy was sometimes difficult to control, and would leave a gap for them to turn the class into complete chaos. Additionally, some shy learners would not participate and some students would begin fighting one another. Some teachers from other classes would sometimes come to the classroom for the amount of noise that was produced. From the experience we had from the control of situations (like the ones described above), we learned from this that without strategies to control learners from the beginning, classes can become highly disorganized. Teachers can solve this problem establishing some rules before the group activity, or by warning them that if they become too loud, they would not continue. They can also create some visual aids that allow learners to see when they are crossing the line, and in that way control students' energy.

Finally, a last challenge to be highlighted was linked to pupils' rejection of authentic aural materials. We noticed that when native-accent was used in aural material students needed more than the normal repetitions (3 repetitions) to understand the message conveyed. Each time we used this type of material, learners showed negativity towards it because they found it more

difficult to comprehend; this was probably due to their lack of acquaintance with these types of input and activities and their familiarity. We learned that this type of material must be carefully chosen when working with young learners and that the amount of information should not be too long for it would stress students. Teachers must prepare students with enough input before they are asked to listen to authentic speech, handouts containing the words, constant repetition and pronunciation of the words must also be taken into consideration before exposing them into these kind of listening activities.

9.3 Linguistic Outcomes

9.3.1 Strengths.

We consider that one of the strengths regarding linguistic outcomes has to do with students' performance to use and remember the knowledge they acquired during the lessons developed along this implementation. It is important to point out that, by the end of the course, learners were able to accomplish more complex language activities by using and implementing what they had already learnt in previous lessons and topics. The latter evidences a significant advance in regards to their language development in comparison to their performance at the beginning of this project. This can be evidenced in the lesson plan 10th (See annex 3.3 – Lesson plan 10th) in which students, to be able to carry out the activities proposed in this lesson successfully, would need to use and recall topics and knowledge from previous sessions. The lesson plan 10th involved as a final activity to draw monsters by following very specific written instructions that included the recognition and use of numbers, colors, and body parts, among others. Additionally, it involved matching activities, listening activities, and autonomous work

and creativity while using different language skills. The only way to complete this final activity successfully was by actually using the linguistic resources they acquired and by using these elements according to what they were asked to do. We evidenced that most of students were able to achieve the learning aim of the session by evaluating the artifacts they produced, in this case, the monsters they drew following instructions (See annex 4 – Monsters- Photos - Instructions). It is evident how most of students actually used the linguistic resources they had in accordance to the instructions they were being given; these instructions were directed to the drawing of monsters with specific characteristics. These pictures showed different versions of monsters, but all of them evidenced that the instructions were followed properly and that they used the knowledge they acquired in previous sessions coherently since they were not guessing nor doing random attempts; the artifacts prove it. This outcome confirms an understanding of previous topics and an actual internalization towards the input learners received given the fact that most of them were able to use the knowledge they already had as a tool to achieve a more demanding task while showing a more sophisticated language use.

On the other hand, we evidenced how much students had learnt and the degree of success they were having in their learning process. This session was also a huge opportunity to evaluate and identify the weak and strong points of students' performance in regards to the topics it involved, and it helped us to reflect on how to maximize students' strengths and minimize their weaknesses. Knowing where the learning gaps were would provide us with a clearer idea about what improvement actions should be taken in order to contribute positively to students learning.

Another strength worth mentioning is related to the overall exposure of students to English in the classroom during the implementation of this project. Such exposure to the language may be evidenced in the opportunities and the encouragement the learners had to listen to and speak the language and to use the other language skills. We think this is an important aspect to be developed in this section since the actual and practical use and understanding of a foreign language is the main objective when learning it; communication is the ultimate goal. Along the course, as teachers, we realized and witnessed the development of the students' in relation to their understanding and use of English. Going from routine and usual use of patterns, phrases, questions, sentences and interactions to more developed activities where students had to use the language and get exposed to it in a more complex way. Despite the fact that learners were quite reluctant to use or participate in activities that involved listening, reading, writing or speaking in English at the beginning, once the course advanced, and the exposure and encouragement to use the language were incorporated, we realized how things started to change and how learners were encouraged to interact in English having no other alternative than getting use to the new dynamics of the English class.

It is important to mention that the target population was not used to get exposed to a foreign language nor to actually produce it since they always had the English class completely in Spanish, so students were basically introduced to a whole new world. Since the very first class, we introduced the use of English as a mandatory rule, and this simple action paid off. As we said before, students started to use English, and getting used to it. An evidence of this is the simple, but meaningful language use. Students always were greeted in English, and they got used to reply in English too; they answered simple questions such as: 'how are you today? What date is today? What was the previous session about? What do you have for today's English class?'

among others. They had been provided with different possible answers, alternatives and linguistic resources to reply, so they were able to use the one they preferred in a more autonomous way. This kind of questions was basically a routine for each class; we think these simple actions began to make a difference. Additionally, learners started slowly to call and ask for things in English, such as permission to go to the bathroom, borrowing classroom objects and calling them by its name, they also got better when following oral instructions, so you realized how their listening skill also showed some improvement. Sometimes, some students were very reluctant to speak English, and other classmates encouraged them to do it, which was really a surprise since we noticed how most of them were really committed and willing to use the language for actual communicative purposes. The latter might seem simple and basic, but this provided us the opportunity to develop more complex language tasks in the future, so basically we went from students that did not use English at all to students that started to use English for real communicative purposes. It might seem simple, but we think that it is a great achievement.

Another positive aspect identified from the implementation is that students were also exposed and encouraged to participate in varied activities that incorporated the four main language skills such as crosswords, matching activities, dictations, singing songs, following oral and written instructions, board races, miming and guessing games, describing people and actions, recognizing and using linguistic expressions or words. This can be evidenced by the artifacts students did, handouts they had to develop, and the activities they got involved in to use the language (See annex 5 – Artifacts- Handouts). In the documents attached, the outstanding performance of the students is worth mentioning. Additionally, we evaluated and provided feedback regarding these activities as it was necessary, and we concluded that most of learners

showed a significant assimilation of the topics, high participation, and willingness to use the language. Actions speak louder than words and the evidence is clear with respect to their level when this project began in comparison to when it finished. We learned how significant small things can be, and how relevant small linguistic elements can become. Aspects such as scaffolding, routines, encouragement to use the language, and taking advantage of all possible opportunities to use the language had a positive impact in the implementation of this classroom project and helped learners to improve their learning process.

9.3.2 Challenges.

Even though at the end of the process we identified in the linguistic outcomes the improvement in the use of the target language by the students, the process to get to the final point was a challenge. We consider it a challenge since learners had a tough time getting used to a language that was not their own. We tracked learners' language improvement by means of different worksheets and handouts that were used during the practicum. In addition, some kinesthetic activities were used in order to evaluate learners' response to interactive activities. This kind of activities allowed us to realize that some children had some participation problems; one of those being lack of courage to make mistakes. This difficulty was identified in an activity in which the learners had to write the parts of the body on the board. Some students had a hard time going to the front; it was always the same students who were willing to do it. This resulted in an extra effort in order to motivate all the class to participate in the activities. It is also significant to highlight that some learners were more predisposed to use the language than others, and therefore would participate in almost every class. Sometimes we had to stop those learners from

participating so we could give a less confident learner a chance to hear his/her opinion.

At the very beginning we taught learners some short expressions such as ‘may I go to the bathroom please?’ or ‘how do you say... in English?’ and tried encouraging them to use them every time they need it to use it. We also encourage them to use words such as please, hello, thank you, your welcome, etc. At the end of the day, most learners would just say it in Spanish since they would forget. However, with constant repetition from the facilitator learners would start to use them more often. According to Tomlin (1994) repetition is a social act with cognitive consequences. With repetition, the teacher helps the pupil to understand the sentence produced, and this, in turn, has the cognitive consequence of helping the learner to transform the input in the L2 into intake. With time and constant input learners managed to pick up a good amount of words and expressions in English. They would no longer say ‘chao profe’ but instead they would say ‘bye teacher’. It seems as if it was only a small achievement, but every class they would learn a little more.

Another challenge that is worth mentioning is related to a strike from the school that lasted around 3 weeks. This affected learners’ linguistic outcome in the fact that students did not receive input during this time, and therefore created a major setback in regards to learners’ language development. The impact of this three-week break was evident in some classes, for learners had a difficult time to adapt themselves and get back on track. As an example, in a particular class learners were asked to complete a small worksheet related to the Simpson family. They also had to read a small description of each one of the family members, and then answer some true or false questions. Finally, they had to complete a family tree from the characters by

using the information that was given. During this class, some students were confused or lost for they did not understand many of the words that were in the reading even though we had covered them in previous classes. We came to notice that students needed to review many of the topics from before since it affected the learners' ability to recall particular linguistic elements. It was evident that these elements were necessary to complete the activities successfully. As a result, students' learning was slowed down for we had to go back and review most of the aspects that were needed to continue with their learning process. We learned from this on how significant it is for teachers to provide learners with additional assignments when encountered with a similar situation and in that way reinforce their learning to avoid any type of difficulties. We also found it very noteworthy that teachers provide learners with some reviewing activities on the first classes after they have been on a long break in order to activate their brains and have them think in English again.

10. Conclusions

After the implementation of this classroom project, which focus was the impact of communicative activities on the development of learners' speaking skill and the encouragement of its use in the classroom, we have come to conclusions regarding its pedagogical implications, gaps, achievements, teaching and learning goals, and recommendations.

First of all, we might start by saying that in terms of professional growth, we conclude that the way the speaking skill is approached in the Colombian context should lead to new practices towards its teaching since results have shown the gaps and difficulties students have when it comes to this skill. From the previous statement, we have a starting point to reflect on how our own practices as teachers had a positive impact on students' learning along this project, which will be developed later in this section. Additionally, the implementation of communicative activities have served us as means and resource to realize how we were teaching speaking and what changes we should implement in order to provide students with the most beneficial and meaningful activities. It is also important to mention that along this project we noticed how this kind of activities influenced the way we perceived the structure of the lessons, and lesson planning in general since it provided us with a different conception about how we should plan our classes and how the speaking skill should be introduced in a lesson. We also realized about the importance that including the writing, reading and listening skills for providing a holistic learning- teaching process has.

In regards to students' responses, we can say that their involvement, participation and enthusiasm regarding the entire implementation of this project were satisfactory in general terms. We learnt that exposing students to lessons where they actually engage and participate

contributes for them to have a more cooperative attitude. In addition, students tend to get involve more easily when the planned activities involve their interests, learning styles, contexts, etc, so this must be taken into consideration when planning the lessons since this might increase the chances of achieving the learning goals.

In relation to the linguistic outcomes, there were positive results. The implementation of this project definitely had a positive impact on students' use of the speaking skill, their participation in class, and even the way they perceived the English language in general. Taking into account that students came from a context where they basically did not learn and use English for real communicative purposes, it is not a surprise that they improve when it comes to the speaking skill, and English as a foreign language in overall terms. The communicative activities used along this project and the teaching practices that were implemented contributed to improve the students 'oral participation in English, the use of the language for communicating, and the development of the speaking skill. In this sense, we strongly recommend the implementation of communicative activities for teaching speaking in regular lessons since they evidenced a positive influence on students' participation and use of the speaking skill in the classroom. Needless to say, it is clear that these activities must be linked to teaching practices that encourage students to actively be part of the lessons and that promote their participation and involvement. Moreover, establishing language routines, providing varied activities, and taking advantage of the learning events that take place spontaneously in the classroom setting have to be a must in this field.

On the other hand, and despite good learning results, we also faced difficulties that evidenced limitations when it came to the proper development of this project. External factors such as strikes, and days off might prevent the lessons from having the continuity necessary to

maintain a more convenient flow in regards to the lessons and topics covered along the course. Teachers need to have a back-up plan to prevent the students' language development to be affected by this everyday aspect. For example, it is important to assign autonomous additional homework, to encourage students to use English outside of the classroom as much as possible, and to take advantage of the classroom time whenever it is possible.

Regarding the teaching objectives, we believe that it was achieved since some of the activities that we implemented in the classroom were focused on promoting oral production in learners. At the beginning of this project learners started with only few amount of words in English. However, with constant reinforcement from the teacher followed by the development of the communicative activities, learners were able to elaborate and speak more complex sentences such as 'May I go to the bathroom? What is this? How do you say ___?' etc. Evidence for this achievement can be found in the linguistic outcomes section of this paper. The use of communicative activities had an impact in learners since classes were designed with a priority in improving learners' linguistic abilities by using commands, expressions, and short phrases repetitively. This helped learners improve in the target language since they would repeat those phrases every time during the whole process. With this said we can confirm that the specific objectives were reached.

With regards to the learning objective we also believe it was reached since the communicative activities that we introduced such as miming and guessing games helped shy learners develop more confidence at the time of participating, and therefore be more willing to cooperate. Kinesthetic games were very helpful at the time of motivating students and proved to be of great significance when learners had to participate, for that reason we encourage teachers to

develop this kind of activities in the classroom, for they have proven to be of great worth and amusement for learners. Learners' attitude towards the implementation of communicative activities was positive most of the time, they were willing to cooperate, they enjoyed the activities, sometimes it would live a gap for behavioral problems, however it would decrease as the facilitator learned how to handle those issues. In general terms the specific objectives were also reached.

In conclusion, it was complex to put into practice all the educational techniques and strategies that we planned to implement in this project since theory is completely different to the real context; in fact, the real context had more challenging situations than what was expected. However they were necessary in order to grow and learn and also to explore how to handle problematic situations and find quick solutions to them. We found this project to be very gratifying in our learning and teaching process.

11. Annexes

Annex 1 : Lesson Plan 14th

Date of the class: 03 – 06 -2015	Class Number: __14__		
AIM: At the end of the lesson the learners will be able to: Identify certain zoo animals by relating images and words as well as some action verbs			
Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN) Estándar General: Hablo en inglés, con palabras y oraciones cortas y aisladas, para expresar mis ideas y sentimientos sobre temas que me son familiares. Estándares Específicos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondo a preguntas sobre personas, objetos y lugares de mi entorno. • Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase. • Reconozco cuando me hablan en inglés y reacciono de manera verbal y no verbal. • Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. • Utilizo el lenguaje no verbal cuando no puedo responder verbalmente a preguntas sobre mis preferencias. Por ejemplo, asintiendo o negando con la cabeza. 			
Indicadores de logro: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifica y relaciona acciones con animales y palabras - Reacciona físicamente en coherencia con las ordenes orales recibidas - Participa de rondas y juegos relacionados con animales y sus movimientos - Escribe los nombres de animales en inglés de acuerdo a la imagen o acción - Realizar algunas acciones físicas (mímica) coherentemente con las palabras que le son asignadas 			
Assumed Knowledge: Learners know the name of some domestic or common animals			
Materials: Flashcards, piece of paper, markers, board, video beam			
DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	Anticipated problems and	COMMENTS

		solutions	
<p>Introducing some zoo animals. (10:30 – 10:45)</p>	<p>The facilitator will use zoo animal flashcards. Before the class T will put the flashcards in a bag. He will bring out the bag and will take one out one by one. Slowly, inch by inch, T will pull out the animals. T will elicit /teach/chorus the animal name "e.g. What is this? It's an (Elephant). (Elephant), (Elephant), (Elephant)". Then teach/chorus the action (E.g. "how does an elephant walk?" he stomps! T will mimic the action with learners.</p>		
<p>(10 :45 – 11:00)</p>	<p>T will play the let's go to the zoo song. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwRmivbNgQk . Then, learners will have to identify the animal and match it with the action, writing its name in front of it with the action verb. For example (picture of an Elephant) → stomp : an elephant stomps. (picture of a kangaroo) →: a kangaroo jumps. An so on.</p>	<p>No video beam.</p> <p>Use the flashcards and body language to simulate the actions in the video, and carry the song in a different device too.</p>	
<p>(11 :00 – 11: 20)</p>	<p>T will tell learners that they will play a game called what's that animal, he will divide learners in small groups and tell them that one person will have to act like a certain animal and the others will have to guess what animal it is an what it is doing.</p>		
EXTRA-CLASS WORK, ANNOUNCEMENTS, THINGS TO CONSIDER:			
Learners will be asked to research 5 animals of their choice and to share its name with learners on next session.			

Annex 2: Lesson Plan 9th

Date of the class: 13-05-2015		Class Number: _9_	
AIM: Learners will be able to identify the parts of the body by matching, pointing, and touching. Besides, they will write down the written representation of the body parts accordingly.			
Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN) Estándar General: Hablo en inglés, con palabras y oraciones cortas y aisladas, para expresar mis ideas y sentimientos sobre temas del colegio y mi familia. Estándares Específicos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprendo canciones, rimas y rondas infantiles, y lo demuestro con gestos y movimientos • Participo activamente en juegos de palabras y rondas. • Reconozco palabras y frases cortas en inglés en libros, objetos, juguetes, propagandas y lugares de mi escuela. • Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. . • Escribo el nombre de lugares y elementos que reconozco en una ilustración. Indicadores de logro: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifica las partes del cuerpo y las relaciona con su versión escrita. - Reconoce y pronuncia adecuadamente palabras que le son familiares y pertenecer a su entorno - Reacciona físicamente en coherencia con las ordenes orales recibidas - Reconoce palabras y partes del cuerpo en ilustraciones, en sus compañeros y en si mismo. - Asocia imágenes con las respectivas palabras. 			
Assumed Knowledge: Learners must be aware about their bodies, .			
Materials: Video beam, speakers, handouts, markers, board, laptop,			
DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	Anticipated problems and solutions	COMMENTS

6:30 – 6:35	T will start the class by showing some dolls or action figures for introducing the parts of the body, what is this ? head, hands, etc, etc . Ask learners... touch your head ?, touch your knees ? and so on.		
6:35 – 6:40	Learners will learn and sing a song related to the parts of the body, they have to perform some movements while singing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxphoOOwTbo	Some of the L's might not remember some things, so teacher will help to elicit information from them by providing them clues.	
6:40 - 6:45	T will call some students in front of the class, the group will practice again the parts of the body by saying what part of the body the teacher is showing them.	Technical problems with the sound, so another digital version will be carried in other device	
6:45 – 7:00	Teacher will give students a picture of a body. It will be also projected on the board. T will write the names (hands, head, etc) in front of the respective part of the body, L's will do the same in their notebooks, while teacher ask about a specific part . (page 13)		
7:00 – 7:10	Teacher will show a monster (with several heads, arms, etc) (the monster has 3 heads , 2 arms) Teacher will model de activity first.		
7:10 - 7:20	Students will be asked to touch certain part of their body, (individually) Juan, touch your head , show your arm, etc		

Annex 3 – Lesson Plan 8th, 9th, 10th

Annex 3.1 – Lesson plan 8th .

Date of the class: 11 – 05 -2015		Class Number: __8 th__	
AIM: (REVIEW SESSION AFTER STRIKE) Learners will be able to remember, recognize, identify and use the topics developed in previous sessions in simple reviewing activities (vocabulary, classroom objects, alphabet, numbers, fruits and colors among others)			
Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN) Estándar General: Desarrollo estrategias que me ayudan a entender algunas palabras, expresiones y oraciones que leo o escucho Estándares Específicos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. • Utilizo el lenguaje no verbal cuando no puedo responder verbalmente a preguntas sobre mis preferencias. Por ejemplo, asintiendo o negando con la cabeza. • Copio y transcribo palabras que comprendo y que uso con frecuencia en el salón de clase. • Reconozco cuando me hablan en inglés y reacciono de manera verbal y no verbal 			
Indicadores de logro: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reacciona físicamente en coherencia con las ordenes orales recibidas - Identifica y relaciona imágenes con texto. - Reconoce y pronuncia adecuadamente palabras que le son familiares y pertenecer a su entorno - Reconoce palabras y objetos en textos escritos que pertenecen a su entorno escolar. - Responde y usa saludos de acuerdo al momento del día y situación 			
Assumed Knowledge: Learners were already exposed to vocabulary related to colors, some classroom objects, fruits and numbers from 0 to 40, so it is expected that they recall some of this information.			
Materials: Video beam, speakers, handouts, markers, board, laptop, flashcards			
DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	Anticipated problems and	COMMENTS

		solutions	
<p>Come back to class (6:30 – 6:35)</p> <p>Reviewing (6 :35 – 6:50)</p> <p>Alphabet (6:50 – 7 :00)</p> <p>Realia (7 :00 – 7: 10)</p> <p>Dictation (7:10 – 7: 20)</p>	<p>T will start the class by giving back the students' notebooks, and checking attendance.</p> <p>Teacher will review previous topics, (colors, numbers, alphabet, classroom objects) He will show some slides that have been used in previous sessions and ask students about it in order to check if they actually recognize and remember the topics. What color is this? What number is this? etc</p> <p>Teacher will write the gaps for the words ‘‘ fruits and colors and classroom objects ‘‘ - - - - - he will ask students to tell letters in order to fill the gaps, review the alphabet. Hanging man game</p> <p>Realia – teacher will put on the table different fruits, classroom objects that he will take out from his bag very slowly (To create expectations)and will present the vocabulary by showing the objects, and pronunciation (classroom objects, colors, fruits) what is this ? and writing the names on the board</p> <p>Teacher will distribute a piece of paper to each student. Then he will ask learners to write the numbers from 1 to 15 (numerical way) from the top of the paper to the bottom, then teacher will dictate words or letters related to the topics what were reviewed. Every word will be said twice.</p>	<p>Given the fact, this is the first class of the day and the week, and the first one after a long strike, it is very possible that some announcements are going to be done by the school, institutional acts or similar situations, so time management must be extremely well managed to take advantage of every minute there is.</p>	
EXTRA-CLASS WORK, ANNOUNCEMENTS, THINGS TO CONSIDER:			

Annex 3.2 – Lesson plan 9th .

Date of the class: 13-05-2015		Class Number: __9__	
AIM: Learners will be able to identify the parts of the body by matching, pointing, and touching. Besides, they will write down the written representation of the body parts accordingly.			
Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN) Estándar General: Hablo en inglés, con palabras y oraciones cortas y aisladas, para expresar mis ideas y sentimientos sobre temas del colegio y mi familia. Estándares Específicos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprendo canciones, rimas y rondas infantiles, y lo demuestro con gestos y movimientos • Participo activamente en juegos de palabras y rondas. • Reconozco palabras y frases cortas en inglés en libros, objetos, juguetes, propagandas y lugares de mi escuela. • Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. . • Escribo el nombre de lugares y elementos que reconozco en una ilustración. Indicadores de logro: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifica las partes del cuerpo y las relaciona con su versión escrita. - Reconoce y pronuncia adecuadamente palabras que le son familiares y pertenecer a su entorno - Reacciona físicamente en coherencia con las ordenes orales recibidas - Reconoce palabras y partes del cuerpo en ilustraciones, en sus compañeros y en si mismo. - Asocia imágenes con las respectivas palabras. 			
Assumed Knowledge: Learners must be aware about their bodies, .			
Materials: Video beam, speakers, handouts, markers, board, laptop,			
DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	Anticipated problems and solutions	COMMENTS

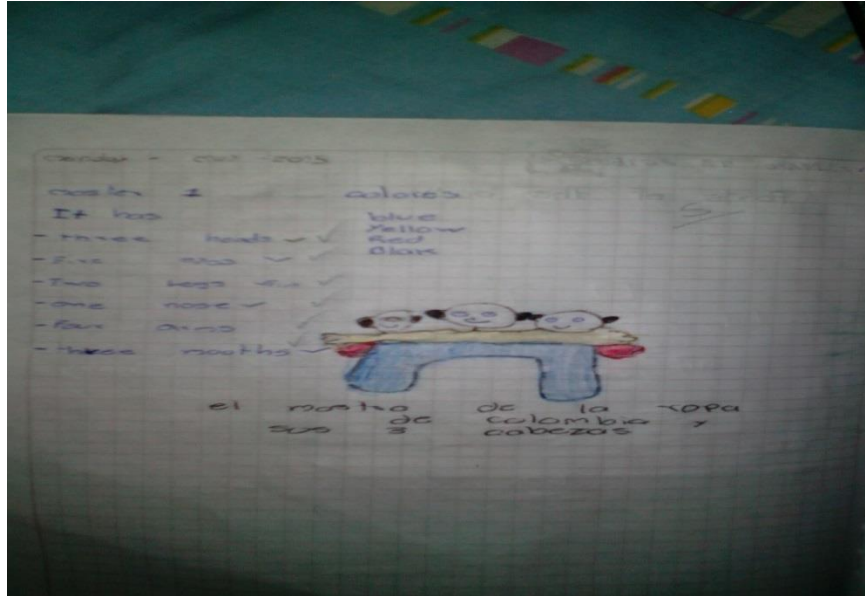
<p>6:30 – 6:35</p> <p>6:35 – 6:40</p> <p>6:40 - 6:45</p> <p>6:45 – 7:00</p> <p>7:00 – 7:10</p> <p>7:10 - 7:20</p>	<p>T will start the class by showing some dolls or action figures for introducing the parts of the body, what is this ? head, hands, etc, etc . Ask learners... touch your head ?, touch your knees ? and so on.</p> <p>Learners will learn and sing a song related to the parts of the body, they have to perform some movements while singing. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxphoOOwTbo</p> <p>T will call some students in front of the class, the group will practice again the parts of the body by saying what part of the body the teacher is showing them.</p> <p>Teacher will give students a picture of a body. It will be also projected on the board. T will write the names (hands, head, etc) in front of the respective part of the body, L's will do the same in their notebooks, while teacher ask about a specific part . (page 13)</p> <p>Teacher will show a monster (with several heads, arms, etc) (the monster has 3 heads , 2 arms) Teacher will model de activity first.</p> <p>Students will be asked to touch certain part of their body, (individually) Juan, touch your head , show your arm, etc</p>	<p>Some of the L's might not remember some things, so teacher will help to elicit information from them by providing them clues.</p> <p>Technical problems with the sound, so another digital version will be carried in other device</p>	

Annex 3.3 - Lesson plan 10th .

Date of the class: 20 th - May- 2015		Class Number: __10__	
AIM: Learners will be able to draw a monster by following instructions that involves the monster's characteristics such as colors, numbers, and body parts specially. Besides, they will be able to match body parts (images) and words.			
Estándares Básicos de Competencias (MEN) Estándar General: Desarrollo estrategias que me ayudan a entender algunas palabras, expresiones y oraciones que leo Estándares Específicos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participo activamente en juegos de palabras y rondas. • Escribo el nombre de lugares y elementos que reconozco en una ilustración. • Reconozco palabras y frases cortas en inglés en libros, objetos, juguetes, propagandas y lugares de mi escuela. • Comprendo canciones, rimas y rondas infantiles, y lo demuestro con gestos y movimientos • Reconozco y sigo instrucciones sencillas, si están ilustradas. . • Indicadores de logro: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asocia imágenes con las respectivas palabras. - Reacciona físicamente en coherencia con las ordenes orales recibidas - Reconoce y pronuncia adecuadamente palabras que le son familiares y pertenecer a su entorno - Reconoce palabras y partes del cuerpo en ilustraciones, en sus compañeros y en si mismo. - Identifica las partes del cuerpo y las relaciona con su versión escrita. 			
Assumed Knowledge: Learners must know some parts of the body in English.			
Materials: Video beam, speakers, handouts, markers, board, laptop,			
DAY/STAGE/ ACTIVITY/TIME	PROCEDURE TEACHER AND LEARNER ACTIVITY	Anticipated problems and	COMMENTS

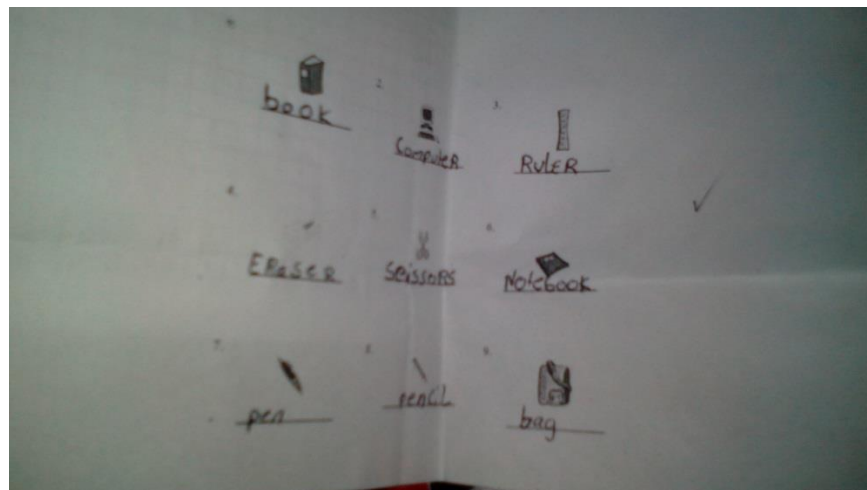
		solutions	
10:30 – 10: 35	T will start the class by giving back the workshop developed the previous class about the parts of the body while checking attendance.		
10:35 – 10:40	Students will be asked to touch certain part of their body, while the teacher write it on the board.		
10:40 – 10 :45	Learners will listen to a song related to the parts of the body, they have to perform some movements while listening to it. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gxphoOOwTbo		
10: 45 – 11:00	Teacher will provide learners with a handout where they have to match the words with the corresponding images (body parts) Teacher will write on the board a list of monster's characteristics (monster 1 : it has 3 red heads, 5 blue eyes, four legs, etc , listed) Learners will have to draw their own version following the characteristics.	Technical problems with the sound, so another digital version will be carried in other device. Teacher will perform the movements if necessary.	
11:00 – 11: 20			

Annex 4 - Monsters – Photos - Instructions





Annex 5 – Artifacts - Handouts



Color seven pencils yellow.
Color nine rulers green.
Color four erasers black.
Color eight glue sticks orange.

➤ Add the

$8 + 6 =$	fourteen
$9 + 7 =$	sixteen
$7 + 4 =$	eleven
$9 + 8 =$	eighteen
$9 + 9 =$	seventeen

$5 + 8 =$	thirteen
$6 + 6 =$	twelve
$10 + 10 =$	twenty
$8 + 7 =$	fifteen
$10 + 9 =$	nineteen

➤ Read, find and color.

Color two pens blue.
Color seven pencils yellow.
Color nine rulers green.
Color four erasers black.
Color eight glue sticks orange.
Color three pencil sharpeners red.
Color one schoolbag purple.
Color five books gray.



1.  _____

2.  _____

3.  _____

4.  _____

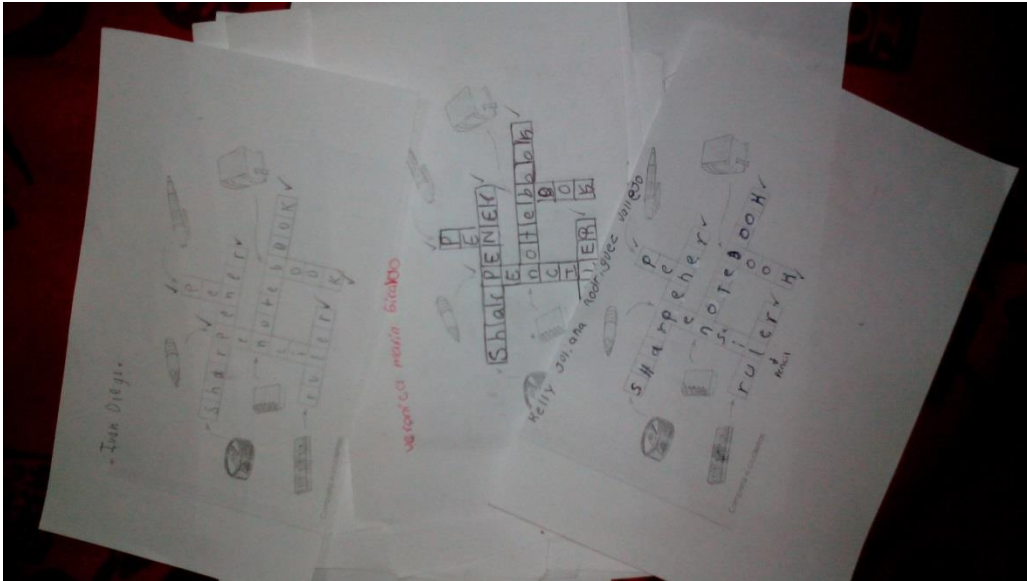
5.  _____

6.  _____

7.  _____

8.  _____

9.  _____



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