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**AUTORIZACIÓN DE LOS AUTORES PARA LA CONSULTA, LA  
REPRODUCCIÓN PARCIAL O TOTAL, Y PUBLICACIÓN ELECTRÓNICA DEL  
TEXTO COMPLETO**

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Puerto Colombia, 4 de septiembre de 2020

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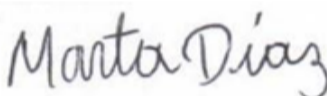
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COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES**

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FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN  
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2020**



**IMPROVING SPEAKING SKILLS AND VOCABULARY THROUGH LUDIC TASKS AND FUNNY ACTIVITIES IN 7TH GRADE STUDENTS AT MARCO FIDEL SUAREZ SCHOOL**

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**Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning  
Strategies**

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## **Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning Strategies**

### **CHAPTER I**

#### **1. Introduction**

Wherever you go, it is difficult to try to find an ideal classroom where students can effectively and easily learn a second language. In the case of speaking, which is one of the most complicated skills to teach, we find problems of understanding, fluency and confidence among students. Al Hosni, Samira. (2014) states that English as foreign language (EFL) learners, no matter how much they know about the English language, still face many speaking difficulties. Many studies have indicated that oral language development has largely been neglected in the classroom, and most of the time, oral language in the classroom is used more by teachers than by students. However, oral language, even as used by the teacher, hardly ever functions as a means for students to gain knowledge and explore ideas. To develop the knowledge to deal with oral communication problems in an EFL context, researchers first need to know the real nature of those problems and the circumstances in which 'problems' are constructed. Therefore, We as teachers can help students to improve their speaking skill by the use of different methods.

As an innovative method to overcome speaking difficulties in learners; Cooperative Learning (CL) was included in this study. Cooperative learning and English language learners go together. Since cooperative learning promotes English language acquisition among EFL students by helping them to become more confident while using the L2 in the first place when they work in small groups and in any other context later on. It also allows students to get new learning methods by observing how their peers

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solve problems that involve learning English. As Ellis (1997, p.244) stated, the constant use of English in the classroom is widely considered an opportunity to enhance students' foreign language learning. From a social perspective to second language learning, interactionist theories assure that "verbal interaction is of crucial importance for language learning since it helps to make the facts of the L2 salient to the learner".

Regardless of their motivation and their reasons to learn a foreign language, it is always acquired through cooperative or non-cooperative social environments. It is important to mention that the features of a target language cannot be deeply taught without integrating instruction in the target language learning process together with the student's usage of the L2.

In addition to cooperative learning, this project involves the use of authentic sources from the second language community – newspapers, films, photos, news broadcasts, television shows, roll plays, small group discussion and others – with the aim of making the learning process more realistic, comprehensive, and often enjoyable. According to Nunan and Miller (1995), authentic materials "are not created or edited expressly for language learners" (p. 68). Nevertheless, authentic materials allow students to "feel, touch, smell, and see the foreign peoples and not just hear their language" (Peck, 1998). In the same way, we consider authenticity enables students to better perceive socio-cultural aspects from different countries; encouraging and engaging them to develop and to be immersed into the foreign language.

As a result of our teaching practicum carried out from 2018 to 2019 (2), we could evidence that the group of children we were working with found speaking as the most difficult skill to improve. Students seemed to be interested in the idea of learning English. They never gave up. They did attempts. They looked for a safe space to practice and to use the language. Unfortunately, before our



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arrival, they had not had the opportunity to be in contact with language, at least not with language in real context from a sociocultural perspective.

Most of them seemed to be engaged with the class in terms of participation, motivation and responsibility. However, they defined the lack of speaking activities as frustrating. We noticed that anytime they had a speaking activity, they frowned. It was probably because of the topics of their books. Perhaps, the kind of activities the teacher used were tedious or they always seemed to be the same. Maybe because those activities did not allow students to use the language in real contexts or because of their length. They used to last 15 minutes maximum. Therefore, students were reluctant to speak up and natural classroom interaction was kept to a minimum. They were painfully reticent to answer the teacher's questions about their presentations in front of the class, or when they performed any kind of role for an audience.

We became interested in knowing what kind of activities or methods could be used in order to engage students with the process and to help them to improve their communicative speaking skill. In consequence, we decided to apply one study to identify the main issues that were affecting a group of young learners whenever they had to speak.

### **1.1 Statement of the problem**

Based on our first impressions about the class, we noticed that student's oral production skills were affected for different factors. Speaking skills were neglected in the lesson plans. We also observed that the class was teacher-centered and students seemed to abhor their books.

Through interviews and observations; we identified why students considered that speaking was the most difficult skill for them. Due to the fact that materials and activities selected by the teacher

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were not of their interest, students did not have the best attitude. They usually frowned, the instructions had to be repeated at least three times whenever they listened to the words "speaking activity". A whisper was heard and the predisposition to this type of process was evident.

Our responsibility as practicum teachers was to identify those reasons or factors that had led students to behave in that way while the development of the speaking skill in the classroom. We needed to know the reason why it was mostly affected in comparison to the other skills which processes were developed in a better way.

Through this study, relevant factors affecting nine-grade students' oral production were founded. The data already mentioned is presented out later in this study.

### **1.2 Research question**

Taking into account the main issues we uncovered during our preliminary observation and the application of different tools that helped us to collect relevant data (interviews, surveys, among others), we decided to conduct this study guided by the following research question: What factors hinder oral production skills in public school 9th graders in an EFL setting?

This project emerged as an idea to help learners succeed when facing a conversation in real contexts. Based on their interest and using authentic material; it was possible to develop a pedagogical proposal that follows cooperative learning strategies. It could help students to overcome their weaknesses in speaking skill.

Despite the use of authentic material and cooperative strategies, we observed how important and motivating it was for learners to get involved in communicative situations which allow them to express their own ideas and feelings about familiar topics. For this reason, our main



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purpose during this research was to design and implement tasks which encouraged students' oral output.

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Thus, having speaking skill as the target of our project, we expected to identify starting points that may lead us to the answer of the following main query with its two supportive questions:

1. What kind of teaching material should be used by teachers at a public school to improve oral production skills?
2. How does cooperation promote the development of the speaking ability of English as a foreign language in 9th grade students at a public school in Barranquilla-Colombia?

### **1.3 Objectives:**

- To determine how cooperative activities help learners to overcome the factors that hinder their speaking skills in an EFL setting.
- To assure the kind of teaching material that should be implemented promotes oral production.
- To plan and develop a pedagogical proposal to help learners to enhance their oral production.

This research study explored the incorporation of Cooperative Learning, in English language teaching in an EFL setting. It also investigates strategies and techniques that make the speaking skill learning process more productive.

Students selected as our sample of our study agreed with using an alternative method to engage learners with peers in order to comprehend and learn a second language should be requisite to successfully learning a new language. This thesis is intended to make educators think about the language learning process, to recognize the importance of including cooperative learning methods in their curriculum. Hopefully, they will be encouraged to implement some of the tools created using CL into their classrooms. Since we consider that developing fluency implies taking risks by using language in a relaxed, friendly atmosphere



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for –an atmosphere of trust and support. Speaking fluently, of course, involves speaking easily and appropriately with others.

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The main objective was to focus on those general oral items to communicate in a foreign language. Therefore, the decision was to invite our students to talk to each other by using cooperative activities (roleplays, projects, worksheets, songs among other activities) as the main strategies.

### **1.4 Setting of the study**

This study took place in a public school located in Barranquilla. The institution had different facilities that include administration offices, staff room, cafeteria, copy center, canteen, laboratory, library, computers room, English room, arts room, sports field, toilets, preschool area, and classrooms from 1st to 11th grades.

Each classroom has an air conditioner, students and teacher's desks, lockers, posters, a board and a plasma T.V. On the other hand, it is important to say that the classroom is small for 32 students. For that reason, we did not have enough space to develop some kind of activities. It was not an impediment but it could have been easier and satisfying.

In terms of the administrative organization of the institute; it follows the same system as most of the public schools in Barranquilla. They have a Headmaster who is in charge of all the different processes related to the quality of the education, the use of economic resources and the accomplishment of the laws. Also, to make sure that all the academic processes are carried out in an adequate way; there is an academic coordinator who has a role of pedagogical support. They also have a secretary that oversees the organization of all the institutional documents.

## **Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning Strategies**

### **1.5 Rationale**

Communication through speaking is considered as a fundamental ability since it allows people to open themselves to the world. Besides, learning a second language has become an important tool that every colombian student must achieve in order to succeed in all life scenarios. Now, acquiring speaking skills in a second language is a key ability that will be useful for the professional life of every high school student.

Students' oral production is often challenging for English teachers because it becomes difficult for them to express their ideas orally. Overcoming this difficulty involves the implementation of as many strategies as possible in order to boost a student's speaking skill. Unfortunately, most English teachers at public schools tend to focus on grammar and reading exercises during their classes, neglecting the appropriate spaces to work on significant activities that can enhance this important skill, taking away the opportunity to produce oral idea by themselves. In the school we worked with, 9th grade students are expected to achieve a CEFR B1 level, according to *plan nacional de bilingüismo (PNB)*. In this level people must have the ability to express oneself in a limited way in familiar situations and to deal in a general way with non routine information. It means that they must be able to briefly describe experiences and events with basic vocabulary and grammar structures. Unfortunately, students still struggle with producing their own ideas according to this level.

This study aims to find out the factors that affect this phenomenon, in order to help them to fully achieve these abilities and later develop a plan that can help them to overcome those difficulties so that they can feel comfortable at the time of speaking.

It was necessary to develop this study because it is fundamental to discover the reasons or factors that affect EFL students' oral production, to help them to increase their performance so that they can feel more confident to express and construct meaningful ideas in a way that makes them feel comfortable and motivated. Through this study, we aimed to make a



## **Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning Strategies**

contribution to bilingual education in public schools by giving alternatives that can increase the production of this skill.





## **Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning Strategies**

### **CHAPTER II Literature review**

#### **2. Review of the related literature**

Various studies have explored issues that directly influence the mastering of the speaking skill.

In Colombia, Noguera (2014) conducted a study with the aim of reducing the levels of anxiety of students at the time of speaking through the implementation of group work. It helped students to feel comfortable and to perform better at the time of facing any speaking activity. The analysis and findings of this study helped researchers to classify and convey the factors that hinder oral production and to attempt to develop a pedagogical proposal that deals with them. This study also provided us with tools to face this kind of situation when students were asked to accomplish a speaking task.

While developing this research, Noguera decided to use cooperative language strategies, since they encourage learners to work together to reach common goals. In addition, it was necessary to test the design of the teaching material. She had to promote different activities for students to practice and to talk among them. It included a broad variety of educational tools where students usually work in groups, created solutions, looked for meanings, explored new knowledge, interpreted theories, and applied the tasks included. This study is related to ours since we found that students often felt afraid when they had to develop oral production skills, and even more when they had to do it individually.

Mendoza (2007) conducted a case study in a public high school with 6th grade students who showed symptoms of nervousness in specific situations such as conversations, role plays and oral participation or any other oral activity. Findings showed that students felt anxiety and nervousness symptoms during oral activity participation.

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This occurred especially when they faced the unknown aspects of the language, sometimes provoked by lack of familiarity with topics during the development of group discussions, or because of the level of activities and the materials selected by the teacher.

Castrillón (2010) conducted research with 4th semester students from a public university in Colombia in order to identify what affects their participation and interaction in class. He found that there are different learners' factors that may influence participation in a classroom such as unwillingness to participate and fear of making mistakes in front of their classmates. Most of the cases were related to the kind of activities and materials used by the English teacher.

Moreover, the findings concluded that anxiety affects students' oral competence. This study also revealed that oral presentations and participation in front of large audiences and the teacher were the communicative activities which aroused the most anxiety. It was necessary to create small teams that allowed students the chance to work in groups, to interact with others, to speak, to listen and to be in contact with the language during the whole period of classes. Through its results, this study aims to ask the teachers to be conscious about the material used during the development of speaking skills and about the way the processes will be developed according to the quantity of students, the class- time, the level of the topics, whether they are related to students' interests, and the variety of activities that could be presented.

Prieto C.C. (2007) carried out another research study that is strongly linked to our study. The study was called "Improving Eleventh Graders' Oral Production in English Class through Cooperative Learning Strategies" because of the process that is carried out with the CLL strategies to enhance learners' speaking skills. This study was conducted to establish strategies to help students to improve their oral production in English. Before setting the strategies, the researcher had to find out which of the CLL activities that contained those



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strategies were suitable to apply. The study revealed that the major problems categorized learners issues in three major areas: oral report, nervousness, and pronunciation.

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It was carried out with eleventh graders at Colegio de Bachillerato Patria in Bogotá. The main objective of the research was to investigate problems of EFL learners' speaking and factors that hindered their oral production skills. It also aimed at obtaining suggestions on how to improve EFL learners' speaking skills. The study revealed that the main problem in that school was the fear of speaking. Students only performed properly while working in groups but they struggled whenever they worked individually and while trying to create anything original. She concluded that cooperative learning strategies helped students to improve oral production and interaction, but it was a gradual process.

Cañas S.( 2013) conducted a study called " Identifying Factors that Affect FL Learners' Oral Participation at a Public University in Colombia reported. This case study attempted to identify factors that affect foreign language (FL) students' oral participation. This study revealed that some anxiety signs such as general avoidance, physical actions and physical symptoms are the factors that affect FL students when speaking in front of the class. This study is related to our project since it found that the activities selected by the teacher had a bad impact on students' interest. The lack of variety of activities and the materials are shown as some of the factors that hinder students' oral production. It was the main reason that encouraged the researcher to design a pedagogical proposal. It allowed students to learn through a variety of games, roleplays, timed-speaking and implementing authentic material as a motivation for her students.

Similarly, Tanveer, M (2007) showed some factors that affect students' speaking skills at Glasgow University. They were insufficient linguistic proficiency, speaking anxiety, lack of ideas and interference of the L1 and syntax. He also claimed that the material provided to students makes the difference. He stated that catching themes and topics related to students' likes and necessities lead the group to a safe environment in which participation and making mistakes together are the clue.

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Thus, in this paper, we introduced some of the most important studies related to the identification of the major issues affecting speaking skill. These studies established a framework to guide our own work.

### **2.1 Theoretical framework.**

The purpose of our theoretical framework is to provide the reader with an overview of the speaking skill in EFL settings. It also explores the factors that affect the students' oral production while it considers the findings of different related studies.

First, the concept of speaking and its sub-skills are presented. Then, oral participation concept, authentic materials and the factors affecting oral production are introduced. Finally, to sum up, a summary is made to present what the previous studies have or have not done.

#### ***Relevant concepts***

In order to obtain a better understanding of the research, some concepts need to be explained. That is the reason why we set the key concepts' definitions of the research.

#### **2.1.1. The concept of Speaking**

Being a relevant skill to consider while we are learning a second language, speaking has to be developed carefully in order to achieve the goals proposed in an EFL setting. Any discussion of how to overcome factors that hinder speaking skills in an EFL setting must begin with an outline of the concept of speaking.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990:66-67) defined speaking as a complex cognitive skill that can be divided into different subcategories. While some of them are acquired by a guided process, some others could be processed automatically. We understood that some of the skills are



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automatically processed by the brain, and some others need some guided help in order to be fully developed.

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Widdowson (1990:59) gave three different definitions: 1) speaking is simply the manifestation of an abstract system that involves the use of grammar structures and phonological systems. 2) speaking is an active productive process that makes use of the aural medium, and 3) Speaking is considered as an instance of use. Thus, it makes part of a reciprocal exchange where both reception and production are essential in order to make it work adequately. That is to say that speaking skill is complemented by grammar structures and phonological system and its production is directly influenced by the reception of the speaker.

Chaney (1998) proposed that speaking is the process of creating and sharing meanings through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols in a variety of contexts.

Burns and Joyce (1997) agreed that speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information. That is to say that people need this skill to have verbal symbols in order to interact with others and to reach a mutual agreement.

Hadfield (1999:3) suggested that EFL learners that are able to communicate their ideas properly in the target language are considered to have achieved the goal. He also stated that speaking is the connection between the classroom and the outside world. Giving students the opportunity to practice purposeful communication in meaningful situations assures the proper development of this skill.

### **2.1.2 The concept of speaking skill**

The study of a language contains two kinds of skills. There are receptive skills which involve two aspects: understanding and reading; and the productive skills, which involve writing and speaking. Bygate (1987) stated that into the teaching process, the speaking skill can not be seen as an individual, but it has to be supported by listening, reading and writing skills. Thus,

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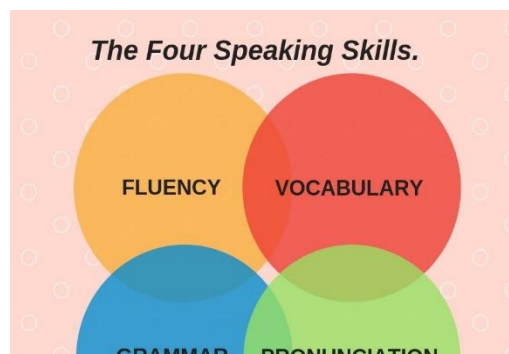
it makes part of a reciprocal exchange in which both reception and production are essential in order to make it work properly.

Widdowson (1990) agrees that speaking is a process complemented by grammar structures, phonological systems and its production is directly influenced by the reception of the speaker ( listening and reading skills).

On the other hand, there are some researchers and teachers that suggest working the speaking ability separately from the other skills (Tarigan:1986). Speaking is a crucial ability that should be detached from listening, writing or reading skills. Since it is an instrument that lets us express a message whether the listener understands or not. Besides, as Šolcová (2011) asserted, speaking has its own patterns and structures that are different from those of writing. Speaking instructions and guidelines should be focused on oral production only. Nevertheless, they both agreed that a successful speaking class should cover activities of production, receiving and processing information anyway.

### **2.1.3 Speaking sub-skills**

Brown (2008:142-143) Explains that it is necessary to create a list that includes some of the micro or macro skills needed for a specific task. The term Micro skills refers to those fragments that make part of the language, such as phonemes, morphemes, words, collocations, and phrasal units. Macro skills are those larger elements that speakers implement to give a clear message, such as structure, vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency added to the discourse, function, style, cohesion, non-verbal communications and strategic options.



*Illustration 1 Four Speaking Skills*





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Brown (2004) stated that in macro skills, the speaker has to appropriately accomplish communicative functions according to situations, participants and goals, use appropriate styles, registers, implications, redundancies, pragmatic conventions, conversation rules, floor keeping and yielding interrupting and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversation.

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The last skill in macro-skills is that the speaker needs to develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as structuring what he says, emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how your interlocutor(s) is/are understanding you.

In regards to assessing speaking skills; the researcher has to pay close attention to two main skills as essential substances of speaking skill, namely microskills and macro-skills. That is to say, that the speaker needs to adequate his speech in function of the context; applying the correct micro and macro skills that would help him to develop speaking tasks in an accurate way.

### **2.1.4 The concept of materials**

Materials is one of the most important factors that can assure an effective oral production in language learners. Proper materials, well designed and developed in an appropriate way, can boost students progress in the learning of the language. Tomlinson (2008) stated: “materials are anything which is done by writers, teachers or learners to provide sources of language input and to exploit those sources in ways which maximize the likelihood of intake”. In other words, the supply of information about and/or experience of the language in ways designed to promote language learning.

To the previous definition we would add that materials development involves any kind of activity and/or exercise (games, role plays, readings, problem-solving situations, group discussions, etc.) totally developed from raw texts, with or without pedagogical purposes, for the students' level and created to address a skill or section in order to be improved in a creative way.

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### **2.3. Factors that affect oral production**

As a common result of any research, the issues that affect the normal course of the object of study have to be taken into account. Therefore, talking about factors that can hinder the oral production of students in an EFL setting, we could find relevant information on the diagnosis of our course. The main factor that affects the development of their oral production in the second language was the materials selected by the teacher and the way he applies them in the learning process.

Zhan (2012) stated that oral performance represents a practical resource for English students, and it offers them a helpful way to understand the meaning of the target language. For this reason, it is really important to determine the kind of material that best fits the necessities of the students, the institution and their curriculums. Woolfolk (1998) agreed by saying that the materials selected should be developed considering students' interest, necessities and desires, since in this way student's affective states would be more active, open-minded to receive information. As a result, they will be ready to learn from minute one of class until the last moment.

According to Cotter (2007), all the interactive and cooperative activities are essential for students who need to develop their speaking skills. They might be able to achieve goals, to improve their knowledge and understanding of the language through group work. Also, he strongly argued that teachers must implement activities that offer students the chance to develop conversations in real contexts and scenarios. Prieto (2007) suggested that L2 learners can recognize and adopt ways to start a topic, to include others, to change topics, to repair communication breakdowns, to deal with those who dominate the conversation, to use language, to solve problems and to end a discussion while practicing in groups. Following this idea, Slavin (1995) suggested that cooperative activities engage students and help them to overcome the factors that affect the development of oral production but that it is essential

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for teachers to vary the kind of activities very often in order to work on the different sub skills in oral production.

Garibaldi (1990) took the view that materials may be changed periodically to motivate students with different activities and to create a more demanding and challenging process that enhances their spoken skills.

It is very important to communicate, to express our ideas, our thoughts and to say what we feel in a comprehensible way. Indeed, effective communication gives us the opportunity to create a better world. Unfortunately, human beings do not always take advantage of this unique ability in everyday life.

Part of this weakness can be observed in EFL classrooms because of various reasons that can include methodology selection, availability of resources and even teacher's profile. In our case, the approach implemented by the teacher imposed a higher emphasis on the reading skill in English. The oral skill is very often set aside, and regular classes tend to develop cognitive processes mostly by reading and writing. Most of the time, we lack enough reflection on how to encourage learners' potential in regard to their communicative competence. This situation worsened when the institution's concern was to have learners provided only with tools to speak or to communicate in a proper way.

According to Chatsain (1998 pp. 330 - 358) speaking is a productive skill, and it involves many components. It is more than making the right sounds, choosing the right words or constructing sentences that are grammatically correct. Moreover, one of the biggest problems that teachers have while teaching a foreign language is to prepare students to be able to use it. Giving students the opportunity to say something, even if there are grammar or pronunciation mistakes, may increase students' rate of participation in oral activities.

The "use of the language" and "communication" are the keywords of the new vision of languages, the authentic sense and real objective of learning (Canale and Swain, 1980). Regrettably, there are many cases of people that have spent years learning a foreign language,



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and they do not have the ability to use it properly. When people do not make the “use” of the language early in their learning process; it is going to be more difficult when they try to do it later. This is the reason why having the essential opportunities to practice with peers and teachers will be reflected as an improvement of the language.

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In addition, affective factors may be included since they "most pervasively obstruct the learning process" (Arnold & Brown, 1999) [8]. Worrying about being "wrong, stupid, or incomprehensible" (Brown, 2001) [9] completely ruins learners' speaking performance. Most ESL learners are nervous in class (Liu, 2006) [10], especially when they are asked to speak in class without any readiness. "Too much nervousness makes learners tongue-tied or lost for words" (Shumin, 2002) [11] which completely affects their achievement in foreign/second language classroom (Zhang & Jia, 2006) [12]. They are shy of the attention that their speech attracts. They are also worried about being criticized or losing face in front of the rest of the class.

Related to affective factors, we can also find motivation, which is one of the factors that influence success or failure in learning a language, particularly a second language or foreign language (Gardner, 2006) [15]. In the same lines, Petty (1998) [16] argued that if students do not want to learn, their learning efficiency will slow in such a way that they may learn virtually nothing. Making mistakes is a natural process of learning a language but it causes potential threat to one's ego.

These threats discourage the learners from talking in English. Learners believe that it is not possible to achieve fluency or mastery of the language. This lack of confidence prevents them from learning the speaking skills. Eventually they lose interest and give up.

Therefore, this research paper is aimed to defend the increase of students' oral production through cooperative activities. It tends to achieve learners to be engaged, to maximize their performance on the spoken ability, and to develop a pedagogical proposal. This proposal uses authentic materials based on their necessities, interest and expectations in regards to the learning process since these kinds of activities provide students with security to express their ideas in front of others. Besides, the students may learn through each other by achieving cooperative language learning, which promotes a positive climate in classrooms.



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Ehrman and Oxford (1993) aimed to include cooperative learning as a classroom procedure which can lower anxiety in language classroom. Gutierrez (2005) agreed that in order to help students to minimize the stress effects, it is necessary for teachers to adapt their activities focused on oral production and group work activities.

In conclusion, including important concepts such as speaking from a communicative perspective, speaking skill and its sub skills, materials implemented during EFL classes, cooperative learning and each one of the factors that guide this research, since the purpose of this project was to encourage an improvement on students' performances in spoken English, making use of appropriate material that can be helpful to reach this aim. It becomes necessary to have a wide perspective about these concepts that are part of the study.

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### **CHAPTER III Methodology.**

#### **3. Type of research.**

This research study follows a qualitative approach in order to find out how we could help 32 students of 9th graders to improve their speaking skills. Out of those 32, we selected a sample of 6 students in which we focused while gathering the data. We found that many students had difficulties while trying to express their ideas or whenever they were asked to do any kind of performance. Since the aim of this study is to develop their oral production, we first needed to know what were the inconveniences or the main issues they found on their learning process, in other words, to discover the factors that affect their improvement and understanding of the language. As a result, we decided to guide our research through the following question: What factors hinder a public school 9th graders oral production in an EFL setting?

We appropriated the concept of Punch (1998) which states that qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as involving "... an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (p.3). We considered that a qualitative approach fits better with our research study since it can help us to take data based on student's reactions and responses in the class, to our observations of the processes developed during our research. Furthermore, this study takes into account the context, the tools, and communicative skills with the aim of interpreting the reasons why these speaking difficulties are present in this group of students. Besides, it is important for this research to make direct contact with students in their own environment.





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Thus, fieldwork in the classroom plays a significant role for the development of qualitative research.

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The instruments implemented for the diagnosis, data analysis and elaboration of the didactic proposal were the unstructured interview, field notes, observation and surveys that provided us with valuable and relevant information related to the factors that hindered their oral production.

### **3.1 Population**

This research study intends to discover the factors that affect students' oral production in an EFL setting. It was carried out with a sample of 6 students out of 32 students whose range of ages is between 14 and 15 years old, of strata 1 to 4. They come from different socioeconomic levels of the city and its surrounding areas.

The participants of this study were chosen because of their abilities, their management and command of the language, influence in the work group, their sense of ownership and desire to learn, to participate and to improve.

The vast majority of students who attend the institute belong to families whose parents demand great involvement in the comprehensive education of their child and with a high level of education. In addition, these families usually have the same ideals as the school. The center ensures a fairly high control over the students and a constant communication with families, thus avoiding any type of academic or social problems they may have. In fact, both parents and students showed a great interest in language learning as the fulfillment of activities. Parents expressed they wanted their children to be able to communicate in English since it would be useful for their future.

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### **3.2 Context**

Barranquilla is an industrial and cosmopolitan city located in Colombian's northern Caribbean coast. It is one of the most important cities in this region and the fourth most populous in Colombia with around 2,5 millions of citizens. It has a wide education offer, from primary schools to universities and technical institutions. Bilingual education has been regarded as an important tool in students' education. However, most public schools need to improve English teaching strategies.

The school where this research was conducted is located in a medium-high class neighborhood which is close to the principal avenues of the city. It means that there are many bus routes that facilitate students' access to the school. This institution is recognized for being one of the best public schools in Colombia, based on the scores of the ICFES national exam. Academic excellence is one of the main characteristics that teachers use to describe the school. In 2016 it was awarded the title of the best public school of Colombia. It has a rigorous admission process that selects only the students that demonstrate to have a high academic level according to the requirements of the school. For this reason, we had big expectations on being part of this institute and working with the students.

The administrative organization of the institute is the same as most public schools in Barranquilla. They have a Headmaster, who is in charge of all the different processes related to the quality of the education, the use of economic resources and the accomplishment of the laws. The academic coordinator has a role of pedagogical support making sure that every teacher carries his duties out. Also, the coordinator assures the correct behavior of the students and teachers; the secretary organizes all the institutional documents.

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The academic coordinator is currently implementing an institutional project in which he seeks to take the school to a new level in the national scale of public institutions by educating teachers and providing resources to the classrooms.

### **3.3 Instruments of data collection.**

Based on our research question and the objectives we had for this particular study, it was necessary to obtain purely interactional data that allows us to know our sample, to identify the positive aspects and weaknesses.

The instruments implemented for the diagnosis and the development of our research and the previous proposal were: field notes, surveys, and observations.

Each instrument chosen allowed us to know a little more about our sample. Thus, we were able to determine the average proficiency level of the classroom; we were able to differentiate those individuals that stood out, factors that affected students, their thoughts, interest, desires and opinions about the processes, the teacher, the language, among other relevant things.

We were able to determine some aspects that they considered must change to provide opportunities to develop their communicative skills and to gain confidence to express their ideas.

The first instrument implemented to collect data were the *surveys*. They included a set of standardized questions that explored specific topics and collected information regarding their interests, thoughts, likes, dislikes, and opinions about the classes, about the development of the different skills and information related to the topics or the way they would like to learn English.

The type of questions we included in questionnaires made the participants feel comfortable. We did them in Spanish in order to obtain a better and a more reliable idea about their



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thoughts, and to avoid any kind of nervousness while they were answering the questions. They seemed to be relaxed,

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with no fears of being criticized or punished because of what they were writing and sharing with the researchers. Questions related to the teacher, his methods, activities, projects and tasks provided us with relevant information. Some of them decided to share their experiences and to tell us different situations they had gone through during their learning process. Furthermore, we obtained information about their ages, educational level, family situation, and some other details that might be relevant when it comes to the data analysis.

After the application of the surveys, we decided to implement three different kinds of interviews since this allowed us to obtain a very clear sense of student's oral skills, as well as to learn more about the students and begin to build some rapport with them. The first interview was based on their experiences related to their English class. We asked about their feelings, their participation, their thoughts, their grades, and their ideas about what could be improved. The second interview was focused on the teacher, the materials, the class itself, aspects they liked and did not like. We also questioned them about the methods, tools, activities used by the teacher, and about the time they had to develop each skill. The third interview centered on discovering their necessities, their likes, their desires, their feelings while producing in English. We were interested in determining what kind of learners we had, how they would like to learn the topics they loved, and some other aspects that we considered essential to the development of a contingency plan to help students achieve all their goals on the language learning process and to improve their oral production.

Granted, interviewing involved some challenges, one being that students were absolutely petrified at the idea of confronting the researchers. For that reason, we decided to use Spanish in order to make them feel comfortable while sharing that one to one setting with us. We started the interview with light conversation, then we opened with very easy questions and meeting in relatively informal surroundings. We tried to create an informal atmosphere in which students feel relaxed. Each interview lengthened from 5 to 10 minutes. After each of them, we made notes related to the main ideas, their experiences and all the relevant data we could obtain.

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We also used field *notes*. We considered them to be the most adequate instrument for documenting needed contextual and real information from the time of our classes. Those notes and observations guided us to focus on what participants wanted and needed to know. Sometimes, it was done directly while the informants knew they were being observed. On other occasions the subject was unaware that we were observing them.

This method provided us with very valuable information regarding the way in which the teacher developed the processes, the types of activities he created, what he used, the materials and resources he implemented in the processes and the students' response to them.

While observing the classroom, each of us focused on different aspects of the process. One of us was in charge of the Descriptive observations: simply writing down what was observed. The second was to focus on the inferential observations: an observation that paid attention to the subject's body language and behavior. Finally, the three of us were focused on the Evaluative observation in which we could make an inference and therefore a judgment from the behavior of each participant, the teacher and students.

We decided to classify all those relevant aspects we noticed by class, actions, participations, mistakes, blanks, suggestions and ways to improve for the development of the proposal. In addition, comprehensive field notes; especially those that include critical reflection were useful in guiding future data collection efforts in the current study.

### **3.4 Legal issues.**

This research study was developed under a set of laws that establish how bilingual education in public schools must be conducted. The set of documents mentioned in this section are “*Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994*”, “*Ley 1651 de 2013*”, “*Programa Nacional de Inglés (2015-2025)*” and “*Common European Framework of Reference*”.

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'Ley 115 de Febrero 8 de 1994' Is the law that has ruled the education system in Colombia since 1994, it includes all the parameters in which colombian education must be carried out. *ARTICULO 1o. Objeto de la ley. La educación es un proceso de formación permanente, personal, cultural y social que se fundamenta en una concepción integral de la persona humana, de su dignidad, de sus derechos y de sus deberes.* It is important to understand the meaning of education and the impact that it has in the life of every human being. Also, it recognizes a foreign language as a part of the mandatory curriculum of every educational institution.

*ARTÍCULO 23. Áreas obligatorias y fundamentales. Para el logro de los objetivos de la educación básica se establecen áreas obligatorias y fundamentales del conocimiento y de la formación que necesariamente se tendrán que ofrecer de acuerdo con el currículo y el Proyecto Educativo Institucional.*

*Los grupos de áreas obligatorias y fundamentales que comprenderán un mínimo del 80% del plan de estudios, son*

*Los siguientes:*

- 1. Ciencias naturales y educación ambiental.*
- 2. Ciencias sociales, historia, geografía, constitución política y democracia.*
- 3. Educación artística.*
- 4. Educación ética y en valores humanos.*
- 5. Educación física, recreación y deportes.*
- 6. Educación religiosa.*
- 7. Humanidades, lengua castellana e idiomas extranjeros.*



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8. *Matemáticas.*

9. *Tecnología e informática.*

*Ley 1651 de 2013, also known as ley de bilingüismo is the law that involves all of the parameters related to bilingual education in Colombia. It was the first law created to assure the implementation of English learning in colombian students. Artículo 1o. Adiciónese al artículo 13 de la Ley 115 de 1994 el siguiente literal: j) Desarrollar competencias y habilidades que propicien el acceso en condiciones de igualdad y equidad a la oferta de la educación superior y a oportunidades en los ámbitos empresarial y laboral, con especial énfasis en los departamentos que tengan bajos niveles de cobertura en educación. Artículo 2°. Adiciónese al artículo 20 de la Ley 115 de 1994 el siguiente literal: g) Desarrollar las habilidades comunicativas para leer, comprender, escribir, escuchar, hablar y expresarse correctamente en una lengua extranjera. Artículo 3°. Modifíquese el literal m) del artículo 21 de la Ley 115 el cual quedará así: m) El desarrollo de habilidades de conversación, lectura y escritura al menos en una lengua extranjera. Artículo 4°. Modifíquese el literal l) del artículo 22 de la Ley 115 de 1994, el cual quedaría así: l) El desarrollo de habilidades de conversación, lectura y escritura al menos en una lengua extranjera. Artículo 5°. Modifíquese el literal h) del artículo 30 de la Ley 115 de 1994, el cual, quedaría así: h) El cumplimiento de los objetivos de la educación básica contenidos en los literales b) del artículo 20, c) del artículo 21 y c), e), h), i), k), l), ñ) del artículo 22 de la presente ley. Artículo 6 0 • Adiciónese al artículo 38 de la Ley 115 de 1994 el siguiente texto: "Las instituciones de educación para el trabajo y desarrollo humano que decidan ofrecer programas de idiomas deberán obtener la certificación en gestión de calidad, de la institución y del programa a ofertar, sin perjuicio del cumplimiento de los demás requisitos l establecidos en las normas jurídicas vigentes para el desarrollo de programas en este nivel de formación. Todas las entidades del Estado, cualquiera que sea su naturaleza jurídica o territorial, sólo podrán contratar la enseñanza de idiomas con organizaciones que cuenten con los certificados de calidad previstos en el presente artículo". Artículo 7°. El Gobierno*

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*Nacional tomará las medidas necesarias para financiar los costos que demande la implementación de la ley, dentro de las cuales deberá explicitar los períodos de transición y gradualidad que se requieren para el cumplimiento de la misma. Artículo 8°. El Gobierno Nacional reglamentará la presente ley y tomará las medidas necesarias para cumplir con los objetivos propuestos, dando prelación al fomento de la lengua inglesa en los establecimientos educativos oficiales, sin perjuicio de la educación especial que debe garantizarse a los pueblos indígenas y tribales. Artículo 9°. Vigencia y derogatorias. La presente ley regirá a partir de su promulgación y deroga todas las disposiciones que le sean contrarias.*

Besides, There is a program developed in order to improve the English level of Colombian students. It is a proposal that sets an ensemble of goals directed to excel the education of a foreign language in Colombia. It is called ‘*Programa Nacional de Inglés (2015-2025)*’

*Se propone desarrollar 13 iniciativas para garantizar una base sólida para todos los niños de Colombia*

- *Acompañamiento y formación de docentes*
- *Fortalecer el inglés de docentes de inglés de secundaria y media*
- *Motivar a los docentes*
- *Fortalecer las habilidades de enseñanza de inglés de los docentes i ii iii Incorporación de la lengua inglesa fuera de la escuela*
- *Involucrar a la comunidad y motivar a los estudiantes con campañas por el inglés*
- *Desarrollar estrategia de inglés en medios de comunicación masivos xi Integración y sinergia*
- *Incentivar el inglés en instituciones privadas*
- *Acompañar y promocionar alianzas y recursos con fuentes locales Modelo pedagógico completo*
- *Apoyar inclusión adecuada de horas de inglés en malla curricular y reclutar los docentes para llenarlas*
- *Sugerir planes de estudio y herramientas pedagógicas presenciales y virtuales para enseñarlos iv v Cultura de desempeño*
- *Apoyar la evaluación de vinculación, reubicación y ascenso*
- *Medir resultados en grados 5 y 9*
- *Infraestructura de apoyo y tecnología*
- *Asegurar o proveer equipos para traer al aula representaciones fidedignas de la lengua*
- *Desarrollar aplicativos para fortalecer y acompañar el aprendizaje del inglés.*

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Through this plan, MEN (Ministerio de educación nacional) aims to work on a better development of English learning through the implementation of some strategies that promise to fix all the issues that public education has been presenting through all of these years.

Also, *Ministerio de educación nacional (MEN)* follows the standards set by the *Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)* to measure the English level in schoolers. These standards set the level of oral and written comprehension/production in English language.

*Presentation of Common Reference Levels The establishment of a set of common reference points in no way limits how different sectors in different pedagogic cultures may choose to organise or describe their system of levels and modules. It is also to be expected that the precise formulation of the set of common reference points, the wording of the descriptors, will develop over time as the Common Reference Levels 23 ABC Basic User Independent User Proficient User A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2 (Breakthrough) (Waystage) (Threshold) (Vantage) (Effective (Mastery) Operational Proficiency) Figure 1 1 Trim, J. L. M. 1978 Some Possible Lines of Development of an Overall Structure for a European Unit Credit Scheme for Foreign Language Learning by Adults, Council of Europe. experience of member states and of institutions with related expertise is incorporated into the description. It is also desirable that the common reference points are presented in different ways for different purposes. For some purposes it will be appropriate to summarise the set of proposed Common Reference Levels in single holistic paragraphs, as shown in Table 1. Such a simple 'global' representation will make it easier to communicate the system to non-specialist users and will also provide teachers and curriculum planners with orientation points:*

## Improving 9th Graders' Oral Production in English through Cooperative Learning Strategies

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she

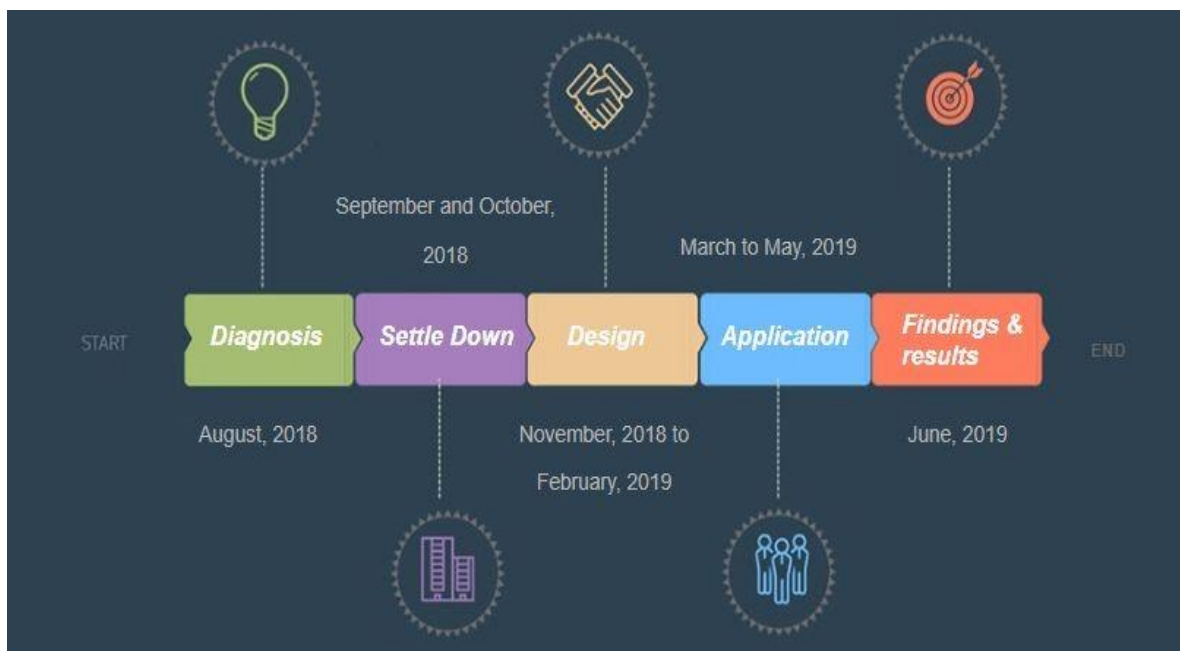
*Tabla 1 Common European Framework of Reference*

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*In order to orient learners, teachers and other users within the educational system for some practical purpose, however, a more detailed overview is likely to be necessary. Such an overview can be presented in the form of a grid showing major categories of language use at each of the six levels.*

Here, we can identify the scale that measures bilingual education in Colombia, and the way English level is officially evaluated by the ministry of education.

### 3.5 Timeline.



*Illustration 2 Investigation timeline*

Our research began in August 2018 when we had our first contact with the group. We did observations of their English classes for one month; with the aim of collecting relevant information about their behaviors and the use of the language inside the classroom.

Based on what we observed, we decided to conduct this research using a qualitative approach since it allowed us to develop it in a descriptive and interpretive way. The description,

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comparison, triangulation and analysis of the results found during the diagnostic phase were performed. In this regard, four moments or phases were considered: *the diagnosis, settle down, the design of the pedagogical proposal, and its application.*

The first moment, named **diagnosis**, allowed us to determine the scope of our students' speech in relation to the pedagogical proposal that we found essential to implement. We focused our attention on their performances, their speeches, the average level of the class, their strengths, and their weaknesses. We observed their reactions to the processes that were developed into their English class. We also took into account the role of the teacher, his attitude, his speech, the way he prepared the lesson, the materials he used, the kind of activities he employed, and the amount of time he offered to the different skills.

Once we had obtained pertinent data about possible issues that could be hindering the students' processes, we started phase two. It was named, **the Settle down**. That moment was developed between the months of September and October, 2018). We observed how the process of teaching and learning of orality was taking place in that school. We continued observing students' responses in order to set goals that guarantee the improvement of students' oral production.

Once we accomplished phase 2 we continued with phase 3, named **Design** (November, 2018 to February, 2019). During this period of time, the design of a didactic pedagogical proposal was developed. A moment in which the conceptual references of our model to be implemented was established. Based on students' difficulties that could be found in the learning process in the English language. We focused on developing a group of activities with authentic materials in order to develop oral production interactively and interestingly. We also took into account verbal fluency, accuracy, naturalness, and speaking sub skills in the use of the language while designing each unit.

Attached to the immersion, cooperation and learning through artifacts, projects, dynamics and activities that develop creativity, we decided to put into practice all the knowledge



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previously acquired by students as a possible solution to the problem analyzed during the two previous phases.

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Finally, the fourth phase; named **Application** took place from March to May, 2019. The implementation of our pedagogical proposal was successfully developed in the public school. It allowed us to obtain our findings and to answer the research question that guided this study.

### **3.6 Data analysis.**

In this research four tools were used to collect the data: surveys, fieldnotes, unstructured interviews, and the analysis of matrix and interaction models for oral presentations.

All these tools were applied simultaneously during the development of the first two phases of the research. Diagnosis and settling down. We focused our attention into students' performance, their speeches, and their average English level.. We observed their reactions to the processes developed into their English class according to their curriculum.

First, we applied the survey (form 1); students were given the papers with nine questions about their interests and motivations to learn English. Through this survey we obtained information related to their development of the four skills. They answered it individually and returned it to the researchers. Students were comfortable while answering the written form. Besides, students were told to present three different speaking tasks. The first one was an activity called "Guess the star". In which they had to describe Colombian famous people. They were divided into 5 groups of 6 students. Each of them had a different role. Before starting the activity, five images were pasted on the wall outside the classroom. Two people from each group had to memorize one picture. They had 2 minutes to do it. Then, they had to transmit as many characteristics as possible to one student called the "messenger." After that, he/she shared the information to one student in charge of making a drawing based on their description. Subsequently, another participant memorized the drawing. Later, the last student had to write on the board all the characteristics and descriptions he/she received from the previous student.





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Finally, the whole group had to compare the drawing with the real pictures while using the words employed.

The second speaking task was an interview related to abilities, physical appearance, character and personality. They had to describe their classmates giving as many details as possible. They had to do it using the vocabulary presented in the previous class. Students were asked to talk about their classmates, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses.

Finally, the third speaking task was a 5-minute presentation. In groups of 3 students they chose a free topic of their interest. They were told to prepare visual aids.

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### CHAPTER IV Results

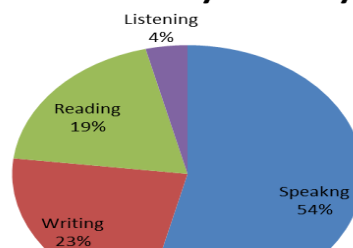
This chapter presents the results of the study with regards to its questions. Qualitative data was gathered through speaking tasks, observation and transcripts of the interviews and questionnaires revealed three emerging categories that encompass issues affecting the oral production of this group of ninth-grade learners. The researchers used triangulation to validate the data obtained. Each category was named based on the studies and the literature existing in the field of speaking skill.

#### **First Category: Few Speaking Opportunities.**

The first category resulting from the analysis of the data is Few speaking opportunities. Since students did not have enough opportunities to show their speaking skills during classes, they struggled whenever they wanted to express their ideas or opinions. The majority of the time they listened to their teacher while he/she was explaining a grammar theme or talking about topics that were found in their books; it was usually related to politics and the environment. This could be evidenced by their answers to the surveys and interviews, where they expressed their unconformities related to what they did during their classes.

As we can observe in the graph, students answered that they rarely practiced speaking during their classes. Therefore, they could not develop this skill in the way they would have liked to, making them think that speaking is the most difficult skill to practice

**What is the skill that you rarely practice?**



Graphic 1 What is the skill that you rarely practice

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We also noticed that most of them found speaking the most difficult skill to improve because of the differences they found between the L1 and the L2.

(Transcripts of an Interview taken from fieldnotes, 2018 )

- Researcher: What do you like about English?
- Student 3: I like all, it is very cool. I listen to music, I like movies, like books, like history and Inglaterra. The bus red... o the red bus? *Ilustración 1 Figure #2 What is the skill you rarely practice*
- Researcher: Great! red bus is perfect. Did you know they are called double-decker buses?
- Student: 3: No sir, I like it.
- Researcher: Yes! Those are the best.
- Student 3: Uhm, I think English is difficult. Speak is difficult. creo que es difícil hablar en inglés porque muchas palabras son al revés.
- Researcher: ¿Al revés? what do you mean?
- Student 3: Si, las palabras tienen un orden diferente. No puedo decir el carro rojo, tengo que decir el rojo carro. Cuando escribo es más sencillo. Hablar es chevere, pero aquí nunca lo hacemos. Creo que al profesor no le gusta.

During the development of the interviews and with the aim of determining the oral skills proficiency of our students, we used a proficiency scale offered by the American Council on the Teaching of foreign Languages (ACTFL) and its proficiency guidelines in order to determine the level of proficiency our students belonged to.

After the review and the transcription of the interviews, we found out that in average, the class was between beginners (lv12) and functional (lv13-4). According to the scale, during lv1

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1 and 2, students could express themselves haltingly and with difficulty; they were frequently unable to express or to connect ideas. The participants often failed to understand clear, and slow sentences, even after clarification or repetition. Mistakes (inaccurate pronunciation, intonation or grammar), or limited vocabulary also caused communication breakdowns. While in the functional level (3) students were able to discuss a limited range of topics (self, immediate environment, among others) with a patient interviewer. However, when dealing with other topics communication tended to be difficult and often broke down; the interviewer's patience was tried on almost all topics. The students often misunderstood the interviewer unless ideas were clarified or repeated. Mistakes sometimes interfered with communication, and lack of vocabulary sometimes hindered communication.

In general terms, most of them struggled while trying to connect ideas, some of them expressed them in Spanish, some others asked how to say different kinds of transitional words and some others just changed the whole speech to Spanish in order to be able to share their ideas.

Another aspect that we noticed was related to the word choice. Students were able to express ideas individually, but the lack of connectors made them use words that did not fit or had a relationship with what they were trying to say. (Data taken from individual interviews, 2018).

Example:

Student 1: I do not like to read papers from Colombia. Want to create and want to speak fast as you. Student 2: I wish teacher to stop the reading activities. We like series, aparte we meet many things of The state united and England. They are cold.

Student 3: I studied in my house, I like English. The teacher do always does the same stuff. We have no fun nor interesting activities. I win the quiz in five. They win exams also. (She pointed out her classmates) But don't talk never. never talk.

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Students 4: Want to speak speed, want to learn to present and want to practice also my friends in groups.

Student 5: I not like teacher because he talks of plants and naturaleza...nat... nature always. No, perdon. He always talks about nature. I don't like. Love Football, city, music, cine, arte, guerra, videojuegos, muchas cosas que nos gustan. (turned it into spanish).

Student 6: We dislike read and I like write. too, we like talk pero no, not speak here. No in house, no in here. I like to speak and write.

Most of the students who claimed that speaking was difficult blamed it on the lack of activities and the time they were allowed for practicing.

Once, one girl who asked her teacher to play a song in order for them to practice reading skills while learning how to pronounce the words properly. At the same time, she wanted to have some fun while learning through listening to one of her favorite singers. The reaction of the teacher was unexpected. He took that comment as a sign of rebellion. He asked her to write the advice on a piece of paper and to give it to him at the end of the class. It was okay until he started arguing about who was the one that should plan the lessons and who was the one who should decide what was important and significant and what is not. Students remained silent for the rest of the class and the speaking activity was never performed. Instead, they had to read an article related to the presidential elections in Colombia and its contrast with the ones in European countries. The course of the class became strange until the end of it.

On the other hand, there were several cases in which the participants claimed for more activities related to speaking in which they had the chance to speak and to interact with others. (Data taken from field notes, 2018).

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Student 4: Pienso que el inglés es un idioma muy importante que todos debemos hablar. Por esa razón creo que debemos practicar más, estar más en contacto con el idioma porque si no practicamos y no hablamos luego no seremos capaces de contestar nada o de decir lo que creemos. Yo quiero hablar con mis amigos en Inglés.

- Student 6: En lo personal me gusta escribir. Siento que es más sencillo. Luego cuando intento decir algo dudo de todo y me demoro mucho pensando en que palabra es la siguiente. Si un verbo o no sé qué...

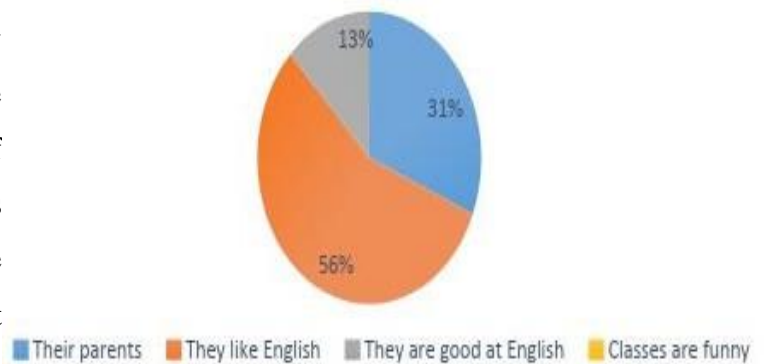
(Data taken from fieldnotes, 2018). Through the interview, we noticed that students seemed interested in learning English; they liked how challenging learning a new language can be, and they had the desire to improve their oral production through activities that would allow them to interact, to practice, to talk, to act, to create something new, or to share their opinions.

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In regards to our observations, we found the fact that students never gave up really impressive. They tried speaking. Most of them seemed to be engaged with the class in terms of participation, motivation, responsibility. Nevertheless, they had no opportunities to be in contact with language and after three weeks of observations, the lack of speaking activities was evident.

We noticed that anytime they had a speaking activity, they frowned. Probably because the topics of their books were boring. Another probability was kind of activities the teacher used were tedious and did not allow them to use the language in real contexts. Finally, they argued that cooperative speaking activities lasted 15 minutes maximum and they were usually

### What is their motivation to learn English?



Graphic 2 What is their motivation to learn English

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performed during the last minutes of the class. In fact, for several cases it was not possible to develop them or they could not be completed because of the time factor.

Students usually asked for these activities to be the first ones since speaking seemed to be one of their main interests. Based on their words, we could assert that was one of the moments of the classes that they enjoyed the most. They strongly believed that it allowed them to practice, to talk to their friends in another language and to work with people that they hardly ever do.

As shown in the table above, students' main motivation to learn English is because they like it. From day number 1, students shared the love and the passion they felt. The idea of learning a new language was charming and wonderful for them. They wanted to have opportunities to practice speaking and the rest of the skills too. Yet, in the case of the oral production they felt they were not given enough time to improve.

This aspect helped us to confirm that they had the will to practice their speaking skills during classes, but the lack of opportunities did not allow them to do so. In addition, they asked whether they could avoid the rote learning activities, the choral drills and recitations.

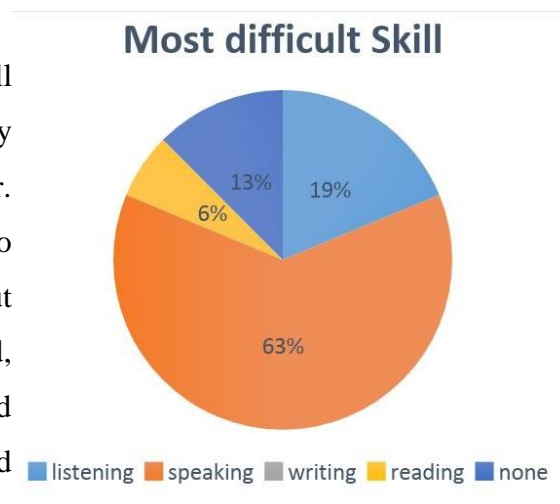
Another aspect related to the few speaking opportunities is that student participation was very low. In a class with a large number of students like the one we were working with, each student had very little time for talking because only one student could talk at a time, and the other students had to listen to him/her. In the speaking class, some learners dominated the whole class, while others talked very little or never spoke.



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### Second Category: Fear of Speaking

The students answered that the most difficult skill for them was speaking because they feel that they need to know more vocabulary and grammar. Others said that they did not have enough time to think of the correct way of saying things, but most of them agreed that they felt ashamed, nervous, afraid or frightened whenever they had to speak. They claimed they did not feel prepared to speak because they rarely did it. Each time they had to perform, they



Graphic 3 Most difficult skill

struggled. Besides, some of them shared that they did not like to do presentations alone because they were afraid of making mistakes, and when they were in front of an audience they feel like they are alone against the world and that the rest of the people would be looking for a way to humiliate them. (Data taken from class interviews, 2018).

Following what students said, we took the concept of Horwitz et al (1986) which says that the fear of speaking with another person, to perform in small or large groups is related with anxiety, and can be defined as the subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system. It includes signs such as general avoidance that is related to “forgetting” the answer, showing carelessness, cutting class, arriving late, arriving unprepared, low levels of verbal production, lack of volunteering in class and apparent inability to answer even the simplest of questions.

In regards to the factors affecting students' oral participation we found that when students participated orally in the classroom, their performance was affected by some symptoms of anxiety and nervousness.

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As mentioned before, we decided to use Horwitz's model since it better explains what we noticed. Although the Horwitz (1986) model has four sources of anxiety, we identified two of them in our project: General avoidance and physical actions.

It is important to mention that general avoidance happens when students forget the answer, arrive late or go to class unprepared, and do not answer the questions (Horwitz, 1986). We realized that students felt these symptoms when participating in oral activities. For instance, during a class we observed that one participant said while performing a role play "No teacher, ehh wait a moment, I don't know what to say or how." During another class, while doing a large-group discussion, four students seemed to be nervous because one of them had forgotten the ideas they had previously prepared. He then said "Lo siento, ¿qué hago? se me olvido todo. Estoy nervioso. " One of his classmate said to him: "Somos dos, ojalá que todo no nos vaya tan mal".

On the other hand, general avoidance constrained students from answering specific requests from the teacher. One participant said "Una vez no era capaz de pronunciar unas palabras, la de environ... enviment... environ ¿Cómo es que se dice ambiente? ¡Este environment! esa palabra es muy difícil, parece la clase de ciencias esto" (Data taken from fieldnotes,2018).

In most of the cases during the few speaking activities we had the chance to observe, we noticed that students were asked to answer different kinds of questions related to politics and the environment. Such topics that were not their favorite ones. They had some minutes to plan their answers or to take a stand in regards to a specific situation. Furthermore, the teacher suggested them not to learn dialogues or speeches by heart; a very curious and non-sense instruction based on the ones he had previously provided to students.

He said "English is like maths, if you forget just one number, in this case one word, you are lost." (Data taken from fieldnotes, 2018). We could infer that when students performed an oral activity they forgot some words and the right pronunciation, which constrained their participation and increased their levels of anxiety and nervousness. Students became afraid



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of making mistakes because they were not well prepared or had forgotten parts of their scripts (Data from field notes, 2018).

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According to Littlewood (2007), a language classroom can create inhibitions and apprehension for the students. When students want to say something in the classroom they are sometimes inhibited. Our students were worried about making mistakes and fearful of criticism. It was possible to notice that some of them were ashamed of the other students' attention towards themselves, or sometimes it was related to the teacher's attitude, comments or actions. In this case, students seemed to be afraid and they did not want to participate in the discussion. (Data from field notes, 2018)

In another class in which the students developed a speaking activity, we found out several aspects we ignored. While observing a class, we perceived that students tended to participate more in activities in which they had enough time to prepare for what they were to say or perform. That day, it was about creating a role-play based on a book they had recently read.

As mentioned before, the amount of speaking activities was low; most of them were usually divided into two or three classes because the time that the teacher relegated those activities to the end of the class.

We also noticed that there was a difference between working in class and individually. There was more participation among them through small group work because they felt they were in a more relaxed environment (Data from field notes, 2018). Data triangulation indicates that participants agreed on what we observed. For example, one of them stated: "Me gustan las actividades grupales como los juegos de rol, crear y contar historias, compartir y discutir sobre algún tema interesante". To that statement, another student agreed and assured: "Exacto! en las porque podemos trabajar con los compañeros, crear personajes, también porque nos da la oportunidad de mejorar el inglés, ya que cada uno debe utilizar expresiones o cosas vistas en la clase, eso es muy interesante. Estas discusiones son interesantes, pero somos muchos. Muchos no decimos nada porque no alcanzamos o simplemente porque nos muchas personas y no nos animamos a intervenir." (Data from interviews and field notes, 2018)

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Similarly, another participant stated: “En las discusiones con amigos sobre temas actuales siento que puedo aprender mas porque quiero hablar y opinar. A la vez puedo preparar mi idea rápidamente mientras escucho a los otros hablando inglés tambien. Es divertido porque cada uno de nosotros tiene diferentes ideas entonces tratamos de que las cosas que hacemos nos salgan bien. Me gusta mucho trabajar así. Pero ya cuando se trata de un debate o una charla de todo el grupo prefiero solo escuchar la opinión de los otros porque no me gusta levantar la mano; me da miedo decir lo que creo porque a lo mejor se reirán o estará mal dicho. (Data taken from interviews and field notes, 2018).

It seemed that students participated actively because they felt immersed and engaged with the clas; they felt more relaxed when they had the opportunity to prepare their oral performances with their classmates instead of working alone. As a non- participant observer, we realized that students were well prepared when they performed role plays. The teacher congratulated them because of their performances. (Data taken from field notes, 2018).

At the end of those presentations, the teacher asked for feedback from the class in order to gather their ideas related to the way they felt while performing. All of them agreed that working in groups made them feel like they were not in an English class, but they were in a great place in which they were talking, sharing, planning and playing with their friends in order to obtain the best possible results.

There was one student that stated: “Así deberían ser todas las clases: practicar, hablar, escuchar a los otros. Siento que sirve mucho y así se aprende mejor, más rápido”. The teacher agreed by saying:

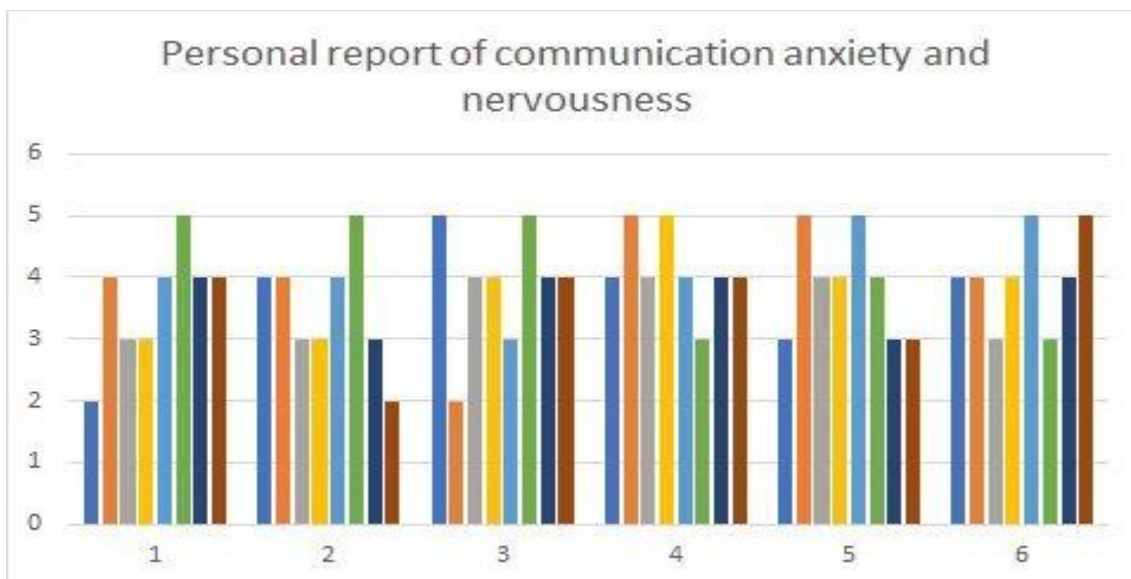
“Sure! This is the way you guys can speak better, you practice, you enjoy and you get good grades”. It was not probably the most satisfying speech but students felt comfortable during the whole process and happy with the results. ( Data taken from interviews and fieldnotes, 2018).

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Once students finished their performances, we decided to give them a questionnaire in order to know how they felt about communicating in English. In the questionnaire there were different kinds of questions that asked students for sharing a personal report of communication anxiety and nervousness. There were sixteen statements concerning feelings about communicating with other people. They had to indicate how the statement applied to them by choosing whether each statement was ALWAYS, true, OFTEN true, true HALF OF THE TIME, OCCASIONALLY true, or NEVER true. They had to circle the number under the appropriate word. This questionnaire allowed researchers to measure how students felt while using the second language, or performing in it. Also, we obtained a clear report on what made students feel worried or uneasy when they were speaking to others.

The following graph will help the reader to better understand what we found through the development of the personal report. The table includes the first eight statements of the report since it shows students' feelings in regard to the moment when they faced a speaking task individually, in small groups, or in front of an audience. Each statement is represented through a different color just in order the reader to look at the data collected in a clearer way. In this order. The one in light blue represents statement number 1, the orange represents the statement number two and so on.

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*Graphic 4 Personal report of communication anxiety and nervousness*

Graphic 4 shows the result researchers obtained in the personal report of communicating anxiety and nervousness. Using several statements we wanted to identify students' feelings concerning communicating with other people.

The first statement of this report asked students to say how comfortable they felt when they faced an audience, rather than if they enjoyed it or not. Participants' responses let us know that most of them did not enjoy performing a speaking task in front of an audience. These results had all to do with the answers and opinions we obtained during the interviews and in the individual Speaking Inventory that we applied to determine the main aspects of students' speaking habits, their strengths and weaknesses, and how they learned best. (e.g.) Student 5 claimed that one of his weaknesses was performing in front of his classmates because he was afraid of making mistakes, and that the rest of the students could laugh at him. Another example would be student 6's opinion when he stated that one of his frustrations when speaking in English was the moment when he had to face an oral presentation in front of more than 10 people. He usually gets nervous and forgets most of the words.

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In regards to the second statement, which was intended to determine students' awareness and desires of being part of the conversations and to look forward to expressing their opinions in large-group meetings or discussions, students answered that they often felt nervous and their level of anxiety tended to rise. This result is also supported by the interviews, where they expressed that they did not feel well while sharing their opinions during large group discussions or during the symposiums. Most of them did not like these kinds of activities because of the quantity of people there. They usually felt ashamed of sharing their ideas with the whole group. On the other hand, they thought there were too many people, thus their chances to speak were very reduced.

The above idea is related to statement three that asked for students' desires of looking forward to an opportunity to speak in public. Often most of them felt nervous or anxious about sharing their opinions with big groups. Similar to what we observed during the classes, and to their thoughts about the interview processes, we learned that they disagreed with large group activities because of two main reasons. First, because they did not feel comfortable while speaking in front of many people. Second, because they considered they had no time to express all their ideas.

Students' responses to statements 4 and 5 "I find the prospect of speaking to a large group mildly pleasant" and "I feel that I am more fluent when talking to people than most other people are provided us with a clear idea of their nervousness during the development of speaking tasks. They rarely ever enjoyed or felt good while performing in front of an audience.

The next two statements (6 and 7) were closely related since all of them allowed researchers to think that students felt nervous before they spoke in public. These feelings of anxiety and nervousness remained the same during their performances, and they did not feel relaxed at any point until they finished the speaking task.



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The last statement aimed at determining whether students enjoyed presenting a speech on a local television show as a way to challenge their speaking abilities. Only student number two assured he would be able to do it. The rest of the group unanimously answered that they would occasionally or never do it.

Students' beliefs and thoughts towards English as a foreign language was strongly affected for some internal and external factors viewed along this category. It is important to understand that to deal with them is the key for having a good and suitable environment to develop their speaking skills.

### **Third Category: Materials used in class.**

When we considered the parts of the speaking process individually, no single part presented overwhelming difficulties. For example, neither pronouncing a word correctly nor deciding which verb tense to use is impossibly difficult if you focus all your attention on that single problem. There are usually different kinds of issues that affect the normal course of the learning process; especially when we talk about the speaking skill. Talking about factors that can hinder the oral production of students in an EFL setting, we found relevant information on the diagnosis of our course. The main factor that affected the development of the student participants' oral production in the second language was the materials selected by the teacher, and the way he implemented them in the learning process.

First of all, we found that students were reluctant to use the materials that were imposed by the teacher during the process. Field notes, unstructured interviews and surveys were really helpful to identify why students did not feel motivated to participate during their classes. It was the fact that most of the time, their classes were based on a textbook, and the topics were monotonous.

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The English program in this school was built around the same textbook series that focused heavily on writing and reading skills. Furthermore, activities that were not included in the book, but that were selected by the teacher, were mainly focused on listening, reading and writing.

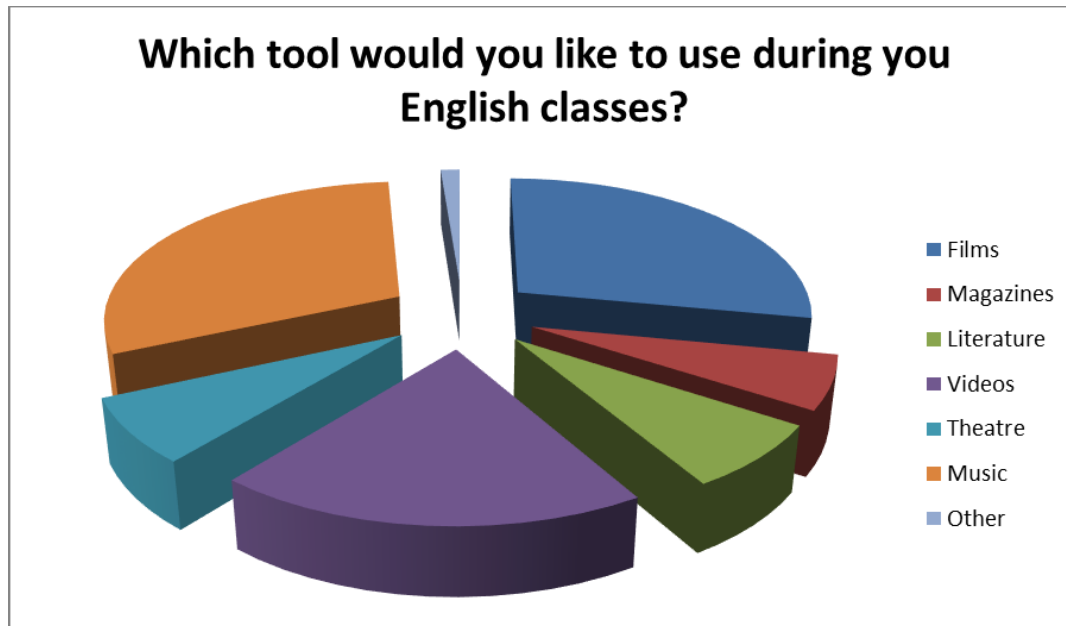
The speaking session consisted mainly of memorizing and performing dialogues as fluently as possible. It was also part of the problem since students felt obliged to learn vocabulary and expressions by heart; dialogues or speeches related to topics that they disliked or unreal and non common scenarios.

The results were uneven at best. If students wanted to say something that fortuitously coincided with a sentence they had memorized, they could rattle it off fluently and flawlessly, but whenever they wanted or tried to say anything original, they struggled for an agonizingly long time as they tried to put even basic sentences together. This was one of the main issues that made us desire to develop a pedagogical proposal that could help students to express their own ideas. Our aim was to give them all the necessary tools that would encourage them to produce in the target language.

Students argued that they did not feel interested in the topics they were learning in their English classes. They considered that their textbook was not interesting at all, which made them feel bored. (Data taken from field notes, 2018). In second place, we found that there was a lack of oral production activities in the textbooks. Most of them were focused on writing and reading skills, so they did not have many opportunities to improve their oral skills in class.

Thanks to students' opinions on the surveys and the interviews it was possible to learn that most of them suggested the use of different tools during their classes. Through the survey we noticed that students were really interested in the improvement of their oral production. They claimed the use of films, music, videos, and some other tools that could allow them to be in contact with the language in a variety of scenarios.

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*Graphic 5 Wich tool would you like to use during you English classes*

The pie chart above shows the result of one of the questions in the survey in which students stated that they wanted to try new tools that would motivate them to learn through a variety of activities, to be immersed in the language.

During the observation process, the teacher used many large-group discussions related to politics and science. Even when students did not like the topics selected, they did their best. At the end of the classes, they usually talked to us in regards to the upcoming activities. They complained about their nonconformities of the day, and in several cases they expressed their frustration whenever the teacher used large group discussions.

Students expected that our presence in the institution would improve their spoken skills. In fact, sometimes we had the feeling that everyone expected our appearance in the classroom to have a miraculous impact on students' skills, even in this particular class of 32 students where we could hardly speak to each student once a day. Data taken from interviews.

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The following are comments that students shared with us about these kinds of activities; large-group discussions and what the teacher called "symposiums," that according to students were basically the same activity, but with the difference that it was the result of an incomplete activity from the day before.

Researcher: what do you mean by "it is the same but different?"

Student 4: Quiero decir que es lo mismo, pero lo deja de tarea porque el tiempo no alcanza. Es la misma actividad que podríamos hacer ahora, con la diferencia de que mañana el profesor espera que cada uno traiga un comentario aprendido de memoria en lugar de hacer otra cosa".

(Data taken from interviews and fieldnotes, 2018)

In relation to this inconvenience, we took the view of Boonkit (2010), who asserted that the use of appropriate activities for speaking skills could be a good strategy to engage students. We considered that providing students the freedom of topic choice urged the participants to feel comfortable, persuaded to speak English, and increased the speaking confidence among EFL learners.

In the same vein, regarding the material commonly used by the teacher in order to practice speaking (large-group discussions, choral drill, repetition activities, memorizing materials, and vocabulary lists) we observed the way the teacher planned his lessons. In consequence, we noticed that the kind of activities he selected did not take into account several factors, such as the quantity of students, the tools or materials needed to develop them, the sources and the estimated-time for each activity. Data taken from field notes.

After analysing the way the teacher planned the activities for the class, we had the opportunity to observe the class that he had previously planned, he started the class with a large- group discussion. during the development of this?? activity, while trying to think about



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possible comments, ideas or examples, learners complained that they could not remember anything or that they had nothing to say about it.

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They said they did not have any motivation to express their thoughts due to different reasons. Student 6 shared that he was not interested in that topic and that the vocabulary of politics was too difficult. Even when some words are similar to the ones in Spanish, he did not feel comfortable with the material or he just did not think it was good for the English class.

Another student who asked many questions related to the meaning of the words and how to say x or y word in English complained about the level of difficulty. It was too hard to think about it because of three main reasons. First, the discussion was not important for her. Then, she said she hated it even in Spanish, and she also said that they were not "old people" interested in politics, or in solving word searches or sudokus. As a consequence she didn't perform as expected in the discussion.

In regard to these comments, we agreed with Rivers (1968) who thinks that learners often have nothing to say, probably because their teachers had selected a topic that is not appropriate for them, or because they do have enough information about it. Bachman and Palmer (1996) [19] believe that topical knowledge has a great effect on the speaking performance of the learners. The type of topic under discussion influences the ease of language use, to a great extent. One's lack of knowledge, interest, and preparation for a certain topic can greatly influence one's perceived competence. Having enough knowledge about a certain topic and being familiar with the register enhance one's linguistic self-confidence, while lack of knowledge about a topic and its appropriate register result in one's avoiding communication (MacIntyre, Clément, Dörnyei & Noels 1998) [20]. Baker and Westrup (2003) also support the above idea, and stated that it is very difficult for learners to answer when their teachers ask them to say things in a foreign language because they have no idea about what to say, which vocabulary to apply, or how to use grammar accurately.

Taking into account the general comments, the unanimity, experiences, ideas and feelings shared by the student, data obtained during the interviews and surveys, added to specific



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moments of the class such as the aforementioned incident between student 4. We decided to ask students to perform a 5 minutes presentation in small groups as a first speaking task.

The aim of the activity was to determine the kind of topics that they were interested in, to know a little bit about their needs, their likes and dislikes, their passions or talents. In addition, we applied this activity and we found it as a way to observe students' reaction to the small-group work. Their feelings and thoughts about it. Furthermore; we wanted to know how they communicate in English.

We observed several aspects of their performances. We determined their understanding of their audience, if they were able to be understood. We also paid attention to different factors like nervousness, postures, movements, facial expression and gestures, accuracy, word choice, eye contact, spontaneity, sense of humor, voice control, comprehensibility, the use of visual aids, their skills to persuade others, whether or not they took a stand, and whether or not they prepared notes. Moreover, we wanted to determine their level of fluency.

This activity allowed us to collect a great deal of information related to the general perspective of the classroom in regards to the way they would like the class to be. We noticed how confident they felt while performing with more people. We discovered that their nervousness and levels of anxiety were very low. Their attitude, their confidence, the control of the volume, their pauses, eye contact and posture were absolutely different. Students stated that they loved having the opportunity to do a presentation based on what they liked the most. Allowing them the freedom to select a topic with which they felt comfortable to present seemed to be a wonderful idea based on their comments about it.

These are some of the comments we heard from the student participants.

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Student 1 state: I think that talking of k-pop was cool! I think all my friend love k-pop. We listened to music in the presentation, we show videos and all pay attention. Thank you for this. "One of his partners of the presentation prefered to do it in Spanish. He said: Realmente nunca pensé que podría hablar de k-pop o de cualquier otro tema libre que me gustara. Pensé que hablaríamos de lo de siempre. Me gusta la idea de usar el inglés para las cosas que normalmente hablamos en nuestra vida diaria.

Student 4: Realmente me sentí algo asustado al inicio de la exposición. Pensé que igual que las otras veces cometería mil errores o se me olvidaría todo. Resalto dos cosas, la primera el buen trabajo de mi equipo. No sentí que estaba sola nunca, trabajar con ellos ha sido fantástico y la segunda, el hecho de hablar de una de mis pasiones en la vida y ser capaz de expresar lo que eso significa para mi, me encanto. (Data taken from interview, 2018).

One of the groups developed a presentation about some of the most representative cities of England. Their visual aids, the projection of their voices, their movements, their accuracy and their preparation was really good. Surprisingly, this group was made of 3 of the students that had claimed suffering of anxiety, nervousness and fear of speaking during the surveys, interviews, questionnaires, and basically on all the opportunities they had to express their weaknesses or the aspects to be improved. Their comments about this activity and the way they felt about it were really interesting.

One of the students stated that he had felt different this time. He said that having the opportunity to work in small groups provided him the chance to feel comfortable to express his thoughts about the way the presentation should be developed. It motivated him to help the group to achieve their goals and to do the best presentation they could do. He felt engaged with the process, so he never felt afraid of presenting his topic since he loved it, and he had a lot of things to say about it. In general terms he agreed with the change of topics, the variety of concepts, contexts, new vocabulary and an environment where he forgot his fears and he was not afraid of making mistakes because he felt happy during his performance.



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Data taken from interviews (2018).. Another student shared her impressions about the topics. She found the topics selected by her classmates interesting. Somehow she felt she learnt a great deal about different topics she did not know before, and she felt really good during the whole class. She did not feel nervous or anxious working in small groups and then performing in front of all her classmates. As we mentioned above, we as evaluators of their speaking presentations noticed that there was change in their attitudes, and that their performances were really good. They showed commitment, it was obvious they had practiced a lot and their speeches sounded really good, it was very understandable despite the mistakes they make in terms of word choice, the use of transitions, connectors and inaccurate pronunciation of some words, mainly related to the stress or intonation. (Data taken from field notes)

The topics the students selected gave us a good overview on their interests in life, their projects, their passions and motivations. Getting to know our students was an excellent strategy.

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### **CHAPTER V Conclusions**

This research study was conducted with the aim of answering this research question: What factors hinder oral production skills in public school 9th graders in an EFL setting?

The answer to this question will shed some light on the factors affecting this group of young learners' speaking skills.

This qualitative study explored the speaking skill of 6 young learners in an EFL setting. The use of speaking tasks, interviews and oral presentations allowed the collection of a great amount of information. Other tools such as surveys, observations and unstructured interviews, small group discussions and questionnaires enabled the researchers to find valid results that were previously triangulated. The analysis of the data revealed three categories that were directly related to the student's spoken performance and which included various issues hindering young learners' speaking skills. These categories were the lack of opportunities to develop their oral production, their fear of speaking and the material and tools provided by the teacher.

During the interviews students blamed the topics, the activities and the methodologies used by the teachers since they considered they were boring, out of context; some of them were too difficult; they were not focused on the development of the speaking skills. Furthermore, they did not allow students the opportunities to use the language from a sociocultural perspective that would provide them with an immersion on topics and concepts they actually use in their daily lives. In other words, the students wanted to learn English in real contexts; using it in daily life situations; immersed in the topics they like, if it was not possible. Their desire was to learn English in a great variety of scenarios while using different kinds of materials, strategies, games, and tools that motivate them to be part of the process; to use the language and to participate as many times as possible.

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Through the development of the speaking task and the use of different tools to collect data, it was possible to determine that the main factors affecting students' oral production were the materials, tools, topics and activities selected by the teacher while the improvement process of their speaking skills was slow.

From the moment we started observing the process, we realized that students did not feel motivated with the activities they were assigned to; this lack of motivation and engagement was not only in speaking but in general. They did not seem to be engaged or motivated during the process. They performed well; they did not refuse to participate, but they did not feel good or relaxed.

Most of them expressed unconformities regarding the topics of the discussions, symposiums and the rest of activities. It involved their affective factors.

We noticed anxiety, shyness, self-esteem, motivation, fear of making mistakes, lack of interest and many more factors that are related to speaking. The reasons we received were in regards to the topics selected. They strongly believed that topics were advanced and most of the times during their performances they failed because they had no ideas to share on the discussions, their arguments were not strong because they ignored the topics or their concepts about them were reduced.

Due to the fact they did not feel prepared to talk about these topics, their levels of anxiety and nervousness tended to increase. At the same time, the few speaking activities and the overfocus on reading and writing activities made students feel afraid or unprepared whenever they had to face a speaking task.

The result was that they either made many mistakes in spite of having a good knowledge of the topic or they totally kept silent. ESL learners should be motivated to speak bravely through the use of different tools and new material that provide them with opportunities to speak, to be immersed in the language, to practice, to interact with others, to use the language in real contexts, to share their ideas

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with no fear of making mistakes and by the use of vocabulary, topics, multimedia and authentic materials that could encourage and challenge students to improve their speaking skills.

At the same time, we found out the vital role the teacher played in making learners willing or unwilling to speak. It cannot be ignored. If a teacher pays equal attention to all members of the class, she encourages everybody to take part in classroom discussions and activities, and gives enough time for students to participate, he or she can considerably enhance the students' willingness to speak.

We as teachers should build an excellent rapport with their students. It is the duty of the teachers to make the learners aware that making mistakes is a part of the learning process. We consider that teachers should turn their fears into challenges and challenges into success by introducing many interesting and engaging activities in the classroom. Teaching and learning can be more meaningful if we integrate those elements into our approaches.

In this paper, the above-mentioned factors had an important role in developing the oral competence of the learners. Thus, an attempt has been made in this study to focus on those factors that have prevented or affected the focal learners' motivation to speak English confidently and effectively. On the other hand, this study attempted to look at a contingency plan that would help students to enhance their oral production through the development of a pedagogical proposal. This proposal includes all the positive aspects we observed, based on students' necessities, the interest of the institution and that through the use of group work activities, authentic material and a variety of sources and tools to engage and motivate students to improve their speaking skills.

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to develop a pedagogical proposal that shows the importance and the role that cooperative methodology plays in the development of speaking skills. It also was implemented in the classroom in order to develop a better understanding and acquisition of the second language.

Speaking tends to be considered the most difficult skill to be developed, especially for us, Spanish speakers, since it is quite difficult to practice speaking when the student does not live in an English speaking country. For this reason, we developed and implemented 3 units that involve cooperation and communicative strategies from a sociocultural perspective with the aim of enhancing students' oral production through the use of authentic materials.

**KEY WORDS:** Cooperative learning, speaking, development, difficulties, activities, teaching and learning, authentic materials.

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### **Pedagogical proposal**

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### **1. Introduction**

In the initial research study we found that the student participants did not have enough opportunities to develop their speaking skills, causing most of them to struggle while sharing their ideas orally. While investigating this issue we had the opportunity to listen to students' opinions about this situation. We discovered that the methods that were implemented during their classes were mostly teacher-centered, which significantly reduced significantly the opportunities to practice speaking skills during their English classes. Also, the students shared that the materials they were working with were not engaging enough for them. For this reason, we considered it necessary to develop this proposal so that they could have a space where they could enhance their oral production skills using cooperative learning and authentic materials.

*CL methods, models, and instructional procedures organize students to: work in groups toward a common cooperative learning goal or outcome, or share a common problem or task, in such a way that they can only succeed in completing the work through behaviour that demonstrates interdependence, while holding individual contributions and efforts accountable.* Brody and Davidson (1998). We considered this approach to be appropriate to help the students to overcome those difficulties presented in their classes. We decided to implement this proposal, not only because the method reinforces group work, but also because it is a useful way to strengthen their speaking skills in a way that motivates them to participate actively.

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### **1.1 Statement of the research**

The experience that we acquired during our practicum (2018-2 to 2019-2) in the public school already described in the first part of this research showed us the path we had to lead in order to study the problems that students had while practicing their oral production skills.

These students had a lack of commitment with the class because of various reasons that were affecting their L2 production. The application of a diagnostic test (including all the skills), and speaking activities gave us the awareness about what the gaps they had while speaking were. They used to think too much before answering the questions; they tried to guess words, or they said nothing. Furthermore, studying this population in that way, we identified the problems that are attempted to be solved later in this research.

Being conscious about all the behaviors and problems mentioned above, we decided to conduct the study using the following question: What factors hinder oral production skills in public school 9th graders in an EFL setting? This pilot study intended to give answers about those issues that were affecting the students. The results of the study suggest that there were three factors hindering students' oral production skills: Fear of Speaking, Few Speaking Opportunities and Materials used in class.

After we discovered the sources of difficulty, it was important to conduct another research study that could help to solve these problems. The new research was focused on the use of an innovative method (in terms of speaking) that would make students think critically, actively participate in classroom speaking activities, and develop a sense of cooperation with others in order to reach a common goal, speaking properly in English.



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### **1.2 Setting of the study**

The setting for this research was a public school in Barranquilla- Colombia. This proposal was designed and implemented for a ninth grade classroom. It was implemented as part of classes that were connected with the curriculum content of their program. These classes were designed with the idea of improving children's oral production skills through the use of cooperative learning strategies. It was also supported by authentic materials that would allow them to learn the language from a sociocultural perspective. We did this with the objective of increasing student understanding of content, and to build particular transferable skills. Besides, these classes intended to create suitable conditions where students could develop their social skills by working with classmates and teachers. Most of the activities were carried out in small groups to promote students working together in order to maximize their own and each other's learning.

The sample was a group of 6 students out of 32. They were between 14-15 years old. These students agreed to participate voluntarily in this study. They were in the ninth grade and they had achieved an A2 level of proficiency according to the Common European Framework of Reference (2001). The students decided to become participants in this research because of their willingness and desire of improving, practicing and developing their speaking skills. The students were selected based on the field notes that we took during the diagnosis moment, and also based on the learners' performances on the diagnostic test.

### **1.3 Justification.**

Speaking is "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13). Speaking is a relevant part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, as stated by Zieliński

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(2011) teaching speaking has been undervalued or forgotten. Many teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. Oral skills have been reduced to role plays and repetition tasks.

Some others do not even use it into their activities. However, today's world requires that teachers should improve students' communicative skills because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

In order to teach second language learners how to speak in the best way possible, we developed three units that contain different kinds of authentic activities. Through these units, we helped students to improve their speaking skills through interaction, the use of cooperative learning strategies and through intercultural and communicative activities that tend to motivate and engage students in the process.

These units can be applied to EFL classroom settings. Since it is helpful to encourage students to become more comfortable with the use of English, to help them to express their ideas with some degree of fluency. In addition, it can offer the stage for spontaneous discourse. Furthermore, it assures more student-centered orality into the classroom.

Learning a foreign language may be a challenge for most people due to differences in the structures, pronunciation among other factors between one's mother tongue and the target one. However, there are some tools that facilitate the teaching and learning process of a foreign language. For instance, we found relevant, suitable and necessary the development of authentic materials, the use of digital devices, video blogs, educational platforms, videos, activities that promote interaction, activities focused on their communicative skills through cooperation and other kinds of resources.

Therefore, this research project wanted to determine what kind of materials should be used by teachers to promote the development of speaking skills through interaction, cooperation and the use of authentic materials. We implemented activities that positively influenced the



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development of the oral competence of English as a foreign language in students of a public school in the city of Barranquilla-Colombia.

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### **1.4 Research question**

This qualitative study focused on the implication that a pedagogical proposal based on cooperative learning strategies has in the field of speaking development. It also explores the inclusion of authentic materials in an EFL class for young learners. The following research question guided our study.

How can the use of cooperative learning help to enhance ninth graders' oral production skills through the use of authentic materials in an EFL setting?

We asked this research question because of the needs and requests for a change that students had in the previous research study. In order to develop our proposal, we took into account the few opportunities they had to speak in English into the classroom. Second, we integrated the issue of their fear of speaking in that language when they were or were not in front of the class. Finally, we incorporated the problem they had with the materials used by the teacher in each class. We decided to use the Cooperative Learning method and strategies together with authentic materials. In this way, we could gather everything into only one question that could cover a complete answer to the factors hindering students' speaking skills.

Using the Cooperative Learning method and strategies, we expected to help students to enhance and overcome their rates of interaction with the L2, and also the fear they felt. Moreover, integrating



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the authentic materials to the research question, we attempted to give students what they were asking; the implementation of new and current topics interesting to them through the use of authentic materials.

Once we began to explain to them about the implementation of a new method that could help their oral production process, they became motivated. This motivation played an important role in terms of students' active participation and acceptance of the proposed new method. Students were wondering about what kind of methodology we could implement in order to impulse their speaking skills. Regarding this, the development of activities that integrate students' interest and needings shared in the previous research allowed us to provide students better class experiences. Getting their attention and commitment. On the other hand, we did not just present the activities and the topics but we also explained to them their importance and how relevant the development of speaking skill could be. In addition, we shared with students the advantages that cooperative and interactives methodology could have in their academic and social life in the L1 and L2. This just increased their expectations about what we were going to do into the classroom in the following classes.

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### **CHAPTER II Theoretical framework**

This study explored the impact of the cooperative learning methods and the use of authentic material in the development of oral production in an EFL setting. It specifically investigated how the use of cooperative strategies helps to sort out the major issues affecting the speaking skills of young learners.

#### **2. Important concepts:**

##### **What is cooperative learning?**

Cooperative Learning has been defined by various professionals from different fields. Johnson (2001) defines cooperation as a successful learning strategy in which small teams, each with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Artz & Newman (1990) defined cooperative learning as small groups of learners working together as a team to solve a problem, complete a task, or accomplish a common goal.

Furthermore, different researchers and academics give special characteristics and qualities to cooperative learning. Cooperative learning strategies have been shown to improve academic performance (Slavin, 1990), to lead to greater motivation to learn (Garibaldi, 1979 in Kagan 1986), to increase time on-task (Cohen 1988), to improve self-esteem (Johnson and Johnson, 1989) and to lead to more positive social behaviors (Lloyd, 1988). Cooperative learning, according to another expert, promotes language acquisition by providing comprehensible input in developmentally appropriate ways and in a supportive and motivating environment (Kagan, 1995).

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### **What are the types of cooperative learning?**

A cooperative classroom consists of the integrated use of three types of cooperative learning groups (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013). Cooperative learning groups may be used to teach specific content (formal cooperative learning groups), to ensure active cognitive processing of information during direct teaching (informal cooperative learning groups), and to provide students with long-term support and assistance for academic progress (cooperative base group).

### **Formal Cooperative Learning Groups**

Formal cooperative learning groups may last for one class period to several weeks to complete specific tasks and assignments (such as solving a set of problems, completing a curriculum unit, writing a report or theme, conducting an experiment, or reading a story, play, chapter, or book) (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013). Any course requirement or assignment may be reformulated to be cooperative. In formal cooperative learning groups the teacher:

1. Specifies the objectives for the lesson (one academic and one social skills).
2. Makes a series of decisions about how to structure the learning groups (what size groups, how students are assigned to groups, what roles to assign, how to arrange materials, and how to arrange the room).
3. Teaches the academic concepts, principles, and strategies that the students are to master and apply and explains the task to be completed and the criteria for success.
4. Monitors the functioning of the learning groups and intervenes to teach collaborative skills and provide assistance in academic learning when it is required.



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5. Evaluates student performance against the preset criteria for excellence and ensures that groups process how effectively members worked together.



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Formal cooperative learning should be used whenever the learning goals are highly important, the task is complex or conceptual, problem solving is required, divergent thinking or creativity is desired, quality of performance is expected, higher level reasoning strategies and critical thinking are needed, long-term retention is desired, or when the social development of students is one of the major instructional goals (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

### **Informal Cooperative Learning Groups**

Informal cooperative learning groups are temporary groups that last from a few minutes to one class period; That is to say that each group of students is arranged to fill other peers' gaps in function to reach a specific goal (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 2013). During a lecture, demonstration, or film they can be used to focus student attention on the material to be learned, set a mood conducive to learning, to set expectations as to what will be covered in a class session, to ensure that students cognitively process the material being taught, and to provide closure to an instructional session. (Holubec, 2014).

According to Kilickaya (2005) during direct teaching the instructional challenge for the teacher is to ensure that students do the intellectual work of organizing material, explaining it, summarizing it, and integrating it into existing conceptual structures. On the other hand, Informal cooperative learning groups are often organized so that students engaged in three-to-five minute focused discussions before and after a lecture and three-to-five minute turn-to-your-partner discussions interspersed throughout a lecture.

### **What is the definition of authentic materials?**

According to Peacock (1997), authentic materials have been created to fulfill a social purpose in the community language.

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Bacon and Finnemann (1990) stated that authentic materials are texts, videos, audios, roleplays, projects produced by teachers for pedagogical purposes. There is a wide variety of authentic materials that can be employed in an EFL setting. Some of them are newspaper reports, magazine articles, advertisements, poems, songs, video clips, menus, horoscopes, among others. According to Guariento and Morley (2001) authentic materials can create a bridge between classroom knowledge and a students' capacity to participate in real world events. In addition, a teacher has to make sure that activities taken from different sources link together to make a cohesive whole, and that they serve to fulfill the aims and objectives of your lesson" (Gower, 1995: 80).

Similarly, Bacon and Finnemann (1990) also provided a definition emphasising on the production of and the intention for native speakers. Sanderson (1999), while maintaining an analogous viewpoint in understanding this kind of material, claims that a newspaper article written for an English-speaking audience is a very classic example of this.

More recently, Kilickaya (2004) stresses on the "exposure to the real usage of the everyday life language" and how the materials are used by speakers for their own purposes in daily life. It can be easily understood from the presented viewpoints of classifying what authentic materials are, and what are not. Together with the omission of the pedagogical purposes in adapting the materials, those authors seem to overemphasize on the existence of what is indicated as "the production by speakers." These definitions have presented a prevailing belief among English language teachers that only speaker-produced materials can be of satisfactory quality to be used as authentic materials. Whether or not this belief is appropriate in the dramatically changing context of English language teaching in this century is still in discussion.

Shepherd (2010) Stated that there are several reasons for creating authentic units of materials, primarily because it helps students that would panic when facing the language that is largely



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unfamiliar, as using authentic materials can be rewarding and stimulating for both teacher and students.

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### **2.1 Studies related to cooperative methodology**

Most of the studies we reviewed found cooperative learning to be more effective than other modes of instruction on higher level tasks. In the studies where cooperative learning did not clearly improve quality thinking, it nonetheless led to gains in other areas, which are often associated with cooperation.

Improving Eleventh Graders' Oral Production in English Class through Cooperative Learning Strategies was a study developed by Claudia Prieto (2007). This paper reported research carried out with eleventh graders at Colegio de Bachillerato Patria in Bogotá. The main objective of the study was to establish strategies to help students to improve their oral production in English. This action research prompted a more cooperative environment among students in the oral process, based on the lack of interactive activities that provided learners the opportunity to be in contact with the language and the lack of speaking activities. They found the cooperative approach as a successful way to motivate students. Moreover, students found it really interesting, engaging, funny and helpful. As a result, they transmitted this concept to other teachers in the school in order for them to apply it.

This project makes clear that the use of cooperative methods and strategies may help students to better express themselves orally. Prieto (2007) claims that it is necessary to find or create activities that allow students to use cooperative strategies in order to practice, to be immersed into the target language, and to achieve the desired oral level.

The researcher concluded that cooperative methods and strategies tend to develop oral production. She also stated that through this kind of activities, we teachers encourage good group dynamics, and create a comfortable atmosphere into the classroom while teaching and learning a foreign language. She concluded as well that all the students at the end of the implementation showed a different attitude towards group work and the skill of speaking.

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Study	Treatments	Nature of Thinking Tasks	Findings/Explanations
Johnson, Skon, Johnson (1980) n = 45 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	Cooperative vs. Competitive vs. Individualistic goal structures	Categorisation and retrieval task Spatial reasoning task (Rasmussen Triangle) Verbal problem solving task - math story problems	Cooperative structure led to higher achievement than individualistic on all 3 tasks. In two of the three tasks, the cooperative structure produced higher achievement than the competitive. Why? Students in cooperative groups used superior strategies and perceived more peer support and encouragement for learning
Johnson, Johnson, Stanne & Garibaldi (1990) n = 49 High School Humanities	CL with no processing; CL with teacher-led processing; CL with teacher & student-led processing vs. Individual learning	Complex computer-assisted problem solving task	Students in all three cooperative conditions performed better than in the individual learning condition. Cooperation with teacher- and student processing led to greater problem solving success. Why? Metacognitive processing improves ability to problem-solve through increased student self-efficacy and insights on effective behaviour; feedback increases the frequency of skilful behaviour.

*Tabla 2 Johnson & Johnson on Cooperative Learning*

We adopted the model of Johnson & Johnson (2001) for our research because they focus on developing a specific structure that can be incorporated into a variety of curricula with an emphasis on integrating social skills and academic tasks. For them there are four steps that teachers must follow in teaching cooperative skills: Students must see value in group work; students must be aware of the necessary skills for successful group work in order to know what they are supposed to do; students must practice the skill (in this case speaking); and students need to process the skills they have practiced (in order to improve them).

*Nature of Cooperative Learning:* In every classroom, no matter what the subject area, teachers may structure lessons so that students:



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1. Work cooperatively in small groups, ensuring that all members master the assigned material.

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2. Engage in a win-lose struggle to see who is best.
3. Work independently on their own learning goals at their own pace and in their own space to achieve a preset criterion of excellence.

These are three ways student-student interaction may be structured in school classes: competitively, individualistically, and cooperatively, as Deutsch claims,

- *Cooperative Learning related to motivation and engaging for students: Deutsch (1962) Suggested that when students are required to compete with each other for grades, they work at each other to achieve a goal that only one or a few students can attain. Besides, according to him, when students are graded on a norm-referenced basis, that requires them to work better, faster, and more accurately than their peers.*

Cooperative Learning (CL) is defined as the “instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1998, p. 1:5). It is often implemented through a set of well-prescribed and highly-structured techniques, with two key elements involved: positive interdependence and individual accountability (Johnson et al., 1998; Kagan, 1994; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Slavin, 1995).

*‘Positive interdependence* is linking students together so one cannot succeed unless all group members succeed’ (Johnson et al, 1998, p.1:7). It can be structured by carefully arranging mutual goals, group rewards, learning resources, and individual roles or tasks. *Individual accountability* requires that every member of the team is accountable for completing a particular part of the task so that no one can hitchhike on the work of others. It effectively decreases hitchhiking because students know that their contribution to teamwork can be individually identified and assessed. It is widely proposed that, in addition to increasing the effectiveness of teaching, integrating positive interdependence and individual accountability into group work facilitates positive peer interaction, equal participation and supportive

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relationships among group members (Johnson et al., 1998; Jacobs & Goh, 2007; Kagan, 1994; McCafferty, Jacobs, & DaSilva Iddings, 2006; McGroarty, 1993; Slavin, 1995).

(Ashley Montagu, 1965) stated that Students' learning goals may be structured to promote cooperative, competitive, or individualistic efforts. In every classroom, instructional activities are aimed at accomplishing goals and are conducted under a goal structure. Each goal structure has its place (Johnson & Johnson, 1989, 1999). In the ideal classroom, all students would learn how to work cooperatively with others, compete for fun and enjoyment, and work autonomously on their own.

Cooperation is working together to accomplish shared goals. Within cooperative situations, individuals seek outcomes that are beneficial to themselves and beneficial to all other group members.

### **CHAPTER III Methodology**

#### **3. Introduction**

During the past decades, teaching and learning a foreign language has gained much more attention all over the globe. As a result, searching for appropriate and effective teaching materials occupies an impressive space of instructors 'thinking. Cakir (2006) claimed that the purpose of learning a foreign language is to be able to get benefits from using it in the real world, in real situations. Therefore, most of the language teachers think whether it is good to teach the language using the course book tasks, which are regarded as artificial because they are designed for teaching purposes only, or if they may adopt using authentic materials to scaffold learners' learning process in general and to develop oral production skills in particular. Larsen Freeman (2000, 129) states that one of the characteristics of communicative language teaching is using authentic materials since it helps students to develop all the skills. Hernandez (2004) proposes that creating, utilizing or developing



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authentic material in the target language facilitates the learners' and teachers' work since it provides learners with a high level of independence when communicating in a foreign language in a real life context from social perspectives.

Through this research we decided to find support in cooperative learning and the implementation of authentic material to develop a series of lessons. Taking into account each difficulty we found in the classroom, we divided the lessons in three units so as to enhance students' speaking skills.

### **3.1 Nature of the research**

This study is an action research study developed within a qualitative approach. We decided to use it since it is the one who best suits the students' necessities based on the information that we obtained after collecting and analysing data in the previous study. We took into account the context, the tools, and communicative skills to interpret and conclude which is the way through which the problems that hinder students' speaking skill could be solved. It was important for our research purposes to make direct contact with students to obtain more precise information. Thus, after making observations in the field of action, we decided to analyze the situation and to create a solution to this problem.

The research question that guided the current qualitative case study is: How can the use of cooperative learning help to enhance oral production skills in 9th graders of a public school in an EFL setting?

We collected from the students and their context data and evidence that supported this research directly. We considered their opinions and experiences in the school essential tools which can set the path that this study should follow. Furthermore, based on the information gathered, we decided to follow the action research embraces since there was a given problem in the classroom to solve.

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As Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon (2014) asserted, it consists of a four-step process in which the researchers first *plan* to initiate a change, *act or create* and then *observe* the implementation, and *reflect* on possible results. Parsons & Brown (2002) commented that through these experiences, by analyzing the data collected, researchers can make decisions, create and develop a new methodology or a proposal to generate a more effective class.

On the other hand, a qualitative approach provides a point of view onto the social world whose goal is to obtain understanding of a social issue or problem (Biber, 2004). As Hernandez (2013) pointed out, the qualitative approach is a research method that through observation, searches and different kinds of data collection could determine the different factors that affect learners; assuming a solid reality and creating new strategies, content or activities to encourage them.

As Bryman (2004) stated, qualitative research helps teachers to understand their students through the students' eyes, take into account students' backgrounds, emphasize more on process, and develop grounded theories. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe qualitative research as involving "... an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. That is to say that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them." (p.3).

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### **3.3. Instruments**

Based on our research question and the objectives we had for this particular study, it was necessary to obtain purely interactional data that allowed us to determine what the most effective way to obtain the results expected was.

The instruments used to develop our proposal were authentic materials; such as videos, articles, and posters. Field notes were taken in every single session and right after class with the support of videos, pictures and audio recordings of participants interacting during each activity. Extended notes were also written right after each class session by paraphrasing or entering verbatim transcripts of students' conversations. These field notes were accompanied by the teacher-researchers' analytical comments about the experience. In addition, oral presentations and worksheets were used along with oral production rubrics in order to collect the necessary information for the proposal, and to show how students' performance were increasing or decreasing.

By this time, we were able to determine what were those aspects students considered a good idea to be changed, with the aim of providing opportunities to develop their oral production and communicative skills. In addition, the idea was to help them to feel confident while expressing their ideas, since students do not usually get enough chances to put into practice this skill in their schools and classrooms; the lack of oral skill practice represents a difficulty for them at the time of expressing their ideas orally.

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As the first instrument to use, we considered the field notes necessary for our data collection. Mainly, they were the best way of documenting needed contextual information in real time. Those notes and observations guided us to focus on what the participants' attitudes and needs were. This provided us with very valuable information regarding the way in which we needed to apply the proposal, the kind of activities to implement, the materials and resources to use, and students' possible response to them.

We conducted observations of the learning process in the classroom. They were directed at the informants' behavior when teachers and students carried out the teaching and learning processes. They were implemented to learn about the obstacles and difficulties that occurred during the development of the speaking skill process and where these took place.

While observing the classroom, each one of us focused on different aspects of the process. One of us was in charge of the descriptive observation that consisted of writing down the events of the class. The second one focused on the inferential observation: this kind of observation consisted of analyzing the subjects' body language and behavior. Finally, all of us focused on the Evaluative observation in which we could make an inference, and therefore, a judgment about the behavior of each participant. Field notes were a really important tool to collect the data, to assess how students were growing during the process.

Regarding the authentic materials used in class, we have to mention that they were an important tool to collect the data through the field notes successfully. Each video, article or poster we used gave us information about students' attitudes and performance during the activities. Also, it showed how the learners' feelings were before, during and after the activities; whether or not they were positive.

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The next instrument was the oral presentations that we used in the process of application of the pedagogical proposal. They were useful to collect the data needed to conclude the research. They provided us with all the information that concerned students' performance in each activity. Also, we could obtain a wide view about how students were growing until a certain point in the research.

We also implemented the worksheets into our proposal to reduce the problems that students have while speaking English. These worksheets were developed in three units of 4 lessons each. The units were related to the question posted to try to solve the difficulties they had. The research question is “how can the use of cooperative learning help to enhance oral production skills through the use of authentic materials to public school 9th graders in an EFL setting?” Taking into account the question, we created units while thinking about the implementation of cooperative learning and the authentic materials in order to improve speaking experience in the classroom.

In these worksheets we implemented Cooperative learning as an alternative to increase students' interaction with one another. In this way they were going to help one another with their weaknesses. In the case that one student felt lost, he would receive help from his peers. The authentic materials used on the units were sources of knowledge, and they amazed students with something that they had not seen before. This helped to break the barrier that learners have when accepting foreign topics.

We used oral production rubrics as a tool to see how the population of students were developing their skills during the activities. Those rubrics evaluated them in five different aspects: Range, Accuracy, Fluency, Coherence and Interaction; according to the CEFRL (Common European Framework of References for Languages)

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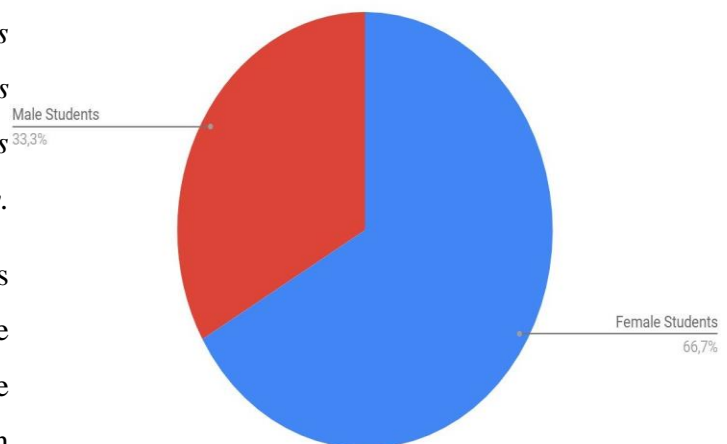
### 3.4 Setting and Participants

This research study was conducted at a public school in a Southwest neighborhood of Barranquilla, Colombia. Students came from families whose parents made a great effort to raise them properly. In this context, where their mother tongue is Spanish, even when they are surrounded by English, most students did not have any previous contact with the English language; much less any practicing in another scenario out of their four hours per week in their English class.

Six ninth graders out of Thirty two were involved in the study. Four of them were female, and the other two were male. They had an intermediate English language level and, as explained in the statement of the problem, they found speaking the most difficult skill to improve.

*The graph shows the number of boys and girls who answered the survey. It is important to take into account that there is a difference between the amount of girls and boys but this does not affect our study.*

We decided to select these six students as a sample of the whole population since there are thirty-two (32) students in the classroom. Participants were chosen because of their abilities, their



*Graphic 6 Gender of the participants*

management and command of the language, influence in the work group, their sense of ownership and desire to learn.

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Therefore, they represented the different types of learners presented in the classroom. We decided to conceal their names in order to protect their identities. Students will be identified with a number from 1 to 6.

Student 1: He is a 15-year-old boy who demonstrates to be committed to the learning process. His speaking skill is well developed; at the time of expressing himself he barely hesitates. He is able to make correct use of grammar along with basic vocabulary. He still needs to enrich his vocabulary so he can create more structured ideas. He was always engaged with class activities, and even helped those classmates who had trouble with participating.

Student 2: He is a 14 year-old-boy who wants to improve his speaking skill, but struggles with it. When he wants to speak, he takes time to think about the words before pronouncing them, which affects his fluency in a significant way. He is interested in the activities, but feels ashamed of his lack of fluency. He has great ideas to share with the class, but does not construct them properly.

Student 3: She is a 14-year-old girl who likes to get involved with the activities of the class. Most of the time she raises her hand to participate, demonstrating to be fully interested in the lessons, but her interventions are not well structured. She needs to improve both grammar and vocabulary. Despite that she always encourages her peers to be involved with the task during group activities.

Student 4: She is a 15-year-old girl who has good pronunciation and vocabulary, but her shyness does not allow her to take an active role during class activities. Even though her interventions are well structured with a correct use of vocabulary and grammar that adapts to intermediate level, it is not common to hear her voice during the class.

Student 5: She is a 14-year-old girl that often shows lack of commitment with speaking activities. She demonstrates to have a great reading comprehension, and her writings are well structured with an appropriate use of grammar and vocabulary. However, when it comes to

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participating in oral production activities, she does not show enough interest to take an active part of the activity.

Student 6: She is a 14-year-old girl who demonstrates to try her best when it comes to speaking in class. However, she still needs to improve her fluency and pronunciation, even though she expresses her ideas making an appropriate use of grammar and basic vocabulary.

All our participants defined the lack of speaking activities as frustrating. They claimed that their book and the materials used in the class should be changed since they did not like the kind of activities or the topics the teacher used. Learners found them tedious and with no purpose, students also stated that the topics and the development of the classes did not correspond to their interests, needs and desires. In addition, activities seemed to be teacher-centered most of the time. According to them, themes and units do not allow the use of language in real contexts, but on superficial topics for around 15 minutes each 4 hours. We gathered the following comments.

Student 6 : "Considero que las actividades del libro no son suficientes para motivarme a hablar o a trabajar en mejorar mi inglés. Son algo aburridas y monótonas. Los temas de las lecturas son los mismos desde la primaria".

Student 1: I think that the book is old, the teacher doesn't let us speak. The class is only for reading and writing.

*Student 3:* We want to learn about America; we want to listen to music; we want to create something, to speak, to know how to say Conversaciones del mundo real in English. Vale, Personally, I want you to change everything.

*Student 4:* Mr. X never use the video-beam, we don't watch videos, music or nothing. We listen to him for hours. We don't like paperwork, we need something more.

*Student 2:* please, ayúdanos a mejorar. Queremos hablar entre nosotros en inglés, we want to divertirnos mientras aprendemos. Queremos saber del mundo, saber a dónde podemos llegar



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con el inglés. We like English, we need different types of activities. (Data taken from field notes after an open interview, 2018).

In conclusion, the students chosen for the research agree that they need a different material that engages them with the class and motivates them to be more involved in the activities. Most of them demonstrate to be interested in their learning process. However, there are some aspects that need to be improved in order to have a better development of their speaking skill.

### **3.5 Administration**

This study was developed in a public educational institution. It has a staff of 45 teaching professionals who educate 741 students. The school has an inclusive nature with preschool, Primary, Secondary and Middle School levels. The majority of the students come from socio-economic strata 1 and 2, with a small number that belongs to strata 3 and 4. The ages of the students range from 4 to 18 years, distributed as follows: between 4 and 5 years Preschool students, 6 to 11 years old Elementary students and 12 to 18 years old Secondary and Middle School students.

### **3.6 Pedagogical Design**

Our project focused on encouraging teenagers to improve speaking skills through cooperative strategies by taking into account that our students did not speak fluently or freely due to different factors that affect the development of the speaking skills. Some of them were very shy and nervous about expressing themselves in front of the class, most of them manifested discomfortability, disagreements and disapproval in relation to the materials used and the type of activities developed in the classroom.

To tackle students' difficulties related to the speaking skills, we decided to implement an action research in which through the development of 3 units that contain authentic material.

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In that way, students would be able to improve their speaking skills, to overcome their weaknesses, and to enjoy themselves while being part of the process.

In this methodological proposal, students found cooperative and interactive activities, projects, storytelling activities, guessing and speculation games, brief discussions, intercultural and communicative activities, dictogloss, discussions, role-plays, timed-speaking, brainstorming, story completion, and reporting activities. In addition, this project included the use of digital devices, video-blogs among others that promote interaction.

We implemented our project with three units; each of them had four lessons (or lectures).

The first one was named "Let's be amazing, the second one "Discovering the world, and the last one was titled "More than a native speaker".

For the development of each unit we designed a lesson plan (see the format at appendix 2). It followed the scheme of a topic, strategy (name of activity) objective or goals, resources, and then, the procedures to develop each lesson per unit.

The class was divided into three important moments. First, the warm-up in which we broke the ice with a fun activity by presenting the general topic to unit and lesson through a video, a video blog, articles or any kind of authentic material that best suited the lesson. Also, we considered materials that were catching for students based on their interests. Second, we divided the classroom into 6 groups, 4 groups of 5 students and two of 6 students (In most of the cases). After that, the instructions and rules of the activity were given to students, and the activity was carried out (during this part students had the chance to speak even more among them and with the teacher). We supported them when it was needed. We made emphasis on the importance of learning and practicing the topic; we provided them with the ideas of the contexts and scenarios which could be used in order to develop their awareness while they were using the second language.



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The third moment was really important, since at that point students did presentations of their products. Every unit provided us with a product: a presentation, a role play, a debate, or a discussion among others. During this step, we provided students with different kinds of feedback that encouraged them to keep trying, to be motivated, to improve their fluency and confidence when they were speaking English. The goal was to improve the ability of the student to communicate effectively in English.

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**Unit 1 let's be Amazing.**

### LESSON 1: The new avengers: Chapter 1

**Level:** Pre-Intermediate

**Goals:**

- To be able to use specific language items with accuracy.

-To be able to respond to another person's utterances by using a small repertoire of follow-up questions and responses.

-To demonstrate appropriate communication skills for an oral presentation.

**Time:** 120 minutes.

**Materials:** Markers, colors, sheets of paper, computer projector, posters, dictionaries, video for the intro and a video of marvel's soundtracks.

**Step 1:** The teacher shows videos related to superheroes in order to make them discuss about the possible topics or interests that will be developed during the unit.

- Sicha, G. 2018. Marvel Studios - Intro|Logo: New Version (2016) recovered from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN\\_e5-fcGU4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN_e5-fcGU4).

**Step 2:** The teacher briefly recounts an event that will change the history of the world we know. (In order to motivate students, captivate and draw their attention).

*"After the end of the infinity world of the avengers, the world need new superheroes..."*



*Illustration 3 Let's be Amazing.*

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**Step 3:** The teacher explains the first activity. He provides all the information about what students are expected to do. He gives them the guidelines, the deadlines and he/she clarifies all the possible doubts. This activity requires each student to create their own stories, their own character or superhero. They have to draw it; to explain what their superpowers would be like. Also, they have to create and describe their uniforms, to name themselves, to talk about their schedules, about their real and their secret lives. They have to answer how do they handle it? How do they get the power? How did they discover it?

**Step 4:** Each student presents their characters and talks about them in the way they selected. They may answer all the questions previously presented. (*Estimated time per individual 3 minutes*).

**Step 5:** The teacher makes comments and provides feedback on their performances and summarises the class, asks for comments and tells them what they are supposed to achieve. (Grammar practice, spontaneity, to give them clues on how to deliver their reports, how to organize a presentation. Preparing them to respond to questions and to persuade others).

Grammar topics required before applying this activity: *Present simple, past simple, the time, the dates, modal verbs, adjectives and personal information and adverbs of frequency.*

### **Notes:**

1. In order to have students to relax and to motivate them to focus and engage with the activity, the teacher uses the video of Marvel's soundtracks during the whole process (while drawing, while planning and creating the stories, etc...)

*Marvel Soundtrack playlist* = (Steve, H. 2017. The Music of the Marvel Cinematic Universe- Update 3 recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMGE4hq5e2Y>).

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### LESSON 2 - The new avengers: Chapter 2

**Level:** Pre-Intermediate

**Goals:**

- To make effective use of verbal delivery skills, including voice projection, intonation, stress, pausing, volume and silence.
- To show understanding of the basic problem solution genre in a presentation format.
- To be able to express basic and advanced practical language items, such as expressing the time, using dates, numbers, asking and answering questions, and to talk about frequency, about events of the past and the present with both accuracy and fluency.

**Time:** 60 minutes.

**Materials:** Markers, colors, sheets of paper, visual aids, posters, video of marvel's soundtracks.



*Illustration 4 The new avengers*

**Step 1:** The class begins with a video that establishes the focus of the activities, the environment, the stage, and the moment of the class in which we are. (It may be related to the topic of the unit). In the case of our study, we decided to use a trailer of a very famous movie sequel in order to engage them in the process.



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*Video Selected*= Sony pictures entertainment 2019. Spider-man: Far from home - Official Trailer recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt9L1jCKGnE>.

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**Step 2:** The teacher brings the character of a villain (created by him/herself). Teacher describes his powers, his strengths, his size, his uniform, he specifies if the villain possesses weapons etc. It can be used a poster with the drawing or a picture of it.

**Step 3:** Teacher divides the classroom in 4 groups of five students and two of six students. (one of the group of six students is confirmed by all the participants of our study).

**Step 4:** Students create a story about how they destroyed or killed the villain brought by the teacher. In order to develop the activity, teachers may ask X number of analytical questions.

We decided to ask the following questions.

- Where did this event take place? When did it take place? Who were the participants? What happened first? How was it?
- We also decided that one of the members of the group might die. They have to discuss it and to take a group decision about it.
- How has the world changed since that day?

**Step 5:** Each group will share their stories in front of the class (estimated time for each group, 5 to 7 minutes). They will have to answer different kinds of questions from the audience and from the teacher. Notes

1. Topics required to the development of this activity= present and past simple, conditionals, wh questions, the numbers, the dates, vocabulary about places.
2. To keep students relaxed and to create an environment of cooperation and hard work, we used a soundtrack video taken from Youtube.

Video: Legendmusic 2017. Legendary Epic Music - No One Can Stop Death (Anti Hero Music Mix) recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RS4dnCh4dw>.



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### LESSON 3: Presidential debate, let's change the world!

**Level:** Intermediate

**Goals:**

- Students will be able to express and justify their ideas, opinions and feelings by validating their arguments.
- To answer questions where possible, and to refer them to other members of the team or deflect them.

**Time:** 90 minutes.

**Materials:** Markers, colors, sheets of paper, visual aids:

video of a soundtrack for elections and a video of american flag waving.



*Illustration 5 Presidential debate*

**Step 1:** The classroom is divided into 4 groups of 5 students and two of six students. Each group has 3 minutes to determine the student who will be the head of the party that each individual will have on the executive branch. They can be the candidate to the presidency, the vice president candidate, the chief minister, secretary, the mayor of the capital city, the president of the council of minister, or a governor.

**Step 2:** The teacher provides students with several United States issues that need to be changed. Three candidates to the presidency may select one of these topics. The other three groups will be randomly assigned to compete with one of the first three groups.

**Issues for the debates:**

- Gun Control
- Global Warming
- Education

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- Death Penalty
- Equal Rights
- Economy
- Cultural identity

**Step 3:** The teacher explains the guidelines, and gives them 4 questions that must be answered during the debate.

**Step 4:** Each party or group starts working on their proposals, their ideas and opinions about the topic that they have to develop. They will have 20 minutes to prepare and to organize it.

### Questions for the debates:

- Introduce your issue
- What would you do about the issue now if you were president?
- What will happen if things don't change?
- What would you have done differently if you had been the previous president?

**Note 1:** While preparing the arguments and ideas for the debate, teacher must walk through the classroom solving their questions and doubts.

**Note 2:** While they are working on their ideas, and while they are discussing the arguments and thoughts that they have to present, we decided to use a soundtrack video for elections.

Video: *Cross L. 2016. MSNBC Election Theme for 30 Minutes.*  
*Recovered from:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BSgaMycEh5A>

**Step 5:** The debates start. The teacher selects the first topic, and the two groups go in front of the class. The teacher does a brief intro about the topic that will be developed and ask the



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first question. Each group will have the opportunity to give their ideas and support them. The process is repeated until it covers all the questions.

**Step 6:** the rest of the groups (American population) will vote for their candidate. Only one party will win the contest. Then, the teacher continues with the other groups.

**Note:** During the debate, we decided to use a video of the american flag waving behind them in order to motivate students and to bring their minds to a real scenario or context.

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Video selected: [SlowTV Relax&Background](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01jCUM5eYOE) 2016. [10 Hours] American Flag Waving - Video & Audio. recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01jCUM5eYOE>

### Unit 2 Discovering the world.

#### LESSON 1: Events of the world

Level: Pre-Intermediate

#### Goals:

- Students will be able to share opinions and to make their own conclusions while using the grammar topic already presented. (Conditional number three).
- To use appropriate language to transition from one idea to the next, and to show connections among ideas.

Time: 60 minutes.

Materials: Short articles, Sheets of paper and markers.

**Step 1:** The class is going to be divided in groups of 5 and 6 people. Teacher gives students an article explaining a certain situation that somehow affected the history of the world. These articles explain how it could have been different.

**Step 2:** Students will discuss in groups how the tragedy could have been avoided or could have been different by using conditionals needed according to the situation. Then, each group is going to create an outline that includes five sentences on how the situation could have been avoided.



Illustration 6 Discovering the world.

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**Step 3:** Later, the teacher is going to collect the outline's sheets. After that, the teacher gives them to another group. Learners have 10 minutes to read them and prepare an explanation about it. Next, they must explain what they read without knowing which group wrote it. The group that wrote it will have to identify if their ideas were expressed properly or not. If it is not correct, they will clarify it.

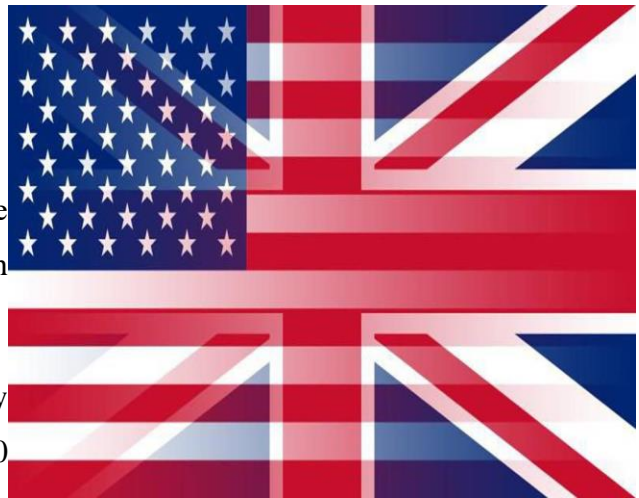
Note: After hearing each explanation and being attentive to details, three students randomly selected must give their opinions about the situation that has been explained by their peers.

### LESSON 2: American vs British English

**Level:** Pre-Intermediate

**Goals:**

- To develop student's awareness of the differences between American and British English expressions (Idioms).
- To be able to use a number of high-frequency expressions to maintain and develop. Time: 90 minutes



*Illustration 7 American vs British English*

**Materials:** Flashcards, Audio, videos

**Step 1:** At the beginning of the class, the teacher is going to share a video in which several English accents from all over the world are simulated.

Video: *Truseney92 2015. The English Language in 67 Accents & Random Voices. recovered from*



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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=riwKuKSbFDs&t=578s>.

**Step 2:** The teacher presents two lists of idioms explained through flashcards. There will be two lists of 6 idioms. One with idioms from the United States and the other one with idioms from the United Kingdom. The classroom is going to be divided in groups of 5 and 6 students. Three groups are going to work with idioms from the United States, and the other three with the ones from the United Kingdom



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**Step 3:** In groups, they are going to have an idiom that they must explain through examples of situations in which they could be used. They must do so without actually saying the idiom. The rest of the students are going to guess which idiom has been explained.

**Step 4:** The teacher is going to give directions about how to create a role play in which they make use of those idioms. They might include at least three idioms from the list that was assigned to the group.

**Note:** The idioms presented to students on the activity were taken from the following source:

*Interactive English 2017. Idiom challenge: Británicos vs. American Idioms recovered from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRsCOWRS83g>. It will be the teacher's decision if they prefer to explain the idioms by themselves rather than projecting a video in front of the class.*

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### LESSON 3: We are all different.

**Level:** Intermediate

**Goals:**

- To provide students with cultural aspects of English speaking countries.
- To open their minds to the world.
- To be able to express their thoughts and feelings in regards to foreign cultures.
- To make effective use of verbal delivery skills, including voice projection, intonation, stress, pausing, volume and silence.



*Illustration 8 We are all different.*

**Time:** 45 minutes.

**Materials:** Posters and images.

**Step 1:** Students are going to be arranged in three lines. The first student of each line is going to hear one sentence explaining one tradition or custom from any English speaking country. Then, that student is going to transmit the information to the following classmates and so on. Once they reach the last student of the line, he/she is going to say the information he/she heard aloud. The first student is going to verify whether the information was correct or not. (This process is going to be repeated twice, for a total of 6 sentences).

**Step 2:** Once the 6 sentences have been verified, students are going to be given a poster in which there will be three columns. The first one will contain the six traditions already presented but through pictures this time. The second one will have key words or sentences





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related to the pictures, and the last one will encompass pictures of flags of the countries where those traditions take place.

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Step 3: Students will match the three columns, and they will share their opinions about the traditions. Moreover, they will declare whether or not they found them interesting.

Note 1: Traditions and customs were taken from an European website:

*Pöhland, J. (1999). Customs and Traditions in English speaking countries. Retrieved from [https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/words\\_list/customs\\_traditions.htm](https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/words_list/customs_traditions.htm)*

### LESSON 4: World war.

**Level:** Intermediate.

Goals: -To be able to give arguments and defend their perspectives

-To practice comparatives and superlatives.

- To allow students to develop their creativity and express their ideas.

**Time:** 60 minutes.

**Materials:** Paper, color pencils, markers, posters.



*Illustration 9 World war*

**Step 1:** The teacher is going to divide the class in groups of 5 and 6 people. Then, he will give them 5 characteristics to create a country. ex. (Cold, beaches, mountains, carnivals, Rock music). These characteristics will be given randomly, using the software of an American website specialized on giving random words.

Website: “Random Word Generator”. Retrieved from <https://randomwordgenerator.com/>.

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**Step 2:** Students will have to create their own country, based on the characteristics already given. They will have to create a flag, traditions, weather, accent, location, name of the capital city, and some interesting facts they would like to add. They have to present the countries with their classmates.

**Step 3:** After hearing the presentations. They will have to create a text that includes sentences in which they explain why their countries are better than the others. Such sentences need to incorporate the use of comparatives adjectives.

**Step 4:** Once each group has presented their reasons why their country is better than the others, the other groups have to defend their countries.

**Step 5:** The teacher is going to give feedback on their performances, explaining what they have done great. The teacher is going to let them know the hidden purpose and goals of the activity.

### **Unit 3: More than a native speaker**

#### **LESSON 1: Dictocomp**

**Level:** Intermediate

**Goals:**

- Have students practice analyzing dialogues and learn phrases for making useful conversational moves.

**Time:** 60 minutes.

**Materials:** Video projector

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**Step 1:** Select several (6) interesting movie scenes that contain phrases for making useful conversational moves (e.g., making excuses offering explanations).

**Step 2:** Have students analyze the dialogues in the scenes to identify what conversational moves are made and what phrases are used for making them.

**Step 3:** Assign groups to learn to perform scenes in class.

**Step 4:** Give small awards for the best performance, best actor, best supporting role, and so on.

### **LESSON 2: New and improved!**

**Level:** Intermediate

**Goals:**

- To have students practice talking about advertising and explaining how it works.
- Teach advertising- related vocabulary.
- To have students practice persuasion
- To have students practice trying to think from the target culture's perspective. Time: 60 minutes.

**Materials:** Videos related to advertisements and high-viewership events

**Step 1:** The teacher divides the classroom in 4 groups of 5 students and 2 of 6 students

**Step 2:** Give a presentation about the advertisements created for products and high-viewership events (e.g. Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Pepsi, Super Bowl, EuroCup) in the target culture. Explaining the events, the products and the role advertising plays in it.



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**Step 3:** To have students design and campaign for a brand or an event. Ask them to prepare and perform a 2 to 3-minute advertisement. Encourage them to be creative and entertaining.

**Step 4:** Have students try to perform their advertisement.

**Step 5:** Comment on their performances and reward the best group by giving them an award.

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### **LESSON 3: A weird gossip**

#### **Goals:**

- To have students practice improvisation.
- To have students practice spontaneous story-telling.

**Step 1:** The teacher divides the classroom in 8 groups of 3 students and 2 of 4 students.

**Step 2:** Teacher gives students 3 flashcards with random images on both sides. (e.g. broken heart, car, cellphone). They have to create a story about any famous person. The story must be connected with the images on the flashcard.

**Step 3:** Students present their stories pretending that they are at a Gossip TV show. There are two TV hosts and the other one(s) will be the reporter(s) that give more details in the place of the event.

**Step 4:** Teacher gives feedback and the best representation will get an award.

### **LESSON 4: Like an artist's eye.**

**Level:** Intermediate.

#### **Goals:**

- To be able to use the past tenses in order to create and tell a story.
- To work cooperatively while carrying out discussions.
- To practice, improve and increase their speaking skills while describing a complex drawing.

**Time:** 60 minutes.

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**Materials:** board, markers, pictures.

**Step 1:** Have students divided in groups of four to start the activity.

**Step 2:** The teacher will explain the activity to students. The activity consists of selecting one of the four students of each group. The selected student will play the role of a receptor of ideas. The other three students of each group will have to think about something in specific (imaginary person, landscapes, objects, etc....).

**Step 3:** Once the roles in each group are settled down, they will have five to ten minutes to organize the ideas. Students will have to tell their receptors at least five ideas each of them and tell the ideas one by one the receptor.

**Step 4:** When the receptor gets a total of fifteen ideas, he will proceed to portray all the ideas in a drawing. Students will have 15 minutes to make the drawing.

**Step 5:** Then, the teacher will take the drawings of each group and distribute them but randomly one more time.

**Step 6:** Finally, students will have to look at the drawing they received and try to explain it in front of the class. They will create a story for the drawing according to what they could understand. Students will prepare everything in 20 minutes and then share it.

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### **3.7 Data Analysis**

The data analysis is how researchers go from a mass of data into meaningful insights (Huberman, 1984). Once all the data was collected using the instruments in the interaction with students, we decided to analyse the data by doing a deep examination of it. Then, we established some stages in order to make it easier to understand for readers.

The first step was to examine the data from the different instruments used. Field notes, as one of the most important tools, gave us a wide view of student performance while they were doing the activities that we carried out in the classroom. Each student had a different response and development when we applied the original worksheets. Learners had a gradual growth in each class starting when we decided to apply the first worksheet focused on developing their speaking skills.

The students accepted the oral presentations and worksheets as a new and innovative proposal to overcome their current problems with speaking. Students were excited once they realized that these other ways of doing things were yielding results. We read notes in order to have some insights about how this new strategy and content was helping them to conquer their difficulties. Taking the above into account, we coded the data provided by the selected students in order to make it more precise. We coded the students' performances (student 1, student 2, student 3, etc.) during three moments which marked by the informants' oral production and gradual growth (shown with grades from oral production rubrics applied before and during the proposal) while we applied speaking worksheets and activities. These three moments are equivalent to the three units that we develop as our proposa



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Strategies**

Categories	Codes
Giving opportunities and interacting with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Listening attentively to peers.</li> <li>- Giving feedback to peers.</li> <li>- Gaining fluency.</li> <li>- Being accurate when speaking.</li> <li>- Cooperative Learning strategies as a tool to improve.</li> </ul>
Being Confident to speak better.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student's empathy with the interlocutor.</li> <li>- Earning other ways of communication.</li> <li>- Being coherent to enhance.</li> <li>- Cooperative Learning strategies as a tool to improve.</li> </ul>
Putting aside traditional topics and giving interesting ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning vocabulary and culture.</li> <li>- Teaching and learning through authentic materials.</li> <li>- Cooperative Learning strategies as a tool to improve.</li> </ul>
Participants	<p>Student 1, Student 2, Student 3, Student 4, Student 5 and Student 6.</p>
Moment 1	Unit 1: Let's be amazing.

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Moment 2	Unit 2: Discovering the world.
Moment 3	Unit 3: More than a native speaker.

*Tabla 3 Codes*

The second step was to classify the data into small categories. Using this classification we analysed the implications of each category in order to obtain a deep understanding. Finally, we created a third step that was intended to find the category that better suited and helped us to answer the research question that led this study. This central category was about positive or negative affectation of original speaking worksheets in students. The rest of the categories are related to and complete this last category to improve the factors that could hinder students' oral production skills in an EFL setting.

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### **CHAPTER IV Results**

The results of research offer the reader a clear idea of what the researchers did. First of all, we must mention the research question that led this study in order to identify whether or not we obtained the expected results at the end of the application process.

The research questions that guided this pedagogical proposal was:

*How can the use of cooperative learning help to enhance oral production skills in 9th graders of a public school in an EFL setting?.*

The data in this study yielded results in connection with speaking activities supported by authentic materials. We integrated CL strategies that had a significant impact on students' learning processes. We need to state that the issues that hindered the oral production skills in these students (few speaking opportunities, fear of speaking and materials used in class) were not completely solved. Yet, the data indicates that the incorporation of CL strategies in oral production activities helped to reduce them.

The analysed data taken from the three moments (Unit 1 "let's be amazing" Unit 2 "discovering the world", Unit 3 "more than a native speaker") using the different instruments revealed three major categories. These categories were about how learners' performance were growing during the passing of the units. The first of them is "*providing opportunities and interacting with others*", the second one is "*being confident to speak better*" and the third one is "*putting aside traditional topics and giving interesting ones*".

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### *Providing opportunities and interacting with others*

While we were analysing the data of the applied proposal we noticed that the oral production activities were causing a direct interaction among students. Also, this gave them many opportunities to face their speaking skills in the language in comparison to other learners into the classroom. These opportunities and interactions were facilitated by the cooperative learning strategies that we used while applying the units.

After the teacher introduced each strategy separately, students started using the strategies unconsciously during every activity of each unit. They were able to master these strategies in order to complete the activities faster and make the experience of learning or understanding other words easier. The purpose was to give students what they were missing in their oral production process and fill that gap using the CL method.

The researchers noticed that through the activities, the opportunities to interact and speak with others in the L2 increased significantly in comparison to their old classes. But, how could we evidence this change in students' interaction when giving classes and using CL strategies? The only way to do it was by taking field notes, carrying out interviews, and analysing students' comments regarding the development of the class and their own performance. Also, having more interaction increased the rate of errors committed and corrections given by other students. It means a constant growth of knowledge and practice of speaking skills in the L2. So, this constant growth of the abilities is shown as grades according to the CEFR scale for oral assessment in the rubrics used to assess students' performance in each unit.

This data taken from field notes and interviews was collected once we finished applying our proposal in the class. The questions were oriented in order to know what students' feelings and thoughts were regarding what they did in classes led by the teacher. The questions and the different answers from students were the following:

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*Teacher:* How did you feel using the CL strategies in class? Do you think that you had more opportunities to interact with your mates and with the language?

*Student 1:* Yes teacher, desde que we are working the strategies in the classroom we can interact more with our classmates and improve how we speak in English. I felt really nice in those classes, we were improving a lot.

*Student 3:* I think you made a good work with us. Now we can talk and interact even with our real teacher in class.

*Student 5:* Pensé que no funcionaría (she laughs). When I realized that it was dando resultados and I was talking and talking incluso si me equivocaba I felt that I learned something.

*Student 4:* It was great! You did what some teachers don't. You wanted us to be better in speaking and interact more and you did it.

*Student 2:* Thanks to you we are different now. Thanks to all the activities that nos ayudaron a mejorar mucho, estamos interactuando mucha más in Spanish and in English.

*Student 6:* La idea de desarrollar más nuestra habla fue emocionante. Of course, we can be more in contact with the language and other people.

*Data taken from interviews and its transcriptions in fieldnotes (May 2019)*

Data taken from field notes showed students' feelings and thoughts about the development of the activities and how they were increasing the interaction rates little by little. It means that the pertinence these activities could have not only in a school context (EFL) but in a real life context is significant. Students developed a wide range of communicative skills during the activities. Some of these skills can be useful when we are learning a second language, or even when talking to one another in their mother tongue. Therefore, we can say that they improved their cognitive skills to communicate in a second language such as Listening, Non-



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verbal Communication, Giving Feedback, Clarity and Concision. In addition, some social skills to communicate in the L1 or L2 were improved; these are Confidence and Empathy with others.

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To make the data clearer, we consider appropriate to say a bit about these communicative skills developed by learners in order to adapt themselves to the circumstances and communication issues in the speaking activities.

**Listening:** To communicate effectively with someone else, students had to take time to practice active listening during the activities. It involved paying close attention to what the other person was saying, asking clarifying questions, and rephrasing what the person said to ensure understanding ("So, what you're saying is..."). Through active listening, students could better understand what the other person was trying to say, and be able to provide an appropriate answer.

**Non-Verbal Communication:** It was important for students to know what their peers were saying without using words. Sometimes, learners did not have any idea on how to say a word or a complete sentence. As a result, they turned to make gestures and signs with different parts of their bodies in order to make the idea clear.

**Giving Feedback:** This skill was really important in the communicative process they developed during the activities. Since they were working with the skill they had practiced the least, it was normal to see students committing errors. In regards to this fact, we asked students to give themselves the needed feedback in order to go on with success during the implementation of the proposal. They should be able to accept and even encourage feedback from others. Students listened to the feedback they were given, asked clarifying questions when they were unsure of the issue, and made efforts to implement the feedback.

**Clarity and Concision:** While activities were developing, students learned how to commit less errors than before. This was possible by just saying enough. It means, not talking too much or too little. They tried to convey the message in as few words as possible. Students were saying what they wanted clearly and directly. If at any time they rambled on, their peers were going to be tuned out from what they really wanted to say and they could get lost.

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Furthermore, the last two communicative skills they also developed in the process were useful to determine a certain kind of behavior while they were speaking in the L1 or L2. These skills are mostly social because of the impact they have in the way we act toward someone else. Besides, they show how it negatively or positively affects the communicative process.

**Confidence:** For students that were reinforcing their speaking skill confidence played a significant role in the interactions with others. Thanks to this communicative skill, students showed their classmates that they believed in what they were saying. Exuding confidence was as simple as making eye contact or using a firm but friendly tone. Students had to avoid making sentences sound like questions, and always listen to their peers in order to build the same feeling of confidence among them.

**Empathy:** Social skills were useful for this process since they helped students to interact better and construct social ties or bonds of friendship with the person they were talking to. They needed to demonstrate to their classmates that they were listening attentively to them and they have understood what they said. Each of these demonstrations had to be respectful towards mates' opinions and feelings.

We could evidence that students 2, 3 and 5 were improving some cognitive and social skills gradually as they were interacting with their peers, showing more and more interest in the locutor's speech, listening attentively to what they say and giving answers with a certain level of confidence.

-Student 1: I think that if I am president of the country, I could... emmh... change many things that are affecting people's condition of lives, for example, the health programs are not good, they should be free for everybody.

-Student 2: I understand, but, how?

-Student 3: I think it is a good idea, but maybe for the most poor people, they need it more.





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-Student 5: That's true, poor people have more necessities.

*(Data taken from field notes, 2019)*

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On the other hand, the placement of students in a level according to the CEFR scale for oral assessment was carried out at the beginning of the study as a diagnostic test, including an oral activity that was assessed to place them. It is important to know that assessing an oral production activity has to be completely qualitative. Evaluators must place the participants according to the accomplishment of some criteria in a specific level. Therefore, the range of students' speaking skill was varying from one to another. We had students from A1 to B1 levels.

	INTERACTION	FLUENCY	ACCURACY
Student 1	A2	A1	A2
Student 2	A1/A1+	A1/A1+	A1/A1+
Student 3	A2	A2	A2
Student 4	B1	A2	A2
Student 5	A1	A1/A1+	A1/A1+
Student 6	A1/A1+	A1	A1

*Table 1 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Interaction and Fluency)*

What this table showed us was the average levels that our selected group had before starting to apply the pedagogical proposal. The importance of the variety of levels is displayed when students use CL strategies. If we had different ranges of speaking proficiency in English in the small group we were working with, it meant that each student had knowledge that the rest were missing. Consequently, the main purpose of the CL strategies into the oral production activities which were making them fill the gaps of their peers and vice versa. They did all of this while we were giving them more opportunities to speak English and interact among them.

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To evidence the constant growth students had during the activities developed in class. We have to exhibit the results of the activities assessed using the oral production rubrics. The results of these rubrics were divided into three moments. These moments agree with the end or final activity of each unit. They showed how students performance was regarding the three speaking sub skills that concern this category.

Unit 1: Let's be amazing assessment activity.			
	INTERACTION	FLUENCY	ACCURACY
Student 1	A2/A2+	A1/A1+	A2/A2+
Student 2	A2	A1/A1+	A2
Student 3	A2	A2	A2/A2+
Student 4	B1	A2	A2/A2+
Student 5	A1/A1+	A1/A1+	A2
Student 6	A2	A1/A1+	A1/A1+

*Table 2 Unit 1: Let's be amazing assessment activity.*

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Having assessed Unit 1, we could notice that students' performance increased. The chart shows that performances of interaction, fluency and accuracy do not have the same increasing rate. The interaction sub skills have shown a growth in Students 1, 2, 5 and 6 from A2, A1/A1+, A1 and A2 to A2/A2+, A2, A1/A1+ and A2 respectively. In comparison to the other two students this growth could be possible and more visible thanks to the low level of proficiency that these four students had in this sub skill. However, we could not notice a significant increase in fluency. Most of the students remained with the same level of fluency but only Students 1 and 6 had changes. They passed from A1 and A1 to A1/A1+ and A1/A1+. As with the previous sub skill we can say that they were the only students who increased because of the low level they had at the moment of doing the activities. Moreover, the accuracy sub skill was the only one that increased evenly when this unit was assessed. All the students passed from A2, A1/A1+, A2, A2, A1/A1+ and A1 to A2/A2+, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2, and A1/A1+ respectively. We can say that students consciously or unconsciously considered that if they had a wider view of grammatical structures they could do it better in the activities. This is the reason why the growth was not uniform in terms of fluency and interaction.

Unit 2: Discovering the world assessment activity.			
	INTERACTION	FLUENCY	ACCURACY
Student 1	A2/A2+	A2	B1
Student 2	A2	A2	A2/A2+
Student 3	A2/A2+	A2/A2+	B1
Student 4	B1	A2/A2+	B1

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Student 5	A1/A1+	A2	A2/A2+
Student 6	A2	A2	A2

*Table 3 Unit 2: Discovering the world assessment activit*

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Once we collected the data from the assessment of Unit 2 we noticed that students were more focused on speaking better during the activities. This concern for speaking better was reflected in the results of the fluency sub skill. Each student improved on this; they passed from A1/A1+, A1/A1+, A2, A2, A1/A1+, A1/A1+ to A2, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2, A2 respectively. Although fluency was successfully improved on this Unit, interaction only had one case of advance. Student 3 was the one that has passed from A2 to A2/A2+ being this change significant because in the first unit he did not improve. Therefore, all the work done by this student in units 1 and 2 was shown in the assessment of the last one. We can say that not all learners develop in the same way and time to improve their skills.

In addition, looking at accuracy sub skill results, it is possible to say that this is the most important part for students learning and improvement. Students demonstrated their commitment and desires of participation from activity number one until the end of the first two units. The reception of each topic presented and the development of the different activities showed that their motivation and engagement had increased. At that moment students seemed to be deeply immersed in the language and they confirmed by talking to us about those activities they started doing in their daily lives. Students associated their likes and hobbies to the language. Some of them claimed that they started watching videos of interviews of their favorite actors and singers. Others used netflix and prime to watch their movies and series in English even when they found it difficult to understand. Now, we present some of the data taken from interviews and observations from the fieldnotes.

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### Group Interview

*Teacher:* Did you do something else in order to improve your performance during the activities? *Student 4:* Yes, I was reviewing all the grammar and tools given by our homeroom teacher at home. *Student 6:* I just take a look at my notes before the class starts.

*Student 1:* Sometimes I tried to remember and identify which structures are presented in the accounts I followed on Instagram writings.

*Student 2:* When I listened to music, I sang and maybe that helps me to remember things. I also watch Lucifer and Jane the virgin in netflix. I like to listen English with my favorite series.

*Student 5:* I just did my English homework at home, I think it was useful to remember principally grammar.

*Student 3:* I used to analyse the readings of some video games and keep in mind what was familiar and new to me. First, it sounds good in English. I think it is its original sound. Also, I love to watch the premier league with the narrator in English. I love soccer and English.

Data taken from fieldnotes (April,2019) Therefore, the constant growth of this sub skill was unavoidable for students when they were completing the activities. Students 1 to 6 have shown that improvement passing from A2/A2+, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2, and A1/A1+ to B1, A2/A2+, B1, B1, A2/A2+ and A2 respectively. Here the enhancement of accuracy was evidenced, and it also showed how this sub skill could carry the other ones little by little. Without accuracy you cannot have fluency because students do not have the grammatical structures needed to speak. Plus, without reinforcing this sub skill they cannot even have enough interaction because of the lack of structures to maintain it.

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Unit 3: More than a native speaker assessment activity.			
	INTERACTION	FLUENCY	ACCURACY
Student 1	B1	A2/A2+	B1/B1+
Student 2	A2/A2+	A2/A2+	B1
Student 3	B1	B1	B1/B1+
Student 4	B1	B1	B1/B1+
Student 5	A2	A2/A2+	B1
Student 6	A2/A2+	A2/A2+	A2/A2+

Finally, when we analysed the results of the third unit, we verified that the increase of communicative skills from one level to another was a reality. At this point all students were different in comparison to the beginning of the applied proposal. All of them had a better interaction with other classmates while speaking in the L2. Moreover, this change was observed in the L1 in which they have improved their relations thanks to all the activities given in class.

In addition, the difference of growth between unit 2 and unit 3 was the greatest in comparison to the other units. In this last assessment we could notice that both sub skills were developed in most of the students of the selected group. Students 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 have shown the constant growth in both sub skills. In interaction sub skill they passed from A2/A2+, A2, A2/A2+, A1/A1+ and A2 to B1, A2/A2+, B1, A2 and A2/A2+ respectively. The only student that did not have any advance in this sub skill was student number 4. The reason was because he felt it was good enough for him at that level.



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*Teacher:* Why do you consider that you did not have an improvement interacting with others during this activity?

*Student 4:* Maybe I was focused on the development of other things that I consider are more important.

*(Data taken from Field Notes on May 2019)*

Furthermore, in fluency sub skill the growth was particularly well developed and improved among all the students (1 to 6). They advanced from A2, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2, A2 to A2/A2+, A2/A2+, B1, B1, A2/A2+, A2/A2+ respectively. Regarding the answer of Student 5 and the development of all of them during the activities, we could say that each learner was trying to enhance the fluency sub skill more than the other. This is because in a real life conversation with another person fluency is more pertinent in regards to the sustainability of the speaking act. Students can consider that listening to someone that thinks too much before saying something is boring. This is due to the lack of fluency.

On the other hand, accuracy sub skill has remained as the one who did not have any kind of interruption in its growth while units were advancing. This sub skill is the right definition of constant growth. The students were improving their accuracy level since we began to apply the activities of the pedagogical proposal. They progressed from B1, A2/A2+, B1, B1, A2/A2+ and A2 to B1/B1+, B1, B1/B1+, B1/B1+, B1 and A2/A2+. Each student was responsible for this improvement; they reached the maximum level they could in this sub skill. They are able to accomplish many tasks in comparison to the past, and also to help themselves take advantage of this skill to continue improving their communicative process.

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### *Being confident to speak better*

This second category helped us to evidence the enhancement of one punctual issue that students were facing when doing some oral production activities. Before applying the pedagogical proposal, we found out that many of them were afraid of standing in front of the class and saying something in English. Even if they did not have to do it in front of the class and they just had to say something to a classmate or the teacher, they became horrified and ashamed. This problem was classified in the previous research as “*fear of speaking*”. We tried to solve this issue by implementing the pedagogical proposal. Such proposals applied CL strategies in oral production activities integrated with the use of authentic materials as a tool to enhance students' speaking problems.

The information from this category was collected during the application of the units. The tools and procedures were the same as the last category. We took notes and transcribed the interviews we did at the end of unit 3 to show how students were feeling and what were their thoughts about the positive consequences that these activities brought them. We applied for the next interview to see if students considered they had felt any change in regards to their confidence while they were speaking in the L2. *Teacher*: If I told you right now to tell me something in English. Do you consider you are going to do it without a problem?

*Student 1*: In this moment... I consider I don't have the same fear when I hear you tell me something in English and.... mmm I have to say something too.

*Student 3*: I know I don't have a great English level and I have to keep growing. But I am more confident now. It is something that helped me a lot.

*Student 5*: Maybe I can have some problems but the difference in comparison to the pass is great.

*Student 4*: I have the ability to speak if you ask me teacher. Being shy and shameful it's not like the current me is.

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*Student 2:* I think that is different in this moment because... ummmm I think...mm that I can say more things now. The activities help me to be... sure when.... mmm I have to speak.

*Student 6:* It depends because I sometimes forget some words in English. But I feel that I can speak more.

*(Data taken from Field Notes on May 2019)*

The interview transcription displayed student's thoughts towards speaking at the point when they have already finished the entire units. While the students were doing that interview they felt even more confident than during the first interview they had in the previous research. The way they talked to researchers had a new style, a different tone of voice, and they took their time before saying things with the aim of saying it properly. Students were responsible for what they were saying. Also, they were kind of selective when they tried to say something. Each word they used was easy to understand for them and for the researcher. This was with the aim to make themselves clear enough while transmitting what they wanted to say.

But, how could they have obtained that confidence through these activities? The answer is because when the learners were in the process of working in the units they obtained experience and reinforced their coherence in the target language. Coherence is tightly connected with the amount of confidence someone can have in the communicative process. Coherence is the logical arrangement of someone's speech, or how every part of that person's answer is connected with another sentence. If we talk about the arrangement of words and how they have sense once we connect them with another sentence, we have to mention that each student has improved this with the progress of the applied units. We already mentioned that while applying the units of oral production activities we had to explain and review everything they needed to succeed on this. We reinforced grammatical structures and useful vocabulary useful to complete the activities successfully. Therefore, using all that reviewed knowledge and putting it into practice, helped students gain the ability to speak with clarity, concision and cohesion.

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On the other hand, to show that cohesion growing which helped them to overcome shyness and shame they feel when they had to speak and transform it into confidence, we collected the data using oral production rubric. This rubric was based on the CEFR scale for oral production assessment. In this category we are going to show only the speaking sub skill that concerns the most with the development of confidence in the communicative process. The speaking sub skill to be treated is *Coherence* and how it was growing up constantly when units were passing by.

	COHERENCE
Student 1	A1/A1+
Student 2	A1
Student 3	A1/A1+
Student 4	A1/A1+
Student 5	A1
Student 6	A1

*Table 4 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Coherence)*

In the table above we can see what students' performance was when taking the assessed oral production activity to place them according to the CEFR scale for oral production assessment. Students did not have a good level in this sub skill. All of them began from the bottom (A1 - A1/A1+) of the scale. This was something good because of the opportunity to show how they could improve their speaking skills using the material created for this purpose. They had many gaps of knowledge in regards to various topics. So, we had to review everything required for that activity. In this way, they started to work on the units using the CL strategies we explained to them. Therefore, each gap students could have at that moment would be solved by themselves led by researchers in charge.

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Analysing the following charts we present the results of the three moments (Units 1, 2 and 3) in which could be evidenced the constant growth of students' sub skill during the activities.

Unit 1: Let's be amazing	
	COHERENCE
Student 1	A2
Student 2	A1/A1+
Student 3	A2
Student 4	A2
Student 5	A1/A1+
Student 6	A1

*Table 5 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Coherence)*

Taking into account these results, students' performance in coherence have improved in comparison to the application and results of the diagnostic test. The increase of the sub skill was possible due to students' acceptance toward the proposed activities in class. The activities were created based on the needs they had expressed in the previous research. So, they employed everything to accomplish each activity in a proper way. It was what they were expecting to take that step ahead in speaking skills. The improvement was reflected as a new level in CEFR scale for oral production assessment. Students from 1 to 5 have advanced from A1/A1+, A1, A1/A1+, A1/A1+, A1 and A1 to A2, A1/A1+, A2, A2, A1/A1+ and A1/A1+ respectively. In comparison to the last category, the growth students underwent happened to all of them. Each student improved a bit on the management of coherence when building sentences in oral speech. This is going to be relevant to continue successfully with the other units.

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Next, we have a chart of Unit 2 that shows the students continuous advances in the discussed sub skill of this category.

Unit 2: Discovering the world	
COHERENCE	
Student 1	A2/A2+
Student 2	A2
Student 3	A2/A2+
Student 4	A2/A2+
Student 5	A2
Student 6	A1/A1+

*Table 6 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Coherence)*

Oral production assessment of the final activity of the Unit 2 threw data similar to the assessment of the Unit 1. Students' performance has continued growing up in Coherence sub skill. At this point, students were able to employ other ways to make themselves clear. They turned to use synonyms of words or trying to explain that word with their own words even if they had to use Spanish to do it. For example, one of them during an activity said "a person who sings"; he or she did not know or did not remember how to say the correct word for that concept. Therefore, he or she sought for another way to make the real meaning of his or her message reach the receptor. Moreover, this improvement was shown as a new level in the CEFR scale for oral production activities. Students 1 to 6 passed from A2, A1/A1+, A2, A2, A1/A1+ and A1/A1+ to A2/A2+, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2 and A2 respectively. The growth was significant and showed how students' coherence was improving as they became more confident in the spoken language.

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Finally, the last chart showed us total results of the whole work done in that EFL setting. Students' were different than the first time we met them, they seemed to be surer of their own abilities. We cannot say that this confidence was at the level of confidence of a B2 or C1 person. But, it helped them to improve not only in confidence but in other factors already mentioned.

Unit 3: More than a native speaker	
	COHERENCE
Student 1	B1
Student 2	A2/A2+
Student 3	B1
Student 4	B1
Student 5	A2/A2+
Student 6	A2

*Table 7 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Coherence)*

On this final chart, the results of the last unit were displayed. Assessments and tasks were important to know how the final and last performance of students was carried out. Furthermore, it gave us the final level these learners gained when facing our pedagogical proposal. As we already mentioned, students significantly improved on what they were doing. They implemented all the tools they learned during the process and some others to make themselves clear. In addition, the enhancement of the Coherence sub skill in all the units were displayed according to the CEFR scale for oral production activities. Students 1 to 6 moved from A2/A2+, A2, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A2 and A2 to B1, A2/A2+, B1, B1, A2/A2+ and A2 respectively.

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When analysing this final chart we realized the connection between *Coherence* and *Confidence* in speaking performance. As they are closely linked, students' grammatical advances and logical thinking presented before and during each activity directly affected the amount of confidence they gained at the end of the Units. This could be clearly evidenced in the transcription already presented before, in which students expressed their thoughts and feelings in regards to their advance in that sub skill and how confident they are right now.

### *Putting aside traditional topics and giving interesting ones*

This third category had an important role in students' motivation to participate actively during the activities. Before developing this proposal, we found that students felt bored working with the same materials in every class. The topics approached by those materials were not attractive for them. For that reason, they did not feel engaged. The collected data allowed us to identify topics of their interest that permitted us to design this proposal.

During the application of the activities, we noticed that students were positively responding to their development. The activities generated high expectations on students because they were totally different to the topics that they used to work with. This was evidenced by the effort they made to express their ideas in the best way possible. Most of them demonstrated to be interested in what they were told to do. They even suggested new ideas related to the topics we worked on during the units.

The tools we implemented to collect the data for this category were interviews and field notes. The interview questions were oriented to their level of interest towards the topics we worked in class and how they felt while working with them.

Teacher: Do you think it was key to have changed the old and boring topics for some news and interesting ones?





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Student 1: Of course, I like superheroes, tv shows and movies. It is interesting for me. Student 2: Yeah, It is more interesting than the other topics, it is not boring.

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Student 3: Yes because the topic is interesting for young people like we. Student 4: The class are different than before, now I like classes.

Student 5: I learn a lot of new things and I can talk about the things that I like. Student 6: I want more classes like this, I don't like the book.

*(Data taken from field notes, May 2019)*

At this point, we could evidence that their lack of motivation was due to the topics chosen by their teacher. Students shared that it was easier for them to participate during the activities because the topics were attractive to them. This aspect increased their commitment to improve their oral skills, to express their ideas more clearly and to overcome the anxiety as well.

By implementing the same rubric we used in the previous categories, we demonstrated how giving interesting topics to students positively influenced their speaking range. We worked with the CEFR scale for oral assessment rubric in order to display the results obtained during the end of the units. Before looking at the pedagogical proposal's tables we have to see how students' levels were at the very beginning. The next chart illustrates the diagnostic speaking activity we did in the previous research.

	RANGE
Student 1	A1/A1+
Student 2	A1
Student 3	A2
Student 4	A2
Student 5	A1

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Student 6	A1
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*Table 8 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Range)*

This chart shows that students had a poor repertoire of words and used simple phrases related to a few topics dealt with in class. These topics were the ones that really caught their attention, but the others were boring or monotonous. Therefore, students avoided them. This gave us the opportunity to explore new topics while putting aside the traditional ones in order to increase their range level. Moreover, we need to mention that all of them had a basic level in this sub skill. They were between A1 to A2. So, it gave us the chance to work more effectively using the new topics together with the CL strategies in oral production activities.

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Unit 1: Let's be amazing	
	RANGE
Student 1	A2
Student 2	A1/A1+
Student 3	A2/A2+
Student 4	A2/A2+
Student 5	A1/A1+
Student 6	A1/A1+

*Table 9 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Range)*

At the end of Unit 1, we noticed a difference in students' range level of vocabulary and expressions compared to before. The change and adjustments of the topics they were working with enhanced their range. The implementation of interesting topics for students impulsed their desires of knowing a bit more about them, thus succeeding with the main purpose of these new topics. Students seemed to be completely engaged. As a result, it was easier for students to improve the range in the four activities of each unit. Learners 1 to 6 showed improvement in the level of the current sub skill. They progressed from A1/A1+, A1, A2, A2, A1, A1 to A2, A1/A1+, A2/A2+, A2/A2+, A1/A1+ and A1/A1+ respectively. As it was shown by the rubrics results, students took advantage of the opportunity they had to speak. They had a significant experience in learning; they had fun and demonstrated to be interested in all topics.

The following chart shows the progression students had while doing the activities assessed in Unit 2.

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Unit 2: Discovering the world	
	RANGE
Student 1	A2/A2+
Student 2	A2
Student 3	B1
Student 4	B1
Student 5	A2
Student 6	A2

*Table 10 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Range)*

This chart continued to highlight the selected group performance in the last activity in Unit 2. We found that student 1 increased the CEFR level A2 to A2+, the rest of the students remained in the level already achieved in the previous unit according to the rubrics. However, we noticed that they kept working to move ahead their range level to a higher one.

Unit 3: More than a native speaker	
	RANGE
Student 1	B1
Student 2	A2/A2+
Student 3	B1/B1+
Student 4	B1/B1+
Student 5	A2/A2+

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Student 6	A2/A2+
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*Table 11 Oral activity assessed according to the CEFR scale (Range)*

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Here, we can see that students' range level incremented during the development of the activities. Student 1 maintained a CEFR B1 range level, and students 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 improved their levels from A2. B1, B1, A2, A2 to A2+, B1+, B1+, A2+, A2+ respectively. This demonstrated that the implementation of proper topics helped to enhance their speaking skills.

It is important to remember that the question that guided this research study was How can the use of cooperative learning help to enhance oral production skills in 9th graders of a public school in an EFL setting?

This research question emerged from students' need of improving their oral production skills since they did not have enough opportunities to express their ideas, to interact among them, and to use the language in real contexts. This addressed researchers all the way here to analyze the results.

We decided to divide it into three categories in order to make it easier to understand while the students were reading. Using the CEFR scale for oral production activities as evidence for the results, the categories were complemented. Demonstrating the applicability of the proposal, the results were divided one more time in three moments corresponding to the final activity of the units applied as pedagogical proposal.

After analysing all data gathered, we noticed a significant improvement. Students were increasing their abilities in each sub skill while working with the different units of the proposal. The participant students were more comfortable while speaking because the atmosphere of the classroom allowed them to participate every single time they wanted to. Student group work, their interaction, their discussions, their non prepared answers to any kind of questions, and their abilities to handle small conversations about specific topics demonstrated that their oral production skill had improved. Their levels according to the rubric used throughout the sessions stated that their level raised from level A1 to A2.



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Surprisingly, some of them even reached the B1 and B1+ level in speaking according to their performances in the designed spoken activities.





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On the other hand, since it was difficult to work this skill separately, the activities impacted, not only that skill, but all of them together. This could be evidenced on the way they gradually started to demonstrate more confidence, their lack of hesitation in comparison to their first interventions, a way wider vocabulary and structure, and definitely in their empathy with others feelings and opinions.

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### **CHAPTER V Discussion**

This fifth chapter analyses the findings presented in the previous chapter. Interpretations are given according to the propositions, premises and ideas considered to solve the research questions that guided this study. Additionally, implications and suggestions for further studies are also provided.

The data in this study showed that Cooperative Learning Strategies (CLS) played a significant role in students' speaking processes. Through the implementation of the pedagogical proposal and students' responses to it, factors that were affecting A1 to A2 learners were considerably surpassed. This fact allowed us to confidently state that the use of CLS, authentic materials and implementing a student-centered class have a significant influence not only in students' second language, but in their confidence, nervousness and social skills. The following paragraphs will describe and summarize the findings of this study.

#### *Pedagogical Implications*

Teaching speaking is a very important part of second language learning. The ability to communicate in a second language clearly and efficiently contributes to the success of the learner in school and success later in every phase of life. Therefore, it is essential that language teachers pay great attention to teaching speaking. Rather than leading students to pure memorization, providing a rich environment where meaningful communication takes place is desired. After implementing, collecting and analysing the data in order to have exact results of it, we can strongly agree that Cooperative Learning Strategies through the use of authentic materials had a serious implication in the improvement of students' speaking skill not only in the selected population, but also in the rest of the students in the classroom.

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Regardless of the different levels they had when the proposal was applied and the advantage it could imply, learners had the ability to master themselves in the Cooperative learning strategies in order to assure the enhancement of their performance in the speaking skill. It was difficult at the beginning because of the presence of something new and strange for them. But, once they received the instructions and the activities were passing by, they started to use these strategies unconsciously. These activities made students more active in the learning process and at the same time made their learning more meaningful and fun for them. Therefore, as researchers we can claim that the constant and varied practice of these strategies was the key of making students master them and overcome the factors that hindered their oral production.

Another implication was the use of the language that the homeroom teacher had at the moment of giving the classes to students. Students' speaking skill was barely put in practice because of the methodology used in class that was teacher-centered. The homeroom teacher did everything, and students only had to listen and pay attention without having any interaction between them. For this reason, we could claim that the use of activities that promote an active students' participation, cooperation and interaction is the base and the first step to develop pupils' oral production skills in the L2. Besides, these interaction and cooperative activities were ignored by the methodology the homeroom teacher used. This ignorance generated difficulties for students when communicating with others in an academic or real life context. It did not matter if it was in the L1 or L2. Moreover, that current ignorance produced them many gaps in their learning process and development of the speaking skill.

In general terms, it is possible to say that not creating an interactive environment can cause a lack of interest among students during classes. Consequently, oral production can be directly affected since students would not be using the language. If they barely express their ideas, they do not work cooperatively, they develop the same kind of activity, they would not feel attracted by the materials or the classes.

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The implementation of this new methodology and its impact was evidenced when we started to apply the pedagogical proposal into the classroom. After the development of the units and the analysis of their impact into the sample randomly selected at the beginning of the research, the study confirmed that student's oral production can be enhanced through the proper selection of the materials to work with. Considering and answering what their likes, needs and their motivations were. Besides, it also confirmed the relevance of using authentic material as a support of the processes. The strategies encouraged students to go further and break their own limits.

The third implication was about the importance of giving learners the opportunity to interact among them in the L2. Also, the pertinence that the use of attractive topics toward a young public has. Using innovative and attractive topics with a pedagogical aim caught students' sights. Once this attention was gotten, it was easier to encourage them. Consequently, students' responses were even better than expected. The interaction increased a lot in classroom activities, they overcame their fears and reinforced their communicative skills in the L2. In this way, we also demonstrated the significance of providing opportunities to share their perspectives, to work cooperatively, to apply their knowledge and understanding of the L2 in a variety of contexts that could be later used in their everyday English.

The feedback given by students and seeing their excited faces at the beginning and at the end of each activity were ones of the various reactions they had during the application of the proposal.

Therefore, we stated that students' attention in class topics play an important role in their learning process. Nowadays, teenagers have many particular interests. We as teachers must take advantage of it and include them as an engaging tool.

Using any kind of authentic materials while asking our students to work cooperatively can be helpful to encourage students to become more comfortable with the use of English. In addition, it can allow them to express themselves with some degree of fluency by offering



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the stage of spontaneous discourse. In this way, we assure a more student-centered orality into the classroom.

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### *Implications for further research*

The findings stated that CL strategies work appropriately with teenagers in an EFL setting of a public school. But the case could be different if this proposal is applied to children or adults. This study was focused on teens. Hence, each strategy was carefully combined with authentic materials to be applied with teenagers.

In the case of children, they would need more help from teachers and the implementation of a great variety of topics that are according to their age. Moreover, the grammar should be adapted to their language proficiency since children are being introduced to a new language. Children do not learn a new language, they acquire it. They face two different linguistic codes; the one from their mother tongue and the one from the foreign language. Thus, children just repeat, imitate and act as their social environment requires them. Therefore, the methodology has to be changed and fit children's needs.

On the other hand, we only have to change the topics we manage with adults. Evidently, a person who is in his/her 30s is not going to have the same interests than a teenager. Modifying the focus of interest of the topics and applying the methodology we stated in this research, can yield good results.

The design of the materials can also be arranged according to students' needs. For instance, it can change if our population is completely composed by children. They need materials to be easier to understand and teachers' assistance constantly during the development of the activities. In the same vein, if we are going to be working with adults, we must implement materials and activities that positively influence the development of their oral competence of English as a foreign language.

We undertook this study with the aim to determine how cooperative strategies and the materials implemented can help learners to overcome factors that hinder their speaking skills in an EFL setting. We assure the readers that by using the proposal suggested in this study,



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it could be possible to deal with other aspects that are hindering the development of students English speaking skill.

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Further studies can be focused on other language skills, such as written production, reading or listening comprehension. Also, they can be applied with different material according to the population, whether they are working with adults or kids. They could take into account their interests and needs, their context, their resources, and the way they respond to different situations. This can bring a wide variety of results depending on the way they decide to apply the materials and CLS. We suggest that it is important to do a deep exploration on the population's background in order to conduct the study and proposal in the best way possible so that they can improve their performance and reach better results.

### *Limitations*

The implemented proposal has presented a fundamental factor that limited the study time. During the application of the research there was not enough time to apply the proposal for a longer time so as to collect much more data. We only designed twelve activities divided into three Units with different thematics in each one of them. Each activity was applied in only one class per week, giving us the time of three months or twelve weeks to apply and collect the data to elaborate the results. Speaking in a foreign language involves a variety of operations, and learning to perform all of them quickly requires extensive practice. This extensive process talks about students being in contact with the language, developing more activities that provides them with opportunities to hinder not only oral production skills but all of them together. We consider that it would be desirable to count on more time to better appreciate the development of the students' speaking skill. Yet, we can assert that the implementation of the proposal lasted enough to yield valid, solid results.



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### *Suggestions for further research*

For further applications of this study, we suggest to have a bigger availability of time when other people decide to apply the research. It is necessary to let students practice the skill you are working with and let them interact with some teacher assistance among them. During speaking practice in class, the more students who can talk at any given time, the better. In this way, you are assuring the collection of more data to support the study and the satisfaction of students' learning process. In addition, pair or small- group work allows more students to practice speaking than large-group discussions or teacher- centered activities do.

The methodological application of this study can be adapted according to the needs the researchers have at the moment they applied their study. They have the might to adapt the units given in this study in order to fulfill students expectations for the classes. When using this with kids, we suggest changing the way in which the units are guided. They were created taking into account a different population. If we talk about kids, the activities have to be easy to understand, appealing and funny. We recommend teaching them the spoken language from the beginning, without many technicalities. Avoid this in order to always have their attention and courage to go on. On the other hand, some correction of student errors may be helpful, but there is little evidence that correction improves students' accuracy. Overcorrection can make students self-conscious and discourage them from speaking.

Many other studies can be conducted using the methodologies already suggested to acknowledge and gather all the possible impacts and solutions that the use of Cooperative Learning Strategies and authentic materials have. Furthermore, it is necessary to evidence whether this study is suitable when it is used in other contexts and populations.



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