



Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla.

Facultad de Lenguas

**ACTIVITIES AND TASKS THAT TEACHERS EMPLOY IN ORDER TO
PROMOTE THE SPEAKING SKILL WITH LEARNERS AT THE CENTRO DE
LENGUAS (CELE) OF THE BENEMERITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE
PUEBLA (BUAP)**

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
in the Teaching of English at the Facultad de Lenguas BUAP.

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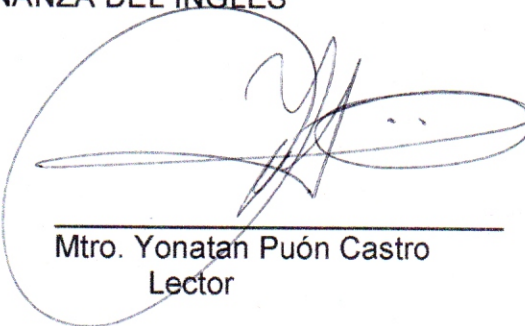
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Dedications

To God whose blessings and love give me an eagerness to continue every minute of my life.

To Arantza, my beautiful princess and Emiliano, my sweet little angel who both represent my greatest love.

To my husband whose love, support, advice, and companionship encourages me to get my goals.

An eternal, and special thank you to my mother, who has been with me in every essential moment of my life. Her great love, guidance, advice, support and mainly her time when I needed her was the basis to finish this thesis.

To my aunt Lulu, who is like my fairy godmother, she is always there to make my wishes come true for me.

To my father whose strength and character has given me the most important life lesson.

Last, but certainly not least, to my siblings and nephews who are an important part of me.

Dedicatorias

A Dios cuyas bendiciones y amor me dan la fuerza para continuar cada minuto de mi vida.

A Arantza, mi hermosa princesa y a Emiliano, mi dulce angelito quienes representan mi más grande amor.

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Abstract

The present study aims to analyze and describe the most common practices teachers employ at the Centro de Lenguas (CELE) from the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP) in order to promote speaking in the English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Such an exploration aims to acquire essential data to know what teachers are doing in the classroom regarding language communication. The present investigation is a descriptive study based on teachers' information obtained from a survey, with questionnaires being the primary source of data to be analyzed as well as some teachers' interviews being the second element in order to complement the gathered information.

The concept of Communicative Competence (Canale and Swain 1980) is of great relevance in this research due to the fact that its components grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence represent the basis of communication. Similarly special attention must be paid to the concept of the speaking as skill to understand its implications when this process occurs.

In this way, it is necessary to share this data with current and future TESOL teachers in order for them to understand that their teaching practice must consider the essential factors of the communicative process in order to facilitate the practice of the speaking skill in the classroom. Teacher education programs must acknowledge that teaching practices require students to be aware and participate in an active manner when they communicate in a foreign language context with the help of specific activities for this purpose. Hence, one of the purposes of this investigation was to promote reflection and awareness among English teachers to make a change in their daily practice.

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Chapter I: Introduction

1. Introduction

In this investigation, I will focus on the most common activities that teachers design or employ in order to promote oral production within the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at the Centro de Lenguas (CELE) of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla (BUAP). In the language-teaching field there are various factors which affect the learning/teaching process, and the potential success of learners in acquiring the foreign language. As such, the types of activities that teachers use in order to promote the speaking skill are considered an essential aspect of the L2 acquisition process. For this reason, the current study intends to survey the most common activities that teachers within the CELE/BUAP use in order to promote oral production within their classrooms.

1.1 Research problem

Oral production has been an issue of great personal interest because it represented a challenge to overcome for the researcher while studying an undergraduate degree in English Language Teaching (ELT). The speaking skill was problematic for me, which increased my awareness about the importance of facilitating oral production in the language classroom. As an English teacher, I can empathize with my students who have difficulties with the speaking skill due to various factors such as a perceived lack of vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, semantic knowledge as well as self-confidence and willingness to

take risks in the classroom. For this reason, an analysis of the practices used by CELE teachers of the BUAP at the third level of the program when promoting the speaking skill will be carried out.

1.2 Rationale

As previously mentioned, activity design represents an essential component within the process of facilitating the acquisition of a L2. The goal of the EFL program at the CELE/BUAP is to promote Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1981) of the English language with the learners who study there. Hymes (cited in Munby, 1978) is one of the many authors that discuss the concept of Communicative Competence. Hymes (ibid.) original idea was that speakers of a language have to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language. They also need to know how language is used by members of a speech community to accomplish their purposes (ibid.). Communicative competence refers to the ability to communicate a specific message in order to establish communication, but it is necessary to know the constraints of a specific context. Considering all this information, it is relevant to establish the range of communicative activities that are being employed in order to enhance the communicative competence of the learners within the EFL program at the CELE/BUAP, with a particular focus on their oral production.

1.3 Research question(s)

1. What types of activities do CELE teachers report using while attempting to promote oral production in the third level at the BUAP?
2. Is there a coincidence among the oral activities different teachers use in the classroom?
3. What is the role of Communicative Competence in second language learning?
4. What conclusions can be drawn about communicative activities for CELE students and what pedagogical considerations must be taken to improve teaching practices?

1.4 Significance of the study

This paper sets out to contribute with some data into the Communicative Competence field, in the belief that the main goal of L2 learners is to be able to communicate and successfully interact in the target language. In other words, having a complete knowledge of grammar is not enough when it comes to communicate and perform in different communicative situations and contexts. (Hymes 1971, Canale and Swain 1980.) For that reason, the main interest of this research is to highlight the common oral activities teachers consider relevant to practice the target language in the classroom.

At the local level, the study may contribute to the re-thinking and re-design of CELE courses in the curriculum renewal process at BUAP University and encourage communicative practices into the classrooms. Some experience on Communicative Competence instruction may assist teachers in designing more communicative sessions on the specific needs of their own students.

CHAPTER II: Literature review

2. Introduction

Learning a language different from the mother tongue is an event that is taking relevance these days. It is well known that being fluent in a second or foreign language represents a wide opportunity in the professional area and in the social aspect. For this reason, communication represents the basis of any educational approach to teaching a L2. Thus, the activities teachers employ to enhance the oral production in the classroom represents the main concern of this paper. This section will provide the theoretical framework that is behind this research. The definitions of specific concepts necessary to understand the present work like communication, communicative competence , performance, authenticity, tasks and activities will be drawn. In a similar manner, it will be presented the theory related to the methodology in order to carry out this project.

2.1 Communication

Communication is the beginning of any human activity and it is essential for the social, cultural and personal development. It is “a fundamentally interpersonal phenomenon in that much of the language we use on a day-to-day basis is situated within and framed by the myriad of intellectual and practical activities that constitute, and are constituted by, our social institutions”(Phillips & Terry 1999, p.18). Phillips & Terry (1999) describe three macro domains as part of the purpose for learning to communicate in another language: The

“interpersonal domain” is the direct interaction with other people with the purpose of establishing personal relationships and fulfilling a task. The “interpretive domain” deals with the understanding of spoken or written language in order to develop new meanings, ideas and feelings. The “presentational domain” is meant to present ideas, information, feelings and experiences using the spoken and the written form (ibid.).

All these three domains require the development of communicative competence as part of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) in order for it to be effective. A brief overview of the history and how CLT is understood by many different scholars is provided in the following lines.

2.1.1 Communicative Language Teaching

For the purpose of this paper it is necessary to focus on the Communicative Language Teaching approach. There has been much debate about CLT in recent years. It is important to mention that CLT refers to both, processes and goals in classroom learning. The central concept in communicative language teaching is ‘communicative competence’, a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s. (Habermas & Hymes 1971; cited in Munby 1978).

2.1.2 Definition of Communicative Competence

Hymes cited in (Munby 1978) is one of the many authors that discuss the concept of Communicative Competence. Hymes original idea was that speakers

of a language need to have more than grammatical competence in order to be able to communicate effectively in a language. They also need to know how this language is used by members of a speech community to accomplish their purposes. In this manner, communicative competence refers to exchanging meanings to establish a communication, but it is necessary to know the regulations of a specific context. On the contrary, Chomsky (cited in Munby 1978) makes a distinction between *performance* and *competence*. Linguistic competence is an area of study in the field of intercultural communication, and it is also the use of grammatical rules of a language; whereas communicative competence is the use of social language rules.

2.1.3 Components of Communicative Competence

Canale and Swain (1980) cited in Phillips & Terry (1999, p.20) is one of the authors who define Communicative competence in relation to four components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Similarly Bachman (1990) cited in Phillips & Terry (1999, p.20) state a third model containing five components: discourse competence, linguistic competence, sociocultural competence, actional competence and strategic competence.

2.1.3.1 Grammatical competence

Grammatical competence is one of the four elements that Canale (1981) cited in (Richards & Schmidt 1996) mentions in Communicative Competence. It

is named by some other authors as linguistic competence. Thus, Grammatical competence is related to syntax, morphology, lexis, phonology, and orthography. According to Canale (ibid) this competence “focuses on the knowledge and skill required to understand and express accurately the literal meaning of utterances.” It seems that this component has more importance than others related to correctness of utterances. It is important to notice that in order to achieve communication a person has to be an expert in linguistic and speaking features. As it is seen, it is evident that grammatical competence considers many relevant issues of communication.

2.1.3.2 Sociolinguistic competence

The following component of Communicative Competence is Sociolinguistic competence, also known as pragmatic competence. Besides the grammatical rules of a language there are other aspects to consider in order to be competent; and it is the appropriateness of utterances. Canale & Swain (1980) cited in (Richards & Schmidt 1996). Sociolinguistic competence focuses on the correct manner of an individual to interact in different contexts depending on contextual facts, purposes, norms or conventions of interaction. In other words, it is important to know the social and cultural rules of the language community which includes a better understanding of the social context where communication takes place.

2.1.3.3 Discourse competence

The third component of Communicative Competence is Discourse competence. It refers to the selection, sequencing and order of words, structures, sentences, and utterances to form a spoken or written text. It means that cohesion and coherence are important elements in formal or informal settings to communicate a message in a meaningful manner. (Richards & Schmidt 1996). "Cohesion deals with how utterances are linked structurally and facilitates interpretation of a text, and coherence refers to the relationships among the different meanings in a text." (ibid). It means Discourse Competence deals with the ability to understand individual messages and to recognize all the discourse features.

2.1.3.4 Strategic competence

The last component of Communicative Competence is Strategic Competence. It is defined as the group of skills to negotiate and solve communicative problems. (Bachman 1990, cited in Phillips & Terry 1999). In addition, Canale cited in Richards & Schmidt (1996) explains this component as the way to master verbal or non-verbal communication strategies based on two reasons: the compensation of incorrect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse rules and the enhancement of an effective communication. To conclude, it can be said strategic competence consists of the strategies involved for a successful communication and such strategies take place when learners cannot express what they want to say because they lack the resources to do so.

2.1.4 Language Skills

There has been much discussion about the integration of the four skills; listening, reading, writing, and speaking in order to learn a foreign or second language. Most textbooks and ESL contexts focus on one or two skills isolating the others; however, recent studies show the importance of integrating the four language skills (Brown, 1994). It is now important to emphasize that each skill is very different from one another and each skill has its own features; however, they are closely related to reach communicative competence. From this difference among the four skills it is necessary to present the main division of skills according to receptive and productive performances (ibid). From this view in the receptive field it appears the listening and reading skills and in the productive one, writing and speaking.

2.1.4.1 Listening

In discussing aural skills, speaking and listening are two basic skills and are essential in acquiring communicative competence in language learning. So, part of being a proficient speaker is listening to oral language and understanding what is said so that the responses will be accurate (Brown, 1994). Observing the previous consideration it is necessary to define the listening skill. Brown (1994) mentions this is “the psychomotor process of receiving sound waves through the ear and transmitting nerve impulses to the brain, bringing to bear a number of different cognitive and affective mechanisms.” In another perspective, Nunan cited in (Richards & Renandya, 2002) states two models in order to understand

the basis of listening. The bottom-up occurring when comprehension is possible as a result of decoding the spoken text in a linear process. The top-down model on the contrary, focuses on meaning construction through prior knowledge such as inferences, intentions or expectations.

2.1.4.2 Reading

Reading has been one of the most practiced skills since long time ago. People have always had the necessity or like to read in a FL or L2. It is considered the skill everyone wants to learn into EFL fields (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Since people need to read for personal professional or academic purposes, this skill gains much importance. Furthermore, these authors mention the great importance to expose students to different language texts for pedagogical purposes. In this way they visualize and acquire structures used in the language they are learning (ibid). As a consequence, Richards & Renandya (2002) state, reading represents a big opportunity to get information of new topics and express opinions or even write a text and to study language.

2.1.4.3 Writing

As it was previously mentioned skills appear interrelated one to another and writing can be the consequence of reading. Writing is considered one of the most difficult skills because of the complex process it represents to generate, organize and translate ideas to understandable texts. (Richards & Renandya ,2002). Another definition is given by Brown (1994), who considers this skill as an

individual's behavior depending on the cultural background he/she has. It means that all knowledge people gather from their life experiences and thoughts are translated to written parts. It is evident that referring to ideas and thoughts is really complex; however, it is an essential part of the language acquisition process.

2.1.4.4 Speaking

As speaking is the main concern of this research, it is necessary to see different perspectives of this skill. Speaking is the natural state of language, as all human beings are born with the innate ability to speak their native language. It is, thus, the most distinguishing feature of human beings. This verbal communication involves not only producing meaningful utterances but also interpreting others' oral productions. Speaking is regarded as a critical skill in learning a L2 by most language learners, and their success in learning a language is measured in terms of their accomplishments in oral communication (Nunan, 2001). From this view it is evident the other three skills previously mentioned are the complement of speaking since it involves learners in the mastery of different factors of language that together result in the competence of the spoken language. Bygate (1987), in a similar perspective states that speaking is a common form of expression almost used by everybody, thus this skill is taken for granted and not much attention is paid to it. However, speaking encloses many aspects that are required in the pedagogical field, and for this reason it is a skill that deserves high attention.

2.2 Approaches to Speaking

In order to have a wider idea about speaking, it is necessary to know there are two main approaches to this skill. According to Richards & Rodgers' cited in (Brown, 1994) the two approaches are: a theory of the nature of language learning and a theory of native language. The first one refers to an account of the physic-linguistic and cognitive processes involved in language learning and the conditions that allow the successful use of these processes. The second refers to an account of the nature of language proficiency and to the basic units of language structure.

2.2.1 Factors that affect the speaking context

As previously mentioned, the speaking skill is a viatal element in a model of communicative competence. As such, the factors that affect the communication process in regards to spoken communication will be discussed in further detail below.

2.2.1.1 Speaker

In order that the speaking process happens it is necessary to consider two essential elements. The first one is the speaker, Lucas (1998) defines this element as "the person who is presenting an oral message to a listener". It means the speaker is the individual who produces any utterance, thought, idea, or opinion with the purpose to send an oral message. If there is not a speaker the speaking process does not happen.

2.2.1.2 Listener

The other relevant factor as it was mentioned before is the listener. It is defined as the receptor of a message sent by the speaker (Lucas, 1998). Thus, all the ideas, opinions and utterances produced by the speaker become meaningful when the listener decodes these sounds. It is evident that these two factors need to be present in order to establish a conversation.

2.2.1.3 Message

This concept concerns to the content of what the speaker says (Lucas, 1998). Message involves all the expressions, feelings, information, or ideas a speaker wants to communicate. Furthermore, it has to do with the verbal message, it means the specific words an individual expresses from the speaker and the nonverbal message, as the tone of voice, gestures or facial expressions used to send the message.

2.2.1.4 Channel

Channel is the fourth important factor in the speaking process. This is the element by which the message travels. (Lucas, 1998). It means all the information a speaker wants to express is by this mean. It can be from the simplest form as a common conversation in which the channel is just the voice an individual can listen, to the most complex form as a speech on the radio or television where the channel can be just listened by the audience in the case of the radio or listened and watched at the same time in the case of the television.

2.2.1.5 Feedback

This term is defined as the reciprocal messages from the listener to the speaker as an answer to the original information given by the speaker and it may be verbal or nonverbal (Lucas, 1998). This factor has great impact on the speaking process because it shows if the message is understood or not by the participants of the process.

2.2.1.6 Situation

Situation is of great importance to establish a conversation. Lucas, (1998) defines situation to “the time and place in which speech communication occurs”. It refers to the specific atmosphere and the correct time to produce any kind of message. The time to speak about any topic depends on the circumstances of the place. It is not the same to have a conversation or speak about something in the street or in the church. These two places reflect the difference between the formality and time of talking and the physical characteristics of the places.

2.3 The Importance of Speaking

In the traditional approaches of language learning and teaching, the speaking skill was neglected in many institutions where the emphasis was mainly on reading and writing. The Grammar-Translation method is one example, Richards and Rodgers (2001) mention that reading and writing are the essential skills to be focused on however, little or no attention is paid to the skill of speaking and listening. In the Communicative Approach, speaking was given

more importance since oral communication involves speech where learners are expected to interact verbally with other people. Moreover, the teachers' talk will be reduced; that is to say learners are supported to talk more in the classroom. Ur (1999) declares also that *"of all the four skills [listening, speaking, reading and writing], speaking seems intuitively the most important: people who know a language are referred to as „speakers“ of the language, as if speaking included all other kinds of knowing."* Today, many second language learners give the speaking skill priority in their learning because if they master this skill then they will be considered as if they have mastered all of the other skills. Furthermore, the main question often given to foreign language learners is *"do you speak English?"* or *"do you speak French?"*, but not *"do you write English?"* We understand that most of people take speaking and knowing a language as synonyms. Celce-Murcia (2001) argues that for most people *"the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language since speech is the most basic means of human communication."*

2.4 Characteristics of Speaking Performance

In recent teaching contexts, a lot of attention has been paid to design activities which focus more on tasks that are balanced between the need to achieve fluency and accuracy. These criteria are also based upon in the assessment of the oral skills. In the communicative approach, fluency and accuracy are the main characteristics of this approach, and they are seen as complementary in accomplishing a given task. Although Richards and Rodgers

(2001) mention that “*fluency and acceptable language is the primary goal: Accuracy is judged not in the abstract but in context*”, and this is an obvious point since the emphasis of CLT is on the communicative process between learners or teachers-learners, rather than mastery of the language forms. Many questions have been raised about the role of accuracy in CLT theory.

2.4.1 Fluency

The main goal teachers wish to achieve in teaching the productive skill of speaking is oral fluency; it is the main characteristic of the speaker performance. Hughes (2002) defines fluency as the ability to express oneself in an intelligible, reasonable and accurate way without too much hesitation; otherwise the communication will break down because listeners will lose their interest. Hughes (2002) supports also that fluency and coherence refer to the ability to speak in a normal level of continuity, rate and effort in addition to link the ideas together in a coherent way. Speech rate and speech continuity are the key indicators of coherence. Many of second language speakers think of fluency as the ability to speak fast, that is why they start speaking rapidly without pauses. In a similar perspective Fillmore (1979) cited in Brumfit (1984) defines fluency in a wider way mentioning four kinds production. The first is ‘*the ability to fill time with talk*’ it means talking without many pauses in certain time. The second kind is ‘*the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned and semantically dense sentences*’ , showing a ‘*mastery of the semantic and syntactic resources of the language*’ One can say, it is the ability to respond in a coherent way through linking the words and phrases

effectively, pronounce the sounds clearly, using stress and intonation. Fillmore's third kind is '*the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts*' It is to have the skills to talk in about different topics in different situations. And the last kind is '*to be creative and imaginative in ... language use*' it includes varying styles, joking, or using metaphors.

2.4.2 Accuracy

Most second language teachers nowadays emphasized the term of accuracy in their teaching because learners seek more to be fluent and they forget about being accurate. Without structuring accurate speech, speakers will not be understood and their interlocutors will lose interest if they perform incorrect utterances each time. Therefore, paying attention to correctness and completeness of language form is of more importance for oral proficiency. (Skehan, 1996 cited in Ellis, 2003) define accuracy as referring "*to how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language.*" Therefore, learners should focus on a number of things in their production of the spoken language, mainly, the grammatical structure, vocabulary and pronunciation.

2.4.3 Grammar

There has been much debate about the importance of grammar. In the 1920s grammar teaching represented a relevant issue of language instruction. It

was believed that knowing grammar was to master a language. Then in the 1970s this view changed. Grammar was not the only component necessary to be competent in the language; it is necessary to know how grammar is used in real communication (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Ur (1999) states that grammar is 'the way words are put together to make correct sentences'. It is all the necessary patterns to get appropriate utterances which involve not just the length but also the complexity of the utterances (ibid). To be a competent user of the language it is necessary to complement the grammar structures with the use of these rules in the everyday communication.

2.4.4 Vocabulary

Achieving accuracy in terms of vocabulary refers to the appropriate selection of words during speaking. Students often encounter difficulties when they try to express what they want to say in the FL. This is because they lack the appropriate vocabulary, and they sometimes use words incorrectly, for example, in the case of synonyms which do not carry the same meaning in all contexts. Students then, have to be able to use words and expressions accurately. According to Harmer (2007) the knowledge of the word classes also allows speakers to produce well-formed utterances.

2.4.5 Pronunciation

The English language has been long considered by either native speakers or non native speakers as a difficult language because of its pronunciation.

Learners, then, who want to develop their speaking skill in English should practice pronunciation overall. They should be aware of the different sounds and their features and where they are made in one's mouth. They have also to be aware of where the words should be stressed, when to use rising intonation and when to use falling intonation. All these issues provide them with extra information about how to speak English effectively and help to achieve the goal of a better understanding of spoken English. Thus, if pronunciation is not correct, the speakers then will not be understood and accuracy is not achieved.

2.5 Oral Communicative Strategies

The acquisition of oral communicative competence is considered one of the most important issues of learning a foreign or second language in the current times. However learners may find difficulties in taking part in interactions. Thus, the way to solve these communication problems is through the use of communicative strategies. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, p. 170-71) define communicative strategies as *"Speakers-oriented; that is they are used by learners to compensate for lack of L2 knowledge or their inability to access the L2 knowledge they have."* These strategies help students to avoid failure when engaging in oral communication. Bygate (1987) classifies two main types of communicative strategies. The first is achievement strategies which include: guessing strategies, paraphrase strategies and cooperative strategies. the second type is reduction strategies which involve avoidance strategies.

2.5.1 Achievement Strategies

Achievement strategies involve the use of means to compensate the language gap by using a substitute. Learners try to find a way to communicate their messages without losing or changing it. Achievement strategies involve the following sub strategies (Bygate, 1987).

2.5.2 Guessing Strategies

There are different types of guessing strategies the speaker might use. He can transfer words from his mother tongue and pronounce them as it belongs to the target language. The speaker might also use a word from his mother tongue without changing it hoping that the interlocutors will understand them, and a last guessing strategy can be used to coin a word. For example, a learner creates a new target language word on the basis of his knowledge of the language, such as using 'air ball' for balloon (ibid).

2.5.3 Paraphrase Strategies

This strategy mainly involves looking for an alternative to the word or the expression that the speaker needs in the target language. He might use a synonym or a more general word; this is called a lexical substitution strategy. The speaker can explain a concept or a word by making some sort of phrases to express its meaning; this is also called circumlocution. For example, a mixing of black and white could be used to explain the grey color (Bygate 1987).

2.5.4 Co-operative Strategies

They happen when the speaker gets help from other interlocutors. He may ask for the word through using it in the mother tongue and the interlocutors help him to find it in the target language, or through indicating the object (by means of pointing usually) that he means (ibid).

2.5.5 Reduction Strategies

Bygate (1987) mentions that these strategies are used by learners to reduce their communicative objectives by giving up the topic or abandoning a specific message.

2.5.6 Avoidance Strategies

Learners commonly use such strategies to avoid various types of trouble they may have. Perhaps they want to avoid some particular sound sequence, for example, the 'th' sound in English. Some other learners wish to avoid the conditional in English, and others like to avoid words whose gender is unknown or unsure to them. In using these kind of strategies, learners may sacrifice part of their intended meaning. Finally, students may avoid some difficulties in expressing opinions too, because of the lack of vocabulary, so, they avoid some of the message content and look for something else to talk about or simply remain silent (ibid). Now that all of these concepts have been defined, it is essential to describe what tasks and activities are necessary in order for communication processes to occur.

2.6 Speaking Difficulties in Foreign Language Learning.

Practicing the speaking skill of a foreign language is not the same as knowing the rules of the language. Echevarria et al. (2004) claim that the difference between the knowledge of how things must be done and the ability to do these things is crucial in the learning process. Learners often find some difficulties when practicing the speaking skill, even those who know about the system of the foreign language. Parrott (1996) asserts that teachers must perform a series of tasks that aim at providing learners with the confidence and the skills required to take advantages of the classroom opportunities in order to speak English effectively. According to Ur (1999) there are four main problems in getting students to speak in the foreign language in the classroom.

2.6.1 Inhibition

This problem reveals more when learners try to participate in the classroom but many factors stop them from doing so. Littlewood (1981: 93) argues that *“it is too easy for a foreign language classroom to create inhibition and anxiety.”* Such factors refer to the feeling of shyness and fear of making mistakes and these are due to the difficult development of the communicative process and the feeling of linguistic inferiority. Students are afraid to make mistakes, especially when speaking to a critical audience. Ur (1999:111) states that *“Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom. Worried about, making mistakes, fearful of criticism or loosing*

face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.” This situation is very common for teachers, who ask their learners to express themselves in front of the whole class, so this leads many of them to experience stress when performing speaking activities. In brief, stress and anxiety are two factors that can stop students from speaking confidently in front of their classmates.

2.6.2 Nothing to Say

The common expressions FL learners use when they are imposed to participate in a given topic is “I have nothing to talk about”, “I don’t know”, “no comment” or they keep silent. These expressions are due to the lack of motivation in expressing themselves or the chosen topic they should discuss or talk about. Rivers (1983: 192) says that *“The teacher may have chosen a topic which is uncongenial to him [the learner] or about which he knows very little, and as a result he has nothing to express, whether in the native language or the foreign language.”* Moreover, the poor practice of the FL can contribute to creating this problem. Baker and Westrup (2003) support this idea when saying that many students find it difficult to answer when teachers ask them to say anything in the target language. The learners may have a limited number of ideas to talk about; they may not know how to use some vocabulary or they are not sure of the grammatical correctness. Also, students may not want to carry out the discussion on topics that are not interesting for them.

2.6.3 Low Uneven Participation

This problem refers to the amount of each student's time of talking. Rivers (1983) claims that some personality factors can affect participation in a FL, and teachers then should recognize them. There are some students who tend to be dominant and take almost the whole students' talk time. However, others prefer to speak only if they are sure that what they will say is correct, and some others keep silent, show no interest or participation along the course. Harmer (2007) suggests streaming weak participators in groups and letting them work together. In such cases, they will not hide behind the strong participators, and the teacher can achieve a high level of participation. Another factor that can create problems of participation is the classroom arrangement that may not help students to perform some speaking activities. However, these are not the only factors that affect speaking practice. Sometimes low participation is due to the ignorance of teacher towards their responsibility to motivate students. If the teacher does not motivate his learners, the talkative ones also will show no interest. So, increasing and directing student motivation is one of the teacher's responsibilities.

2.6.4 Mother Tongue Use

FL students of the same mother tongue tend to use it outside and even inside the classroom because they feel more comfortable and less exposed to the target language. According to Baker and Westrup (2003: 12) "*barriers to learning can occur if students knowingly or unknowingly transfer the cultural rules from their mother tongue to a foreign language.*" Therefore, learners will not be

able to use the foreign language correctly if they continue being influenced by the use of their mother tongue. Moreover, the lack of vocabulary of the target language usually leads learners to borrow words from their native language. In conclusion, teachers have a great duty with foreign language students in order to motivate them with an interesting topic, and getting students to feel confident to talk in the target language instead of using their mother tongue.

2.7 Tasks

They are used for different purposes, and thus defined in different ways in the literature. There is a large amount of definitions and opinions that researchers have expressed from the simplest to the most complex. According to Long (1985, cited in Ellis, 2003, p. 4), tasks have their meaning as simple things people do every day, such as “painting a fence, buying a pair of shoes, finding a street destination, or making a hotel reservation”. In this definition, Long (ibid.) considers any action as a task; however, it is a very broad definition in which a task can involve using language or can be performed without using language. Ellis (2003) mentions that tasks can be seen as part of an instructional work plan. A work plan involves an outline of how the task will be carried out and what learners (and facilitating teachers) are expected to do to further the completion of the task. For instance, the instructional work plan may involve an academic task designed to promote focus on various language forms used to fulfill particular communicative functions. Breen (1989) explains this unpredictability of the process as a mismatch between task-as-work plan and task-as-process. In this

case, task work plans should anticipate variability of learners' performance in task-completion. Breen (1989) thinks that if a task is adaptable to variation in learners' performances, the task can be more effectively promoted as an appropriate activity for language learning. On the other hand, more narrow definitions focused on meaning in tasks are regarded by other authors as a distinguishing feature of tasks. Nunan (1989), Skehan (1996), and Richards, Platt, and Weber (1985) cited in Ellis (2003) clearly mention that tasks should be designed to engage learners in practicing the target language in a meaningful context by paying primary attention to conveying meaning.

2.8 Activities Teachers use to promote the speaking skill

Encouraging students to produce verbal language has been an issue of great interest for many teachers. For this reason, there are different techniques or activities authors describe in the Communicative Language Teaching process among students. The following table shows a description of some of the different communicative activities taken from Brumfit, (1984). It is presented in two main categories: functional communication activities and social interaction activities.

Table 1. Types of communicative activity (adapted from Brumfit, 1984:20-62)

Functional communication activities

Sharing information with restricted cooperation

Identifying pictures: Learner A must find out which of the pictures learner B is holding, by asking him questions about it.

Discovering identical pairs: This activity is very similar to the previous one, but in here the discoverer must now question several other learners.

Discovering sequences or locations: Learner A has a set of pictures arranged in sequence. Learner B has the same set of pictures, but these are not in sequence. Learner B must discover the sequence of A's in order to arrange his own in the same way.

Discovering missing information: Learner A has information represented in tabular form. Learner B has an identical table, except that different items of information have been deleted. Each learner can therefore complete his own table by asking his partner for the information that he lacks.

Discovering missing features: Learners A and B have the same picture, except that some items have been deleted from one of the pictures. The learner with the complete picture can have the initiative to ask question and identify the details that have not been reproduced in the other version of the picture.

Discovering secrets: One learner has a piece of secret information which the others in his class must discover by asking appropriate questions. These questions can be restricted to a certain kind, such as yes/no questions to prevent the ease of the activity.

Some variations in organization: The teacher can vary the organization of these activities to suit specific circumstances.

Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation

Communicating patterns and pictures: Learner A has an assortment of shapes which he arranges into a pattern. Learner B has the same shapes. They must communicate with each other so that B can reproduce as exactly as possible the same pattern as A.

Communicating models: This is a variant of the activities just discussed. Learner A (or group A) learns how to construct a model or prepare a meal by following the instructions from learner B (or group B).

Discovering differences: Learners A and B each have a picture. The pictures have some differences. The learners must discuss the pictures in order to discover what the differences are.

Following directions: Learners A and B have identical maps. Only A knows the exact location of some building or other feature. He must direct B to the correct spot. In these activities the focus is more clearly on 'meanings to be communicated' for a specific purpose.

Sharing and processing information

Reconstructing story-sequences: A picture strip story (without dialogue) is cut up into its separate pictures. One picture is handed to each member of a group. Without seeing each other's pictures, the learners in the group must decide on the original sequence and reconstruct the story.

Pooling information to solve a problem: Learners A and B have specific information to share in order to solve a problem. Together the learners must work in order to achieve the purpose of the activity.

Processing information

Social interaction activities

The classroom as a social context

Using the foreign language for classroom management: This approach involves exploiting for language learning not only the planned activities, but also the classroom management that revolves around them. This provides a rich source of communicative needs in the foreign language classroom.

Using the foreign language as a teaching medium: This is to introduce into language lessons the element that they lack: nonlinguistic subject matter which must be learnt and explored through the foreign language.

Conversation or discussion sessions: This is regarded as a source of relief from more serious language work. It opens up a rich stimulus for communicative interaction. It provides a context for a wide range of communicative functions and domains of meaning. It provides learners with opportunities to express their own personality and experience through difficult periods.

Basing dialogues and role-plays on school experience: The aim of this approach is to help young learners to understand their environment and cope with its problems through foreign language activities. To this end, aspects of their experience (such as homework, low marks etc.) are discussed in class through the foreign language.

Some limitations of the classroom situation: In situations outside the classroom learners will need to satisfy a much wider variety of communicative needs arising from the events of everyday life. They will also need to cope with a greater variety of patterns of interaction. Finally they will need to become involved in different kinds of social relationship, for which different kinds of language will be appropriate.

Simulation and role-playing

Role-playing controlled through cued dialogues: Considering the potential of cued dialogues as simple role-playing activities rather than controlled language practice it is necessary to point some observations. Learners will have their cues printed on separate cards. This gives the interaction some of the uncertainty and spontaneity involved in 'real' communication: each learner must listen to his partner before formulating a definite response.

Role-playing controlled through cues and information: In cued dialogues two sets of cues must interlock closely, in such a way that no

cue produces an utterance which conflicts with what follows .This places tight limits on the amount of creativity that is possible within that format.

Role-playing controlled through situation and goals: The control now determines not so much the specific meanings that learners express. It is directed at the higher level of situation and the goals the learners have to achieve through communication.

Role-playing in the form of debate or discussion: The situation is a debate or discussion about a real or simulated issue. The learners' roles ensure that they have (a) adequate shared knowledge about the issue and (b) different opinions or interest to defend.

Large-scale simulation activities: The logical extension of these activities is the large-scale simulation exercise, which may be as long as complex as time and resources permit. In some extended simulation exercises, gaming conventions are used in order to simulate the rewards and sanctions that motivate real-life interaction.

Improvisation: It is closely associated with work in the native language context, notably in drama. Learners are often presented only with a stimulus-situation, which they can interpret and exploit in any way they wish. The starting point for an improvisation may be a simple everyday situation into which the learners are asked to project themselves.

Chapter III: Methodology

3. Introduction

The present chapter will provide information about the methodology, the setting the participants, the instruments, and the procedures followed in the analysis of the data in order to carry out this research. As the main objective of this project was to know the activities used by teachers at CELE/BUAP to promote the speaking skill, It was necessary to use survey research by means of questionnaires applied to teachers of English 3 at CELE.

3.1 The research design

For this study, it was necessary to use a mixed-method research. According to Creswell (2003, p.19) mixed methods are the employment of both "qualitative and quantitative research practices and data analysis". The main reason to adopt a mixed method research was to provide this study with both quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a wider perspective on the issues under investigation. In this way, qualitative research "assumes a dynamic reality", and quantitative research "assumes a stable reality" (Nunan, 1992 p.4). This study combines both practices which starts with a broad survey in order to generalize results to a population, and then it narrows to a second stage, on detailed qualitative open-ended interviews to collect detailed views from participants. Thus, two instruments were applied. First, a questionnaire, as primary source of data was applied to teachers, then some interviews were carry

out as a secondary source in order to corroborate the data obtained from the questionnaires.

3.2 Subjects

For this study 13 teachers from the CELE program were selected as the complete number of teachers assigned to English level 3. All of them work as English teachers as a foreign language giving lessons at the third level of the program. There were 3 males and 7 females with ages ranging from 27 to 56 years old. Most of them hold a Master's degree in English Language Teaching or a related field. The majority of the participants have between 10 and 20 years of experience. These teachers are all veterans of the BUAP, and are very familiar with the curriculum. They make up the principal team of English teachers within the CELE program, and are responsible for all aspects of the teaching process including: materials development, testing procedures, textbook selection, classroom management, and most importantly, the creation of activities in the classroom to promote speaking from their learners.

3.3 Instrument

Teachers were given a questionnaire in order to explore the issues and gather data related to the research questions that this investigation is meant to address. Nunan (1992) says that questionnaires are a relatively popular means of collecting data in field settings. This questionnaire had 9 mixed questions that elicited information such as: the subjects' background like academic degree,

years of teaching experience, the importance of teaching the speaking skill, the frequency to enhance the practice of speaking, the oral activities used in the classroom, the aspects teachers consider in speaking such as proficiency and accuracy, the main limitations students face to speak and the way teachers correct their students. There was just one open question related to the manner teachers encourage students to participate in speaking activities. In order to have a reliable interpretation of the answers, the 'piloting phase' (Nunan, 1992 p.145) was regarded. The questionnaire was analyzed by a teacher first, and then corrected to be finally applied to 13 teachers.

3.4 Procedures

After the instrument was finalized, it was administered to the 13 subjects. The administration process took place as described below. First, the participants who give English 3 were identified. The researcher approached these participants and invited them to participate in the investigation. It was not difficult to acquire the participants' consent to participate in the investigation since the researcher is an insider within the research context and, as colleagues; the other teachers were enthusiastic to participate in the project. As the different participants agreed to provide input for the investigation, the researcher scheduled times for them to fill out the data collection questionnaire. Each participant filled out the questionnaire at different times, yet all of the process took place within the work setting of the CELE. The average time to fill out the questionnaire took around 15 minutes. Upon completing the questionnaire, the

teachers would return the instrument to the researcher. When all the questionnaires were completed, the researcher analyzed and organized the data.

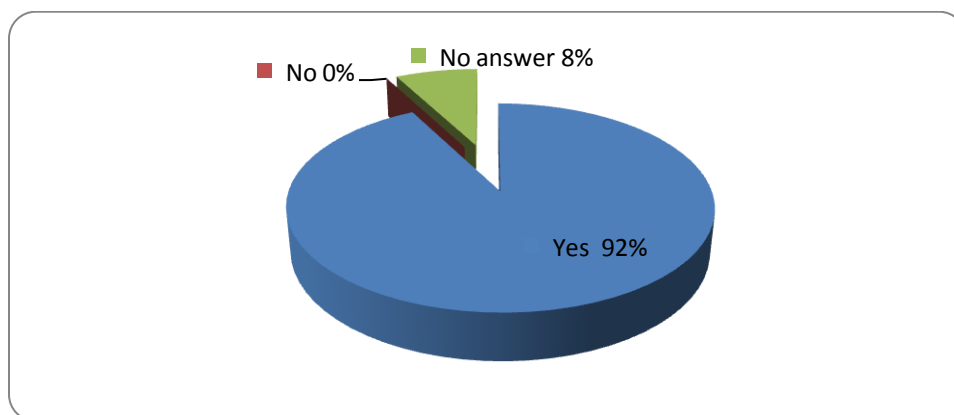
Chapter IV: Findings

4. Introduction

In this chapter, the results drawn from the data collected through the surveys described in the previous chapter will be presented. Specific conclusions about the results are illustrated in graphs and tables. In the same way, conclusions of the results and implications for further research are also provided.

According to the data collected, it was found that most of the teachers consider oral practice relevant in the development of the language learning process. The graph below illustrates the importance of speaking practice in the classroom.

Figure 1: Speaking importance

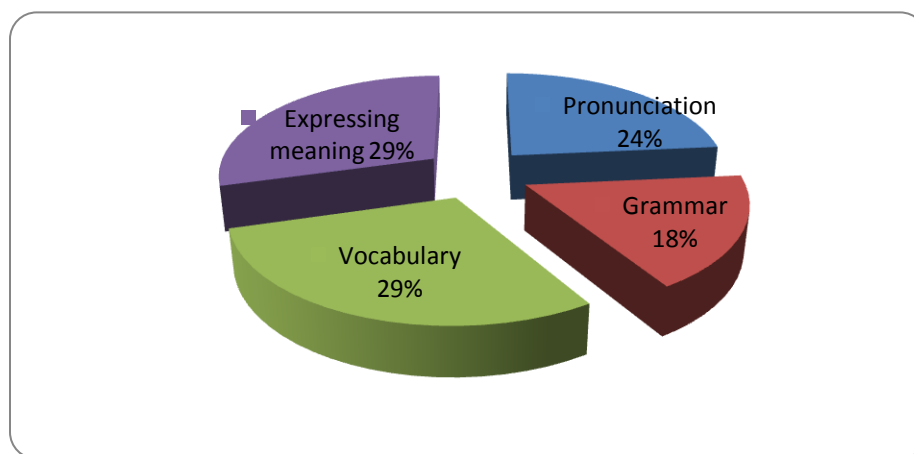


As it can be seen, teachers focus on oral production in their teaching practice. It can be said that it cannot be apart from the whole learning process. The graph shows that 92% of the participants consider it to be important for

students to practice speaking in the classroom. This information in the figure above can be corroborated with data from the interviews as we can see below. Various participants express their views on the importance of the speaking skill. One participant says, “Well...of course the speaking skill is important for our students...if we don’t give them the opportunity to practice speaking, what are we doing this for?” Similarly, another participant reports that “the ability to speak is probably the most important goal for most of our students in the CELE. They need to be able to interact in an international setting in the future.” However, not all of the participants agreed. One participant reported that “realistically, we can’t believe that the majority of our students will ever actually need to speak English in their professional lives...I mean...let’s get real.” As we can see, most of the participants agreed upon the importance of the speaking skill, yet to varying degrees with different emphasis placed on their reasons for believing that it is important. On the other hand, not all of the teachers agreed that students would actually need to speak English in their future professional settings, which shows us that the teaching staff is not homogeneous in their beliefs about these issues even though there is widespread agreement on the general issue.

Due to the importance of speaking it was necessary to recognize some key aspects to focus on. The information presented in the following figure shows this information.

Figure 2: Speaking aspects

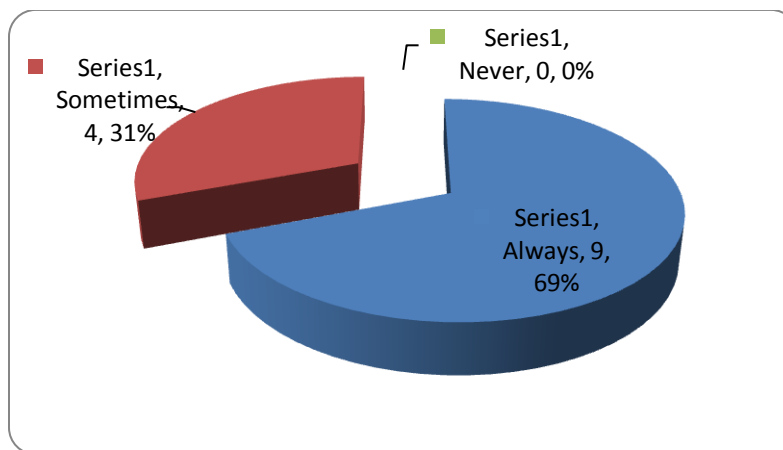


The table above presents the main aspects teachers consider to carry out the oral practice. It can be observed that vocabulary and expressing meaning have the same percentage in the table with a 29 percent of a 100 percent. It represents the most relevant aspects considered by teachers. Then a 24 percent focuses on pronunciation and just the 18 percent considers grammar as part of speaking. On this concern, there is a disagreement among the participants and it is evident on the data collected from the interviews. One of the interviewed teachers mentions “Well... for me the main aspects students have to focus on are vocabulary and grammar ... if a student doesn’t know the necessary words to express himself or herself the interaction is not going to happen... and in the same way, the knowledge of the main grammatical rules of the language are of great importance to be able to communicate in a correct way... so the rest of the aspects like pronunciation, and expressing meaning will appear later on.” Another participant agrees on this point and she adds the importance of expressing meaning “In my opinion if you are not able to express meaning in a

conversation it is just a failure...for me the most important is to give a message and to be understood by others... of course grammar and vocabulary are part of this process.” It is evident that participants agree on some aspects to practice speaking, but some of them give more importance to the meaning and some others to the use of grammar and vocabulary. However, pronunciation is not mentioned as a relevant point for the participants in the oral communication.

Once it is known the main aspects teachers emphasize to practice speaking, it is also important to know how often teachers allow their students to practice the target language in the classroom.

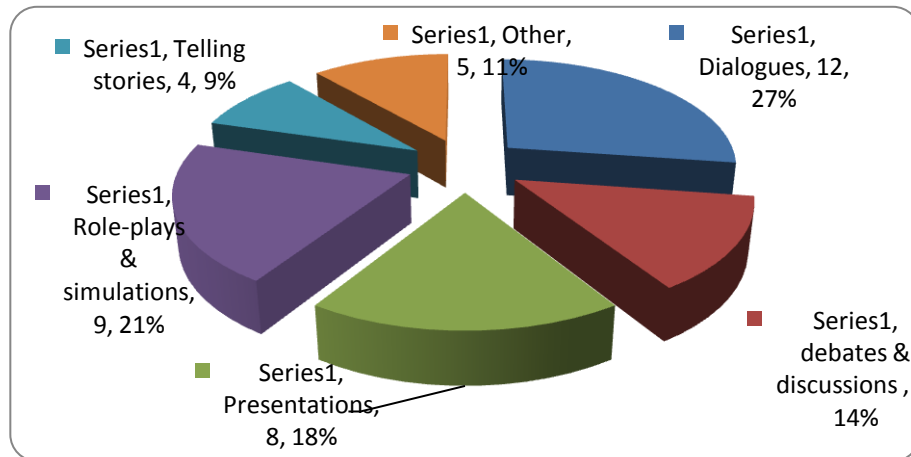
Figure 3: Frequency of oral practice



In this graph, it is evident teachers frequently enhance the oral practice among students with a 69 percent of a 100 percent. Considering this number, it is clear that the majority of teachers include any activity in the classroom to use the target language. Just a 31 percent of the participants report that they sometimes motivate their students to practice speaking.

In completion with the previous graph we have in a more evident way the activities teachers work in the classroom in order to practice the oral production.

Figure 4: Common oral activities

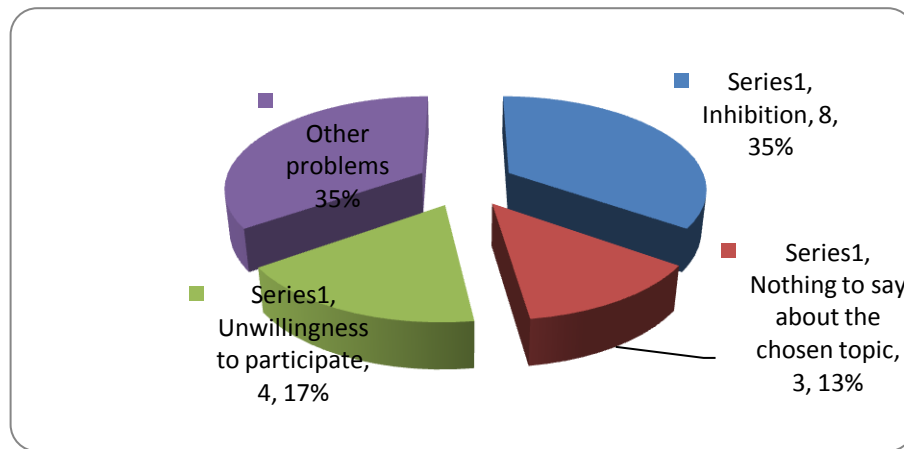


This graph clearly illustrates the use of dialogues as the first resource from teachers to practice speaking among students. It is represented with the 27 percent followed with the 21 percent given to the use of role-plays and simulations. Some other common activities are presentations with an 18 percent of 100 percent and debates and discussions with a 14 percent. Then in the last place it is telling stories with just a 9 percent of 100 percent. To support this information we can see the data given by the participants from the interviews. One of the teachers report that she usually practices oral production at the beginning of the class “In general I use different activities to practice speaking...in fact I use some of them as warm-up to make students speak...and during the class I work with dialogues as the book says.” In the same way, another participant believes that the practice of speaking among students is

essential to acquire the language. “I don’t see how a student can get the language if they don’t interact, if they don’t express their opinions or feelings...that’s why I always try to work with an activity during the class that make students speak with each other ... could be with very simple questions or with a presentation so they can feel they are learning English. Nevertheless, another teacher report “I consider important students speak in the classroom, but they need first to know the grammatical rules and the correct pronunciation of words to express something in English, so I give the class, then students work with grammar exercises and I just give like ten minutes two or three days a week to practice with some oral activities”. It is evident that most of the teachers work very often with oral activities in the classroom considering they are an essential factor to acquire the language, but there are also some opinions that differ from this view and they focus more on grammar than on speaking.

Together with the practice of students’ oral production it is the limitations to produce the language. Thus, the following figure presents some problems teachers consider students present when they are practicing the target language in an oral way.

Figure 5: Common speaking problems

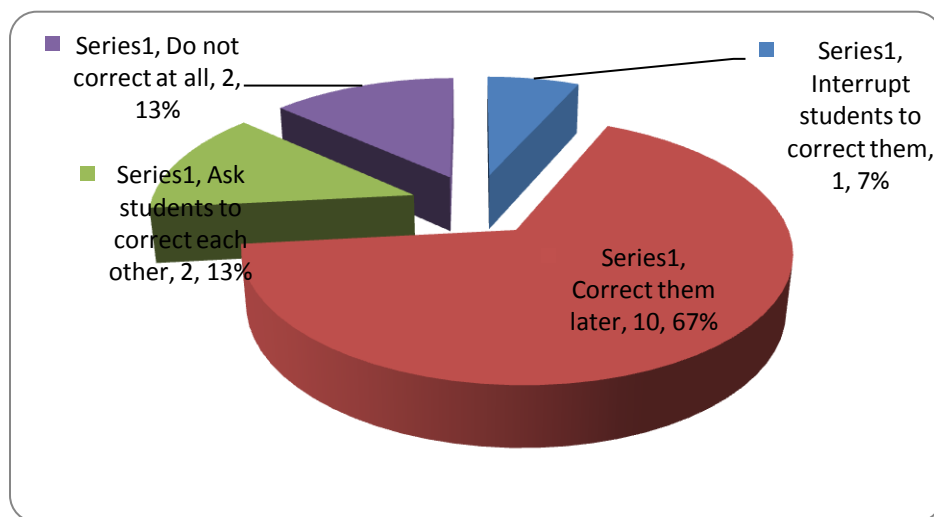


In the figure above we can observe the main problems teachers identify that students have when practicing speaking. According to Ur (1999) some of the problems are inhibition, nothing to say about the chosen topic, and unwillingness to participate and these topics were the same considered in the survey. In this graph, inhibition rates in the first place with a 35 percent of a hundred percent. Supporting these results we can mention to Ur (1999:111) who states that *“Learners are often inhibited about trying to say things in a foreign language in the classroom. Worried about, making mistakes, fearful of criticism or losing face, or simply shy of the attention that their speech attracts.”* With this quote, it is also evident the impact that some other problems have when practicing speaking and they appear in the same level in the graph with the same number of a 35 percent of a hundred percent. The results from the survey show some problems teachers consider like: lack of vocabulary to express their ideas, fear to speak in public and commit mistakes, and lack of interest in learning a language. The other 17 percent of a hundred percent is given to unwillingness to participate

and the last 13 percent is nothing to say about the chosen topic. These results are corroborated by some participants from the interviews. One of the teachers reports “ ...during the last period students had many difficulties trying to express complete ideas...well I observed vocabulary was the most remarkable problem my students faced.” This information supports the data given to the topic other problems shown in the graph. On the other hand, another participant mentions some other problems besides vocabulary. “Mmm.. I think in general when students speak the problems are more about pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary”. Thus, we can say there are many different problems students face when they practice orally the target language since inhibition or lack of interest until the poor amount of vocabulary.

Since students face many problems when speaking it is necessary to describe the manner teachers correct their students when they commit a mistake or an error. Thus, this information is presented in the following figure.

Figure 6: T. reaction towards students speaking errors



The figure above presents in a very evident way that most of the teachers prefer to correct their students later on, and not at the moment that oral production occurs. The graph illustrates this data with a 67 percent of a 100 percent. Then, 13 percent shows that teachers ask their students to correct each other, and in the same way we can see another 13 percent referring to teachers who do not correct their students at all. The last 7 percent shows that teachers interrupt students to correct them. This data can be corroborated with the results given by the participants from the survey. Different teachers agree on correcting after the activity is completed. One teacher reports “.... talking about correction I prefer to say what is wrong and the reason after the activity. I mean I explain briefly the rule he or she used in an incorrect way...well I can say that it is often at the end of a class if it is a presentation or at the end of the activity in a general way to be useful for the rest of the class....” Another participant agrees and reports “....Well yeah there is always something to correct, and even when I correct students in a silent way at the moment students are speaking I correct them in a formal way after they’d finished their participation and mainly when it is a presentation or a role-play...ahhh and there are some times that I ask students to evaluate their classmates, like... they have to focus on errors and explain what’s wrong...” All this information supports the data presented in the figure and makes evident that teachers intend to make any correction after students’ oral practice to avoid the flow of their participation.

To conclude with the data description it is essential to mention the different techniques teachers use to encourage students who are reluctant to practice the target language. The following table describes this information.

Table 1: Teachers' techniques to encourage students to participate in speaking activities

Motivate students with prizes, candies or participations.
Motivate students with interesting topics like role-plays or debates
Motivate students by saying "great, excellent, you are doing well" etc.
Create a good or pleasant environment
Being part of the activity
Let students know they are practicing a skill
Mention errors are not important, and not to worry about mistakes
Ask students why they feel insecure
Ask to work with people that are better to improve knowledge
Enhance students' confidence and make them trust themselves

The table above describes the most common techniques teachers use as a tool to enhance students to practice speaking in the classroom. The most remarkable is motivation. Teachers consider it is essential to motivate students with any kind of prize, with interesting topics and activities, with rewarding words or with a pleasant environment. Some other relevant techniques are involving the teacher in the activity, making students aware they are practicing a skill, letting them know errors are not important, asking why they feel insecure, working with better people, and finally enhance students' confidence and make them trust themselves.

Chapter V: Conclusions

5. Introduction

The current chapter is presented in three parts; first, the significant conclusions that were obtained from the investigation after conducting this research project are discussed, which explores teachers' activities to promote oral production in the classroom. Next, it discusses the main limitations of this study and finally some directions for further research.

5.1 Key Findings

The purpose of the present paper was to analyze and describe teachers' practices in the classroom to enhance students' oral production. More specifically the patterns of the questionnaires' answers were analyzed in order to draw some conclusions about the common oral practices used by teachers, and how they influence students' speaking development. The results of this research performed on CELE teachers of the BUAP provided essential information to consider. First of all, the importance of practicing the speaking skill in the classroom was confirmed. Most of the teachers consider it cannot be excluded from the language teaching process. According to the results, it is evident teachers frequently enhance oral practice among students with any speaking activity in the classroom to use the target language. This information confirms one of the assumptions that speaking is one of the most important skills in the language process. Due to the relevance of speaking, teachers focus their

attention mainly on vocabulary, pronunciation and the expression of meaning and they consider grammar as the least important element in order to communicate. The results shown in this research agree on the importance of expressing meaning in oral communication. It corroborates Hymes' definition of Communicative Competence which refers to exchanging meanings to establish a communication, but it is necessary to know the regulations of a specific context. Another important finding was the description of the most common problems and it is based on the classification that Ur (1996) mentions when students have to speak. On this concern, inhibition appears as the main problem to communicate, since students do not feel confident or secure to express their ideas in front of people, and students decide not to participate in the oral activities teachers promote. Some other problems are unwillingness to participate and nothing to say about the chosen topic. It becomes a reality when we as teachers observe the lack of interest to speak in the target language. Some students just do not participate or they make use of their mother tongue. According to the teachers' opinions it happens because of the limited vocabulary students have or because they think they do not have anything to say. Teachers believe it is necessary to motivate students to practice orally in the target language with interesting topics, with any type of prize or with rewarding words towards students' performance. Another way to motivate students is to create a good environment to practice speaking or we as teachers get involved in the activity, taking the role of a participant instead of being the observer. It is evident that the speaking skill is one of the most complex abilities students face when learning a language and all

the previous information is a prove there are different factors that increase this complexity; however the majority of teachers try to deal with this difficulty and work with oral activities into the classroom. At this point it is necessary to mention the most common oral activities teachers prefer to enhance oral practice in the classroom. According to the results in the first place it is the use of dialogues, with 27 percent followed by role-plays or simulations and presentations as the third place. It is important to mention that most teachers believe that these type of activities which are more free and less controlled than some others like debates or discussions and telling stories work better in order to practice the speaking skill. As a consequence of practicing a skill, there is the necessity of correcting students' oral production. Thus, the last finding is the way teachers correct speaking errors. In this way, almost all teachers agree that errors must be corrected after the activity development, not to interrupt students' effort. In conclusion, it is evident the relevance of oral interaction among students, but the role of the teacher as a guide to implement some tasks or activities in order to speak in the target language, is specifically necessary if we want proficient students.

5.2 Implications

The analysis performed and the results suggest that lack of motivation by students to speak in the classroom may be caused by the type of activities teachers develop with their students. These activities are not always according to the students interests in order to enhance participation or they are out of their

context. Most of the times, speaking activities represent a way of evaluation more than practice, which is reflected on students nervousness and inhibition to speak, and in general the activities are something unreal such as role-plays or simulations of any situation. In this way, besides the difficulty of oral practice, students have to face the impression of acting a specific character in a specific setting. From my point of view, we as teachers have to be more careful and analytic to choose and implement the oral activities, we have to consider the necessities of students the major they are coursing and their interest. The advantage in this situation is that the majority of teachers are aware of the importance of speaking practice and they are doing something into the classroom to improve students speaking performance.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The present study was based on the established parameters to be a research project, however there were some limitations to get more reliable information. First of all, it is essential to mention that this investigation was written after almost 5 years of delay, and the fact of reading and writing this thesis became a real challenge after such a long time after finishing the master's program; however during the process it became easier. Another constraint I dealt with was that the primary focux of the research was modified from the original proposal, mainly because of time. In this way, the study was reliant on based on questionnaires and interviews to some teachers at CELE/BUAP. A general limitation of all kinds of questionnaires is that they only intend to elicit opinions,

perceptions, attitudes or believes of the subjects involved in the research. For that reason, the results will always reflect what subjects think they do, and not exactly what they actually do. That is, for this study, only subjects' self-perception of their oral tasks was determined. However, for a correlational study, larger samples needed to be collected, and longer and more elaborated procedures would have been needed such as class observation to corroborate teachers' opinions. However, the purpose of this research was only to explore and describe the most common oral practices done by teachers, and some suggestions for future research are outlined in the section that follows. It is hoped that this further research suggested may help to shed some light on oral activities in the CELE/BUAP.

5.4 Directions for further Research

As stated above, this study only presents a descriptive overview of teachers' oral practices in the CELE/BUAP, and thus, it leaves many questions unanswered and many issues to be studied. Thus an action research can be done after this paper to provide answers to questions such as if the activities teachers report using in the classroom to promote speaking are working or if they are helpful to the students learning. In this way, after getting the results or more specifically the best oral tasks can be implemented at CELE/BUAP as part of the students' learning process.

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APPENDIX I

Teacher Questionnaire on Oral Production Activities

This questionnaire aims to collect information about the activities teachers use to promote oral practice among students in English 3 at CELE-BUAP. Your participation will be of great importance and your collaboration is greatly appreciated.

Instructions: Please tick the answer that best corresponds to your answer.

1. Degree(s) held:

☐ BA ☐ MA ☐ PHD

2. How many years have you been teaching English?

☐ 1-5 ☐ 10-15 ☐ More than 20
☐ 5-10 ☐ 15-20

3. Do you consider it to be important to teach speaking?

☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Which of these aspects do you focus in oral practice?

☐ Pronunciation ☐ Vocabulary use
☐ Grammar ☐ Expressing meaning

5. How often do you invite your students to interact with each other?

☐ Always ☐ Sometimes ☐ Never

6. What are the speaking activities you focus on most to create a successful interaction?

☐ Dialogues ☐ Role-plays and simulations
☐ Debates and discussions ☐ Telling stories
☐ Presentations

Other: _____

7. How do you encourage students who are resistant or insecure to actively participate in speaking activities?

8. What is the most common speaking problems students face in Oral Expression?

☐ Inhibition because of shyness, anxiety and stress
☐ Nothing to say about the chosen topic
☐ Unwillingness to participate
☐ Other problems (please explain): _____

9. If your students say anything wrong during interaction, do you:

☐ Interrupt them to correct them ☐ Ask students to correct each other
☐ Correct them later ☐ Do not correct at all

Why: _____

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONS OF FOCUS GROUP. TEACHERS' INTERVIEW.

1. How important is the oral practice in your classroom?
2. What aspects do you consider important in oral activities?
3. What speaking activities do you carry out in your classroom?
4. What problems did you notice on students' oral production?

APPENDIX III

TRANSCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP. TEACHERS' INTERVIEW.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

R (Researcher): Good morning teachers

T (Teachers): Hello

R: I really appreciate your collaboration and time for this interview. It's really helpful. Now, I'm going to ask you some questions about the study. Please feel free to say what you think frankly and how you feel while answering the questions.

1. How important is the oral practice in the classroom?

T1: The ability to speak is probably the most important goal for most of our students in the CELE. They need to be able to interact in an international setting in the future. Many students have the necessity to communicate and understand English because of their major requirements, and opportunities they get when they speak English, so this language is essential for them.

T2: Well...of course the speaking skill is important for our students. I consider that language practice must be our main reason to teach ...if we don't give them the opportunity to practice speaking, what are we doing this for ? This is the basis to get a language. We as teachers have to give the opportunity to practice first in the classroom and then they might practice outside.

T3: Mmm.. realistically, we can't believe that the majority of our students will ever actually need to speak English in their professional lives...I mean...let's get real. Many students who are taking our courses think English is not useful for them, they take it just as a requirement to end their major. And yes we can be positive and think that language practice will be great, but usually it is part of students' evaluation than real practice in the classroom.

2. What aspects do you consider important in oral activities?

T1: Well... for me the main aspects students have to focus on are vocabulary and grammar ... if a student doesn't know the necessary words to express himself or herself the interaction is not going to happen... and in the same way, the knowledge of the main grammatical rules of the language are of great importance to be able to communicate in a correct way... so the rest of the aspects like pronunciation, and expressing meaning will appear later on."

T2: I mainly focus on vocabulary...I mean you have to give the necessary tools to communicate.. it is when you show students the words they need they will be able to express a message and the language learning will have meaning for them. I also consider grammar important to be able to communicate, because if you don't know how to structure a sentence you couldn't give a message.

T3: In my opinion if you are not able to express meaning in a conversation it is just a failure...for me the most important is to give a message and to be understood by others...in here pronunciation is also important because if the pronunciation is correct it is easier to understand the message.

3. What speaking activities do you carry out in your classroom?

T1: First of all I have to say that speaking activities don't have to be separated from any grammar class that's why I don't see how a student can get the language if they don't interact, if they don't express their opinions or feelings...that's why I always try to work with an activity during the class that make students speak with each other ... could be with very simple questions or with a presentation so they can feel they are learning English.

T2: In general I use different activities to practice speaking...in fact I use some of them as warm-up to make students speak...and during the class I work with dialogues as the book says. That's the way I usually work every term.

T3: I consider important students speak in the classroom, but they need first to know the grammatical rules and the correct pronunciation of words to express something in English, so I give the class, then students work with grammar exercises and I just give like ten minutes two or three days a week to practice with some oral activities.

4. What problems did you notice on students' oral production and how do you correct them?

T1: During the last period students had many difficulties trying to express complete ideas...well I observed vocabulary was the most remarkable problem my students faced, and talking about correction I prefer to say what is wrong and the reason after the activity. I mean I explain briefly the rule he or she used in an incorrect way... I can say that it is often at the end of a class if it is a presentation or at the end of the activity in a general way to be useful for the rest of the class.

T2: Mmm... I think in general when students speak the problems are more about pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. I usually correct my students when they finished the activity not to cut the idea, but sometimes I correct them immediately after they mispronounce a word.

T3: Well yeah there is always something to correct, and even when I correct students in a silent way at the moment students are speaking I correct them in a formal way after they'd finished their participation and mainly when it is a presentation or a role-play...ahhh and there are some times that I ask students to evaluate their classmates, like... they have to focus on errors and explain what's wrong.