THE APPLICATION OF TASKS COMBINED WITH PROACTIVE FOCUS ON
FORM TO DEVELOP ORAL PRODUCTION

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Abstract

Although communicative tasks are nowadays being taken into account to increase learners' oral production, few researchers have focused their attention to the form while meaning is carried through real purposes, contexts, and interaction in a task. This research intends to show the effectiveness of the combination of tasks with proactive focus on form to enhance language learning through a way of accuracy and oral production. In this paper, a class based on reactive focus on form and some tasks was first carried out in order to know the aspects of present tense forms that twelve students from the linguistics and languages department from the University of Nariño needed to improve. After, the data was analyzed to design four tasks combined with proactive focus on form. After applying a pos-test, it was found that students had improved correcting eighty two percent of the mistakes made during the application of the tasks and the normal class. However, common mistakes such as those occurred with the third person of the singular form of some irregular verbs still occurred. These opening findings imply that the use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form really allow learners to enhance form language aspects while meaning is taken as the principal goal.

Resumen

Aunque las tareas comunicativas actualmente son tenidas en cuenta para incrementar la producción oral de los estudiante, pocos investigadores han centrado su atención a la forma mientras el significado es llevado a cabo a través de propósitos reales, contextos e interacción en una tarea. Esta investigación por tanto intenta mostrar la efectividad de combinar tareas con Proactive Focus on Form para aumentar la producción oral y la precisión gramatical.

En esta investigación, una clase basada en Reactive Focus on Form y en algunas tareas comunicativas fue llevada a cabo con el fin de encontrar los aspectos gramaticales relacionados con el presente simple que los estudiantes del Centro de Idiomas de la Universidad de Nariño necesitaban mejorar. Después de este proceso, los datos encontrados fueron analizados para diseñar cuatro tareas combinadas con Proactive Focus on Form.

Después la aplicación del post-test se encontró que los estudiantes mejoraron, corrigiendo un ochenta y dos pro ciento de los errores que surgieron durante la aplicación de las tareas y la primera clase. Sin embargo, errores comunes como los que ocurrían con la tercera persona de la forma del

singular, de algunos verbos irregulares todavía seguían ocurriendo.

Finalmente, estos encuentros implican que el uso de las tareas combinado con Proactive Focus on Form realmente permite a los estudiantes aumentar aspectos gramaticales mientras el significado se toma como el objetivo principal.

CONTENT

Introduction

    Learning English as a second language is a wide field studied by several researchers all over the world in order to find out possible ways for teachers to get effective strategies for teaching, and for students to be able to acquire a target language through an efficient and appropriate learning process. The development of communicative skills demands a great deal of attention. The field of TESOL (Teaching English as a Second or as Foreign Language) suggests that learners must be involved in the use of communicative tasks to enhance the conditions for the development of communicative competence. Tasks tend to elicit communication and serve as means to provide learners with implicit grammar instruction focus on form.

    About the relevance of tasks in foreign language learning, Fotos (1998) suggests that tasks are designed to increase learner awareness, interaction, and also provide negotiation of meaning through target structures used in context. Instruction and communication should have a balance in learning because both extremes can be harmful for the whole process. Higgs and Clifford (1982, as cited in Wasanasomsithi, 1998: 1) state that if learners acquire the

target language through communication oriented instruction which stresses the need to foster communicative competence before the mastery of accurate grammatical structures, learners will run the risk of "fossilizing" grammatical errors.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to describe the application of communicative tasks combining form and meaning, and oriented to proactive focus on form. These tasks and the instruction given are related to oral production. The features of fluency, vocabulary, and especially grammatical accuracy are analyzed to examine the effectiveness of the tasks and the focus on form provided by the researchers.

Chapter 1. Technical-scientific aspects

Topic

   Tasks and focus on form

Title

   The application of tasks combined with proactive focus on form to develop oral production.

Problem Statement

   Currently, and due to government guidelines and policies, teachers are more concerned with the implementation of strategies to make courses communicative. However, They might not know how to fit grammar instruction in communicative classes: they might focus on teaching grammar trough traditional methodologies or, to teach focusing on communication which is strong in the sense of meaning, use, and context, but not in accuracy, which might lead learners to fossilize mistakes.

   In EFL contexts focus on form, a relatively new trend that combines the components mentioned above, may offer a strong rationale for setting up communicative language activities in the classroom. Thus, it is necessary to provide appropriate tasks in coherence with focus on form to encourage both students and teachers, and for promoting a

communicative and accurate English use. This study intends to establish:

How the use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form affects some aspects of learners' oral production?

In addition, according to this question, it is necessary to determine:

Will learners improve their English production through tasks that draw attention to focus on form?

Justification

The use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form may give learners the opportunity to use the target language through suitable structures, and also encourage them to interact into a collaborative interchange which might promote self-confidence and accuracy.

Another reason that supports the use of communication and grammar instruction is Fotos' research on several explicit focus-on-form tasks (1994). The author suggests that tasks performance can significantly increase learner awareness of the target structure and improve accuracy in its use, as well as providing opportunities for meaning-focused comprehension and production of the target language. Furthermore, such tasks release more traditionally oriented non-native speaker teachers from the requirement to lead

communicative activities in the target language (Fotos, 1998).

A final justification for centering this paper on grammar instruction and speaking in an EFL setting is that the use of tasks allows focus on form to be more feasible in EFL settings (Long, as cited in Fotos, 1998: 307). FONF (Focus on Form) takes into account not only meaningfulness, but also accuracy, and that is an important element in learning settings such as Pasto where the little exposure to interaction and the fossilization of errors are commonly observed in foreign language classes.

General objective

To describe how tasks combined with proactive focus on form affect some aspects of learners oral production.

Specific objectives

To identify possible difficulties through the application of a communicative class where FONF may be expected to arise incidentally.

To design communicative tasks combined with proactive focus on form which may enhance conditions for learners' oral production.

To apply the tasks in an EFL setting over a four-week period.

To identify the effects of the tasks combined with FONF through a post-test.

Hypothesis

Task-based activities offer EFL learners a way to maximize their target language use, and have therefore been recommended as the basis for syllabus organization. (Fotos, 1998)

Besides, Long's original consideration establishes that task-based language instruction is particularly suitable for focus on form (Long, as quoted in Fotos, 1998: 305). It is expected that the study will contribute to provide both teachers and learners the possibility to use language through several functions and consequently to go beyond the transmission and repetition of isolated structures, and also beyond the communicative interaction that neglects accuracy.

According to what was stated above, the hypothesis is:

H_1= The use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form will affect some aspects of the learners oral production.

On the other hand, taking into consideration that the present study will take place in an experimental way, it is also true that the use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form will probably give tentative outcomes for the

teaching and learning process. In addition, the following might anticipate:

H_0= The use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form will not affect some aspects of the learners oral production.

Variables

Independent variable= Tasks combined with proactive focus on form.

Dependent variable= oral production.

Chapter 2: Reference framework

Antecedents

Currently, tasks have become an outstanding tool since it is suggested that they promote naturalistic learning, being the core of many communicative syllabi, and serving as a means to provide focus on form. As a result of this, researchers interested in the teaching-learning process of English have been concerned in the study of this subject, and have suggested that tasks can be particularly suitable for focus on form.

According to Swain and Lapkin (n.d.) meaningful interaction communicative tasks can lead learners to focus on form while constructing the meaning required by the task. These two authors conducted a research in a French immersion context, involving fourth grade immersion classes: two receiving dictogloss and two jigsaw task. One jigsaw class and one dictogloss class also received a mini-lesson on French pronominal verbs as an input enhancement activity. Swain and Lapkin hypothesized that the dictogloss would lead learners to focus on form to a greater extent than the jigsaw, although the two tasks involved essentially the same content. In this way, they expected that within each task, the students receiving the mini-lesson would pay greater

attention to form than the students that did not receive it. The results suggested that the mini-lesson lead students to overgeneralize the pronominal form (e.g., the students may use *se sonner*, a non-existent pronominal verb, where *sonner* should be used. This may have occurred because the learners applied this particular rule to a case where the rule was not valid. It is interesting to note that dictogloss was prominent in promoting accuracy in the use of pronominal verbs.

Theoretical Framework

Focus on Forms

According to Long (n.d.) it is considered today the traditional approach, although it has not always been viewed that way. Course design starts with the language to be taught. The teacher or textbook writer divides the L2 into segments of various kinds (phonemes, words, collocations, morphemes, sentence patterns, notions, functions, tones, stress, and intonation patterns, and so on), and presents these to the learner in models, initially one item at a time, in a sequence determined by (rather vague, usually intuitive) notions of frequency, valency, or (the all-purpose and question-begging) "difficulty". It means that the learners synthesize the parts for using communication,

and for this reason, Wilkins (as quoted in Long, from
http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/conf/ref.htm)
called this the synthetic approach to syllabus design, in
which teachers use synthetic materials, methodology,
pedagogy, and synthetic syllabi (such as lexical,
structural, and notional functional which are accompanied by
methods like Grammar Translation, Silent Way, Total Physical
Response, Audiolingual Method, etc) for learners to master
the language structures like native speakers do.

   This approach does not seem to take into account the
learners' communicative needs, and in doing so classes might
become boring and not so effective since, according to Long
(n.d) learners have to follow explicit grammar rules, repeat
models, memorize short dialogues, transform exercises and so
forth. This usually results in teaching too much (some
language, skills and genres learners do not need), and too
little (not covering language, skills and genres they do
need). This is discouraging to students and inefficient
(Long, from
http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/conf/ref.htm).

   In this way, a typical response to frustration with
this approach originated a new one which was strongly based
on meaning.

Focus on meaning

It is a responsive approach to focus on forms, and the starting point of this is not the language, but the learner and learning processes. The lessons with focus on meaning are purely communicative and the practices related with it are comprehensible samples of L2 in the form of content based instruction, the learner is the one who analyzes the L2 inducing grammar rules from exposure to the input with positive evidence alone, and Grammar is considered to be best learnt incidentally and implicitly through communication.

However, a pure focus on meaning is inefficient because although considerable progress in an L2 is clearly achieved in classroom, immersion program learners are "far from native-like, particularly with respect to grammatical competence" (Swain, as quoted in Long, from http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/conf/ref.htm). Besides, simple L2 exposure does not guarantee acquisition of that L2, and comprehensible input is necessary, but not sufficient (Long, from http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/conf/ref.htm).

As a consequence, according to Tsui (1995: 69) while modification devices in interaction (Confirmation check,

clarification request, repetition request, decomposition,
comprehension check, and self-repetition) help ESL students
or NNSs to obtain comprehensible input, the number of
modification devices used is not necessarily indicative of
the amount of input that is comprehensible to the student.
This is because, as Tsui (1992, 1995: 69) points out
interaction is a two-way process. How much of the input is
comprehensible depends not only on how much the NS or
teacher modifies the input and the interactional structure
in order to provide comprehensible input, but more
importantly on how much the NNS or student is involved in
trying to obtain comprehensible input. The teacher or NS may
use a lot of modification devices and yet still fail to make
their input comprehensible.

    As a consequence, it is important to do a brief review
of different methods which every approach has used taking
into account the evolution of grammar.

Evolution of grammar through methods

    The quick evolution of grammar since the nineteenth
century does not allow for a single person to be up to date
with the ever increasing newly arriving theories. The fact
that such theories are changing so rapidly has a lasting
effect on how grammar is taught today. In this way, grammar

has had an increasing evolution reflected through the numerous theories which begin since traditional grammar, and then continued with structural grammar and transformational grammar (Glauner, 2000). Thus, grammar is a large concept that has changed step by step, being implemented through different methods as it follows.

The grammar translation method

Grammar translation is a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules followed by application of this knowledge to the tasks of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language. It hence views language learning as consisting of little more than memorizing rules and facts in order to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

Direct method

This method focused on teaching grammar inductively without explanation of grammar rules. Teachers promote the use of the foreign language in a natural way (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

Audiolingual method

According to Fries (1939, as quoted in Richard and Rogers, (2001: 52)) grammar, or "structure", is the starting point. The structure of the language was identify with its basic sentence patterns and grammatical structures. The language is taught by systematic attention to pronunciation, and by intensive oral drilling of its basic sentence patterns (Richards and Rogers, 2001)

Total Physical Response

Asher (1977, as cited in Richards and Rogers, 2001:73) claims "most of the grammatical structures of the target language and hundreds of vocabulary items can be learned from the skillful use of the imperative by the instructor"

The Silent Way

Gattegno (1972, as quoted in Richards and Rogers, 2001:82) states that the "spirit" of the language is referred to the way each language is composed of phonological and suprasegmental elements that combine to give the language its unique sound system and melody.

In this method the sentence is the basic unit of teaching, and the teacher focuses on propositional meaning, rather than communicative value. Students are presented with the structural patterns of the target language and learn the

grammar rules of the language through largely inductive

processes (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

Community Language Learning

La Forge and Curran (1983, as quoted in Richards and

Rogers, 2001:91) accepts that language theory must start,

though not end, with criteria for sound features, the

sentence, and abstract models of language. La Forge goes

beyond the structuralist view of language, however, and

elaborates an alternative theory of language, which is

referred to as Language as social Process. In this way the

foreign language learners' tasks are " to apprehend the

sound system, assign fundamental meanings, and to construct

a basic grammar of the foreign language."

The Natural Approach

Krashen and Terrell (1983, as cited in Richards and

Rogers, 2001:179) see communication as the primary function

of language emphasizing the primacy of meaning as the nature

of language. Bolinger (1977, as quoted in Richards and

Rogers, 2001:180) considers that the significant fact is the

subordinate role of grammar. The most important thing is to

get the words in.

Suggestopedia

Lozanov (1978, as quoted in Richards and Rogers, 2001:101) maintains that the emphasis regards languages elements and their organization such as the memorization of vocabulary pairs and lexical translation. Thus, grammar is not widely emphasized.

Communicative language teaching

It is based on what Hymes (1972, as quoted in Richards and Rogers, 2001:159) called "communicative competence" which is the knowledge and the ability for language use in context.

The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse (Richards and Rogers, 2001).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT)

TBLT emphasizes the central role of meaning in language use. In addition, Long and Crookes (1991, as cited in Richards and Rogers, (2001: 229)) claim that specific tasks can be designed to facilitate the use and learning of particular aspects of language.

As shown, grammar has been applied through several methods and approaches, however the concern to merge meaning

and forms carries out the invention of a viable approach

called as it follows.

Focus on form

Focus on form refers to how attentional resources are

allocated, and involves briefly drawing students' attention

to linguistic elements in context such as words,

collocations, grammatical structures, pragmatic patterns,

and so forth, as they arise incidentally in lessons whose

prevailing focus is on meaning or communication (Long, from

http://www.mhhe.com/socscience/foreignlang/conf/ref.htm).

On the other hand, according to Long & Robinson (as

quoted in Doughty & Williams, (1998: 23-24)) FONF refers to

how focal attentional resources are allocated. Although

there are degrees of attention, and although attention to

forms and attention to meaning are not always mutually

exclusive, during an otherwise meaning-focused classroom

lesson, focus on form often consists of an occasional shift

of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher

and/or more students – triggered by perceived problems with

comprehension or production which might be dealt with by

supplying corrective feedback in its implicit or explicit

form. This is similar to what happens when native speakers

who are good writers pause to consider the appropriate form

of address to us when composing a letter to a stranger, or when efficient readers suddenly "disconfirm a hypothesis" while reading and are momentarily obliged to retrace their steps in a text until they locate the item – perhaps a little *not* they had missed earlier in the sentence which caused the semantic surprise. The usual and fundamental orientation is to meaning and communication, but factors arise that lead even the fluent language user temporarily to attend to the language itself.

In this way, focus on form arises incidentally during communication. However, Doughty and Williams (1998, as quoted in Mackey, Polio, & McDonough, 2004: 302) have expanded the definition of focus on form to include pre-planned interventions. Focus on form has been reinterpreted as proactive attention to form (i.e., preselected forms are taught through communicative activities) (Doughty & Williams, 1998, as cited in Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen (2001: 411)).

Thus, the term focus on form has since been stretched beyond the meaning that Long suggests (1991, as quoted in Ellis et al., (2001: 411)). Two kinds of focus on form can be identified whether the focus on form is proactive

(planned) or incidental: reactive and preemptive (Long &
Robinson, 1998, as quoted in Ellis et al., p. 415)

Doughty and Williams (1998, as quoted in Mennim, (2003:
131)) make the distinction between proactive and reactive
focus on form. Both approaches seek to focus on language
forms in a communicative context: those that come up while
students are involved in the communication of meaning.
Although Doughty and Williams suggest no particular benefit
of one over the other, they point out that classroom
circumstances might lead a teacher in his or her choice of
focus on form. For example a proactive focus on form might
be useful if a teacher has a clear idea of common language
problems in a class with the same L1, or if a particular
language form will be useful or necessary for the completion
of a communicative task. On the other hand a reactive focus
on form can more effectively deal with linguistic problems
that arise while students are engaged in the communication
of meaning.

According to Doughty and Williams (1998: 198 as cited
in Memmim, 2003: 131) proactive focus on form is where the
teacher chooses a form in advance to present to students in
order to help them complete a communicative task. This can
be done explicitly through formal instruction, while a less

explicit focus might involve asking students to alter or manipulate a text that contains a target form. This differs from traditional grammar instruction as the grammar focus is not centred around a set of language structures imposed by the syllabus. Instead the choice of form is determined by the communicative needs of the learners. The choice of forms is also influenced by other factors such as individual learner differences, developmental language learning sequences, and L1 influences.

Besides, Doughty and Williams (1998: 198 as cited in Memmim, 2003: 131) state that an implicit proactive focus on form can be achieved, for example, by playing a game that requires the use of a target form, or by exposing learners to modified input where a form is made salient. For instance, Doughty and Varela (1998, as cited in Ellis et al., 2001: 411) report a classroom experiment in which a science report task served to create contexts for the use of past tense. Teachers were instructed to provide focus on form by means of confirmation checks and recasts when learners failed to use the target structure. This task represents a clear example of what Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993, in Ellis et al.) have called a *structure-based communicative task* –this meet criteria such as structural

accuracy is essential to meaning in the task, and
communicatively oriented feedback on structural accuracy
needs to be incorporated into the design of the task-
Therefore, this kind of tasks clearly constitute a very
different kind of focus on form from the one Long envisaged
in that attention to form is no longer incidental but
proactive (i.e., planned), and it is intensive rather
extensive (i.e., it involves repetitive exposure to a single
preselected linguistic feature rather than nonrepetitive
exposure to numerous linguistic features within a single
lesson) (Ellis et al.).

   On the other hand, Mennim (2003) points out that
reactive focus on form treatments can deal more specifically
with student output where the focus is on structures that
students themselves have used, or have tried to use, during
a communicative task.

   According to Mackey et al. (2004) in reactive
incidental focus on form, the teacher perceives the
learner's utterance as inaccurate or inappropriate and draws
his or her attention to the problematic feature through
negative feedback. They also argue that some types of
negative feedback are implicit in that they do not include
any explicit statements about grammaticality, and that

recasts are generally considered to be implicit forms of negative feedback.

Ellis et al. (2001) argues that reactive focus on form arises when learners produce an utterance containing an actual or perceived error, which is then addressed usually by the teacher but sometimes by another learner. Hence, it supplies learners with negative evidence. As long and Robinson (1998, as cited in Ellis et al., p.415) point out, this evidence can be explicit (e.g., the learner is told directly what the error is or is given metalingual information relaiting to the correct form) or implicit (e.g., the learner's deviant utterance is recast in the target language form).

Negotiation of meaning (long, 1996, as cited in Mackey et al., (2004: 304)) is also considered to be reactive incidental focus on form because learners' attention can be drawn to a problem when a communication breakdown occurs. Reactive incidental focus on form can also occur in the form of more explicit negative feedback, such as when teachers respond to a problematic utterance by stating that the learner made an error, or providing metalinguistic information about the error (Mackey et al.).

According to Ellis et al. (2001) there are two types of negotiation such as *negotiation of meaning*, which is entirely communicative in orientation, as it is directed at enabling the participants to achieve mutual understanding in order for communication to proceed, and *negotiation of form,* which is didactic in orientation, as it is directed at improving accuracy and precision when no problem of understanding has arisen.

Whereas reactive focus on form involves negotiation and is triggered by something problematic that an interactant has said or written, preemptive focus on form involves the teacher or learner initiating attention to form even though no actual problem in production has arisen (Ellis et al. 2001). Besides, according to Ellis (n.d. as quoted in Mackey et al. 2004: 303) in preemptive incidental focus on form, the teacher briefly treats language as an object and may or may not use metalinguistic terminology.

In sum, Mackey et al. (2004) argues that in focus on forms, the learners' primary focus is on forms, and there is distribution of attention to specific forms. In planned focus on form, the primary focus of attention is meaning, but there is an intensive distribution of attention to specific forms. Finally, in incidental focus on form, the

primary focus of attention is meaning, but there is an extensive distribution of attention to a variety of forms.

According to Skehan (1996, as quoted in Celce-Murcia, (2003: 174)) Learners will develop more effective strategies for achieving communicative goals if they are encouraged with FONF. In this way, Learners will be enabled to exchange meanings in spite of the shortcomings of their language. Skehan (1992, as quoted in Celce-Murcia (2003: 174)) also argues that learning is more efficient if there is a need to focus on accuracy within a task-based methodology and a critical focus on language form within the task-based cycle.

Furthermore, classroom activities that focus on form involve encouraging learners to attend to the language forms that they are neither using themselves or are exposed to through input. Next, learners notice ways in which their own interlanguage differs from the target language (Mennin, 2003)

Thus, the combination of proactive FONF and tasks may be effective because learners might be likely to attend to form in communicative activities.

Tasks

The term "task" came into deliberate use in applied linguistics in the early 1980s. Today it is a widely used

concept both in second language syllabus design and in second language acquisition research (SLA). Because tasks promote naturalistic learning and catalyze acquisitonal processes, particularly when combined with group work, they provide a close fit with communicative language teaching (Rubdy, 1998)

Another claim for tasks is that specific tasks can be designed to facilitate the use and learning of particular aspects of language. Long and Crookes, (1991:43, as cited in Richards and Rogers (2001: 229)) Claim that tasks provide a vehicle for the presentation of appropriate target language samples to learners – input which they will inevitably reshape via application of general cognitive processing capacities – and for the delivery of comprehension and production opportunities of negotiable difficulty.

According to Richards and Rogers (2001) tasks, it is said, provide full opportunities for both input and output requirements, which are believe to be key processes in language learning. Besides, tasks are believed to foster processes of negotiation, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation that are the heart of second language learner.

Skehan (1998: 98, as quoted in Richards and Rogers (2001: 226)) notes that in task-based instruction (TBI) "meaning is primary... the assessment of the task is in terms of outcomes" and that TBI is *not* "concerned with language display."

Skehan (1998:97, as cited in Richards and Rogers (2001: 229)) suggests that tasks can be designed along a cline of difficulty so that learners can work on tasks that enable them to develop both fluency and an awareness of language form.

According to Nunan (1998) if learners are not given opportunities to explore grammar in context, it will be difficult for them to see how and why alternative forms exist to express different communicative meanings. For example, getting learners to read a set of sentences in the active voice, and then transform these into passives following a model, is a standard way of introducing the passive voice. However, it needs to be supplemented by tasks which give learners opportunities to explore when it is communicatively appropriate to use the passive rather than the active voice.

According to Nunan (1993, as quoted in Celce-Murcia (2003: 173)) a communicative task is a piece of classroom

work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating,
producing or interacting in the target language while their
attention is principally focused on meaning rather than
form.

    Calvache (2003) affirms that a very general and
essential characteristic of a task is that it is
accomplished when after following some directions; the
learner is able to draw a map, write a paragraph, complete a
paragraph and so forth. Also he mentions that in language
teaching we can find communicative tasks and learning tasks.
The former focuses on the exchange of meaningful messages
with similar purposes to the daily communicative
interactions while the latter tends to explore aspects from
the linguistic system per se. Both tasks are interrelated
and they are brought into practice when learners use the L2.

    The advantages of working with a task-based approach in
the foreign language classroom are evident: not only are
students using language to perform different functions
(e.g., make requests, apologize, obtain information), but
they are also going beyond mere transmission and repetition
of grammar. Since tasks encourage students to use
meaningful, real language in a wide array of situations,
learners are more aware of socio cultural differences, they

explore and develop their own ways of interaction and learning and at the same time analysis and problem-solving skills are stimulated.

It is relevant, in this way, to enable students to develop their oral skill through tasks based on FONF to make them acquire a suitable communicative competence.

Communicative competence and tasks

Hymes,(1971, as quoted in Wasanasomsithi (1998: 3))is one among those who first introduced the notion of 'communicative competence' to refer to the use of language in social context. According to Hymes, grammatical competence is only one component of the overall language knowledge native speakers possess and thus, communicative competence should incorporate sociolinguistic and contextual competence as well as grammatical competence.

Canale and Swain (1980, as quoted in Richards and Rogers (2001: 160)) identify four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. *Grammatical competence* refers to what Chomsky calls linguistic competence and what Hymes intends by what is "Formally possible." It is the domain of grammatical and lexical capacity. *Sociolinguistic competence*

refers to an understanding of the social context in which communication takes place, including role relationships, the shared information of the participants, and the communicative purpose for their interaction. *Discourse competence* refers to the interpretation of individual message elements in terms of their interconnectedness and of how meaning is represented in relationship to the entire discourse or text. *Strategic competence* refers to the coping strategies that communicators employ to initiate, terminate, maintain, repair, and redirect communication. Besides, Canale and Swain (1980: 30 as quoted in Dörnyei and Thurrell (1991: 16)) states that *Strategic competence* refers to verbal and no-verbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. That is, this refers to the ability to get one's meaning across successfully to communicative partners, especially when problems arise in the communication process.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which is based on the notion of communicative competence, asserts that the primary objective of a second or foreign language program must be to provide language learners with the information

practice and much of the experience needed to meet the communication needs in the second or foreign language (Canale(n.d.) as quoted in Wasanasomsithi (1998: 3)). With its focus being placed on the interpretation, expression, and negotiation of meaning, CLT guides language learners beyond memorized patterns and monitored repetitions to take part in meaningful interaction, the performance learners are required to do outside their language class (Wasanasomsithi, 1998).

In this way, the use of tasks is an innovate strategy that moves from reactive and proactive responses of the learners to an interactive stage where the desire of learning with others through group work and cooperation is essential (Calvache, 2003).

Thus, it is important to notice the relationship that there is between communicative competence and tasks, because the first one is the ability to use the language in a variety of settings, taking into account relationships between speakers and differences in situations, and tasks are activities that involve real communication, which may allow the speaking development to happen.

Speaking development

Speaking is fundamental to human communication because of its frequency of use. When compared to the other skills (reading, writing) it is evident that all of us speak more than we write; however, it seems that many English teachers still spend most of class time on reading and writing practice almost ignoring speaking and listening skills. This might be due to many factors among which might be mentioned that learners will not encounter opportunities to interact with native speakers outside the classroom, the lack of availability of materials in schools and as Nunan (1993, cited in Celce-Murica (2003: 110)) suggests, in EFL classrooms learners are not motivated and getting students to speak is a challenge or speaking is not culturally adequate except when called on. In addition, large classes are often the norm, limiting both student opportunities to talk and teacher opportunities to provide feedback. Other problems may arise if the curriculum does not stress speaking skills or views them solely as an avenue to grammatical accuracy; furthermore, if the teacher is a non-native speaker of English, he or she may not be competent or confident in speaking English.

If the goal of a language course is truly to enable their students to communicate in English, then speaking skills should be taught and practiced in the language classroom. Currently, reading, writing and vocabulary tend to be the focus of instruction because those are the abilities learners need for the ICFES test, but communication needs to be implemented to comply with Colombian government goals and policies regarding proficiency and assessment. Then, teachers need to center their efforts in providing new tasks and strategies that involve communicative competence. Swain (1985, as quoted in Lawtie, 2004) suggests that "We learn to speak by speaking". In this way, the more teachers practice the more they will improve their own oral skills as well as help their students improve theirs.

Another element that supports the idea that speaking is important is given by Ur (1996), who states 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 ask 'speakers' of that language, as if speaking included all others kinds of knowing; and many if not most foreign language learners are primarily interested in learning to speak. However, in order

to speak, first and second language learners need another skill: listening; a complex process that allows us to understand spoken language. Listening, the most widely used language skill, is often used in conjunction with the other skills of speaking, reading and writing. Listening is not only a skill area in language performance but is also a critical means of acquiring a second language (L2). Listening is the channel in which we process language in real time –employing pacing, units of encoding and pausing that are unique to spoken language (Carter & Nunan, 2.000).

In order to help learners get enough listening and speaking experience, Ur (1996) suggests using task-based activities rather than topic-based activities (open questions, debates, discussions) because in the first one there is more interaction, more participation, more motivation and enjoyment since learners have a clear purpose or a goal to get through the use of language.

However, it is important to be cautious about this, since no matter what strategy teachers apply, speaking will always be a problematic issue in EFL classrooms. Parrott (2000) argues that some problems that students have to develop oral fluency are inhibition, or lack of confidence, fear of making 'mistakes', the feeling of having nothing to

say on the subject, lack of appropriate language and lack of practice in conventions of conversational interaction. Hence, he suggests that teacher can take some brainstorm measures to help with each of these problems such as pre-teach key vocabulary, organized the class so that activities take place in small groups. Group and pair work and a clear set of directions and materials can help teachers decrease their participation and move on a learner-centered classroom where students interact with each other. Other strategies related to speaking include focusing initially on information rather than opinion, encouraging an organized discussion of learning skills and objective, try to convince learners of the value of trying to express themselves beyond their apparent linguistic limits (pushed output), encouraging them to accept that 'mistakes are inevitable' in some activities in which the main focus is on oral communication.

Thus, if students do not learn how to speak or do not get any opportunity to speak in the language classroom they may soon get de-motivated and lose interest in learning as Nunan (1991, as cited in Lawtie, 2004) wrote, "success is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language"

Finally, as it was shown before, interaction plays a decisive role for learning a language. It allows teachers and learners to develop oral production through practice.

Classroom interaction and language learning

It is said that in a second or a foreign language, classroom language and interaction are even more important because language is at once the subject of study as well as the medium for learning (Tsui,1995). Also according to Tsui when students listen to the teacher's instructions and explanations, when they express their views, answer questions and carry out tasks and activities, they are not only learning about the language but also putting the language that they are learning to use. The author also states that in situations where the target language is seldom used outside the classroom and the student's exposure to the target language is therefore mainly in the classroom, the kind of input and interaction that is made available is particularly important.

Conceptual framework

In spite of the fact that the idea of using tasks as a tool for learning and planning is not a new one in the educational field, it is a relatively recent arrival on the language teaching scene. However, it is clear that tasks are

strongly being implemented due to the fact that they offer several profits and advantages in foreign language acquisition (Nunan, 2000).

It has been accepted that language is more than simply a system of rules. Language is now generally seen as a dynamic resource for the creation of meaning. In terms of learning, it is commonly accepted that we need to distinguish between 'Learning that' and 'Knowing how'. In other words, we need to distinguish between knowing various grammatical rules and being able to use the rules effectively and appropriately when communicating (Nunan, 2000).

As a result of this, teachers need to help learners see that effective communication involves achieving harmony between functional interpretation and formal appropiacy (Holliday (n.d.) as quoted in Nunan (1998: 102)) by giving them tasks relationship between grammatical items and the discoursal contexts in which they occur.

Taking into account a communicative task is a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form (Nunan, 2000) it is important to

deal with FONF for students not to fossilize mistakes which may affect oral performance. As a matter of fact, Fotos (1998) points out that FONF in EFL contexts provide strong reasons to combine grammar instruction with communicative tasks.

Moreover, Fotos (1998) suggests that a task-based approach to FONF is quite feasible for EFL situations and she also proposes that interactive communicative tasks based on pair-group participation give learners the opportunity to engage in meaning-focused interaction where they must both comprehend and produce the target language.

Foster (1999) affirms that the challenge for a task-based pedagogy, therefore, is to choose, sequence, and implement tasks in ways that will combine a focus on meaning with a focus on form.

Skehan (1996, as quoted in Foster (1999: 69)) has developed a theoretical framework for task based teaching that claims to balance the development of fluency with accuracy and interlanguage restructuring.

Foster and Skehan (1996) have shown that giving learners time to plan before they begin a task significantly increases the complexity, accuracy, and fluency of the language they use, and that these effects increase in

relation to the cognitive difficulty of the task (Foster, 1999).

As it can be seen, several researchers have taken into account the use of tasks as a promise strategy to be applied in the learning process.

Contextual framework

Language center of the University of Nariño

The Language Center has traditionally been a central element of the Linguistics and Languages Department. First of all in 1962 the Electronic Language Center was created in order to intensify the teaching of foreign languages through the use of modern systems and with the goal of bringing the possibility to learn a language faster and in an efficient way. Then, four years later, it served as a means to create the modern languages department.

Finally, on November 25th, 1993 the Language Center received the name of Language Center of the University of Nariño (resolution 158). After that this center has been the place that offers foreign language courses as well as Spanish courses and indigenous languages courses. The language center is also seen as the research center to implement pedagogical projects in the field of language teaching.

Mission, vision and principles

The mission of the Language center of the University of Nariño is to promote the learning of Spanish, foreign and indigenous languages. This knowledge will contribute to the scientific and intercultural education of its participants based on the continuous investigation and methodological studies.

On the other hand, the center has the vision of providing students with an excellent academic preparation which allows them to use the target language, to acquire new knowledge, and to communicate effectively.

The main principles the language center pursues are developed in view of students' needs, so what this establishment proposes is:

To promote pedagogical innovations in the area of languages through the investigation and methodological studies.

To offer courses that let students acquire a functional knowledge of mother, foreign and indigenous languages as a means to communicate.

To offer a variety of options since there are a great number of people interested in learning languages. That is why the courses are then organized according to learners'

levels (i.e., beginners, intermediates and advanced

learners) (Obando, 2004).

Definition of terms

Grammar

A description of the structure of a language and the

way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are

combined to produce sentences in the language (Richards, J.,

Platt, J., & Platt, H., 1992)

Communicative Competence

The ability not only to apply the grammatical rules of

a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences

but also to know when and where to use these sentences and

to whom (Richards, J., Platt, J., & Platt, H., 1992).

Corrective feedback

It is an indication to a learner that his or her use of

the target language is incorrect. This includes a variety of

responses that a language learner receives. Corrective

feedback can be explicit (for example, 'No, you should say

"goes", not "go") or implicit (for example, 'yes, he goes to

school every day'), and may or may not include

metalinguistic information (for example, 'Don't forget to

make the verb agree with the subject') (Lightbown and Spada,

1999)

Types of corrective feedback

According to Spada and Lightbown (1999) there are six different feedback types as it follows.

Explicit correction

It refers to the explicit provision of the correct form. As the teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates that what the student had said was incorrect by saying phrases such us 'Oh, you mean...', 'You should say...', and so on.

Recast

It involves the teacher's reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance, minus the error. Recasts are generally implicit in that they are not introduced by 'You mean', 'Use this word', or 'You should say.'

Clarification request

It indicates to students either that their utterance has been misunderstood by the teacher or that the utterance is ill-formed in some way and that a repetition or a reformulation is required. A clarification request includes phrases such as ' Pardon me...', 'Excuse me...' It may also include a repetition of the error as in 'What do you mean by...?'

Metalinguistic feedback

It contains comments, information, or questions related to the well-formedness of the student's utterance, without explicitly providing the correct form. Metalinguistic comments generally indicate that there is an error somewhere (i.e., 'Can you find your error?'). Also, metalinguistic information generally provides either some grammatical metalanguage that refers to the nature of the error (i.e., 'It's masculine') or a word definition in the case of lexical errors. Metalinguistic questions also point to the nature of the error but attempt to elicit the information from the student (i.e., 'Is it feminine?').

Elicitation

It refers to at least three techniques that teachers use to directly elicit the correct form from the students. First, teachers elicit completion of their own utterance (For example, 'it's a...'). Second, teachers use questions to elicit correct forms (for example, ...'How do we say x in French?'). Third, teachers occasionally ask students to reformulate their utterance.

Repetition

It refers to the teacher's repetition, in isolation, of the student's erroneous utterance. In most cased, teachers adjust their intonation so as to highlight the error.

Comprehensible input

It is the input that can be understood. In classroom interaction, input often refers to the language used by the teacher. However, language used by a pupil also serves as input for other pupilsm (Tsui, 1995: 113).

Modification devices in interaction

According to Tsui (1995: 65-8) modification devices in interaction are as it follows.

Confirmation check

A confirmation check is used to ensure that the speaker has correctly understood what the previous speaker said. It can be realized by repeating or paraphrasing what the previous speaker said with a rising intonation.

Repetition request

Repetition requests are used when the speaker fails to hear or understand what the previous speaker has said and asks for a repetition or a restatement. It can be in the form of repeating part of the previous speaker's utterance with a rising intonation, the aim being to get them to

repeat the rest. It can also be in the form of an explicit request to the other speaker to repeat, by using expressions like 'I beg your pardon' and 'Please say that again'.

Decomposition

It means breaking up the initial question into several questions, making it easier for the other speaker to respond to it. For example, 'When do you go to the uh Santa Monica?' ... 'You say you go fishing in Santa Monica, right?'

Comprehensible check

Comprehensible checks are usually realized by 'Right?', 'OK?' or 'Do you understand?' Long (1983, as quoted in Tsui (1995: 68)) considers comprehension checks as strategies for avoiding trouble since, according to him, they show an effort on the part of the native speaker to avoid a communication breakdown. However, they are also used by teachers when students show no sing of comprehension.

Self-perception

The term 'self-repetition' is used to refer to all instances where the speaker repeats what they have said previously, whether it is an exact repetition or a repetition in which modifications are made. The various types of modification of questions discussed in the previous section can all be subsumed under 'self-repetition'.

Focus on form

It is an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features by the teacher and/or more students triggered by perceiving problems with comprehension or production through corrective feedback or recasts(Long & Robinson, 1998 in Doughty & Williams (1998: 23))

Focus on Forms

This is known as the traditional approach. The teacher or textbook writer divides the L2 into segments of various kinds (phonemes, words, collocations, morphemes, sentence patterns, notions, functions, tones, stress and intonation patterns, and so on), and presents these to the learner in models, initially one item at a time, in a sequence determined by (rather vague, usually intuitive) notions of frequency, valency, or difficulty (Long, n.d.)

Fossilization

A process which sometimes occurs in which incorrect linguistic features become a permanent part of the way a person speaks or writes a language. Aspects of pronunciation, vocabulary usage, and grammar may become fixed or fossilized in second or foreign language learning (Richards, J., Platt, J., & Platt, H., 1992)

Language awareness

Approaches to teaching a language which emphasize the value of helping learners to focus attention on features of language in use. Most such approaches emphasize the importance of learners gradually developing their own awareness of how the language is used through discoveries which they make themselves (TEFL Glossary, 2002)

Negotiation of Meaning

When learners interact with native speakers or other learners, they often have problems in communicating. This leads to interactional efforts to make mutual understanding. This is called 'negotiation of meaning' (TEFL Glossary, 2002).

Task

It is an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information trough some process of thought, and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process. (Prabhu (1987) quoted by Richards and Rogers (2001: 233)).

Task based syllabus

A syllabus which is organized around tasks rather than on terms of grammar or vocabulary (Richards, J., Platt, J., & Platt, H., 1992).

Chapter 3: Methodological aspects

Population

This study was carried out with a group of students from the Language Center of the Linguistics and Languages Department of the University of Nariño.

Sample

The sample of the study consists on twelve students, chosen at random, all of which belong to a first level course at the institution above mentioned.

Design

This study was carried out in three main stages: First of all, the learners' level of proficiency in the target language was identified through a class based on communicative activities where students had to perform orally, and where FONF may be expected to arise incidentally. After this, and considering the data gathered when students focused their attention to aspects related to the simple present tense, different tasks based on proactive FONF were designed in order to reinforce students' uptake. The tasks considered oral production, accuracy and the degree to which learners showed the grammar problems detected in the first part of the study. Lastly, an interview was carried out with the chosen population to

determine the effects of the combination of communicative
tasks and proactive FONF.

$$G_1 = \quad 0_1 \quad X \quad 0_2$$

Research type

This research is experimental since a treatment will be
applied. In order to identify the effects of this treatment,
learners were asked to perform orally. This performance was
analyzed considering some parameters present in the Common
European Framework, which were modified according to the
real needs in this context, and according to rating scales
and performance criteria suggested by Underhill paper
(1987). If learners seem to move closer to the
characteristics stated in the CEF-based parameters, then it
could be suggested that the applied had a positive effect on
learning. In any case, the outcomes obtained in this
investigation can serve as a means to identify both positive
and negative effects of combining communicative tasks with
proactive focus on form. In order to provide additional
information, a descriptive analysis was used as well.

Data gathering procedure

This study was developed by applying a reactive focus
on form class as a pre-test, and a post-test, which
consisted basically on oral interviews with students. In

order to have enough output from students to be analyzed, and to foster interaction, these interviews were conducted in pairs. However, the interaction was initiated by the teacher. In addition, some observations were fulfilled and subsequently analyzed.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The entire data obtained through the research process was analyzed in a quantitative way, but aspects such as students' response to the use of communicative tasks and focus on form were also analyzed qualitatively and included in the conclusions of this study. The interpretation of the scores obtained was described qualitatively as needed in order to obtain a clear picture of the results and to be able to draw some generalizations.

Administrative aspects

Schedule of activities

Activity	Month													
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Preliminary project	——	——												
References collection		——	——											
Project production				——	——	——								
Design of instruments						——	——							
Project fulfillment										——	——			
Data collection											——	——		
Data analysis												——		
Final report													——	

Budget

Unit	Concept	Cost per unit	Total cost
1500	Photocopy	50	75000
1	A personal computer	1'855000	1'855000
1	Toner	48500	48500
3	Ink load	10000	30000
2	*Block of paper*	*9800*	*19600*
4	*CD*	*1000*	*4000*
26	*Use of internet per hour*	*1800*	*46800*
	Teaching material		*80000*
	Presentation material and equipment		*100000*
1	*Book*	*55000*	*55000*
	Transportation expenses	*450000*	*450000*
Total budget			*2763900*

Chapter 4: Results

Analysis and interpretation of a class taken as pre-test, tasks and post-test

Procedure of the pre-test

The researchers conducted a class focused on reactive focus on form in order to know student's weaknesses and strengths of present simple tense grammar in oral production. The diagnostic class was based on the third unit of the book "American Inside Out". (Kay & Jones, 2003).

The class began by reading the article "On a perfect day in New York." After that, teachers asked students to read and do some exercises (1 and 2) from the book. First it was noticed that students had difficulty in pronouncing some verbs such as get up, go out, and watch, and that they did not know some words from the reading like: sailing, about, croissant, and so on. Then, one of the researchers talked about how a day in his life was by using the most common verbs to describe daily activities (walk up, get up, have breakfast, work, go to work, study, go shopping, and so on), and making some gestures whenever necessary to enhance students' comprehension.

Once Students understood, they started talking about their own daily activities. Subsequently, the other

researcher talked about his partner's routine. Then learners were asked to do the same so that they talked about a friend's and a relative's routine day as a way to use simple present and conjugations in a communicative, purposeful way.

Finally researchers handed out a copy with a drawing representing a specific activity with a question, in order for learners to answer and talk about it (appendix 1).

Researchers found that learners made a large number of mistakes, and in most of the cases their oral performances were not sufficient to convey meaning, ask or answer through accurate structures when they spoke about their daily activities and especially when they talked about someone else. Moreover, they often got stuck, and took a long time to ask or answer a question. At times, they did not speak at all. Besides, it could be noticed that students had some problems because they did not know enough vocabulary. In this case the researchers provided expressions such as: How do you say….in English? (e.g., How do you say "yo me baño" in English?).

Despite these limitations, the class was carried out and students were able to continue interacting with the support given by the corrective feedback (recast, repetition, and elicitation) and the modification devices

(confirmation check, clarification request, repetition request, self-perception, and comprehensible check) provided by the researchers, and which arose during the procedure and which facilitated interaction.

The most common mistakes students made came from overgeneralizing a grammar rule and from attempting to translate a Spanish structure into English as can be seen in these examples: I am get up at 7:00, I to have breakfast, she go to school, he have lunch, he watch TV, I me get up. Also, they omitted the pronoun repeatedly. Although the researchers provided modified input for modeling structures, students' difficulties were especially strong when dealing with verbs in third singular person, and also on the auxiliary "Do" or "Does".

Most of the learners made sentences without using the third person of the singular endings. They hardly ever did it, but they did not do it in a suitable way. They did it when dealing with the second or the first person of the singular and the plural which, again, might be a transfer from what they know in Spanish.

The researchers provided some feedback to try to make learners notice their mistakes by themselves. For example:

Researcher: What time does she have breakfast?

(question)

Student: She have her breakfast at 7:30 (answer)

Researcher: She has breakfast at 7:30 (recast). Now, what time does she have breakfast? (repetition)

Student: She has her breakfast at 7:30 (answer)

Researcher: she has breakfast at 7:30? (confirmation check)

Student: yes, teacher (confirmation)

When researchers applied elicitation, they asked questions to elicit the correct form for instance, how do we say "ella cepilla sus dientes todos los días" in English?, the students tried to answer: she brush her teeth everyday, the researcher replied: are you sure?, and the student corrected: she brushes her teeth everyday.

On the other hand, there were moments where students had some problems to understand what researchers wanted to say, in this case they used comprehension checks not only to avoid a communication breakdown, but also when students did not show sign of comprehension. For example:

Researcher: can you tell me what kind of activities your mother does on Sundays?

Student: Mmmm, Mmmm (silence)

Researcher: Do you understand my question? (Comprehension check).

Student :(muttering) so, so.

Researcher: Sorry?

Student: Sorry, puede repetirme otra vez la pregunta profe?

Researcher: O.k. Can you tell me what kind of activities does your mother do on Sundays?(slow pace)

Student: Ah! My mother gets up at 6:30 and she prepares the breakfast for my brothers and she (teacher, how do you say in English quedarse solo?

Researcher: stay alone

Student: and she stay alone because we go to study

Researcher: stay? (repetition)

Student 2: She stays alone (a recast given by a classmate)

When a response is not given , a comprehension check was an important device for finding out whether this is because the students do not know the answer or because they do not even understand the question. Moreover when the mistakes arose, different kind of feedback and modification devices arose too, as seen above.

The data collected in this class were allocated in table 1 and represented in graphic 1.

In table 1, the numbers refer to the twelve students with whom the research was carried out. In this way, the number one refers to the student one, the number two to the student two, and so forth.

The letters are the level that the students got in the pre-test, A1 is the lowest level and A4 is the highest one.

In turn, these levels were got according to a grade given to the students by the researchers. The X is to mark the level in which the students are.

In graphic 1, the scale shows the grade got by each student. This scale is taken from one to five.

The explanations about these grades and their corresponding levels are specified in the interpretations under the title "Basic user". (See page 57-59)

Criteria / Learners	Categories											
	Fluency				Grammar Accuracy				Vocabulary			
	A4	A3	A2	A1	A4	A3	A2	A1	A4	A3	A2	A1
1				X				X				X
2			X				X				X	
3				X				X				X
4			X				X				X	
5				X				X				X
6				X				X				X
7				X				X				X
8				X			X					X
9				X				X				X
10				X				X				X
11		X					X			X		
12				X				X				X

Table 1.

Graphic 1.
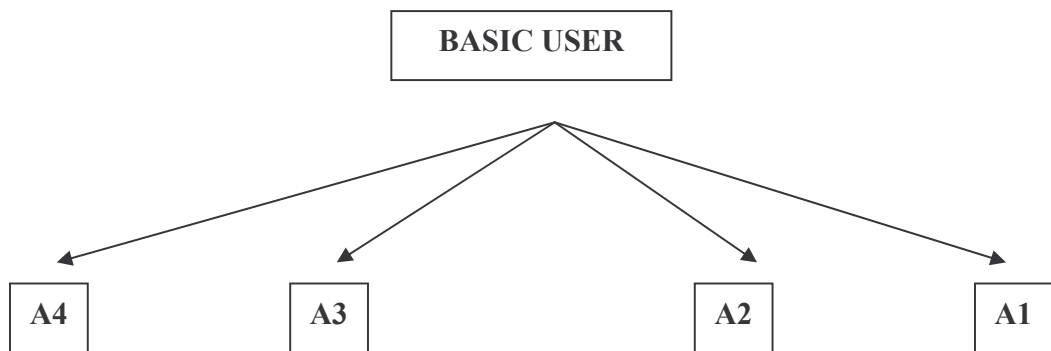
Fluency:

Students are given a certain score or classified in a certain group according to the criteria explained next. Students are classified as:

A4: When students speak without hesitating or getting stuck. Their answers are straightforward (E = 4.8 – 5.0).

A3: When students express their ideas, but hesitate a little bit. They use some explanations before uttering the main idea (B = 4.0 – 4.7).

A2: When students take long to express their ideas, and require teacher's feedback or modification devices. Despite this delay, they finally do it. (A = 3.0 – 3.9)

A1: When students display a lot of difficulty to express or give an accurate answer. When they constantly require teacher's feedback or any modification device (I = 0.1 – 2.9).

Grammar accuracy:

A4: When students use reasonably accurately a repertoire of frequently used "routines" and patterns associated with more predictable situations. They make effective use of simple present tense (E = 4.8 – 5.0).

A3: When students use some simple structures correctly, but still systematically make basic mistakes. They can answer simple questions about personal topics correctly in present tense (B = 4.0 – 4.7).

A2: When students show only limited control of a few simple grammatical structures and sentences patterns in a memorized repertoire. They have difficulty with question formation(A = 3.0 – 3.9).

A1. When students cannot deal with grammatical structures accurately, so they make many mistakes. They cannot construct correct simple sentences (I = 0.1 – 2.9).

Vocabulary:

A4: When students express their ideas through suitable words according to the main topic. Fully active concrete vocabulary is used (E = 4.8 – 5.0).

A3: When students have a limited amount of vocabulary, but are able to express their ideas. When they are familiarized with common concrete vocabulary. They still search for words (B = 4.0 – 4.7).

A2: When students ask a teacher the word they have in mind because they do not know how to say it in English, or when they vacillate and tend to replace the expected word by another which is less appropriate. Vocabulary is still very limited (A = 3.0 – 3.9).

A1: When students get stuck because of they do not have enough vocabulary to give complete ideas, or when they are constantly asking to the teacher about common words. They do not have concrete vocabulary (I = 0.1 – 2.9).

In the normal class taken as a pre-test, the results got were not optimum. Despite some present tense forms were noticed, the students still had difficulties when using

them. The fact that a learner responds to a focus on form
by producing the form correctly does not mean that the
learner has acquired the form. However, it does indicate
that the form has been noticed" (Swain (1985) as cited in
Rod Ellis (2001: 413)).

Considering the idea above mentioned and after having
detected the common learners' mistakes through the pretest,
it was decided that this research would be based on
proactive focus on form combined with communicative tasks in
order to reinforce students' learning. After this treatment
was implemented in subsequent classes, the researchers
attempted to pinpoint the effects of tasks on the learners'
performance.

Tasks

Session 1 (task 1)

Goal:

Students will exchange information about cultural
aspects.

Students' oral interaction will be fostered through the
use of a task.

Procedure:

First, the teachers showed students the Unit 2 of the video English World (Didaco, S.A.), in which some characters introduced themselves. They gave information about their names, age, nationalities, jobs, and country where they came from. The researchers made students watch the video four times in order to have a clear understanding of the function featured on the video.

Second, the teachers gave each student a piece of paper containing key words (see appendix 2) about someone from a specific culture. The words were also featured in the video.

Third, they asked students to find the people who had the information that they were missing. To do this, they read their own key words aloud. In this part, there were some mistakes in the pronunciation of some words which were corrected by the teacher.

Next, when they had found each other they sat down in a group together, they got into three groups of four students and they were expected to discuss and organize the information they had obtained.

Subsequently, they wrote a short text according to the characters in the video by using the key words.

Next, the text was presented to the rest of the class without reading it. In this presentation the researchers found some common mistakes in the groups 1 and 3. The texts were incorrect because of the wrong use of the verb with the pronouns he and she.

The students' texts were as it follows.

Group 1: "Tony is Italian. He is twenty nine. He is waiter. He is work at Luigi's restaurant. He is cook lasagna for lunch."

Group 2: "They are Alexandra and Ivan. They are Russian. They dance in a theater. They are twenty seven years old."

Group 3: "He is François. He is French. He have thirty two. He is a hairdresser. He have a beauty salon."

The researchers established that these difficulties were prevailing in each member of these groups because no one provided peer feedback to their classmates during the task. Group 1 made a correct use of the verb to be in some sentences, but they overgeneralized it by using this verb when it was not required. Group 3 made a mistake that is very frequent, they used the verb "to have" to express someone's age. Group 2 did not make any mistake, and although they used the verbs accurately, the researchers

recognized that this text was easier for them since they did not work with the pronouns he or she. Therefore, they did not need to add (in this case) the "s" to the verb "dance".

While students were presenting the texts, the researchers provided feedback and some modification devices such as metalinguistic feedback, comments or questions, without explicitly providing the correct form.

Students group 1: he is work at Luigi's restaurant. He is cook lasagna.

Researcher: Can you find your errors?

Student 2: He work at Luigi's restaurant and he cook lasagna.

Researcher: Are you sure that it is work or works and cook or cooks?

Students: Ah! He works at Luigi's restaurant and he cooks lasagna.

In this case, the researcher emphasized the form of the correct verb, and this helped students notice the error.

In group 2, the researchers provided feedback in the same way. For example:

Students group 2: he have thirty two.

Researcher: have thirty two? But remember the character is telling his age. Can you find your mistake?

Student 10: yes. He is thirty two

Researcher: O.K. very good.

Students group 3: he have a beauty salon.

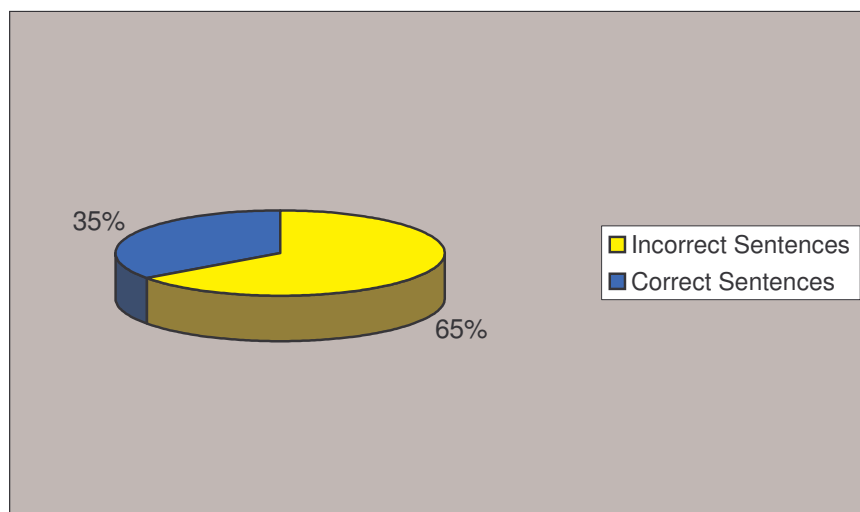Researcher: excuse me. (Clarification request)

Student 12: tal vez es...he has, teacher?

Researcher: He has what? (Clarification request)

Student: he has a beauty salon.

Researcher: yes, right.

The number of accurate and inaccurate oral answers regarding the use of simple present in a communicative task can be seen in graphic 2 as follows:

Graphic 2

Session 2 (task 2)

Goals

To elicit students to make guesses about the person who lives in the apartment shown in the picture (see appendix 3).

Procedure

The researchers first asked students to get into groups of four, and handed in a piece of paper containing a picture about someone's bedroom. Afterwards, students were asked to survey it and to begin to make guesses about the bedroom-owner's personality for five minutes.

Later, and after having provided the directions and the materials needed, the researchers asked learners to look for the words they did not know in English and which were, related to the items in the picture. Ten minutes were given to do this activity.

When looking for unknown vocabulary, students began to interact by asking some short questions in order to ask his or her group about some words. They showed to be very concerned about the time available to complete the task. So, a collaborative environment was clearly created by them. Most of the time they were working in English. However it was unavoidable for the students to use Spanish when dealing

with some sort of difficult structures. Therefore, they asked the teachers or another partner for help as is illustrated next.

Group 1:

Student: teacher, how do you say "bicicleta stática" in English?

Researcher: exercise bike

Student: thanks!

Group 2:

Student: Teacher, Is the person married? Because there is two pillows on the bed.

Researcher 2: Because there are two pillows on the bed (recast).

Researcher 1: No, it isn't. It is single. There are two pillows but the bed is not so big.

Group 3:

Student 2 (asks to a classmate): cómo se dice raqueta, sabes?

Researcher 1: How do you say that Spanish question in English? Do it in English, please (elicitation).

Student 2: Ok, teacher. How do you say "raqueta" in English?

Student 4: I don't know.

Student 2: teacher, how do you say "raqueta" in English?

Researcher 1: racket.

Student 2: thank you!

Student 4: thank you!

Group 2:

Student 3 (asks to another partner): help me! This word is difficult. I don't find almohada in my dictionary.

Student 4: the teacher say pillow.

Researcher 2: The teacher say... pillow? (elicitation)

Student 3: no, says

Researcher 2: So tell me again the whole sentence.

Student 4: The teacher says pillow.

Researcher 2: Ok, very good!

After, the researchers gave some more instructions to engage all the groups in a frequent interaction. Nine pieces of paper containing a question were put in a bag and students had to take one question at a time and ask it to their classmates. Hence, Group 1 began to take out a question and read it, and group 2 answered it. Then, group 3 gave support to the group-2 answer by giving details from the picture, and by using phrases such as "Because, there is/are…". After that, each group changed their role taking

turns until each group performed each function and ended up asking three questions, answering three different questions from other group, and also giving support to other people's responses. During this part of the task, the learners were very attentive.

Although this time, students showed to be much more interested, some mistakes were still made during student-student interaction or student-teacher interaction. Some are exemplified below.

First turn

Student 1 (group 1): Is the person who lives in the apartment a man or a woman?

Student 1(group 2): woman

Researcher 2: woman? No more? (clarification request)

Student 4 (group 2): is a woman.

Researcher 1: is a woman??? (elicitation)

Student 1 (group 2): teacher, teacher, the person is a woman.

Researcher 2: that's better.

 (Researcher 1 asks student 1 from group 3 to give support)

Student 1 (group 3): the person is a woman because there is dresses for woman.

Researcher 1: because there are dresses (recast).

Student 1 (group 3): yes there are dresses.

Third turn

Student 3(group 3): is the person athletic?

Student 3 (group 1): no,

Researcher 1: no...? no... what? (clarification request)

Student 3 (group 1): no, the person is not athletic. She is..., she is... How do you say gorda in English?

Researcher 1: fat

Student 3 (group 1): yes, I imagine that she is fat

(Researcher 2 elicits student 3 from group 2 to give support)

Student 3 (group 2): yes, she is fat because she have a exercise bike.

Researcher 2: she has an exercise bike (recast).

Eight turn

Student 4 (group 2): does the person study?

Student 4 (group 3): no, the person don't study.

Researcher 2: excuse me? (clarification request), the person...? (elicitation)

Student 4 (group 3): the person don't studies.

Researcher 2: the person doesn't study (recast)

Student 4 (group 3): yes, the person doesn't study because maybe she cook

Researcher 1: she cook...? (elicitation)

Student 4 (group 3): excuse me, she cooks

Researcher 1: ok.

(Researcher 2 elicits student 4 from group 1 to give support to the answer)

Student 4 (group 1): no, I think she study because she has a computer. Excuse me, she studies because she has a computer (self-perception)

Researcher 2: well done!

Student 4 (group 1): and there is many books.

Researcher 1: there are many books (recast)

Student 4 (group 1): ahhh, yes, yes, teacher, for two or more things there are.

Researcher 1: yes, that's it.

As shown above, corrective feedback was supplied and some modification devices arose during oral interaction.

Finally, each group presented orally their own description of the person's personality. Although, this time, mistakes related to "s" and "es" were reduced, the irregular verb *have* in its third person of the singular form was used. But the use of "to be" was improved.

Nevertheless, this time the use of all present tense forms improved; students sometimes showed to be aware of their own mistakes. The results can be clearly seen in graphic 3.
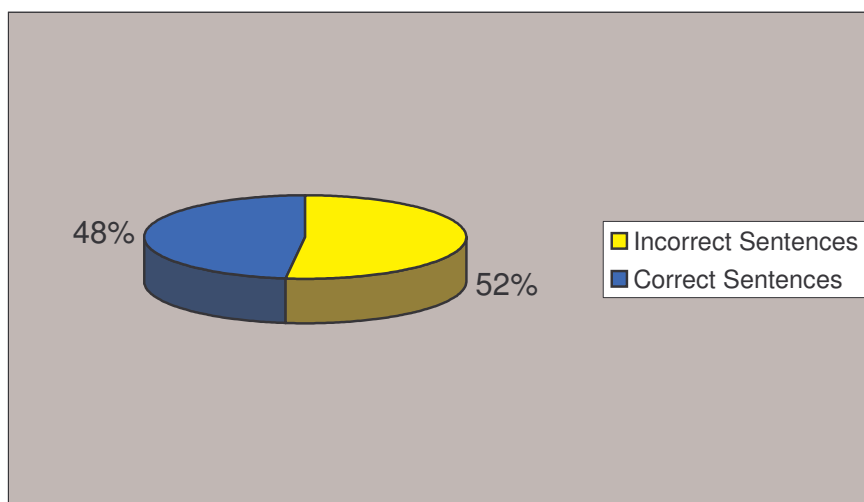
Graphic 3

Session 3 (task 3)

Goal:

Students will play the role of interviewers and interviewees for a show that intends to match people who have common likes.

Procedure:

First, the researchers asked students to get in pairs and they gave them two different charts with questions and a part of information referring to these questions related to likes and dislikes (see appendix 4). There were six pairs.

Second, each student selected a role, which was as an interviewer or an interviewee. Thus, the interviewer organized the questions. Then, these were asked to their interviewees. The students acting as interviewers completed the information on a chart; they answered the questions using this information.

After that, students switched roles in order to provide similar practice for both people regarding the use of questions and answers.

Once they finished this activity, teachers distributed at random the charts containing the information given by the interviewees.

Next, interviewers asked their interviewees about the person's information they had.

Finally, the teachers used all the information held by the students to ask them general questions to check their comprehension about the topic and their accuracy.

During this procedure the researchers found some mistakes in the different sentences but especially in the questions produced by the interviewers. For instance:

Pair one:

Interviewer: you do smoke?

Interviewee: yes

Pair two:

Interviewer: What do kind of pet you have?

Interviewee: a dog.

Interviewer: what do music you listen to?

Interviewee: I listen to regeaton music

Pair four:

Interviewer: Do have you a pet?

Interviewee: yes a pet

Pair five:

Interviewer: what do you watch TV program?

Interviewee: I watch los Simpson

One common mistake was that students did not place the auxiliary "do" correctly in their sentences; however, students understood the questions and answered correctly in most of the cases. Also, it was easier for the interviewees to respond because they only had to complete the information. Nevertheless, they sometimes did not answer using whole sentences, e.g. "a dog" instead of " I have a dog" or only "yes".

The researchers provided feedback when they made these mistakes:

Student 1: what do kind of pet you have?

Researcher: do you think that the order of your question is right?

Student 1: maybe, what kind of pet you do have?

Researcher: you are closer. What kind of pet do you have?

Student 1: o.k. teacher. What kind of pet do you have?

Student 2: a dog

Researcher: very good, but can you give me the whole answer?

Student 2: I have a dog

It is one example about how the mistakes were corrected, but when the interviewers asked their interviewees about the person's information they had, other mistakes arose, because they were using the third person of singular. For example:

Student 3: what magazine or newspaper do you read?

Researcher: remember that in this case you have to ask the question using the third person.

Student 3: Mmmm what magazine or newspaper do she read?

Researcher: not exactly, someone knows the right way?

Student 5: yes, does she read.

Student 3: what magazine or newspaper does she read?

Student 4: she reads the magazine

Researcher: well done!

Most of the students had a little bit of difficulty when asking the questions in the third person as shown in the example above. Nevertheless, it was solved with feedback and modification devices. the same was made with the mistakes made by the students in the few verbs that they used, i.e. "she like..." or "he watchs...

In this task the students improved a sixty four percent in relation to the last tasks. The results are seen in graphic four.
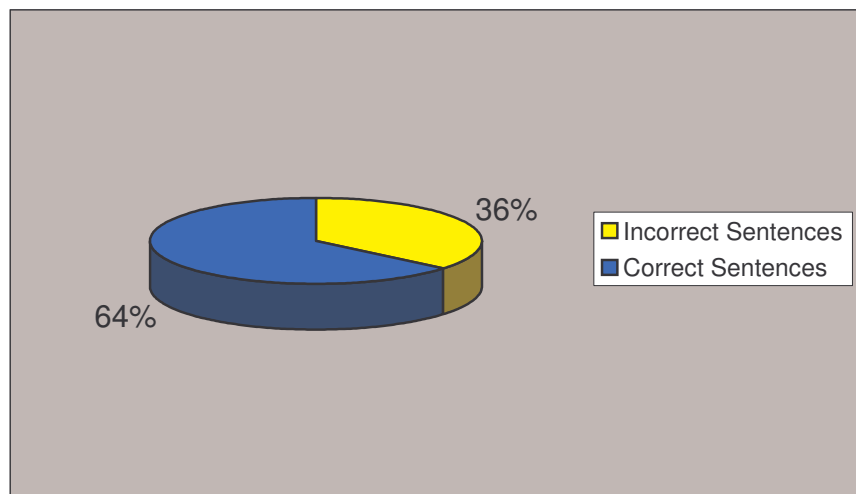
Graphic 4

Session 4 (task 4)

Goals

To talk about daily activities. This task serves as a means to lead students to practice orally by giving short

utterances, making questions, and giving descriptions.
Besides it is useful to make students interact and realize
differences between third person of the singular and plural.

Procedure

The researchers began to ask the students to get into
groups of six, and gave directions to engage them in the
task. Then, each group chose two partners who were supposed
to draw according to their partners' directions.

A picture about "A day in the life of an English
teacher" or "Boys' weekend out" (see appendix 5) were given
to the four participants expected to give instructions. Also
a fine cardboard divided into twelve spaces like in each
original picture, and some marker pens were given to those
chosen to draw.

The learners from group one began to look at the
picture "Boys' weekend out" and described the first section
of the picture. Then, the learners from group two continued
their duty in a similar way by using their picture "A day in
the life of an English teacher". There was a striking
interaction since the learners in charge of drawing asked a
lot of questions to imagine each picture in a more precise
way.

As learners made mistakes, the researchers provided corrective feedback (recast and elicitation).

Each learner and group took turns to participate. Nevertheless, it was clear that some students spoke more than others, and some of them made more mistakes than others. Also some times the people drawing did not hear the directions or did not understand them. As a consequence, some modification devices such as confirmation checks, repetition requests, and so forth were required.

Some examples of this procedure can be seen below.

Group 1 (Boys' weekend out):

Student 1: There are three boys, they say hello.

Student 2: they use pants and T-shirts.

Researcher 1: they <u>wear</u> pants and T-shirts

Drawer 1: how are?

Researcher 2: how are? What?

Drawer 1: how are they?

Researcher 2: that's ok.

Student 1: they are tall and fat. The T-shirts has lines.

Researcher 1: the T-shirts...

Student 1: have lines, the T-shirts have lines.

Researcher 1: Ok.

Group 2 (A day in the life of an English teacher):

Student 1: the teacher dreams in the bed.

Researcher 1: a teacher dreams on a bed

Drawer 1: is a man or a woman?

Researcher 1: is the teacher a man or a woman?

Drawer 1. is the teacher a man or a woman?

Student 3: the teacher is a man.

Student 4: the alarm clock sounds, and the teacher gets up.

Student 1: nooo, the teacher wakes up because he is on the bed

Researcher 1: yes, very good.

Group 1 (Boys' weekend out):

Student 2: draw the boys in a restaurant.

Student 1: they have... Teacher, how do you say vasos in English?

Researcher 1: glasses

Student 1: they have glasses. They drink beer.

Drawer 2: They drink beer?

Student 1: yes beer or juice.

Group 2 (A day in the life of an English teacher):

Drawer 1: Quickly! Quickly!

Student 4: the space number six has students and the teacher.

Drawer 1: how many students there are?

Researcher 2: how many students...?

Drawer 1: how many students is there? Ahhh, no, no, no, the correct is how many students are there?

Researcher 2: very good!

Student 3: there are six students.

Student 1: and there is a board. They are in a classroom.

After the two groups finished drawing the twelve sections of the picture, all the learners sat down together in their group and were given the picture used by the other group. Then, they compared the pictures drawn with the original one. Each group found four mistakes, and consequently they corrected them. However, just group two did not make any mistake when correcting. Group one made two mistakes, one was reformulated by self-perception device, and the other was addressed by a participant from group one providing the correct form of the structure.

Finally, the teachers gave the total score and told what group was the winner.

It was evident students had enhanced their output since they were aware of what they knew and did not make as many mistakes as in task 1. They clearly acquired the use of the morpheme "-s" and "-es", and also the use of the auxiliaries in their form and correct order. Although, some of them continued to make mistakes when dealing with the irregular verb have.

On the other hand, they spoke more than in the previous tasks, and interacted by making gestures, speaking, and by asking when having doubts about vocabulary or structures. Many modification devices were required to help learners improve their accuracy and fluency. The mistakes made in this last task are presented in graphic
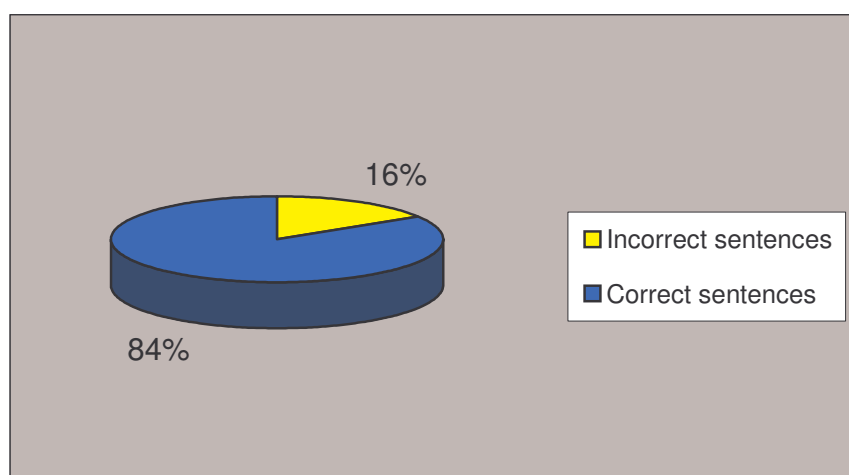
Graphic 5

Post-test

Goal

To get students to speak about daily activities using the topics related to simple present.

Procedure

First, researchers prepared some questions concerning daily activities' information about himself or herself and someone else.

Second, students got in pairs but they were asked individually by the researchers. Each student answered all questions and researchers classified the responses based on the table 1 and basic user criteria (see page 61).

Nine of the twelve students answered the questions correctly and only three made some mistakes such as:

Researcher: what time do you get up?

Student 1: I get up at 6:30

Researcher: and what about your mother?

Student 1: she get up at 6:00.

Researcher: what kind of TV program does your father watch?

Student 1: your father watch news.

Researcher: what is your favorite subject?

Student 12: I am like biology.

Researcher: why?

Student 12: because is interesting.

Researcher: what time do you get up?

Student 8: I get up to the 6:00 O'clock

Researcher: what about your mother?

Student 8: she get ups to the 6:00.

It can be observed that each of these students still made different kind of mistakes, for instance, in the third person of singular the unnecessary use of verb to be, the inadequate use of the possessive adjectives and the omission of the subject. However, these mistakes were not as common as it was observed at the beginning of the study.

Third, researchers used some pieces of paper with a topic (family, vacation, home, free time, school, and life) related to the different issues taught in class. There were two questions for each topic (see appendix 6). Thus, every one selected a piece of paper and he or she talked about the topic according to the question given by using the simple present structures. In this opportunity the researchers noticed that eight of the twelve students had an adequate interaction; this time there were four students who made mistakes, the three students mentioned above and the student two.

For example:

Topic: family

    Researcher: what does your family do on Sundays?

    Student 1: Mmmm. They walk and my father read and my mother cook and in the afternoon go to the park and my brother ride bicycle.

Topic: home

    Researcher: What does your mother do everyday in the morning when she is at home?

    Student 12: uh. She prepare food. She buy. She watch novels. She washs dress. She cleans the house in the morning.

Topic: free time

    Researcher: what does your brother or sister do in his / her free time?

    Student 3: my sister reads magazines. She speaks for telephone. She go the street. Mmmm eso.

Topic: life

    Researcher: how is a day in your life?

    Student 8: I get up at 6:30 and me bath for go to the school and listen class. Go to the house, study, do the exercise of English. I go to the VIPRI and.. study English..

Two of the rest of students also made some little mistakes, however they noticed them immediately and corrected themselves (self-perception). For example:

Student 11: my mother cook lunch ... ah cooks lunch...

Student 7: he play soccer... excuse me, he plays soccer

Students got difficulty in getting vocabulary in some sentences, they got better a little bit in their fluency, but especially they got better notoriously in the grammar accuracy.

Taking into account that in the first class (pre-test) there were many prevailing mistakes in the use of simple present tense, the final results suggest a positive response of students to the combination of tasks with proactive FONF. The progress of students in their output and their self-correction skills seemed to be more visible after the application of each task.

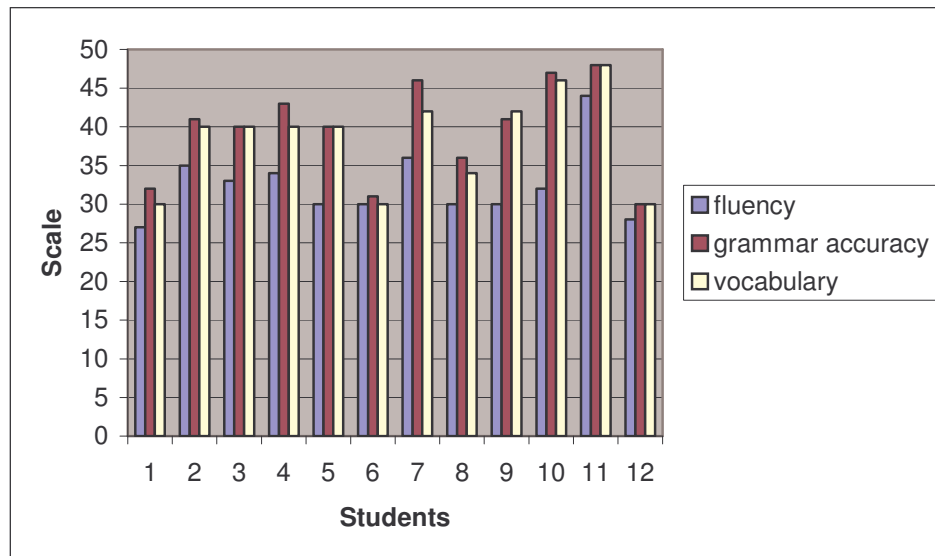The results obtained in the post-test are seen in graphic 6.

The table and the graphic used in the pre-test were also used in the post-test with the same interpretation according to basic user. Nevertheless the results changed.

Criteria / Learners	CATEGORIES											
	Fluency				Grammar Accuracy				Vocabulary			
	A4	A3	A2	A1	A4	A3	A2	A1	A4	A3	A2	A1
1				X			X				X	
2			X			X				X		
3				X			X				X	
4			X			X				X		
5			X			X				X		
6			X			X					X	
7			X			X				X		
8			X				X				X	
9			X			X				X		
10			X			X				X		
11		X			X				X			
12				X			X				X	

Table 2.

Graphic 6

Chapter 5: conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions

After having collected the data and after having analyzed it considering the theoretical framework, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The information collected in the class taken as the pre-test, suggested that incidental focus on form frequently arose during the class. So, teachers should attempt to profit from it and transform the mistakes students make into a valuable tool for teaching, clarifying or reinforcing aspects of language that students need to communicate more adequately. Students knew the grammar rules before hand, because in schools it is common to have classes focused only on explicit grammar instruction. However, when students tried to communicate they did not apply those rules. So, the tasks aimed to lead students to use accurate forms and to realize if the language they were producing in class was accurate or not. Students seemed to profit from peer feedback and from self-correction during the application of the treatment.

The lack of interaction and accurate use of language noticed in the pre-test and in the first task leads to think that foreign language learning in elementary and high

schools does not allow learners to communicate through fluency or accuracy. Therefore, learners tend to decide to attend additional courses in another setting such as the Language Center of the University of Nariño. As time went by students' participation increased and they were more involved in asking questions about elements that were necessary to complete the task at hand. This change suggests that schools should attempt to change the focus of their classes and give learners more time for interaction since that is what is required by standardized exams.

As it can be seen, the use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form not only helped to increase oral fluency and vocabulary, but also to improve grammatical accuracy without the use of explicit grammar instruction or instruction done in Spanish. This indicates that teachers should try out new ways of teaching since the byproducts of those new techniques might include an accurate use of grammar, an aspect that seems to be very important for teachers in high-schools.

However, it is unavoidable to mention that the use of tasks combined with proactive focus on form is sometimes difficult to be applied when students do not have a previous background in the foreign language and this lack of

vocabulary or grammar aspects can prevent oral interaction from happening despite the efforts of teachers and despite the materials used.

Thus, the flow of the communication does not break and students can keep on talking. However, it is necessary that teacher, before the communicative tasks, provides useful input through questions or vocabulary for students to use during interaction.

Consequently, it is important to provide students with language likely to help them cope with their lack of vocabulary. Expressions such as: 'How do you say _____ in English?' 'What is it/that?' 'Is it right to say...?' 'Excuse me, can you repeat it again?' 'I don't understand!' 'Say it quietly' 'What does _____ mean in Spanish?', and so forth should be given to students at the beginning of a course so that they can use the L2 in every situation in the class and create an environment where students use English for different functions, not only to answer the teacher's questions. Spending some time teaching students classroom language is also important because learners feel that they can participate more, and they actually speak more. In the case of the group studied, students started participating actively in peer correction.

When implementing communicative tasks, focus on form and peer feedback in the classroom, it is important to remember that a certain amount of noise will always be present since students are interacting with each other instead of just wait until it is their turn to answer a teacher's question. However, teachers need to have a good classroom management so that the students do not get distracted or start using Spanish. Giving students a time limit for each task and monitoring them constantly can contribute to reduce discipline problems.

The use of communicative tasks as opposed to traditional interaction in the class where the teacher is the center of the learning process proved useful for the students. They not only started experiencing new types of techniques, but also got involved in discovering grammar and on providing feedback to their classmates. Despite the fact that the group was not very advanced, these activities were engaging for the students and it can be said that they contributed to improving the learners' accuracy.

Finally, this research was successful because the communicative tasks contributed to enhance the students' vocabulary and hence their fluency. Furthermore FONF was a great help to make students' utterances become accurate. For

these reasons, it was striking that the learners improved
the use of present simple tense structures so that the
expected goal was achieved.

Recommendations

This research may constitute the basis for future
research about communicative tasks and focus on form.

The following recommendations are suggested, not only
for teachers who teach at the Language Center of the
University of Nariño but also for all teachers who teach in
high-schools.

It is not necessary that the students have a high
level of English to interact in the classroom and understand
the language or that they are in a real communicative
context because the students can start speaking in English
since the first class if teachers use communicative tasks
and focus on form in a purposeful and organized way.
Teachers who want to implement these elements need to have
an adequate proficiency to be able to provide clear
directions, cooperate with students when they need
vocabulary, notice errors and be able to paraphrase or
exemplify a concept in order for learners to realize that
they made a mistake. Also, teachers need to spend time

creating or adapting the tasks since they should have a goal
and they should foster student to student interaction.

FONF is the latest approach to teach students
linguistics elements in contexts where they arise
incidentally in lessons focused on communication.

It is important to note that there are different kinds
of tasks that teachers can use to obtain a lively,
meaningful class and allow students to interrelate and
develop oral production.

Communicative tasks, for instance, involve learners in
comprehending and producing in the target language and they
are mainly focused on meaning. However, if teachers combine
them with proactive FONF, which consists on choosing forms
previously planed to be taught, this can help the students
communicate in the target language without fossilizing
mistakes. Again, teachers should be careful to diagnose
students' problems and to plan and implement adequate
techniques to address these weaknesses.

The textbook is an important tool to teach in the
classroom, but teachers can design their own tasks to teach
the topics of the class in a successful way. For doing this
it is necessary that he or she takes into account the
context in which students are learning and the grammar

feature that needs to be learned or reinforced through that specific task or group of tasks.

To teach a topic trough tasks, teachers need a variety of materials. In an EFL environment such as Pasto, materials may be expensive or difficult to find. This problem can be solved if teachers plan carefully ahead and create their own aids. Any additional visual input is valuable; for example, the teacher can create or use drawings, pictures, charts, wallcharts, puppets, cartoons, readings, videos, CDs, and so on. They do not need to get complex material to attain the goal of the class. This material could trigger the interest of learners who seem bored of using exclusively the book through the course.

It is necessary to stand out that the appropriate use of the tasks in a communicative course not only contribute to help students develop oral skills such as speaking and listening but also serve to develop writing, reading skills and learning vocabulary. This helps teachers prepare students for future real situations such as taking a standardized test with a specific grid such as the ones proposed by the Common European Framework.

Finally, teachers should provide enough input, feedback, modification devices when their students make

mistakes or when it is necessary that students are able to
produce output, interact and develop all skills, especially
speaking and listening not only inside the classroom, but
also in a real-life situation.

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*What **does** Carlos buy in the market?*

*What **do** they do on Saturday night?*

What **do** Johnny and Luis do after class?
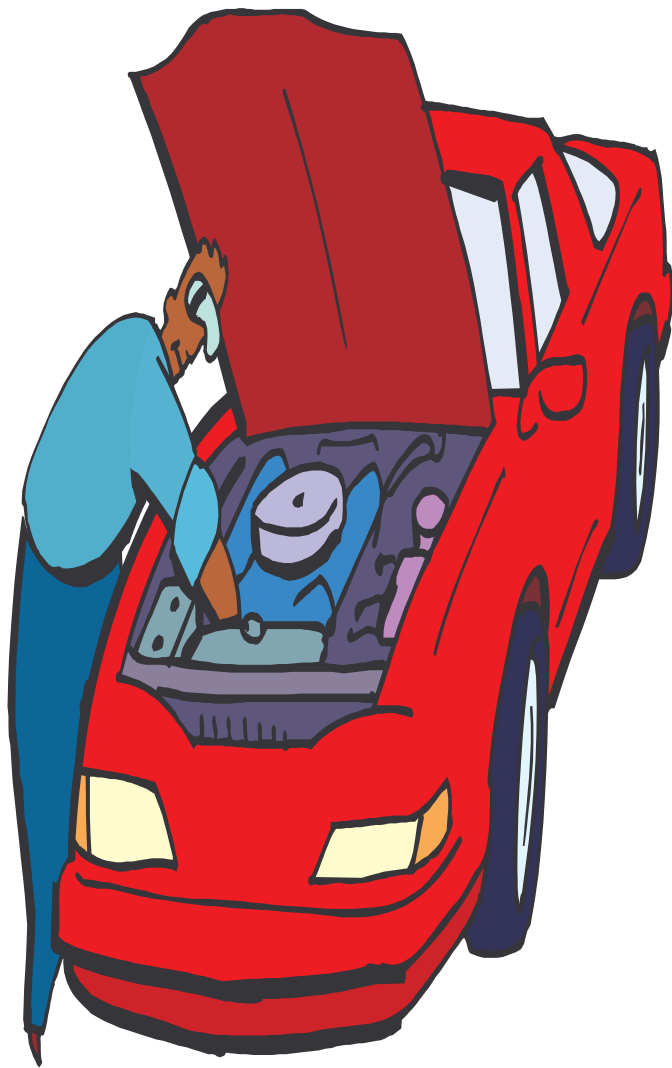
What *do* they drink for breakfast?

Hot Coffee

What **does** he do?

What **does** the mechanic fix?

*What kind of pet **does** she have?*

What **does** she do on Friday in the theatre?

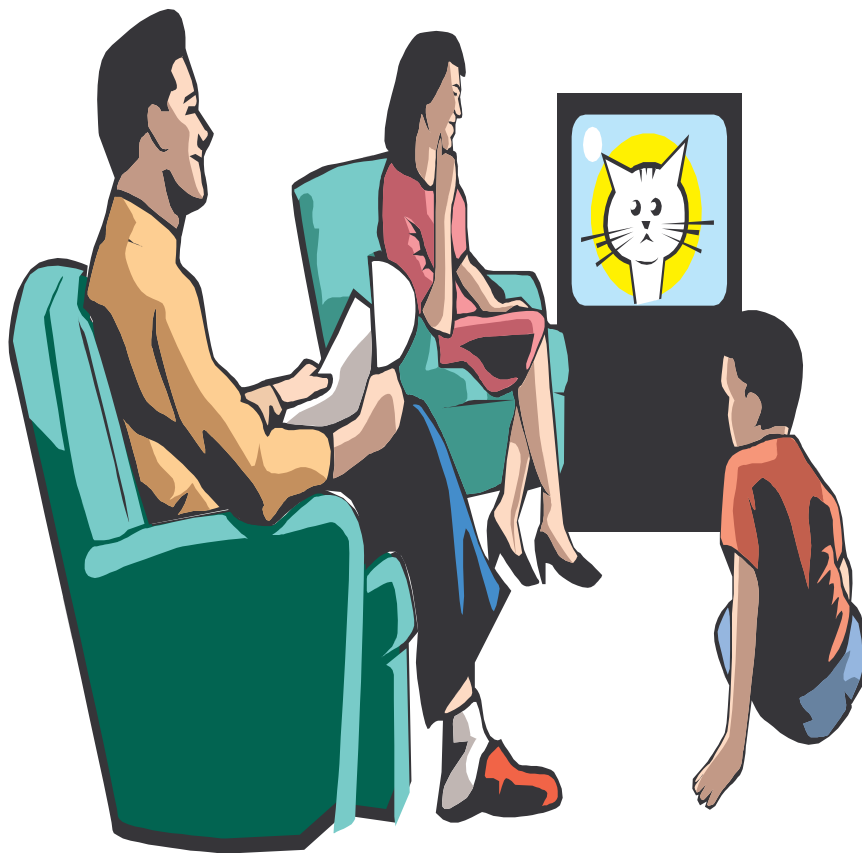*What **does** he do every morning?*

*What time **does** Sara study?*

What **does** Edward teach at school?

*What **do** they do after dinner?*

Appendix B (task 1)

Task 1.

(Session one)

Goals:

To exchange information about cultural aspects. This task will also be useful for fostering student to student interaction in an oral way.

Input:

The prompt given so that students initiate the interaction will be pieces of paper containing key words taken from a short text related to specific cultures.

Procedure:

- Students watch and listen to a video: "English World"

- Teachers hand out pieces of paper containing key words about someone from a specific culture. The words are featured in the video.

- Teachers ask Students to find the people who have the information that they are missing. To do this, they must read his/her own key words aloud.

- When they have found each other they should seat down in a group together, and they will be expected to discuss their information and finally write a short text about different cultural settings by using the key

words. The text will be presented to the rest of the class without reading it.

Time:

It will last one hour and fifteen minutes.

Teacher role:

Monitor and facilitator, source of knowledge if they need additional vocabulary

Learner role:

Conversational partner

Setting:

Classroom and group work

Materials:

The materials to be used in this task are as it follows:

ITALIAN

HE

IS/ARE

HE

FOR LUNCH

TONY

WORK / WORKS

LASAGNA

HE

TWENTY NINE

IN

IS/ARE

COOK /COOKS

HE

IS/ARE

LUIGI'S RESTAURANT

AND

A WAITER

IS/ARE

A BEUTY SALON

HE

HE

THIRTY TWO

HAS/HAVE

IS/ARE

FRENCH

IS/ARE

HE

A HAIR DRESSER

FRANCOIS

IS/ARE **YEARS OLD**	**ALEXANDRA AND IVAN** **THEY**
IS/ARE **IN** **THEY** **A THEATER**	**RUSSIAN** **TWENTY SEVEN** **DANCE/ DANCES**

Appendix C (task 2)

<div align="center">

Task 2

(Session 2)

</div>

Goals:

To lead students to make guesses about the person who lives in the apartment shown in the picture.

Input:

Teacher gives the learners some questions as it follows.

1. Is the person who lives in the apartment a woman or a man?

2. Does the person have a baby?

3. Is the person athletic?

4. Does the person drink coffee?

5. Does the person study?

6. Does the person belong to middle or low class?

7. Does the person like music?

8. Is the person messy?

9. What is his/her profession?

Procedure:

- Students work together into groups of four and look at the picture (adapted from Badalamenti and Henner-

Stanchina (1993: 105) as exemplified in Nunan (1998: 106)) They are expected to make guesses.

- After that, students are given ten minutes to look up the names of the things shown in the picture that they do not know.

- Then, group 1 will be expected to take out a question, from a bag, printed in a piece of paper and read it, and group 2 will answer it. Then, group 3 give support to the group-2 answer by giving details from the picture, and by using phrases such as "Because, there is/are…" After that, each group changes their role until each group has played three times each function.

- Finally, each group presents their own description about the person's personality orally.

Time:

One hour

Teacher role:

Monitor and facilitator, source of knowledge if they need additional vocabulary
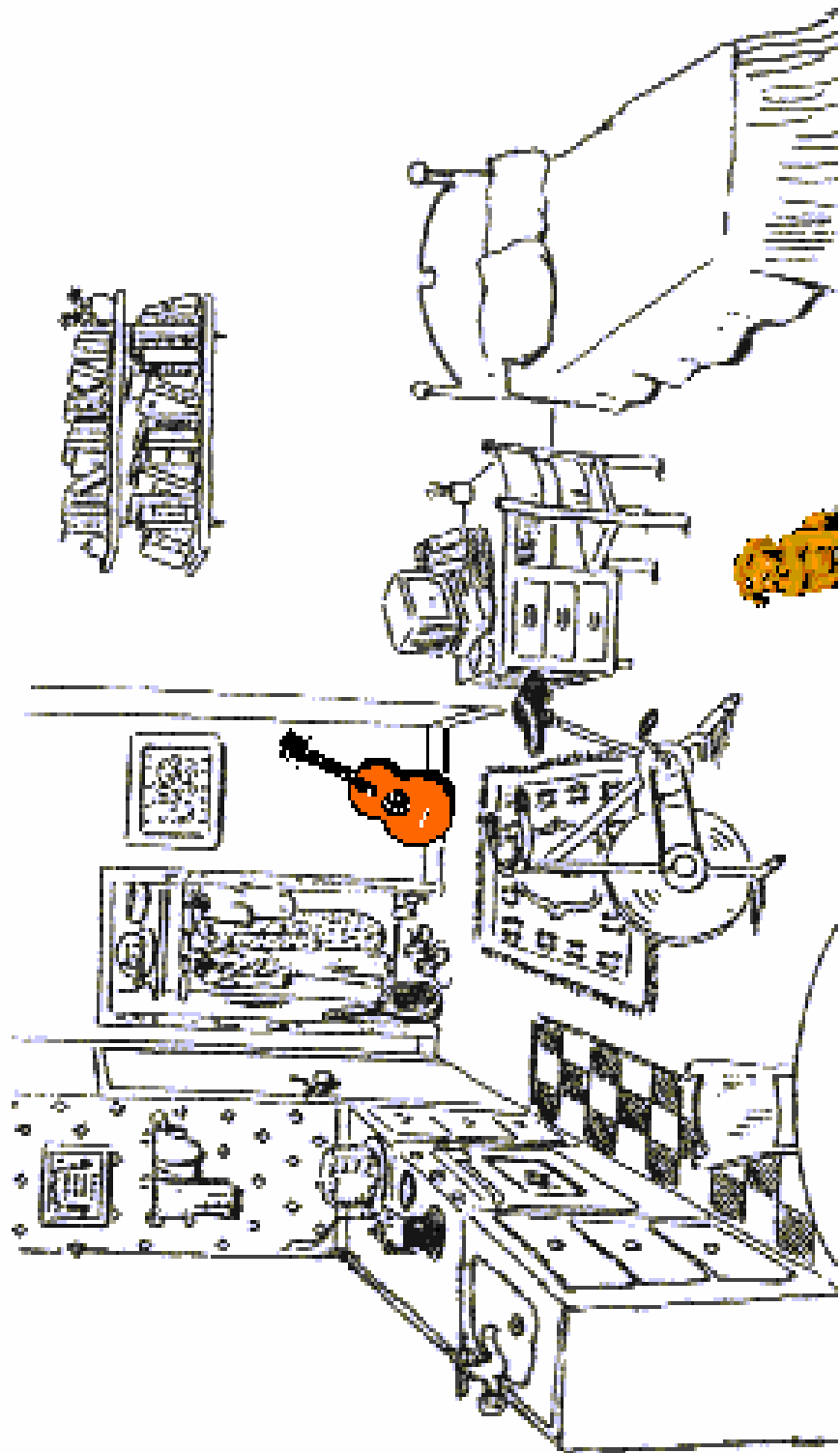
Learner role:

Conversational partner

Setting:

Classroom and group work

Materials:

The materials to be used in this task are as it follows.

1)

2)

The transcripts of the questions mentioned above.

References:

Nunan, D. (1988). *Teaching Grammar in Context*. ELT journal, volume 52 (2), 101 – 109.

Appendix D (task 3)

<div align="center">

Task 3

(Session 3)

</div>

Goals:

To get students to play the role of interviewer and interviewee for a show which matches people who have common interests

Input:

Teacher gives the learners some charts with questions and information about things people like.

Procedure:

- Learners work in pairs. (5 minutes)

- Each student has a role which can be interviewer or interviewee.

- They are given two different charts, one with questions and another one with a part of information according to these questions. (10 minutes)

- The interviewer orders the questions and asks them to his/her interviewee. (10 minutes)

- He or she answers the questions using the chart information. (10 minutes)

- After that, they can change their role.(10 minutes)

- Once they finish this activity, researchers distribute at random the charts containing the information given by the interviewees. (5 minutes)
- Interviewers ask their interviewees about the person's information they have. (10 minutes)

Time:

One hour

Teacher role:

Monitor and facilitator, source of knowledge if they need additional vocabulary

Learner role:

Conversational partner

Setting:

Classroom, pair work

Materials:

The materials to be used in this task are as follows.

Charts

INTERVIEWER

What /name /your / is?_____

you /do/ smoke? _____
a/have/do/pet/you?_____
kind/of/have/pet/what/you/do?_____
_____
any/play/do/sport/you? _____
sport/what? _____
you/like/food/what/do?_____
listen to/do/what/you/music? _____
_____
TV programme /watch/you/do/what? _____
_____
read/you/paper or magazine/what/do? _____
_____

INTERVIEWEE

Name: _____

Smoke?   Yes _____   No _____

Have a pet?   Yes _____   No _____   Kind: _____

Play a sport? Yes _____   No _____   Kind: _____

I like _____ (food)

I listen to _____ (music)

I watch _____ (TV programme)

I read _____ (magazine or paper)

References:

Oxenden, C. et al. (1996) *New English file* "*Elementar Student's book*". Oxford University Press.

Apendix E (task 4)

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TASK 4

(Session four)

</div>

Goals:

   To talk about daily activities. This task will serve as a means to elicit students to develop oral production by giving short utterances, making questions, and giving descriptions. Besides it will be useful to make students interact and distinguish between third person of the singular and plural.

Input

    The prompt given so that students initiate the interaction will be pieces of paper containing pictures about daily activities adapted from "New English File" book (Oxenden. et al, 1996)

Procedure

   Students get into groups of six. Then, each group chooses two partners who will draw according to their partners' instructions.

   A picture about "A day in the life of an English teacher" or "Boys' weekend out" is given to the four participants expected to give instructions. Also a fine cardboard divided into twelve spaces like in each original

picture, and some marker pens are given to those chosen to draw.

Teachers give directions (Students are expected to interact by asking, answering, and describing in order to make their partners imagine what they have in the picture, and what is the activity the teacher does or the boys do in the picture)

Each group tells to the others about the activity represented in the picture, and also they describe the picture. They take turns.

The two learners drawing will be allowed to ask in order to get more information.

After the two groups finish drawing the twelve situations, all the learners sit down together in their group and are given the picture used by the other group.

Then, they are expected to compare the pictures drawn in the fine cardboard with the original one. If there is any thing different, they correct the mistake by describing it again. If they do it so, they are given one point to their score. However, if they make a grammar mistake, the other groups are allowed to correct the mistake and the point will be assigned to them.

Finally, the teachers give the total score and tell what group is the winner.

Time:

It will last one hour and twenty minutes.

Teacher role:

Monitor and facilitator, source of knowledge if they need additional vocabulary

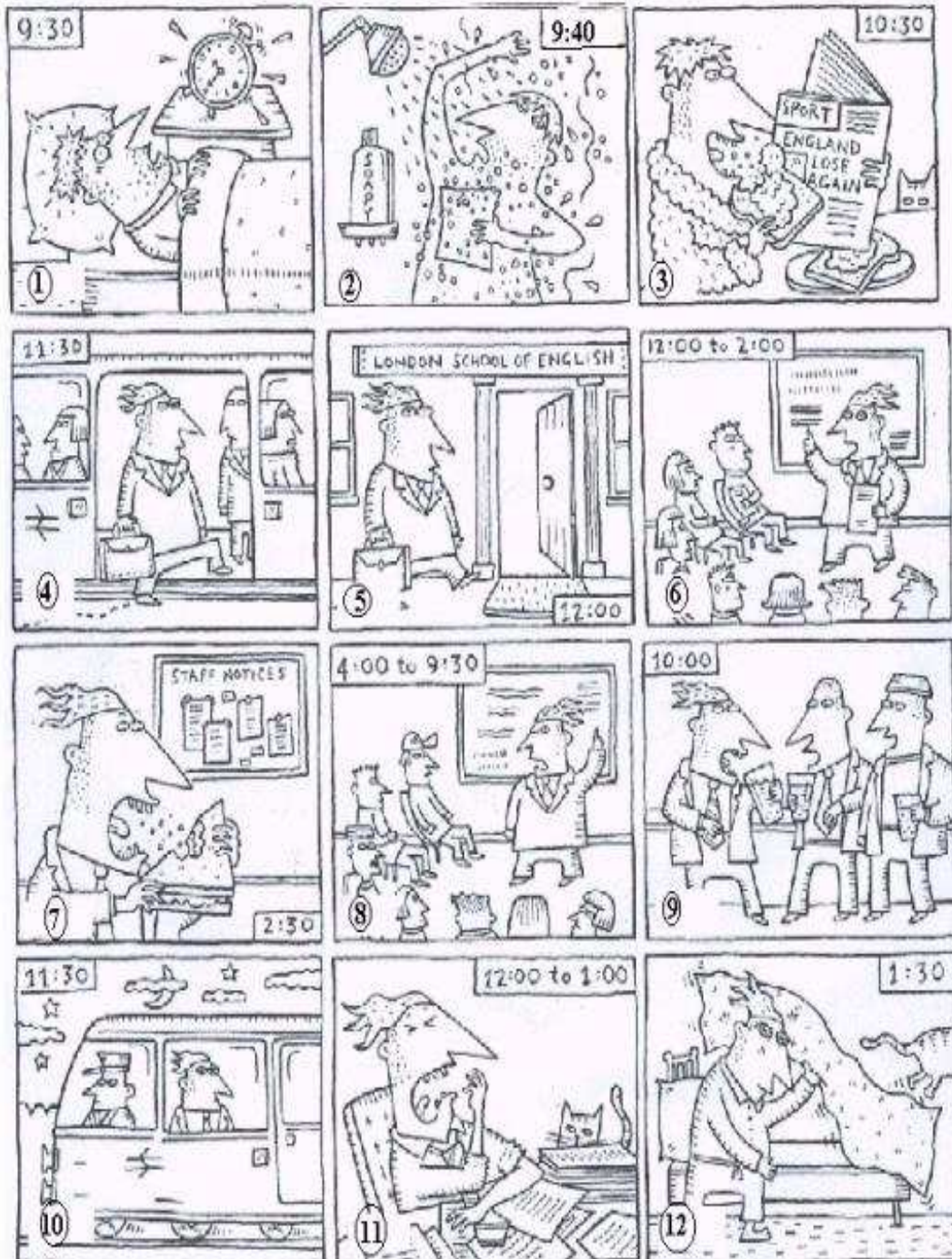*Learner role:*

Conversational partner

Setting:

Classroom and group work

Materials:

The materials to be used in this task are as it follows:

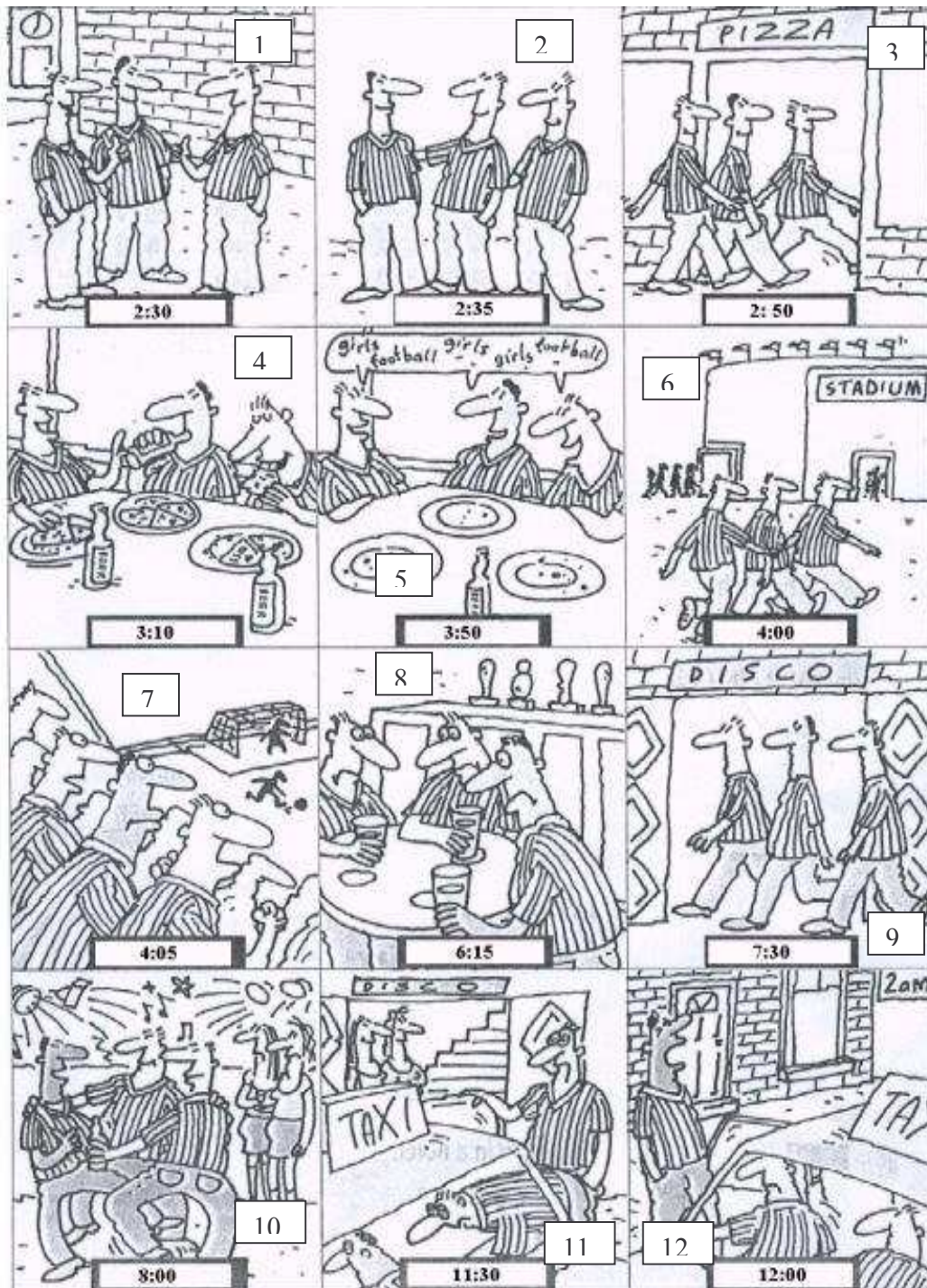# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ENGLISH TEACHER

(Adapted from Oxenden et al, 1996)

BOYS' WEEKEND OUT

(Adapted from Oxenden et al, 1996)

2) Fine cardboards divided into twelve spaces like it follows.

3) Marker pens.

REFERENCES:

Oxenden, C. et al. (1996) *New English file "Elementary Student's book"* . Oxford University Press.

I part:

What does your family do every morning?

FAMILY

What does your family do on Sundays?

FAMILY

What do your friends do on vacation?

VACATION

What do you usually do on vacation?

VACATION

What does your mother do every morning when she is at home?

HOME

What do you do when you get home after school?

HOME

What do you do when you are at school?

SCHOOL

What do your classmates do at school?

SCHOOL

What do you usually do on your free time?

FREE TIME

What does your brother or sister do in his or her free time?

FREE TIME

Describe a day in your father's life

LIFE

How is a day in your life?

LIFE

II part:

Questions (interview)

- What time do you get up? And what about your mother?

- What do you usually have for breakfast?

- What time do you go to school?

- Which is your favorite subject? Why?

- What kind of TV shows does your father watch?