THE USE OF GROUP WORK ACTIVITIES TO FOSTER EFL ORAL PRODUCTION

AND REDUCE ANXIETY ON INTERMEDIATE EFL STUDENTS

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NOTA DE RESPONSABILIDAD

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Resumen

Este documento de investigación presenta ideas que argumentan la aplicación de actividades en grupo, para reforzar la habilidad del habla y reducir la ansiedad al momento de hablar. Además este documento contiene investigación acerca del aprendizaje cooperativo como metodología para incrementar la participación por parte de los estudiantes de una lengua extranjera. Al mismo tiempo, se describen claramente las ventajas al desarrollar ciertas actividades en grupos de trabajo con el fin de disminuir la ansiedad y reforzar la producción oral con el fin de lograr una participación prospera.

Abstract

This research paper presents some ideas that justify the application of group work activities to foster speaking skill and reduce anxiety at the moment of speaking. Moreover, this paper contains the reviewing about cooperative language learning methodology to improve the participation by students of foreign language. At the same time, the advantages are described to develop certain group work activities in order to decrease anxiety and reinforce the oral production to achieve a prosperous participation in classrooms.

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Introduction

In the following paragraphs, the introduction of this study is developed considering the importance of using group work activities during oral production in order to reduce anxiety on intermediate EFL (English as Foreign Language) students. First of all, let us try to understand that one of the foreign language students´ skills is oral production, according to Cotter (2007), all the interaction skills are so essential for students who need to develop them to achieve certain interaction activities through group work, where the students need to be aware of how to start a topic, how to include others, how to change topics, how to repair communication breakdowns, how to deal with those who dominate the conversation, how to use language to solve problems, and how to end a discussion. All of this development can become one of the most complex processes and in some cases it not only might be difficult for students but it could also be hard for some teachers specially when students feel a great deal of anxiety around speaking.

It is reasonable to think that the importance of developing excellent oral skills and how teachers can go about promoting them while facing the feeling of anxiety at the moment to speak. This is being this very common into the environment of foreign language students. Incidentally, it is necessary to mention some concepts about language teaching and their adaptation in some specific learning activities which in this case the central issue will be the oral production in order to help students to minimize the anxiety´s effects (Gutierrez, 2005).

As far as communicative language learning is concerned as a process which can be influenced by many factors that include aspects as follows: the teacher, the learner, the environment or some psychological implications, in this case, the center of attention will be language anxiety with the purpose of understanding some cases which students have very good levels in ESL (English as a Second or foreign Language) nonetheless, they can be affected by

this internal fact called LA (Language Anxiety) preventing a good performance specially in oral production. Incidentally, we must not forget at the moment to speak the students tend to feel anxious as Crandall (1999) states "Fear or failing or appearing foolish is a constant threat to interaction in the language classroom, especially when teachers ask questions which only a few students can answer."

Therefore, this research paper is aimed to defend the decrease of students´ anxiety through group work activities which provide them the security to express their ideas in front of others, besides the students may learn through each other achieving a cooperative language learning being that a very good technique to promote a positive climate in classrooms as Oxford and Ehrman (1993) state include cooperative learning as a classroom procedure which can lower anxiety in the language classroom.

1. Problem Statement

Learning English as a second language might not be difficult if teachers apply the development of appropriate skills through the use of adequate techniques in which they can support students to achieve knowledge. However, it is essential to consider that there might be many students who face anxiety difficulties at the moment of performing orally.

Sometimes, students might feel some rejection in the classroom because oral activities could be demanding, and even more when speaking in a foreign language. Besides, the environment and classmates could also be a factor for students to feel fear to speak. Because of this, anxiety problems appear.

Anxiety sometimes is faced when students are blocked or have difficulties to speak in front of a group, specifically their classmates. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) affirm that anxiety is the major obstacle to overcome in learning to speak another language, which limits language production on the students. Moreover, most of the studies that have researched anxiety indicate that it is related to speaking or oral performance which might affect the oral performance into a language class, thus students tend to avoid speaking the target language.

In Colombia, these anxiety problems have not been studied yet; it is not easy to get any report on them. It is possible that one solution to this problematic issue when speaking might be the use of group work activities in EFL classes in order to decrease the effects caused by anxiety when speaking. Moreover, with the help of this research paper, teachers might encourage students to talk with the application of some activities to promote oral production in the classroom.

So, to try to avoid the afore mentioned problem, the following Research Question is posed: "Does the use of group work activities foster EFL oral production and reduce students´ anxiety when speaking in the classroom?"

2. Objectives

2.1 General Objective

To implement group work activities to reduce anxiety in the EFL classroom to promote oral production.

2.2 Specific Objectives

- To reduce anxiety by using group work activities when students speak.

- To apply different group work activities to foster oral production.

3. Justification

Oral performance represents a practical resource for English students and it offers them a helpful way to understand the meaning of the target language, but the effect of learners' affective states has been known as factors of distortion of cognitive process according to Woolfolk (1998). All the affective states in learners complicate the process of learning a second language; and one of the particular factors of distortion is anxiety.

In most EFL teaching environments, teachers believe anxiety is a personal trait of learners, and individualistic and in some cases a non manageable feature which is not related to the learning process. Then, it would be important to describe the possible effects and solutions through some group work activities.

A research on anxiety might provide teachers some insights that help them to understand how it differs in classrooms. Moreover, this kind of research might be useful to contextualize some important options about language anxiety and the strategies to decrease this feeling.Cooperative Language Learning (CLL), might be implemented through mutual collaboration with students that encourage them to explore language learning on their own terms. As a result this provokes students its application working in groups providing them the security needed to show a real understanding or a real knowledge of the topics. Because of the above, anxiety might be solved, group work activities and the use of CLL promote different activities for students to talk and practice among them.

4. The Use of Group Work Activities to Foster EFL Oral Production and Reduce Anxiety

on Intermediate EFL Students

The objective of language is achieving communication among people and the aim of speaking promoting communicative efficiency into a context. According to Foppoli (2006), teachers want students to be able to use the language as correctly as possible in the classroom. In this process, speaking becomes an important skill for teachers and students.

It is known that speaking can be a part of today's activities into classrooms as an essential part required of today´s society especially into the context of learning a second language which may be one of the proofs to demonstrate the real knowledge of an L2. For many ESL students it is difficult to evade the sensation of anxiety they feel when they are in an oral activity. As was mentioned by Woolfolk (1998) "as a general uneasiness, a sense of foreboding, a feeling of tension" p.396.

The purpose of this research is to offer teachers the necessary theoretical background about the importance of speaking in everyday situations no matter where students are and at the same time how they can reduce the effects caused by anxiety in certain cases applying group work activities and covering the merits of them and then suggest group work activities as alternatives to avoid anxiety.

According to Kumaravadivelu (2006) English conversation plays a crucial role in the communication process and the understanding among students who apply their knowledge being capable to keep a fluent conversation into real contexts,it is viewed as the main goal of this research paper is to underline the importance of group work activities in students´ performance. Therefore, it is needed to focus on certain approaches which are related to this field in order to

have a better understanding of communicative skills to decreasing the anxiety and foster oral production.

4.1 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning has been applied in teaching and learning second languages, since the nineties. It has been growing rapidly thanks to its good results in classrooms. Smith and Macgregor (1992) defined Collaborative Leaning as an agreement in which small groups of students with various levels work together to achieve a common goal. Moreover they defined Collaborative learning as an approach to teaching and learning, the techniques require learners to work together to deliberate, discuss, and create meaning.

Smith &MacGregor (1992) define the term as follows:

Collaborative learning is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most center on students' exploration or application of the course material, not simply the teacher's presentation or explication of it (p. 656).

According to Bruffe (1995), basically collaborative learning is an approach to education; it is a group work organization or a structured activity which students sit together to achieve a common goal, and to complete a specific task. With the implementation of it, students can improve certain skills such as speaking by interacting with their partners and teachers.

Dooly (2008) states that "Collaborative Learning has been called various names: cooperative learning, collaborative learning, collective learning, learning communities, peer teaching, peer learning, or team learning (p. 1)".What they have in common is that they all

incorporate group work activities. However, collaboration is more than co-operation. Since, Collaboration involves the whole development of learning. It may include students teaching one another, students teaching the teacher, and of course the teacher teaching the students, too. More importantly, it means that students are responsible for one another's learning as well as their own and that reaching the purpose implies that students have helped each other to understand and learn.

4.2 Cooperative Learning

Another important concept related to communicative approaches which may be carried out is Cooperative Learning. Fathman& Kessler (1992) point out there are some resemblance between Collaborative Learning and Cooperative Learning, they define Cooperative Learning as the most streaking features when working in group work in the development of this method of learning students are designed to engage actively in learning process, through interaction and inquiry with peers in small groups. In cooperative learning, learners are motivated to work together towards common goals, achieving language and teaching more effective. Besides, Cooperative Learning allows students to work together in small groups to accomplish shared learning goals which they emphasize in working together in a collaborative learning achieving social skill.

According to Yan Zhan (2010) people who work in a cooperative learning activity accomplish the following advantages:

- Positive effects on relations among student

- Self-esteem

- Long term retention

- Depth of understanding of course material

- Reducing levels of anxiety.

Incidentally, we must not forget that working in cooperative learning might be one of the most effective and constructive teaching strategies in comparison when students work through a traditional language; that is to say when students work individually and when the only person who speaks tends to be the teacher becomes interaction something without importance because students only listen and don´t produce oral performance. As for the previous ideas, this work presents teachers a useful chart that permits a comparison which states each of the parameters of using cooperative language learning and the difference using the traditional language teaching.

Table 1.

This table shows the main differences between TLT and CLL.

	Traditional Language Teaching	**Cooperative Language Learning**
Independence	None or Negative	Positive
Learner roles	Passive receiver and performer	Active participator, autonomous learners
Teacher roles	The center of the classroom, controller of teaching pace and direction, judge of students' right or wrong, the major source of assistance, feedback, reinforcement and support.	Organizer and counselor of group work, facilitator of the communication tasks, intervener to teach collaborative skills.

Materials	Complete set of materials for each student.	Materials are arranged according to purpose of the lesson. Usually one group shares a complete set of materials.
Types of activities	Knowledge recall and review, phrasal or sentence pattern practice, role play, translation, and listening etc.	Any instructional activity, mainly group work to engage learners in communication, involving processes like information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction.
Interaction	Some talking among students, mainly teacher-student interaction	Intense interaction among students, a few teacher-student interactions
Room arrangement	Separate desks or students placed in pairs.	Collaborative small groups
Student expectations	Take a major part in	All members in some way

	evaluating own progress and the quality of own efforts toward learning. Be a winner or loser.	contribute to the success of the group. The one who makes progress is the winner.
Teacher-student relationship	Superior-inferior or equal	Cooperating and equal

This table explains that cooperative language learning has some characteristics with communicative language teaching, they both refer to interaction and communication between students, the teachers' role is taken as a guide, facilitator, negotiator, and anxiety the autonomy and centricity of the students in classroom.

Moreover, communicative language teaching promotes a healthy relationship with other classmates because it is more conductive to share ideas, and respect the integrity of students, allowing for personal growth and responsibility, etc. According to Johnson & Johnson (1991) the communicative function of language learning can be related as a way of cooperative language learning which students feel to support each other and they can achieve an oral performance only if they share with classmates that it is to say, cooperation.

To reinforce the above information some specific advantages according to a Research by Zhan (2012) which illustrated the major reasons about using cooperative learning activities:

- It provides more chances to practice oral English (speaking).
- It makes a deeper understanding of the learning materials and remembering the new words more quickly.
- It provides more concentration.

- It provides more relaxed environment in group work reducing language anxiety.

- It must be self-disciplined to preview and review the learning tasks for the benefits of groups.

- It promotes students in learning to be responsible about words and actions.

Moreover, Stenlev J (2003) defines Cooperative learning as "the learning in small groups where interaction is structured according to carefully worked-out principles". This method was initially applied in USA, were found that it can be developed at all age levels, from kindergarten to university. It is much more than just a bag of behavior to make teaching run more easily. It is a different way of conceiving teaching.

Kagan(2001), states that cooperative learning is a form of teaching that challenges students at the intellectual as well as the social level and that combines various levels of simultaneous learning processes in an ingenious way. Researchers show numerous impressive results in terms of subject knowledge. For example: an increase in the individual's self-esteem and a noticeable reduction of bullying which in some cases are presented in classrooms which makes students feel intimidated to participate in class. Cooperative learning might allow students to break down prejudices and insecurity, and if it is applied a high level on activities it can prevent boredom and off-task behavior.

Considering the previous characteristics about CL, learners are given opportunities to interact in pairs or group activities; the teachers can use interactive tasks to improve language structures, lexical items and communicative functions. According to McGroarty (1989) CL becomes a useful option when learning because it increases incidence and diversity in practicing L2 thanks to the different types of interaction. Moreover, it increases cognition and language

providing at the same time several opportunities to communicate permitting learners to reach active learning.

According to Deen (1987) the application of different activities such as a) jig-saw activities, creates much more practice than individual's activities where students are given different information. They share, discussion, and synthesize, b) team practice where students are given some material which they have to develop and after that share ideas and become confident because all their work is the result of everyone´s support, c) cooperative projects which students receive different topics: They have to collect all this information after summarizing and finally share it to the whole class; this activity allows students to express likes and dislikes in front others classmates.

Dewey (1916) affirms that Cooperative learning as a strategy that promotes the cognitive and linguistic improvement of learners in English as a Second Language (ESL) takes place when students work together in small groups which are achieved through group activities and at the same time this strategy enhances all students to work even if there is a large class.

Brown (2004) states that Cooperative Language Learning focuses mainly in work in groups, which self- esteem, creativity, care and altruistic relationships are promoted in learners, all the above are considered to encourage interaction. The articles revised for this paper are aimed to persuade teachers in the creation of activities for supporting SLA process.

4.3 Differences and Similarities between Cooperative and Collaborative Learning

According to Matthews (1995) taking into account that some doubts exist about collaborative learning and cooperative learning according to its similarities and differences, here it is important to point out certain characteristics which are useful to understand these two methods very well of language learning. In the following list are related the similarities:

- Stress the importance of active learning.

- The teacher acts as a facilitator.

- Teaching and learning are experiences shared by both the student and the teacher.

- Enhance higher order cognitive skills.

- Greater emphasis is placed on students' responsibility for taking charge of her or his learning.

- Involve situations where students must articulate ideas in group work activities.

- Help students develop social and team building skills.

- Increase student success and information retention.

- Utilize student diversity

The similarities expressed above are related specially with the concordance that can be found at the moment to apply cooperative or collaborative learning, but it is necessary to stand out some differences found which clarify the reasons as why not to call it collaborative learning and cooperative learning as the same method, the following chart presents a very precise comparison among these two concepts:

Table 2:

This table shows the main differences between Cooperative Learning and Collaborative Learning

Cooperative Learning	Collaborative Learning
Students receive training in small group social skills. Activities are structured with each student having a specific role. The teacher observes, listens and intervenes in a group when necessary. Students submit work at the end of class for Evaluation. Students assess individual and group performance	There is the belief that students already have the necessary social skills, and that they will build on their existing skills in order to reach their goal. Students organize and negotiate efforts themselves. The activity is not monitored by the instructor. When questions are directed towards the teacher, the teacher guides the students to the information needed. Students retain drafts to complete further work. Students assess individual and group performance.

4.4 What is Group-Work?

The meaning of group work was mentioned by Woolfolk (1998), as an interdependence among students achieving an exchange of thoughts in which all members must participate in a sharing of ideas, beliefs, opinions and so on. Group work is not only an organization of students into a group but also this cooperation must be accomplished if students share their knowledge working together in order to achieve a real cooperation work.

Brown (1914) defined group work as "a generic term covering a multiplicity of techniques in which two or more students are assigned a task that involves collaboration and self-initiated language" (p. 173).In some cases, students may feel interaction as a way of competiveness; group work becomes as a form of interaction more than an evaluative mode. This encourages students to take risks in the sense that they can verbalize their ideas, even though when these are not fully developed and coherent they may use the target language when they are not sure it is grammatically right or wrong. According to Barnes (1976), this kind of talk is referred to as an "exploratory talk" in a mode of evaluation that becomes a process of sharing knowledge that diminishes the stress, nervousness, anxiety that interaction produces.

Brown (1994) mentions that group work procedures should be part of an overall technique that aims to achieve quality in communication the following are the advantages of group work on English language classroom proposed by the previous author:

- Group work generates interactive language.

- Group work offers an embracing effective climate.

- Group work promotes learner responsibility and autonomy.

- Group work is a step toward individualizing instruction.

From the features above, it is possible to figure out that effectiveness which must be taken into account to carry out the oral production process.

Whereas, in order to have a very complete review about group work, it is indispensable to mention some limitations of the way in which a big number of teachers feel. In applying group work, next is a list of some disadvantages in not applying group work.

- The teacher is no longer in control of the class.

- Students´ will use their native language.

- Students ´errors will be reinforced in small groups.

-Teachers cannot monitor all groups at once.

- Some learners prefer to work alone.

Although, such problems can occur in group work, that Brown (1994) points out every problem depends in learning-style differences but they can be solved thanks to planning and management. The implementation of group work techniques can go wrong if they are not cautiously planned, well executed, monitored throughout, and followed up. For this reason teachers should integrate students through a selection of appropriate group techniques.

4.5 The Importance of using Group Work

English as an essential international language has gained attention from people who want to be into the new world of bilingualism, additionally for students who are learning a second language, some of them might do very well on other skills such as: listening, reading and writing. However, the ability to use the language in real communication does not seem to be an easy task. Consequently, the quality among students' participation in EFL classes seems to be limited. This is how the use of group work could be an alternative to that might embrace solutions to develop and improve the speaking skill. Nonetheless, sometimes students' utterances

do not have a good quality and although they can be interpreted or "deciphered" by some interlocutors, it doesn't mean that they will make it possible to transmit a message in an effective way. All of this may be caused by internal and external circumstances such as nerves, anxiety, self-esteem and the environment. The language progress might not happen if a student has lack of motivation, lacks self confidence, or if he/she is anxious of making errors. Some students are fearful of making mistakes or losing face in public and are as Brown (1994) states "vulnerable to what they may perceive as criticism and rejection" pg 174.Then, the main purpose is to provide a stress-free and non-threatening situation into the classroom for a more advantageous learning. Each atmosphere might perpetuate in well organized group work activities.

4.6 Group Work provides Students a Positive Climate

As Long and Porte (1985) state, group work might be defined as a good solution to reduce anxiety. That is to say that this strategy promotes a positive affective climate in the classroom. Therefore, it reduces anxiety, especially when they create interaction among students. This means that group work activities provide students a successful learning and socialization with their classmates. Fostering appropriate intellectual, social and behavioral skills allow students to become part of a class.

Richards & Rodgers (2001) state that group work gives students the opportunity to use the target language in a safe atmosphere. It means that it provides them support to each other taking into account that this involvement could be developed through the use of Cooperative Language Learning (CLL) also known as Collaborative Learning (CL), being that Cooperative Learning is mainly based on interaction and reciprocal participation using different kinds of activities involving students to work in pairs and small groups where the members of the group are required mutual help to participate in a reciprocal way. It is important to engage students in

group work activities developing cooperative language learning in order to foster their oral communication and to create a welcoming and comfortable learning environment. As Chamberlain (2005) mentions, group cooperation is more important and useful than individual work, with this technique students may interfere with their learning and socialization as well as that of their classmates.

According to Ethan (2013) a big deal for students at the moment of speaking is to try to express their ideas in front others who sometimes feel embarrassed and prefer being silent even if the topic is well known studied at that moment. This is how teachers who are monitors of the class must provide techniques which facilitate students´ oral production without any impediments for them trying to enhance their motivation. For instance, group work is a good technique to solve the previous problem that students have to face into classrooms. So, at this point it is important to cite Brown (1994) who states "A further affective benefit of small group work is an increase in student motivation" p. 174.Therefore, if students feel motivated to talk about something they are going to express their ideas and they are not going to feel embarrassed. As a result, the process of oral production will be achieved in a good way.

Thanasoulas (2002) affirms the importance to know that motivation generates interest to do what teachers want to recognize from students, in this case, having students talk and practice the knowledge acquired before. However, teachers can promote group work and achieve this important skill which is to develop speaking into classrooms. In this manner, groups have important implications, among these; the most important is that they generate motivation as the main purpose which enhances student´s participation into classrooms and the use of group activities in a complete oral contribution through group work through learning.

4.7 Group Work provides students an Interactive Language Learning.

Promoting interactive language techniques into classrooms are the key to encourage oral production in students which they can learn by doing. As Tsui (1995) states "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" p.12.

Brown (1994) states, when students are exposed to real contexts they feel the need to apply authentic communication and this must be developed through group work in which each student has the opportunity to talk,especially when it is a large class. In this manner, with group work, students have many opportunities to speak. In addition, group work not only is a good technique for students but also for teachers who can realize the oral performance achieved by each of their students. Group work activities might be applied into classrooms especially when they are large. It can be beneficial not only for students but also for teachers who can manage their pupils in an easier way because teachers can realize of each student´s knowledge and at the same time it reduces time for teachers.

According to Stevick (1980), "In a language, course success depends less on materials, techniques and linguistic analyses, and more on what goes on inside and between the people in the classroom" (p. 4). All the process of interaction is produced among students and it might be achieved in an easier way by carrying out group work which facilitates the sharing of ideas, beliefs, knowledge, likes, and dislikes and so on. For instance, this process might be centered especially through the most important way to apply and put into practice the language which is improved only with the application of it. As Pica (1990) states there are different ways to learn a second language, but one of the most effective ones is through interaction into classrooms. That

is, situations or activities where students can apply the knowledge learned before by using and polishing it. By means of this the L2 can be best comprehended and produced.

4.8 Group Work Reduces Students ´Anxiety

One of the problems to express a real oral performance by part of students is Anxiety; basically it tends to be the worst enemy of people who are learning a second language. This problem prevents them from communication to not be achieved in an ideal way. For this reason this research paper intends to show how effective group work activities are in order to reduce anxiety, as a way to achieve oral performance in students.

At this point it is important to name the kind of anxiety which is experienced by a person who is learning an L2, it is mentioned by Tsui (1995)'State anxiety' is based on a learner's reaction to a specific learning situation such as: taking an exam or correcting an oral presentation. This anxiety is based on a specific learning situation which in our context is very common and it happens every moment when students have to show their knowledge in front of their classmates or teachers. This is how students are predisposed to dry up and they are not able to think of anything to say, avoiding eye contact, and stumble over their words, getting emotional or aggressive and also looking stiff uncomfortable and in some cases losing the fluency, these are the main characteristics that make it evident when the students are facing anxiety.

4.9 What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is something unconscious and it happens without warning making students feel like a person who does not know anything about certain topics. As Tsui (1995) said foreign-language anxiety is a kind of state anxiety which affects students in classrooms debilitating the oral performance of speakers of English as a second language. Also, anxiety has been associated to interfere in many types of learning but in this case it is important to relate to it essentially

when it is presented on second language learning which is determined as second/foreign language anxiety.

In addition Spielberger (1983) defines anxiety as a subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the authentic nervous system. This fact is more evident when students have to develop oral performance which must be the most used nowadays which might allow teachers to know the level the performance of their students.

Tsui (1995) affirms when learning English as a second Language (L2) anxiety must be considered as an adverse event which is found in all classrooms and it happens often to students specially when students have to master the target language and perform in that language at the same time. What is aimed to demonstrate through this research paper is basically to encourage students to produce speaking and using group work activities giving more practicality in spoken English class which is mentioned by John Hycraft (1978), '…to give more practice in spoken English to your class, break them up into pairs or small groups.'(p 567).

The application of this technique would lead teachers to implement some strategies inside the classroom promoting the oral participation and also this will encourage conversation, even with big classes, the application of oral performance classes tends to be very difficult. The application of speaking activities in groups allows students to interact using the language in a natural way through the development of activities, which also implies the use of speaking skills through activities that could be completed through group work developing them in an easier and more fun way.

Another reason to promote group work is because students can feel motivated to talk, in this way they should feel confident to talk and participate into a group and the development of

oral production will be more evident if students work in groups. That is to say that they may forget about their insecurities and they could decrease the chances to suffer from the panic to perceive criticism and rejection by part of classmates or even by teachers. Brown (1994) points out that the alternative in encouraging motivation which generates security into classrooms requires the implementation of group work, as Brown (1994) cites that affective benefit of small group work is an increase in student motivation. It means, if students are motivated they may feel security and confidence to express what they want to say reducing the feeling of embarrassment when expressing their ideas, knowledge, beliefs, and so on because, students could feel a safe atmosphere without any impediments to talk and to produce language through oral communication activities. In other words, it is important to stand out one of the most significant advantages that group work activities offer, which is promoting a safe atmosphere where students feel comfortable to try out the target language and reduce the fear of making mistakes, the strategy of using group work activities to reduce student´s anxiety.

> Tsui (1995) discusses that in view of the language learning anxiety that students suffer in the classroom, it is important that as a language teachers we try to create a relaxing atmosphere, in which students feel comfortable to try out the target language and make mistakes. One effective way of doing this is by using group work. (p. 90)

This author referred to anxiety as a very common problem when someone is learning a second language.The best strategy suggested by him in order to solve is using group work. In this way this technique could be applied by teachers who are interested in enhancing the overall oral production trying to leave the traditional education and putting into practice as the best alternative to teach an L2. Fortunately, there exists one possible solution which in some cases help students to lose this big dilemma which affect most students in classrooms. Taking into

account the occasions when students are carried to express about themselves through different activities that are presented in front to other people but with the intension to show what they think not only by the topic which is delivered by the moderator but also for the activities that promote the free sharing, expressing of ideals and so on.

Although it is important to recognize that many cooperative learning exercises, according to Samimy & Rardin (1994) can be developed to fit within multiple categories, these categories include: discussion, reciprocal teaching, graphic organizers, writing and problem solving. Each category could be included in group work activities through a moderator who develops good cooperative learning exercises which allow students to have motivation in order to minimize anxiety, each process will be carried out with the purpose to achieve the goal wanted by students.

Regarding the big dilemma which impedes oral performance, it is important to cite research Andrade and Williams (2009) supports that the earliest investigations that recognized the important role of anxiety among the many variables that have effects in the foreign language learning. Brown (1973), Chastain (1975), and Scovel (1978) stated that anxiety was evident since the 1970´s but it was relatively incipient or in other words it was not very common in classrooms, but was in the 1980s when foreign language anxiety continued to grow rapidly and presented mixed results it was more evident in EFL which started to produce a big mysterious effect that needed to be more studied and valued in order to identify the possible effects and its solutions. Hence, after many studies and observations it was determined that foreign language anxiety is very different from the other anxieties thanks to the research by Horwitz and Cope (1986), which demonstrated that many people felt insecurity and impediment in the ability to perform successfully in a foreign language, but it was not the same reaction when they were in other situations. Therefore, they concluded that foreign language anxiety is very different from

other anxieties and also it is more common when students are presenting an oral performance in a foreign language especially when they are in front of other people.

4.10 What is Language Anxiety (LA)?

What we are mainly concerned with here is knowing a little bit more about Language Anxiety, according to McIntryre and Gardner (1989), language anxiety is described as the way in which language is not developed, they explain that some students may face difficulties in learning a language, especially when dealing with oral activities, that is how the students become anxious and may feel uncomfortable to make mistakes, and feel anxiety. Additionally, Shekan (1991) mentioned personality influenced students´ performance. Thus a shy introvert student can find language as a difficult experience, while the extrovert student is more probable to enjoy communication associated with language learning.In addition to the above information, teachers have to take into account that in all classrooms anxiety is present but the concrete Second Language Anxiety (SLA) is very different from others. Tsui (1995) affirms that classroom anxiety is a problem which is found in all classrooms. However, the anxiety generated by second-language learning is unique and different from others which are presented only when students have to express their knowledge in a foreign language.

Davu (2010) argued that anxiety in general can be defined as a difficult psychological term covering many variables. In its simplest form, anxiety can be defined as "a general feeling of apprehension including hyper-vigilance, increased sympathetic nervous system activity, and difficulty concentrating" (p. 31). Nevertheless, Foreign Language Anxiety as an apprehension which happens only in EF classrooms has been associated with a large number of negative outcomes that can be classified as a physical, psychological, or social.

According to Young (1990) the risks associated with speaking another language which induces to a highest anxiety as the author said "speaking on the spot" can have different sings of anxiety. For example:

- Students are more reluctant to speak in the classroom.

- Generally they tend to present nervousness.

- Refusal to participate.

- There is a limited risk taking in speech.

- Cognitive tension

As Shumin (1997) stated, affective aspects of the learners take part in the language learning success specially taking them to failure. One of some factors that affect learners is anxiety. Then it is important to point out that anxiety mainly is related to feelings like: uneasiness, frustration, apprehension, and self- doubt. Besides, Language Anxiety is a pervasive phenomenon associated with feelings of fear and apprehension.

4.11 The importance of oral production in ESL

According to Cummins (1994) another important issue discussed in this research paper will be group work activities in oral production. The use of oral production is an important component of language development principally in the ESL area. The effective language learning can be achieved only if it is applied through well organized classrooms which the opportunities to speak. It will be more evident if students are motivated to work in groups and also when they may interact with teachers. The interaction becomes more useful and an important skill to achieve a good participation showing the capacities that students have specially knowledge can be improved only if students are submitted to participate into classrooms.

According to Echevarria & Graves (2007). Effective language learning takes place in well-organized classrooms where there are opportunities for interaction with the teacher, peers and adequate practice in the target language. Interaction promotes effective language practice which encourages students to speak. Teachers may take into account classroom organization to ensure that all students participate. It means if a well classroom organization is developed, it may allow students to produce their target language in an effective way.

4.12 Activities that are useful to encourage Oral Production and reduce Anxiety

The following activities which reflect in a practical way the principles discussed previously in this paper, have been put into practice in EFL settings by the authors, and it can be seen that aspects such cooperation, interaction and collaboration are promoted, aiming to the encouragement of the oral production and reducing anxiety.

As well, this section is going to mention and describe appropriate group techniques as a very important part at the moment to create a good language teaching in classrooms, but first of all we have to take into account that pair work and group work have some important distinctions According to Brown (1994) when talking about pair work it is more appropriate for tasks that are: short and also tasks which are linguistically simple and controlled.

Appropriate pair activities which are not recommended for big groups engage communication for a short period of time and that have a minimum of logistical problems are:

- Practicing dialogues with a partner.

- Simple question and answer exercises.

- Performing certain meaningful substitution "drills"

- Quick (one minute or less) brainstorming activities.

- Checking written work with each other.

- Preparation for merging with a larger group.

- Any brief activity for which the logistics of assigning groups, moving furniture, and getting students into the groups is distractive.

The appropriate group techniques now discussed was mentioned by Brown (1994) as a possible starting point to implement techniques which encourage students in appropriate and successful group work activities, p. 178.

a) Games

b) Role- play and simulation

c) Drama

d) Projects

e) Interviews

f) Brainstorming

g) Information gap

h) Jig saw

i) Problem-solving and decision-making

j) Opinion exchange

As was mentioned, applying group tasks teachers could enhance the effectiveness of the teaching process. Nevertheless, as teachers need to apply new techniques in order to increase oral production, whatever of the above tasks can be applied but it is crucial to know that teachers play an essential and sensitive role when they ask students to discuss their beliefs, for this reason all opinions are to be valued not scorned, respected, and not ridiculed without taking into account religion, sex, age, or other aspects.

Besides, those techniques generate cooperation, and learners show a more effective performance that might help classmates who show anxiety difficulties in any aspect of language. Cooperative work is a powerful tool in this process. To support this idea, it is necessary to review some speaking activities which are mentioned by Nurhakim (2009) the activities are:

4.12.1 Role Play.

It is an imitation exercise where students participate acting in specific roles of dramatization about an event or certain situation. The main purpose of role play is to achieve a complete understanding of a situation using the language by experiencing a realistic simulation.

4.12.2 Interviews.

They are conversations between two people and one of them will be the subject of the report, or the published report itself.

4.12.3 Information Gaps.

In these activities, students have some specific information that the other student (s) don´t have. The specific objective is for students to ask questions to find out what they can find from the other (s).

4.12.4 Games.

These kinds of activities are especially for amusement, fun introduces or develops a subject interaction among students which is the main skill developed in these techniques.

4.12.5 Language Exchanges.

Basically, they are translations, activities that require the meaning of a text in one language, to promote a meaningful text equivalent in another language.

4.12.6 Surveys.

The gathering of a sample of data or opinions which are considered representative about certain topics.

4.12.7 Learning by teaching.

This activity is developed to teach lessons by part of students. Learning by teaching not only with presentations or lectures but also students may have the opportunity to choose their own methods and didactic approaches in teaching classmates certain topics.

4.12.8 Opinion sharing activities.

In these kinds of activities students, share their opinions, beliefs and values about certain topics; they will consider important qualities to take into account in order to improve their own knowledge.

5. Discussion

After extensively reading some authors who have studied about reducing anxiety in classrooms, the following discussions can be made:

Anxiety is a phenomenon which is found in all classrooms, it might be generated in learning a language. It is produced when students have to master the target language and perform in that language at the same time.Some authors proposed some alternatives to reduce anxiety for example, group work activities. They say that these kinds of activities might help if it is incorporated in the classroom.

The use of group work activities in the management of reducing anxiety might be a good technique which allows students to speak in a foreign language. When students work through group work activities it might encourage speaking skills, because they develop tasks about solving problems, providing them a positive support and create a relaxed classroom environment since, the use of group work activities focus on relevant and interesting topics for oral performance such as: introducing themselves, giving opinions, sharing together etc.

Appropriate methods must work on cooperative language learning in order to promote students to develop oral performance, directing their attention in the application of group work activities encouraging cooperation among students to improve the low proficiency of anxiety problems.

Moreover, encouraging group work activities might be a good resource of knowledge, because this is a positive change not only for teachers but also for students who have more time to practice the target language in different ways, especially if teachers apply activities according to the level and interests of students.

Brown (1994), who also mentioned that group work activities increase individual practice time into a group, offering the security needed to work in a community of learners cooperating with each other in pursuit of common goals. When students work through group work activities they develop cooperative language learning methodology which help students to feel more security at the moment to express their ideas in front of others, they feel supported by classmates instead of when they work individually.

Teachers must make sure cooperative language learning can be a feasible alternative to show that students are active participants instead of passive. Therefore, group work activities provide students the relaxing positive teaching and learning environment, which help them to develop the speaking skill.

According to Tsui (1995) teachers who want to reduce anxiety when speaking in a foreign language should create stress-free atmospheres in which students feel comfortable. One effective way of achieving this is through group work activities because students tend to be ready to interact with each other, group work activities provide more opportunities for learners to practice the target language, they encourage students to take risks, exploring with the language.

According to the above, the answer to the research question: "Does the use of group work activities foster EFL oral production and reduce students´ anxiety when speaking in the classroom?" is as follows: According to what was read, the use of group work activities does help to reduce anxiety in the classroom. Group work activities might be useful for teachers who want to implement speaking in classrooms because they generate an interactive language learning, moreover, group work activities solve the problem of classes that are too large because they offer many opportunities to speak and communication is more practiced. This kind of technique provides a relaxed environment for students who face anxiety when speaking.

6. Conclusions

After reviewing some literature related to this topic, the application of activities through the use of cooperative language learning methodology, some conclusions can be drawn. They are as follows:

First, it can be said that working through cooperative learning methodology can provide an appropriate academic environment in which students feel confident, comfortable and willing to speak in class.

Second, Group work activities are based on creative and collaborative tools to increase security to provide every student chances to succeed. Group work activities are useful and have positive effects on oral performance. This can be concluded due to the fact that students feel comfortable and secure when speaking when working in groups.

Group work activities allow students to share ideas so that they are able to reach determined goals together and build knowledge. This kind of group cooperation is useful since teachers are able to guide their classmates to work together and be aware they are part of the group and cooperate. Designing Group Work activities in the classroom helps students get confidence and produce better speaking outcomes.

Cooperative Learning might be a practical option to apply in our context in order to start changing traditional ways of teaching English. It is important that teachers know how to apply it in a correct way by using appropriate CL structures in group works. It is important to know about all the advantages that this approach has, especially when it is to oral performance skills.

Students might develop speaking to accomplish cooperative experiences encouraging students to build new knowledge and experiences together. Some difficulties might appear when students develop oral activities. In order to avoid these difficulties teachers might apply

cooperative learning using some group work activities which leads teachers to consider and take actions about the importance in establishing a cooperation environment.

In group work activities, students have more chances to speak in the target language. In addition, it makes students feel confident most of the time which lets them develops their oral skills, giving students opportunities to participate, and interact. According to Richard and Rodgers (2001) the use of group work activities often provides chances of pace in classroom events and encourage the students' participation. Moreover, these kinds of group work activities maximize students´ interaction and facilitate contributions to each other´s learning.

Besides, CL provides students a relaxing learning environment. It connects students with their personal life experiences, and thus, makes learning more realistic. It is thanks to interaction that students are encouraged to use language differently to express new experiences and realities. Furthermore, group work activities provide students increasing English speaking skills, social skills, acceptance, tolerance of others, and self-esteem.

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