

**IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDENTS' ORAL PRODUCTION BY MEANS OF  
THE USE OF REALIA INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM**

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SAN JUAN DE PASTO**

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**2002**

Nota de aceptación

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San Juan de Pasto, 1 de Agosto de 2002

*I dedicate the success of my research study above all to God who always gave the strength and the value to keep on working in spite of tiredness and difficulties. This triumph is also dedicated to my parents who never stopped encouraging me to go on, as well as to my sister Yoly who, since the beginning of my studies, has been morally supporting me.*

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## **ABSTRACT**

There have been several studies about English teaching and learning; however, in most of the cases, reality shows us that learners do not achieve a good level of oral command of the language even after many sessions of instruction. As a way to understand and to analyze that problem, the present research study focused on the improvement of the learners' oral production by means of using realia inside and outside the classroom. The participants in this study were tested at the beginning of the intervention to detect their level of English oral production. Then, the researcher applied a treatment to the students using pedagogical techniques with realia whose main aim was to foster oral communication in the students. Such a treatment consisted of three classes inside the classroom and three outside it. After the treatment, the students were tested again to analyze to what extent their oral production had improved. The final results indicated that most of the students, especially those who attended all the sessions, improved in a certain way their English oral production (pronunciation, grammar accuracy, fluency and vocabulary). As a final point, it could be said that it is possible to improve the students' English oral production by means of using realia inside and outside the classroom. Nevertheless, a deeper inquiry on how to manage this pedagogical proposal in the long term is necessary, bearing in mind the students' behavior and reaction before it.

## RESUMEN

A pesar de haber diversos estudios sobre la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del Inglés, en la mayoría de los casos la realidad nos muestra que los aprendices no llegan a adquirir un buen manejo oral de la lengua aún después de varias sesiones de instrucción. A fin de entender y analizar este problema, el presente trabajo de investigación centró su atención en el mejoramiento de la producción oral de los aprendices, mediante el uso de materiales reales (“realia”) dentro y fuera del salón de clase. Los participantes (estudiantes de octavo grado) fueron evaluados al comienzo de la intervención del investigador para detectar su nivel de producción oral en Inglés. Luego, el investigador aplicó un tratamiento a los estudiantes, consistente en tres sesiones dentro del aula y tres más fuera de ella, implementando técnicas pedagógicas con materiales reales con el objetivo de lograr que los estudiantes se comuniquen en la lengua extranjera. Después del tratamiento, los estudiantes fueron evaluados nuevamente para percibir su progreso en cuanto a la producción oral se refiere. Los resultados finales indicaron que la mayoría de los estudiantes mejoraron su producción oral en Inglés (pronunciación, precisión gramatical, fluidez y vocabulario). Como un aspecto final, podría decirse que es posible mejorar la producción oral del Inglés en los estudiantes por medio del uso de materiales reales (“realia”) dentro y fuera del salón de clase. No obstante, es necesario una investigación más profunda sobre cómo manejar esta propuesta pedagógica a largo plazo teniendo en cuenta el comportamiento y las reacciones de los estudiantes ante ella.

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it can be noticed that English has become a universal language because of its importance in worldwide trade and in the communication held between people from different countries. That is why high school English teachers try to provide their students with the best techniques so that they can learn and use the target language. But when carrying out this task, teachers sometimes have difficulties as far as the teaching of the four skills of the language is concerned. Consequently, they do not work with them suitably and evenly.

Speaking is one of the four language skills, in which high school students commonly fail because of the lack of attention to it. Taking into account the data collected from a classroom observation in a high school of our city and also the researcher's personal experience, it proved necessary to work on this research about the students' oral production since it seems to be that students cannot put their knowledge in practice with communicative purposes.

This problem affects and interrupts the students' process of learning English because it is useless to know grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, if you cannot express your own ideas using that knowledge. Then, teachers have been concerned about the

“usage” of the language and they have neglected, in some way, its “use” (Widdowson, 1978).

So this research aimed at helping high school students improve their oral production. For accomplishing that task, some techniques with “realia” were applied not only inside the classroom but also outside it so as to try to break the routine and to make the class different, more active and interesting, since it is illogical that the students after six years of English classes in high school, according to our educational system, cannot acquire even the equivalence to a beginner’s level in the four skills and even less in the speaking skill of the foreign language.

## **1. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

In this chapter a look at a problem in our regional high schools in the field of Teaching and Learning English is given. That problem is described, analyzed and evaluated, and also some delimitations of this research study are presented. Finally, the purpose, significance and limitations of the present study are mentioned.

### **Introduction to the problem.**

Since long time ago, researchers have been concerned with the students' second or foreign language learning and why many of them cannot get even a beginner's level of the language after years of instruction. According to the classroom observations carried out in our region, it could be noticed that students from high schools were not doing a good work in learning English, especially as far as the development of the speaking skill is concerned.

Taking into account the researcher's personal experience when studying English in high school and a recent classroom observation carried out in a high school of this city, it can be said that both teachers and students are neglecting the speaking skill. This situation might have arisen because of the lack of creativity in applying a new methodology and

techniques, and in encouraging students to learn English. The problem of the negligence of the oral production has called the attention because it is not fair that students waste six years in high school trying to learn English in an unsuitable way.

### **The problem.**

**Description of the problematic situation.** Nowadays, a common difficulty found in high school students is the development of language skills, especially speaking. Perhaps, students understand what they listen to in English and they can express their ideas in writing, but when it comes to speaking, that is, oral production, they just fail as far as pronunciation and grammar are concerned. That situation was detected through personal experience and also through classroom observation. This problem was observed when students were asked to give an opinion or to answer a question: they found neither the appropriate words nor the correct pronunciation when they performed something in English.

This could be the result of little attention to the speaking skill in class, also because of the poor confidence that the teacher gives to the students for speaking and expressing their ideas, or due to the lack of practice as well. If that situation continues in high schools, six years of English will not be worthwhile because the students will not be able to obtain a beginner's level of the foreign language for communicative purposes.

**Problem statement.** Can the students of eighth level of a public high school of San Juan de Pasto improve their oral production by means of the use realia inside and outside the classroom?

### **Delimitations.**

**Conceptual delimitation.** It is necessary to define and clarify some terms that were used throughout this research so that the readers of this work do not get confused about the sense and the meaning of some essential words. The following terms were considered important to be defined:

***COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE:*** Ability to apply the grammatical rules of a language in order to form grammatically correct sentences and to know when and where to use these sentences and with whom. Communicative competence includes knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the language, knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g. how to begin and end a conversation, topics to talk about, etc), knowledge of what constitutes appropriate as well as correct language behavior and also of what constitutes effective language behavior in relation to particular communicative goals. It also consists of the actual use of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge in understanding and producing discourse (Hymes, 1977).

***FOREIGN LANGUAGE:*** A language that could be taught and learned, but it plays no major role in the community of a country in which it is not the official language of that place (Hatch, 1978).

**INTERNALIZATION:** An abstract process of appropriation of a particular attitude, belief, pattern, etc. so that it becomes part of one's behavior. This process of appropriation implies the development of certain actions such as: to symbolize, to abstract, to conceptualize and to evoke (Longman dictionary of contemporary English, 1995).

**ORAL PRODUCTION:** To talk in the foreign language taking into account the development of the communicative competence (linguistic and pragmatic knowledge) and performance (intelligibility, coherence, pronunciation) (Longman dictionary of applied linguistics, 1992).

**REALIA:** Actual objects, items or resources that the teacher can incorporate into language lessons as examples or as aids to be talked or written about so as to try to improve and extend his/her methodology of teaching (Dubin, 1977).

**SPEAKING SKILL:** One of the four skills that any language has which consists of talking in the language following its grammatical, syntactic, semantic, phonetic and phonological rules with effective purposes of communication (Longman dictionary of applied linguistics, 1992).

**Population.** The population that took part in this research study consisted of the students of eighth level of the afternoon shift of a public high school of San Juan de Pasto. The twenty-eight students (boys and girls) were teenagers between 13 and 14 years and they belonged to a middle class of this city.

**Geographic delimitation.** This research was carried out in a public high school which is located in the south part of San Juan de Pasto, in the department of Nariño, Colombia. The neighborhood where the high school is located belongs to a middle class. Most of the houses around the high school have two stories and they seem to be well constructed. The streets in this area are paved but they are not in +good conditions. Many cars, buses and motorcycles move back and forth around this neighborhood, then we could deduce that there was noise near the high school. Finally, the high school area is not smooth, there are climbs and drops and many steps everywhere.

**The purpose of the study.**

**General objective.** To improve the English oral production of a group of students of eighth level of a high school of San Juan de Pasto by using realia inside and outside the classroom.

**Specific objectives.**

- ✓ To select active speaking techniques so that the students start using the language with communicative purposes.
  
- ✓ To choose and to apply useful and appropriate realia to work inside and outside the classroom so that the students improve their oral production.

### **Significance of the study.**

Based on the experience lived in the classroom observation, it was important to undertake this research study so as to try to find a solution to the difficulties that high school students had in their oral production.

This research was also relevant because it attempted to help the educational community so that the problem stated before does not persist in high schools in the future. Besides, it was interesting to find out about the problems that high school students had concerning the oral production in English, and in this way to contribute to the improvement of this skill on the students.

### **Limitations.**

As in any kind of research that is undertaken, some problems should arise that might cause difficulties in the work. But in any case, those obstacles always lead us to state that the final results are not absolutely definitive.

This research was carried out with students of eighth level, so their previous knowledge of English was, in this case, a disadvantage because it is probable that not all the students had the same level of English and besides what they had already learned did not reveal a significant work, then the techniques that were applied to improve their oral production had to take that into consideration. Another limitation was that it was

difficult to guess what the students really thought and felt, and if they were reacting differently because they were working with a person who was not their regular English teacher. Also the students' poor experience in oral tests represented a barrier.

As far as Action Research Study is concerned, there were some limitations too. For example, this kind of research attempted to change or transform a situation, in this case to improve the students' English oral production, however sometimes the objectives of a research study are not completely reached. Following Strevens' model of Action Research, after the stage of reflecting, the first treatment showed that some aspects for improving the students' oral production were missing, therefore it was necessary the application of another treatment, so this new treatment involved more time working in the institution. Another limitation was that some techniques for the data gathering such as recording were rejected by the students. Besides, sometimes some students were not completely willing to participate in the activities during the research.

In addition, there were other obstacles throughout the research such as unexpected strikes, difficulties with the application of the treatment, few classes of English per week, special activities in the high school, among others, which were related to "time" factor which is very important to be taken into account when applying the treatment and for results analysis.

This chapter presented the description, analysis and evaluation of the problem on which this research study was based. It has been stated that the chosen problem is related to the speaking skill, particularly, the difficulties the students have to improve their English oral production in high school. An insight of the population participating in this

research study, the students of eighth level of a high school located in the south part of this city has been given. Moreover, it has been mentioned that the purpose of the present study was to improve the English oral production in a group of students of eighth level in a high school of this region. Finally, this chapter concluded by mentioning some difficulties that arose throughout the research and also it was stated that this research study was important because it attempted to help the educational community so that the negligence in oral production does not persist in high schools in the future.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Once the problem of this research study has been described, analyzed and evaluated, the population participating has been presented, and the purpose, significance and limitations have been stated, the next step is to give a theoretical support to the research study. As a way to attempt to be aware of what is happening in high schools, concerning the students' low level of English, this chapter discusses that situation by setting a relationship between the aim of the present research study and the actual difficulties found in the field of teaching and learning English. Then, an insight to more specific sub-areas such as Communicative Competence and Oral Production is given. This chapter also refers to the effect of the use of materials and especially "realia" inside and outside the classroom in improving the students' oral production. Finally, some research studies related to the present research study made by the students of the University of Nariño are analyzed.

### **Theoretical Framework.**

**Teaching and learning a foreign language.** One of the most researched fields is language teaching and learning, independently if it is second or foreign language. In

this opportunity, the teaching and learning of English, which is our major concern, will be discussed.

The teaching of English has passed through controversial situations because many researchers have supported different ideas about this topic. Consequently, there are many methods used in the world for teaching English, and the best will be only the one that makes the student learn the language since every one learns in his/her own way.

Indeed the teaching of any language is a hard and serious work. Most of the times bad instruction imparted by the teacher not only produces a bad level of language in the learner but also causes psychological problems for learning languages in the future.

According to Strevens (1977:12) “language teaching is a task in which intelligence, imagination, training, command of language, experience, a body of knowledge and the exercise of judgment and compassion are essential qualities, and in which high standards are imposed and maintained, on a world-wide basis, by a particular branch of the profession of education.” Then, being a teacher demands certain requirements that indeed constitute a guide for a good performance in the field of language teaching.

However, currently we can notice the low level of English of students from high schools but almost nobody reacts seriously against that situation. Since long time ago there have been problems that hinder the advance and improvement in learning English, for instance: use of unsuitable materials, discouragement, economical difficulties, large groups, few hours of English classes a week, books that are not adapted to our social

contexts and interests, and lack of teachers' qualification, (Bastidas, 1991). All this turns the teaching of English into a much more complex process.

Therefore the teacher should ask himself, Where do I want to go?, How do I get there? and How do I know that I have already got there?. That is to say, to set a goal, the means for getting it, and the way to know that goal has been reached (Galeano, 1986).

For being successful, the teacher should make an enthusiastic, natural and relaxed class maintaining the students' motivation. That will generate a more confident environment in the classroom. Another important aspect in teaching English is bringing up to date. The teachers' qualification must be not only as far as pedagogy is concerned but also in other fields like sociology, linguistics, psychology and certainly the language he/she teaches, in this case English.

When talking about the teaching-learning process of any language, it is necessary to make reference to the development of the four skills of the language (listening, speaking, reading and writing) that allows such process to be carried out successfully, that is, to acquire a communicative competence of the other language. But actually the level of English of the students from high schools demonstrates that there are some difficulties in the process of teaching and learning of the language.

Taking into account all those difficulties, it can be inferred that the teacher and the students are not only the ones involved in this process. The society makes also part of the task that high schools develop in the classrooms. As any pedagogical process, the teaching and learning of English implies the presence of some factors such as: the target

language (in this case English), the actors (teacher and students), the tasks to be developed (class and activities) and a series of circumstances in which the process takes place (an educational system) (Oviedo, 1980). Therefore, the teaching and learning of English is an issue that involves everybody: the teacher, the students, the community and the government.

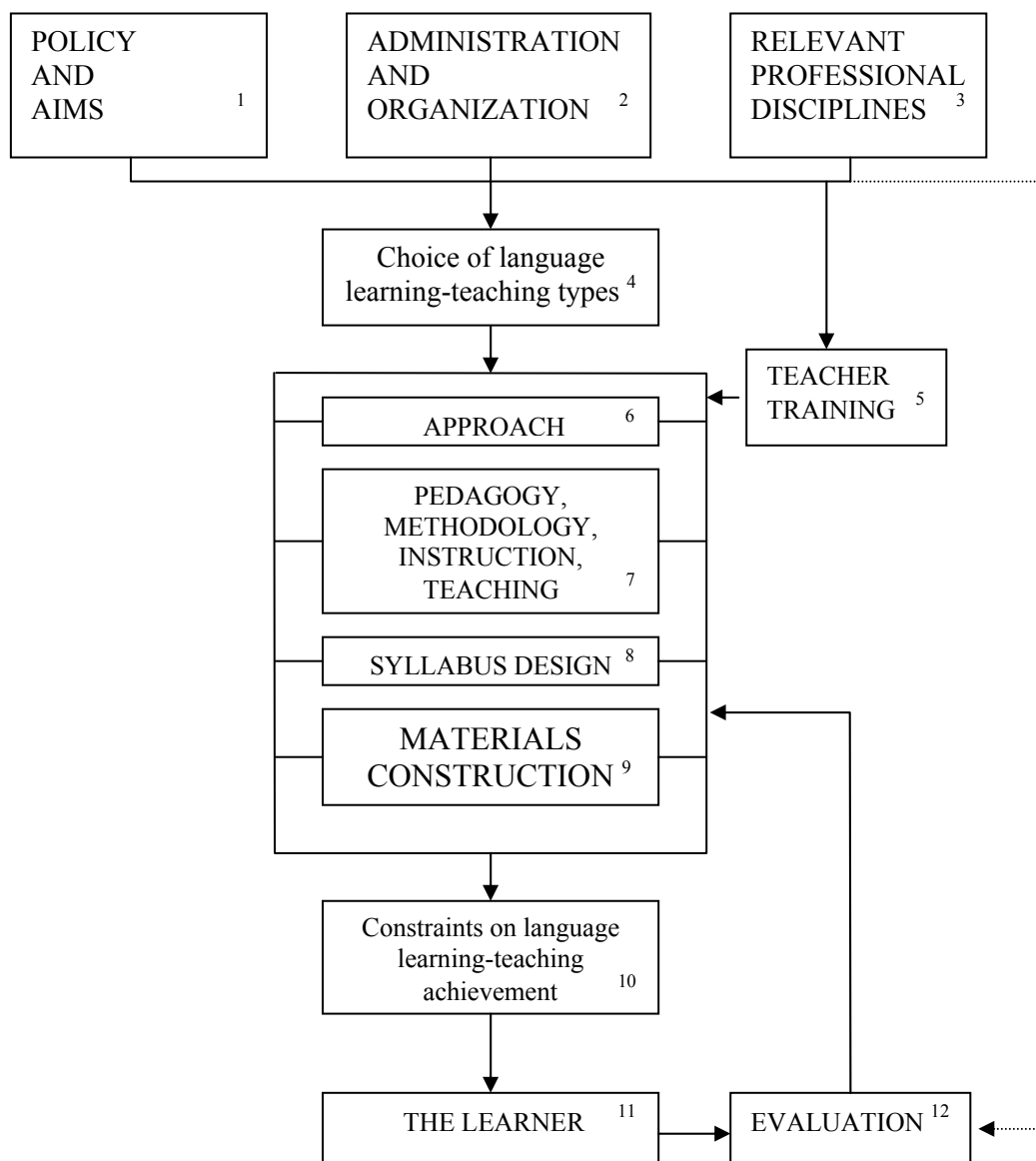
To conclude this part, Strevens' model of the language teaching and learning process (Figure 1) in which he combines the essential features that make up language teaching and any learning resulting from such teaching will be referred (Stern, 1983).

Strevens' model of language teaching and learning process is not mainly concerned with the flow of ideas from the linguistic sciences to language teacher as other authors' models such as Campbell's, Spolsky's or Ingram's. Strevens' model consists of twelve elements which are related one to the other. This model is similar to Mackey's one, which includes policy and governmental agencies in its formulation.

The three first elements of Strevens' model refer to (1) the public will which manifests itself in the intention to make social provision for language teaching, (2) the financial and organizational framework to carry out the social decisions by contributing to the "motive power" which sets the entire process in motion, and (3) the professional disciplines which constitute the intellectual resources for language teaching.

The next six elements of the model describe the implementation of the teaching intention, and they deal with some factors such as pupils' age, stage of proficiency, educational aims, learner involvement, language of instruction status, and target

language status. Besides they account for the implementation of instruction, qualification and enthusiasm to the teacher to go on in his work, implementation of what will be taught, how (methodology) and the resources or materials to be used for teaching.



**Figure 1: Strevens' model of the language learning/language teaching process.**

The final three elements focus on (1) certain factors that influence the learning outcome such as quantity and intensity of instruction, impediments to learning and teaching and

quality of the teacher, (2) learner characteristics (ability, personality, etc), idiosyncrasies and distinctions that mark one off from another, and (3) the assessment of the learning outcome. Finally, it can be said that there is no single “ideal” model for language teaching and learning since any process can be interpreted in different ways depending on the purpose for which the model has been developed (Stern, 1983).

**Communicative Competence.** Based on Hymes (1971), Bastidas (1993) defines communicative competence as follows: “la competencia comunicativa de los individuos incluye conocimiento de las reglas sociolingüísticas que permiten que una declaración sea gramatical, factible, apropiada y aceptable en un contexto determinado.” In other words, what Hymes tells us is that the communicative competence is what will enable the learner to interact and to communicate with the others suitably and effectively by using the previous knowledge he/she has of the target language.

Then, the communicative competence includes both usage and use. “Usage is that aspect of performance which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his knowledge of linguistic rules, and use is that aspect of performance which makes evident the extent to which the language user demonstrates his ability to use his knowledge of linguistic rules for effective communication”, (Widdowson, 1978) (Cited by Ellis, 1994:13).

Taking that into account it can be inferred that it is important to develop a linguistic competence so as to get a communicative competence. However, there must be more attention and devoting of time to oral production since the practice and the use of the knowledge helps the learner internalize the language fast.

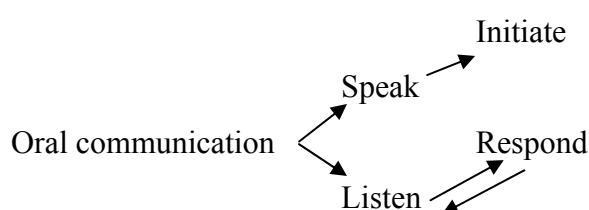
As far as competence is concerned, Chomsky (1965) claims that it includes the knowledge the speaker-hearer has of what constitutes appropriate as well as correct language behavior and also of what constitutes effective language behavior in relation to particular communicative goals (Cited by Ellis, 1994).

As it is known, the equal development of the four skills of the language: listening, speaking, reading and writing is highly important when teaching English. Since the EFL students are not always in contact with the language, it is very important to focus on speaking both inside and outside the classroom. In this way the communicative competence will be applied in more real settings.

Why is communicative competence relevant, especially in our case?. Among the four skills of the language, speaking is being a little neglected especially in the teaching of English in high schools. Some time ago, listening was the main neglected skill, students listened to repeat rather than listened to understand. Consequently, that affected oral proficiency and the development of communicative competence. Essentially, the students should learn how to use the language in any circumstance, place, time, etc, rather than memorize lists of vocabulary and expressions isolated from a real context.

Guillaume (1927) says that as a native speaker's parent does with his children, the teacher must permit the learner to make his/her own constructions since the process of learning a language does not consist of repetition but of creation and generation. That is communicative competence, to let the student produce his/her own phrases according to his/her own communicative needs regarding the context that surrounds him/her.

**Oral production.** First of all, it is necessary to understand that oral communication is “a two way process (Figure 2) between speaker and listener (or listeners) and involves the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding (or listening with understanding)”, (Byrne, 1986:8). It must be taken into account that receptive does not imply passive since the language learner is always involved in the process of interpreting and sharing ideas and meanings.



**Figure 2: Oral communication as a two way process. Byrne, 1986.**

The oral production of English that the students of a high school are supposed to acquire depends on several factors that, in most of the cases, define the level of English the students acquire until they finish their high school. Among those factors are: the schedule (hours per week), the environment (the classroom – school), the methodology, motivation, evaluation and materials.

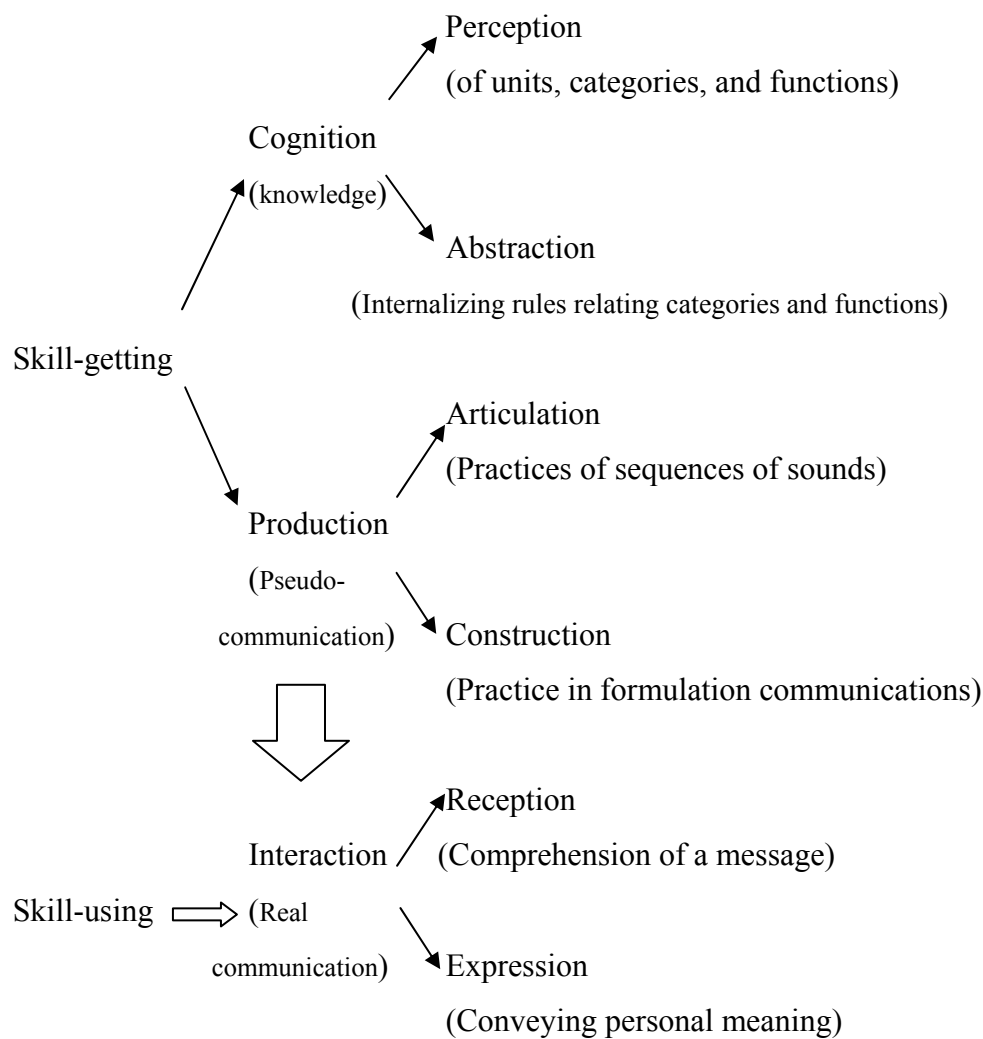
One of the basic problems in foreign language teaching is to prepare learners to be able to speak, to use the language orally. In order to get that goal, the learner must have knowledge of grammar and vocabulary so that he/she can put that into practice. Here, a difference between “knowledge” and the “skill” to use it in communication can be stated: “both knowledge and the skill can be understood and memorized, but only a skill can be imitated and practiced” (Bygate, 1987:4).

When learning a language, the learners really do not know how to join words and sentences in the abstract, they have to produce them and to adapt them to the circumstances and to a determined moment, that is to say, making decisions and using them rapidly to adjust them to our conversation.

Concerning oral production, there are two basic types of skill: motor-perceptive skills and interaction skills. According to Bygate (1987:5) “motor-perceptive skills involve perceiving, recalling, and articulating in the correct order sounds and structures of the language; and interaction skills involve making decisions about communication, such as: what to say, how to say it, and whether to develop it, in accordance with one’s intentions, while maintaining the desired relations with others.”

Rivers and Temperley (1978) provide a diagram (Figure 3) which represents the processes involved in developing oral production and learning to communicate and which distinguishes between skill-getting and skill-using. These two kinds of skill do not represent successive stages in language learning, but according to the authors a pseudo-communication leads naturally into spontaneous communication (Cited by Bygate, 1987).

The main goal in teaching the productive skill of speaking is oral fluency. This can be understood as “the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably, accurately and without too much hesitation” (Byrne, 1986:9), of course, taking into account the level in which the learner is. A difference between the way a beginner speaks and how an advanced learner does it can be set, since both of them will use the knowledge they have acquired independently from the level they are.



**Figure 3: Rivers and Temperley's framework (1978)**

It is necessary to say that fluency always goes together with accuracy. The focus on accuracy for beginners must be major than the focus on fluency, and vice versa for advanced learners because at the beginning the learner is trying to internalize the language. It is important that the learner, especially a beginner, learns how to use structures, vocabulary, grammar in a precise way and moment, that is, effectiveness. Since it would not be worthwhile that the learner performs fluently something in English but without any sense or inappropriate to the situation, the person, the time, the place, etc.

Another aspect that is important in oral production is the intelligibility. Intelligibility implies the mastery of some essential features such as differences between sounds (pronunciation), stress and intonation. Those features are relevant because inadequacy in handling them might cause communication to break down.

Motivation is also related to learners' oral production. Byrne (1986:11) claims that "the development of oral ability is a good source of motivation for most learners and that some points to pay attention to are (1) to find ways of demonstrating the learners that they are making progress in the language all the time, (2) to ensure that controlled practice, when you will monitor and want to correct the learners' performance, is matched by opportunities for free expression and (3) to show the learners how to make the best use of the little they know."

So far, a look at the oral production has been given as if it were something that is developed in isolation. Now it can be said that with the use of a variety of materials, students can greatly expand their knowledge and reinforce their management not only of the oral production but also of the other skills of the language.

**Instructional materials.** Acquiring any kind of knowledge from the high school requires a mediator representation between that knowledge and the student, a representation that substitutes the direct knowledge, that is to say, instructional materials. The effort done to appropriate knowledge must go with a representation of the reality, an instrument that has itself information to be worked and learned.

It is convenient to state what it is understood for materials. According to Gimeno (1991) (cited by Ballesta, 2001) instructional materials consist of any kind of instrument that can serve as a resource for learning or the development of knowledge. Nowadays, in high schools, materials are seen as all those instruments and means that provide the teacher with guides and criteria for getting coherence in his labor and for taking of decisions in planning, development or intervention, and evaluation of the learning and teaching process.

Materials should not be only seen as teachers' assistants either as threats that subtract professionalism to the teacher, but as primary necessary resources both for teachers and students. Therefore, the teacher and the book should not be the only source in the class, new strategies for teaching that involve a big quantity of modern and didactic materials must be present in class helping students learn being in contact with technology. But a problem that could arise is that sometimes teachers cannot suitably profit those materials, so it is not only important the presence of materials in class but also a good use of them.

It is useful to clarify the function of the materials which become didactic means by being actively used in the development of students' knowledge. The selection of materials according to the type of contents being taught, the activities proposed and the students for whom they are intended, is fundamental. Nowadays, it is necessary to use materials developed from new information technology, such as CD-ROM support, which will allow the students to play a more active part in the learning process, creating a varied class that maintains the students' motivation.

**Materials as a didactic means.** Materials as a didactic means makes reference to the incorporation and use of tools inside learning and teaching contexts that contribute to the individual and group work of the students. Means involve resources and materials that serve to organize the curricular development and to carry out interactive processes between the teacher, the students and the knowledge.

Martínez (1992) (Cited by Ballesta, 2001) claims that didactic means force the teacher to reflect about the concrete educational reality, to discover the factual needs according to that reality, to determine the changes on methodology to be used in class, and to consider certain assumptions that could arise throughout the learning and teaching process.

**Materials for learning.** Instructional materials should facilitate the learning of the contents for the students, becoming in this way a significant resource in teaching, and promoting constructivism. When programming learning and teaching activities to be carried out in the classroom, it is important to keep in mind the material which will be suitable to transmit the contents and to achieve our purposes.

The material used in class allows to pay attention to relevant aspects such as explanation, concentration, participation, comprehension, will, creativity and enthusiasm. The teacher's labor in class is to adapt and to use materials according to the students' needs, and an important aspect to be kept in mind when using any kind of material is to be convinced that it is not going to be exclusive, as many teachers do with textbooks, basing their classes just on the study of their contents.

Here are some suggestible questions that teachers should answer when thinking about applying any kind of material in class: What kind of materials are appropriate to be used in the classroom?, Is it necessary to adequate the material to the educational context?, How much importance does the textbook have in the development of the curriculum? Is it an exclusive material in class?, How can I complement the contents of the textbook by using innovative and attractive materials?.

**Materials in TESOL.** Materials play a relevant role not only in oral production but also in the whole process of learning English. Most people associate “language learning materials” with course books because that has been their main experience of using materials. However, it is convenient to clarify that the term “materials” refers to anything which is used by teachers and learners to facilitate the learning of a language.

Materials used in teaching any language must be interesting and attractive so that they can call the students’ attention. “Impact is achieved when materials have a noticeable effect on learners, that is, when the learners’ curiosity, interest and attention are attracted” (Tomlinson, 1998).

Materials can achieve impact through novelty, variety for breaking up the monotony, attractive presentation and appealing content, that is, topics of interest. Although materials impact can vary from a place to another or from some students to others, the teacher must try to apply different types of materials to encourage the students and to avoid making a mechanical class.

Besides, materials should help learners feel at ease in the class. According to Tomlinson (1998) “the less anxious the learner, the better language acquisition proceeds; similarly, relaxed and comfortable students apparently can learn more in shorter periods of time”. As Tomlinson says, instructors (teachers) have to make the learner feel relaxed with materials which are trying to help them learn more than to test them. Also, materials should help learners develop confidence so that they do not feel pushed to learn but free under the whole process of learning a language and specifically to develop the oral production.

It is important to bear in mind a limitation that commonly exists in high schools: economical resources. This factor limits the access to materials for being used in teaching English, so the implementation of materials becomes a teacher’s responsibility in which the teacher should put into practice his creativity to replace some materials with other ones. This does not mean that the teacher and the students must fossilize themselves following a textbook since in the process of learning a foreign language it is important to encourage the students to build up their knowledge. Therefore, that task cannot be limited to the contents of a textbook, which can serve as a guide but it does not represent the essence that the teaching and learning language process implies.

“Ideally materials at all levels should provide frequent exposure to authentic input which is varied in style, mode, medium and purpose, and should be rich in features which are characteristic of authentic discourse in the target language”, (Krashen, 1985) (Cited by Tomlinson, 1998). In that way the learner will have the opportunity to use the target language with real communicative purposes, developing in that way the oral

production based on factual patterns that will facilitate a normal conversation without control, pressures or limits.

A significant point in using materials in the class is that they must create a confident environment in which the students feel comfortable. In this way, the students can easily open their minds to knowledge and interact among them because they feel active and important during the class.

When it comes to materials, it can be said that they have to fulfill certain requirements that guarantee their functionality and success in the students' learning. According to Strevens (1977) there are five characteristics that any kind of material has to have, they are:

- ◆ Realistic: capable of being used by the teachers and the students and easily available.
- ◆ Relevant to the particular point in the learner's progress, to his aims and aged-group.
- ◆ Interesting: varied, on topics of interest and intellectually satisfying.
- ◆ Encouraging: having the quality of making the learner feel he is making progress.
- ◆ Compatible: with the approach being followed, with the teacher attitudes.

**Types of materials.** In the field of teaching and learning a language, in this case English, there is a great deal of materials that can be used for different purposes and different kinds of learners (children, teenagers, adults). There are specific materials the teachers use for developing each skill of the language.

For the development of the listening and speaking skills, there are tapes, videos, CDs, computer programs, and also the teacher and students' speech. Why the same type of

materials for both skills? Because as in any natural process of learning a language listening goes first, then speaking. Thus, one skill always goes together with the other and they are developed jointly.

For the other skills, reading and writing, it happens almost the same. Reading before writing. That is why the materials used for one of these skills serve to develop the others, too. Among those materials there are readings, letters, tales, short and long stories, novels, and also the teacher's and students' own written productions.

Indeed, two kinds of materials: non-authentic and authentic can be discussed (Byrne, 1986). Both of them are important and useful, and their effectiveness is even better if they are used together and applied to the development of the four skills because in that way the real and the abstract complement the student's knowledge.

**Non-authentic materials.** Non-authentic materials consist of those aids that have been already prepared in advance taking into account determined purposes and that in fact they do not completely show and reveal factual situations. For instance, textbooks, readings, activity books, handouts, written workshops and exercises, etc. An important aspect to talk about in this kind of material is that much of this has been made in other countries and that, in some way, causes some difficulties in understanding for most students since almost all that information is not present in their social context, in their real life.

That does not mean that non-authentic materials are useless but they always must be reinforced with authentic material so that the students feel that they can use the

language they are learning in real contexts with their classmates, relatives, friends, etc. In this way the students, specially those who are not willing to learn English, will find, at least, one reason for learning it and using it according to their real communicative needs.

**Authentic materials.** Authentic materials consist of those elements that are real, that the teacher and students can see and touch, and that generate interaction among the students. Authentic material aids in contextually grounding instruction bring students into contact with language as it is used in the target culture in order to meet actual communication needs (Smith, 2001).

As this research study focused on oral production, a kind of material (authentic material) that can be useful for learning English as a complement to the others, is *realia*. Next, this type of material will be presented as well as what it consists of, and how helpful it can be in teaching and learning English.

**Realia.** When it comes to materials for teaching any language, realia indeed makes part of this topic. Realia includes a great deal of items, real objects or aids that permit the teacher to develop his/her class in a didactic, encouraging and interesting way.

“Realia is truly limitless, the more of the aids that the teacher can incorporate into language lessons, the better”. (Celce-Murcia, 1979:314). The teacher must select and use those aids that best serve to reach the objectives of the lesson, the needs and the interests of the students.

According to Moya (1998) “the aim when incorporating realia in teaching any language is that authentic materials show the use and usage of the target language in a more modern way and can add freshness and life to the process of learning.”

Moreover, using realia is also an excellent way to teach new vocabulary. The student is exposed to a varied vocabulary which is in context, so he/she will not imagine or suppose a situation or an object because the student will be involved in that situation watching and touching the objects.

With the use of realia, the students are going to be exposed to a more natural use of the language. “Materials from the target language show the students how the language is actually used; with incomplete sentences, different degrees of formality, vocabulary related to the context, background noise, and fillers such as uh, uh or the speaker's self correction.” (Long & Richards, 1987) (Cited by Moya, 1998).

Taking into account those conditions, it can be inferred that the students will develop their oral production easily. They will have to produce sentences, questions or answers naturally just taking the context, the topic of the conversation and the environment as points of reference. Thus, they will not have to worry too much about strict grammar rules or remembering dialogues memorized which in real situations are not practical enough.

“The use of realia is commonplace in the ESL/EFL classroom and is widely considered to have great value in fostering an active teaching-learning environment.”(Smith, 2001).

In some way, the use of realia helps the students build a bridge between what they are learning in the class and the reality.

Real things turn the class more natural and also make it something different. Routine usually bores the students and in those conditions they will learn because they have to, because of the grade, and not because they feel it is interesting and useful for their lives.

Realia provides language learners with multi-sensory impressions of the language which, as Rivers (1983) (Cited by Smith, 2001) notes is "learned partly at least through seeing, hearing, touching, and manipulating" items. And the best is that the teacher and students are working and learning with familiar objects such as school tools, the equipment of the classroom, the environment of the high school, their clothes, etc.

The use of realia, as a part of our methodology for teaching English, enlivens all this process. Real materials allow us to provide students with the opportunity to use their imagination and creativity, (Domke, 1991). Then, it can be assumed that it is important to use as many materials as possible to give the students helpful tools for learning and keeping their motivation high. All this will make the students perceive that the teacher's work is not too easy and that he wants the best for them.

As it was said before, realia consists of a great variety of didactic aids for teaching any language. Here are some of them: calendars, maps, puzzles, clocks, menus, postcards, letters, stamps, magazines and newspapers, travel posters and brochures, food (food containers), paper, hand puppets, money (play or real), and pictures (Celce-Murcia, 1979).

**The environment in teaching English.** In the process of teaching a language everything counts, and the environment in which the students learn is also important for their progress. Commonly, the teacher makes his/her class inside the classroom, and the students do not imagine that the class could be taught outside the classroom because in their minds they have the conception that a class must take place in a classroom.

The process of teaching or learning any language must not only be carried out inside but also outside the classroom, in more natural contexts profiting from everything that there is around. The environment plays an important role in the teaching and learning language process, because it influences the students' encouragement and disposition for learning and being attentive to the class.

**The English class inside the classroom.** All the objects that can be found inside the classroom can serve to increase the students' vocabulary and to improve their oral production. What the teacher has to do is not to get used to make the class only inside the classroom, but when the class is in the classroom everything that there is in it has to be profited.

The fact of being inside the classroom does not mean that both the teacher and the students have to concentrate their attention just on grammar and vocabulary. Inside the classroom many topics can arise to talk and to develop the oral production. The teacher and the students do not only have to talk about what they have in the classroom, many other topics related to them can be treated. That depends on the teacher's originality and creativity to generate interesting topics for chatting.

**The English class outside the classroom.** Likewise inside the classroom, outside the classroom there are many other things that can be the topic of conversation, the students can learn vocabulary, structures, etc, for example, the teacher can start a chat about the conditions of the infrastructure of the high school, new possible construction, arrangements, and so on. That natural contact will facilitate the students' oral production since they will relate what they see and touch or smell with their knowledge and they will express what they really feel about that.

In this case, oral production is not forced, the students express what they want to say freely as when they want to say something in their mother tongue. Of course, vocabulary and grammatical aspects must be taken into account but no longer repeating and memorizing isolated sentences or phrases but expressing real and contextualized feelings.

**Related Research.** In the University of Nariño, in the Language and Linguistics Department some research studies have been carried out by the students. Among them, there are two research paper related to the present research study. They are: "Developing speaking through the English conversational club" (Avila, 1997), and "Learning useful English phrases through videos to develop the oral communicative competence" (Guanca & Ramos, 1999).

Avila (1997) talks about the development of the speaking skill by means of speaking English in a club. In his research study he proposed that the students could improve their level of English sharing their ideas and opinions in informal conversations. The teacher and the students willing to improve their level of English gather together, not

necessarily at the hour for the English class, and the teacher starts speaking about any topic, it may be about sports, life, music, social concern, etc, and the students have to participate in the conversation with their opinions.

Perhaps, one of the most common problems for students is that in speech they often make mistakes because they lose control, get nervous, forget things they try to say, and even forget what they are talking about, (Avila, 1997). Then, Avila says that the most important aspect here is that students feel at ease, without any kind of pressure, that they feel relaxed and in this way they will speak without paying so much attention to the mistakes they can make but concentrating on the ideas they want to express. However, this does not mean that the students make the same mistakes all the time, mistakes are corrected by the teacher or also by the classmates, and the students should learn the right way to speak by practicing, repeating and making sentences, using what they learn, what is new for them trying not to make mistakes again.

Avila (1997) claims that the results obtained by means of the creation of an English club depends on some factors such as perseverance, time devoted to the club, and serious work during the club. Avila says that the results he got were satisfactory, most of the students improved their speaking skill, especially those who were constant in attending the club.

This research study proposes that teachers, in this case through realia, encourage the students to speak freely without any fear. The concern in Avila's research study is very similar, there is the preoccupation for the low level of English that students are getting from the class. The creation of an English club is a good idea that allows the students to

put into practice their knowledge in real chats. In addition, this is an excellent opportunity for the students to get fluency and to lose their fear of speaking with other people.

Regarding Guancha and Ramos' research study (1999), they refer to the development of the oral Communicative Competence. These researchers have noticed the negligence of the speaking skill in high schools, and they say that the students do not have enough useful expressions for everyday communication in English, consequently they lose interest in language learning.

Guancha and Ramos (1999) claim that old methodologies such as traditional methods present advantages because they emphasize on the teaching of grammar, vocabulary and phonetics, but they also have some disadvantages because they do not bear in mind the learning of the language as use, (Widdowson, 1978).

Then, they propose that students can develop the communicative competence by means of working on visual aids such as tape recorders, record players, videos, the board, pictures, flash cards, etc. The authors have chosen videos and the procedure they present is as follows: the teacher should bring to class suitable videos according to the level of English the students have. Before playing the video, the teacher makes some comments about it, then the students watch the video carefully trying to understand as much as possible. Once the students watch the video, the teacher plays it again making some pauses so that they clearly understand useful English phrases. After that, with the orientation of the teacher the students have to practice in class among them what they just learned.

The results that Guancha and Ramos (1999) obtained were not very good. As the students who the authors worked with in their research study were not enough motivated to learn English, the results after carrying out their project were not satisfactory, only some students really profited what was taught through the videos.

Concerning that situation, it can be said that when teaching and learning a language there are many factors that can affect this process and one of the most important is motivation. Sometimes the teacher's methodology is the responsible of the students' low motivation and consequently low level of English. As far as the oral production is concerned, perhaps at times the teacher neglects the development of speaking skill and puts enough attention on certain aspects such as grammar and lists of vocabulary which may bore the students and create a bad environment for learning English.

The teacher must care about the students' progress and in that way he/she will know in which aspect he/she is failing. Also, the students are sometimes to blame for their poor level of English, because as it is known, the language teaching and learning process is a matter of everybody, and if one part fails there will be instability, that is, bad results.

As it was said before, both research studies described above make reference to the development and improvement of the speaking skill or, as it is mentioned in the present research study, oral production. In spite of those researches and many other, the problem of the poor handling of English in an oral way goes on. It is essential to understand that the language teaching and learning process will always be a mystery, but that does not mean that the teachers should stop researching, on the contrary, there

must be a constant challenge for getting the goal both for teachers and students, because none of them will succeed unless the other succeeds, too.

This chapter has discussed the development of the communicative competence within the field of teaching and learning a foreign language. But primarily this chapter has been concerned with the improvement of the students' English oral production bearing in mind the significant role that materials play for this purpose. Specifically, an insight to realia and how this kind of material can be used in helping the students improve their speaking skill was given. Besides, it was said that an English class can be given not only inside but also outside the classroom in an attempt to make the students feel encouraged to work and learn successfully. Finally, some related research studies of the students of the University of Nariño carried out in our region were discussed. Those research studies referred to the development and improvement of the speaking skill in high school students, and it could be deduced that learning and teaching a language is a complex process which researchers must keep on inquiring.

### **3. METHOD**

Previously, the theoretical support of the present research study concerning the oral production in teaching and learning a foreign language was considered. This chapter refers to the kind of research used in the present study, and also to the participants, setting and sample involved in it, that is, how such a theoretical support was put into practice. Besides, it includes the selected measurement instruments and the procedure carried out throughout the implementation of the research study. Moreover, the pilot study used in this research is described, as well as the way the data were collected, analyzed and interpreted is presented. As a final point, some ethical issues taken into account during the accomplishment of this research are considered.

#### **3.1. Design.**

The kind of research undertaken was an “Action Research Study”. This study involved a group of high school students of eighth level to whom the researcher applied a pre-test, an intervention and finally a post-test. The pre-test revealed the level of oral production in English that the students had, then by means of the application of the intervention the students changed their educational situation, and that was observed with the results obtained in the post-test.

This kind of research was selected because of the concern of the difficulties that high school students have in developing the speaking skill. So this research attempted to provide the students with techniques and activities with suitable realia to work inside and outside the classroom to improve their oral production. In this way, this study contributed in the students' English language learning process.

The present research study adopted a qualitative perspective which implied an active, systematic, flexible, and subjective process in which decisions about the essence of the research were made when being in the target field. An aim of this research, as a qualitative one was to offer descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts.

Here are the main characteristics of a qualitative research taken into account for the present study: it encompasses socially subjective and relative interpretations of phenomena and draws on data to develop and refine hypotheses. It also interprets human behavior from participants' perspectives, explores naturalistic cultural settings without controlling variables and gathers rich data to interpret them through thick description and analysis. In addition, it ensures validity through multiple data sources without seeking to generalize beyond the research context. Finally, it focuses on the processes as well as the outcomes of research.

Action Research was appropriate for this study because it attempted to change, transform and improve a situation, in this case the students' English oral production. It was also pertinent because this kind of research included the community, that is, the students in the solution of their problems looking for a change of the existing reality.

Besides, this Action Research Study aimed at generating reflection, auto-evaluation and self-knowledge in students so that they could be conscious of their problems and they could cooperate in finding solutions to them making a group work.

### **3.2. Participants, setting and sample.**

The participants in this research were students of eighth level. There were twenty-eight students (girls and boys) in the group. Their socioeconomic level belonged to the middle class and they were teenagers between 13 and 14 years old.

The place where the research was carried out was a public high school. This high school is located in the south part of our city. The sample to work in this research, the techniques, activities and realia were not selected by means of a process of randomization because the present research study did not attempt to have a representative sample but to use suitable techniques and realia bearing in mind the purpose of this research and in this way to try to accomplish it.

### **3.3. Measurement instruments.**

First of all, it is important to clarify the variables which were worked with in this research. They were techniques and realia applied inside and outside the classroom and the other one was the oral production of the students.

Second, there were other variables like the effect produced on the students' oral production by the application of the treatment, the changes that the students presented, what they learned, their pronunciation, communicative competence, etc.

As this research was interested in improving the students' oral production, the variables were measured by means of short oral tests, informal interviews and chats with the students, and careful observation of the students' reactions and behavior caused by the treatment. The questions asked to the students were according to the topics they had already studied during the last scholar years in high school as well as according to the topics they were studying at the moment of the research. All those actions permitted to gather information to be analyzed and interpreted so as to organize and to settle down the final results.

#### **3.4. Procedure.**

As any kind of research, Action Research comprises some steps: planning, action, observation and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) (cited by Burns, 1999). However, a more complete description of the phases of Action Research proposed by Burns (1999) can be presented: exploring, identifying a problem, collecting data, planning, analyzing and reflecting, hypothesizing and speculating, intervening, observing, reporting, writing and presenting.

For accomplishing this research some steps were followed according to the phases of an Action Research Study:

First, one of the most important aspects was to get permission for carrying out this work, and for that the researcher sent a formal letter to an authority in the selected high school asking for collaboration in this research. Then, when the permission was ready, the researcher asked an English teacher for cooperation in the research. Then, a classroom observation was carried out to realize what problems affected the process of learning English. Once the problem was identified and data were collected, that information was organized and a plan about what was done in the research was made. That information was analyzed and some hypothesis arose.

After that, an intervention was necessary, then, a pre-test, a treatment and a post-test were applied to the group of subjects being studied. As the main concern of this research was oral production, the pre-test was oral to evaluate the students' speaking skill. The treatment consisted on using techniques and activities with realia inside and outside the classroom; those activities favored oral production as much as possible. The treatment was applied during eight classes, which required approximately two months. The researcher assumed the responsibility of the application of the treatment with the help and guidance of the English teacher of the high school.

Following there is a sample of the treatment applied: The researcher asked or provided the students with glue because they had to stick paper. The students organized work groups and the researcher gave each group paper "boys or girls" figures. Then he showed everybody some pieces of paper clothing while saying their corresponding names. The students did not repeat and memorize mechanically those names but they learned them by having fun with that material, dressing up the paper boys or girls. The

researcher was walking around the classroom looking at what the students were doing, guiding and encouraging them to work and learn, asking questions to promote speaking.

In that situation the researcher had the opportunity to teach the students the name of all the materials they were using in the activity, expressions, commands, structures in a fun and more real way rather than looking at a book and doing mechanical exercises. This does not mean that written exercises are not important in the process of learning English, but that kind of work is precisely necessary for developing the writing skill of the language, not the speaking skill.

The post-test was similar to the pre-test in order to realize the progress or the changes that the students had reached after the treatment. The treatment was applied, while observing and reflecting on the students' reactions and behaviors, then after analyzing what was happening and if something was wrong, the researcher reviewed the treatment and applied it again to obtain more reliable results. Afterwards, the final report was presented, and written down including the quantitative and qualitative analysis, interpretation and discussion of the results as well as the implications and recommendations

### **3.5. Pilot study.**

Before applying any test, treatment, technique, activity, realia, or interview in the research to obtain more reliable information, a pilot study was carried out in order to

detect some possible difficulties that could affect the process of research and data gathering.

The test was piloted first by means of an analysis with the help of the English teacher and the advisor of the research. Then, the test was applied just to some students from the group of the high school, and after that, taking into account the results obtained, the necessary adjustments were done.

The techniques, materials and realia which were part of the treatment were piloted, studied and analyzed before their application since it was expected to reach effectiveness in their application.

### **3.6. Data analysis.**

The data obtained after the application of the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test were analyzed and interpreted mainly qualitatively rather than quantitatively (numbers and percentages) taking into account categories and subcategories which permitted and facilitated an appropriate classification of the information collected as a result of the application of the tests and the treatment.

Based on Bastidas (2002) the qualitative data analysis and interpretation consists of some phases that must be followed; they are: organization of the data, identification of the preliminary ideas, generalization of categories, themes and patterns, verification of

arising hypotheses, interpretation of the data, and presentation of the obtained results in a final report.

Although some quantitative aspects were treated in the research, sophisticated statistic data were not an essential part in this work. This research study had an analytic character, since sometimes quantities can be interpreted in different ways by different persons, and it is not always easy to understand numbers that try to put people's actions or behaviors into a scale.

### **3.7. Ethical issues.**

According to Bastidas (2000) a fundamental element in any research is "Ethics". As far as this is concerned, this paper was carried out bearing in mind some ethical aspects such us:

- Informed consent: the persons involved in this research were informed of it and the necessary permission to work in the research was asked.
- Confidentiality: the collaborators were assured that the information obtained was going to be confidential and no names or specific data was going to be disclosed.
- Consequences: it was guaranteed that the present research would cause neither physical nor psychological problems or bad consequences.

- Reciprocity: the researcher was thankful to the collaborators in the best and most ethical possible way, and the final results were presented to the educational community along with the pedagogical suggestions.
  
- Voluntary participation: anyone was forced to participate in the research.
  
- Coverup in the research: The research was carried out openly so that everybody was aware of what was being done.

This chapter showed that the present study was based on an Action Research design. It was also pointed out that this research study had a qualitative perspective although some quantitative aspects were taken into account. Besides, a look at the description of the participants, setting and sample of the research as well as the measurement instruments (pre-test and post-test) used in the intervention was given. This chapter also depicted the procedure followed in this research study keeping in mind the phases of Action Research. An approximation to the pilot study of this research was made and it was said that it was done to detect some possible difficulties that could affect the process of research and data gathering. To conclude, this chapter presented the way the data were analyzed in the present study bearing in mind some phases proposed by Bastidas (2001), and to finish the ethical issues that any kind of research study must take into consideration were alluded.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Up to now, the last three chapters have talked about the research topic or problem that was worked on, a theoretical support to the present research study was given, and the way this Action Research Study was carried out was depicted, taking into account the setting and participants involved in it. Now that this research study was already carried out, it is necessary to present the results obtained as a product of the application of the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test previously mentioned in chapter III. Therefore, this chapter presents the results and the discussion of the study.

### **4.1 RESULTS.**

Initially, the students participating in the present research study took a pre-test to be aware of the level of oral English they had before the application of the treatment as far as pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and intelligibility are concerned. As it was mentioned in chapter III, after the treatment that the researcher applied, the students took a post-test to realize about their improvement concerning oral production in English.

Below, there are some tables and graphics which represent the results obtained in this research study. First, the results from the pre-test and the post-test are analyzed independently, and then a comparison of them is made.

Table 1 shows the results obtained in the pre-test in each of the four aspects evaluated. After that, table 2 presents the statistical results and percentages of the pre-test.



**TABLE 2. Statistical results of the Pre-test**

Evaluation Criteria	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Absolute Frequency
1	76	65,6%	76
2	40	34,4%	116
3	-----	-----	-----
4	-----	-----	-----
5	-----	-----	-----
TOTAL	116	100%	-----

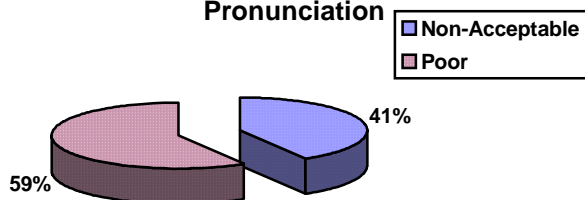
1 = Non acceptable    2 = Poor    3 = Acceptable    4 = Good    5 = Excellent

Mode = 1    Mean =  $\bar{X} = \sum fx/N = 156/116 = 1,34$

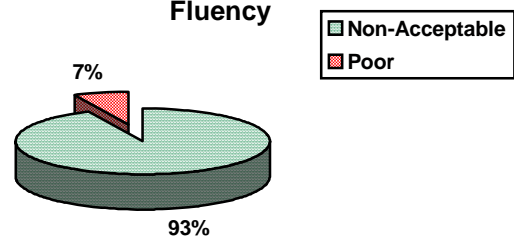
Table 1 presents the number of students of eighth level of a public high school of San Juan de Pasto who participated in the present research study. The valuations that the students received in the pre-test concerning pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and intelligibility can also be observed. As it is notable in table 1, most of the students did not get good results in the pre-test, they mainly got “non-acceptable” results, as well as some “poor” results. Although the students were willing to cooperate in the pre-test, their low results can be explained by considering the fact that they had never been tested orally in English. Therefore, it appears that if the students do not practice English in an oral way, not only in a test but also in many other activities and actual situations, they will not be able to develop their speaking skill.

Next, there are some graphics which present the corresponding percentages to the results compiled in table 1 about each of the aspects evaluated in the pre-test.

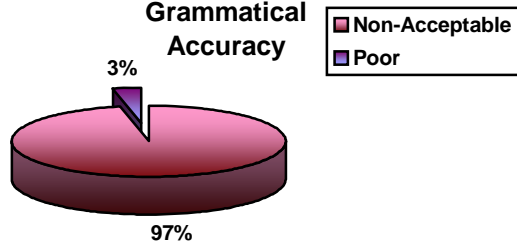
**Figure 4. Results of the Pre-test of Pronunciation**



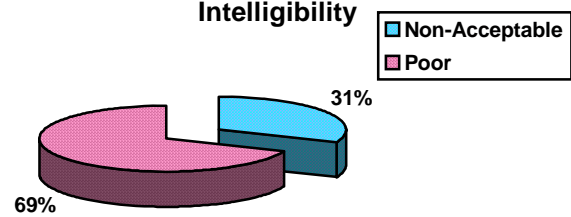
**Figure 5. Results of the Pre-test of Fluency**



**Figure 6. Results of the Pre-test of Grammatical Accuracy**



**Figure 7. Results of the Pre-test of Intelligibility**



Figures 4,5,6 and 7 show in a separate way the percentages of students according to their valuations concerning the four aspects evaluated. The pronunciation ratings reveal that 59% of the students had “non-acceptable” pronunciation and that 41% had “poor” pronunciation. As far as fluency is concerned, it can be noticed that almost all the students (93%) had a very low level, and the same rate is distinguished in grammatical accuracy. Finally, about intelligibility, 69% of the students did not have an acceptable level of this evaluated aspect, just 31% had “poor” results. These results suggest that the students’ pronunciation is not good because they had almost never been asked to speak English, so they are not used to; consequently, the other aspects evaluated are in the same conditions likely due to the lack of significant and contextualized oral practice in class.

Below, table 3 contains the results of the post-test in each of the aspects evaluated. Besides, table 4 illustrates the statistical results and the corresponding percentages.

**TABLE 3. Results of the Post-test**

CATEGORIES →	Pronunciation					Fluency					Grammatical accuracy					Intelligibility					AVERAGE SCORE	TOTAL SCORE							
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5									
EVALUATION CRITERIA	Number of students →																												
1			X				X						X					X									3.25%	11	
2				X				X					X						X									3.84%	13
3				X				X					X						X									3.84%	13
4			X					X					X						X									3.54%	12
5			X				X						X						X									2.95%	10
6			X					X					X						X									3.54%	12
7			X					X					X						X									3.54%	12
8			X				X						X					X				X						2.95%	10
9				X					X				X											X				4.42%	15
10				X				X					X										X					3.84%	13
11			X					X						X								X						4.13%	14
12		X					X						X					X				X						2.65%	9
13		X					X						X					X				X						2.36%	8
14			X						X					X								X						4.42%	15
15				X				X					X									X						4.13%	14
16		X					X						X					X				X						2.65%	9
17		X					X						X					X				X						2.36%	8
18			X					X					X									X						3.25%	11
19				X				X					X					X				X						3.84%	13
20			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
21			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
22		X					X						X					X				X						2.65%	9
23			X					X					X									X						3.25%	11
24			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
25				X				X					X					X				X						3.84%	13
26			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
27			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
28			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
29			X					X					X					X				X						3.54%	12
TOTAL AVERAGE SCORE	---	4.3%	14.6%	6.1%	---	---	6.9%	16.4%	1.7%	---	---	5.2%	18.1%	1.7%	---	---	5.2%	15.5%	4.3%	---	---	5.2%	15.5%	4.3%	---	100%	339		

**EVALUATION CRITERIA**

**5 = Excellent    4 = Good    3 = Acceptable    2 = Poor    1 = Non-acceptable**

**TABLE 4. Statistical results of the Post-test**

Evaluation Criteria	Frequency	Relative Frequency	Absolute Frequency
1	-----	-----	-----
2	25	21,6%	25
3	75	64,6%	100
4	16	13,8%	116
5	-----	-----	-----
TOTAL	116	100%	-----

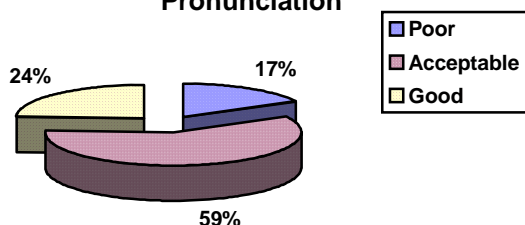
1 = Non-acceptable    2 = Poor    3 = Acceptable    4 = Good    5 = Excellent

Mode = 3    Mean =  $X = \sum fx/N = 339/116 = 2,92$

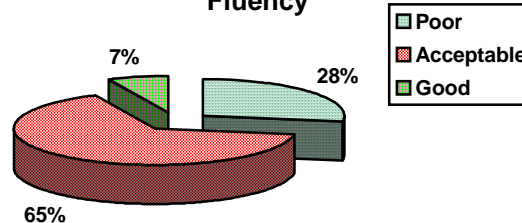
Table 3 summarizes the results obtained from the post-test that the students took once they had already experimented the treatment the researcher applied to them bearing in mind the results of the pre-test. Besides, we can observe the valuations that the students got in each of the four aspects evaluated, as in the pre-test, after some instruction. The results on table 2 lead us to say that the students got a better outcome in the post-test. Their most evident improvement is distinguished by the fact that they did not get any “non-acceptable” result, but some “poor” and “good” results, and above all “acceptable” results. The reason for the students’ improvement of the oral production, could be that the treatment helped them to practice English in an oral way, that is to say, paying attention to the speaking skill that had been neglected.

Below, you will find some graphics which show the corresponding percentages to the results compiled in table 3 about each of the aspects evaluated in the post-test.

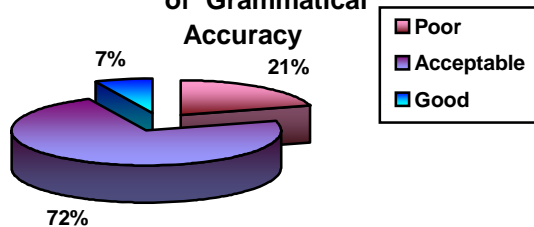
**Figure 8. Results of the Post-test of Pronunciation**



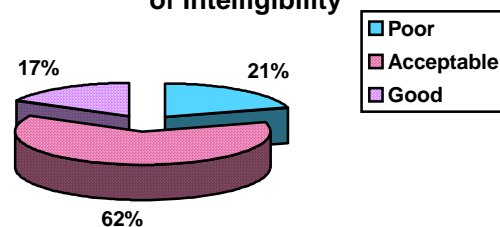
**Figure 9. Results of the Post-test of Fluency**



**Figure 10. Results of the Post-test of Grammatical Accuracy**



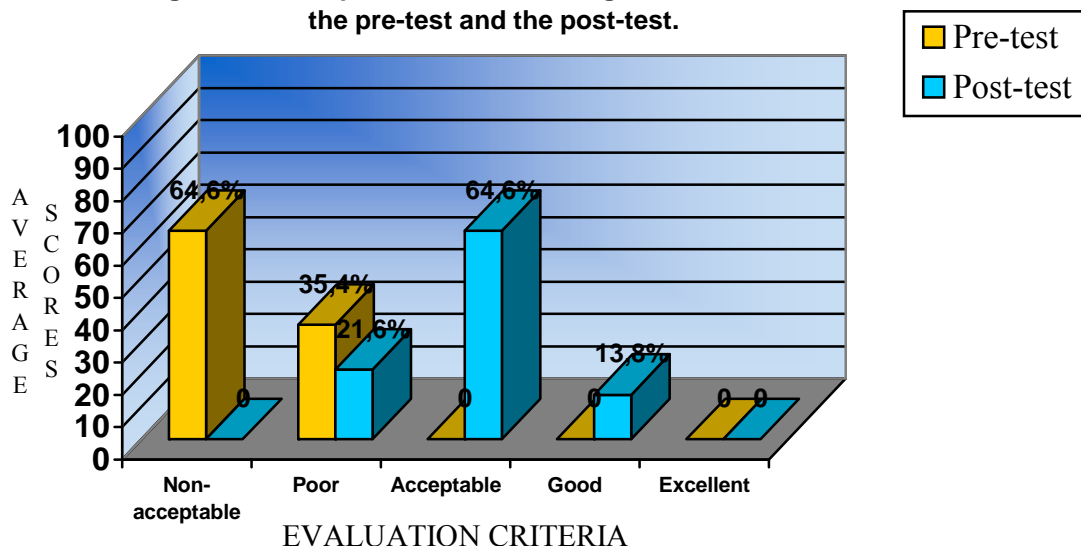
**Figure 11. Results of the Post-test of Intelligibility**



The graphics presented above (Figures 8,9,10 and 11) depict independently the results that the students obtained in each of the four aspects evaluated in the post-test which are compiled in table 2. It is notable that the students increased their level of oral production in English. Regarding pronunciation, 59% of students got “acceptable” results, and in the same valuation for the other aspects evaluated, the percentages are: fluency (65%), grammatical accuracy (72%), and intelligibility (62%). Furthermore, there are some other percentages that confirm the students’ improvement; they are those of “good” results which did not appear in the results of the pre-test. These data suggest that what the students need is to practice, to use the language for real communicative purposes, and in this way, they will be able to improve their oral production, acquiring at the same time a significant learning.

Next, figure 12 presents some percentages which attempt to give a general idea about the results of the pre-test and the post-test, and also a comparison between them.

**Figure 12. Comparison between the general outcome of the pre-test and the post-test.**



The graphic presented above (Figure 12) shows the general results obtained from the pre-test and the post-test that the researcher applied to the students. In this opportunity, the four aspects evaluated in the tests (pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and intelligibility) are not described indistinctly but they are presented as a part of a whole along with the corresponding qualitative valuations.

These findings make evident a difference between the results obtained in the pre-test and the ones of the post-test. In the pre-test, a large percentage of students (65,6%) got “non-acceptable” results, while the post-test indicates that none of the students got in that category. Another aspect to be compared is that 34,4% of the students got “poor” results in the aspects evaluated in the pre-test, but only 21,6% of the students got the same category in the post-test; in addition, the post-test presents a percentage of “good” results (13,8%) which do not appear in the pre-test.

The different results presented in figure 12 let us say that it seems that the students can experiment a satisfactory outcome after some instruction based on the development of the oral production of English by means of some techniques that make the students put into practice what they learn in class, that is, using the language for real communicative purposes, avoiding as much as possible fixed contexts and topics which might make the students see the class as a simple subject matter they have to study to get some grades. On the contrary, what may help the students to improve their oral production is to infuse into them the awareness that the only way for them to develop the speaking skill of the language is to speak it up.

## 4.2 DISCUSSION

4.2.1 **Purpose of the study.** It is important to start the discussion of the results obtained based on the objectives proposed in this research study which mainly aimed at improving the students' oral production. Bearing in mind the results presented before, it can be inferred, at first impression, that the students improved their oral production in English, but the reality is that they practically started developing the speaking skill with the experience of the treatment applied to them in the research.

It is necessary to clarify that the students had almost never practiced English in an oral way. As it is mentioned in chapter I, the main purpose of this research study was to improve the students' oral production, but the situation in which the students were before the treatment was not the expected one. Then, it can be assumed that the present research study inculcated, in a certain way, into the students the bases of their speaking skill so that they improve it by working on it frequently in the future.

Throughout the research, appropriate techniques to develop the oral production in the students were applied, otherwise the results that the post-test presents would not let us be aware of the change that the students experimented as far as their speaking skill is concerned.

As it is stated in chapter III, the techniques were applied not only inside the classroom, but also outside it, where the students had the opportunity to learn in an agreeable and relaxing atmosphere. The classes outside the classroom consisted of studying

interesting topics but without feeling threatened or scared because of the grades as in any other class, on the other hand, the students could laugh and play while increasing their knowledge. According to Avila (1997) the most important aspect while using the language in real contexts, is to show confidence to the students and to encourage them to talk about what they perceive around them, whatever they want to say, without paying so much attention to their mistakes but to their effort and progress.

In general terms, it can be stated with certainty that this research did help the students to learn many things in English, for example, commands, vocabulary related to clothes, sports, adjectives, etc; and to put them into practice, at least during the research. Although the students did not improve thoroughly their oral production, it can be assumed that they made a progress and that is the most important thing since in that way they can feel motivated to keep on practicing and improving their learning (Byrne, 1986).

**4.2.2 Qualitative results.** Many important results were obtained as a product of the application of the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test, and consequently some comments can be made about them. As we could observe on the tables and graphics, four aspects were taken into account to be evaluated in the tests (pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and intelligibility), and those aspects were evaluated by means of some qualitative patterns to which some quantities were attributed in order to obtain percentages to be graphically presented (non-acceptable:1, poor: 2, acceptable: 3, good:4, and excellent: 5).

As it is mentioned in chapter III, an Action Research Study consists of cycles with four essential moments: planning, action, observation and reflection (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Taking that into account, the first cycle of the present research study is presented below. It covers the application of the pre-test and a part of the treatment. The other part of the treatment and the post-test are the result of the accomplishment of the second cycle.

**4.2.2.1 First cycle.** In the first cycle, the application of a plan can be observed with the major aim of improving the students' oral production. Besides the students' behavior and attitudes perceived during the first part of treatment were depicted and analyzed.

At the beginning of the research, before the application of the pre-test, during the first contact with the students, most of them felt a little tense. But they got more relaxed after some minutes when a student asked: “*¿Nos van a calificar, teacher?*”. As we could notice in chapter III, to carry out an uncover research is an important ethic aspect that any researcher must take into account. Therefore in the present case, the researcher told the students that they did not have to worry about the grades, just to collaborate in the activities of the research. Then, the students said: “*Así no hay ningún problema, teacher.*”

This indicates that the students were worried about the grades and that they conceived the English class just as another subject matter of the curriculum and not as something beneficial for their lives, something that could be very useful to them when leaving the high school.

Before the application of the pre-test, the researcher talked a little with the students and asked them if they had ever had English oral exams. “*Tal vez no teacher, y ¿Cómo son?*”, said the students. This clearly indicates that most of the students did not even know what an oral exam was. Therefore, the students were not ready for an oral test and consequently they could not make use of their little knowledge of English; that is why the results in the pre-test were not satisfactory.

The students also said to the researcher: “*Los otros años solo hemos hecho oraciones en el cuaderno y traducimos lecturas.*” Based on the students’ opinions, it can be said that they had not developed the speaking skill of the target language. The students were in eighth level in high school, however, it can be assumed that what they had learned and their practice of English during the two previous years had not been meaningful enough.

The first impression when looking at the tables and graphics of the pre-test is to realize that the only qualitative valuations that appear were “non-acceptable” and “poor”. That may be an evident proof that the students had a very low level of English, especially in the oral production, the topic studied in the present research.

As a way to collect data, the researcher wanted to record the pre-test, but the students said: “*No nos grabe teacher, ¡que verguenza!*.” This indicates that the students were conscious of their problems concerning speaking English, and that situation can be also observed in the low results of the pre-test. This leads us to infer that the students probably did not care about the oral production, not totally because of the fact that they

did not like English but because they needed to be in contact with the spoken language to develop it and improve it.

During the first questions of the pre-test, the students felt nervous, for that reason, some of them said: “*teacher, no preguntará cosas tan difíciles*”, but then they got a little relaxed, perhaps because the researcher tried to create a confident atmosphere in spite of the students’ low results. Concerning the four aspects evaluated, fluency and grammatical accuracy are the ones in which the students failed the most; the students could not speak in a normal way, they stuttered to express a single sentence because they were not used to speak. In addition, their knowledge of grammar was very low, they mixed verb tenses, pronouns, and regularly omitted prepositions.

Their pronunciation and level of intelligibility was low as well, but at least many students could pronounce correctly most of the words they knew. It was notable that most of the students understood the questions of the pre-test; however, they felt they could not answer them easily since they did not have the suitable tools to do it, they regularly said: “*Yo le entiendo más o menos teacher, pero no sé como decirle la respuesta en Inglés.*”. In spite of their low results, the students were willing to answer the questions and to participate actively in the pre-test.

Throughout the application of the treatment, the researcher spoke almost all the time in English and sometimes in Spanish so that the students understand very well not only directions and commands but also the topics of the class. The students were really motivated in the classes. “*Teacher, ¡yo quiero decir la oración!*”, that was what they said while raising their hands all the time, that means that they were willing to

participate and that they wanted to practice and learn more vocabulary, structures, grammar, etc, although sometimes that situation generated a little indiscipline which the researcher controlled by calling the students' attention with dynamics or games.

The students' pronunciation and fluency about the things studied throughout the research was good. As they did not have the written form they pronounced well but once they saw a written word or sentence they made many mistakes. Sometimes the students asked: "*¿Por qué cuando tenemos las oraciones escritas en el tablero y en el cuaderno hablamos mal?*." It means that the students actually noticed their mistakes, therefore, they could realize that they could express well an idea in English if they only had the oral basis that guaranteed them a good pronunciation.

In spite of the fact that the students were conscious of that problem, they always asked the researcher to write what they were studying in the class: "*teacher, escriba lo que estamos diciendo en el tablero para copiar en el cuaderno*". As they were following a specific methodology with their English teacher since two years ago, it was a little difficult to change things overnight, but it does not mean that it is not possible, just that change is a process that takes time and it should not be forced because the results could be worse.

Something motivating during the application of the treatment was the fact that most of the times the students seemed to be happy with the class. "*Estuvo bien la clase teacher, estuvo diferente y aprendimos muchas cosas* ", they commonly said. This implies that the students noticed the new methodology and techniques applied for the class and they liked that change. Then, it can be inferred that variety in methodology calls the students'

attention and encourages them to learn, since the routine turns the class boring and leads the students to “learn” mechanically for the exam and not for their lives.

At the beginning of the classes, the researcher usually encouraged the students with commands such as: stand up, raise your hands, put your hands down, clap once, clap twice, sit down. By means of this warm-up, the students could recognize that the vocabulary, sentences, etc, that were studied in class served to express real things in the class, or real actions as in the example of the commands. Some students said: “*teacher, practicando así todas las clases si aprendemos*”, this indicates that now they understand that they can improve their skill with practice.

Taking that into account, it can be deduced that it is important to bring new topics to the class and also to relate them with topics already studied so that the students keep on practicing and acquiring a significant learning. Sometimes the students asked the researcher to tell them the translation of some Spanish words as in this example: “*Teacher, ¿Cómo se dice grabadora en Inglés?*”. By means of these questions, the students meant they wanted to learn more than the things studied in class.

In the classes that were part of the treatment, sometimes other topics emerged as in the following anecdote. One day, the topic of the class was “clothes”, and the researcher was making some sentences based on the clothes he and the students were wearing. While practicing the vocabulary and making some sentences the researcher noticed that there were some students who always stayed by the window at the corner and they did not seem to be interested in the topic of the class. The researcher approached them and noticed they were looking at some music CDs, so he asked them this question: “*What*

*are you wearing right now?*”, they did not understand the question but they tried to answer it just by saying the pieces of clothes they were wearing. This means that they were not paying attention. The researcher profited those music CDs and asked them: *“Do you like music?”*, they replied: *“Yes, I like music metal”*, the researcher asked them another question using the verb to have: *“How many music CDs do you have?”*, they probably did not understand the question right away, they remained quiet and then they said in Spanish to the teacher: *“Teacher, ¿que si tenemos CDs?”*, the researcher encouraged them by saying: *“yes but also how many, one, two, three?”* by touching and counting the CDs. Now, they understood and answered: *“I have four CDs of metal”*. Although they were not attentive to the class, at least they said something real in English which indicated them that they could apply their knowledge in real situations.

It is essential to mention that real material was used with the students so as to help them to learn easily by means of relating the meaning of the words to the objects they could see and touch such as school tools or fruits. For instance, when the researcher said to the students: *“I have a pear”*, the students did not understand anything, but when the researcher repeated the sentence while showing them “a pear”, the students said: *“Ahora si entendemos más o menos que nos quiere decir, nos esta hablando de una pera o algo así”*. It is notable that the students related the oral form of the word “pear”, with a real one, so they did not need the translation, they understood directly in English.

Bringing real materials to the class called the students’ attention, that is why they said: *“teacher, la clase estuvo chévere, diferente, seguirá trayendo cosas así para que aprendamos mejor, no solo con el libro”*. This clearly indicated that the students

noticed that there was something missing in their class, something that could motivate them, something out of the routine.

After some classes, the students improved a little their oral production and at least it could be notable that they started speaking English by their own initiative with some things like the greetings. One day, in the corridor, some students suddenly said “hello” to the researcher: “*Good Afternoon teacher, how are you?*”. The researcher never expected the students to speak English out of the classroom, so he wondered how the classes could be carried out outside the classroom. This was precisely what the students asked to the teacher from time to time: “*Teacher, hagamos la clase afuera para tomar aire fresco, que aburrido todo el tiempo en el salón*”.

After four classes as part of the treatment, it was necessary a reflection about the students’ attitudes and behavior concerning the treatment being applied. It can be inferred, in general terms, that the students accommodated to the changes the treatment brought although not completely because as it was already mentioned, the change is a process and not an instant decision.

The most relevant aspects that were reflected were that the students felt encouraged with the new methodology, they were learning many things, they were improving their oral production (pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy and intelligibility), in other words, they were making progress, at least they had started speaking by putting into practice what they were learning in class.

4.2.2.2 **Second cycle.** In the second cycle, the application of a revised plan with the same purpose of the plan applied in the first cycle is described. Taking into account that the students had suggested to carry out the class outside the classroom, the researcher figured out that perhaps what the students needed to keep on working with motivation was to change the environment where they usually worked: their classroom.

*“Vamos a hacer la clase afuera teacher, y así le indicamos el colegio y usted nos enseña cosas que veamos afuera”*. The students generally made some comments like this, so it seemed to be that it was a good idea to work in real contexts and make the students talk about real facts or things.

The first class out of the classroom was surprising for the students: *“Que chévere, vamos a hacer la clase afuera”*, said some of them. The researcher told the students they had to behave outside the classroom, some students said: *“yes”*, and another student added: *“no problem teacher, usted tranquilo”*. In the last case, although the student mixed English and Spanish, we can deduce that he wanted to express that idea in English, and that reflects a little of the progress they were making not only concerning the grammar aspects and vocabulary they were learning but also concerning their attitude before the use of the language.

As in the classroom, the researcher indicated objects to the students and said the names of those things in English, but not the translation so that they could relate the names and the objects. *“Teacher, como se dice insectos, plantas, llantas”*, etc, said the students. This implies that things the researcher taught them were not enough for them, they

wanted to know more, and that interest and curiosity could not be cut or limited, that is why the researcher answered all those doubts.

A disappointing aspect was that some students were distracted by some other students from other levels who were hanging around the high school. These students who were not attentive and who did not participate were probably those who did not make a significant progress as it was shown in table 4.

A significant aspect during the treatment was to value the students' progress so that they could feel they were improving their oral production. Sometimes the researcher told the students: "*very good, excellent, what an intelligent student, perfect*", etc. That encouraged the students to go on since in that way they could realize that their efforts were worthwhile and that their progress was taken into account.

As another part of the treatment, the students had the opportunity to learn by having fun. For example, one day the researcher took the students to the basketball court and they said: "*Que rico vamos a jugar basket y además aprendemos más Inglés, gracias teacher. Usted es buena gente, thank you*". The students were thankful because the researcher gave them a space in which they could feel free and at the same time they were increasing their knowledge of the target language. That day, the students played, learned and enjoyed the class. It can be inferred from this situation that the atmosphere the students need to learn is not precisely a strict and intimidating environment but a space in which they can feel free to learn and that they feel confident to clear up their doubts with the help of the teacher.

As a next step after the treatment, a post-test was applied to the students to be aware of their progress as far as oral production is concerned taking into account the four aspects also evaluated in the pre-test (pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy, and intelligibility).

Therefore, once the students experimented the new methodology in the treatment of the present research study, it was necessary to apply to them a post-test to analyze to what extent their oral production had improved; and the results obtained were positive, taking into account the very low results they presented in the pre-test.

In the last class, when the researcher told the students about the post-test, they felt a little nervous and worried: “*teacher, no vaya a hacer preguntas difíciles*”, however, some other students said: “*bueno, por lo menos ahora ya sabemos más cosas que cuando nos hizo el primer examen*”. It means that the students were conscious of their progress and most of them, who had really done their best, were sure of what they had learned. Certainly, the students did not remember everything studied during the treatment but at least they had practiced oral English and besides they had started developing their speaking skill.

During the post-test, the students seemed to be less anxious than during the pre-test, and that could be the reason why they improved their results. “*La primera vez no le entendíamos nada teacher, y ese examen estaba durísimo, pero ahora por los menos ya le podemos contestar algo*” some students commented.

It can be assumed that indeed, with the treatment of the present research study, the students started developing their speaking skill because none of them no longer got “non-acceptable” results in any of the aspects evaluated; and most of them got “acceptable” results and some other “good” results, which were not present in the pre-test, where the students only got “non-acceptable” and “poor” results.

After the post-test, most of the students wanted to know how their performance had been and some of them said: “*ahora tuvimos que haber mejorado algo no, teacher?*”. In fact, with the knowledge the students had along with what they learned with the treatment, they started talking and that was what helped them to improve their results in the test.

In other words, they only put into practice the knowledge they acquired with real communicative purposes and also according to what they felt and what they actually wanted to express in English. Then, it can be said that the new methodology applied to the students focusing on the development of the oral production started to work, and the results could keep on increasing if both teacher and students are perseverant with this task.

**4.2.3 Explanation of the qualitative results.** The findings presented at the beginning of this chapter, product of the application of the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test of this research study, are consistent with a great part of the theory stated in chapter II. That consistency is above all related to the motivation, the oral production, the materials (realia) and the environment; all these aspects play important roles in the whole process of teaching and learning English.

Regarding the motivation, it was a relevant aspect that the students felt encouraged since the beginning of this research study with the researcher's proposal about improving their oral production in English. In this way, they were aware of what was going to be done, and they were willing to cooperate in the research from which they were going to get profit. This agrees with Byrne's (1986) point of view: "the development of the oral ability is a good source of motivation for most of the learners."

In addition, it is important to bear in mind that a fundamental aspect that influences the process of learning a language is to keep high the students' motivation, to give them the opportunity to learn by using their imagination and creativity (Domke,1991). Then, one explanation for the students' low level of English is the lack of motivation for learning English.

As it was mentioned above, the students participating in this research study were motivated to improve their oral production; so the improvement or the beginning of the development of the speaking skill that the students experimented, which is revealed by the results of the post-test, can be attributed to the fact that they were encouraged and that they felt that with a new methodology they could learn more.

The results of the research study offer clear evidence that the students had not almost had any opportunity to practice English in an oral way before the treatment , so their oral production had not been developed, that is why, figure 4 shows the very low level of English that the students had. Therefore, it can be inferred that the knowledge of English the students had acquired in previous years had not been significant; perhaps

they just studied for the tests, what teachers commonly like, but not to keep that knowledge active in their minds.

The low results the students got in the pre-test could also have been due to the nervousness since that oral test was the first one they faced. But after the treatment, in the post-test, the students felt more comfortable and relaxed, and although they did not do excellent in their answers, an evident change could be noticed. Consequently, it may be inferred that if the students practice English orally and much better in real contexts and with communicative purposes, they not only will improve their oral production (pronunciation, fluency, grammatical accuracy and intelligibility) but also they will lose little by little the fear to speak freely.

Another important aspect that deserves to be discussed is the materials. Part of the improvement of the students' oral production is due to the use of appropriate materials which should not be seen as only one more tool that teachers use in class, but as a means that forces teachers to reflect about the factual students' needs and to discover them according to the reality (Martinez, 1992) (Cited by Ballesta, 2001).

It is convenient to recognize that the materials used in the present research study aimed at making the students speak, taking into account the use of didactic and interesting activities in order to profit as much as possible from materials. This is what Tomlinson (1998) points out: "impact is achieved in learning when materials have a noticeable effect on learners, that is, when the learners' curiosity, interest and attention are attracted."

Throughout the application of the treatment the students felt more confident and tranquil, that is why they felt more relaxed in the post-test rather than in the pre-test, and the results let us say that the students improved their oral production once they were more comfortable. Consequently, it might be inferred that the new strategies applied to the students and the suitable materials used helped students to feel at ease in the classes. That is precisely what Tomlinson (1998) claims, “the less anxious the learner, the better language acquisition proceeds.”

Since this research study aimed at improving the students’ oral production by means of realia, it could be useful to talk about it to explain the positive results the students got after the treatment. The findings lead us to believe that the students were not learning significantly, or at least there was a complete negligence of the speaking skill.

The results of the post-test suggest that the students started talking after the treatment, and if the treatment was based on the use of realia, it can be assumed that realia along with some pedagogical techniques helped the students to improve their oral production. Moya (1998) supports this idea by pointing out that the aim of incorporating realia in teaching any language is that authentic materials promote the use and usage of the target language in a more modern way. This can help the students to enliven the process of learning.

Let us remember that according to Krashen, realia faces the students with authentic input which is varied in style, mode, medium and purpose (Cited by Tomlinson, 1998); then, from that statement, the findings imply that the realia used in the treatment of the research study was helpful because it brought the students in contact with the language

in real contexts, which helped them build a bridge between what they were learning and the reality, by listening first and then speaking.

Another important aspect to be mentioned about realia is that throughout the application of the treatment the researcher could notice that the materials brought to the class were not enough, but as realia is truly limitless, everything in the classroom and outside it could be profited to talk and to promote the oral production on the students, since they liked to be in contact with the things, to touch them, to play with them, etc. That is why Rivers (Cited by Smith, 2001) says that realia provides the learners with multi-sensory impressions of the language so that the learners can see, hear, touch, and manipulate items while learning.

To conclude this part, it is essential to talk about the role the environment played in the improvement of the students' oral production. As it is mentioned throughout this paper, the treatment consisted of the application of techniques and realia inside and outside the classroom, so here we have two different kinds of environment where the process of learning a language can be developed.

When applying the treatment with the students, all of them said with a smile on their faces: "Teacher, we never expected the English class could be developed outside the classroom." That statement implies that the students were encouraged to work and study outside the classroom, and if they were motivated they could learn easily because they wanted to do their best to improve their oral production.

The positive results that the post-test reflects lead us to infer that the environment affects considerably the students' oral production. If we particularly refer to the work done outside the classroom, it is necessary to say that the students were completely willing to cooperate in the class, they were happy and they demonstrated the disposition for learning. Outside the classroom, the most important thing was to speak about everything that surrounded the students; of course, each class had a specific topic, but the students were free to express their ideas about other things. What the researcher really cared was the fact that the students were in contact with the reality and spoke without paying so much attention to their mistakes, and to feel at ease and relaxed to express their own ideas.

**4.2.4 Limitations.** The main purpose of this research study was to improve the students' oral production, but as in any kind of research there were some aspects which affected, in a certain way, the development of the present study. For instance, it was not expected that the students had not developed the oral production until that level; they were supposed to have some knowledge of English and that they could speak something.

The anxiety that the students felt during the pre-test had an effect on their results. They felt a little uncomfortable because that was the first time they were evaluated in an oral way. But then, throughout the research, they got relaxed and felt better.

It is possible that the students' results varied because the classes given outside the classroom were commonly interrupted by other students of other levels who distracted the students participating in the research. Besides, the English class with the researcher

was on Fridays, once a week, because the students had another English class with the teacher on Tuesdays. Then, the students were exposed to different kinds of methodology which might have confused them.

In addition, the students entered the English class just after the break, then, they were usually tired and most of them always said: “*Sigamos en el recreo otro rato, profe...*”. Besides, sometimes all the students were willing to participate and there was some indiscipline. Another aspect that interrupted the process was a strike which made the class be put off. That affects the students’ pace of learning.

In general terms, although the initial expectation of the present research study was to help the students improve their oral production, at least the students started the process of the development of the speaking skill. It might be inferred that the students could obtain good pronunciation, fluency, grammar accuracy and intelligibility in a longer term if they keep on practicing oral activities in English.

**4.2.5 Recommendations.** According to the results obtained in the present research study, there are some useful recommendations that must be taken into account:

**4.2.5.1 For pedagogical purposes.**

- ✧ It is recommended to value at every moment the students’ progress to keep their motivation high so that they learn because they want it, and not just because they

have to pass the examination. Besides, they will feel that the efforts they are doing are worthwhile.

- ✧ The teachers or researchers should not see the lack of materials in high school as a major problem. They should make use of their creativity to replace the materials they do not have by their own ones, avoiding the negligence of any skill of the language and avoiding also the fossilization of their learning. Then, the use of materials that help the students to build up their knowledge is recommendable.
- ✧ As far as materials are concerned, it would be good that the teacher or researcher uses and profits as much as possible from modern materials and technology in class in order to help the students really learn, or else it would not be worthwhile the use of them.
- ✧ To carry out the English classes outside the classroom is recommendable in order to keep the students' motivation high for learning the language; moreover, it is recommended not to exert excessive pressure or control on the students because as it is mentioned throughout this paper, "the less anxious the learner, the better language acquisition proceeds." (Tomlinson, 1998).

#### 4.2.5.2 **For further research.**

- ✧ It would be useful for further related research that the researcher always bear in mind the students' previous knowledge to start a research study from concrete facts.

- ✧ It would be very interesting that the procedure, the techniques and the materials continue being applied to the students so that they can be constantly speaking and avoiding to lose the habit to speak in the target language.
  
- ✧ It would be important to undertake a long term research study in a high school dealing with the development of the four skills of the language in a natural order as it occurs in the mother tongue (listening, speaking, reading and writing).
  
- ✧ Another problem that may be relevant to be researched is the reason why most of the teachers or students concentrate their attention on developing reading and writing skills along with translation rather than listening and speaking.

This chapter has mainly discussed the results of the present research study both quantitatively and qualitatively. As part of the quantitative report, some tables and graphics were analyzed, these presented percentages related to the results obtained in the pre-test and the post-test, and also a comparison between the results was made. Furthermore, a qualitative analysis of the results of the pre-test, the treatment and the post-test was presented. This chapter has also been concerned with the experience shared with the students during the application of the treatment; qualitative comments and analysis on the students' behavior and attitudes were discussed. Moreover, we accounted for possible explanations to the results of this study. Some limitations that appeared throughout the research and that affected the results in a certain way were considered. Finally, this chapter was concluded by mentioning some recommendations both for pedagogical purposes and for related research.

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# APPENDIX

## **APPENDIX A**

### **MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENT**

#### **ORAL PRE-TEST & POST-TEST**

1. What's your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What's your telephone number?
4. What time is it?
5. What day is today?
6. What is there in this classroom?
7. Describe the landscape that you can see out of the classroom?
8. Commands: Pick up your bag! Close the door! Open the window! Bring me that book!
9. What are you wearing now?
10. What kind of fruits do you like?
11. What kind of fruits do you hate?
12. What is this?(pen)
13. What color is this pen?

14. Is it yours?
15. Whose pen is this?
16. What sports do you like?
17. What do you use for playing basketball?
18. What subject or subjects don't you like?
19. Which class is more interesting for you, Mathematics or English?
20. What are you going to do this weekend?

## APPENDIX B

### PERMISSION LETTER FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

San Juan de Pasto, Marzo 5 de 2001

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Colegio\_\_\_\_\_

La Ciudad

Cordial saludo,

Actualmente, la enseñanza del Inglés en los colegios de nuestra ciudad no está produciendo resultados satisfactorios. Por tanto se hace necesario efectuar procesos investigativos que nos lleven a detectar las posibles falencias que se han convertido en un obstáculo y crean dificultades en los estudiantes en el aprendizaje del Inglés.

La presente es con el fin de solicitarle muy comedidamente me permita asistir a su institución para llevar a cabo observaciones de clase de Inglés para así recolectar una gran y valiosa información para mi proyecto de investigación en la Universidad de Nariño, logrando determinar las causas por las cuales los estudiantes no logran adquirir un buen nivel de Inglés a lo largo del bachillerato en el colegio.

Agradeciendo de antemano su atención y esperando su pronta y favorable respuesta para mi solicitud, me despido de usted.

Atentamente,

HERNÁN DARÍO FIGUEROA M

Estudiante – Investigador

JESÚS ALIRIO BASTIDAS A. Ph, D.

Prof. Investigación – Acción

**APPENDIX C**

**PERMISSION LETTER FOR THE APPLICATION OF THE PRE-TEST,  
TREATMENT AND POST-TEST**

San Juan de Pasto, Octubre 8 de 2001

Magíster

\_\_\_\_\_

Colegio \_\_\_\_\_

La ciudad

Cordial saludo,

La Universidad de Nariño y el Departamento de Lingüística e Idiomas con el ánimo de impulsar la Investigación Acción en el área de la enseñanza del Inglés solicitamos comedidamente a usted conceder al estudiante de séptimo semestre de Inglés – Francés HERNÁN DARÍO FIGUEROA MONTENEGRO, el espacio y los estudiantes de grado

octavo del Colegio \_\_\_\_\_ con el fin de llevar a cabo la aplicación del tratamiento que hace parte de su proyecto de investigación que a continuación se sustenta.

Como es claro, en la enseñanza de los idiomas y en este caso del Inglés, se trabajan conjuntamente las cuatro habilidades de la lengua: escucha, habla, lectura y escritura. En razón al bajo nivel de Inglés con el que salen muchos estudiantes de los colegios, en especial en la habilidad del habla, este proyecto de investigación va encaminado hacia la aplicación de una metodología tentativa que se propone mejorar la producción oral en Inglés de los estudiantes.

Dicha metodología consiste en la realización de la clase de Inglés tanto dentro como fuera del salón de clase, mediante la utilización de materiales reales y objetos tangibles que el estudiante investigador lleve a la clase e igualmente aprovechando los elementos que se encuentren en el salón de clase y fuera de él.

El fin de la aplicación de este modelo de enseñanza es de interiorizar la lengua en los estudiantes y permitir que ellos aprendan el Inglés en contextos más reales, casi de una manera natural, estableciendo relaciones directas entre la realidad circundante, los objetos, las situaciones, el lugar, el tiempo y su pensamiento. Pues, ni el Inglés ni ninguna lengua extranjera podría aprenderse únicamente con lo que se estudia en el salón de clase, por lo tanto, es necesario la aplicación de los conocimientos en la expresión de ideas concretas, coherentes, efectivas y adecuadas al contexto. ¿Que funcionalidad tiene enseñarles a los estudiantes la oración “*It’s raining*” (está lloviendo) en un día caluroso?, para que el estudiante aprenda más efectivamente la

lengua se le debe contextualizar y así él podrá relacionar su conocimiento y la lengua con la realidad.

¿Por qué dentro y fuera del salón de clase?. Atendiendo a factores psicológicos, el hecho de estigmatizar al estudiante en que la clase es explícitamente desarrollada en el salón, lo condiciona a pensar en que su conocimiento lo adquirirá en medio de cuatro paredes y por consecuente la gran mayoría de los estudiantes al salir de salón de clase, pareciera como si se olvidaran de todo, pues en su mente probablemente no conciben la aplicación de sus conocimientos académicos fuera del salón. Esto no se debe a que ellos no sean capaces de poner en práctica lo que aprenden sino más bien a la falta de aplicabilidad fuera del entorno del salón de clases, donde se sientan más libres y menos presionados para expresar sus ideas en Inglés.

Como usted podrá notar, con la implementación de esta metodología se espera un mejoramiento en la producción oral de Inglés de los estudiantes atendiendo a los propósitos y objetivos del proyecto de investigación. Dicho mejoramiento será determinado mediante la aplicación de dos exámenes orales a los estudiantes: un Pre-test al inicio del tratamiento con el fin de detectar el nivel de Inglés en el cual se encuentran los estudiantes, sus falencias y sus logros; y un Post-test al terminar el tratamiento para establecer los cambios que éste generó en la producción oral de los estudiantes.

Para efectos de aplicación de éste tratamiento y la recolección de los datos necesarios para determinar el cambio en los estudiantes se estima conveniente 8 sesiones, una sesión por semana de dos períodos de clase, lo que lleva a un total de 16 horas de clase.

Teniendo en cuenta que el estudiante investigador aun adelanta sus estudios en la Universidad de Nariño de Lunes a Jueves, se sugiere el día Viernes para la aplicación del tratamiento.

En retribución a la valiosa colaboración del colegio, el estudiante investigador se compromete a presentar un reporte oral y escrito al finalizar su tratamiento y el análisis de los datos recolectados de modo que la institución conozca los resultados obtenidos, las conclusiones que se puedan establecer al igual que las posibles sugerencias que vengan al caso.

Agradeciéndole por su valioso tiempo poniendo en consideración ésta propuesta investigativa, nos despedimos de usted esperamos su pronta respuesta.

Atentamente,

HERNÁN DARÍO FIGUEROA M

Estudiante – investigador

Dr. EDMUNDO MORA

Jefe de Departamento  
de Lingüística e Idiomas

Universidad de Nariño