Direct Language Learning Strategies applied in public high schools to identify their effect on speaking

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San Juan de Pasto, Junio 27, 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATED TO

I am grateful for my parents,
my skills and the knowledge .
I am grateful for my professors,
my friends and my wife;

Jorge Figueroa.

DEDICATED TO

Thanks to God for giving me life,
thanks to my family for
their love and support.

Jesid R.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of teaching a second language in high schools should, with no excuses, be directed towards developing students' communicative competence. This research project's main objective is to use some direct language learning strategies in order to identify their possible effect on the speaking skill of 6th grade students in a public high school in Pasto.

In order to achieve this main objective and the specific objectives it was necessary to apply not only a pre-test and a post-test, but also to carry out a 20-hour application on direct language learning Strategies. The outcomes of this study show that the effects produced by the application of direct language learning strategies on the speaking skill are positive as well as meaningful which allows the researchers of this project to invite teachers and researchers not only to make use of them inside the classroom, but also to continue researching on learning strategies in relation to other skills.

Resumen

El propósito de enseñar una lengua extranjera en los colegios debería estar dirigido sin ninguna duda hacia el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes. El principal objetivo de este proyecto investigativo es usar algunas estrategias directas de aprendizaje con el fin de identificar su posible efecto sobre las habilidades orales de los estudiantes de grado 6to de un colegio público en Pasto. Para alcanzar tanto el objetivo principal como los específicos fue necesario no solo aplicar un pre-test y un post-test, sino también realizar una aplicación de 20 horas sobre las estrategias directas de aprendizaje.

Los resultados de este estudio demostraron que los efectos producidos por la aplicación de las estrategias directas de aprendizaje sobre la habilidad oral fueron positivos como también significativos lo cual permite a los investigadores de este proyecto hacer una invitación a profesores y otros investigadores no solo a que usen las estrategias directas de aprendizaje en el salón de clases sino también a que continúen investigando acerca de las mismas en relación con otras habilidades.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Topic

Direct Language Learning Strategies applied in public high schools to identify their effect on speaking.

Problem Statement

Nowadays, the teaching of English in public high school in Pasto might not possibly be offering students what is supposed to, mainly because the way this has been understood neither has been the best, nor has been changed. Thus, the teaching of English continues focusing on the same and traditional goals and methodology, which are not only very difficult and do not take students to a meaningful communication but also of no interest and motivation for them and their necessities. Thus, public high schools might have completely forgotten that the purpose of learning a new language is communication. So the speaking skill has no importance for them, that is why it does not play any significant role in the classroom and it might have no importance for teachers and students either.

This entire situation has also led teachers and students not to question themselves about how to become more successful learners, on the students' part, or better trainers, on the teachers' part. Thus, they do not know or are unaware about the existence or use of, for instance,

the language learning strategies, which might specially help the students not only take advantage of their aptitudes or learning styles to speak the new language, but also make them more responsible for their own language learning.

The purpose of this research project is centered on the possibility, and by the application of some language learning strategies, to offer the students of sixth grade of a public high school an opportunity to apply some commons language learning strategies.

Formulation of the Problem

How direct language learning strategies may influence the speaking skill of public High School students?

Delimitation

Conceptual Delimitation

Learning Strategy: For Oxford (1990:1). It is a step taken by students to enhance their own learning. One commonly used technical definition says that learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information. It is useful to expand this definition by saying that learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable,

more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable
to new situations. (Oxford 1990:8.

Direct Strategies: They are strategies that involve
directly the target language. Direct strategies require
mental processing of the language. These strategies
include memory, cognition, and compensation strategies. The
direct strategies are beneficial to the students because
they help store and recover information. These strategies
help learners to produce language even when there is gap in
knowledge. They also help to understand and use the new
language. (Oxford 1990).

Memory Strategies: Memory strategies help learners
store and retrieve new information. They reflect very
simple principles such as arranging things in order, making
associations, and reviewing. They also enable learners to
store verbal materials, and then retrieve it when needed
for communication. (Oxford 1990).

Cognition Strategies: They are strategies that enable
learners to understand and produce new language by many
different means. These are perhaps the most popular
strategies with language learners. The target language is
manipulated or transformed by repeating, analyzing or
summarizing. (Oxford 1990).

Compensation Strategies: They are strategies that enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. They are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, specially, of vocabulary. (Oxford 1990).

Speaking skill or communicative competence: Is the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers to make meaning (Savignon 1972). In Murphy´s (1991:52) words, speaking is the ability to speak coherently and intelligibly on a focused topic.

Geographical

Our research project was carried out at one of the Public high school in the city of Pasto (Nariño), it is located to the south- east of Pasto (Nariño). This high school is located in a paved sector and it is also located in a low and social class.

Population

Our research project was developed with the students of secondary level in a Public school. The group was made up of men and women. They basically came from low and middle social classes.

Objectives of the Study

To determine whether direct language learning strategies influence the learners' speaking skill.

Specific Objectives

To apply an intensive course on direct learning strategies.

To determine which direct strategies could be more useful once the training is done.

To assess the students´ performance throughout the application course on direct learning strategies.

To assess the students´ speaking level in the beginning of the course as well as in the end of the course.

Significance

This study is worthwhile because:

This study could give practical suggestions to teachers who are concerned about the use of Direct Language Strategies for helping their students with their speaking skill. It could also help students identify the close relationship between learning and learning strategy in order to determine the effect on the speaking level of the secondary public high school students in Pasto. Furthermore, It could allow the students to identify the Direct Language Learning Strategies and at the same time to put them into practice

to improve the students' speaking skill. Finally, the outcomes of this project might be consider in the institutions methodology as long as they believe it to be relevant for the English teaching in this school,

Limitations

Before starting the application of this research project, the researchers thought of some possible limitations that in the end turned into real ones. One of these limitations was the possibility of not finding a homogenous group in terms of knowledge, physical and mental maturity, and motivation and interest to use the direct strategies in the topics being taught. Besides, the number of the students and hours to work with, could affect the training development due to the lack of time to apply the treatment. Once the researchers finished the strategies and post-test applications to the experimental group (6-3), they found the following limitations which affected the normal development of the treatment application, these limitations were: first of all, the number of the students, the group was composed of 46 students, which made difficult the personal work control, as well as, the group work. Due to this, the activities took more time than what was expected, and not all the students had the opportunity to participate in the class. Second, the schedule and the

time, the whole English classes were carried out at the end of the schedule, at this time the tiredness played an important role in the development of the classes. The researchers just had fifty minutes time class during Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Besides, the researchers had to deal with some classes' interruptions like, discipline, missing classes, teacher's strikes, parent's meetings, soccer matches and so on.

In a normal class of fifty minutes the researchers had to discount 10 minutes organizing the students. 10 minutes of warm up (applying the structure reviewing strategy). 5 minutes with the cleaning personal interrupting the classes taking the garbage out. 5 minutes picking the control class up by other students, messages sent by the director through the speaker placed in every classroom. After these interruptions the researcher could work in the class with a very short time for developing any activity (grammar explanation, oral practices, evaluations, etc.).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework about Speaking and its relation with

Language Learning Strategies.

Knowing the purpose and what this research project is

directed to, it will be relevant for us to have a better

understanding of what the speaking skill and language

learning strategies are and involve, to then be able to

relate them in a better manner.

Speaking

To learn a second language should include more than

grammatical competence. Communication is effective when the

learner gets involved in the social and cultural aspects of

language use and how these are different between his first

and second language.

Communicative competence has shown itself to be a

robust and challenging concept for teachers, researchers,

and program developers alike, Communicative language goals

and the processes of classroom learning, for teaching

practice that views competence in terms of social

interaction and looks to further language acquisition

research to account for its development.

A careful look at some brief authors´ definitions of

the concept of communicative competence will somehow help

us in understanding why the development of the speaking

skill in the classroom language is compulsory. First of all, it is important to say that since the very moment of its appearance in the language learning field, "communicative competence" has gotten researchers' attention not only because It is a very complex concept to be defined, but also because It represents a great contribution for language teaching and learning. Thus, this term might be defined as "a mutual exchange between two or more individuals which enhances cooperation and establishes commonality. Communication is also seen as dynamic, not static, and as depending on the negotiation of meaning between two or more persons who share some knowledge of the language being used"(Oxford, 1990:7). So, for Oxford (1990) communicative competence has to do with competence or ability to communicate and it involves both spoken or written language and the four language skills. On the other hand, Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence to characterize the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, to make meaning. Some studies of L2 use have shown the kinds of problems L2 learners face and the skills they need to overcome them to communicate in an L2. Studies of oral L2 performance within task based contexts have identified the problems of using more accurate, fluent and complex language, and have

started to explore the ways in which learners'
communicative performance can be influenced through
communication practice.

Let us now see how the speaking skill has been defined
by some important authors. According to Bygate (2001),
speaking in a second language involves the development of a
particular type of communication skill. In addition, some
of the processing skills needed in speaking differ from
those involved in reading and writing. Speaking in L2 has
occupied a very important place throughout the history of
language teaching, and only in the last two decades has it
begun to emerge as a branch, learning and testing in its
own right, rarely focusing on the production of spoken
discourse. There are three main reasons for this. The
first is tradition: grammar-translation approaches to
language teaching still have a huge influence in language
teaching, marginalizing the teaching of communication
skill. The second is technology: only since the mid-1970s
has tape recording been sufficiently cheap and practical to
enable the widespread study of talk. Due to the difficulty
of studying talk, it was easier for teachers,
methodologists, applied linguists and linguists to focus on
written language than spoken language. The third reason
for its peculiar development might be termed exploitation:

most approaches to language teaching other than grammar-translation (the direct method, the audiolingual approach) as well as more marginal approaches (silent way, community Language Learning and Suggestopedia) exploited oral communication centrally as part of their methodology: not as a discourse skill in its own right , but rather as a special medium for providing language input , memorization practice and habit-formation. Most of the focus in teaching oral skill was limited to pronunciation.

According to Brown (1978), the nature of all human beings is to be social, so he believes that the spoken language production is primarily used for the purposes of social interaction. He also believes that spontaneous spoken language is very different (in relation to written language for example) in form and function. In other words its manner of production structuring and the like, take place in an interactive situation where the speaker has to take account of the listener and he must also monitor his listener to check if the assumptions he is making are being shared by the listener and that the listener understands what he is saying as well. He also adds that the speaker needs to check to see what the attitude of the listener is to what he is saying, and how what he is saying appears to modify the listener´s attitude to the speaker.

Brown (1978), states that there are some special factors that perhaps make the speaking interacting situation a little difficult. They are: 1. pressure of time. Since in a conversation the speaker speaks against time, so he must not take up too long a turn in the conversation since he might turn himself into a bore for the listener. Besides, he has to complete whatever he wants to say before his interlocutor breaks in. 2. The speaker is speaking in a here-and-now situation. He has no precise record of what he has just said or what has been said by previous speakers; this means to him, remembering in a general sense how he got to his present point in the argument while he is planning and monitoring the correctness of the utterance he is actually producing and planning how this is to fit into an overall structure.

The previous factors may result in: 1. the speaker does not Marshall his arguments very well or gets his narrative in the right order. 2. His control over a series of clauses is obviously limited by his short-term memory. 3. Like tired writers, they often get into a lexical or syntactic rut especially in conversation. 4. To keep a conversation going the speaker is led to the very dense use of fillers, which are chunks of speech containing very little if any cognitive content and which appear to operate

as prefabs that give the speaker some time to plan what he really wants to say.

In Murphy's words (1991:52), speaking, the ability to speak coherently and intelligibly on a focused topic is generally recognized as a necessary goal for EFL students.

Cultural aspects are also important in speaking. Knowledge of a second language should include more than just grammatical competence.

Communication can only be effective when the student is also sensitive to social and cultural aspects of language use and how these differ between his first and second language. Thus, expectations and interpretations are likely to differ on the role of silence, speaking volume and intonation, situations requiring set formulas, conventions of politeness and how information is organized and shared". (Applegate,1975:271).

This way, Applegate (1975) believes that students are quite conscious about some problems when learning a second language: new sounds, new vocabulary, and new grammatical problems. However, they are not conscious whatsoever about the social and cultural aspects of language use; such as: knowing when to talk and when to keep silent, how loud to talk and with what intonation, what constitutes a polite request and what a refusal, how to initiate a conversation

and how to end one, when to interpret an utterance literally and when to use it as a formulaic convention, and so on. All of these social and cultural aspects are better known as "the role of speaking".

Most of these rules are hard to verbalize or explain since they are unconscious habits reacquired in imitation of the adults around us. Some of these important rules are as follows:

Silence: According to the context, silence (when to speak and when not to speak) may be interpreted in different ways; that is, while for some speakers to be quiet would be a good way to protect themselves from strangers, for Americans silence is interpreted negatively "many Americans (and many English people) have a rule, that is social conversations silence must be filled (Reisman (1971:6) quoted by Applegate (1995:272)).

Volume and Intonation: In Applegate words (1975:274) intonation and volume are not considered as important as other more tangible language differences. However, he believes that these aspects are crucial since, for instance, a compliment with the wrong intonation and volume is no compliment and a polite request with the wrong intonation and volume is not polite.

Conventional Language: Applegate (1975) states that much of the language we use is formulaic, so every culture has different conventionalized utterances like greetings, leave-takings, apologies, consolations, congratulations, and so on, for certain social situations. These conventions in some contexts may depend on the formality of the situations and the age and mood of those involved in the situation.

Norms of Interactions: They have to do with those rules governing how people relate to one another verbally in various situations so, given a particular situation such as an exchange of greetings, norms of interaction may vary on who says the first greeting or when or how. It is similar when getting acquainted with a stranger and the kinds of the questions to ask and the turn taking to speak.

Handling Information: This is perhaps one of the most pervasive ways in which norms of interaction differ. This, specifically, has to do with the topic in mind to talk about, and how to bring it up and how openly to talk about it. So, in many parts of the world, the normal patterns is to ease gently into talk about a particular subject through exchanges of greeting formulas, polite inquires about family and friends' health, which allow to bring up the central topic at last as quite incidental.

It is also important to know that the speech production involves some characteristics which are proposed by Levelt (1989), quoted by Bygate (2001:16).

Characteristics of Speech

To understand what is involved in developing oral L2 skills, it is useful to consider the nature and conditions of speech. Most current approaches draw on a psycholinguistic skills (or information) processing model. Levelt (1989), quoted by Bygate (2001: page 16) proposed that speech production involves four major processes:

Conceptualization: This is concerned with planning the message content. It draws on background knowledge, knowledge about the topic, about the speech situation and knowledge of patterns of discourse. The conceptualization includes a monitor, which checks everything that occurs in the interaction to ensure that the communication goes to plan.

Formulator: This finds the words and phrases to express the meanings, sequencing them and putting in appropriate grammatical markers (such as inflections, auxiliaries, articles). It also prepares the sound patterns of the words to be used: L1 errors of pronunciation very commonly involve switching sounds between words that are separated from each other: such switches suggest that the

pronunciation of words must be prepared in batches prior to pronunciation.

Articulation: This includes the motor control of the articulatory organs; in English: the lips, tongue, teeth, alveolar plate, velum, glottis mouth cavity, and breath.

Self-monitoring: This is concerned with language users being able to identify and self correct mistakes.

All this happens very fast and, to be successful, depends on automation: to some degree in conceptualization, to a considerable extent in formulation and almost entirely in articulation. Automation is necessary since humans do not have enough attention capacity consciously to control the three types of process. Hence, for an elementary L2 speaker it will be difficult to manage this speech fluently and accurately, since they lack automation and /or accuracy, and it is difficult for them to pay attention to all these processes simultaneously under pressure of time.

Language Learning Strategies

Now we will turn to language learning strategies. It is important to say that for a better and clearer understanding of language learning strategies we have considered to base it especially on the Rebecca Oxford's writings (1990) since we believe that her contributions regarding them are considered the most appropriate for

carrying out this project. However, let us start by giving some authors' definitions and classifications of language learning strategies. Rubin (1981) quoted by Green and Hecht (1993:151) states that language learning strategies are long-term plans employed by learners in different ways and with differing frequency, to control the learning process. Rubin also describes six strategies employed by successful learners: classification, monitoring, memorization, guessing, deductive reasoning, and practicing

Wenden and Rubin (1987) quoted by Himasnoglu (2000)define learning strategies as "any set of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information". Whereas, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) hold that learning strategies are the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information". According to Oxford (1990) language learning strategies are actions taken by second and foreign language learners to control and improve their own learning. Further, in her book she adds that learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, and more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations.

Oxford (1990) also poses that language learning strategies have some important features to bear in mind:

They contribute to the main goal, communicative competence. All language learning strategies help learners participate actively in authentic communication, they operate in both general and specific ways to encourage the development of communicative competence.

They allow learners to become more self-directed. This is particularly important for language learners because they will not always have the teacher around to guide them as they use the language outside the classroom.

They give teachers new roles as facilitators, helpers, guides, consultants, advisers, coordinators, diagnosticians, and co-communicators.

They are problem-oriented. Language learning strategies are tools, and they are used because there is a problem to solve, a task to accomplish, an objective to meet, or a goal to attain.

They are specific actions taken by the learner. Language learning strategies are specific actions or behaviors accomplished by students to enhance their learning. Examples are taking notes, planning for a language task, self-evaluating, and guessing intelligently.

They involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive. Language learning strategies are not restricted to cognitive functions, they also include metacognitive, emotional (affective), social, and other functions as well.

They support learning both directly and indirectly. Some learning strategies involve direct learning and use of the new language; these are known as direct strategies. Other strategies contribute indirectly but powerfully to learning, these are known as indirect strategies.

They are not always observable. Language learning strategies are not always readily observable to the human eye. For example the act of making mental associations cannot be seen. This is a reason why it is often difficult for teachers to know about their students' learning strategies.

They are often conscious. Language learning strategies reflect conscious efforts by learners to take control of their learning, and after a certain amount of practice and use they can become automatic.

They can be taught. Learning strategies are easy to teach and modify, they can be taught through strategy training. Strategy training helps guide learners to become more conscious of strategy use and more adept at employing appropriate strategies.

They are flexible. Language learning strategies are not always found in predictable sequences or in precise patterns. Learners can choose, combine, and sequence strategies.

They are influenced by a variety of factors. There are many factors that might affect the choice of strategies, such as, degree of awareness, stage of learning, task requirements, teacher expectations, age, sex, nationality/ethnicity, general learning style, personality traits, motivation level, and purpose for learning the language.

Learning strategies have also been classified differently by some authors. Thus, Rubin and Stern (1975) quoted by Huang and Van Naerssen (1987:289) classify learning strategies in three groups: formal practice, functional practice, and monitoring. Formal practice includes listening to and doing pattern drills, listening in order to improve pronunciation, memorizing and reciting texts, imitating, retelling stories, reading aloud, and reading in order to learn vocabulary items or grammatical structures. Functional practice includes activities which mainly focus on using language for communication, such as speaking with other students and native speakers, listening and reading for

comprehension, attending lectures, watching films and tv programs, and thinking or talking to oneself in English. Monitoring refers to the efforts made by the learner to pay attention to the use of linguistic forms and modify language responses.

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) quoted by Vandergrift (1997: page 170), have validated a body of language learning strategies, and an accompanying classification scheme grounded in cognitive theory. They have differentiated and categorized the range of cognitive activity in language learning into two main types: metacognitive and cognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies are important because they oversee, regulate, or direct the language learning process. These strategies, which involve thinking about the learning process, include planning, monitoring, and evaluating. However, without the deployment of appropriate cognitive strategies, the potential of these metacognitive strategies is curtailed. Cognitive strategies manipulate the material to be learned or apply a specific technique to the learning task. A third category, socio-affective strategies, was added to describe learning that happens when language learners co-operate with classmates, question the teacher for clarification, or apply specific techniques to lower their anxiety level.

Oxford (1990) also gives her own classification of the strategies. She divides strategies into two major classes: direct and indirect. Direct strategies are subdivided into three groups: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies are also subdivided into three groups: metacognitive, social, and affective strategies.

For the sake of a better understanding on the reader's part we are going to explain each one of them; however, and since this research project has to do more specifically with the application of the direct strategies to the speaking skill, we are going to give a more detailed description of them.

Direct Strategies

Direct strategies involve the target language directly and they also require mental process of the language. As it was briefly mentioned before, direct strategies are divided into memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies.

Memory Strategies.

Memory strategies have been used for thousands of years and they have a highly specific function: helping students store and retrieve new information. They also reflect very simple principles, such as arranging things in order,

making associations, and reviewing. These principles all involve meaning. Memory strategies fall into four sets: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing action.

1. Creating mental linkages. This strategy set has one strategy directed towards the speaking skill, placing new words into a context. This strategy has to do with placing a word or phrase in a meaningful sentence, conversation, or story in order to remember it.

2. Applying images and sounds. This strategy set has one strategy directed towards the speaking skill, representing sounds in memory. This strategy has to do with remembering new language information according to its sounds. Learners may make auditory representations of sounds like linking a new word with familiar words or sounds from any language through the use of sense or nonsense rhymes.

3. Reviewing well. This strategy set has one strategy directed towards speaking. Structured reviewing. This strategy, by means of reviewing in carefully spaced intervals, allows learners to be so familiar with the information being learned that it becomes natural and automatic.

4. Employing action. The two strategies in this set, using physical response or sensation, using mechanical techniques, are not directed towards speaking.

Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means. These strategies are a varied lot ranging from repeating to analyzing expressions to summarizing. In spite of their variety, cognitive strategies are unified by a common function: manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner. Cognitive strategies are subdivided into four sets: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output.

1. Practicing. This strategy set has five strategies directed towards speaking. Repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, and practicing naturalistically.

Repeating. This strategy has to do with saying or doing something over and over.

Formally practicing with sounds and writing systems. This strategy has to do with practicing sounds

(pronunciation, intonation, register, etc.) in a variety of ways, but not yet in naturalistic communicative practice.

Recognizing and using formulas and patterns. This strategy has to do with being aware of and/or using routine formulas.

Recombining. This strategy deals with combining elements in new ways to produce a longer sequence.

Practicing naturalistically. This strategy has to do with practicing the new language in natural, realistic settings.

2. Receiving and sending messages. This strategy set has one strategy directed towards the speaking skill, using resources for receiving and sending messages. This strategy has to do with using print or non-print resources to understand incoming messages or produce outgoing messages.

3. Analyzing and reasoning. This strategy set has three strategies directed towards the speaking skill. Reasoning deductively, translating, and transferring.

Reasoning deductively. This strategy deals with using general rules and applying them to new target language situations.

Translating. This strategy copes with converting a target language expression into the native language or converting the native language into the target language.

Transferring. This strategy has to do with directly applying knowledge of words, concepts or structures from one language to another in order to understand or produce an expression in the new language.

4. Creating structure for input and output. This strategy set is made up of three strategies, taking notes, summarizing, and highlighting. But no one is directed towards speaking.

Compensation Strategies.

Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite limitations in knowledge. They are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and, especially, of vocabulary. Compensation strategies are divided into: guessing intelligently in listening and reading, and overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

1. Guessing intelligently in listening and reading. This strategy set is composed of two strategies, using linguistic clues, and using other clues. But no one is directed towards speaking.

2. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing. This strategy set includes eight strategies, switching to the mother tongue, getting help, using mime or gesture, avoiding communication partially or totally, selecting the

topic, adjusting or approximating the message, coining words, and using circumlocution or synonym.

Switching to the mother tongue. This strategy has to do with using the mother tongue for an expression without translating it.

Getting help. This strategy deals with asking someone for help by hesitating or explicitly asking for the person to provide the missing expression in the target language.

Using mime or gesture. This strategy deals with using physical motion in place of an expression to indicate the meaning.

Avoiding communication partially or totally. This strategy has to do with partially or totally avoiding communication in general, (topics, specific expressions, abandoning communication in mid-utterance).

Selecting the topic. This strategy deals with choosing the topic of conversation in order to direct the communication to one's own interests and make sure the topic is one in which the learner has sufficient vocabulary and grammar to converse.

Adjusting or approximating the message. This strategy deals with altering the message by omitting some items of information, making ideas simpler or less precise, or

saying something slightly different that means almost the same thing.

Coining words. This strategy has to do with making up new words to communicate the desired idea.

Using circumlocution or synonym. This strategy deals with getting the meaning across by describing the concept or using a word that means the same thing.

Indirect Strategies

Indirect strategies are divided into three groups: metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies.

Metacognitive strategies.

They have to do with coordinating the learning process. The strategies in this set are: centering your learning, arranging and planning your learning, evaluating your learning.

Affective strategies.

They have to do with helping regulate emotions. The strategies in this set are: lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, taking your emotional temperature.

Social strategies.

They have to do with helping learn with others. The strategies in this set are: asking questions, cooperating with others, empathizing with others.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Paradigm.

Our research had a quantitative focus; this kind of research is described as a formal, objective, systematic process in which a numerical data are utilized to obtain information. Among its most outstanding features are systematicity (having a system or following a process), objectivity (it is thought that in gaining, analyzing and interpreting quantitative data, the researcher can remain detached and objective), deductiveness (in other words it tests theory), generalisability (it produces results that can be generalized), numbers (it uses data that are structured in the form of numbers or that can be immediately transported into numbers). This type of research was the most adequate for our research because it allowed us to measure the probable effect that the Direct Language Learning Strategies would have on the learners speaking.

Type of Research

As it is known, experiments involve research designs where a control group is similar to the experimental group in every way except that the control group does not receive the treatment that the experimental group receives. Experimental research most often involves the random

assignment of participants to either the experimental or the control group. Quasi-experimental research involves research where it is not possible to meet the conditions of true experiments. For example, the experimental and control groups might involve intact groups, (e.g., two classrooms) that cannot be randomly assigned to treatments. Taking this into account , the type of research for our project was quasi-experimental because we were going to work with two (2) groups described as control group and experimental group, the former would continue working as it had always been doing, without any kind of interference, however, they would be given two tests(a pre and a post test). On the contrary, the second group would take the already mentioned tests and the treatment. All this process had the purpose to identify if the direct language learning strategies were to have an effect on their speaking skill or not. These groups, the experimental and the control group were not mixed because of the high school politics.

Population, Setting, and Sample

Population

Our research project was carried out with the collaboration of a public high school in Pasto. This high school is composed of six levels, and there are six (6) courses per level, each course is made up of 40 to 50

students, in most of the courses there are more men than women, their age range depends on the level that the student is attending. However the age of the students who start their studies in sixth (6th) level are between 10 and 12 years old, the age of the students who finish their studies in eleventh (11th) are between 17 and 19 years old. In terms of the students' origins, it could be said that most of them are from Pasto and they come from the surrounding neighborhoods as well.

Setting

This research project took place in a public high school in the city of Pasto. This high school is located in the south part of Pasto, in the department of Nariño, Colombia. Also the high school is placed in a paved sector. This Institution is placed in a low and middle social class. Besides, this is a very busy area because many cars, buses and motorcycles move back and forth around this neighborhood, therefore, it can be said that it is a very noisy environment. The high school also has a huge green zone and its infrastructure is adequate for the students´ necessities.

Sample

Concerning the sample, it was composed of two groups of students taken from secondary school; each group was

composed of 46 students (6-3) and 43 students (6-4), the
first course exactly had 37 men and 19 women, and the
second course (6-4) had around 30 men and 15 women. Their
ages ranged from 11 to 13 and they belonged to low and
middle social classes

Procedure

Data collection Techniques

This research project obtained help from different
types of techniques, like a) Observation, it is a technique
that served to prove our hypothesis about the possible
influence of the Direct Language Learning Strategies in
relation to the speaking skill. b) Tests (pre-test, the
one which was applied to both groups before starting the
research. post-test, the one which was applied to both
groups after finishing the research), it is a technique
that serves to measure and compare the results obtained
from the application of the Direct Language Learning
Strategies.

Description of the Procedure

The steps that our research project followed are:
First we needed to ask for a formal permission to an
authority in the public high school; that is, to talk
personally or to send a letter to the principal of the high
school, after that we had to talk to the English teacher in

charge of sixth grade for cooperation in our research.
Then, and in order to identify the students' speaking level
and some factors that were interfering in the acquisition
of the speaking skill, a class observation was done. Once
the students' real level of English was recognized, the
pre-test was designed (the researchers had to reach an
agreement on the possible questions for this test. They
also had to make a careful analysis of the standards the
high school was following for sixth grade). The same
procedure would be carried out for the post-test but the
difference would lie on the questions choice. This time the
questions would be chosen from the contents the researchers
would work with during the 20-hour training, it is
important to also point out that the tests would be done in
an oral way. Besides, as it was said before, we would work
with a control group (6-4) and an experimental group (6-3),
the latter being the one on which we would apply the Direct
Language Learning Strategies. After the application of
these two tests, we would compare the results from the
tests to recognize the possible changes in the students'
speaking skill to finally draw some conclusions and propose
some possible pedagogical suggestions. Finally we would
have to thank the institution, teachers and students for
its cooperation by leaving a copy of our research project,

and if it were possible, the researchers would make a brief presentation for the high school of the research itself.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Once the researchers had finished the application of the pre-test and the post-test, they would proceed to do a detailed analysis of the two tests, they would start first with the pre-test in which they would also compare the 6-3 grade students' performance in contrast with the 6-4 grade students'. They would follow the same procedure with the post-test as well. But, for this test the analysis would be a bit more extensive as this test would show the researchers if there was any change in the experimental group (6-3) in relation to the control group (6-4) once they had undergone the application of the direct strategies. After that, they would organize, compare, and analyze whether the strategies used before had an effect or not on the speaking skill. If so, they would come up with some pedagogical suggestions.

Ethical Issues

According to Bastidas (2002) a fundamental element in any research is "Ethics''. As far as this is concerned, this paper is going to be done taking into account some ethical aspects such as:

Informed consent: In relation to this aspect we will have to first talk to some authority (the principal) in the high school and the students of ninth grade as well for having their permission and cooperation.

Confidentiality: the students and the people who are going to help us with our research will be assured that the information obtained in the process is going to be confidential and their names or another kind of information will not be revealed.

Consequences: In this aspect we are going to have to be very clear with the high school and guarantee them that our research project will cause neither physical nor physiological problems or other type or consequences on the high school and the students.

Reciprocity: In this aspect we are going to show how thankful we are to the high school and its cooperation not only by sending a letter to the principal, the teacher and the students, but also by offering or leaving a copy of our research project for the institution.

Voluntary participation: In this aspect we will be very precise by saying that nobody will be forced to take part in our research project, but we will also insist on the importance of everybody's cooperation for the success of our project.

Cover-up in the Research: In this aspect everybody, who wants to know about what our research project has to do with, will have an easy access to any information of the research.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

DATA ANALYSIS

Direct Language Learning Strategies Analysis

Before going into an exhaustive analysis of all the direct strategies that the researchers worked with in this project, it is important to start by saying that of all the direct strategies directed to the speaking skill, the researchers made up their minds to only work with nine of them (they will be describe later on). The researchers made this decision since these nine direct strategies were the most accurate ones if it is borne in mind some oxford´s (1990) strategies features: the students stage of learning, their, their age, their motivation level, the teachers expectations, the tasks requirements, the strategies flexibility to be combined and sequenced in a given activity, the ease can be employed with and finally and perhaps the most important one, the students purpose for learning the language. All of these strategy features made the researchers go from a wide range of strategy variety to a small and specific strategy group that would hopefully fulfill the researchers and the project´s needs.

Now, let us move on onto a detailed description of each one of the strategies.

Recognizing and Using Formulas and Patterns (May 5th/09). As it was mentioned in the theoretical framework, this cognitive strategy has to do with using phrases or expressions of daily use. So the researchers named this activity as "classroom common language for the teacher and the student". It was basically composed of greetings, useful questions inside the classroom and some commands (see appendix A). Once the students were given a sheet with all the expressions, the researchers explained them what the meaning of each one of the expressions was and its correct pronunciation. Then, through some interaction the researchers put the strategy into practice by asking the students whether to perform a command or ask or answer any given question. For this strategy to work properly it was necessary to get some help some from another strategy (structured reviewing, which is explained next.

For this memory strategy the researcher did not use any specific activity since this strategy deals with reviewing something learnt before in spaced intervals. So, this strategy was specifically used to do a quick class after class review of not only the previous activity (classroom common language) but also the coming ones. So, every single class the researchers tried to get the students to put into practice this strategy by asking them

questions of everything already learned. However, as there was so little time and so many students in the classroom, this strategy was applied once or maximum twice a week. Otherwise, the researchers would not have had enough time to apply the other strategies. Therefore, the researchers always took five or ten minutes of a class to do a quick check on the activities already worked as well as the attitude and response on the student´s part towards this strategy.

Placing New Words into a Context (May 20ᵗʰ/09). This memory strategy did not have any specific activity either because similar to the "structure reviewing strategy", they are both flexible to be combined or sequenced in other strategy application. Given this situation, this strategy was used to introduce some vocabulary about professions and physical descriptions. Vocabulary that was necessary to include in order to fulfill in some percent the requirements of the course (to give personal and family information). As this strategy meant somehow a need for the students when they wanted or needed something, the researchers used it to also put into practice the classroom common language activity. Thus, it was not only words, but complete phrases to use when the students required

something. The strategy was used as often as possible throughout the whole course.

   Repeating (May 22nd/09). As this cognitive strategy has to do with saying or doing something over and over, it was basically used to help students remember words pronunciation and vocabulary. This strategy did not have a specific activity for it represented a clear advantage for the researchers. That is, the possibility to use it at any moment throughout the training. The application of this strategy allowed the researchers to have a continue control over the student´s performance as well as observing how well or bad they were doing with vocabulary and pronunciation.

   Practicing Naturalistically (May 26th/09). For this cognitive strategy, the researchers thought of a game-like activity named "guess my job". (See appendix B). As this strategy has to do with having the students practice the new language in a natural, realistic setting, the activity would perfectly fulfill the strategy requirements. It also important to say that this activity was complemented by another strategy (using mime and gesture) explained further on. The activity required to divide the students into small groups. Each group had a representative who was given a picture with a person wearing something related to the

profession, and then the student, by using mime o gestures, tried to let his / her group guess their profession, if the students said something to his/her group, they would lose. Thus, his/her classmates were forced to speak whether asking questions or making statements. All the groups were really into the activity, and the activity helped in reinforcing the grammatical points explain two classes before (verb to be and adjective pronouns).

Using Mime or Gesture (May 26th/09). This compensation strategy was, as it was said above, used like a complement for the activity named "guess my job". This strategy was really useful for each one of the representatives as it allowed them to convey meaning through physical movements in place of an expression. This strategy helped the students feel little or no pressure on them; pressure that would have been very difficult to deal with if the representatives of the groups had had to speak to describe the pictures. Thus, this strategy helped keep a balance along the activity, while there was little or no pressure on the groups' representatives there was indeed much more pressure on the group itself to guess the profession.

Using resources for receiving and sending messages (June 5th/09). The purpose of this cognitive strategy was to have students use print or non-print resources to

understand incoming messages or produce outgoing messages. As the researches were working on the speaking skill, they used the strategy to produce outgoing messages. So, the previous class to the activity, the students were all asked to choose a person (whether a relative or any other person) from a photograph, newspaper or magazine with the purpose of making a short physical description of the person they chose. The activity was named "what's my ideal friend like?"(See appendix __).The activity let the researches put into practice the previous grammatical point which was "what's ……… like?" used to talk not only about themselves but also about other people (family, friends, etc). Again the students worked in groups and to make sure that all the students were capable of making the description, they were told that the researchers would choose two representatives of each group to stand in front of the classroom and make the description.

Recombinig (June 10th/09). This cognitive strategy was very important and useful in the researches opinion due to its possibility to let students combine old and new elements in new ways to produce longer sequences. So, the researches thought of a simple but valuable activity named "introduce me please"(see appendix __). For this activity the students had to remember and gathered all the things

already learnt along the course (verb to be, adjective

pronouns, professions and physical descriptions). They were

again divided into groups and they were handed out a

flashcard with one or two people in it so that they can do

a good description. Once they were ready, the students were

told that the researchers would choose at random two

representatives from the group to stand in front of the

class and introduce the person or people in his/her

flashcard.

Formally Practicing with Sounds and Writing Systems

(June 12th /09). For this cognitive strategy the researchers

considered that the best exercise or activity to fulfill

the strategy requirements would be a dialogue carried out

in pairs as this strategy is all about practicing sounds;

that is, pronunciation, intonation, register, etc, in a

variety of ways. The activity was named "letting my

classmates know me. Similar to some of the previous

activities, the application of this strategy was

complemented by another strategy (recombining) and since

the researchers wanted to noticed how prepared the students

would be to deal with and gather most of the things already

seen before. So, in this dialogue the students were

expected to give simple personal information such as name,

age, profession and some physical characteristics, which

were all related to the grammatical points worked by the researchers throughout the training.

Pretest Analysis

For the pre-test design, the researchers had to ask for the in-charge teacher's collaboration because the questions to ask needed to be adjusted to the standards aspirations that this high school was using with 6th grades. Once the researches finished this careful analysis, they agreed on the following questions:

1. *What´s your full name?*

2. *Where is he/she from?*

3. *What do you do during the day?*

4. *What does your father do on weekends?*

5. *What is this?*

6. *What kind of food do you like?*

7. *Do you like dogs?*

8.   *What are you wearing today?*

9. *How often do you practice sports?*

10. *How often do you go to the cinemas?*

The pretest was applied to all the students belonging to grades 6-3(experimental group) and 6-4(control group) in the afternoon schedule. The researchers applied it the 28th and 29th of April 2009 from 4:45 to 6:00 p.m. it´s also important to remember that for answering the questions all

the students had to work in groups of four to facilitate
the researchers job. The analysis of all the questions went
as follows:

Question number 1(what's your full name?): This was
the easiest and most comprehensive question for most of
students since they seemed to have a previous knowledge
about the question itself. Most of the students answer
correctly, by using whether a short answer (only their
names), or a long answer (My name is………) showing little
difficulty to deal with this question. However throughout
the question asking, we noticed that there were some
factors (two specifically) affecting some students'
performance. They were the lack of knowledge (which led
them to only say their names in some cases and in others to
stay quiet or to use the Spanish expression "no le
entiendo") and their nervousness when being asked to answer
the questions (which for the researches was worse since the
students never said a word. This situation meant a waste of
valuable time for the researchers if it is considered the
amount of students that the researches had to assess)

Question number 2(where is he/she from?): This was
also a very receptive and comprehensive question on the
students' part. It was very easy for most of them to answer
about themselves. However, the situation changed a little

when it was somebody else's information (relatives). Most
of the students answered by saying the name of their city
(Pasto), some others used complete sentences to answer the
questions (I'm from……).But, in their effort to answer
correctly, some of them gave confusing answers (my from
is……). Similar to question N° 1, the lack of knowledge and
the nervousness were perhaps factors affecting their
performance.

Questions number 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, and 10: These
questions showed the clear difficulty for students to deal
with more demanding (in terms of vocabulary and structure)
questions. All the students, without any doubt, showed no
comprehension about these questions. (For these questions
some of the students remained quiet and the others used the
Spanish expression "no le entiendo") So the researchers got
no answers.

Question number 5(what is this?): This was a question
that represented little trouble to the students, not
because they understood the question immediately and
completely, but because the question itself required the
researchers to point at something specific (a pencil, a
chair) which somehow helped them when answering. Again,
similar to the previous questions all the students gave
short answers (only saying the name of the object pointed

at by the researchers), they never used long sentences

(It's a……… or they are………). In addition, they had some

difficulty to deal with the basic vocabulary that should be

managed by this grade.

Question number 7(Do you like dogs?): Owing to the

fact that this is a yes/no question, the researchers

expected to have quick and secure answers from the

students. But, due to the most students´ lack of

vocabulary, this question turned into a sort of difficult

question too. Thus, most of the students used short answers

for this question (yes/no), but they never used the correct

short answers (yes, I do/ No, I don't) and for the few

students who had no idea about the question, the

researchers were forced to use the L1 to translate the

complete sentence or to give them the meaning of the key

words "like" and "dog".

Next we have figures 4.1 and 4.2 to show the

performance of the 6-3 and 6-4 students throughout the

pretest. For the results analysis of the pretest, the

researchers considered the following assessment patterns:

*comprehension (*the ability the students showed to

understand the researchers' questions and respond

appropriately*), fluency (*the ability the students showed to

easily get their ideas across when producing an utterance

quickly and naturally and without many pauses*), grammar*

*(*the ability the students showed to correctly articulate

and connect their ideas*), vocabulary(*the ability the

students showed to understand and use vocabulary words and

phrases*) and pronunciation(*the ability the students showed

to produce correct pronounced and comprehensive utterances

in terms of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns*).* Each

one of the patterns was given a specific grading criterion

summarized as follows*:*

    Comprehension: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge",

from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9

meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5

meaning "high quality performance".

    Fluency: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2

to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning

"average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high

quality performance".

    Grammar: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2

to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning

"average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high

quality performance".

    Vocabulary: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from

2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning

"average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high

quality performance".

Pronunciation: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge",

from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9

meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5

meaning "high quality performance".

ANALYSIS PRE - TEST COURSE 6-3

	grade 1.0 - 1.9	grade 2.0 - 2.9	grade 3.0 - 3.9	grade 4.0 - 5.0
comprehension	86	9,3	4,6	0
Fluency	93	4,6	2,3	0
Grammar	93	4,6	2,3	0
Vocabulary	95	0	4,6	0
pronunciation	93	2,3	4,6	0

ANALYSIS PRETEST 6-3
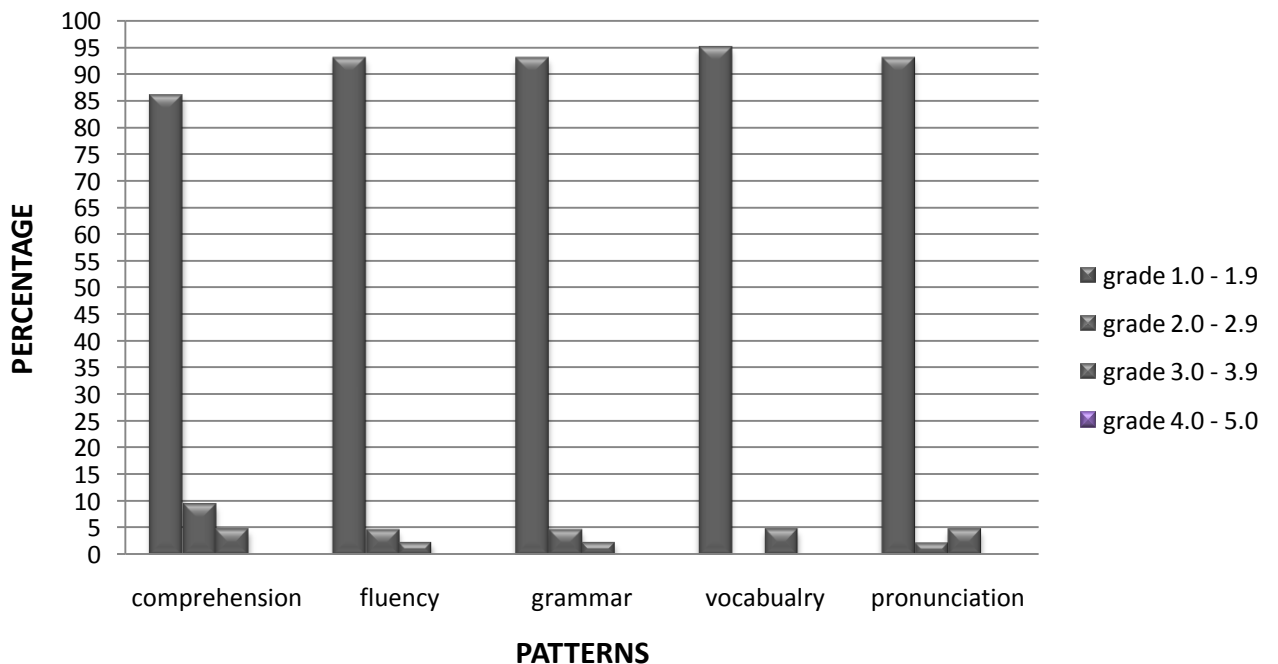
During the pretest application to the course 6-3, the researchers worked with 44 students who represented the 100 percent of the population. as it can be seen in figure above, for the comprehension pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 86 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 9.3 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 4.6 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English comprehension was really poor.

For the fluency pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 93 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 4.6 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 2.3 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English fluency was also really poor.

For the grammar pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 93 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 4.6 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 2.3 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0

percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English grammar was really poor.
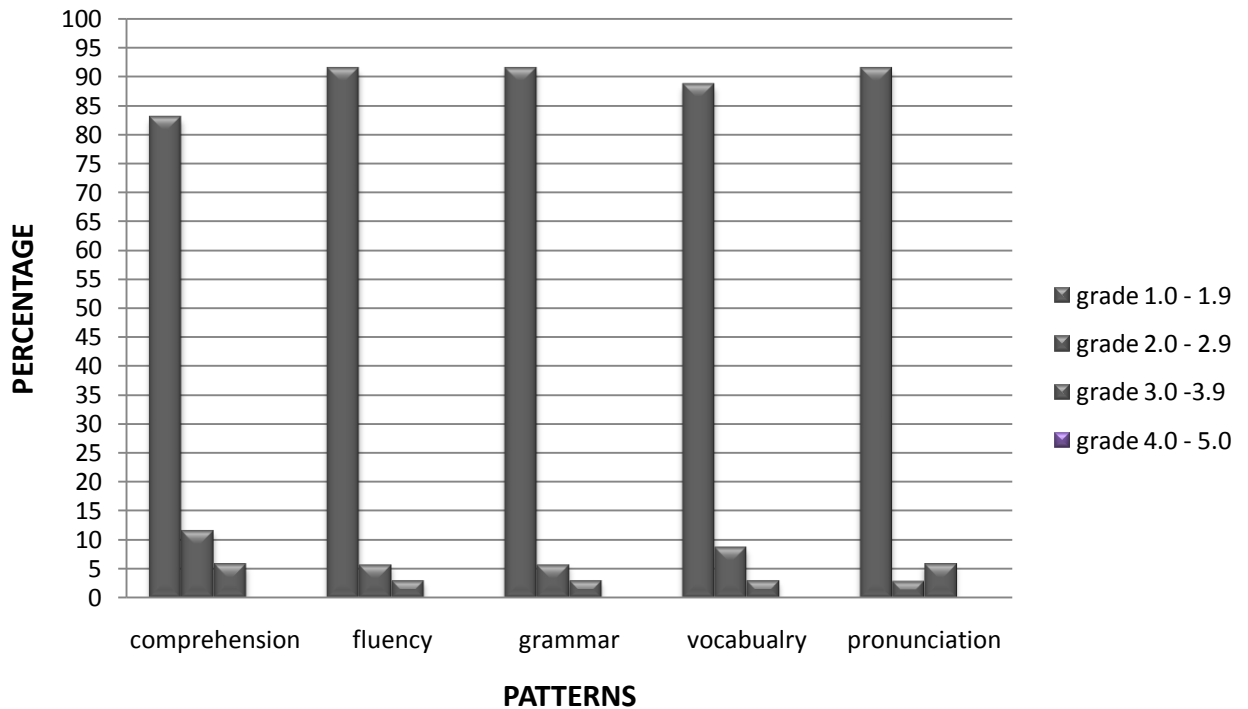
For the vocabulary pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 95 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 0 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 4.6 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English vocabulary was really poor too.

For the pronunciation pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 93 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 2.3 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 4.6 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course's English comprehension was really poor.

ANALYSIS PRE - TEST COURSE 6-4

	grade 1.0 - 1.9	grade 2.0 - 2.9	grade 3.0 -3.9	grade 4.0 - 5.0
comprehension	83	11,4	5,6	0
Fluency	91,4	5,7	2,9	0
Grammar	91,4	5,7	2,9	0
Vocabulary	88,6	8,6	2,9	0
pronunciation	91,4	2,86	5,7	0

ANALYSIS PRETEST 6-4

In the pretest application to the course 6-4, the researchers worked with 46 students who represented the 100 percent of the population. as it ca be seen in figure above, for the comprehension pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 83 percent of the

population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 11.4 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 5.6 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-4 course's English comprehension was really poor.

For the fluency pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 91.4 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 5.7 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 2.9 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-4 course's English fluency was also really poor.

For the grammar pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 91.4 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 5.7 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 2.9 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-4 course´s English grammar was really poor.

For the vocabulary pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 88.6 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 8.6 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 2.9 percent

of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0

percent of the population, which showed to the researchers

that the 6-4 course's English vocabulary was really poor

too.

For the pronunciation pattern, the percentage obtained

for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 91.4 percent of the

population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 2.86 percent

of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 5.7

percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was

the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the

researchers that the 6-4 course's English comprehension was

really poor.

The previous analysis showed that the courses 6-3 and

6-4 basically had the same poor performance along the

pretest.

Post-test analysis

To carry out the post-test, the researchers basically

had to agree on one simple thing: "the questions they would

choose to ask the students". This task was much easier

since the researchers already knew the contents worked

along the course. It is important to mention that neither

of the two groups was told when this test would be done or

what the possible questions for this test would be because

the researchers did not want to give any kind of advantage

to the groups, on the contrary, they always wanted to keep a maximum objectivity. The post-test questions were the following ones:

1 *Hi, how are you doing?*

2 *What's your full name?*

3 *What's his/her name? (Asking for a classmate's)*

4 *What's your profession?*

5 *What's your father's/mother's profession?*

6 *What's your physical appearance?*

7 *What's his/her physical appearance? (Using flashcards)*

Similar to the pre-test, the pos-test was applied to the two groups (6-3/6-4) in the afternoon schedule, 6-3 being "the experimental group" and 6-4 being "the control group". This post-test was carried out the 16th and 17th of June 2009 from 5:45pm to 6:30pm. The two groups of students took the test in groups of four as this helped the researchers not waste much time and be able to finish the whole assessment in the time desired. The questions went as follows:

Question number 1(Hi, how are you doing?): This question did not represent much of a problem for all the students (specially 6-3 students) since, in the first place, the question itself is not too demanding to be answered and secondly because the students(grade 6-3)were

already familiar with this question since at the beginning of the training the researchers taught them some common greetings in English, so when they were asked this question almost all of them answered it easily and correctly(some students answered "fine ,thanks and you" and some others answered "I'm doing well, thanks"). There were of course some exceptions like the few students who remained silent because they did not understand the question (they were specially the naughtiest and most undisciplined students in the classroom). With the control group (6-4), the researchers also used the same question to see if they were capable to recognize and answer the question, however, none of the students understood the question that's why the researchers decided to change the question for a similar one "how are you". Most of the students were asserted to answer this question (the majority used the answer "fine thank you" or only "fine"); however, there was a considerable number of students who did not understand the question and therefore kept silent.

Question number 2(What's your name?): This question was, without any doubt, the easiest and most comprehensive one for all the students. That is, the experimental group (6-3) and the control group (6-4) had no problem to deal with this question. Although, two or three students from

the control group (6-4) seemed not to have the slightest idea about the question, their answers showed it so (he's teacher/he's student). However, when talking about the answers in general terms, it was more the students using short forms (only their first name) than the students using long forms (my name is………). Besides, by the simple fact that this is perhaps the only question they knew the best, the students, neither the control group, nor the experimental group, did not make any mistake(except for the two or three students already mentioned). On the contrary, they all appeared to be very relaxed and willing to answer the question, their answers were very fast and it was not necessary for the researchers to repeat the question more than once.

Question number 3 (What's his/her name?): The researchers decided to include this question because they wanted to observe if the students had at least assimilated these two other adjective pronouns (his/her). When the experimental group (6.3) was asked this question, the great majority of students were capable of answering the question correctly, either with short forms (by only saying their classmates' names) or with complete sentences (his/her name is………). However, there were a few students (again the less interested and naughtiest ones) who seemed not to have

learned anything throughout the training. These students preferred whether to keep silent or to answer with an incorrect adjective pronoun (your name is…………/ my name is…………). With the control group (6-4) the question did not go very well. Some of the students understood the question (although it was necessary for the researchers to repeat the question and to point at their classmates) and totally answered the question in a short form (by directly using their classmates' names). The great majority of the students did not understand the question as they immediately thought they were being asked about their names. So they hurried to answer with their names (my name is………) or they preferred to remain silent.

Question four (What's your profession?): This question was not too demanding for the students either since almost all the students knew this basic profession (student). However, what the researchers really wanted with this question was to observe how capable the students would be to use a complete answer. The researchers started with the experimental group (6-3). All the students understood the question at once. However, when the students answered the questions the researchers could observe that not all the students were capable of answering with complete sentences. A great number of students used complete forms (I am …………)

and the rest only answered with short forms (their names only). The control group turned out to deal with this question fairly well in terms of the question comprehension (it was not necessary for the researchers to repeat the question). However, when they were expected to answer, they did it with only the short form (by just saying "student"), they never used the complete form (I'm a………/my profession is………) and a few students were not sure about their profession so they doubted to answer quickly. These students needed the researchers' help to confirm what they wanted to say (they used the Spanish expression "profe, estudiante en ingles is student, no?").

Question five (What's your father's/mother's profession?): Similar to question number 3 and 7, the researchers decided to include this question because after the training the two groups underwent, they would be supposed to give not only personal information, but also friends and family's information. The experimental group went first. Their performance in terms of comprehension was good enough, except for a few students who seemed not to understand the question at first (the researchers had to repeat the question twice at least). However when it was time for them to answer, the researchers found that few students only used long forms correctly (my mother/father

is………He/she is………), it was more the students who used short forms (only the profession) and not real professions. They tried to use the profession they remembered (teacher, doctor, policeman).This situation was not positive for the researchers, considering that the students were taught some common and basic professions. For the control group (6-4), this question went worse for they started to have problems since the very same moment of the question formulation. The great majority of students needed to be reasked the question twice or three times, they only said in Spanish "no le entiendo", "Que es eso?". It was very few students who understood the question at once. The situation did not change for the answers either , the few students who finally got the question did not know how to answer it because they did not remember any professions, so they decided whether to remain silent or to say the profession in Spanish. They never used short or long answers. It was a poor performance.

Question number 6 (What's your physical appearance?): this question and question number 7 were, in the researchers' opinion, the most difficult and demanding ones as all the students would have to speak a bit more when describing themselves. As usual the researchers started with the experimental group. Most of the students seemed to

understand the question clearly except for a few students
who needed the question reformulation. It went worse when
the students were expected to give their answers. It was
few students the ones who were capable of giving accurate
and comprehensive answers (I'm tall/ I'm short/I'm fat/I
have short hair, etc).Most of the students did not know
what to say, so they kept silent. Some others tried indeed
to give an answer but in their attempts to do it correctly
they made some grammar mistakes (I am is fat/I am is
blank/I am is eyes black) as well as pronunciation mistakes
("eyes" pronouncing it as it is written /eyes/,"short"
pronouncing it as /chort/, "tall" pronouncing as /tal/
etc).For the control group (6-4), it was much more
difficult to deal with this question. When the researchers
introduced the question none of the students understood the
question, so the researchers had to repeat the question
again and they also had to give them specific examples
(even for other students the researchers had to translate
the question into Spanish). When the students were expected
to give their answers almost all the students kept silent
or they said in Spanish "no se". Few students, the ones
that had been able to at least say something simple
previously, tried hard to produce something but they could

only start the utterance (I'm………)or they kind of mixed

Spanish and English (I am gordo/alto,etc).

Question number seven (What's his/her physical
appearance): This question was similar to the previous one

in terms of difficulty, the only difference was that the

information to be given was somebody else's (he/she). For

the application of this question the researchers used some

flashcards which the students had to describe. The

experimental group's performance was exactly the same as

the previous question. When they were introduced the

question, they all seemed to understand the question

(except for two or three students, already mentioned in

previous questions who did not understand the question and

it was necessary for the researchers to repeat the question

and give an example). For the moment of answering, some

students did it well (they produced correct and complete

utterances and they also gave as may characteristics as

they could). However, most of the students, although they

tried hard, made some grammar mistakes as they showed not

to have a complete mastering of the personal pronouns

"he/she" (they said: you are tall, or when it was a woman

picture they used "he is………" and the opposite with a man

"she is………".another common mistake was "he/she is hair

black" or "he/she is eyes big"). They also continued to

make pronunciation mistakes (for "tall" they said /tal/, for "eyes" they said /eyes/). The control group was next, and similar to the previous question they had a hard or even harder time because almost all the students did not understand the question except for a few ones who really did it. This made the researchers repeat the question twice at least or to use some specific examples to see if they understood. When they were supposed to answer (even the students that understood the question and who had at least answered some of the previous questions) none of them was able to produce any utterance, some students only used the Spanish expression "no se" or they preferred to remain silent.

Next we have figures 4.3 and 4.4 to show the performance of the 6-3 and 6-4 students throughout the post-test. Similar to the pre-test, the researchers considered the same assessment patterns for the results analysis of the post-test, they are as follows:

*comprehension (*the ability the students showed to understand the researchers' questions and respond appropriately*), fluency (*the ability the students showed to easily get their ideas across when producing an utterance quickly and naturally and without many pauses*), grammar (*the ability the students showed to correctly articulate

and connect their ideas*), vocabulary (*the ability the students showed to understand and use vocabulary words and phrases*) and pronunciation (*the ability the students showed to produce correct pronounced and comprehensive utterances in terms of stress, rhythm and intonation patterns*).* Each one of the patterns was given a specific grading criterion summarized as follows*:*

Comprehension: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high quality performance".

Fluency: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high quality performance".

Grammar: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high quality performance".

Vocabulary: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high quality performance".

Pronunciation: from 1 to 1.9 meaning "no knowledge", from 2 to 2.9 meaning "poor performance", from 3 to 3.9 meaning "average performance" and finally from 4 to 5 meaning "high quality performance".
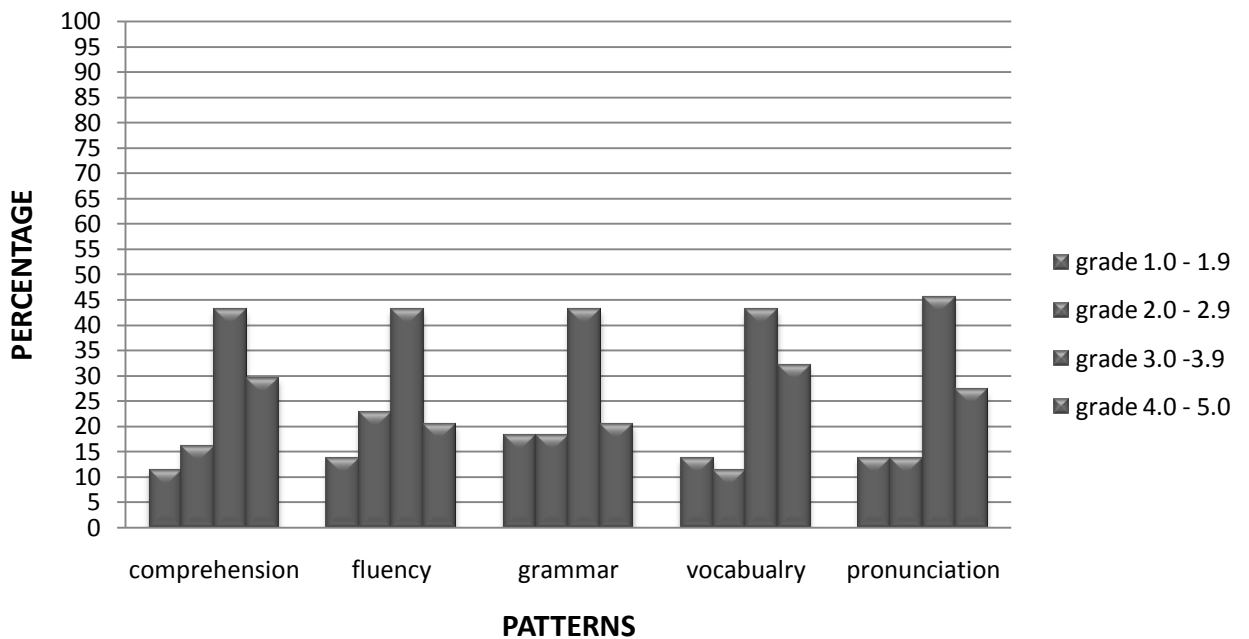
ANALYSIS POS - TEST COURSE 6-3

	grade 1.0 - 1.9	grade 2.0 - 2.9	grade 3.0 -3.9	grade 4.0 - 5.0
comprehension	11,3	16	43	29,5
Fluency	13,6	22,7	43	20,4
Grammar	18,2	18,2	43	20,4
Vocabulary	13,6	11,3	43	32
pronunciation	13,6	13,6	45,4	27,2

ANALYSIS POSTEST 6-3

As the 6-3 course graphic showed, the researchers found for this course that there was not an excellent but meaningful progress in the experimental group's

performance. Thus, the percentages for all the assessment patterns went as follows:

For the comprehension pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 was the 11.3 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 16 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 43 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 29.5 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English comprehension increased considerably (Making a contrast between the 6-3 post-test and 6-4 post-test, it can be observed that for this comprehension pattern the performance percentage for 6-3 grade course was 37.4 % higher than 6-4 grade course (the green line in the graphics)). It is also important to mention that for this comprehension pattern there was not exactly any strategy application. However, taking advantage of one special feature the strategies have (flexibility), strategies like "*structured reviewing*", "*repeating*" and "*using mime or gesture*" which were often used throughout the complete training, might have somehow helped the students in obtaining the already positive mentioned results.

For the fluency pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 was the 13.6 percent of the population,

for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 22.7 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 43 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 20.4 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English fluency increased considerably (Making a contrast between the 6-3 post-test and 6-4 post-test, it can be observed that for this fluency pattern the performance percentage for 6-3 grade course was 40.1 % higher than 6-4 grade course (the green line in the graphics).). For dealing with this fluency pattern during the training, the researchers used the two following strategies "*repeating*" and "*practicing naturalistically*" which were of great help for the students to also obtain positive results at the end of the training.

For the grammar pattern, the percentage obtained for grades 1.0 to 1.9 was the 18.2 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 18.2 percent of the population, for grades 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 43 percent of the population and for grades 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 20.4 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English grammar increased considerably (Making a contrast between the 6-3 post-test and 6-4 post-test, it can be observed that for this grammar pattern the performance percentage for 6-3 grade course was

40.1 % higher than 6-4 grade course (the green line in the graphics)).For this grammar pattern assessment, there was not any specific direct strategy (all the strategies are only to work with the speaking skill). Nevertheless, the researchers did take advantage of the strategies flexibility. Therefore, they used the following strategies "*repeating*", "*formally practicing with sounds and writing systems*" and "*recombinig*". These strategies indirectly helped the students in obtaining better grammar results at the end of the course.

For the vocabulary pattern, the percentage obtained for grades 1.0 to 1.9 was the 13.6 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 11.3 percent of the population, for grades 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 43 percent of the population and for grades 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 32 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English vocabulary increased considerably (Making a contrast between the 6-3 post-test and 6-4 post-test, it can be observed that for this vocabulary pattern the performance percentage for 6-3 grade course was 40.1 % higher than 6-4 grade course .The green line in the graphics).It is important to remember that for this vocabulary pattern the researchers obtained help from three strategies "*recognizing and using formulas*

and patterns", "structured reviewing" , "*placing new words into a context*" and "*using resources for receiving and sending messages* ". These strategies somehow helped the students with most of vocabulary seen along the course and also in obtaining positive results at the end of the course itself.

Finally, for the pronunciation pattern, the percentage obtained for grades 1.0 to 1.9 was the 13.6 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 13.4 percent of the population, for grades 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 45.4 percent of the population and for grades 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 27.2 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-3 course´s English comprehension increased considerably (Making a contrast between the 6-3 post-test and 6-4 post-test, it can be observed that for this comprehension pattern the performance percentage for 6-3 grade course was 39.7 % higher than 6-4 grade course (the green line in the graphics).For this last pattern, the researchers took advantage of strategies like "*repeating*", "*practicing naturalistically*" and "*formally practicing with sounds and writing systems*". These three strategies were very helpful to make the students deal with pronunciation problems more easily along the course as well as obtaining positive results in the post-test application.

ANALYSIS POS - TEST COURSE 6-4

	grade 1.0 - 1.9	grade 2.0 - 2.9	grade 3.0 -3.9	grade 4.0 - 5.0
comprehension	83	11,4	5,6	0
Fluency	91,4	5,7	2,9	0
Grammar	91,4	5,7	2,9	0
Vocabulary	88,6	8,6	2,9	0
pronunciation	91,4	2,86	5,7	0

ANALYSIS POSTEST 6-4
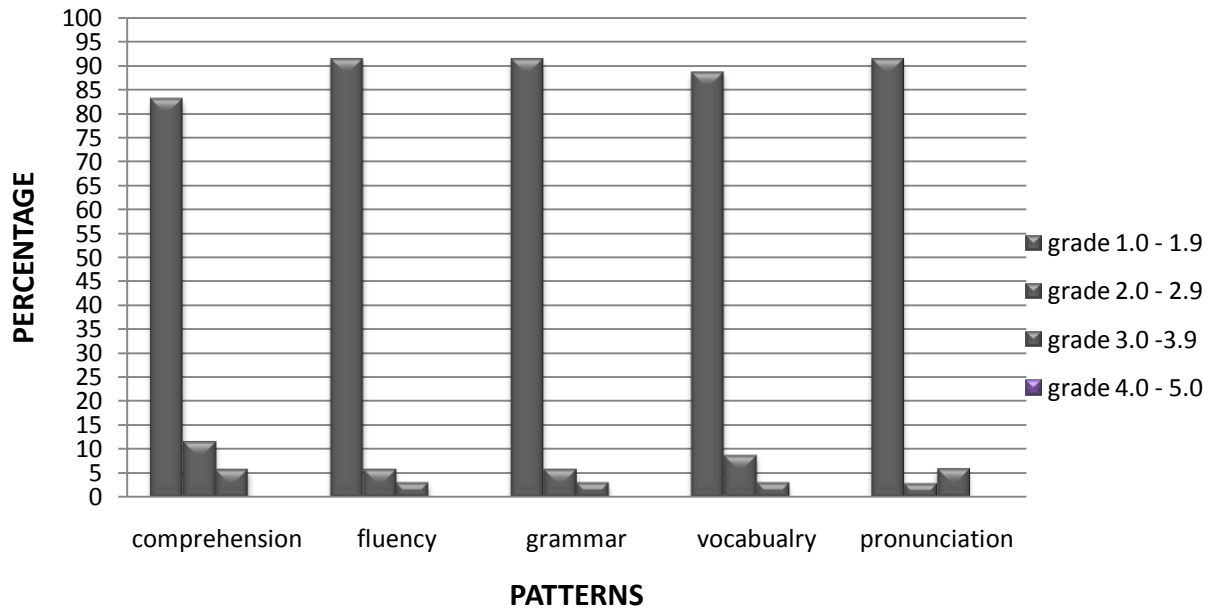
In the posttest application to the course 6-4, the researchers found fewer students than before; According to the official teacher the 9 or 10 missing students had been expelled some weeks ago due to discipline issues as well as low academic results. So the researchers, for the post-test, had to work with 33 students who represented the 100 percent of the population. Thus, the percentages for all

the assessment patterns went as follows: For the

comprehension pattern, the percentage obtained for grade

1.0 to 1.9 it was the 83 percent of the population, for

grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 11.4 percent of the

population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 5.6 percent of

the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0

percent of the population, which showed to the researchers

that the 6-4 course´s English comprehension continued very

similar to the pre-test application.

For the fluency pattern, the percentage obtained for

grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 82 percent of the population,

for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 12 percent of the

population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 6 percent of

the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0

percent of the population, which showed to the researchers

that the 6-4 course´s English fluency was also continues

poor.

For the grammar pattern, the percentage obtained for

grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 82 percent of the population,

for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 18 percent of the

population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 0 percent of

the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0

percent of the population, which showed to the researchers

that the 6-4 course´s English grammar was really poor.

For the vocabulary pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 78.8 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 21.2 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 0 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-4 course´s English vocabulary was really poor too.

For the pronunciation pattern, the percentage obtained for grade 1.0 to 1.9 it was the 73 percent of the population, for grades 2.0 to 2.9 it was the 27 percent of the population, for grade 3.0 to 3.9 it was the 0 percent of the population and for grade 4.0 to 5.0 it was the 0 percent of the population, which showed to the researchers that the 6-4 course´s English comprehension was really poor.

As it can be seen, when comparing the two pos-test graphics (6-3/6-4) the researchers concluded that there was not a significant progress in this course, its English level continues poor in comparison to the 6-3 course. Thus, the experimental group (6-3) was far better at coping with all the speaking assessment patterns. This showed that the strategy choice made by the researchers was accurate and worthwhile. Therefore, this reduced but relevant group of

strategies plus the topic grammatical instruction, given by

the researchers before any strategy application, were all

capable to successfully deal with the post-test questions

and the assessment patterns too.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMENDATIONS

Conclusions

After having successfully finished the application of the nine direct strategies to the speaking skill of the sixth grade students (experimental group) and having also carefully analyzed the outcomes of the pre-test and post-test, the researchers agreed on drawing the following important conclusions:

The nine direct strategy training did have an effect on the speaking skill of the sixth three grade students. This was clearly observed when doing the post-test analysis between the experimental and control group. That is, on the one hand the experimental group (6-3) was, in its majority, capable of dealing with most of the requirements that the post-test demanded from them in terms of questions comprehension, fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. There were of course some students who did not have a good performance (as it is normal in every English classroom) but it was a minor group. On the other hand, the control group (6-4) was totally different for there were very few students (counted students) who were capable of understanding and answering some of the post-test questions. The majority of the students had a difficult time to understand and answer the questions. This

situation had the students obtain very low grades in each one of the assessment patterns.

There were some direct strategies that worked better than the others. Direct strategies like structured reviewing, recognizing and using formulas and patterns, recombining, practicing naturalistically, using resources for receiving and sending messages and using mime or gesture had a better effect on the students' speaking skill than the other three direct strategies placing new words into a context, repeating and formally practicing with sounds and writing systems. A reason for this was perhaps that these three strategies depended basically upon the students as they demanded a lot of interest and attention while in class on the students' part.

In a better environment (a more reduced group and a longer and more constant class) the strategies might probably have had a more meaningful effect. These two factors were always troublesome to deal with during the strategy application for the researchers due to the impossibility to have a continuous and personalized control over every single student as well as the time wasting with the frequent interruptions caused by other people (cleaning personal or the class control person).

Any teacher of English should definitely think of the idea of including the language learning strategies inside the classroom. As it could be observed, after the application of this research project the language learning strategies proved to be useful and reliable as the majority of the students in the experimental group (6-3) had a positive and meaningful change in their speaking skill in terms of comprehension, fluency, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation patterns. Even though there were some negative factors affecting their normal application, as usual.

The L2 use inside the classroom should be the desired objective, but it is not always feasible. During the direct strategies application the researchers tried their best to always make use of the L2 (English), but it was literally impossible as they were working with such a big group (46 students) which made it really difficult for the researchers to make a continuous use of the L2 during the class. So, to have the students controlled, focused and working the researchers had to use the L1 (Spanish) most of time and this situation was not good at all as the researchers considered that the students should be exposed to the English language as much as possible so that they could be benefited not only of the "comprehensible input"

(common or everyday English that the researchers used while in class), but also of the "incomprehensible input" (the researchers' speech which was more complex but that would also allow the students to go a little beyond their possibilities)

Students' intrinsic motivation will always be important when learning another language. This situation; that is, the lack of motivation was very common inside the classroom and the researchers were aware of it when the 6-3 students were asked to do some homework or to make a review of a topic on their own at home. It was very few students the ones that carried out the activities proposed by the researchers. Most of time, the researchers had to be hard at them (sometimes by threatening them with a bad grade or a sudden quiz) to get the best from them. Perhaps things would be different if most of the students thought of learning English as a nice and useful experience which would hopefully give them a chance not only to learn from other cultures, but also to travel to other cities or countries in order to have a better quality life. However, it is a little difficult to make students change their minds if the places where there needs to be and start some of this motivation (homes/schools) provide little or no motivation at all. So the first step for English teachers

should be to somehow try to modify this situation by going from lazy, boring and monotonous classes (basically based on grammatical points) to more interesting, active and different ones where the students' potential, to talk about life in general, is more valued and exploited.

Recommendations

Knowing that there might be some other researchers (students/teachers) interested in whether continuing a similar study regarding learning strategies or putting them into practice inside the language classroom, the researchers considered the following pedagogical recommendations:

Language learning strategies, created by oxford (2.000), were thought of to be applied to the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).This means that there is still a wide field to be dug when talking about learning strategies application. So, future researchers would like to analyze which and how language learning strategies could influence one of these three other important skills.

Language learning strategies could also be included as part of teachers' everyday classes. The application of not only cognitive and memory strategies, but also the other direct and indirect strategies proposed by Oxford (2.000)

are in fact very easy and comprehensive to be used inside and outside the classroom as there is always going to be a specific strategy to deal with any given skill problem that the teacher and the students need to work with in a class. So, it would be an excellent idea for teachers to get acquainted with more information about language learning strategies (not only the ones posted by Oxford (2.000) but also from other authors).

By including the language learning strategies in the classroom teachers might receive lots of benefits. According to Oxford (2.000), some strategies' features would help teachers have a better class. For instance, "learning strategies contribute to the main goal, communicative competence". Something which is nowadays a big weakness in public high schools because the development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among students using meaningful and contextualized language. Therefore, by using the learning strategies the students would become more active participants in such authentic communication. Another important feature is "they can expand the role of teachers". Teachers would gain somehow new teaching capacities like helping other colleagues or even their students identify their own learning strategies or they would also be able to conduct a

training course on learning strategies to hopefully help

their students become more independent learners.

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Appendix

Pre and Post test Format

Student's name: _____*date* _____ *grade*___

Score Assessment Patterns	1.0 – 1.9	2.0 – 2.9	3.0 – 3.9	4.0 – 5.0
Comprehension				
Fluency				
Grammar				
Vocabulary				
Pronunciation				

Comprehension: *ability to understand questions and respond*

appropriately

Fluency: *ability to speak quickly naturally and without*

many pauses.

Grammar: *ability to use correct grammar and sentences*

structures.

Vocabulary: *ability to understand and use vocabulary words*

and phrases.

Pronunciation: *ability to use correct the stress, rhythm*

and intonation patterns.

Taken by New interchange 3rd edition teacher's book.

Classroom common language for the teacher and the students

Good morning/good afternoon/good evening.

Hi, how are you? **I'm fine thanks and you?**

Hello, what's up? **I'm good thank you and you?**

Hi, how's it going? **It's okay thanks**

Hello, how are you doing? **I'm doing well thanks**

Please, open the door

Please, close the door

Please, pay attention

Please, be silent

Look at the board

Teacher, can you repeat it please?

Teacher, I don't understand. Explain again please

Teacher may I go to the bathroom, please?

Teacher, what's the meaning of _____?

Teacher, how do you say _____ in English?

Work in groups/work in pairs

Flashcards