

Speaking Clubs: An Alternative to Strengthen EFL Learners' Oral Production

M.A. Cinthya Olivares Garita

Universidad Nacional Sede Regional Brunca, Costa Rica
cinthya.olivares.garita@una.cr

B.A. Verónica Brenes Sanchez
veronik2905@hotmail.com

Resumen: Ha existido mucha incertidumbre en cuanto a cuales técnicas podrían acelerar la producción oral de los estudiantes de inglés como idioma extranjero. Definitivamente, el esfuerzo de los profesores para lograr este objetivo debería trascender el salón de clases. Algunas veces, aunque los profesores constantemente llenen sus estudiantes con ideas acerca de estrategias para cumplir este difícil objetivo fuera de las aulas, esto se vuelve una labor utópica. Una vez que los estudiantes salen del aula, rara vez algunos de ellos se mantienen en contacto con el idioma. Dependiendo de la variedad de estilos de aprendizaje, algunos estudiantes prefieren mantener contacto con otros compañeros para establecer comunicación y depurar su rendimiento lingüístico de forma oral. Este hecho al igual que los beneficios del uso de la tecnología para aprender un idioma extranjero destaca la importancia de la enseñanza del inglés a través de clubes conversacionales. Aspectos como reunirse en grupos con un mismo propósito, usar recursos audiovisuales para promover la conversación y aprender en un ambiente amistoso han garantizado a los estudiantes de un idioma extranjero un avance en el logro de este objetivo vital. Elementos distintivos de varias metodologías de enseñanza de un idioma tales como el método directo, desugestopedia, aprendizaje cooperativo, instrucción a base de tareas, enseñanza del lenguaje en comunidad y el enfoque comunicativo refuerzan la metodología de los clubes conversacionales diseñada para fortalecer la producción oral de los estudiantes. Esta investigación de acción comprende un análisis de las necesidades de los estudiantes del Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) y de una propuesta para la implementación de clubes conversacionales como una herramienta para enriquecer la producción oral de sus estudiantes.

Palabras claves: producción oral, rendimiento lingüístico, audiovisuales, estilo de aprendizaje, desugestopedia, instrucción a base de tareas

Abstract: There has been much uncertainty as to what techniques could accelerate EFL students' oral production. Definitely, teachers' effort to attain this goal should transcend the classroom. Sometimes, although teachers constantly fill in students with ideas about strategies on how to fulfill this far-reaching objective outside the classrooms' walls, this turns out a utopic task. Once students leave the classroom, rarely do some of them keep in contact with the language. Depending on the variety of learning styles, some students do prefer to maintain contact with other partners to establish communication and polish their oral linguistic performance. This fact along with the benefits of the use of technology to learn a foreign language draws

the importance of teaching English through speaking clubs. Gathering in groups aiming at the same goal, using audiovisuals to prompt conversation and learning in a non-threatening atmosphere have guaranteed EFL students an advance in their achievement of a better linguistic performance. Distinctive elements of several language teaching methods and methodologies such as the Direct Method, Desuggestopedia, Cooperative Learning, Task-based Instruction (TBI), Community Language Teaching and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) underpin the speaking clubs methodology designed to strengthen learners' oral production. This action research entails an analysis of the needs of CI-UNA (Centro de Idiomas, Universidad Nacional) students in order to propose the implementation of speaking clubs as a tool to enhance students' oral production.

Key words: oral production, linguistic performance, audiovisuals, learning styles, desuggestopedia, task-based instruction

I Introduction

The English language has reached great impetus and status in this new area of communication and information. Thousands of people struggle to learn it as a second or foreign language day by day. Approximately, around 375 million people speak it as a second language. It is estimated that over 1 billion people are currently learning English worldwide. The use of English, other than that of a native language, ranges from trading, doing ordinary life transactions to doing occasional business or having pleasures. Different countries have incorporated English to their educational curriculum. Costa Rica has not been the exception, and its educational institutions, public and private, have started programs and majors to prepare citizens in this area.

In this globalized era, the use of English has dramatically grown. Fortunately, the southern region of Costa Rica is a very representative example of the evolution of the demand for the English language, mainly in the tourism field. Citizens in this area have distinct characteristics as to what studies to initiate due to this demand. Business administration, English and tourism majors seem to be on the lead. Due to these citizens' specific needs Universidad Nacional has started language programs and projects to facilitate the learning of foreign languages, mainly English at a shorter time. Since the year 2010, approximately around August, the language program Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) opened its doors to Brunca Region citizens in order to enable them to learn a foreign language. In the course of 2011, after conducting some research about CI-UNA program, the implementation of more extra hours of continuous English practice was acknowledged as a top priority to maximize the efficiency of the courses. During the year 2012, specifically in the second bimester, the analysis of the data collected brought to light a new alternative in order to respond to this need. The following is a study of these students' needs along with a new proposal to enhance students' aural and oral abilities: the speaking clubs.

1.2 General Objective

To enhance CI-UNA students' oral performance through the implementation of speaking clubs

1.3 Specific Objective

1. To devise a new alternative for CI-UNA students to improve their oral and aural performance
2. To suggest a suitable methodology for CI-UNA students to be exposed to more quality time of interaction practice
3. To recommend materials for the improvement of students' oral performance

II Literature Review

2.1 The Behaviorist and Mentalist Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Second language learning and teaching have been subject of investigation for more than fifty decades, and researchers and teachers still continue contributing through theories, models, and approaches. In the 1950s and 1960s the behaviourists claimed that in order to internalize a language system no more than “a stimulus-response connection” was needed. For them, “learning took place when learners had the opportunity to practice making the correct response to a given stimulus” (Ellis, 2012, p. 31). Nevertheless, in the 1960s the counterpart of the Behaviorist theory (the Mentalist) came to argue that “the human mind is equipped with a faculty [The Language Acquisition Device] for learning language” (p. 32). Therefore, all human beings are capable of learning a linguistic system only by means of receiving the appropriate input. On behalf of these two theories, different second language hypotheses have evolved providing participants of the learning process with significant information that enlightens the procedures employed for second language learning and teaching.

2.2 The Acquisition/learning Hypothesis

Krashen's *Acquisition/learning Hypothesis* has provided a clear view between these two routes of language development. For this researcher, there are two forms in which people can learn a language. The former is an subconscious process in which students are not aware of the fact that they are acquiring a language, being the procedure natural and similar to the one undergone when acquiring the mother tongue. The latter of these two refers to a conscious method in which learners are mindful of the process they are going through, knowing about the rules of the linguistic system (Krashen, 1986, p. 10). Subsequently, to acquire a language, a natural environment is needed. Otherwise, the only form in which a person can acquire the linguistic system is by being immersed in the target language. In this way, learners will be exposed to the comprehensible input ($i + 1$) needed to construct their knowledge. As Krashen explained, learners acquire a language only when structures which are “a little beyond” student's knowledge are deployed. Once the input is understood, the output (productive skills) will start to emerge (Krashen, 1986, pp. 21-22). Nonetheless, providing that Spanish is the native tongue in Costa Rica, EFL (English as Foreign Language) classrooms are the most common means of learning the language. In other words, most learners, especially teenagers and adults who attend English classes, are aware of the process they are facing. For this reason, a meaningful learning environment embodies the successful internalization of the linguistic system.

2.3 Meaningful Learning

In EFL classrooms, meaningful learning is the key to internalize the language items and rules. According to Ausubel's *Subsumption Theory*, "learning takes place in the human organism through a meaningful process of relating new events or items to already existing cognitive concepts or propositions" (as cited in Brown, 2007, p. 91). To exemplify this theory, Ausubel added that "if we think of cognitive structure as a system of building blocks, then... meaningful learning is the process whereby blocks become an integral part of already established categories or systematic clusters of blocks" (p. 92). Therefore, if the learning process is meaningful, the target language items and structures will go to the long term memory rather than to the working memory (short term memory). In the long term memory, knowledge will be held permanently facilitating the information to be recalled at any moment. On the other hand, if the activities developed in the classroom are not meaningful to students, the information will be stored for a short period of time (Carroll, 2008, pp. 47-50). Consequently, making the learning process a meaningful experience as well as providing a collaborative learning environment may assure students the internalization of the language.

2.4 The Learning Environment in EFL Classrooms

In addition to meaningful learning conditions, the environment in which students attend classes plays a significant role in the route of foreign language learning. When analyzing human behavior, including the learning process, Rogers (1951) found a new concept "away from teaching and towards learning" called "transformative pedagogy" in which the "goal of education is the facilitation of change and learning" (Brown, 2007, p. 97). Rogers' *Humanistic Psychology* claims that "teachers must provide the nurturing context for learners to construct their meanings in interaction with others" (as cited in Brown, p. 98). Freire (1970) also agreed on these facts and added that "students should be allowed to negotiate learning outcomes, to cooperate with teachers or another learners in a process of discovery, to engage in critical thinking, and to relate everything they do in school to their reality outside the classroom" (as cited in Brown, p. 98). Hence, not only do these cases scenarios describe an environment which may provide students with the opportunities to achieve competence in the target language, but also they go hand in hand with some principles of teaching methods and approaches employed in the classroom.

2.5 Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching

Different approaches for language teaching have been developed for the purpose of accomplishing the English language teaching objectives. The *CLT (Communicative Language Teaching)*, for example states how "whenever possible, 'authentic language' — language that is used in a real context— should be introduced" (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 17). According to this approach, teachers' responsibility is to establish situations to promote interactive communication which encourages cooperative relationships among learners and gives them the opportunities to negotiate meaning (p. 127). In addition, the *CLL (Community Language Learning)* explains that "language is for communication" and that "building a relationship with and among students is very important" (pp. 94-95). *The Direct Method* also provides some principles of language teaching. First, no translation is

allowed in the class. Therefore, “the meaning is to be conveyed *directly* in the target language through the use of demonstration and visual aids [like videos and songs]...” (Diller, as cited in Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 23). Finally, in this method, the class is based on situations or topics so that students can employ the language in real-life like situations. Consequently, the *CLT*, *CLL*, and *The Direct Method* are three contributions to language teaching.

The Desuggestopedia Method has also contributed to the process of teaching a foreign language. This method has been developed so that “learning is facilitated in a cheerful environment” (p. 79), ‘desuggesting’ the barriers in the learning process by means of songs and games in the classroom. In the *Task-based Instruction*, learners are provided with “a natural context for language use. As learners work to complete a task, they have the abundant opportunity to interact, [and] such interaction is thought to facilitate language acquisitions as learners have to understand each other to express their own meaning” (p. 144). Lastly, *The Cooperative Learning* involves working hand in hand with students, teaching them social skills so that they can work together more effectively, and asking students to work in groups for them to learn from each other (p. 164). As a result, *Desuggestopedia*, the *Task-based* and the *Cooperative Learning* approaches foster not only students’ learning but also teachers’ instruction to merge them and create a unified relation between both parties for the purpose of achieving communicative competence in the target language.

2.6 Communicative Competence and Performance

If the learning environment and the approaches for education are appropriate, students will gain accuracy in their performance becoming competent in the language. To go further in these concepts, Savignon (1997) established the difference between competence and performance defining the first as “a presumed underlying ability... what one knows” while the second would be “the overt manifestation of that ability... what one does” (as cited in Omaggio, 2005, p. 4). Therefore, when students are going through the learning process, their main goal is not only to attain competence but also to be accurate while performing. Accuracy refers to the [degree of] acceptability, quality and precision in the message conveyed (Swender, as cited in Omaggio, 2005, p. 15). For students to be accurate, they must be fluent in the target language, master the grammatical items and structures, pronounce in the appropriate form, possess the vocabulary, create cohesive and coherent ideas (pragmatic competence), and finally, hold the ability to be understood (sociolinguistic competence) (p. 15). Subsequently, second language learning is aimed not only at gaining the knowledge about the language but also at being able to use it appropriately, and during the process itself certain factors such as students’ multiple intelligences must be taken into consideration.

2.7 Multiple Intelligences

In order to help students achieve competence and proficiency in the target language, teachers must provide equal learning opportunities in the classroom. Howard Gardner’s *Multiple Intelligences Theory* presents a new form of seeing students’ route to language development. According to Gardner (2011), “all [people] possess... seven or eight

intelligences... [and] no two people—not even identical twins—possess exactly the same profile of intelligences” (p. VX). Since students possess different intelligences, each student learns differently from the others making each learning process unique. For this reason, classroom work must be set in a way that students’ profiles of intelligences are taken into consideration. Activities developed during the class must embrace students’ intelligences and learning styles. Therefore, videos and pictures may be implemented for those visual students, songs may be useful for those pupils with a musical intelligence, problem solving may encourage logical mathematical learners, games may be appropriate for those kinesthetic students, readings and oral exercises may motivate learners with an orientation towards the linguistic intelligence, and group work may be established for those an interpersonal intelligence, while intrapersonal learners must be allowed to work alone. As a result, considering the multiple intelligences may contribute to making the learning process more meaningful and accelerating the development of the linguistic skills, especially speaking which is students' main objective in FLL (Foreign Language Learning).

2.8 Strengthening Oral Skills

Speaking in the foreign language is the main goal for students learning English or any other foreign language. As Lazaraton (2002) stated, “the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing the language since speech is the most basic means of human communication” (p. 103). Nevertheless, becoming accurate in the speaking skill requires practice and time. Bailey and Savage (as cited in Lazaraton, 2002) added that, “speaking a foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills” (p. 103). For this reason, the more contact hours students have with the linguistic system, the more fluent and accurate they are going to become. Based on a survey research, Ferris and Tagg (as cited in Lazaraton, 2002) suggested that “what academic ESL students need most is extensive authentic ESL practice in class participation, such as taking part in discussions, interacting with peers and professors, and asking and answering questions” (p. 105). Accordingly, activities for oral communication such as role plays, speeches, song/video discussions, board games, and conversations may be developed in the classroom for the purpose of strengthening this linguistic skill. In addition, culture may be incorporated in the classroom so that further discussion about different topics is developed by the participants.

2.9 Incorporating Culture in the Classroom

Culture is a key element in second language teaching. According to Peterson and Coltrane (2003), “language is not only part of how we define culture, it also reflects culture” (para. 1). Therefore, it is almost impossible to study a language without taking into consideration the target language culture since “the forms and uses of a given language reflect the cultural values of the society in which the language is spoken” (para. 5). In addition to Peterson and Coltrane’s words, some approaches of foreign language learning/teaching also agree on this fact. The Direct Method for example, establishes that “learning another language also involves learning how speakers of that language live” (Larsen-Freeman, 2000, p. 28). Consequently, some instructional strategies for teaching culture must be implemented in the classroom. Authentic materials constitute a fundamental source of both language and culture. Moreover, working with proverbs or idioms in the classroom may present an

overview of some of the main beliefs and values shared in the target culture. Another strategy to be developed in class is role playing inasmuch as students may act out cultural differences between the mother and the foreign culture. Lastly, teachers may invite native speakers of the foreign language to come to the classes so that students are provided with direct contact with the language and the culture (Peterson & Coltrane, para. 11-18). Therefore, culture is central in FL classrooms, and it contributes to learners' understanding of the foreign language.

III Data Analysis

3.1 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify CI-UNA students' needs in order to suggest an alternative strategy as well as a methodology and materials to enhance their oral and aural skills.

3.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the skills from CI-UNA courses that need reinforcement?
2. What are appropriate activities to enhance CI-UNA students' oral performance?
3. What is a suitable methodology to provide CI-UNA students with more quality time of interaction practice?

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.3.1 *The Participants*

Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) has approximately two hundred students. This language program was designed to teach eleven different levels. Students may begin in CI-UNA Starter and move to CI-UNA 1, 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 until reaching CI-UNA 10. Currently, there are only eight distinct levels (until CI-UNA 7). For the development of this study, a group of 30 students was randomly selected from the eight levels that are opened at the present time. The following chart evinces the distribution of the students selected:

Table 3.3.1 Students Selected to Gather Key Data

Level	CI-UNA Starter	CI-UNA 1	CI-UNA 2	CI-UNA 3	CI-UNA 4	CI-UNA 5	CI-UNA 6	CI-UNA 7
Number of students	5	3	3	3	3	4	4	5

Note: The number of students selected per course was congruent with the total number of students enrolled.

Furthermore, five teachers from this language program were selected to fill in one questionnaire. These five informants have been part of CI-UNA body of teachers for, at least, one year. They have ample experience working with these students, which gives them the opportunity to identify weaknesses and strengths of the language program.

3.3.2 *The Instruments*

Two different questionnaires were designed to collect reliable data. The first questionnaire was directed to current CI-UNA students, specifically thirty. This instrument consisted of

three different sections. The first one aimed to record personal information, the second one to gather insights about the methodology of CI-UNA courses in order to detect weaknesses and strengths in a multiple-choice item, and the third one was designed to compile students' impressions in an open-ended item. The second instrument was the teachers' questionnaire. It was intended to amass their insights about CI-UNA language program and its students' needs.

3.3.3 Analysis and Results

An in-depth analysis of students and teachers' answers was carried out to fulfill the goals of this study. The following graphs and chart reveal the main aspects that will lead the researchers to devise a proposal in order to enhance students' aural and oral abilities.

3.3.3.1 Skills that Require Reinforcement from the Students' Viewpoints

Figure 3.3.3.1 Skills that Require Enhancement

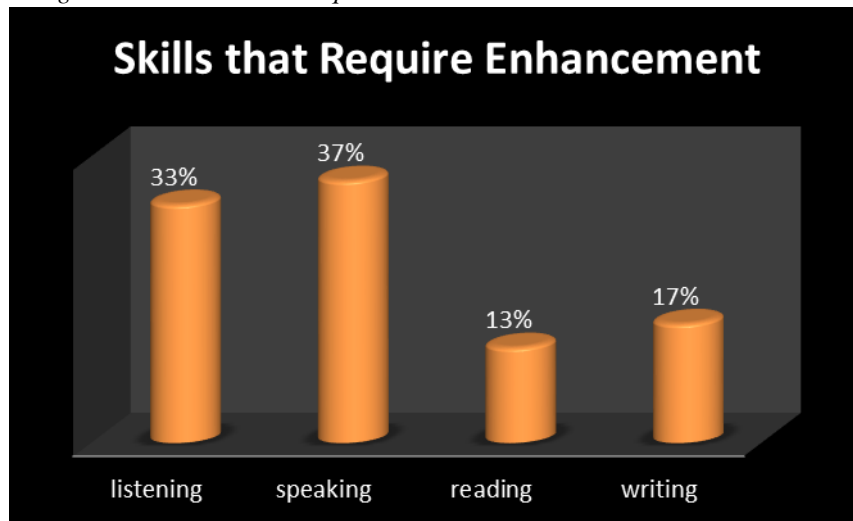


Figure 3.3.3.1 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N1 Students' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

The analysis of the graph above shows the distribution of the percentages according to CI-UNA students' insights about the skills they need to reinforce more. Speaking leads the list resulting in 37% followed by listening 33%. Writing and reading are the skills that they consider need less reinforcement; each one scored 17% and 13% respectively. Both oral and aural skills seem to be the skills students acknowledge as the most important, or the ones they feel they must emphasize more on.

Even though CI-UNA regular courses are highly conversational, students believe that they need more time than the one allocated in weekdays or weekend sessions to spend time in order to interact and strengthen listening and speaking. Writing and reading time devoted in the regular courses seem to suffice students' expectations. This result may be caused by the goals students have set since the beginning. Their immediate needs are dictated by the market place which has imposed demands on customer service, business

management and tourism. They need to command an acceptable level of English to apply for any of these types of job positions.

3.3.3.2 Skills that Require Reinforcement from the Teachers' Points of View

Figure 3.4.3.2 Skills that Require Enhancement

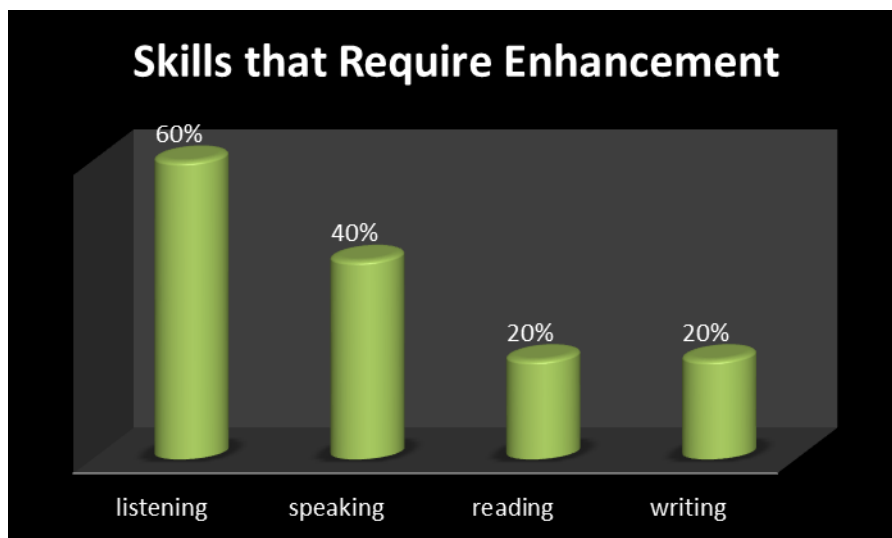


Figure 3.3.3.2 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire NI Teachers' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

This figure gives evidence of the distribution of percentages of the linguistic skills that teachers believe need more reinforcement. Listening and speaking are still on top 60% and 40% respectively, followed by reading and writing with the same percentage each, 20%.

The graph throws light upon the difference in determining which skills need more reinforcement from the teachers' and students' perspectives. According to the information displayed in the previous graph students consider that speaking needs a higher emphasis; however, teachers do assume that, based on the performance during classwork and the results of ordinary evaluations, students need to strengthen the listening skill more. Although there is a slight gap in importance between the listening and speaking skills, teachers still consider that both listening and speaking must receive a stronger focus, and that students must attend this by making a greater effort inside and outside the class.

3.3.3.3 Activities to Enhance Students' Oral Production

Table 3.3.3.3 Activities to Enhance Students' Oral Production

Activities	Use		Percent of cases
	N	Percent	
Role-plays	5	16%	48%
Direct questions	2	7%	21%
Comments about video clips and songs	6	20%	60%
Picture description	2	7%	21%
Group discussion	7	24%	72%
Games	5	16%	48%
Board games	3	10%	30%
Total	30	100%	300%

The previous table illustrates the activities students acknowledge as the ones they must perform to enhance their oral production to a higher level. Group discussion and commentaries about video clips and songs are the ones that amounted the greatest percentage, 24% and 20% respectively. Then, role plays and games that were given 16% each occupy the third and fourth place correspondingly. Board games amounted 10% and direction questions and picture description were given 7% each. It is worth mentioning that the successfulness of a class boils down to whether students feel comfortable performing the activities designed for them. This list in order of preference suggests teachers the ideal activities to include in an alternative methodology and still guarantee its effectiveness.

3.3.3.4 A Methodology to Boost Oral Production Effectively

Figure 3.4.3.4 A Methodology to Boost Effective Oral Production

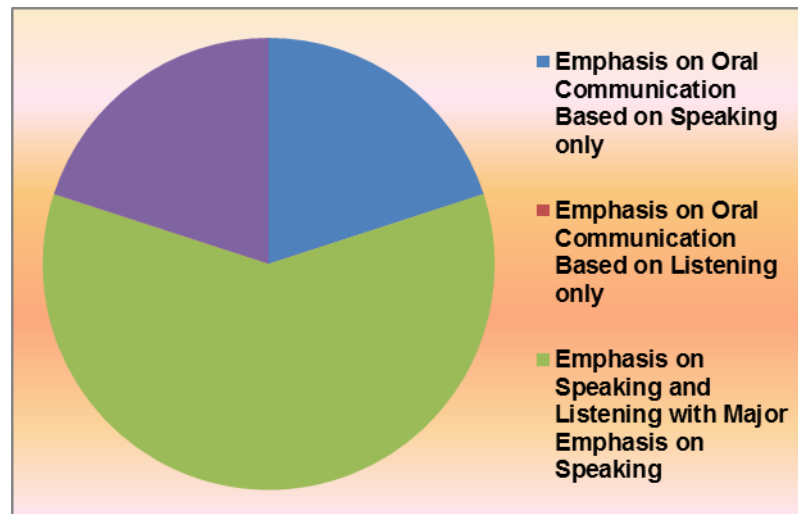


Figure 3.3.3.4 This figure shows data collected through a multiple-response question from the instrument *Questionnaire N1 Teachers' Impressions* administered in July-August 2012.

In the graphs that pointed out the skills teachers and students believe that an alternative methodology must emphasize on, speaking and listening were the ones given more prominence. The pie graph above shows the emphases on listening and speaking for an alternative methodology. The emphasis on speaking and listening with a major load in speaking received 60%. The emphasis on oral communication based on speaking only and the emphasis on speaking and listening with a major emphasis on listening received equal percentages 20%. The choice that received zero percentage was that of the emphasis on oral communication based on listening only.

Definitely teachers did agree on the fact that listening and speaking must be the backbone of an alternative to enhance the students' linguistic level. Nevertheless, teachers conceive speaking as the most powerful skill over the other ones, followed by listening. Both skills together constitute the two drivers that ensure the effectiveness of students' oral performance.

3.4 The Proposal

The analysis of the data previously examined brought to light the need to devise an alternative to help CI-UNA students strengthen their oral production. The information was painstakingly scrutinized and suggested three different contributions. The first contribution deals with the implementation of three different speaking clubs, the second one the methodology to incorporate to these conversational clubs and the last one relates to suitable materials to favor the enhancement of oral and aural skills.

3.4.1 First Contribution: Speaking Clubs

CI-UNA language program, specifically of English, is taught in four different modules along two years. The analysis of the information gathered contributed to the design of three different speaking clubs. From CI-UNA Starter until CI-UNA X all courses have been grouped into three speaking clubs. In order for all students to have equal opportunities to attend, these three speaking clubs will be imparted once a week. Students must attend the one designed for their level. The following chart illustrates the division suggested for CI-UNA students:

Table 3.4.1 Recommended Division of CI-UNA Students to Attend Speaking Clubs

Club	Elementary Speaking Club	Intermediate Speaking Club	Upper-intermediate Speaking Club
CI-UNA regular courses included	CI-UNA Starter	CI-UNA III	CI-UNA VII
	CI-UNA I	CI-UNA IV	CI-UNA VIII
	CI-UNA II	CI-UNA V	CI-UNA IX
		CI-UNA VI	CI-UNA X
Time	6 months	8 months	8 months

Note: The first row on top delineates the name of each speaking club. The columns specify each CI-UNA level that the speaking clubs are intended to.

Every speaking club is planned to be taught paralleled to the other regular CI-UNA courses. The shortest speaking club is the Elementary one that groups students from CI-UNA starter, I and II in a period of six months. The other two speaking clubs are longer and last eight months each. Based on each of CI-UNA course programs, the topics for each speaking club were painstakingly selected to favor students’ linguistic growth, and still keep congruency with what students’ were studying at the moment. The next chart evidences the topics selected for each speaking club.

Table 3.4.1.2 Topics Selected for Each Speaking Club

SP Topic per week session	Elementary Speaking Club	Intermediate Speaking Club	Upper- intermediate Speaking Club
1	Celebrities and Fame	Dating	Television Influence
2	Family ties	Media and entertainment	Friendship
3	Feelings	Going green	Teenage World
4	Being on a diet	Appearances	Crime
5	Your health	Addictions	Job Market
6	Vacationing	Body Image	The American Dream
7	Fashion	The News	Medicine miracles
8	Homelessness	Happiness	Natural Devastation
9	Music	Advertising	Money
10	Sports	Smoking	Technology Craze
11	Holidays	Cyber dating	Fitness and wellness
12	Seasons	Pet Peeves	Alcoholism
13		Bullying	Shopaholism
14		Weddings	Superstitions
15		Lies, dishonesty, cheating	Robberies
16		Traffic Accidents	Child Abuse/Child Labor

Note: SP stands for speaking club. The first column on the left denotes the number of the session in which the topics will be developed.

3.4.3 Second Contribution: Methodology

The methodology undertaken in these proposed speaking clubs is rooted in an eclectic approach. Various methods and approaches give origin to the methodology designed for the speaking club sessions. Methods such as the Audiolingual, Desuggestopedia, Community Language Teaching, Direct Method, Total Physical Response, Task-based Instruction and Communicative Language Teaching offer a set of principles that add the sessions purpose and effectiveness.

Every session is organized into four different stages pre-listening, while listening, after listening and consolidation of the day. This organization is highlighted by an alternative model stemmed from the Task-based methodology. Each session is oriented towards the attainment of oral proficiency; thus, the dynamics of the stages guarantees skill-getting and skill-using tasks, mostly determined by a heavy focus on speaking through

listening with pre, while and post stages. In the pre-listening stage, students' ears are finely-tuned to comprehend further input. They are exposed to as much vocabulary as possible during this stage. Students are also given opportunities to activate their schemata by providing ideas and impressions on the topics. In the while-listening stage topic-specific audios are selected to address students' listening comprehension level and a bit beyond. In this way, the Input Hypothesis is deployed ($i+1$). In the after-listening stage students are free to actively interact individually or with one another by undertaking highly communicative activities as talk shows, debates, information gap, interviews, role-plays, simulations, board games and the like. In the consolidation of the day stage the lesson is brought to an end by facilitating more opportunities to produce more. Learning has been scaffolded to help learners reach this point. In one week the topic is first introduced and in the next week an expansion unit is taught. In this lesson students explore the topic once more to consolidate it.

From the three different types of evaluation (summative, diagnostic and formative) the latter corresponds to the one used during the development of these speaking clubs. Formative evaluation heightens students' motivation, boosts participation and positive reactions. There is no fear to fail while participating. Students take risks more freely. They are not apprehensive and reserved since the atmosphere invites them to interact.

3.4.4 Third Contribution: The Materials

The materials suggested for the development of these speaking clubs are either a set of samples compiled from useful websites or creations and adaptations by one of the developers of CI-UNA language program. These materials are sequenced according to the topics and the different stages pre/while/after stages. Three different booklets were designed for the three different clubs. They contain material adapted, created and compiled and are used only by the instructors of the conversational clubs. The appendix shows one sample designed for the unit eighteen of the Intermediate Speaking Club Booklet.

IV Conclusions

After conducting this research study, various conclusions were drawn. First, oral production, in any particular EFL course, regardless of the focus of it, must be enhanced and boosted in the classroom. Second, alternative and supporting ideas like the ones provided here must be considered to strengthen oral and aural performance in any conversational course. Third, listening and speaking are the skills students and teachers strongly believe must receive high prominence. The command of these two skills will later help students find more profitable jobs related to customer service, business management and tourism. Fourth, speaking clubs promote the integration of the skills and even the sub skills in the session activities. Fifth, this alternative generates a sense of community since students, without pressure of failing, construct their knowledge and interaction in small groups every week. Sixth, students benefit more from a non-threatening environment where the main focus is to practice the language without fear. Seventh, a fluency-to-accuracy approach is better tackled from the development of activities such as group discussions, commentaries about video clips and songs and role plays.

V References

- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of language learning and teaching*. (5th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents.
- Brown, J.D. (1994). *Elements of language curriculum*. Boston: Heile & Heile.
- Carrol, W. D. (2008). *Psychology of language*. (5th ed.) California: Thompson Higher Education.
- Cristal, D. (1995). *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* Cambridge University Press.
- Curtain, H. (1994). *Making the match: foreign language instruction for an early start*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *Second language acquisition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2012). *Understanding second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gardner, H. (2011). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.
- Krashen, S. (1986). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Prentice Hall International.
- Larsen-freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lazaraton, A. (2002). *Teaching oral skills. Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- Nunan, D. in Celce-Murcia, Marianne. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Heile & Heile.
- Omaggio, A. (2000). *Teaching language in context*. (3rd ed.). Boston: Heile & Heile.
- Peterson, E., & Coltrane, B. (2003). *Culture in second language teaching* (Report No. EDO-FL-03-09). Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from ERIC database.
- Richards, C. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. The United States: Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. (2005). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Savignon, S. (1997). *The communicative language teaching for the twenty-first century*.
- Susan, G. & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition*. (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

1st Author's biography

Cinthya Olivares Garita holds a Licentiate's degree in Applied Linguistics in English and a Master's degree in Second Languages and Culture from Universidad Nacional. She is currently working at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension in the English teaching major and the Associate's program in English. She has worked for thirteen years teaching students of all levels: primary, secondary and university. She has also worked for private and public institutions, participated in national and international conferences for teachers and been a trainer of several courses for in-service MEP teachers. She is currently one of the developers of CI-UNA (Centro de Idiomas Universidad Nacional) language program at SRB.

2nd Author's biography

In 2008, Verónica Brenes Sánchez enrolled in the English Teaching Major at Universidad Nacional with high expectations of becoming an outstanding English teacher. During her major, she joined the Students' Association (ASEUNA) representing students from Brunca Extension in the University Board of Directors. She also participated in the project called "Team UNA Amistad" which consists of free English tutorials for high school students. She graduated on May 2012 and got a bachelor's degree, and in July of 2012 she started taking a Licentiate's degree on Applied Linguistics at this same university. Now, she is working as an English instructor for Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED) in a special program for senior citizens. Besides this, she works at Centro de Idiomas at Universidad Nacional (CI-UNA) and teaches learners through CI-UNA speaking clubs.

Appendices

Unit 14 Superstitions

Contents: Opinions, disbelief, amazement

1. Pre-listening:

Activity 1 Power Point Presentation

- A. Project the power point presentation about the origin of some superstitions.
- B. Encourage the students to talk about it and exchange their ideas and impressions about it.

Activity 2 Matching Pairs

- A. Distribute the cards among the students.
- B. Ask them to read the card.
- C. Explain to them that that is one part of one superstition.
- D. Ask them to walk around and look for the partner whose card is the half of the one they hold.
- E. Once students match one part of the superstition to the other, ask them to either agree or disagree with it.
- F. When they are done, ask them to approach the teacher to give them more strips of paper with the half of one superstition. They must start the process once again.
- G. This activity was adapted from http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=27689

2. While-listening:

- A. Play the video clip of the song “Superstion” at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhw_zbvxb4
- B. Have the students report the examples of superstions they saw in the video.
- C. Play the song again and have the students do the exercises
- D. This activity was taken from http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=34196

3. After listening:

Activity 1 New Year’s Superstions

- A. Distribute the cards about New Year’s Resolutions around the world among students.
- B. Ask them to sit in pairs.
- C. The students in the pair talk about the superstions they were assigned.
- D. Once they are done, ask them to pass on the superstions and get more.
- E. This activity was adapted from <http://busyteacher.org/9806-weird-new-year-traditions.htm>

Activity 2 Role Playing

- A. Divide the students in groups.
- B. Assign them one of the role cards to each member.
- C. Have them to take turns to perform the situations.
- D. This activity was adapted from <http://busyteacher.org/2746-silly-superstitions.html>

4. Consolidation of the day: Let’s Talk about Superstions Cards

- A. Stick the little cards on the board and a newsprint sheet on the opposite wall to the board.
- B. Have the students line up in groups facing the board.
- C. Provide them with a marker.
- D. Ask them to run to the board and grab one card to the sign given.
- E. Have students discuss the answer to the question written on the card picked with the group and run to write the answer on a newsprint sheet given by the teacher as fast as they can.
- F. The group with the most correct answers wins.
- G. This activity was adapted from http://en.islcollective.com/worksheets/worksheet_page?id=4137



Superstition

By Stevie Wonder

<i>thirteen</i>	<i>broke</i>	<i>devil</i>	<i>strong</i>	<i>bad</i>
<i>ladder</i>	<i>save</i>	<i>superstitious</i>	<i>believe</i>	<i>wash</i>

Very, writing's on the wall
 Very superstitious, about to fall
 month old baby, the lookin' glass
 Seven years of luck, the good things in your
 past

When you in things that you don't understand
 Then you suffer
 Superstition ain't the way (chorus)

Very, your face and
 hands
 Rid me of the problem, do all that you can
 Keep me in a daydream, keep me goin'
 You don't wanna save me, sad is my song



Chorus + yeh, yeh
 Very, nothin' more to say
 Very, the
 's on his way
 month old baby,
 the lookin' glass
 Seven years of luck, good things
 in your past
 Chorus + no, no, no



If you meet a black cat	you will have good luck
If you touch wood	you will have good luck
If you walk under a ladder	you will have bad luck
If you spill salt on the table	you must throw it over your shoulder or you will have bad luck
If thirteen people sit to eat at a table	one will die
If you break a mirror	you will have seven years bad luck
If you catch a falling leaf in autumn/fall	you will have good luck the next year
If you put shoes on the table	you will have bad luck
If you kill a spider	you will have bad luck
If you cross your fingers	you will have good luck



The single women of **Ireland** wait desperately for the New Year's night because it is the night that can bring them the love of their life. They place **mistletoe leaves** under their pillow hoping to catch their future husband. It is also believed in Irish culture that it helps them get rid of bad luck.



A strange and weird New Year tradition in **Denmark** is **breaking the dishes** at neighbor's door. Strangely this makes them happy instead of annoying them. The family with the hugest tower of broken plates, glasses, cups and other crockery is considered to be the luckiest one because it means that they have lots of loyal friends.

<p>You believe that if you shake hands with three people in a row without <i>them</i> saying anything, it's extremely lucky. You spend large parts of your day trying to achieve this, but it's very difficult because people always want to talk to you.</p>	<p>You believe that it's good luck if the door of the room you are in is open by a few centimeters because then any bad luck is not trapped in the room with you. If someone closes it, you always open it again so that the bad luck can escape.</p>
<p>You believe that it's extremely lucky to tap people on the shoulder three times, so you always try to do this wherever you go. Not only will this bring you good luck, but you believe that it will make you rich too.</p>	<p>You believe that it's extremely unlucky to wear shoes or sandals of any kind. Moreover, you believe that the people wearing shoes and sandals around you will give you bad luck, so you always try to convince them to remove their footwear. If they won't then you try to do it for them.</p>
<p>You believe that winking your right eye when you are talking to someone is very lucky, so you always wink when you meet people.</p>	<p>You believe that if you step on any cracks or lines in the floor, you will have some very bad luck, so you are always very careful not to step on these wherever you go. People always complain that you stare at the floor when they talk to you.</p>
<p>You are very superstitious and believe that tapping seven times on different surfaces (walls, windows, desks, etc) will bring you lots of good luck.</p>	<p>You strongly believe that if you see someone wearing glasses, you must try them on because this allows you to understand the person better. You will use any excuse to have a look though someone else's glasses although occasionally you have to force the person to let you do this</p>
<p>You believe that it's very unlucky to say words that are of more than <u>three</u> syllables. If you accidentally do this, you must to the YMCA actions to counteract the bad luck.</p>	<p>You believe that it's very unlucky to be touched by another person. Whenever this happens, you must shout "GIB GOB GIB" as loudly as possible to scare away the bad luck.</p>



Let's talk about **SUPERSTITION**



Superstition: a belief not based on reason or fact, but on old ideas about luck and magic

Are you superstitious?
If so, give examples.
If not, explain why.

Who's the most superstitious person you know?
Talk about him or her.

Have you ever visited a fortune teller?
What did he or she predict?

What's your star sign?
How many signs of the zodiac do you know?

Do you read the horoscope?
Do you believe in it?
Has it ever come true?

Which sign of the Chinese zodiac were you born under?
How many do you know?

Do you believe in astrology?
What are lucky or unlucky numbers?

Have you ever eaten in a Chinese restaurant?
Did you get a fortune cookie?

Do you believe in ghosts?
Have you ever seen one?
Talk about it.

What's the strangest thing that has ever happened to you?

Has a dream ever come true?
Can dreams predict the future? Talk about it.

What's a lucky charm?
Give examples.
Do you have one?

What are things that are considered unlucky?
Explain.

What are things that are considered lucky?
Explain.

Do you believe in UFOs?
Are we alone in the universe?
Give your view.

Do you believe in *fate* (= power believed to control all events)?
Why or why not?

Do you believe in *reincarnation*? (= born in another body after death)
Why or why not?

What's the strangest *old wives' tale* you've ever heard? (= a superstitious belief or story belonging to traditional folklore)