EFFECTS OF GROUP WORK ON THE ORAL INTERACTION OF STUDENTS ENROLLED IN THE

COURSE ENGLISH

INTEGRATED SKILLS I (SPEAKING/LISTENING/READING) OF THE

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE IN ENGLISH AT UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL,

BRUNCA EXTENSION, PÉREZ ZELEDÓN CAMPUS

A Case Study

By

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Dedication

- I thank GOD for my life and everything that has come with it.

- I would like to thank my kids, but I need to ask for their forgiveness because of the time that I have not been with them.

- I thank my husband for all his support and tolerance during the process of finishing this project.

- I thank my mom for being so beautifully kind to me, for her prayers, and unconditional love.

- I thank my sisters for their good wishes and support.

- I thank my thesis mate Melisa Mora for everything she has shared with me during this unforgettable time.

- I thank the tutor M.A Cinthya Olivares Garita, who accompanied us throughout this process.

- I am also grateful with our collaborative teacher Sofia Mora Abarca who allowed us to collect information from her students.

- And, I thank myself for being such a courageous woman.

  Let's celebrate life.

  Mariela Cedeño Vargas

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study aimed at researching the effects of group-work activities (GWAs) on the oral interaction of the students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension. The basis of this research is grounded on the fact that students might experience positive as well as negative effects when it comes to their effectiveness on the oral interaction during GWAs. The analysis of these effects might help teachers as well as students to overcome the negative effects and take advantage of the positive ones to enhance oral interaction through the use of GWAs. This research unraveled relevant positive as well as negative results. Among the most important negative effects, it was found that the traditional GWAs employed by the teacher did not totally accomplish the purpose of developing students' oral interaction; the use of the mother tongue was a constant in activities in group; and there was no evidence of any specific approach followed by the teacher to design and carry out the GWAs in the class. The positive effects are based on the development of confidence, socializing skills, and peer feedback as results of their oral interaction in the target language. Consequently, the researchers came up with an action plan by means of a teacher's guide to implement effective GWAs and a students' booklet to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies for enhancing learners' active oral participation in their learning process.

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List of Abbreviations

ALM………………………………………………….………Audio Lingual Method

CBI……………………………………………………….....Content-based Instruction

CI-UNA……………………………………………….Centro de idioma Universidad Nacional

CL……………………………………………………..……..Cooperative Learning

CLL……………………………………………..…………….Community Language Learning

CLT……………………………………………..…..Community Language Teaching

DM……………………………………………….…….Direct Method

EFL……………………………………………...….Students of a Foreign Language

FLSs……………………………………………..…..Foreign Language Students

GT…………………………………………………………………....Grammar Translation

GWAs………………………………………………...…….……Group-work Activities

INA…………………………………………………...Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje

MEP………………………………...……………Ministerio de Educación Publica

MSs……………………………………………………………….Metacognitive strategies

R1…………………………………………………...……………………..Researcher 1

R2……………………………………………………...………….…..Researcher 2

SA………………………………………………………...……...Structural Approach

SW……………………………………………………….………..Silent Way

TBI………………………………………………….…......Task-Based Instruction

TEC…………………………………………….…Instituto Tecnológico Costarricense

TPR…………………………………………………...……..Total Physical Response

ULICORI………………………………………………....Universidad Libre de Costa Rica

UNA…………………………………………….…...Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica

UNED………………………………………….....….Universidad Estatal a Distancia

Chapter One: Introduction

Oral interaction in the target language among students involves constant negotiation of meaning for an adequate communication. Due to the fact that Costa Rican people speak Spanish as their native language, students of English as foreign language (EFL) have limited opportunities to interact orally with native speakers of English; this fact hinders the possibility to improve students' linguistic weaknesses. Therefore, the success of this skill depends upon the students' attitude and own efforts, and the teacher's organization and desire to innovate in the classroom. Authors like Brown and Yule (2001) stated that "learning to talk in the foreign language is often considered to be one of the most difficult aspects of language learning" (p. 25) since communication entails proficiency in aspects like fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy. As a matter of fact, responsible teachers who are interested in the success of their students need to look for innovative techniques to provide learners with class activities in order to promote interaction in English language. Furthermore, learners should be responsible for their own progress because "no longer is learning seen as one-way transfer of knowledge from teacher to student" (Lazaraton, 2001, p. 104), but students can learn from their partners as well as from the outside sources. It has been observed that group-work activities (GWAs) may be a suitable strategy that can be used in a language class to improve the oral ability. In fact, oral performance constitutes a relevant factor to master, but it could be the most challenging aspect of a foreign language too. Effectively, oral interaction among students can be truly developed through GWAs.

The role of group work in the EFL classroom to enhance the oral communication has been the focus of several investigations aimed to prove the effects that this strategy has on the oral interactions. Since individual work is part of a traditional class, students might not have the chance to learn how to work well with others and to manage their own emotions while they interact with others (Clowes, 2011, p.1). Oral interaction among students can be put into practice by implementing GWAs like solving exercises, discussing an article, performing role-plays, and presenting topics in general to make learners use the language in context. Not only are GWAs a way to construct learning but also a way to

promote learners' oral interaction. This aspect constitutes a benefit since learners might be exposed to an environment of confidence and motivation to acquire the communication skills needed in the classroom. This is one of the reasons that justifies the exploration of the effects that GWAs might have on student's oral performance when they interact in groups. In this study, Chapter one presents the problem and the importance of researching, describing, and analyzing the effects of GWAs on the students' oral interaction, the theoretical and practical background that focuses on how oral performance activities done in groups have been dealt with in previous researches, and the research questions that conducted this study.

Purpose of the Study

The need of speaking English in the Southern Region of Costa Rica may derive from two main aspects that are the economic and the social fulfillment. The former is the one that has more influence on Costa Ricans because oral proficiency in English is currently a requisite to be hired by most companies. In the Brunca Region, there are many public and private institutions that offer courses and majors to learn English. According to Monge (2014), there are twelve private universities for example the Universidad Libre de Costa Rica (ULICORI) and two public ones located in Pérez Zeledón (para. 5). In the case of public institutions, the Universidad Estatal a Distancia (UNED) and the Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) are the ones that provide education with quality (Calderón, 2014, p. 15). The UNED offers a variety of majors to people who are not able to attend classes regularly. Regarding English, this institution offers students a Bachelor's Degree in English for I and II cycle, Licentiate's Degree in English teaching, and free courses of the foreign language mentioned (Universidad Estatal a Distancia, 2014, para. 5). Another public institution that offers English teaching is the Instituto Nacional de Aprendizaje (INA). The courses at INA are currently saturated since the demand of English learning with computer science could be striking features to have an appropriate profile in order to obtain a job in this region (Monge, para. 7). Finally, the Universidad Nacional

(UNA), Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón campus which is perhaps one of the most prominent institutions that promotes the teaching and learning of English in Pérez Zeledón.

The UNA might be one of the most productive public institutions in the teaching of English in the Southern Region since it offers many options of academic improvement focused on English learning. This university is located in the province of San José, Pérez Zeledón county, San Isidro district, Sinaí neighborhood. The UNA has two main objectives which are: "the formation of high-level professionals and [cultural] exchange with civil society, knowledge and wisdom in its many expressions, through research and social outreach" (UNA, 2013, para. 1). Regarding English teaching, it offers the Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching and, the project Centro de Idiomas (CI-UNA), which provides citizens with non-academic English courses with high standards of quality, and the Associate's Degree in English. The Associate's Degree in English is focused on enabling students to master the four macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). One of the foundations of this degree is based on the fact that the foreign language is a tool for communication and social interaction as well as the exchange of cultural matters (Chavez et al., 2008, p. 5). The importance of English as an international language is also considered in the design of this degree since the occupational profile includes people who work in national or international enterprises. That is why the target population consists of any professionals, students of other university majors, and citizens interested in obtaining an intermediate-advanced level in English. To reach this objective, the oral expression, written expression, reading comprehension, listening comprehension and cultural competence are the skills developed in the Associates' Degree in English (Chavez et al., 2008, pp. 6-10). The oral performance tends to be the skill most used by learners or, at least, the most demanded to use since communication plays a significant role in society. Therefore, teachers of this degree should use several classroom activities for students to improve their oral performance. Group work may be one of the tools that teachers can use to achieve this goal.

It is relevant to collect data about the use of GWAs, points of view of the oral performance, and perspectives about GWAs and their effects on the oral interaction. This is why a diagnostic instrument was administered to the students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I, and the collaborative teacher in order to gather data about the aspects previously mentioned. It was found out that 99% of the informants revealed that these types of activities are put into practice by their teacher. As a result, GWAs are part of the methodology of speaking/listening and reading classes of the population under study. Moreover, 75% of the students consulted highlighted speaking as the most important ability since it is the hardest one to master, and they are conscious of its significance for future job opportunities. The teacher in charge of the course English Integrated Skills I was asked about GWAs to reinforce oral interaction. She reported that she does use activities that must be carried out in groups since she believes that the oral performance can be enhanced by developing group tasks. She claimed that learners feel more confident and participate actively in these types of activities than the ones that imply only teacher-student interaction.

In regard to the awareness of the speaking improvement, 85% of the participants assured that they have experienced benefits when expressing orally because of the implementation of GWAs. The teacher was also aware of the positive effects these types of tasks might have on the oral interaction since she has used GWAs and believed in them. In addition, the learners revealed that they receive feedback from their peers while they performed orally in group activities. Thus, 70% of the informants agreed with the benefit about being corrected by their classmates and this can be a possible result of these tasks. At last, another significant conclusion of the diagnosis consists of the use of the learners' mother tongue while working in groups. 90% stated that they speak Spanish during activities that imply working with other classmates since for them it is easier to communicate. Concisely, this diagnostic test threw light upon the idea that GWAs might have relevant effects on the target population; however, class observations guided the researchers to explore the actual effects of these types of activities on the oral

interactions of the population chosen. As a matter of fact, the purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of GWAs on the oral interactions of students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English (in listening, speaking, and reading classes) at UNA.

Background of the Study

The core of the present investigation was to research on the effects that group activities have on the oral interaction of students who learn English as a foreign or second language. In other countries, experts in teaching a second or foreign language have focused on group work as a way to improve the oral ability. For example, Ibtissem (2013) conducted a study to explore the significance of using cooperative group work to promote the oral interaction in an EFL context. The population taken into account was third year License, Master, and Doctorate collegians and teachers who have taught oral expression at the Department of English at Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra in Algeria. Among his findings, he concluded that "there is a positive correlation between the cooperative group work technique and the speaking skill" (p. 80). This study also revealed that learners should be forced to participate in groups so that they gather the necessary skills in order to interact with others in the target language. His final finding was about the positive influence that group work has upon the motivation and participation of learners. If learners' motivation increases, their participation would be more constant during the class. In addition to international studies, in Costa Rica several publications have also stressed the influence of GWAs on the students' oral performance.

In Costa Rica, current academic publications have been devoted to establishing the impact that these types of activities reflect on the oral expression in the EFL context. There is a recent study carried out by Chevez (2009) about the effects of grouping techniques on the oral performance of students in the class of the Nursing School at Universidad de Costa Rica. She stated that the relevance of group work in the EFL class has demonstrated to be effective to improve the oral skills in the target language. This investigator implemented group-work techniques to see how students behaved toward the challenge of

interacting with peers in the foreign language. Among the grouping techniques she used, the most significant one consisted of assigning groups that mix students with high level with the ones having a low one. She concluded that low-proficiency groups "are able to communicate in English most of the time and use strategies such as negotiation of meaning that enhance their learning process, and give them a chance to use the language more" (p. 252). As a result, developing GWAs have shown positive results when it comes to improving the oral interaction no matter the level of proficiency.

Concerning GWAs to improve the oral skills, there is a survey carried out by Hernández (2006) that was administered to teachers of an oral communication course at Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica (TEC). The topic of the survey is about the components of successful tasks related to the oral abilities. Their insights were compared to the opinion of second-year undergraduates taking the same course of oral communication and the opinions of some specialists on the field. She concluded that "[a] good number of teachers believe that successful tasks should be preferably for pair or group work" (p. 52). Nevertheless, teachers need to keep themselves updated to bring innovation and maintain the students' interest when working in groups. Additionally, there is a contemporary study developed by Jiménez and Palacios (2011), who are professors at Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, about effective speaking techniques to encourage communication by the use of activities that might embrace group work. The authors established that oral performance can be enhanced by role plays, debates, discussions, and round tables (p. 250) that are likely to reach linguistic improvement since they are developed in pairs or groups. To conclude, the investigations mentioned confirm the effects that GWAs produce when learners speak in the target language. However, more research is necessary to explore those effects in the Costa Rican context, specifically at Universidad Nacional in the Brunca Region.

Research Questions of the Study

The questions below lead to the central foci of this study whose target population is composed of teachers of a foreign language (EFL) and learners of the course English Integrated Skills I in the

Associate's Degree in English at UNA.

-What effects do GWAs have on the oral interaction of students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I in the Associate's Degree in English?

-What are the techniques employed by the current and former teachers of speaking, listening, and reading classes to promote the use of GWAs?

-What is the contribution of this study to the EFL context to improve the oral interaction through the use of GWAs?

Significance of the Study

It is significant to mention that teaching oral performance has been a dominant aspect in foreign language instruction because being able to communicate in the target language is generally one of the goals in an English class. Even though there are numerous techniques and strategies to encourage students to express orally, group work might be one of the most appropriate techniques to improve oral ability because it gives students more opportunities to speak English. Because developing oral interaction is challenging, it is necessary to inquire on the learners' perceptions about their own oral performance when they develop GWAs. Accordingly, researching on this aspect may provide the course English Integrated Skills I (that is part of the Associate's Degree in English) with teaching contributions to improve group work that involves speaking objectives. The results of the study cannot be generalized to all the groups that take English at UNA, but to the groups that only take English Integrated Skills I. It also gave an overview of the learners' oral interaction development while carrying out GWAs. Consequently, the relevance of this investigation lies on the fact that no one has ever carried out a research project about the effects of GWAs on the oral interaction at UNA. There is no academic evidence that establishes the effects either negative or positive on the students' oral performance when working in groups in this specific context. It is relevant and necessary to encounter the effects that oral performance developed through GWAs have on the learners' linguistic process. Finally, the teachers of the university campus

mentioned before can resort to the present academic work in order to review theories of GWAs focused on a population studying in their same workplace.

Limitations

During the implementation of this study, the researchers faced some limitations that are described in as follows:

There was a noisy environment in the class observed, and it was a problem when the observers tried to listen to the students' oral interaction. This interfered with the opportunity to gather significant information during the GWAs many times. In order to solve this problem, the researchers tried to sit as close as possible of the students. Additionally, during the observations some groups of students went outside to carry out the activity assigned by the teacher, and it was difficult for the observers to keep tuned with all the groups and record the information about their interaction. In this case, the observers kept close of the majority of the groups either in or out the classroom. The variety of quizzes and tests that learners had to take was another constraint since the number of observations could not be accomplished on the time set. As a result, time was extended. Those were the most significant limitations that the researchers faced during the observation period.

Delimitations

The following arguments are based on the aspects reflected in the delimitations of this project. First, this research was restricted to the following processes: a diagnosis of the population related to the phenomenon under study, interviews to the collaborative teacher and a former teacher of the course, questionnaires administered to the students and observations made to the population. These processes aimed to gather information of the teachers and students of the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree of English. Second, since this project is a case study, it allowed making generalizations only about the students developing oral performance in the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English and the teachers of the same context. Third, the action plan

proposed for this project is a set of recommendations and materials that might be useful to either improve or maximize the achievement of some practices only in the groups of the target population. Finally, other researchers and students of the English teaching as a foreign language field could benefit from this study by taking it as a reference for their own academic projects and university tasks.

Definitions

The following terms should be defined to help the reader understand their meaning in this research. The definitions have been collected from Richards and Schmidt (2010).

Activity: This aspect is defined in language teaching as "a general term for any classroom procedure that requires students to use and practice their available language resources" (p. 9). In the case of this study, the group activities are the source of the data collected for further analysis.

Assessment: Defined as "a systematic approach to collecting information and making inference about the ability of a student or the quality or success of a teaching course on the basis of various sources of evidence" (p. 35). This term is significant in this study since assessing students through peer or self-assessment is part of the action plan.

Communication: It is defined as "the exchange of ideas, information, etc., between two or more persons" (p. 97). This term is very important since its development is one of the foci in this research.

Communicative Approach: Defined as "an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE, and which seeks to make meaningful communication and language use a focus of all classroom activity" (p. 99). The research shows evidence of characteristics of this method in the classroom routines.

Community Language Learning (CLL): This method is described as "an application of counselling learning to second and foreign language teaching and learning. It uses techniques developed in group counselling to help people with psychological and emotional problems. The method makes use of group

learning in small or large groups. These groups are the 'community' (p. 100). In this project, group-work activities aim at working as a "community."

Context: This term is defined as "the broader social situation in which in a linguistic situation item is used" (p. 217).

Cooperative Learning (CL): It is defined as "an approach to teaching and learning in classrooms so that students work together in small co-operative teams" (p. 135). Cooperation among students is necessary to come up with valid data in the study.

Discourse: The definition for this linguistic aspect is "a general term for examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as a result of an act of communication" (p.174). Discourse can be generated in written as well as in oral form.

Foreign language: It is described as "A language which is not the native language of large numbers of people in a particular country or region, is not used as a medium of instruction in school, and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government, media, etc." (p. 224). As a result, the foreign language involved in this investigation is English since it is neither the mother tongue of the students nor the official one in Costa Rica.

Group work: It consists of (in language teaching) a learning activity which involves a small group of learners working together. The group may work on a single task, or on different parts of a larger task (p. 256). For the purpose of this investigation, group work is an important factor for exploring the effects that it has on students' oral interaction.

Interaction: It is described as "the way in which a language is used by interlocutors" (p. 289). It is the phenomenon that occurs when the students develop oral activities in teams effectively.

Language proficiency: Defined as "the degree of skill with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand a language" (p. 321). In this case study, language proficiency is part of the learners' goals to achieve in the course.

Metacognitive strategy: This type of strategy is defined as "a category of learning strategy which involves thinking about the mental processes used in the learning process, monitoring learning while it is taking place, and evaluating learning after it has occurred" (p. 361). In this study, metacognitive strategies are part of the proposal developed in the action plan.

Methodology: It is defined as "the study of the practices and procedures used in teaching, and the principles and beliefs that underlie them" (p. 363). Thus, the methodology for the action plan of this research is grounded on a set of group-work activities designed on the basis of several of methods such as CLL, CL, and TBI.

Oral: It is explained as "a term used to stress that a spoken form of language is used as opposed to a written form, as in an oral test, an oral examination" (p. 413). In this study, oral tasks are based on having learners speaking to fulfill specific linguistic objectives in groups.

Performance: It refers to (in generative grammar) "a persons' actual use of language. A difference is between a person's knowledge of a language (competence) and how a person uses this knowledge in producing and understanding sentences (performance)" (p. 428).

Peer assessment: It is defined as "activities in which learners assess each other's performance" (p. 425). This aspect is one of the strategies that teachers can implement to promote students' awareness of their weaknesses and strengths in the target language.

Qualitative research: This term is referred as "narrowly, any research that uses procedures that make use of non-numerical data, such as interview, case studies, or participant observation" (p. 475). This is the kind of research implemented in this study.

Research: It is defined as "the study of an event, problem or phenomenon using systematic methods, in order to understand it better and to develop principles and theories about it" (p. 497).

Role: This term refers to the "part taken by a participant in any act of communication" (p. 501). The roles in a group-work activity play an important part in this research study since it is one of the necessary factors to make group work efficient in the classroom.

Second language: It is interpreted as "any language learned after one has learned one's native language. However, when contrasted with foreign language, the term refers more narrowly to a language that plays a significant role in a particular country or region though it may not be the first language of many people who use it (p. 514). In the case of the population under study, English is learned as a foreign language.

Strategy: This term is defined as "procedures used in learning, thinking, etc., which serve as a way of reaching a goal. In language learning, learning strategies and communication strategies are those conscious and unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using a language" (p. 559).

Target language: Defined in language teaching as the language different from his or her mother tongue that a person learns (p. 583). The target language is the means of communication that the population observed had to use during GWAs.

Task-based Instruction (TBI): It is defined as "a teaching approach based on the use of communicative and interactive tasks as the central units for the planning and delivery of instructions" (p. 585). This method provides the theoretical principles to the use of GWAs in the context of the investigation.

Technique: This term is defined as "a specific procedure for carrying out a teaching activity, such as the ways a teacher corrects students' errors or set up group activities" (p. 601). In this research, group work is the main technique that provides researchers with important information that leads to the results.

Summary

This chapter emphasized the aspects that guided this project by describing the background section which facilitates information of similar investigations to this project, defining the purpose of the study, setting the appropriate research questions, and stating the significance of the research study. Equally, the

limitations, delimitations, and definitions can guide to the understanding of the structure and content of

this investigation. Chapter two will help the reader to link the new contribution to already established

theories and studies. The data discussed and stressed in this coming chapter may also draw conclusive

arguments, and those arguments are also part of the final sections of this study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter two contains the theories about perspectives of GWAs related to the improvement of oral interaction as well as issues, points of view, and theories related to the subject under study. It mentions the connection of the existing information to the content of the research.

Historical Overview of Teaching Speaking in an EFL Context

The development of English learning has become a crucial objective around the world. In fact, being able to speak in a language other than the native one is part of people's expectations no matter what they are currently studying. Since EFL teachers' chief goal is to become communicatively competent, they look for suitable strategies to promote students' oral interaction. Through time the principles and practices of the teaching of speaking have changed, and the history of English teaching gives a remarkable picture about the methods that involve the oral performance as one of their objectives. Brown (2007) offered a summary of the most remarkable teaching methods that contributed to reaching this objective. Basically, he highlighted that the Audiolingual method (AM), Community Language Learning (CLL), the Natural Approach (NA), and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) focused on the development of oral performance to a greater extent (p. 35).

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Audiolingual method (AM) was implemented, based on a theory establishing that language "is a system of rule-governed structures hierarchically arranged" (Brown, 2007, p. 36) and managed as a matter of habit formation. In regard to this, Djigunovic and Krajnovic (2005) argued that this method "resulted from new ideas about teaching foreign languages stressing the primacy of speech over writing" (p. 3). Oral performance was developed by intensive oral activities involving repetitions, drills, memorization, and dialogues. Likewise, this method was characterized by the following aspects: Grammar was taught inductively, there was a lot of use of visual aids, the use of language labs, and great importance was given to pronunciation (Brown, 2007, pp. 23-24). Along with the AM, the Community Language Learning (CLL) appeared in the 70s as a response to the importance given to the learners' affective factors. Basically, this method defended the idea that learners

"first needed to interact in an interpersonal relationship in which students and teacher joined together to facilitate learning in a context of valuing each individual in the group" (Brown, 2007, pp. 36-37). All the boundaries set by affective factors like anxiety and inhibition decreased in such classes. A trend of this method is the use of red colored rods that are intended to let the teacher speak little and give learners the chance to speak gradually a lot more (Djigunovic and Krajnovic, 2005, p. 4). Oral performance is boosted by interacting in a community in which the main goal is to reach "near-native mastery" by means of free conversation, listening, and translations (Brown, 2007, pp. 36-37). The designers of these methods considered that developing oral interaction is essential to help learners achieve foreign language (FL) proficiency.

The third way to teach proposed by experts is the Natural Approach (NA) that was designed by Steven Krashen and Terrell in 1980. They believed that learners would develop language proficiency after a period of silence while they are exposed to input that is a little beyond their current level (Brown, 2007, p. 31). The theory behind this method is that children acquire their first language by being exposed to it and a similar process might be likely to take place with the foreign language. Djigunovic and Krajnovic (2005) stated that "the only valuable knowledge of a language can be obtained through acquisition" (p. 4). To improve oral performance, this method employed a selection of communicative activities mostly developed with authentic materials since the primary goal is to stimulate comprehension and communication among learners (Brown, 2007, p. 36). Another method that improves the oral communication is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). It is grounded on the idea that "language is a system for the expression of meaning… interaction and communication" (Brown, 2007, p. 36) and enables learners to use the foreign language to communicate with others in the class. Teachers who employ this method could do activities with authentic materials that involved students in real communication. This procedure makes a distinction between knowing the rules of a language or being able to use them correctly in communication (Djigunovic and Krajnovic, 2005, p. 5). This assumption

highlights the fact that a foreign language should be learned for communication; knowing the rules is not enough.

These four methods described above had the development of oral performance as one of their main aims in the teaching and learning of English. On the other hand, methods like the Grammar Translation method and the Silent Way, among others, did not consider the oral communication relevant to be developed in the class. However, there are some more new and innovative methods like the Task-based Instruction (TBI) and the Cooperative Learning (CL) that also boost the oral interactions among students.

Task-based Instruction to Enhance the Oral Performance in EFL Students

Task-based Instruction (TBI) is a relatively new method which focuses on teaching the target language by assigning tasks in groups. It is defined as "a kind of instruction in which language learners, performing activities, are engaged in meaningful, goal oriented communication to solve problems, complete projects, and reach decisions" (Seyyedi, 2012, p. 242). TBI has incorporated the use of GWAs as one of the main ways to learn by placing this responsibility upon students. Generally, the kinds of tasks that learners perform are: solving a problem, playing a game, comparing or sharing experiences. By developing tasks, students experience processes like negotiating meaning, experimenting, and paraphrasing, which prompt students to reach linguistic success (p. 243). However, the tasks should be well designed to smooth the learners' acquisition of the language. In accordance to Ellis (2006), there are three specific phases to follow in a task-based lesson. They are the pre-task, which is the activities that can be performed by the teacher and students before they begin with the main task; the during-task, which consists of the chief task that involves instructional options and more prepared activities, and the post-task, which emphasizes procedures for following-up the task performance (p. 80). Having students carrying out tasks ensures the maximization of their capability of solving problems while advancing in

their learning. In sum, the TBI promotes learning by the active participation of students in tasks that encourage the participation of all members to reach a common goal; however, it is the teacher's commitment to plan appropriate tasks to obtain this positive result.

Teaching English by means of carrying out tasks might lead learners to work in the language class effectively and independently. Tasks may be the core of students' opportunities to learn their foreign language appropriately. However, there are breakdowns when attempting to assign a task in the classroom. When assigning tasks in the classroom, students may differ in their interpretations of the task itself. It is important to mention that depending on the perception that students have about a communicative assignment, they will put into practice different linguistic aspects, and not necessarily the ones that competent communication involves. In other words, learners' perceptions of what they are assigned may vary because "any language learning task will be reinterpreted by the learner in his or her own term" (Branden, Bygate, & Norris, 2009, p. 334). Thus, since perceptions are always different when students are required to develop an assignment, it is significant to explain tasks in distinct ways in order to achieve the linguistic objectives. Also, foreign language students (FLSs) should be instructed with clarity at the moment of giving instructions, and they should be provided with examples of what they have to do in a communicative activity. Since communication plays an essential role in EFL instruction, TBI may have either negative or positive effects. That is, students may negotiate meaning in a limited way when the task guidelines are about asking and responding to a number of questions. If the teacher aims to improve critical thinking or the formulation of arguments, he or she should illustrate the procedures and purpose by means of videos or short written dialogues so that the oral interaction expected might take place appropriately.

There are students who may perceive the aims of the task properly. In these cases, learners' understanding of TBI may be positive. Finding the appropriate technique to explain tasks before making students perform them is one of the main benefits that can occur in EFL instruction. Righteous awareness

of task's guidelines could be the result of students with either a high integrative motivation or total awareness of their linguistic weaknesses. According to Branden, Bygate, and Norris (2009), it is assured that students may be able to achieve the main purpose of the task if the objective matches their learning needs (p. 336). Even though students may recognize their needs as learners of a foreign language, they may fail in their interpretations of the objectives of the tasks. Hence, when giving instructions, carrying out the task, and manipulating the material, there may be many factors that interrupt the students' understanding of the instructions. To sum up, learners vary in learning styles and cognitive abilities, and that is why it is worth mentioning how group work influences learners when carrying out classroom routines.

Cooperative Learning in the EFL Context to Accomplish Effective Communication

There may be language instructors who use teacher-centered activities that could reduce students' chances to communicate among them. When students have the chance to talk with each other, they can improve their communicative abilities. Effective communication among peers is part of Cooperative Learning (CL) that is defined as "a student-centered, instructor-facilitated instructional strategy in which a small group of students is responsible for its own learning and the learning of all group members" (Li & Lam, 2013, p.1). Asking learners to develop their tasks as a team is an adequate strategy that serves as a medium to accomplish linguistic objectives and goals in an appropriate class atmosphere. Díaz-Barriga and Hernández (2007) suggested that CL focuses on the socio-affective factors of students increasing their self-esteem, sense of belongingness, and sense of activity that results in an enjoyable learning process (p. 400). The teacher controls students' performance while giving them freedom for communication, which leads to the improvement of their weaknesses. When students cooperate with each other, they can compensate for their linguistic and social needs by means of negotiating meaning among them; that is why that the importance of this method must be taken into consideration by EFL teachers as well as learners so that they take advantage of its benefits.

The CL has been implemented for developing linguistic as well as social skills in a language class; however, when it comes to designing activities based on this method to teach, depending on the context and the learners' affective factors, not all them are linked to the principles of CL. This problem can be reflected on the fact that in a group of learners some speak more than others, or all the work is performed by just one member while the others perform other activities. In order to solve this constraint, Kagan (1990) suggested a Structural Approach (SA) focused on the CL. Basically, the SA to CL is defined as "the creation, analysis and systematic application of structures or content-free ways of organizing social interaction in the class" (p.12). He argues that structures and their possible variations are necessary in cooperative lessons because of their different functions and domains of usefulness (p. 13). The oral interaction can be improved by having students working in structured activities since communication and collaboration are basic skills in these types of class tasks. Examples of structures designed by this author are: numbered heads together, inside-outside circle, jigsaw and fan-n-pick among others. Generally, the characteristics of Kagan's structures are: assignation of roles for team members; cooperation of everyone essentially to accomplish the task; and the activities are carried out in pairs, trios, and groups. The structures can be applicable to several topics, and EFL teachers can adapt them to their context as well. Significantly, the SA is useful to take full advantage of the CL in a language class. The CL has also been the basis of other researchers to promote the enhancement of English as a foreign language.

Some studies focused on CL to improve oral performance have been carried out recently. A study conducted by Lemos (2010) included this method to enhance speaking confidence of eighth graders at Chucua School, located in Colombia, by implementing cooperative-based strategies in the creation of an online radio show. She believed that strategies that involve socio-affective factors help to promote confidence on the oral performance. She found that the cooperative learning strategy (interpersonal and small group skills) employed in the study prompted a starting point from which the decision-making process of learners influenced their performance (p. 80). For example, if learners

realize their mistakes when interacting orally, they can make the necessary changes to polish their speech in sessions of cooperation and confidence. As a result, the strategies previously mentioned "helped the students to build a secure environment" in which they could overcome their speaking flaws (p. 81). In this case, it is possible to say that CL strategies have showed positive results when improving students' oral ability. Furthermore, the interaction that students might experience through cooperation in the class can resemble important benefits for them.

The Oral Interaction and its Benefits to Students of English as a Foreign Language

Oral interaction is one of the most aspired goals to reach when studying English because of the benefits that it provides to a group of students. Oliver and Philp (2014) stated that

Oral interaction is the spoken language that takes place between two or more people and, as the name implies, it is the type of speaking and listening that occurs in real time (i.e. in the present) in communicative exchanges (i.e. interactions). Usually it entails the speakers talking in turn and responding orally to these turns, though sometimes speakers interrupt or talk 'over' each other. Oral interaction is collaborative and most often reciprocal, with each speaker working to call-construct a meaningful exchange. (p. 13)

Clearly, oral interaction is an integral part of human life since it is the main means of communication between people. In the case of learning a foreign language, students are likely to improve their communicative abilities by interacting orally with their peers. Brown (2007) also offered a definition to this term as "the collaborative exchange of thoughts, feelings, or ideas between two or more people, resulting in a reciprocal effect on each other" (p. 212). Through interacting in the target language, students can experience some effects like the increase of the language repertory and speaking improvement. Additionally, this aspect might help learners develop some other beneficial areas in the classroom. Brown (2007) stated some possible effects that learners might experience when negotiating meaning orally. For example, freedom of keeping language in a controlled mode, the intrinsic motivation

reflected on the appreciation of their own competence to use the language that creates a system of self-reward, strategic investment based on the fact that students should use several strategies for production and comprehension when interacting orally, and willingness to communicate even though the risk it means for them are some of the most rewarding aspects that learners can develop by interacting orally (p. 213). With such benefits provided by the interaction among students, EFL teachers might take advantage of it to improve learners' oral weaknesses by the implementation of activities that require student's active participation in teams.

Keeping in mind the importance of developing the oral abilities, EFL teachers should look for innovative ways to exercise the learners' oral skills. Clearly, they are the ones who are more interested in developing this skill in learners; actually, "one of the main aims of teachers is to enable learners to communicate information effectively in spoken language" (Brown & Yule, 2001, p. 103). Nowadays, EFL teachers may be more concerned when focusing on accuracy; due to this, they have resorted to using more communicative exercises that promote oral competence. The most common speaking tasks implemented in the EFL classes are the ones recommended by Lazaraton (2001), which are discussions, speeches, role plays, conversations, and audiotape oral dialogue journals (p.106). She suggested that some accuracy-based activities like drills and repetition might have a positive effect on learners' oral performance, especially in low levels of linguistic oral proficiency. However, discussions may stimulate the oral skills more than repetition and drills since they are classroom routines that could produce learning more at ease (p.106). The implementation of such tasks has shown positive effects on the oral performance. Therefore, EFL learners should feel forced to use their target language with correct grammar and pronunciation, and as natural as possible in order to make peer or group work successful.

Didactic Methodologies and their Relationship with Group-Work Activities

The teaching of a foreign language has been based upon many methodologies of instruction. Some of those methods have taken into account the use of group work in the classroom while some others have

neglected this strategy. For instance, a set of principles stated in numerous methods like Grammar

Translation (GT) and Content-based Instruction (CBI) do not support the use of GWAs as one of the main

strategies to boost the learning of the target language since they entail principles that contradict the

implementation of GWAs. As an illustration, the GT method emphasizes the teacher as the main source of

knowledge, but it does not consider oral communication in the target language as one of the goals in the

class (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2010, p. 10). Even though grammar is an essential linguistic aspect to

develop the oral interaction, the GT does not include activities that involve social aspects in the

classroom. Suggestively, it would be appropriate to encourage students to perform oral tasks in groups in

order to practice the numerous grammatical rules in the target language. Moreover, the CBI highlights

teacher-student interaction while student-student interaction is overlooked. In the case of CBI, it could be

advantageous to motivate students to talk about the contents studied in the class among them.

Furthermore, both methods of teaching a language ignore the importance of group work, being this

technique productive for student-student learning.

Other methods that have innovated the teaching of a foreign and second language like Community

Language Learning (CLL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) have included the use of

GWAs in the class. For instance, CLL considers that "building a relationship with and among students is

very important" (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013, p. 94). This method includes engaging learners in

activities that build relationships among them during the learning process as one of its principles. Having

classroom techniques that involve social abilities may enrich the process of oral performance in a more

practical way. In addition, CLL supports that the target language should serve as a vehicle for classroom

communication (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2013, p. 125). It is implied that both methods stimulate

student-student interaction in order to facilitate effectiveness in language instruction. Consequently, the

interaction among students encouraged in those methods could be provided by developing less

individualistic activities, but more social and communicative ones.

Summing up, the teaching of English has gone through many methods that have tried to build the effective way to transmit knowledge. Some of those methods have taken into account the use of group work in the classroom while some others have neglected this strategy. For instance, a set of principles stated in numerous methods like Grammar Translation (GT), the Direct Method (DM), Audio Lingual (ALM), the Total Physical Response (TPR), and Content-based (CB) do not support the use of GWAs as one of the main strategies to boost the learning of the target language. On the other hand, other methods that have innovated the teaching of a foreign and second language like the Silent Way (SW), Desuggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL), Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and TBI have incorporated the use of GWAs in the class. Along with these methods, the TBI has demonstrated to be one of the most prominent methodologies in regard to the implementation of activities in which learners are responsible for their own learning.

Group-work Activities to Promote Oral Interaction

Activities performed in groups seem to be a prevalent strategy to promote oral interaction. In fact, they may provide learners with opportunities to speak and create socio-affective relationships among them. According to Sato (2003), there are significant advantages that teachers must keep in mind for the purpose of encouraging oral performance among learners. First, he claimed that GWAs "allow students to take the initiative in controlling their communicative activities, reducing anxiety, facilitating responsibility, creating community, and smoothing the progress of fluency as a result" (p.16). Another advantage is the fact that GWAs give learners a sense of security since they, most of the time, are afraid of speaking alone in front of others. When learners work in groups, they realize that their peers are identified with the same feeling, and it gives them a sense of security. Finally, GWAs encourage learners to participate more actively in class (Sato, 2003, p.17). Active participation boosts learners' motivation when they speak in the foreign language in and out of class. To conclude, based on the authors' claims, activities that involve group work help learners to prompt oral interaction by providing them with a sense

of initiative to control their oral performance, the development of confidence, and an increase in participation in the class. As a result, learners might experience a more positive attitude toward the target language.

Researchers interested in demonstrating the impact that GWAs have on the oral interaction have guided studies to discover and review general issues regarding group work. In this sense, Sellito (2011) investigated the varied benefits that this strategy provides to undergraduate students. She argued that in spite of the benefits associated with team or group activities that have been increasingly reported in academic papers, there is a need to categorize them. Basically, she concluded that the benefits can be divided into: experiential, personal, and skills-related effects (pp. 401-409). The first one has to do with shaping learners' development including elements of socialization, exposure to diverse points of view, and role playing. The second one is based on personally derived capacities related to aspects like "acting more responsibly, developing confidence and autonomy, [and] respecting other people's viewpoints" (p. 409) which are produced by experiencing group-work interaction. Finally, the skill-related-benefit is characterized by training produced in peer interaction. She also mentioned other categories like the task development, collaboration, time management, leadership, team participation, negotiation, and conflict resolution (p. 409). In general terms, this research aimed to set a variety of possible benefits that might be derived from group work in undergraduate learners and to determine the effectiveness of oral interaction.

Another study regarding group work to enhance oral interaction is the one directed by Meng (2009) at Xuchang University in China. The purpose of her research was to focus on the problem of students' insufficient ability to speak English mainly caused by large class groups. She wanted to demonstrate that the use of GWAs implemented in large groups of learners is a must to promote oral performance among students. She established that "the increasing enrollment of college students from 1990 in China pushed college English teaching to confront with a new challenge: the inexorable trend of large-class English teaching in many universities and colleges" (p. 219). That is why Meng believed that

there are some significant factors in any language class. First, she argued that interest is a key tool in any speaking course. To promote learners' interest "the teacher should choose materials that fit the learners appetites such as topics in newspapers and magazines, the latest news online, personal, moral and social problems and many other issues of students' concern" (p. 222) that involve students in active participation. Conjointly, she said that encouragement helps students to challenge their fears of speaking since it gives learners self-confidence and it can be more effective than constant correction (p. 223). Meng advocated some strategies like the use of non-threatening tasks and a monitoring system to enhance students' oral performance. The free-tension atmosphere tasks might shape a more relaxed environment for students to carry out the activities in the class. Finally, she stated that the implementation of a monitoring system could keep learners tuned during class activities (p. 224). But there are other strategies for helping learners become competent users of the target language.

The effective improvement of the oral competence during GWAs could be maximized by the implementation of metacognitive strategies (MSs). They can be the key for effective interaction among students. Metacognition is defined as "an appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it requires to apply one's strategic knowledge to a particular situation" (Peirce, as cited in Shannon, 2008, p.18). There are many strategies that a motivated student can employ before, during, and after group-work activities to improve not only speaking but also listening, reading, and writing. Some MSs helpful to control one's own learning are: predicting outcomes, evaluating work, self-assessing, self-questioning, selecting strategies, using discourse, critiquing, and revising (Shannon, 2008, p. 18). These types of strategies help learners to know about their weaknesses and needs in the learning of a foreign language. This fact helps them to reach higher levels of proficiency while motivation and self-efficacy increase. For instance, to satisfy the needs of oral communication when working in groups, students may assess the conditions of the activity, internal and external resources, and constraints when working in teams (Richards, 2008, p. 11). It is

important to highlight that teammates are likely to share information of the MSs that they use so that others can benefit from them. But, it is also the teachers' duty to promote these strategies among their students. Those are some reasons why implementing MSs to develop oral abilities might help learners interact well in the target language.

GWAs may cause frequent exchange of ideas and can stimulate constant oral participation once the activities give room to interact in an oral way. Regarding the previous premise, there are specific team-work activities that Brown (2007) pointed out, and he also mentioned their advantages in regard to competence in oral interaction. These activities are: games, role plays and simulations, drama, projects, interviews, brainstorming, information gap, and jigsaw activities (pp. 231-233). Their advantages are focused on oral performance and if the language instructor makes sure that students experience such benefits, they can develop oral interaction effectively. According to Brown (2007) "Small groups provide opportunities for student initiation, for face-to-face give and take, for practice in negotiation of meaning, for extended conversational exchanges and for student adoption of roles" (p. 225). In sum, once the tasks assigned are assessed adequately in order to prove their linguistic effectiveness, learners can experience more oral interactions that is likely to improve their abilities as learners of the language.

Assessing Group Work

Assessment in the field of teaching/learning a foreign language is essential to reach effectiveness in the use of English. That is, constant monitoring of the teaching/learning process is called "assessment." Specifically, this didactic phenomenon may be necessary to achieve positive results on the oral performance when students work in teams. Assessing students' performance can bring about successful results since it can help to notice strengths and weaknesses of the students especially when they work in groups. As Brown (2007) claimed, "a good teacher never ceases to assess students, whether those assessments are incidental or intentional" (p. 445). Also, there are different ways to monitor learning in the classroom to foster language learning. For example, self-assessment is the process in which the

students can identify what they have to improve by themselves because they "monitor [their] own performance and use the data gathered for adjustments and corrections" (Brown, 2007, p. 479). When learning is being monitored, it is important to make the learners recognize what they have to master. After that, there is peer-assessment in which the learners determine learning and performance aspects of their classmates. Furthermore, the students should be informed about observations of their learning from different points of view in order to have a more complete scenario of their own learning process. In sum, when the learners work in groups, it is essential that the teacher assesses students' oral interactions by employing any of the aforementioned types available for this purpose. In this sense, group work could be an effective strategy to detect strengths and weaknesses in oral performance.

Summary

This chapter emphasized the theoretical aspects that have to do with this study which is essentially the role of group work to promote the oral interaction, and the effects it can cause in students' oral performance. For these reasons, it is important to analyze the beginnings of teaching speaking in EFL contexts in order to discover the importance of group work during the first steps of the development of the oral skills in the EFL class. TBI instruction gives a view of how to deal with the tasks when the teacher encourages students to be autonomous so that they can work as a team effectively. Also, to mention Cooperative Learning, it is important since group work may not have positive results if learners do not contribute with their classmates' linguistic progress. It was discussed that the oral interaction was connected to the benefits in the classroom. Moreover, GWAs are encountered in a variety of methods throughout the history of teaching a foreign language. There was also literature about the effectiveness of group work to improve oral interaction. At last, it was pointed out that assessing group work is highly recommended in order to encourage an appropriate progress of the oral tasks.

Chapter Three: Methodology

The purpose of Chapter Three is to describe the research methodology that was employed to answer the relevant research questions stated in Chapter One. This chapter presents a description of significant information about the qualitative design proposed for conducting this study. Important aspects of the site selection are presented so that the reader can have a pertinent view of the location as well as its characteristics. Next, this chapter provides the reader with data regarding the participant selection to denote how the population was selected for the development of this study. The role of the researchers section aims to emphasize what they did in relation to the research and the data gathering process. Subsequently, the data collection delineates the specific processes in which the information was collected. Finally, the data analysis section outlines how the evidence was collected, organized, and classified to determine the patterns or associations found in the research.

Research Design

This study is qualitative, and it focuses on the participants' perceptions, reactions, and points of view of their reality and their experiences in their natural setting in order to interpret the data collected. According to Hernández, Fernández and Baptista,

> a *qualitative study* is a research in which the participants' perceptions of their reality and the experiences observed are the leading factors of the investigation; it states research questions; it has a topic that has none or little investigation; the observations are analyzed in relationship with the population within their natural setting and the study is subjective because it depends on the researchers' interpretations of what they observe. (2011, p. 364)

The researchers decided to use a qualitative design since "qualitative researchers tend to be concerned with meaning. That is, they are interested in how people make sense of the world and how they experience events" (Willig, 2001, p. 9) in the EFL context considered in this study. As a consequence, the processes observed and analyzed in this study have to do with socialization because when students interact orally, they need to transmit their ideas. Thus, depending on the way they do it; the investigators

can collect essential information for answering the questions stated in this research. Since this study is focused on the effects that GWAs have on the oral interaction, the researchers concentrated on observing and describing their natural environment. As a consequence, students' perceptions of these activities when producing language orally was a source of information for further interpretation. The factors that lead this study are: what students of the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English perceive of GWAs and how their oral interaction develops when they work on these types of activities. As a consequence, the qualitative approach aims to observe the participants in their natural setting for further interpretation regarding the elements mentioned.

The scope is descriptive, and it is based on describing the phenomena, situations, participants' behaviors, factors that alter the environment, the procedures and the characteristics of people and activities carried out. Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2011) stated that "the descriptive scope aims at describing properties, characteristics, people's profiles, groups, communities, processes, objects or any other phenomena that can be analyzed" (p. 80) in order to gather the necessary information for accomplishing the research. In this case, there are descriptions of the GWAs in terms of how they influence the students' oral interaction. The activities done in groups are described in terms of the topic, the type of elocutionary activity (discussion, debate, board-games, etc.), the number of members, the place in which students develop the tasks, the types of interactions the learners have, the number of times the students use either Spanish or English, and kinds of assessment. Thus, the effects of GWAs on the oral interaction of the students are described after stating all the possible features that the phenomena investigated mentioned.

This research is a case study, and it is based on the analysis of everything that occurs in the classroom related to the phenomena researched. According to Hopkins (2002), "the main use of the case study in classroom research is that it provides a relatively formal and fairly definitive analysis of a specific aspect of teaching behavior or classroom life" (p.143) that involves a particular population. As

stated, classroom life is the focus of a case study, and this research specifically aimed to analyze the effects of GWAs when the students develop a conversation, discussion, or any other oral activity in the class.

Site Selection

The site selected to conduct the present study was the Universidad Nacional, Brunca Extension, Pérez Zeledón campus, which is one of the most prominent universities in Pérez Zeledón. This university extension is located in the province of San José, Pérez Zeledón county, San Isidro district, Sinaí neighborhood. The Universidad Nacional is focused on developing three important areas which are the Exact and Natural Sciences, Foreign Languages, and Social Sciences (UNA, 2015, para. 2). All of these academic fields are also explored through investigations. The mission of this university is "to develop projects and programs of investigation, extension, production and the formation of professionals with excellence and social awareness" (para. 5). The vision of the UNA is to become a university that takes leadership in the production of strategies regarding regional development, and the formation of excellent professionals in different fields (para. 6). As noted, this university has a significant mission in Pérez Zeledón which is the academic formation of professionals who also would contribute to the improvement and enhancement of human and social matters once their get a diploma.

The English degree chosen to develop this research is the Associate's Degree in English taught at UNA. It was designed to prepare students to learn English in its four linguistic areas. People of the community can access this program to become foreign language speakers, and use it to interact with native speakers in their jobs or lives. The methodology applied to this degree is the Eclectic Approach with emphasis on communicative techniques to teach the foreign language (Chavez et al., 2008, p. 6). This study focuses on the course English Integrated skills I; this is one of the first courses that students of the appointed degree take. This course is aimed at "initiating the learner in the development of the four basic abilities of the target language (English Integrated skills I Program, 2008, p. 1). The learning of the

aforementioned abilities might enable students to gain proficiency in English, and be able to communicate orally as well as in written way. Some of the linguistic objectives of the course are: to show understanding of basic reading techniques, to employ basic writing techniques to communicate in a written way, to show listening understanding of English materials, and, to use basic vocabulary orally and pronounce it appropriately (p. 1). As established, in the course English Integrated Skills I, students are expected to begin practicing the four main skills of the target language so that they can improve the skills and learn the language effectively.

Participant Selection

The participants of this study are: students, the current teacher, and the former teacher of the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English at the UNA. The sample population is the students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I of this degree, specifically in speaking/listening/reading classes. The oral interaction is constant and necessary to learn the language in these classes. Additionally, in these classes the four abilities are assessed and evaluated. These students took speaking/ listening/reading classes on Monday from 7:00 p.m. to 8: 40 p.m. Wednesday from 7:00 p.m. to 8: 40 p.m. and Thursday from 7:00 p.m. to 8: 40p.m. Thus, they complete four hours and twenty minutes of classes per week. This group has two different professors (one for grammar and writing and another one for speaking and reading). Their listening/speaking/ reading classes take place in a language laboratory three times a week. The professor in charge of teaching these skills is part of the participants as well. The target population takes other courses which are Oral and Written Expression in English, Oral and Written Expression in Spanish, and Pronunciation of Vowel Sounds. It is important to establish that the sampling method used to select the participants is convenience because of accessibility provided to accomplish the study in this place, such as the willingness of the authorities of the institution as well as the collaborative teacher to allow the researchers to make the observations. According to Ross (2005), "A sample of convenience is the terminology used to describe a sample in which elements have been selected

from the target population on the basis of their accessibility or convenience to the researcher" (p. 7). Consequently, the researchers were benefit from the willingness of the collaborative and the former teachers and the permission of the institution's authorities to carry out the research.

Role of the Researchers

During the observations, the researchers had a non-participant role because they interfered neither in the class procedures nor in any other teaching or learning aspect during the reading/listening/speaking lessons. The main objective of the non-participant observations was to observe and describe the effects of the GWAs on the students' oral interaction in their natural setting of instruction. The students did not have any disruption during the observations, but they performed the group tasks at ease. Both researchers of this graduation project have the same academic level that is a Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching from the Universidad Nacional. Likewise, they conducted this project to fulfill the requirements for the graduation in the Licentiate's Degree in Applied Linguistics in English at UNA.

Regarding the investigators' experience when carrying out the observations, the first researcher (R1) taught in a program named Éxito Académico at Universidad Nacional that is a tutoring program for students who wanted or needed extra academic instruction and support those learners enrolled in English Integrated Skills I and II of the Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching Major. After that, she taught conversational courses for some months at two private institutions of the region, and she has also taught English to elementary school students at the Ministry of Public Education (MEP) for more than a year. Also, she has been a teacher of CI-UNA for seven months. R1 played a role of an outsider observer since she is not the instructor of speaking classes to students of English Integrated Skills I. As a result, this observer collected and described the effects of GWAs on the students' oral interaction according to her own impressions. On the other side, the second researcher (R2) was a tutor of the Éxito Académico program too. She tutored students of Integrated English I of the majors System Engineering and Sustainable Tourism for two years. After that, she taught conversational courses at a private institution for

five months. Currently, she has two-year-teaching experience at a MEP elementary school, and two years

and two months teaching at CI UNA. As the two researchers have tutored students enrolled in the course

English Integrated Skills I, they had reference of the program of the course mentioned regarding the

methodology used and its implications.

Data Collection Procedures

In order to gather significant information for this study, a variety of instruments were employed.

The instruments are: a structured observation scale, a questionnaire for the students, and an interview for

a former and the current teacher of the course. These instruments collected the necessary information to

answer the questions stated before in Chapter One. The administration of these instruments helped to

collect verbal and nonverbal information, as well as points of view and experiences of the informants,

which were deeply analyzed to come up with a valid and reliable analysis. As a result, the information

collected from the three instruments was triangulated so that pertinent conclusions about the object of

study could be reached.

Questionnaire for students of English Integrated Skills I Course (Appendix D). This

instrument was designed to investigate students' opinions regarding their experiences of GWAs to

achieve oral interaction in the course English Integrated Skills I at UNA. This instrument is divided into

part one and part two. In the first part, there is a chart with six close-ended questions regarding the use of

GWAs in the course. In order to answer these questions, students had several options which are ranked as

always, frequently, sometimes, and never; students wrote a check mark in the option that they consider

fits their reality. In the second part, there are six open-ended questions in which students provided

researchers with brief explanations, comments, opinions, and experiences related to the topic under study.

Basically, the questions are about several aspects that intervene in the students' development of their oral

interactions, and the influence that Spanish might have in this process. This questionnaire was written in

Spanish since the population chosen has a low level of performance in which their reading and writing

skills in the target language were still limited. The instrument was administered to twenty students who were the total number of participants.

Interview for the former and the current teacher of the course English Integrated Skills I (Appendix E). This instrument was aimed at investigating the teachers' point of view and experiences about GWAs to improve the oral ability of students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I. The interviewees were: informant A, who is the current teacher of the course and informant B, who is a former teacher of the course. Basically, the instrument was an unstructured interview consisting of seven open-ended questions regarding aspects about classroom practices that involve and the possible effects this strategy might have upon students' oral interaction. The questions were based on the perception of students in relation to the strategy itself as a means to improve the way they interact. Also, the interviewees gave information about the techniques that they usually implement regarding group work in the class. There was a question in which the informants had to indicate the effects that this strategy might provoke in their students' oral interactions. The interviewees also provided researchers with information about which linguistic skills they considered to be most developed by GWAs, and the possible benefits that students might experience with the strategy. The probable frequency in which the target language is used during such types of activities was also inquired. The final question referred to any other innovative activity that the informants have used lately in the speaking course. Both interviews took around twenty minutes and were recorded for further analysis and comparison with the other data sources.

Non-participant observation (Appendix C). The main objective of this instrument was to record the use of GWAs and its effects on learners taking the course English Integrated skills I at UNA. The instrument consisted of two parts designed to gather information that could portray significant information for the research. Part one was divided into section A and B; in section A, there was a chart in which the observer wrote the types of GWAs implemented in the class, the teacher's expected outcome of each activity, the reactions and attitudes of students toward the activity, and their peer oral interaction and

feedback observed during GWAs. There was also a space to record students' nonverbal signs, and the teacher's reaction regarding students' outcomes during each GWA. Additionally, a tally to indicate the times in which students use either Spanish or English during the GWAs was included. In part B, there was a space to keep a record of the times when students used English willingly or unwillingly when being asked by the teacher. In addition, there was a space to draw a map of the class arrangement. In part two, there were two open-ended questions regarding the specific use of the target language by the students and their behaviors that indicated their taking advantage of GWAs to practice English. These questions should be answered by the observers during the class. These observations allowed the observers to determine the types of GWAs implemented by the teacher, and the effects they provoked in the learners when using the language orally. This procedure took place from February to April, 2015. Each observation lasted one hour and forty minutes. During the observations there was no participation of the observers in the class activities so that the interaction among learners occurred in a natural environment. Finally, the data collected with this instrument could be triangulated to obtain reliable conclusions for the research.

Data Analysis

The data collected in this study entailed an analysis that was carried out for the purpose of reaching a reliable interpretation of the evidence. The information was essential to answer the questions that are the central focus of this research. In order to reach valid results, many procedures were involved. During the process, the data were submitted to a descriptive analysis to portray evidence of the observations and closed-ended questions of the students' questionnaire. Additionally, the information gathered from the interviews and observations was described in detail by means of tables and graphs that show statistical analysis of the data. The results obtained were broken down into the following classifications grounded on the research questions of this study.

      Effects of GWAs on the oral interaction of students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I. In order to explore the effects that GWAs have on the oral interaction of students

enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I, the researchers triangulated the data obtained from the students' questionnaires, the interviews, and the observations. All the information gathered was essential to achieve reliable conclusions.

Techniques employed by the current and former teachers of speaking, listening and reading classes to promote oral interaction by the use of GWAs. In order to examine the possible techniques that the former and current teacher of the course implemented in the speaking, listening, and reading classes, it was necessary to scrutinize the information gathered from the observations, from the students' questionnaire, and from the contribution in the interviews given by the informants. With the information of these three sources, the identification of the techniques used to promote oral interaction during GWAs was pointed out.

Contribution of this study in the EFL context to improve the oral interaction through the use of GWAs. The deep analysis of the information collected helped to identify the positive and negative effects that GWAs have on the oral interaction of the population under study. Also, this analysis would help to point out the techniques employed by the former and current teachers of the course English Integrated Skills I. The conclusions obtained by the study of the data helped researchers to come up with an action plan for the purpose of repairing the weaknesses that were found as well as maximizing the positive results determined in the inquiry. The action plan is the contribution that this research provides UNA teachers and students so that the use of GWAs to improve the oral interaction can be enhanced.

Research Schedule

The next charts portrays the dates in which the processes of the investigation have been carried

out.

Research Procedures	February			March				April				May				June				July				August				September				October				November			
	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Entrance Negotiation Process	x																																						
Permissions		x																																					
Administration of the diagnosis instruments			x																																				
Introduction	x	x	x																																				
Literature Review				X	X	x	x																																
Methodology								x	x	x	x																												
Observations						x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X	x																									
Administration of the instruments (interviews and the questionnaires)									x	x																													
Data description																x	x	x																					
Data interpretation and analysis																			x	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	x												
Conclusions and recommendations																												x	x	x									
Action Plan																													x	X	x	x							
Project Revision																																				x	x	x	x

Research Procedures	January				February				March				April				May				June				July				August			
	Weeks																															
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Readers' period	x	x	x	x																												
Corrections					x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x										
Final Project presentation																											x	X				

Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis

The chief aim of this research was to identify the effects that GWAs might cause on the students' oral interaction who take the course English Integrated Skills I of the Associate's Degree in English at UNA. In Chapter Four, the information gathered from the three instruments was triangulated to answer the research questions which are the focus of this study. The data analyzed were taken from the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interviews, and the observations.

In this chapter, all the information was scrutinized to develop a description and an analysis based on the three questions established for this study. The analysis examined the activities that were used by the former and the current teacher of the course to promote the use of GWAs, and the effects that they had on the oral interaction of the students enrolled in the course already mentioned. After analyzing the information collected about the questions under investigation, the action plan that this study provided to the English teaching field was designed. At last, in order to describe and analyze the information appropriately, it is essential to take into account that in the case of the questionnaire administered, there were twenty informants who answered the instrument, the interview was administered to a former teacher and the collaborative teacher of the course, and the researchers conducted a number of twenty observations.

Techniques Employed in the Speaking/ Listening/Reading Classes to Promote the Use of GWAs

Based on the data gathered, it can be stated that there was a variety of group activities performed in class which means that it is one of the teacher's strategies used in the course English Integrated Skills I. By means of the instrument number one, which was a students' questionnaire, data about activities to enhance group work were collected in order to keep a record of the ones developed by students to improve their oral interaction. First of all, in any language class, group work might be necessary to develop several activities in which participation and cooperation of all members of the group are necessary. In the course English Integrated Skills I, group work is implemented as a strategy for students to learn the target language through a variety of activities. According to Lazaraton (2001), discussions,

speeches, role plays, conversations, and audiotape-oral-dialogue are the activities most recommended for the students to practice the target language in groups. In instrument number one, learners were asked about the GWAs that the teacher in charge of the course generally used during the class. In their answers, they informed that the activities carried out in groups are: oral questions, description of pictures, writing activities, board games, debates, dialogues, conversations, and oral presentations. But the GWAs most mentioned by the students are listening exercises in pairs, reading exercises in pairs, discussions, and role plays.

During the interviews administered to the current as well as the former teacher of the course English Integrated Skills I, they were inquired into the techniques involving group work that they incorporated in their teaching methodology. The current teacher and the former teacher reported the use of similar GWAs to improve students' oral interaction (see Table 1). However, both teachers agreed only

Table 1

Techniques Employed by the Collaborative Teachers

Current teacher's activities	Former teacher's activities
Role-plays	Discussions
Debates	Debates
	Role-plays
	Poster designs

Note. Techniques employed by the collaborative teacher are on the left while the ones used by the former teacher are on the right. These data were taken from instrument number two: interview.

when they mentioned role-plays and debates. Additionally, both teachers were asked about some other types of activities that they consider might keep students working in groups while they improve their oral interaction. For instance, the former teacher established that activities like storytelling, writing a poster, role-plays and the use of cellphones for academic purposes are the ones she recommended. On the other

hand, the current teacher informed that asking direct questions to the groups, avoiding individual work in the class, practicing conversations with word banks, and carrying role-plays are very useful to develop oral interaction. At that point, both agreed on one activity that is role-playing. In sum, the two informants agreed that GWAs like role-plays and debates are reliable to promote group work while the one that they recommended the most was role-plays.

GWAs provide substantial advantages to stimulate the oral ability. Group work permits students to take the initiative to control their communicative activities, create a community, enable responsibility, reduce anxiety, and facilitate the progress of fluency. Group work gives learners a sense of security since they, most of the time, are afraid of speaking alone in front of others, and this strategy encourages learners to participate more actively in class (Sato, 2003, pp. 16-17). All those advantages allow students to have a positive attitude toward communicating in the target language. According to the data collected during the observation period, the activities developed in class were: discussions, conversations, oral descriptions, role plays, oral question-answer exercises, board games, true-false exercises, charades, debates, writing tasks, and oral guessing (see Table 2). The activities in group observed were varied and involved the

Table 2
*Criteria of Frequency of Activities Observed during Class*

	N	Use Percentage	Percentage of cases
Discussions	10	23%	100%
Conversations	10	23%	100%
Oral descriptions	6	14%	60%
Role plays	5	12%	50%
Oral question-answer exercises	5	12%	50%
Board games	2	5%	20%
True/false exercises	1	2%	10%
Charades	1	2%	10%
Debates	1	2%	10%
Writing tasks	1	2%	10%
Oral guessing	1	2%	10%
Total	43	100%	430%

Note. This table shows the frequency in which the types of activities were developed during the observation period. These data were obtained from the observation number three.

four skills of the language. There were ten discussions and ten conversations whose frequency was 23%

of the time during class observation (see Table 2). Also, there were six oral descriptions (14%), five role

plays (12%), and five oral question-answer activities (12%). Along with these activities, a true/false

exercise, charades, debates, writing tasks, and oral guessing took place just once in the class, which means

2% of the time. In this case, the most frequent GWAs were appropriate to stimulate oral exchanges among

students. Although discussions and conversations were the most frequent activities, oral descriptions, role

plays, oral question-answer exercises, and board games were really important in oral enhancement as

well.

According to the students' answers in the questionnaire and the recorded activities in the

observations, data revealed that the activities mostly presented in the class are role plays, discussions, and

conversations (see Figures 1 and 2). It was concluded that the utmost GWAs mentioned by the learners in

the questionnaire are: role plays, discussions, reading exercises and listening exercises, being role plays
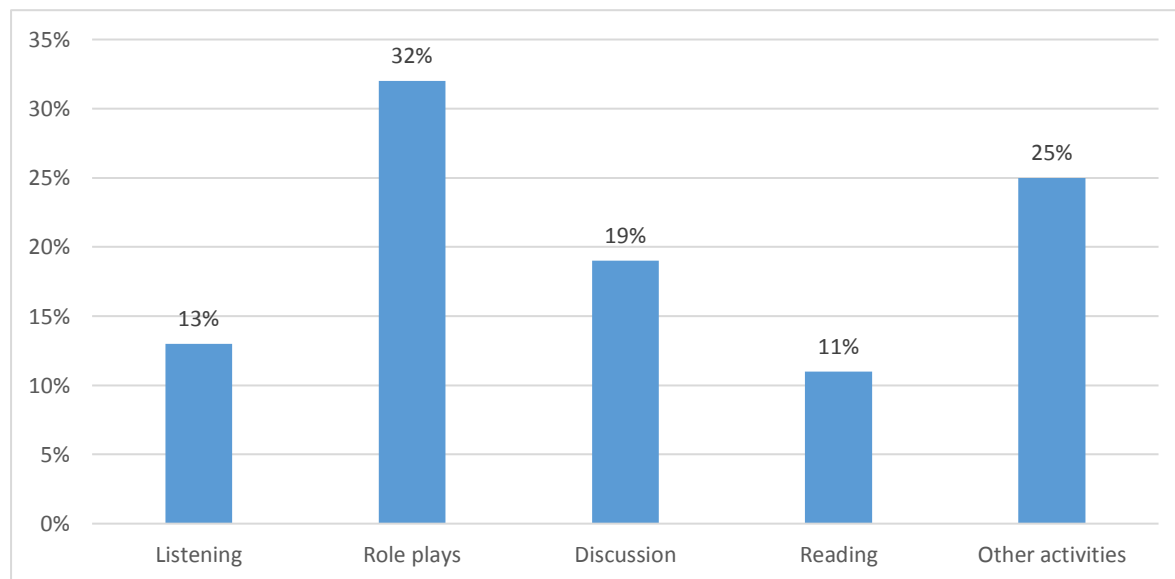
Figure 1. GWAs listed by students. This information was obtained from
Instrument 1: Questionnaire for students.

the most addressed by the informants. Regarding the two most addressed activities, nine of the

participants mentioned discussions and twelve mentioned role plays while there were ten discussions

observed, but there were just five role plays observed in the class. On the other hand, the GWAs most

frequently observed were: discussions, conversations, oral descriptions, role plays and oral question-

answer (see Figure 2). Taking into account the collaborative teacher's point of view about GWAs

implemented in her class, she argued that she employed role plays and debates only. On the other hand,

the activities most observed in class were discussions and conversations. There was just one debate

carried out by students. Contrary to this, discussions and conversations were the most observed GWAs,

but those activities were not pointed out by the collaborative teacher. Significantly, the specific activities
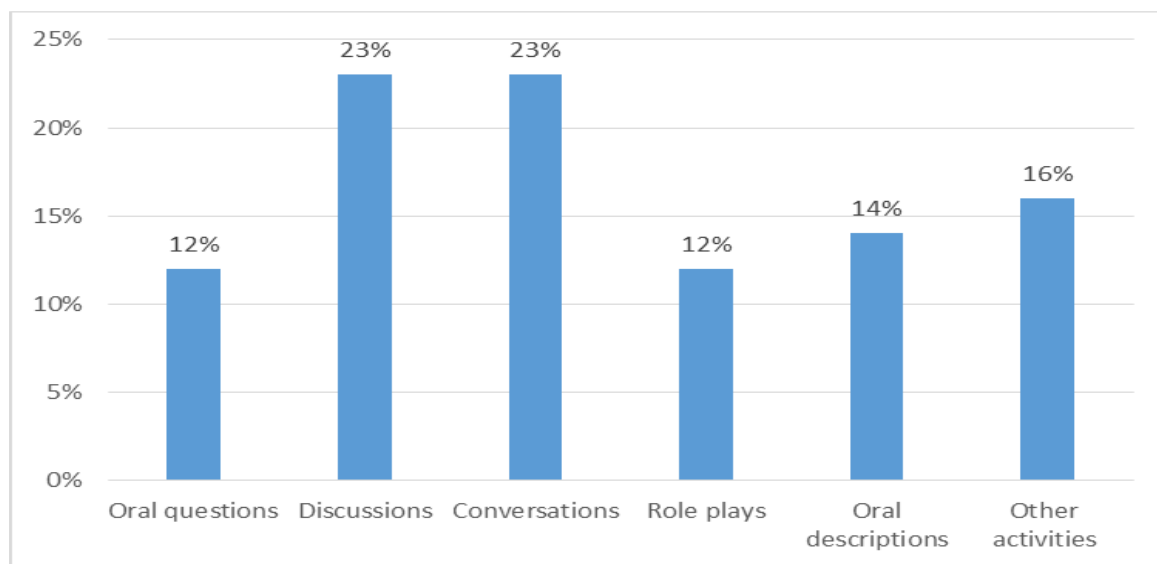
Figure 2. Group work activities observed. This information was obtained from
Instrument 3: Observation.

mentioned by students of the course, the teachers interviewed and the ones recorded during the

observations are role plays, debates, and discussions. In fact, role plays and discussions are GWAs

recommended by Lazaraton (2001) to enhance speaking.

Through the observations, the behavior behind discussions and conversations was also analyzed.

Indeed, some of learners' reactions when discussing were that they showed to be confident, comfortable,

and relaxed. Learners even had fun because they joked about the meaning of some words, and they did

not care about taking risks to make mistakes. During the conversation activities, they sometimes seemed

to be confused about the questions they had to answer and doubtful about the meaning of words, and this made them take extra time to formulate an answer. However, they were talking and laughing probably because they were relaxed and enjoyed the task. They even worked quickly and talked freely in English. Different elements of interaction were recorded when observing these activities (see Table 3). For instance, a repetitive type of interaction was the use of gestures to get meaning across. Students tended to take a passive or active role; sometimes they decided not to work while other classmates participated. There was no control over their decision to be active or not. They also used Spanish a lot when they were not monitored, but they used English a lot too. When planning a role play, they used Spanish even though

Table 3

Interaction Behavior during Group Activities

Positive interaction behavior	Negative interaction behavior
Use of gestures	Use of Spanish
Active role	Passive role
Use of English	No control over Spanish use
Peer correction	

Note. These behavior elements were recorded through Instrument 3: Observation.

they acted out a full English situation. Additionally, some peer correction took place as well; learners corrected others when participating.

According to the curriculum of the Associates' Degree in English, the methodology that can be used by the teacher of the course English Integrated Skills I is an "eclectic approach with emphasis on communicative activities for the teaching of the second or foreign language" (Chavez et al., 2008, p.10). During the observation period, the researchers could notice that, at least in the GWAs developed in the class, the collaborative teacher did seem to follow a specific method in the design of the GWAs. Group work as a strategy to learn a language is supported by methodologies such as Community Language

Learning (CLL) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-based Instruction (TBI), and Cooperative Learning (CL). However, no principles of a specific methodology could be outlined in the information gathered with the three instruments. In view of this information, the researchers considered that there is a necessity of focusing on a specific methodology for learners to work in groups effectively. The benefit of doing so is that the positive effects of GWAs to improve oral interaction can be enhanced and the negative effects can be diminished with suitable techniques by the teacher and learners.

To implement GWAs effectively, roles should be assigned to students so that they can participate in a balanced way. In this particular study, it could be noticed that learners did not have a specific role in the group to keep everyone engaged in the activity. Only the most confident and proficient students were the ones who participated the most. During several observations, there were students who remained silent and did not contribute to the activity; these situations impeded some learners' oral practice of the language. Additionally, it was observed that the use of Spanish was constant during the GWAs, which may be provoked by the low proficiency level of the students. Furthermore, the influence of the collaborative teacher upon students' interaction regarding GWAs was another factor that contributed to the use of the target language. Students kept on communicating in English while the teacher monitored them; however, when she was out of the room, the students forgot about the activity and switched to Spanish immediately. In sum, even though GWAs were put into action in the class, the strategy did not fulfill its goal in most of the members of the group; the researchers found out that the presence of the teacher was necessary for students to accomplish the goal of the activities efficiency.

Effects of Group-work Activities on the Students' Oral Interaction

Positive and negative effects on the implementation of GWAs were found. The main benefits that this type of activity promotes are confidence, socialization, practice, and linguistic improvement. On the contrary, the overuse of Spanish and non-participant students were clear drawbacks found. In the EFL class, group work is definitely necessary to have learners practicing the target language orally, but this

technique can have several effects which teachers have to deal with in order to implement successful group work. Nunan and Lamb (2000) claimed that "group work…has been considered one of the main changes to the dynamics of classroom interaction wrought by students-centered teaching…[and it] is able to increase the amount of active speaking and listening undertaken by all the learners in the language class" (p. 142). As a result, grouping students to develop conversation, discussions, or any other activity could implement student-centered classes, but these activities have different effects on the oral interaction of the students. For instance, Doff (1988) stated that "…group-work can help shy students, who would never say anything in a whole class activity" (para. 14). In order to find out the effects that GWAs have on students of the course English Integrated Skills I, a set of research instruments was administered. These effects could be gathered from the data of the students' questionnaire, the teachers' interview, and during the observation period.

It is necessary to know what the students think about GWAs in order to compare their perspectives with other effects found in the interviews and during the observation period. The answers recorded in the questionnaire reflected that they had many points of view about s. For instance, they claimed that these types of activities are challenging, and that they feel the need of having more oral practice. Also, a significant number of learners think that they experienced linguistic improvement while they socialized with their peers. They also found opportunities to practice the language, and they claimed to feel confident. These findings have to do with CL as a means to achieve effective oral interaction. Díaz-Barriga and Hernández (2007) assured that CL focuses on the socio-affective factors of students, increasing their self-esteem, sense of belongingness and sense of activity that results in an enjoyable learning process (p. 390). Besides improving their skills of the foreign language, learners also regarded these types of activities as a technique to socialize in the classroom (see Figure 3). Outlining, it can be concluded that confidence, linguistic improvement, effective socialization, and linguistic practice and

improvement are substantial effects that students experience when they collaborate as a group to
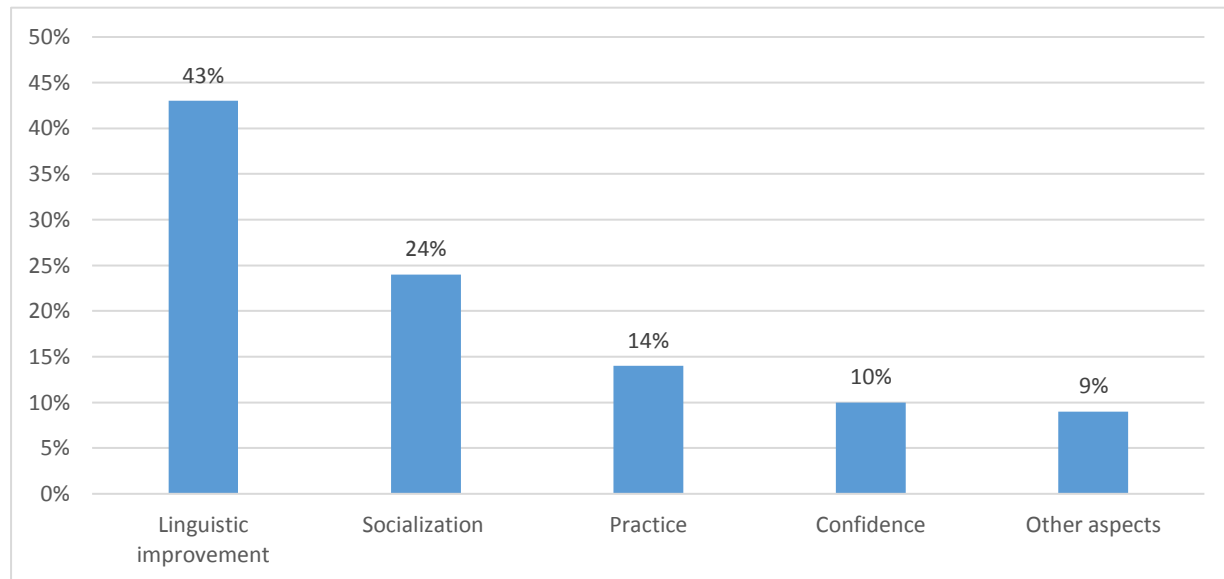
Figure 3. Benefits of GWAs according to students. This information was obtained from Instrument 1: Questionnaire for students.

reach a goal.

       The information revealed that students recognized that they can improve their speaking skill because, in their opinions, there is linguistic improvement, practice, confidence, and socialization. Interestingly, the linguistic improvement was the one most addressed by the informants. Their reactions toward GWAs were positive as well (see Figure 4). During the observation period, it was recorded that students seemed to have fun, feel comfortable, and relaxed. They also laughed a lot, and talked about topics of their interests and not only about topics of the tasks. But, they also had negative reactions such as confusion, tension, and doubts. They made use of Spanish constantly, and some of them were quiet during the development of the task. The observations gave room to the finding that learners had more positive reactions than negative ones. As a result, their opinions were not opposed to the behaviors observed. The current and former teachers interviewed also gave their opinion about the effects caused by GWAs.
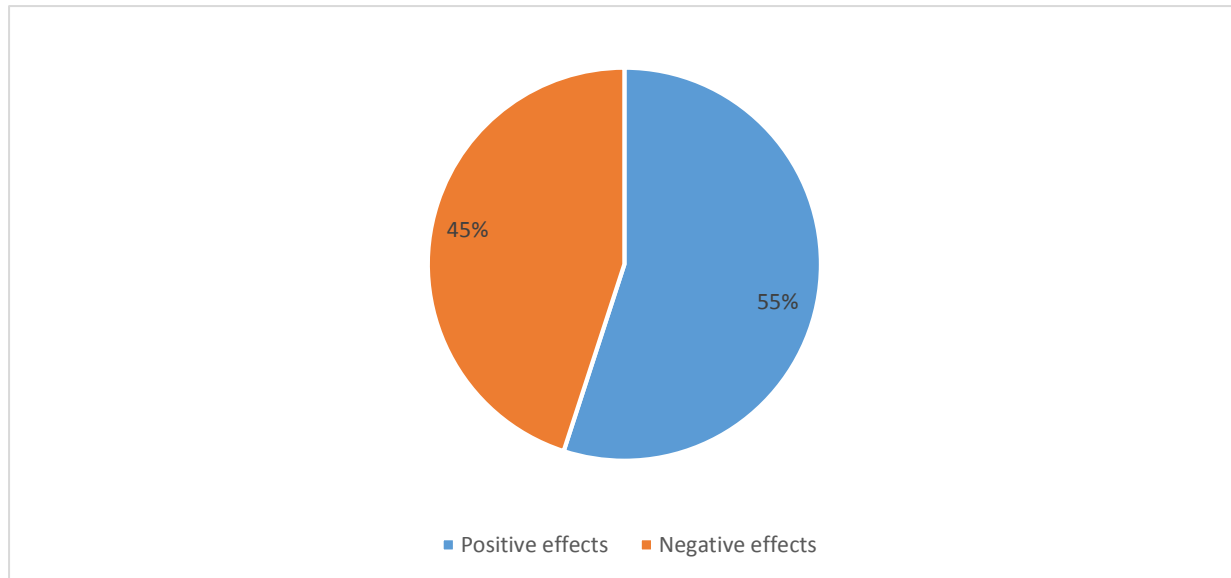
Figure 4. Effects of GWAs according to students. This information was obtained from Instrument 1: Questionnaire for students.

The positive effects the teachers claimed in the interviews concerned the students' confidence and autonomy during teamwork. The former teacher claimed that learners consider GWAs as chances to improve the oral interaction since this strategy gives space, freedom, and confidence to shy students without the teacher's interference. Other benefits cited are peer feedback and cooperation in the learning process. Adding more, she declared that students learn how to become leaders and forget about shyness. Contrary to this, the collaborative teacher argued that she did not consider that students perceive GWAs as opportunities to advance in the foreign language learning; it is the teacher who provides them with the means to share their knowledge instead. She mentioned that there are occasions to promote cooperation in the tasks, and the affective filter decreases and confidence increases. Peer feedback is considered an effect when learners solve exercises in groups. As a final comment, she stated that GWAs themselves are a source of opportunities for the linguistic progress. Both teachers agreed that students increase their confidence when they solve an exercise in groups.

It was concluded that peer feedback was another positive effect in students while working in groups. In the questionnaire administered to the learners, there was an important question about a type of

advantage that the students can benefit from during GWAs (see Figure 5). This advantage consists of the

possibility of having students taking feedback when they interact orally in groups. As a result, the

participants were asked about the possibility of receiving feedback from their peers during GWAs.
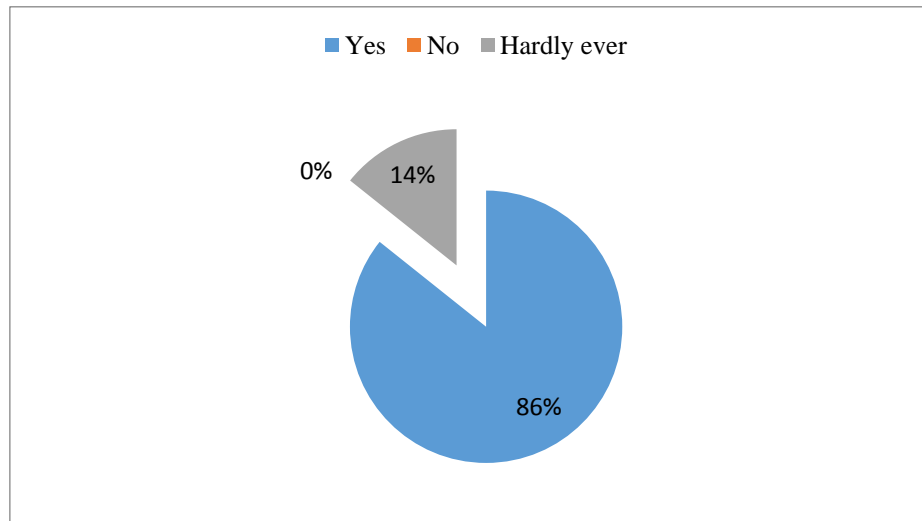

Figure 5. Feedback provided by teammates during GWAs. The graph shows the results obtained by means of the questionnaire administered to the students. It was an open question in which they were required to talk about their experiences regarding peer feedback during GWAs. The information was taken from the students' questionnaire.

According to the data collected in the questionnaire, it was found out that the students affirmed

that they received feedback from their peers when working in groups. Among their answers, the

informants assured that they learned new vocabulary and new structures to express themselves orally.

Most of them said that they did receive feedback. As it is presented in the graph above, 86% of students

said that they are corrected by their classmates. On the other side, 14% of the participants claimed that

they hardly ever got feedback when they worked in groups. The information revealed that none of the

informants confessed that they did not receive feedback during GWAs. In the interview administered to

the teachers of the course, the former teacher said that one of the positive effects promoted by s is peer

feedback. Also, the current teacher declared that peer feedback took place among students while they

worked in teams. As noticed, peer feedback is an effect fostered by GWAs. This effect serves for

increasing students' linguistic improvement in a way that does not affect the affective side of learners since, if the teacher corrects them, they may experience a negative attitude.
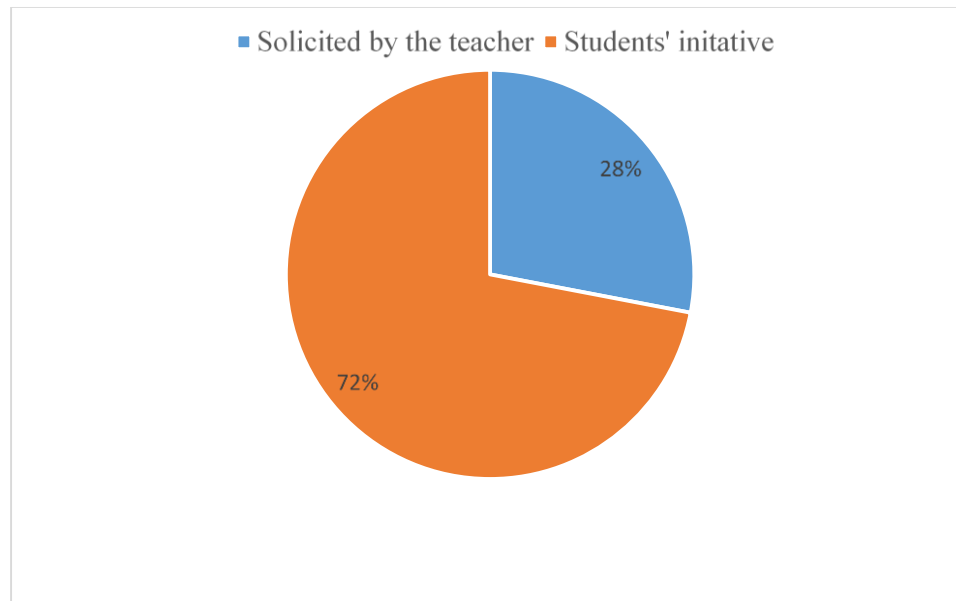
Figure 6. Frequency of the use of the spoken English in the GWAs. The graph shows the frequency in which students used the target language either because of the teacher' solicitude or their own decision. The information was collected from the instrument number three: Observation.

Another effect detected during the investigation is the use of both languages, the target language and the mother tongue of the learners when they develop GWAs. However, it is necessary to confirm the frequency in which the participants used either the target language or the mother tongue. In the observations, it was documented that students made use of the target language because of two main reasons, which are their own initiative or their teacher's solicitude (see Figure 6). As another aspect to research, students gave their opinions about the use of the two languages, Spanish and English, when they worked in groups, and the observed frequency in which English was used because of the teachers' call or students' own decision during the observations. It was found that students mostly used both in GWAs (see Figure 7). The learners' perception concerning their use of either English or Spanish when they work in groups is balanced. Actually, 60% of the learners assured that they speak English while 20% confessed

that they use Spanish and English to communicate in GWAs. In like manner, 10% said that they use

Spanish and another 10% did not answer. It is noticed that more than the half of participants confirmed to

speak English during GWAs. Another aspect to analyze was the times in which the use of English was

demanded by the teacher or used by the students' own decision. It was found that students mostly used

both, their native and the target language in GWAs (see Figure 7).
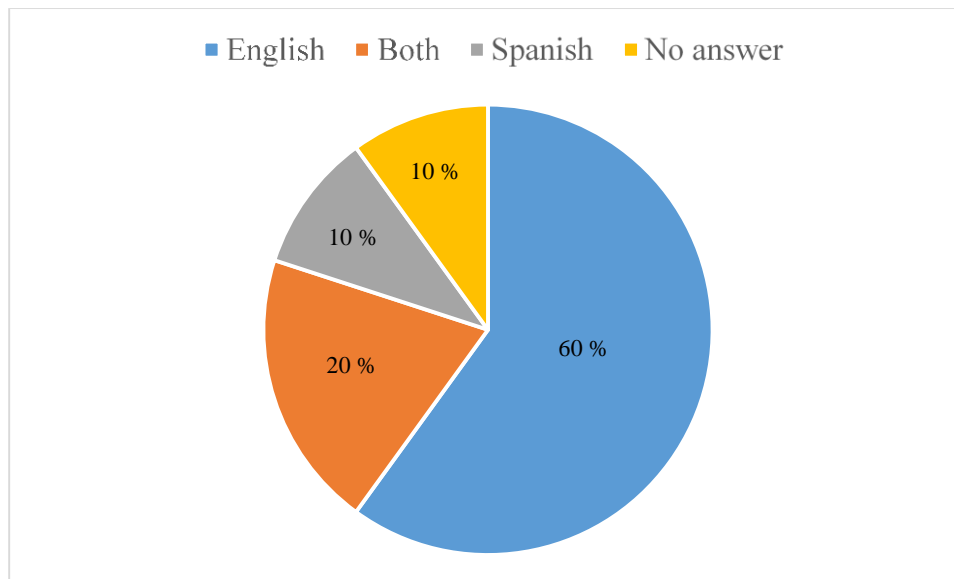
Figure 7. Use of the Target Language in GWAs. The graph shows information about students' use
of the language during GWAs. The data were taken from instrument number one: Students'
Questionnaire.

It was recorded through the observations that 28% of the population used English once their

teacher demanded it and 72% of them made use of the target language because of their own initiative (see

Figure 8). Even though it is a must to use the target language, the observations demonstrated that the

learners used English not only because their teacher demanded it but also because of their own decision to

practice the language. In regard to the effects found in the interviews, the former teacher and the

collaborative teacher mentioned that among the negative effects, the use of the mother tongue is a

problem when students work in groups. The current teacher also supported the fact that students overuse

Spanish during GWAs, but she recognized that during the last weeks her learners have been more familiar

with oral interaction in English since she is constantly monitoring them. Another effect is the fact that during GWAs, there was a number of students who did not participate in the activities either because there was one student who over participated or because of their low proficiency. This negative effect hinders their possibility to advance in their learning of the target language.

Chapter four presented the data analysis and the findings originated from the triangulation of the three sources of information regarding the effects on the oral interaction caused by interacting in groups in students enrolled in English Integrated Skills I. The activities used by the former and current teacher of the course were delimited as well as the ones they recommended to use while doing group work. Knowing the actual role of group work in the class helped researchers to design an action plan from the evidence unraveled. It can also help to add some innovations that might work positively for the students' oral performance. In addition, the effects that these GWAs have on oral interaction were determined. It was found out that group activities bring about negative and positive effects in the learners. This information was essential for the researchers to design strategies to overcome the negative effects and maximize the positive effects. After the data was analyzed, the researchers designed an action plan that is aimed at contributing to expand the use of GWAs to improve oral interaction in the EFL class.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The objective of this study was to explore the effects that GWAs have on the oral interaction of students enrolled in the course English Integrated Skills I. The questions stated before in this study could be answered through the data analysis done in Chapter Four. After this analysis, some conclusions could be stated by the researchers which are significant to contribute to the teachers as well as learners of the aforesaid course. The following conclusions were stated based on the questions which are core of this research.

Techniques Employed in the Speaking/ Listening/Reading Classes to Promote the Use of GWAs

The study exhibited a variety of activities recommended by Lazaraton (2001) to foster speaking in the EFL class. In fact, in the course English Integrated Skills I, there was a variety of s, which were mentioned by the students and the teachers that could also be observed by the researchers in the classroom. Among the GWAs mentioned, the most found in the three sources of information are role plays, debates, and discussions. Based on this, it could be determined that the students were provided with several opportunities to develop their oral abilities in the target language. The activities most mentioned by students were role plays, discussion, listening exercises, and reading exercises. The two teachers interviewed pointed out that role plays and debates are reliable to promote oral interaction during GWAs. The most observed GWAs were conversations and discussions. The activities used in the class are generally traditional when it comes to group work. There were also activities such as board games, picture description, discussions, and writing tasks developed in the class. The verification of such GWAs was one of the purposes of this study. However, it is necessary to comment whether the activities themselves could really help learners to interact orally.

Even though the activities developed in groups observed were many and of several types, most of them did not totally achieve the purpose of enhancing the learners' oral interaction. One of the obstacles was the constant use of Spanish, which meant less oral performance in the target language. It was

observed that learners spoke English mainly when they were monitored by the teacher. Nunan (as cited in Lazaraton, 2001, p. 110) established that the interference of the mother tongue is one of the challenges that students face when learning a foreign language. Additionally, most of the students declared that they used both English and Spanish to function appropriately in the GWAs since they were not linguistically ready to keep a whole conversation held in the target language.

Students' mother tongue was overused when the teacher was out of learners' sight because they usually switched to Spanish purposefully. This situation suggests that the presence of the teacher in the class is an element that keeps students using the target language. However, the observations also revealed that students spoke English because of their own decision to practice the language. It was also noted that some students did not participate actively in the GWAs while others kept on speaking all the time. Some other elements were found. Illustrating, the majority of students' reactions toward working in groups were positive. Students seemed to be confident, relaxed, and comfortable, they had fun, laughed, made jokes, and there was an increase of talk when they were grouped to work. During this oral interaction, there were times when some doubt and confusion took place, but the peer feedback among students helped them to overcome this situation. Learners also made use of gestures and Spanish to participate while some students did not participate actively in the tasks. This could be caused by either the presence of talkative students or because of students' low proficiency.

Another conclusion that surfaced during this research is the fact that there was no evidence of any specific method followed to design the GWAs carried out in the course. Even though teachers can base their teaching on an Eclectic Approach that allows them to follow any methodology in their teaching, it was difficult to identify the one used to plan the work performed by students of English Integrated Skills I. From the researchers' point of view, it is imperative that the GWAs used in this context are designed under the principles of a method like the Cooperative Learning that promotes learning as a goal not only for a student but also for a relevant number of learners.

Effects of Group-work Activities on the Students' Oral Interaction

The conclusions related to the effects caused by GWAs unraveled positive as well as negative repercussions. Basically, the positive effects were reflected on the improvement of the students' oral interactions since they developed confidence, socializing skills, practice, and peer feedback that led to a linguistic improvement. Peer feedback is a factor that gives value to GWAs regarding oral interaction because students learn from each other by giving room to cooperation in the learning process. According to the former teacher, learners develop autonomy and leadership when they perform as a group. She also assured that peer feedback is a significant positive effect provided by GWAs. In the case of the current teacher, she considered that cooperation, confidence, linguistic progress and peer feedback take place in group activities. Students also learn because of their appropriate attitude toward the idea of working with their peers even though these activities are somehow challenging for them. This aspect was reflected on their mostly positive reactions observed while they worked in teams. Having a positive attitude is likely to make learners receive feedback positively and significantly; this might not have the same effect if it were the teacher the one who makes the corrections.

In the case of the negative results, the use of both English and Spanish and the presence of non-participant learners obstructed the equal enhancement of speaking during their oral interactions. The overuse of the mother tongue was present in group activities, but this is generally expected in beginners since they were just initiating their foreign language learning. However, the fact that they speak Spanish in an English class when working in groups, especially in a course in which the target language is the object of the study, is basically a non-positive effect that can be expected by teachers. Regarding this premise, it was discovered that the teacher's monitoring was one of the reasons that made learners speak more English than Spanish. Hence, during GWAs students spoke in both languages. In addition to this effect, there were non-participant learners observed during GWAs. The researchers believe that these students were not willing to participate because of their level, shyness, or their passive role in the

activities. This situation should be addressed by teachers since this behavior could stop students from taking advantage of group work to improve their oral interaction. Undoubtedly, learners experience negative and positive effects with respect to GWAs, but the positive outcomes outnumbered the negative ones.

Recommendations

According to the findings and conclusions generated from this case study, the researchers submitted some recommendations for the teachers and students of the course English Integrated Skills I. These recommendations can help teachers of the course to take advantage of GWAs to improve students' oral interaction. Additionally, the recommendations can also help learners to figure out the usefulness and benefits that these types of activities have when it comes to work with other people in the class.

Recommendations for the teachers of English Integrated Skills I. The teachers of the English Integrated Skills I course should include different types of GWAs based on principles of a particular methodology. The researchers recommend the Cooperative Learning as a suitable methodology to design GWAs. It involves principles that support student-student interaction, putting the responsibility for learning upon students' shoulders. However, the activities should be carefully designed so that the negative effects detected during the data analysis can be minimized. For example, it is recommended to assign roles to each learner in order to avoid non-participant students, and keep them communicating in the target language as much as possible. Furthermore, activities that are directed to help learners who are shy or introverted could help them become more active participants in the activities that are developed in groups. There is a possibility that students may feel anxious when they produce orally in the target language in a beginning English course. That is why the implementation of group work to promote oral interaction is essential. Additionally, the language instructors should not limit the activities only to the traditional ones such as role plays, conversations, or oral-question-answer exercises. More innovative GWAs involving authentic material related to topics of interest for students might let them to become

more interested in speaking English. In this case, it is recommended that teachers implement structured activities which provide students with clear steps to follow. This aspect may avoid confusion and waste of time in the class.

Another recommendation is to include grouping techniques that arrange students with different proficiency levels of the language because those students with a low level may learn from their peers with an upper level. As Xanthou and Pavlou claimed, "…gathering [learners] of varying abilities in same groups has been proposed by many researchers as an effective strategy to promote academic development of students…" (2008, p. 3). As a result, group interaction including level diversity serves for helping low-level learners become active participants who generate their own ideas and points of view. In this sense, the passive learners might feel motivated to speak and be heard by their classmates in small groups. Those with a higher level may provide their peers with feedback. This element is very helpful since students may prefer to be corrected by a partner than by the teacher, and the learning outcomes would be more significant for them. It is also essential to recommend language instructors to guide and train active students so that they can help others. Moreover, by monitoring peer feedback during group work, the teacher can be aware of the linguistic knowledge of students and provide them with assertive explanations of the linguistic aspects that require clarification. Thus, peer correction is helpful not only for students but also for teachers to make holistic evaluations in regard to the students' general knowledge.

Strategies to control the use of Spanish when the learners are performing in groups must be designed to diminish its use during students' oral interactions. Since the participants' context is homogeneous in terms of the language, it is difficult to avoid the use of the mother tongue, but controlling it may be significant in terms of making students get acquainted with its use. Asking students with a low proficiency level to stop using Spanish is not useful and, in any case, teachers cannot force them to speak in the target language. There are several techniques that the teacher can use to control the mother tongue interference. First, he or she can explain learners why it is important to use the target language as much as

they can in class, and even let them know the advantages of interacting in English during GWAs. One of

the students' fears might be to make mistakes in class, but teachers need to explain that these are

necessary emotions to reflect on their linguistic ability and to have more control of their improvement.

This would help shy students and low proficient ones to gain confidence and motivation to speak English.

The second technique is to create an environment in which students feel comfortable and relaxed.

Through this atmosphere in the classroom, the students' affective filter lowers and gives room to speaking

improvement. Another recommendation is to include some GWAs designed for young people so that they

have fun and feel better in class. The teachers can also use simple strategies such as prizes and

competitive-in-group-techniques to control the use of the mother tongue in the GWAs. All these

recommendations might help the participants use Spanish less frequently in the class and take more

advantage of GWAs.

Peer feedback was observed as one of the phenomena caused by group activities. In this regard,

the researchers recommend that the collaborative teacher include peer-assessment, self-assessment, and

group assessment activities for the purpose of making the students aware of their strengths and

weaknesses in their learning. Assessment must be based on both the linguistic and affective domain. In

the case of the linguistic area, oral performance can be assessed in aspects like pronunciation, grammar,

intonation, and vocabulary. Students can also be assessed in terms of their collaboration and socialization

during the activities. In terms of the affective part, students can evaluate their feelings and reactions

toward the activity and how they feel before and after it. Through paying attention to their behavior

during GWAs, students could gain awareness of their emotions and have more control of their feelings to

function appropriately in the class. Indeed, assessment is an effective tool not only for the teacher but also

for students to enhance oral performance, cooperation, and personality traits.

A final recommendation for teachers is to implement metacognitive-based strategies in order to

provide the students with background knowledge and practice to reinforce learning in the activities in

class. These types of strategies work in order to help students learn new vocabulary and prepare them for the coming classes. MSs are likely to make learners perform better in GWAs since they require them to be more conscious of the subject they are learning. For instance, if the learners look for videos of recipes and write key vocabulary about the topic before presenting a recipe orally in groups, they may feel more confident and speak more appropriately. Another advantage of promoting the use of MS is that learners become more responsible and independent in their learning, and this makes them more acquainted with the target language. As a conclusion, MSs can be part of the teacher's methodology to help learners improve their learning of the FL. This improvement can also result in efficient performance, which may benefit the group because of the knowledge and feedback that can be shared during the GWAs.

Recommendations for students of English Integrated Skills I. The researchers suggest students to regard GWAs as one of the main sources of improvement in their oral interactions. There are many researches like the ones carried out by Sellito (2011), Meng (2009), Chevez (2009), and Hernández (2006) among others that have proved the effectiveness of these types of activities to enhance oral interaction. The main benefits derived from GWAs are linguistic improvement, socialization, peer feedback, and confidence. Generally, the participants have a few opportunities to speak English out of the classroom. However, by means of taking roles and assuming responsibility, the students can practice speaking in the foreign language. If the learners' proficiency level is low, the group activities might help them to increase their knowledge by interacting with their peers. On the other side, the students who are highly proficient can correct their peers and be corrected as well. As a consequence, team work may be an effective alternative for exercising the oral performance because of the benefits highlighted before.

Active learners should motivate shy and quiet members of the group by asking them their opinions about the topic discussed, eliciting their ideas, and making them feel committed to the task. Since active and extroverted students may perceive oral expression as less threatening than shy students may do, they should incite those peers who are not risk takers to express their ideas and participate actively. Learners

who are effective communicators in oral tasks can become helpers in GWAs because they can have a closer interaction with those classmates who find it difficult to produce orally. Passive students can feel motivated by talkative and risk-taking classmates to improve their level of proficiency and obtain a better attitude as a result. As a consequence, shy students' oral performance can be reinforced by collaborating and interacting with high-level students in group work.

Students must take advantage of GWAs for enhancing their oral interaction. Learners must practice what they already know about the language and have more chances to learn new vocabulary and grammatical structures during the GWAs. Social abilities can be stimulated as well by cooperating with group members to reach a common goal. Students can also take into account that learning does not have to be boring. Learning can be more interesting if it involves group work since social and oral interaction can take place. The students should reduce their use of Spanish by implementing strategies that help them to negotiate meaning when they interact with others orally. For example, making gestures, saying synonyms, using drills, and chunks can help them to express everything they want to say in English. Even though Spanish is somehow necessary considering the students' level, its overuse should be minimized as much as possible so that students can maximize the learning they are gaining in the class. In fact, GWAs serve as effective opportunities to enhance oral and social abilities. Those are just some reasons why students need to take advantage of group activities in order to improve their speech.

The last recommendation for students is the use of MSs which may help them to have more control over their learning. When students think about their own learning, they are clear about the goals they want to reach and aware of their linguistic weaknesses. The metacognitive strategies (MSs) recommended by Shannon (2008) are predicting outcomes, evaluating work, self-assessing, self-questioning, selecting strategies, using discourse, critiquing, and revising. Through employing suitable strategies for specific situations that involve team work, learners can regulate their current learning and improve not only speaking but also reading, listening, and writing as well. That is why the researchers

recommend students to include metacognition in their learning process, and teachers should also help them to develop metacognitive skills by incorporating active reflection throughout the learning process.

Action Plan

This section exhibits the action plan that may be employed to take advantage of the GWAs proposed to enhance the oral interaction of students enrolled in the English Integrated Skills I course of the Associate's Degree in English. This action plan aims at providing the teacher as well as students with a set of GWAs designed under the principles of the Cooperative Learning and metacognitive strategies. Also, the action plan aims to control de use of Spanish, to take advantage of peer feedback, and to control the affective factors that might influence the oral performance of learners during the GWAs. In order to reach effectiveness in the implementation of this action plan, it is necessary to count on the willingness and collaboration of the authorities and teachers of the Associate's Degree in English at UNA.

Objective. To provide English Integrated Skills I teachers with a set of structured GWAs and students with a metacognitive strategy-based activities based on the principles of the Cooperative Learning so that they can maximize group work as a strategy that can increase the oral interactions in the EFL classroom.

Description. The action plan is named "Making *Group Work* Work." This proposal is designed to solve the problems that obstruct the effective implementation and use of GWAs to enhance oral interactions. The proposal consists of a teacher's guide containing thirteen innovative GWAs that were based on the principles of Cooperative Learning and adapted to the topics stated in the course outline. The activities were created by Kagan (1990) based on his structural approach. Kagan's structural approach for Cooperative Learning consists of "the creation, analysis and systematic application of structures, or content free ways of organizing social interaction in the classroom" (p. 12). For the purpose of reaching the objective of this action plan, the researchers consider that the structured activities will help learners take more advantage of group work as a strategy to improve their oral abilities. This teacher's guide also

includes assessment for students to evaluate aspects such as oral performance in terms of their oral contributions during the GWAs, the affective domain that is about how they feel when participating in the team work activities, the group collaboration that is based on students' support to accomplish the goals of the group-work activity, the individual performance which serves for evaluating students' individual oral interactions in the GWAs, the group oral enactment that evaluates the whole group's oral performance, and peers' performance in which each group member should evaluate one of his or her peers.

The researchers also propose a students' guide that is based on Metacognitive strategies (MSs) appropriate for the students' enhancement of their FL learning. The name of the proposal is *Metacognitive Strategies for Self-learning Enhancement* and consists of recommendations for applying seven MSs that can be included in learners' current learning tasks so that they put them into practice during group work. Some advantages of using these strategies are: students become aware of their linguistic weaknesses and plan ways to overcome them, they can be more conscious of the more suitable ways to learn according to their learning styles, and students have more control of how they think and use this thinking for attaining new knowledge. The MSs are distributed through fifteen weeks of speaking classes.

Benefits. The implementation of Making *Group Work* work might have the following array of benefits:

1. It provides students with opportunities for practicing the already acquired knowledge of the language.
2. It promotes the collaboration among leaners to reach a common goal.
3. It helps learners to build good relationships with others.
4. It provides strategies for the teacher to have more control over the amount of Spanish used in the class.
5. It gives students a sense of community in the classroom.
6. It gives room for learners to provide feedback among themselves.

7. It gives students responsibility for their learning.

The use of MSs can provide students with the following advantages:

1. Students might be more conscious of the learning they are gaining.

2. They can work on their weaknesses and maximize their strengths.

3. They can regulate their process of learning.

4. Learners can be more acquainted with their learning styles and take advantage of this in order to enhance the learning of the English language.

5. Motivation increases, boosting learners' interest as a result.

6. Self-efficacy might be another characteristic that learners can experience using MSs.

7. Students can regulate what they are learning since they have more control of the aspects that they know and do not know.

8. Learners might evaluate their linguistic performance on the foreign language.

9. The success of a learner using MSs may inspire others to follow in his/her steps.

Implications. In order to achieve success in the learners' oral performance, teachers and students of the English Integrated Skills I course should consider the following implications related to this proposal.

1. The implementation of this action plan is subjected to the authorities and teachers of the Associates' Program in English to accept the use of such GWAs in the English Integrated Skills I course.

2. The teachers should take into account that some activities require previously prepared material.

3. The teachers should be the first ones to encourage students to use the MSs and hand them out the material designed in this study.

4. Some GWAs require that the teacher provide students with clear explanations since the activities should follow clear steps to accomplish their goal.

5. Even though every week of the course has its specific GWA, the teacher can use the activities proposed for each topic or adapt them to others.

Group- work Activities Proposed in the Action Plan

The sections of the proposal Making *Group Work* Work are delineated as follows.

Grouping technique. This section is designed to provide the teacher with different techniques to group students depending on aspects like proficiency levels, personal preferences, and aspects related to the topic that will be studied.

Spanish minimizer. This is a strategy that aims at controlling the amount of the mother tongue used by learners in the class. It is included in some of the sessions.

Assigning roles. This section consists of different roles that are given to students in order to fulfill a specific function in the group during the GWA. They are recommended according to the activity that will be carried out.

Description of the activity. In this part, there is a detailed description of the steps to follow in the structured activity. Students should accomplish every step to finish the activity successfully.

Linguistic objective. The linguistic objectives of the activities are taken from the chronogram of the English Integrated Skills I course.

Assessment

This section contains either self, peer, or group assessment that learners complete after finishing the activity. The aim of this part is that students can reflect on their oral performance, affective domain, or the groups' general performance.

The group-work activities proposed for each week are described as follows.

Week One: School Life around the World
Speaking Objective: To introduce oneself to others by sharing personal information.
GWA: Find the Fiction
Grouping Technique: Ice cream stick

Roles: Encourager, time keeper, focus keeper
Assessment: Self-assessment

Week Two: Experiencing Nature
Speaking objective: To narrate a story by telling events based on pictures to reach a common goal.
GWA: Blind Sequence
Spanish minimizer: A Spanish monster
Grouping Technique: The animal technique
Roles: Leader, Time keeper, Wildcard: Checker
Assessment: Self-evaluation

Week Three: Living to Eat or Eating to Live?
Speaking objective: To compare different dishes by describing food preparations.
Activity: Brainstorming
Spanish minimizer: The radar
Grouping technique: The color technique
Roles: Speed sergeant, sultan of silly, synergy guru, and sergeant support.
Assessment: Peer-evaluation

Week Four: In the Community
Speaking Objective: To describe a neighborhood by giving oral directions.
GWA: Numbered Heads Together
Spanish minimizer: The treasures' box
Grouping technique: Low/high level groups
Spanish minimizer: Any member of the group shows a Spanish monster each time a member speaks in Spanish.
Roles: Innovator, innovator 2, prioritizer, and time keeper.
Assessment: Peer- assessment

Week Five: In the community
Speaking objective: To describe locations by answering questions about directions.
GWA: Fan –N- Pick
Grouping technique: The map technique
Roles: Time keeper, reader, checker
Self-assessment: Self –assessment

Week Six: Home
Speaking objective: To discuss advantages and disadvantages of living in different places.
GWA: Talking chips
Grouping technique: The furniture technique
Roles: Encourager, time keeper, focus keeper
Assessment: Group assessment / peer assessment

Week Seven: Cultures of the World
Speaking objective: To give informative speeches about specific cultural characteristics.
GWA: Jigsaw
Grouping technique: The letter box
Roles: Encourager, time keeper, focus keeper
Assessment: peer assessment/ self-assessment

Week Eight: Entertainment and the Media
Speaking objective: To talk about famous people by summarizing a news report**.**
GWA: Carousel feedback
Grouping technique: The initials technique
Roles: Designer, time keeper, elicitor, coach
Assessment: self-assessment/ peer-assessment

Week Nine: Holy week

Week Ten: Listening/speaking, grammar/writing, and reading tests

Week Eleven: Entertainment and the media
Speaking objective: To exchange information by asking and answering yes/no questions.
Activity: Inside-Outside Circle
Grouping technique: The music technique
Roles: Asker and listener.
Self-assessment: Group assessment

Week Twelve: Social Life
Speaking objective: To discuss current social problems by giving points of view.
Activity: Rally Table
Grouping technique: The picture technique
Roles: Encourager, time keeper.
Group-assessment: Group- assessment

Week Thirteen: Customs, Celebrations and Holidays
GWA: Spin-n-Review
Speaking Objective: To express facts by giving opinions about cultural characteristics.
Grouping technique: The random technique:
Roles: Turn captain, innovator, time keeper, quite captain, gate keeper.
Assessment: Self-assessment

Week Fourteen: Science and technology
Speaking Objective: To discuss technology by sharing knowledge about new electronic devices.
GWA: The telephone
Grouping technique: Synonym Technique

Roles: Praiser, reporter, time keeper, recorder, facilitator
Assessment: Self-assessment

Week Fifteen: Science and technology (review)
Speaking Objective: To provide information by sharing previous knowledge, points of view, and opinions.
GWA: Round Table
Grouping technique: *Low/high level groups*
Roles: Captain, time keeper, presenter, praiser and focus keeper
Assessment: Self-assessment

Metacognitive-strategy Based Activities (Students' Guide)

This is a booklet composed of activities designed by taking into account MSs. The strategies are stated by Shannon and aim to encourage students to handle background information, inquire in their own knowledge, investigate and assess their works done. The activities are a complement of the Teacher's Guide. The MSs proposed by the already mentioned author are:

Using discourse – Students discuss ideas with each other and their teacher. *Self-questioning* – Students use questions to check their own knowledge as they are learning. *Predicting outcomes* – Helps students to understand what kind of information they might need to successfully solve a problem. *Critiquing* – Students provide feedback to other students about their work in a constructive way. *Selecting strategies* – Students decide which strategies are useful for a given task. *Self-assessing* – Students reflect on their learning and determine how well they have learned something. *Revising* – Students return their work after receiving feedback. *Using directed or selective thinking* – Students choose consciously to follow a specific *line of thinking*. (2008, p. 19)

Consequently, the activities were designed in relation to the topics of the English Integrated Skills I course. Some strategies are appropriate for homework assignments, revising tasks, and assessment works as well. As a result, each activity has a different strategy, topic, and methodology to guide self-directed learners. Finally, the students' booklet was designed to match the MSs previously described for

the students to have more "tools" (background knowledge, practice, etc.) for classroom's participation so that they can take more advantage of the oral interactions in the class.

The activities for weeks one and eleven include questions for students about facts of both their classmates and famous people, and discussions related to what they know about those celebrities orally. These activities complement the strategy about using discourse. The activities for weeks two and fourteen are based on the strategy named "self-questioning," and the students have to answer questions about their knowledge of words related to nature and connectors and also about the performance of the task assigned to the groups. Once this is done, they have to write sentences. The next activity is about "predicting outcomes" in which the learners have to investigate about vocabulary related to recipes, and then look for videos of recipes to identify and write vocabulary. The fourth activity consists of writing vocabulary about the topic to be studied, and the strategy is predicting outcomes. Activity number five is about providing feedback from their classmates' oral performance in the activity "Fan-n-Pick." The strategy is about "Critiquing." Moreover, the strategy "using directed or selective thinking" is portrayed in three activities (weeks six, thirteen, and fifteen). In these activities, the learners are assigned to express their critical thinking about advantages and disadvantages of living in both in an apartment and in a house, foreign customs, and the role of technology in our lives in written form. The activity programmed for week seventh is about reading an article and scan, skim, guess words, and summarize. For week number eight, the activity is based on the strategy "self-assessing," and it is about watching videos and solving exercises that ask them about what they learned (non-verbal language and vocabulary). The strategy about "revising" is applied in the activity of week twelve, and it is about assessing the tasks done in GWAs. Thus, the nature of the activities varies because the GWAs have different exercises and the metacognitive strategy complements each activity developed in teams.

The next specification chart shows a summary of the topics, group-work activities, types of

assessment, and MSs recommended to address the contents of study delineated in the English Integrated

Skills I course program.

<table>
<tr>
<td colspan="4">Specification Chart of the Action Plan
(Teachers' Guide)
(Students' Booklet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic of the course program</td>
<td>Cooperative learning-based Activities</td>
<td>Type of Assessment</td>
<td>Metacognitive-strategy-based Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Life Around the World
(Week # 1)</td>
<td>Find the fiction: Reading true and false things about their classmates by discussing their guesses orally.</td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>Making a list of all the facts students know about their classmates and tell what they wrote to them (in class-activity).

Strategy: Using discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiencing Nature
(Week # 2)</td>
<td>Blind Sequencing: Describing pictures orally to find the sequence of the situations portrayed.</td>
<td>Self-assessment</td>
<td>Writing vocabulary about nature, connectors, and linking words to formulate sentences (homework assignment).

Strategy: Self-questioning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living to Eat or Eating to live?
(Week # 3)</td>
<td>Brainstorming: Planning recipes according to special situations at home.</td>
<td>Peer-assessment</td>
<td>Looking for vocabulary about recipes and watching videos of recipes to identify vocabulary (homework assignment).

Strategy: Predicting outcomes.</td>
</tr>
</table>

In the Community (Weeks # 4 and #5)	**Numbered Heads Together:** Giving directions orally according to the assigned numbers given to each student.	Peer-assessment	Looking for vocabulary about directions to write them down on a sheet of paper (homework assignment). **Strategy:** Predicting outcomes.
	Fan-N-Pick: Asking, answering, and restating questions orally about addresses based on a map.	Self-assessment	Giving feedback during the oral interactions in both cooperative-based activities (in class-activity). **Strategy:** Critiquing.
Home (Week # 6)	**Talking chips:** Discussing advantages and disadvantages about living in a house and in an apartment. Learners' turns end once they get rid of the chips.	Group-assessment Self-assessment	Writing advantages and disadvantages about living in a house and in an apartment. **Strategy:** Using directed and selective thinking.
Cultures of the World (Weeks # 7 and #13)	**Jigsaw:** Reading, understanding and analyzing texts about cultures to exchange knowledge with new groups.	Peer- assessment Self-assessment	Looking for articles about different customs to scan for details, write main ideas, and guess the meaning of unknown words, and read the articles out loud to practice pronunciation. **Strategy:** Selecting strategies Writing ideas and opinions based on pictures that portray foreign customs and habits. **Strategy:** Using directed and selective thinking.
Entertainment and the Media (Week # 8)	**Carousel feedback:** Designing a collage Then, teams rotate from project to project to provide feedback orally based on the	Group-assessment Peer- assessment	Looking for videos about news and entertainment shows to write attitudes, gestures, body language, and vocabulary identified. **Strategy:** Self-assessing.

	collages of others.		
Entertainment and the Media (Week # 11)	**Inside-Outside Circle:** Asking and answering about celebrities' facts and information by rotating face to face.	Group-assessment	Making a list of famous people they know and facts about them by following the letters of the alphabet. **Strategy:** Self-questioning.
Social Life (Week # 12)	**Rally-table:** Discussing social issues based on the solutions for the different society problems thought by the members of the teams.	Group-assessment	Answering questions about the solutions discussed during the rally-table activity. **Strategy:** Revising.
Science and Technology (Week # 14)	**Telephone:** Designing a gadget to describe it orally to present it in front of the other groups.	Self-assessment	Evaluating oral reports by answering a set of questions based on the activity named "Telephone." **Strategy:** Self-questioning
Science and Technology (Review) (Week # 15)	**Rally-table:** Generating written or oral responses to solve problems by making contributions to the teams' projects.	Group-assessment	Writing both a subjective and an objective comment about the use of technology in our lives. **Strategy:** Using directed and selective thinking.

Chapter six: References and Appendices

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Students to Diagnose the Problem

Appendix B: Questionnaire for the Teacher to Diagnose the Problem

Appendix C: Non-participant Observation Template

Appendix D: Questionnaire for Students Template

Appendix E: Former and Current Teachers' Interview Template

Appendix F: Institution's Documents