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Using Tasks with Some Principles of Emancipatory Education to Improve English Oral

Production

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Abstract

This action-research aimed at fostering students' oral production through Task Based Learning (TBL) with some principles of Emancipatory Education (EE). It was conducted in a public school in La Union-Antioquia with 39 sixth graders during approximately one year. Actions developed included the implementation of the task cycle without the language focus stage. Data gathering instruments included a diagnosis, memos, voice recordings, students' artifacts, and a questionnaire. Findings revealed students' meaningful improvements regarding vocabulary acquisition, along with their capacity to construct well-organized complete sentences and pronunciation as well as speaking skills.

Keywords: Task-Based Learning, emancipatory education, oral production, vocabulary acquisition, sentence construction.

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement to obtain a bachelor's degree in foreign language education (English- French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Colombia.

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I want to express my thankfulness to all the people who made part of this fulfilling experience.

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TBL WITH EE TO ENHANCE ORAL PRODUCTION

Table of Content

Preface

This action research is conducted with the goal of fulfilling the requirements of the Bachelor of Education in teaching foreign languages (English French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia. The willingness for doing this research has come from my class observations period and my desire for exploring the implementation of task-based learning in combination with some principles of emancipatory education to foster a skill that is poor worked in the classroom and the most difficult to master, the speaking. The target group for this project were 39 sixth graders in a public institution in La Union, Antioquia. This paper is mainly addressed to teachers, who want to provide opportunities for students in order to improve their oral production taking into account their contexts and interests.

Carolina Cardona Ríos.

La Unión, Antioquia. December 15th, 2022.

Description of the Context

The institution where this action research was carried out was a public school located in the municipality of La Unión, Antioquia, Colombia. Regarding its mission, the institution offered its students an integral education through active pedagogical practices and projects oriented to the acquisition of values based on being, knowing and doing. As for its vision, by 2025, the school intends to be a leader in integral education with community outreach and inclusion policy. Besides, the pedagogical model adapted in the institution was the social cognitive one, with the purpose of forming autonomous, conscious, and ethical citizens.

Regarding the class, it was a 6th grade and lessons were three times a week in 55-minute periods. The classroom was a clean, well-lit space with windows and a white board. The school promoted the use of the bilingualism classroom, which has a white board, a computer with irregular internet connection and a television set. There was no established frequency of use, as teachers used it according to need or availability. The English class syllabus was based upon the Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras from the Ministry of Education. The content was based on the objectives to reach those standards, and the teacher used to complement it with YouTube videos and internet materials. Most of the time students worked with the workbook "Way to go" for sixth graders. The methodology was Grammar Translation Method (GTM) and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) through which reading comprehension activities, translating words with the help of a dictionary, fill in the blank exercises, creating simple sentences following a grammatical structure and repeating aloud were implemented in the English class (Cooperating Teacher Interview, April 4th, 2022).

Concerning the participants of this study, they were 39 students and a Cooperating Teacher (CT). The students were 22 males and 17 females, ranging in age from 11 to 14 years

old. As for the students' interests in the English class and on how to learn it, almost half of the group answered that they do not like English because they do not understand it and find it difficult to learn. However, the other half responded that they do like it because they find it interesting, because it would help them in the future, and they would like to go to an English-speaking country (Questionnaire, April 5th, 2022). Furthermore, based on the questionnaire responses, students would prefer to learn English through games, role plays, presentations, and songs. Regarding the CT, she holds a degree in Modern Languages English and French, she holds a specialization in ICTs for teaching and a master's degree in ICTs for teaching. She has 21 years of working experience, and she has been teaching for 4 years in the institution. Her teaching philosophy is that the most important thing for her is that students acquire a solid foundation in the language, especially in reading comprehension and vocabulary, and that they become aware that English is very important for their future (CT Interview, April 4th, 2022).

The main problem I identified in the class was the lack of implementation of oral production activities as most activities were focused on writing or reading. Therefore, speaking was not being fostered in the classroom and materials limited the ability to express themselves in the target language.

Statement of the Problem

In an educational space, as it is the school, students should be the focus of the teaching-learning process, having opportunities to discuss about the topics or content they are interested in learning, to express their thoughts, feelings, emotions, concerns, or the ideas they want to say. In the 6th grade English class that I observed, these opportunities were not present in class since it was teacher centered. There were no spaces for students to talk about social issues or topics of

interest, to encourage critical thinking, to go beyond simple content, to talk about their experiences, their feelings, or emotions, about themselves or just life. Besides, the classes lacked teamwork to interact and share knowledge amongst peers, consequently, limiting the students' voices and at the same time reducing the possibilities to express themselves in English in an oral way.

To a large extent, the classes I have observed were teacher-centered learning and the methodology used in the classes was GTM given that classes were based on grammar explanations, grammar rules and structures, and the activities to complement each lesson were mainly, completing exercises on the 6th grade workbook. Taking into account that students do not have the complete book, each student has copies per unit depending on the lessons carried out. This issue is evident in the observations' descriptions where the CT used repeated instructions on the use of copies to practice the grammar rules. I quote an example: "The teacher asks students to take out their copies, which they should always carry, to start working." (Journal, February 22nd, April 4th, May 3rd, 2022). Applying GTM and using the workbook written exercises as the only means to teach English, results in three concerns.

First, there is no meaningful input for students to make connections between the contents and their own lives and contexts. Second, the students' interests are not considered in the lesson planning and class activities. Third, there are no activities that promote students' oral production, since the activities are based on writing, sentence completion and writing sentences.

In addition, in the classroom there were no spaces for students to speak and express opinions or thoughts on topics of interest, from their context or another context. Since the methodology privileged writing over the other skills there is not a habit for them to produce

activities orally. For that reason, there is no meaningful production or motivation to speak and express their thoughts in class. During the observations, in the middle of a dictation, something happened, "He (a student) asks if the teacher and I only learn English and she (the CT) tells him that English and French. He is curious and wants to know why we also learn French and asks the teacher directly, but she doesn't answer him (Journal, March 15th, 2022). McElhone (2013) found student talk enhanced learning and increased student achievement in text comprehension when students received varied and open-ended questions (as cited in Imbertson, Danelle, 2017, p.5). In this order of ideas, the discussion could lead to a meaningful learning thinking about the reason why we are governed by English, but there is no space for them to reflect on topics that are not related to the course content.

Another relevant issue is the lack of teamwork activities in the English class. During the observations period, this situation was constant, and I noted that in the reflections: "So far I have not seen any evidence of group work" (March 14th, 2022). Even though the activities are to be done individually, they seek each other's help. "It is individual work, but they are always asking each other questions" (Journal, April 4th, 2022). Having few opportunities for group work, either in pairs or big groups, limits the probabilities to learn from one another and to interact effectively with other peers. Understanding that humans are social beings and knowing how to work with the other is a necessary skill to develop. Also, the focus on individual work encourages competition, there is no space to interact, to produce orally, to debate, to share ideas or to build knowledge together.

To sum up, the teacher-centered approach and the lack of interactive oral activities because of no teamwork, limits students in the aspects I mentioned above. Thus, the implementation of a student-centered approach can favor the teaching-learning process given

that in this approach "Students co-construct their goals and have 'voice and choice' in determining what, how, when and where learning occurs" (Bouffard, 2019, p. 29). Additionally, "education works simply through another logic than schooling; it is conditioned by emancipation" (Säfström, 2011, p.208). For this reason and given the gaps above, this action research study intends to use Task-Based Learning in combination with some principles of Emancipatory Education to promote students' oral production while they can be designed to work and construct knowledge together.

Theoretical Background

This section aims at defining the concepts that support my research study. First, I will provide a definition about Emancipatory Education (EE) and emancipation in a classroom. Second, I will address the concept of Task-Based Learning (TBL) and the cycles to design the tasks. Third, I will mention how I will implement tasks with characteristics of EE. Finally, I will provide a definition of oral production along with the assessment of this skill.

Regarding emancipation, it can be defined as the process of liberating people from injustices by raising in them the awareness of oppressive societal structures (Freire, 1993). This concept in relation to education has to do with the fact that education allows people to live an emancipated life free from the burdens of ignorance (Säfström, 2011). Considering that schools tend to reduce content aimed at following a curriculum, rather than understanding and discussing the issues of the society in which one lives, emancipation in a classroom is the key to encourage critical thinking in students. It allows to open spaces in the classroom to discuss social issues, to go beyond content, especially in Colombia where social injustices happen frequently. Furthermore, as McLaren (2003) states "schools should be sites for social transformation and

emancipation, places where students are educated not only to be critical thinkers, but also to view the world as a place where their actions might make the difference" (p. 187). One pedagogical aim with this emancipation is to promote reflection about social issues out of the classroom. Another goal is to take students' opinions and interests into account, so they have voice and choice and to free them from the traditional education and the idea that teacher is the center of everything.

When dealing with EE it is paramount to address the concept of Critical Pedagogy (CP) since it is what will allow students to be emancipated from the constraints of their own common-sense assumptions and from the constraints on their contexts. As Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) explained,

> CP of Freire, like critical theory, tries to transform oppressed people and to save them from being objects of education to subjects of their own autonomy and emancipation. In this view, students should act in a way that enables them to transform their societies which is best achieved through emancipatory education. (p. 1)

In respect of TBL, Willis (1996) specifies that "tasks are always activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose (goal) in order to achieve an outcome" (p.23). Rodríguez and Rodríguez (2010) add that "if task-based instruction takes place, language learning is more meaningful and natural" (p.166). The idea of using TBL is to consider real life situations that adjust to students' contexts and interests. In this way, tasks are not something isolated and meaningless. Tasks will help students to accomplish a meaningful outcome while they will be learning the target language since the language will be the vehicle for accomplishing the task and collaborative work is foster as classes become student-centered

(Rodríguez & Rodríguez, 2010). This approach allows students to work collaboratively and interaction at the same time, as learning with others are also fostered.

Implementing TBL framework in this class following its three stages. These are: Stage 1. Pre-task: in this the teacher introduces the topic and the task to be developed. Stage 2. Task cycle: this is composed of 3 steps, in the first step, the students use the language they need to accomplish the task, in the second step, they construct what the report will be along with the outcome, and in the third step, students report their tasks. Stage 3. Language focus: this has two components: analysis, in which students pay attention to language forms such as syntax, structure, etc.; and practice in which students, through different activities, use the language that they have already been in contact with (Willis, 1996).

In relation to the implementation of tasks with some characteristics of EE, I took into account the steps that compose the task cycle in combination with emancipation. First, in the pre-task, emancipation is reflected because students had a voice to choose what topics they would like to discuss in the class. In the task-cycle, considering that a task according to Willis (1996) is a "goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome" (p.2); the emancipation in this part was about fostering autonomy in them and deciding with them the type of task and the planning. In the report, students had to write a short reflection about the topic, its importance and what caught their attention about it. Finally, the language focus was to analyze with students the language forms that they used.

The TBL cycle is characterized by problem posing education proposed by Freire (1993) which is defined as:

> Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it

enables teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process by

overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism; it also enables people to

overcome their false perception of reality. (p. 86)

This problem posing education is also addressed by Nixon-Ponder (1995) who follows

Freire definition and claims that there are five steps of the problem-posing process directing

students to do the following: (1) describe the content; (2) define the problem; (3) personalize the

problem; (4) discuss the problem; and discuss alternatives to the problem. In this order of ideas,

implementing problem posing education allows the teacher to listen to students and enable them

to be the main actors in the educational process.

Considering the concept of oral production Harmer (2001) defines it as "the ability to

speak fluently presupposes not only knowledge of language features, but also the ability to

process information and language 'on a spot'" (p. 272). Nevertheless, Chastain (1998)

recognizes that "speaking is a productive skill which involves many components and goes

beyond making the right sounds, choosing the right words, or getting the constructions

grammatically correct" (p. 330). It can be understood that the speaking skill, more than the

correct pronunciation or grammar structure, is about social use in order to communicate one's

own ideas, opinions or beliefs. For that reason, the use of tasks can be useful to motivate students

and foster this skill. As Willis (1996) states, one way to create an engaging setting is by using the

language with meaningful purposes. Moreover, tasks provide the opportunity to engage students

in a context where the main objective is to make the language learning process more natural

(Ramírez & Artunduaga, 2018, p. 54).

Finally, one possibility to assess speaking skills is suggested by Brown (2003), as he

proposes that a test can be a method of measuring a person's ability or knowledge in a given domain (p.3). It involves a set of techniques, procedures, and items with the purpose of measuring the learners' achievement and performance in a specified area. Byrne (1991) claims that oral tasks encompass the productive skill of speaking and the receptive skill of understanding. Hence, oral tasks are not only about speaking, but to understand what the other is communicating. To assess this skill, Brown (2003, p.172-173) elaborates five components for the assessment of speaking skill concerned with content, grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, pronunciation, and fluency. These five components are considered to design a rubric for measuring and determining students' oral skill at the beginning and at the end of the process.

To conclude, the use of TBL considering some bases of EE, allows students not only to meet the objectives of emancipation and to be the center of the class, but also to improve their oral production by taking into account students' opinions while fulfilling the TBL cycle.

Research Question

How can the implementation of Task-Based Learning with some principles of Emancipatory Education foster sixth graders oral production in English in a public school?

Objectives

General Objective

To explore how the implementation of Task Based Learning with some principles of Emancipatory Education fosters sixth graders oral production in English.

Specific Objectives

1. To diagnose students' initial language state in terms of oral production.

2. To evaluate how the implementation of tasks with Emancipatory Education foster or not oral production of students.

3. To evaluate how the lessons integrating Emancipatory Education with Task-Based Learning approach help students improve oral production.

Action Plan

In order to answer the research question stated for this project, three actions were developed from September to November. The actions were based on TBL stages (Willis, 1996) and five steps of the problem-posing process (Nixon-Ponder, 1995). The first stage was the pre-task where I introduced the topics as options and students decided which topic they wanted to focus on. Also, several activities were designed for students to practice the vocabulary and language commands they needed to accomplish the task. The second stage was the task cycle where students planned the task report in groups, they defined the problem, its causes, and facts, proposed a solution to the problem, and decided on doing a presentation and a short reflection about the topic. The third stage was language focus where an evaluative tool was applied, a written quiz, to check the use of the language that they have been in contact with.

The date collection techniques implemented were the following: first, a diagnosis activity was conducted to analyze students' speaking skills before the implementation. Second, written memos that held information about the implementation of the classes, students' performances, and difficulties. Third, students' artifacts where they reflected about what they had learned.

Fourth, a recording of the final presentations to compare the initial and final state of students' speaking skills development. Finally, a questionnaire to identify students' perceptions when speaking about a topic they chose in English.

Development of Actions

I developed two main teaching actions, based on TBL stages (Willis, 1996) and five steps of the problem-posing process (Nixon-Ponder, 1995) which are reflected along through the activities implemented in the TBL cycle.

The first action consisted of implementing the first stage of TBL: pre-task. It was designed to be implemented in two weeks but due to some time constraints and limitations of class time, this first stage was extended to complete four weeks. During this time, students were exposed to the language and commands they would need to develop the final task, which was a presentation. The first week, we built vocabulary around a socially relevant topic of their choice, in this case, animal abuse. This vocabulary was built from ideas of the students talking about the topic, through a video they watched as an introduction and as reflection material. Activities such as dictations, readings, writing activities, filling the blanks, pronouncing aloud after me, short written reflections, word searches, games, among others, were conducted to help the students memorize and practice the pronunciation of the vocabulary. The second and third week were focused on reinforcing all the vocabulary they have been learning and introducing, reviewing, and working with them the simple present tense as it was the tense they needed to produce orally in the presentation. In the fourth week the focus was for students to be able to construct complete sentences in the present simple tense themselves, they started this construction by organizing random sentences into coherent sentences. Then, they wrote the sentences themselves in a

written manner about the topic they chose, and they began to build vocabulary with English expressions about defining a problem. During this first stage, problem posing education was reflected in two steps: describing the content of discussion and defining the problem, as these two steps allowed the students to choose the topic they wanted to work on having choice and voice in the classroom. I told them that I wanted them to work on a problem that they identified in their own town, then students said their choices aloud and decided on the ones we used as the content of discussion and the problem to be defined during the lessons.

The second action consisted of carrying out the task cycle in three weeks. It consisted of defining the problem, providing causes and facts of the problem, a solution to the problem and finally a short reflection as a conclusion about the problem. These definitions were made by the same groups which worked together the rest of the time. Some difficulties arose because the children are not used to work in groups, there were disagreements, and some did not work, even so, it was carried out to the best it could. Having the necessary structure to write complete sentences, the students wrote the different sections with a minimum of three grammatically correct sentences or if it was not a sentence, it was a well-structured short paragraph. Each section was written according to information that I asked them to consult, with the vocabulary we had been studying, with the help of a dictionary and with my guidance. Next, groups did the poster with all the information they had been writing and presentations took place and each student reported orally without reading. In this stage, personalizing and discussing the problem were implemented in the classes since students were looking for all the information about the problem and contextualizing that problem in the place they live. Furthermore, discussing the alternatives to the problem was reflected in this stage considering that students were doing their presentations and talking about the viable solutions to the problem.

It is important to mention that a third action consisting about the implementation of the language focus stage was planned to be carried out in the class. Feedback on students' pronunciation and presentations was thought to be implemented to correct any mistakes in order for students to be aware of their learning process. Also, a written quiz was planned to check the use of the language that they have been studying. Nevertheless, due to time constraints and situations beyond my control, this action could not be implemented.

 In conclusion, the actions developed allowed us to complete the main task cycle activities involving different works considering students' interests and choices, providing opportunities for teamwork and spaces to hear their voices in an oral and written manner in English with a meaningful purpose.

Data Analysis

To analyze the information gathered, I followed Burns (1999) stages for data analysis: assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. I joined all the data collected. Having the data, I started identifying some preliminary codes and coding all the information through a chart in an Excel file arranged with all the codes names and distinct colors. Also, a triangulation process of the sources took place and a comparison of the data between the diagnosis, and the final task, checking if students' oral production improved or not were carried out. Finally, patterns of codes were gathered, and categories emerged and were organized by importance according to my research question to report the results.

Findings and Interpretations

The purpose of this action research was to explore how the implementation of TBL with some principles of Emancipatory Education (EE) fostered students' oral production. Three findings emerged from the data analysis, as follows: a) Pre-task and task-cycle activities, together with EE, helped students come up with and use vocabulary of their interest, b) Pre-tasks and task cycle activities helped students improve/learn sentence construction and c) Task, planning and reporting activities encouraged students to improve pronunciation and speaking skill. In the following paragraphs, I will provide further explanation of these findings.

Pre-Task and Task-Cycle Activities, together with EE, Helped Students Come Up with and Use Vocabulary of Their Interest

Data analysis demonstrated that pre-task and task cycle activities enhanced students' vocabulary acquisition and use. Contrasting the beginning and the end of the implementation, in the diagnosis activity students demonstrated that they did not have vocabulary to talk about the specific topic, they did not use words or expressions to define the problem, to list the causes of that problem, to provide examples or to propose solutions. As an illustration, I wrote the following excerpt in one of my memos:

> I took notes on each group performance, and I realized that students did not have a lot of vocabulary in English to talk about animal abuse. Most of the vocabulary they used in English was related to naming animals. The vocabulary they used about animal abuse was mostly in Spanish. (Memo excerpt, diagnosis, August 29th, 2022)

Contrastingly, at the end of the implementation and considering that students chose the topic of discussion, they were able to acquire and use topic-related vocabulary in the final task as the recording of the presentations proved. Figure 1 shows the improvement students had

between the diagnosis and the final task. It was evident in the diagnosis that students were not able to use the language and vocabulary in class, as previously mentioned in the memo, neither students were prepared to do a presentation even if they had some time to share their ideas in groups.

Figure 1

Diagnosis and Final Task Comparison
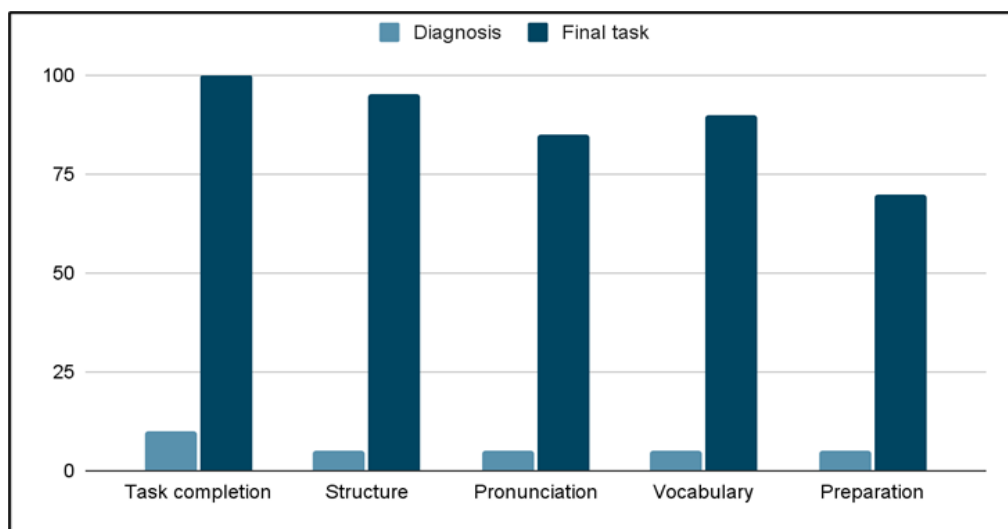
Strikingly, in the final task, every aspect was included in the presentations. As for the task completion, 5 out of the 6 groups presented all the required information and the one group that did not present all the information was because the group was missing the classmate that was supposed to present a specific part of the presentation. To summarize, the changes are remarkable, and it can be demonstrated that the process they had helped them reach that change.

Additionally, the diagnosis evidenced the lack of students' use of vocabulary, words, or expressions to express the ideas they needed to talk about the specific topic. Comparing it with students' performance in the final task, students' use of vocabulary was pertinent and widely

related to the topic they were presenting. As an illustration of this, the following excerpt from a group's performance when doing the diagnosis:

Only 4 students made the diagnosis because the others did not attend class. They did not use vocabulary related to the topic. They all said some animals in English such as dog, cat, elephant and 'animals' in general. There were no complete sentences. (Analysis of Diagnosis, August 29th, 2022)

Also, the following is an excerpt from the transcription of the final task of a group regarding vocabulary: "My name is __ and I will explain the problem. Animal cruelty is the act of subjecting animals to unnecessary painful or stressful situations" (Transcription of Final Task, November 8th, 2022). Nunan (2010) states that vocabulary skills involve the understanding and employment of single words that are used to facilitate the comprehension of phrases and production of sentences. In this way, building up vocabulary was key for students to understand and produce language. Furthermore, the questionnaire responses about EE with vocabulary acquisition, students demonstrated motivation, interest, enjoyment towards the topic of the class, and about their perceptions, students' answers were highly positive (See Figure 2).

Figure 2

Students' answers to the question on their motivation towards the class activities
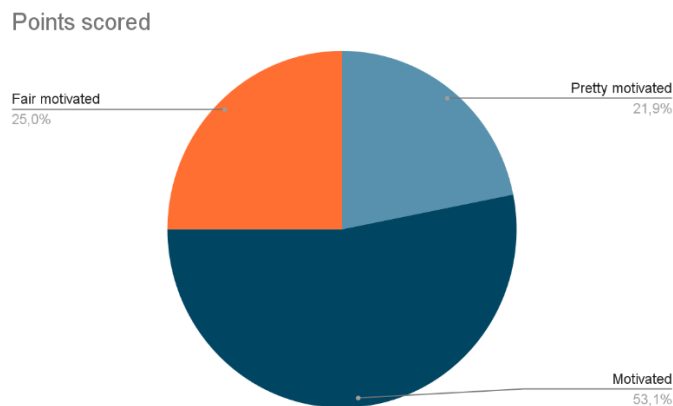
In the same train of thoughts, a big majority of students expressed in the questionnaire that their level of motivation was high. About the interest and enjoyment, there was only one student that was not interested in the topic. Some explanations about the negative answers were more related to group work than to the subject itself. Furthermore, most explanations about why they were interested in the lessons were related to their personal interest in the topic. Most students stated that they were interested because they liked the topic, because they learned a lot, because they could reflect about it, as one student stated: "estuve interesada porque aprendí nuevas cosas sobre este tema y aprendí que los animales también sufren como los humanos"[1] (Questionnaire, November 9th, 2022). Many students expressed their concern about animals' suffering and reflected about it even if that was not a specific objective of the class. In this sense, it seemed likely that implementing EE allowed students to raise awareness about the specific topic and boosted their language learning.

Following this affirmation Aliakbari and Faraji (2011) state that "this approach [Critical Pedagogy] can enable EFL learners to develop their speaking skills by focusing on their real-life problems and at the same time to understand and diagnose their own problems" (p. 83). It can be said that giving students chances to choose a topic of their interest or that they care about, and designing activities based on these, is a key factor to foster students' learning since they are motivated and interested in the classes. Besides, students when carrying out a task where the goal is to solve a problem and the solution comes from them, where they can discuss different alternatives to change something that is really happening, it is a way in which they reflect on the different social problems that happen not only in their context, but around the world.

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[1] I was interested because I learned new things about this topic, and I learned that animals also suffer as humans do.

Pre-Tasks and Task Cycle Activities helped Students Improve/Learn Sentence Construction

Data analysis showed improvements regarding the construction of sentences since it was evident that students had difficulties during the diagnosis in this respect and the difference of results that could be observed with the final result were striking.

As an illustration, most of the students were having difficulties with the production of complete sentences in English, they were using words in isolation when doing the diagnostic activity. During the final task presentation, 5 out of 6 groups demonstrated being able to use complete sentences to define the problem, talk about the causes, provide examples, propose solutions, and reflect about the problem they chose. As for the language structures, all groups were using the necessary structures to present the information. For example, they were using these expressions: the definition of the problem is, some examples of the problem are, the causes are, etc. In the following excerpts of students' works, students' improvement of sentence construction is evident since they elaborated complete sentences to define a concept.

Diagnosis: Group 1:

All students participated. Three of them used some words related to the topic such as: abuse cats, abuse dog, animals danger. The other one only said one thing "maltrato a los perros". Nothing else. They used Spanish to express some ideas related to the topic. There were no complete sentences. (Analysis of Diagnosis, August 29th, 2022)

Final task: Group 1:

"Animals carrying load is [*sic*] when they (people) take animals to carry very hard things. Examples of the problem: One example of this problem is in Cartagena where people use animals as carriage" (Transcription of Final Task, November 8th, 2022).

It appears to be that activities pertaining to the Pre-task and Task-cycle, such as organizing random sentences and deducting the structure, reading, and writing activities, writing the definition, causes, giving examples, writing the solution and a short reflection of the problem; guided students become more aware of the structure of sentences and identify the parts of a sentences: Subject, verb and complement. As evidenced in the questionnaire implemented identify students' oral production in English and their perceptions about the implementation of the project, provided information about the activities that helped them to learn more. For instance, according to the questionnaire, (see questionnaire here), several students stated in different ways that when they were writing the definition of the problem, doing the poster, preparing the presentations, presenting the topic, helped them to learn sentence construction.

Figure 3

Students' questionnaire responses to the activities that helped them learn the most

Points scored

- Doing the poster 15,6%
- The presentations 31,3%
- Building vocabulary 15,6%
- Writing activities 37,5%
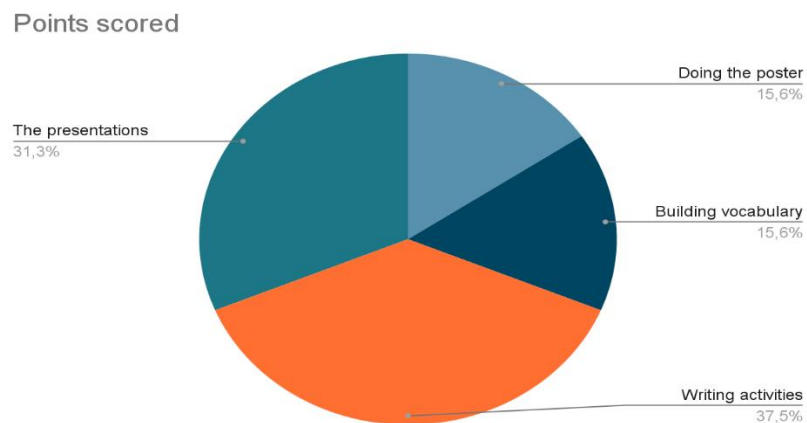
Note: In Figure 3, each action involves different activities. The presentations included: the creation of the presentations, the learning and memorization of the presentation, the rehearsal of the pronunciation, and the presentation itself. Doing the poster covers the creation of the poster, the activity of writing down what they needed to present. Building vocabulary refers to learning

new words and the language commands they needed to report on the task. Activities such as games, writing on the board, putting sentences together and making sense of them, among others. And writing activities refers to writing the definition, causes, examples, solution and reflection of the problem.

A specific answer of a particular student states that through different activities there is an improvement of sentence construction: "La actividad de escribir las frases porque escribimos más en inglés"[2] (Questionnaire, November 9th, 2022). In this sense, Willis (1996, p.101) states "tasks and texts combine to give students a rich exposure to language and also opportunities to use it themselves". Thus, writing activities were a fundamental part of language learning, taking into account that these activities allowed the understanding of sentence structures as well as the order of what was to be said.

Figure 4
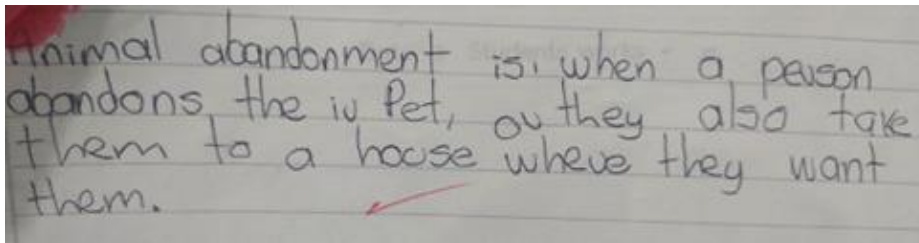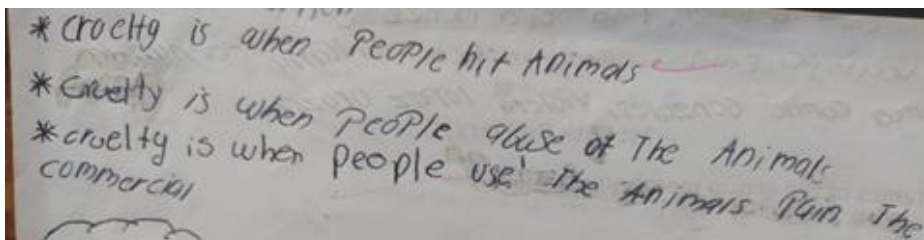
Students' group definition about animal abandonment

Figure 5

Students' group definition about animal cruelty

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[2] The activity of writing sentences because we write more in English.

It can be concluded that this construction improved because when they were writing, they were following a structure. For example, as Figures 4 and 5 showed, when they were defining the problem, they were following a model that was: type of abuse + is when + something happened. Following that structure allowed students to organize sentences in a logical manner. In this way, as the different data showed, the different activities provided students opportunities and input to construct well-organized and complete sentences in simple present tense.

Task, Planning and Reporting Activities Encouraged Students Improve Pronunciation and Speaking Skill

Data revealed that students' pronunciation improved throughout the Task-cycle, some students started using words in English, when at first, they did not use English at all. In addition, the different strategies students used to improve the pronunciation of words in English made a huge difference in students' performance in the final task, as Figure 1 illustrates. Luoma (2004) explains speaking tasks as activities that allow speakers to use the language for achieving a goal. Since the assignment was for a specific purpose, it was also key for students to use language and carry out different activities to achieve this purpose.

Furthermore, I saw students come up with different strategies to improve pronunciation. As an example, one student stated in the questionnaire that: "Algo que me ayudó a mejorar la pronunciación fue practicar muchas veces para hacer la presentación"[3] (Questionnaire, November 9th, 2022). Another student stated that: "Al tener que aprender lo de la exposición de memoria entonces siento que eso refuerza más la pronunciación"[4] (Questionnaire, November 9th,

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[3] One thing that helped me improve my pronunciation was practicing many times to make the presentation.
[4] Having to learn the exposition by heart then I feel it reinforces the pronunciation more

2022). TBL provides learners with natural exposure (input), chances to express what they want to mean (output), and to analyze forms being engaged throughout tasks and becoming more independent, achieving things through the EFL (as cited in Laverde, 2016, p. 24). In this way, independent work was a key for students to improve their pronunciation employing strategies according to their comfortability.

However, regarding the pronunciation in the final task, although for me the presentations were comprehensive and I could understand what students were saying, not all the words were correctly pronounced. They made some mistakes, for different reasons which influenced students making mistakes. In the questionnaire some of students explained that they felt nervous doing the presentations, that they do not like to talk in English, or they do not feel comfortable. Also, even if the preparation was higher in the final task, at the end they were a little lost about when they had the turn to speak. In addition, in the questionnaire when asked if they considered that they had made progress in English, and if their oral production had improved, most of the students answered positively demonstrating that the classes did help them to learn the language significantly.

Conclusions and Implications

This research project had the purpose of exploring how the implementation of TBL with some principles of Emancipatory Education (EE) could foster students' oral production. I could conclude that the objectives were largely reached through the implementation of Pre-task and Task-cycle activities since students' opportunities to have voice and choice in the classroom with the objective of improving oral production were fostered. Therefore, Pre-task and Task-cycle activities combined with EE helped students to acquire and use vocabulary of their interest.

Additionally, data revealed that Pre-task and Task-cycle activities improved students' ability to construct complete sentences considering specific grammatical features of the language. Besides, task, planning and reporting activities enhanced students' pronunciation and speaking skill.

One implication for teaching practices deals with work in groups, teachers should take into account how to organize well-defined groups and ensure that everyone works. Considering that the different activities were carried out in groups and that my group was not used to working with other classmates, letting students decide who they want to work with can be a problem in the long run because the grouping can become unequal. Also, it is important to keep in mind the assignment of roles in teamwork and to make sure that all members of the group and that all the workload does not fall on a few. Thus, it is important to take into account the interests and wishes of the students and negotiate roles and decisions.

Another implication is the importance of including the topics to be taught in the curriculum and relate them to the research project as much as possible. Since I implemented the project very focused on my objectives, I left out those topics that should have been taught. Although the students were learning English and showed improvement in certain aspects such as oral production, vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction, it would have been different if I had considered the topics in the curriculum, given the students a topic to choose from and problematized it. In this order of ideas, one must consider the curriculum to avoid possible problems with the institution.

Additionally, this project also provides ideas of TBL with some principles of EE implementation and its impact on students' oral production on an EFL classroom. This study contributes to consider including the four language skills, not only grammar, especially when it comes to producing orally that can be the most difficult part when learning a foreign

language. Also, for further research it is advisable to contemplate ideas on how to teach and design content in a meaningful way, opening opportunities for students' interests and reflections, conceiving them as the main focus in the classroom.

Reflection

After implementing this project, I would like to highlight it impact in my teaching practicum. I can state that from the beginning until the end it was a challenging process, as I had never taught formally before. Now, teaching for the first time with 40 students of different ages, different ways of learning, different motivations, and different conflicts within the classroom, was a bit overwhelming and difficult. It was not easy to find the way to reach all students and engage them in the learning of English. Spite these difficulties, it was an experience that allowed me to learn, not only ways to address classroom management, or ways to teach the language, but also to consider students' needs and motivations, to put theory into practice and to understand many of the challenges that teachers face. It allowed me to be aware that although one wants to do many things with the students, their interests and needs, there is a curriculum to follow that can limit this in some way. My goal, in large part, was focused on students having a voice and choice in the classroom and I am happy that I was able to achieve that goal and that this experience had an invaluable impact and contribution to both my life as a teacher and as a human being.

Moreover, this experience had both positive and negative aspects. In one hand, learning and reflection will always be present. On the other hand, I expected to carry out all TBL phases in this implementation, but for various reasons, beyond my control, it was not possible. Besides, I thought that teamwork would be easier, but it was not always that way.

However, I consider that I did my best to reach my goals and overcome rising constraints. Finally, I would like to emphasize on the importance of considering students as learners, not as vases to be fill with information, to provide them with opportunities to learn meaningful and contextualized content considering all skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and to be aware that being a teacher is a non-stop process, it is a construction of every day.

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