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Integrating English Macro Skills to Foster Eighth Graders' Production through Collaborative
Learning at INEM José Félix de Restrepo.

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Abstract

This action research project explores the integration of English macro skills at Institución Educativa Inem José Félix de Restrepo in Poblado, Medellín. The project was carried out with students from eighth grade section nine. The aim of the project was to integrate language macro skills through some collaborative learning strategies (CLS) focused on students' production. The data collection tools used included a formal interview with the cooperating teacher, a student questionnaire and student/researcher observations which were recorded in a field journal. Data was analyzed, categorized, and validated by using a triangulation method. The results show that implementing CLS facilitated the integration of English macro skills and students' production.

Keywords: Collaborative Learning Strategies, Language Macro Skills, Productive Skills, Integration of Skills.

Título del proyecto en español: Integrando las Macro Habilidades del Inglés para Fomentar la Producción de los Estudiantes de Octavo Grado a través de Estrategias de Trabajo Colaborativo en la Institución Educativa INEM José Félix de Restrepo.

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English - French) at the Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

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Finally, I want to thank the students and the cooperating teacher at Inem José Félix de Restrepo.

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Preface

I decided to learn English since I was at school when I was not able to communicate in English classes or to talk to my friends, who had a high level. I started to learn the language and to engage in conversations with my peers, which made me feel part of a community. In my quest to continue learning not only English but also French and to be part of a linguistic community, I decided to enroll in the Bachelor of Education in Teaching Foreign Languages (English - French).

In the school of languages, I learned to cooperate and collaborate with my peers to achieve the goals of the different courses. Thanks to the collective work and learning approach, I became part of a community and improved my communication skills in the target languages. I became enthusiastic about collective learning and began to focus the projects of the different courses around this theme.

During the observation period of the eighth-grade students' section nine at Inem José Félix de Restrepo for this study, I noticed there was a lack of communication related to the implementation of a segregated teaching of language macro skills approach. Recurring to the experience I acquired during my learning process and the research on the field of collective work, I decided to implement such experience to integrate English macro skills in the given context looking to positively impact students' production and ability to communicate. I decided to implement CLS to integrate language macro skills and to foster students' production in the target language. Finally, the realization of the project was my opportunity to put into practice the learnings I once acquired as a student. Overall, the results were very satisfactory, and this may be the first of many projects to implement collective work to help students improve in the target language and become part of a community as I once did.

Description of the Context

Inem José Felix de Restrepo (IJFR) is an Educative Institution situated in Medellín, in El Poblado. It is a government institution, dedicated to the provision of formal education services. The school consists of eight buildings, one for each department, and building number six belongs to the English program.

The English department oversees the design of the English language curriculum. They designed and implemented a foreign language proficiency test based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Students are then divided among different levels based on the outcome of their proficiency test results. Finally, the planning of the classes and materials is based on the learning needs and proficiency levels of their students.

Concerning my Cooperating Teacher (CT), she has been teaching at IJDR since January 2006. She has a bachelor in languages from the University Pontificia Bolivariana, and a master's degree in technology for education. Finally, she has a specialization in English teaching from the University Pontificia Bolivariana and a doctoral degree in Education Sciences from the National University of Rosario. The CT oversees the classroom number 136 in block 6A.

The group for this action project was grade eight section number nine. The group was composed of thirty-three (33) students. The levels vary from A1 to B1. As such, students were given activities and evaluated according to their level of proficiency. Finally, students attended classes on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday; and each session had a duration of fifty-five minutes.

Statement of the Problem

The Ministry of National Education (2006) in Guide 22: Basic Standards in Foreign Language which defines the basic standards for Colombia's National Bilingualism Plan,

establishes that students should reach a B1 level of linguistic competence. However, given that

the national Saber Pro 11 assessment only evaluates reading comprehension, many teachers tend

to privilege reading and often fail to integrate other macro skills. I evidenced this same situation

while conducting observations at IJFR when I noticed that CT administered activities that were

based on reading and did not relate other macro language skills within the learning units,

prioritizing a language that segregated the teaching of macro skills to prepare students for

national testing.

Throughout my four months of observations, I observed a common trend in the chosen

method of instruction. Instruction relied heavily on a segregated language approach, especially in

the receptive skills of listening and reading. For example, in February 2022, I observed a four-

lesson unit entitled "Feeling Under the Weather" where activities were based solely on the

reading skill, missing the opportunity to integrate the other macro language skills within the unit.

In addition to the observations, I collected different materials that the CT provided to her

students including worksheets, books, and assignments. For example, the material used for the

activity related to Valentine's Day, carried out on February 14th, required students to do a

reading comprehension on the subject. Students were assigned a short paragraph to read and then

instructed to choose answers from a set of selected responses. Though the macro skill of reading

was used, this activity failed to integrate the rest of the macro skills because it did not provide

students with the opportunity to produce their own original responses.

Finally, my interactions with the CT were critical as they confirmed that the English classes

were based on a segregated macro skills instruction. The CT explained that students faced a lot of

limitations due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The guide, *Guías de Aprendizaje,* was given to the

students focused only on reading skills to respond both to the COVID-19 emergency, but also to

provide students with the necessary tools to complete the national assessment. Therefore, students

were only instructed on the reading skill and this skill was not integrated with the others

Theoretical Background

This action research study utilizes a group of concepts introduced by scholars such as

Richards and Schmidt (2013), Pardede (2015), Aydoğan and Akbarov (2014), Cephe (2022),

Geistkemper (2018) and Piquet. (2009). These concepts include language macro skills,

productive skills, integrated and segregated language macro skills approach and collaborative

learning strategies. I make use of these concepts to first define macro skills and to identify why

macro skills are not being integrated at IJFR. Since the goal of this project is to integrate the

macro skills and to promote students' production, it is crucial to define what productive skills

are.

I have mentioned above that there was a lack of integration of macro skills observed. As

such, I compare the differences between the segregated and integrated approach to better

highlight how the latter could help to promote students' production. Finally, I discuss how the

implementation of CLS could be used to assist in the integration of skills and the promotion of

production.

Macro Skills

Macro skills are the four basic language skills essential for communication. Richards and

Schmidt (2013), describe, the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing are defined as the

way of using language. In other words, these four skills are the essential pillars for

communication since they represent the basic forms of language use. Therefore, it is essential to

consider that the combination of the skills, not the isolated mastery of each skill, is crucial for achieving the goal of communication in the given context.

The importance of the macro skills is that they are the form we use the language to communicate with others (Pardede, 2015). According to Pardede, whenever we use a language to communicate, we are employing one macro skill or a combination of macro skills. For instance, when the language is employed orally, we use speaking to send messages and listening to received. In summary, the four macro skills are the mode we use to communicate in written or spoken language. Therefore, it is important to promote the integration of macro-skills and not to focus on isolated skills, which has been preventing students at IJFR from communicating successfully in the target language.

Productive Skills

According to Richards and Schmidt (2013), the macro skills are divided into productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (reading and listening). Aydoğan and Akbarov (2014) further divide the four language skills by considering two parameters: the communicative mode (oral or written) and the communicative direction (to produce or receive the message). Focusing on productive skills, written expression is the ability to produce language in written form, while speaking orally. In short, productive skills are the way in which we make use of the language to express ourselves, whether speaking or writing.

During the observation period at IJFR, I could see that the teaching process lacks productive skills both in class planning and in the teaching process. Productive skills are the focus of this project because I see the need for eighth grade students to be able to produce output through spoken or written English. Such a goal has not been possible for them in the past due to the absence of tasks to work on such skills. Therefore, not only the integration of the skills but

also to foster speaking and writing is necessary. As Pardede (2019) suggests, to achieve the goal

of communication it is necessary to provide students with the different learning units that require

speaking and listening and not just focus on the receptive skills. As it has been evidenced during

the observation process, when students were required to do listening or reading exercises but

were not exposed to speak or write, limiting their ability to develop holistic communication.

Integrated Language Skills

For this study, I have decided to add the productive skills to the teaching process and to

integrate the abilities since there was evidence of the use of a segregated language skills teaching

approach by the CT. Cephe (2022) describes a segregated approach where skills are taught in

isolation, while an integrated approach, where the teacher looks for the opportunity to combine

the language macro skills to ensure students' future communication success. When the lesson

plan includes activities based on two or more of the macro skills related to each other, the

integration of language macro skills is achieved (Cephe, 2022). Seeking to respond to the need to

integrate the macro linguistic skills in the given context, it is necessary to consider the definition

of macro skills integration and design a plan that contains activities of different nature that

connect one with the other.

When implementing a segregated skills approach, the language is divided into structural

units that may take the form of vocabulary, expressions, grammar, etc. This was observed in the

eighth-grade classroom, through different instruction materials and activities. However, teaching

the language in such a way, does not ensure that the students will be able to put that into a real

context to communicate. Therefore, with the purpose of providing students with the necessary

tools to communicate in the target language, it is necessary to make a transition from an

approach where the four basic skills are taught in segregation to another approach where the

target language is present as a discourse instead of as those units.

When students are given the proper situations to put the content into practice, by integrating macro skills, they have possibilities of succeeding in real communication situations. This is supported by Pardede (2015), who highlights that this approach has become popular when teaching languages since it is believed to develop learners' communicative competencies and the ability to use the language. In summary, in order to develop learners' communicative competencies, the integrated skills approach is likely to help achieve this goal.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an approach that allows collective work in which participants interact and benefit from each other to achieve a common goal. Smith and MacGregor (1992) describe collaborative learning as different educational approaches that require the conjunction of intellectual efforts by the participants. Collective work is done in the search for solutions, for meanings to a task (Smith & MacGregor 1992). Finally, Smith and MacGregor (1992), point out that this approach requires a student-centered approach where through collaboration one seeks to explore and apply the course material and not a simple presentation of it by the teacher. Furthermore, Cephe (2022) argues that teachers can address the problem of lack of integration of macro-skills by implementing collaboration among learners. Therefore, given the objective of my project, the implementation of CLS responds to the need to integrate linguistic macro-skills by allowing a collective work among students that allows them to achieve the goals proposed.

According to Geistkemper (2018), there are different strategies to collaborative in the classroom. Some of them are named: Sequence Chains, Word Webs, Talking Chips and Test-Talking Teams. As defined by Geistkemper (2018), the Sequence Chain strategy consists of giving students a list of items for them to organize in a logical way, having them collaborating to

propose different orders. Regarding Word Webs, this is a concept map or a mind map that is developed in groups. This strategy can be used at the beginning of a unit to foster students' previous knowledge or to review information after having taken a test. Geistkemper (2018) describes talking chips as a strategy that involves giving students few tokens that they will use when they contribute with one idea; thus, they do not dominate the conversation. Finally, Geistkemper (2018) describes Test-Talking Teams as a strategy where students take a test together. They first get an individual test first. Then, they receive the tests back and collaborate to solve the mistakes.

CLS have been used for the integration of macro-skills to foster students' oral and written production. As mentioned by Saenz et al. (2013), through CLS students will work collectively so that everyone can achieve a goal that would otherwise be much more difficult to accomplish. That is why the use of the different CLS mentioned previously, become key to integrate the macro linguistic skills and for students to achieve the goal of oral and written production.

Besides the teamwork effort, there are other benefits in working collaboratively. Piquet (2009) points out that interpersonal interactions enable consistency and objectivity in the activity. This means that collaborative learning reinforces interpersonal skills because participants must put into practice some human factors of coexistence. Therefore, collaboration in learning goes beyond the individual actions of each participant and it is part of a dynamic of collective action. In conclusion, implementing CLS may facilitate the process of the eighth-grade students' production because the members of each group are likely to generate a collective action that facilitates the achievement of the expected outcomes.

Conclusively, this action research study is delimited by a list of concepts that serve as support for the planning of the actions to be taken during the development of the project.

Research Question

How can the implementation of collaborative learning strategies to integrate the macro skills foster students' written and oral production in eighth-grade grade section nine at Institución Educativa Inem José Félix de Restrepo?

Objectives

General Objective

To establish how the implementation of collaborative learning strategies to integrate the macro skills foster students' written and oral production in eighth-grade grade section nine at Institución Educativa Inem José Felix de Restrepo.

Specific Objectives

- To discuss how the use of the selected collaborative learning strategies allows for the integration of the macro skills.
- To evaluate how the application of collaborative learning strategies facilitates students' written and oral production.
- To analyze the perception of the stakeholders about the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.

Action Plan

To conduct this Action Research study, I will implement the following actions within two different cycles. I will first implement two cycles divided in planning and implementing the selected CLS: the first one focused on writing and the second one on speaking. Then, I will conduct the rest of the data collection and subsequent analysis.

The first cycle will be divided in the two moments; planning for the integration of the selected CLS: Sequence Chains, Word Webs, and Test-Talking Teams and implementing the unit which will have an emphasis on writing production. I will plan the writing unit from August 16th to September 2nd, 2022. Before the implementation of this unit, I will provide students with the consent form to review with their families and sign if they want to participate in the data collection process. Then, I will implement the unit and the CLS from September 05 to September 16, 2022. During the planning and implementation, I will observe and complete a field journal to collect information that help me answer my research question.

The second cycle will have the same two moments mentioned above. In the speaking unit I will implement Word Webs, Talking Chips, Test-Taking Teams CLS. I will plan the speaking unit from August 22 to September 2, 2022.Then, I will implement the unit and the CLS from September 26 to October 7, 2022. During the planning and implementation, I will make use of the field journal.

Finally, I will select the rest of the necessary data collection tools to gather information that help me to respond to the research question. Then, I will create the tools considering my research question and my specific objectives and implement them. Finally, I will follow the data validation process suggested by Altrichter et al. (2005).

Development of Actions

The development of the actions was carried out in two cycles, the first one focused on the written production and the second on oral production. Once the planning and implementation of each cycle were concluded, I did the analysis of the data collected and interpretation of data with the goal of establishing how the implementation of CLS to integrate the macro skills foster students' written and oral production in eighth-grade grade section nine at IJFR.

I planned the first unit named *'Good Citizenship'* in August including information of when and how to implement the CLS chosen to promote students' production and to integrate the macro skills. Also, for me to be able to collect information, I designed and sent the consent form for students' parents. 12 parents signed for their children to participate in the project.

After planning the actions, I started the implementation of the first unit. Students completed a reading comprehension activity in pairs in which they were given a text that was divided for them to put it in a logical order implementing the CLS named Sequence Chains. After that, I implemented Word Webs in which students collaborated to make a mind map together as a task review of the previous reading. Then, the students completed a writing activity that required them to produce 5 sentences expressing actions they were going to do and five actions they were not going to do to be good citizens.

Once the initial assignment was complete, students were provided feedback on which answers were correct and which were not. They collaborated again to discuss and resolve the mistakes together to implement the CLS named Test-Taking Teams. The purpose of implementing this last strategy was to develop team problem solving and discussion skills and promote collaboration. Finally, students worked in pairs to create a poster as a summative assessment where they could use the results of all the activities in which they worked

collaboratively to create this final written product.

In September, I implemented the first activity of the new teaching unit that consisted of working in different bases. Even though this activity was not part of the initial action plan, it was included to enrich the process of learning through collaboration among the students. They were divided into different groups and were assigned to one base where they were asked to complete different activities. There were five bases in which the students needed to ask and respond to a practitioner, spin a wheel, and write sentences with the elements, solve a crossword puzzle about the plans, write negative and affirmative sentences using the grammar structure going to' and unscramble a group of sentences.

Then, students collaborated to create a mind map about to the use of a simple future for making predictions, promises and plans. It was done by implementing the Word Web CLS. The purpose was to collaborate and facilitate the subsequent elaboration of a script for a video that they were asked to record. During Word Web development I also used the CLS Talking Chips in which the students had a few tokens that they could use to discuss a topic. In this case, I varied the dynamic to respond to the difficulty of having too many students. I grouped them and each group had a different topic to use and participate. The purpose was to limit the number of participants of each group and to benefit of the different students' English levels.

A test called "Future Guide" was implemented where students had to make use of the simple future to express plans, promises and predictions. During this activity, the CLS called Test-Taking Teams was implemented. At first, students had to complete the task individually and then receive the task back with corrections to be corrected in pairs. From the CLS, students responded to the difficulties they encountered individually in the evaluation of the use of the present simple tense.

By the end of September, as part of the oral production task, we did a group activity in which the students and I prepared a short script for the introduction and the farewell of the video. I implemented Talking Chips CLS, so I could make different students participate and promote interaction. Students were also required to prepare a script to help them in the recording of the video. They needed to talk about their plans, predictions, and promises in 1, 5 and 10 years.

The data collection stage was done during and after the implementation of the two cycles. During the implementation of the two work cycles, the information was collected in a field diary and the students' artifacts (written and oral productions). Then, to collect information that would help me answer whether the implementation of CLS had allowed the integration of the macro linguistic skills, how it had influenced the students' production, and the perceptions of the students and the CT, I designed a questionnaire for the students (See Appendix A) and an interview for the CT which was recorded (See Appendix B).

 I completed 24 observations from August 9 to November 9, 2022. After each class observation, I completed a field journal entry that included the date and the number of the class, the aim of that day's class, the activities, my role as the student-teacher/researcher, the role of the students, language instructions, teaching strategies, interaction patterns and a reflection in which I discussed how the class received the lesson that day. I also taught during the 24 classes and completed a teaching reflection entry focused on language teaching, implementation of the CLS and the results of the activities done in class. Once I concluded the teaching period, I reviewed my field journal, to identify patterns and trends.

Next, I administered a paper questionnaire to 26 students on November 09, 2022, during class time. The questionnaire was composed of five questions, four of the five questions contained three sub questions. Four of the questions were closed and the last question was open.

I made use of this tool to collect information about students' perceptions on how the CLS

allowed them to accomplish the goals of each of the two units, to inquire which objectives the

students believe had achieved, and finally, about their general perception on the implementation

of the CLS. The questionnaire was administered in Spanish. I first read the ethical considerations

of participating in the study to the students. Thereafter, I read each question aloud and provided

students with the opportunity to privately record their responses in writing on the questionnaire.

To maintain student confidentiality, students were not to write their names.

Finally, I completed a formal semi-structured interview with the CT on November 16,

2022. I made use of this tool to collect information about CT's perceptions on how the CLS

allowed students to accomplish the goals of each of the two units, to inquire if the CT believed

that students achieved the goals of the two units, and finally, about her general perception on the

implementation of CLS. The interview was composed of four questions and nine follow-up

questions. All the questions were open with the purpose of gathering as much information as I

could. Additionally, I included some follow-up questions to obtain more details in case needed.

The interview was carried out in Spanish. Before the interview began, I received consent to

record the interview. I read the ethical considerations of participating in the study by answering

interview questions to the CT.

Data Analysis

This project utilizes action research as its guiding methodology. According to Burns et al.

(2005), action research is the study of an academic context with the purpose of identifying

diverse problems and creating solutions for social and academic improvement. In this approach,

the teacher-researcher studies an educational phenomenon not only through observation but also

through direct participation and action. As such, a mix of qualitative and quantitative data was collected from the different sources mentioned to triangulate and validate the findings and consequently, to answer the key question posed in the study.

To validate the data collected, I utilized a process suggested by Altrichter et al. (2005). which includes reading, selecting, organizing, and presenting data in a diagram with the purpose of analyzing and interpreting the information gathered to draw conclusions. My diagrams included information from the three data collection tools. I did three mind maps that included the specific objectives of my research project. Around each objective, I wrote information that will respond or that was related to one of the objectives.

As suggested by Bell (2010), I used a triangulation approach to confirm that the information gathered with each data collection tool coincided with rest. This allowed me to compare similar and competing ideas gathered during the research process. Once I completed the above-mentioned steps, three major themes emerged in the data. These themes included: *Integration of the macro skills through collaborative learning strategies, Collaborative learning strategies' impact on students' production, and Stakeholders' (students, student-teacher/researcher, and CT) perception of collaborative learning strategies.*

I created a matrix to organize the information around the three themes identified, which corresponded to each of my specific research objectives. The theme of integration of macro skills through collaborative learning was identified and used to assist in answering or responding to the objective of how the use of the selected collaborative learning strategies allows for the integration of macro skills. The collaborative learning strategies' impact on students' production category was used to answer questions around the objective of how the application of collaborative learning strategies facilitates students' production. Finally, I identified the category

of stakeholders' perception of collaborative learning strategies to assist me in analyzing the third objective.

Findings and Interpretations

After the analysis of the data collected, I present here the findings and interpretation in three categories and its subsequent categories: *Integration of the Macro Skills Through Collaborative Learning Strategies, Collaborative Learning Strategies' Impact on Students' Production, and Stakeholders' Perception and Attitudes toward the Collaborative Learning Strategies.*

Integration of the Macro Skills Through CLS

The examination of the data showed that the implementation of CLS during the different activities planned in the two teaching units allowed for the integration of English macro skills. As described in one of my reflections of the journal entry dated August 26th:

> On August 23rd, students were asked to complete a reading comprehension task about good citizenship. The goal was to integrate the two macro skills–reading and speaking–so I implemented a speaking activity for the class on August 26th. In the first class, I did a reading activity (reading comprehension) and in the second activity, I did a speaking activity (mind map) by using the CLS Word Webs. I connected what students learned in the reading with an activity that required them to speak and collaborate on the same topic, consequently connecting the two macro skills.

Similarly, my journal entry for September 22nd describes how the CLS named Talking Chips aided me in connecting the macro skills of writing and speaking through the activities of creating a script and making a video. My reflection from that day's journal entry reads:

After teaching a lesson on promises and predictions, today students collaborated to create a script that will help them make a video about their plans. I implemented the CLS named Talking Chips so the students could dominate the conversation a limited number of times and to promote interaction among them. This strategy will help me to integrate the macro skills of writing (writing a script) and speaking (making a video).

Regarding these observations, Cephe (2022) states that a teaching unit that contains activities that are related and based on different macro skills is a unit that integrates macro skills. As seen in the examples above, the lessons had activities based on two different macro skills. The tools that connected the two activities were, in example one, Word Web; and, in example two, Talking chips. In the first example, students completed a mind map together, allowing me to connect what students learned in the reading activity to the speaking one. In the second example, students collaborated by creating a video, which allowed me to connect the two activities of writing a script and speaking in a video. This suggests that through the CLS I achieved the connection of activities that consequently led to the integration of macro skills. Similarly, one student's comment reads: "What I liked about the class was the strategies (CLS), the implied many activities that were connected and helped me to better understand a subject" (Student 21, Questionnaire). From the previous comment, I observed the student highlights the integration of the activities, based on different macro skills, that help for this student to understand. Thus, as Cephe (2022) describes, integrating macro skills requires connecting activities where we teach different macro skills in conjunction as when a lesson requires activities that are related to each other.

Collaborative Learning Strategies' Impact on Students' Production

From the analysis of the data, it was possible to observe that the implementation of CLS

to promote students' production had positively influenced on oral and written production.

Collaborative Learning Strategies' Impact on Students' Written Production

The results of the triangulation process suggest that there is a correlation between the implementation of CLS in *Unit One: Good Citizenship* and the achievement of the unit's goals on the part of the students: *1. Students are be able to express with simple sentences what a good citizen is and what he does, 2. Students are able to express with simple sentences how they are going to be good citizens, 3. Students are be able to understand and use vocabulary to express duties and rights*. As shown in Figure 1, the results from the students' questionnaire evidence that 96.15% (25 students) of the students either agreed or totally agreed that the CLS allowed them to achieve the goals of the first unit. Additionally, by evaluating the students' written production, 92.30% (24 students) accomplished the goals established in the assessment activity carried out at the end of the writing unit. From the comparison of the results of the students' production activity and their perception on how they achieved the writing goal, it is possible to conclude that, given the percentage of students who agree or strongly agree that the CLS helped them achieve the objectives of the unit and the percentage of students who succeeded in doing so is closely similar, there is a correlation that relates the CLS and the results in the assessment.

Figure 1

CLS impact on unit with emphasis on written production
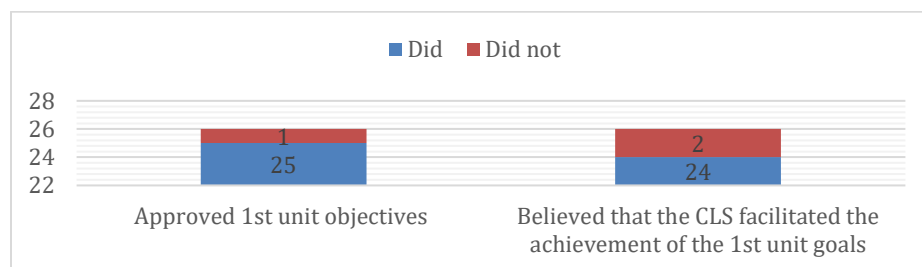
Similarly, during the interview, the CT agreed that the implementation of collaborative

learning strategies facilitated students' production. I asked her if she considered that the

implementation of CLS fostered students' written production to which she commented that since

the Word Web was used as a guide for the writing process it helped them to write. She

commented: "Pues, el Word Webs fue un ejercicio que se proyectó para el tablero, que se

socializó en el tablero y que ellos (los estudiantes) tenían que desarrollar en su cuaderno,

entonces sí (Sí considero que la implementación de las estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo

promovió la producción escrita" (CT Interview). Also, about why the strategies fostered the

production, she says that the implementation of CLS is a way for students to rely on the

production and responses of their peers as a reference for their own production to achieve the

objectives of the activities. She mentionned: "Porque cuando yo no es que tú hazlo solo, sino que

tú puedes ver lo que otros compañeros aportan entonces eso te ayuda para el trabajo que tienes

que realizar" (CT Interview). My finding is supported by Piquet's arguments (2009) that working

in a collective is not about the individual actions of the participants but about the collective

action. In this case, the inclusion of CLS allowed the students to generate a collective action that

facilitated the achievement of the established goals for the unit with emphasis on written

production.

Collaborative Learning Strategies' Impact on Students' Oral Production

The results obtained showed that the influence of CLS on students' oral production was

positive. Regarding the oral assessment activity in which students needed to record a video, 17

students completed the activity and submitted the video, (see Figure 2). Thus, when

administering the questionnaire, students who did not sent the video where ask to mark "Does

apply" in the question number 4 of the questionnaire (Appendix B). 76% (13 students) of those

17 students who completed the task, managed to pass the evaluation with a high performance;

and the remaining did not achieve the objectives set. When students were asked about the

influence that the CLS had on their achievement, 58.82% and (10 students) agreed that the

strategies helped them in achieving the objective. Results showed a possible correlation between

the number of students who achieved the objective settled (13) with the number of students who

believed that the collaborative learning strategies helped them to achieve the identified goal (10).
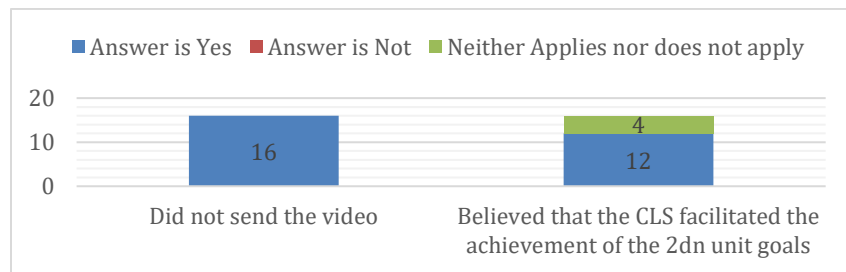
Figure 2

CLS impact on unit with emphasis on oral production
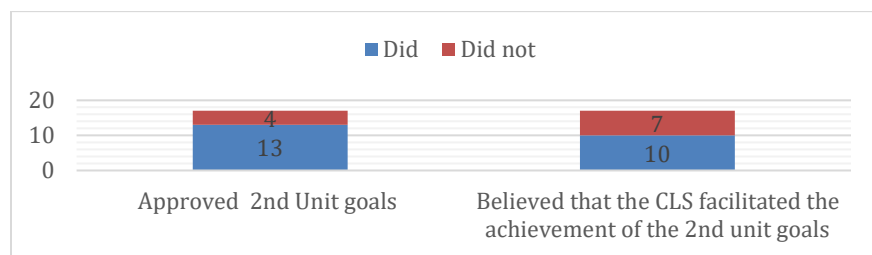
Additionally, there was also a correlation between students who refrained from handing

in the assignment (16) with those who either responded that it did not apply to them (12) or did

not respond to the question at all (4) (See Figure 3).

Figure 3

CLS impact on unit with emphasis on written production 2

A possible limitation that seems to have negatively affected the accomplishment of the

oral task was the students' preoccupation about making a video in which they had to speak using

the target language. The results of the interview with the CT indicate that the students who

refrained from turning in the oral assignment may have done so because of their concern about

the complexity of the video and their fear about recording themselves using English, not because

they felt unable to complete the assignment. As the transcription of the interview with the teacher

reads: "Fue muy complejo, la realización del vídeo fue muy compleja, se sienten reacios a hablar

en inglés, sienten mucho miedo, aunque hayamos hecho algunos ejercicios, siguen sintiéndose

incapaces de completar las tareas orales" (CT Interview). that even though he considers that he

achieved the objectives of the second unit, he decided not to send the video that was part of the

final evaluation.In the same way, a student's comment reflects the opinion of the CT. In the

questionnaire the student wrote that that even though he considers that he achieved the objectives

of the second unit, he decided not to send the video that was part of the final assessment. The

studentt said: " Aprendí a hacer frases sencillas (simple sentences) sobre mis planes de futuro,

aunque no enviara el vídeo (Student 9, Questionnaire). It can be interpreted that there some

students' preoccupation stopped them from sending the video, but this did not mean that the CLS

did not influenced positively their speaking production.

When students were asked if they considered that they had achieved the general objective

of the unit (Express simple sentences about my plans in one year, five years, and ten years) it

was found that 17 students answered positively. In fact, the results of the script activity "Plans

for the future" that was planned as preparation for the video, and in which the CLS Talking

Chips was implemented, evidenced the students' ability to talk about their future plans within the

time frame of the unit. Piquet (2009) mentions that collaborative learning reinforces motivation,

solidarity, and respect among participants, which was reflected in the activity of co-writing the

script This finding contrasts the effectiveness of collaborative learning activities versus

individual activities assigned to the students. As Sáenz et al. (2013) point out, through the

implementation of CLS, the achievement of an objective that would otherwise be too complex

for a single person to complete is sought. This situation was reflected in the making of the video

where 16 of students failed to submit the individual activity. Although the activity was part of a

unit where different CLS were carried out, the final task of the video recording did not require

students to collaborate which influenced their performance and commitment with the task.

Attitudes and Perceptions toward the Collaborative Learning Strategies

Attitude Towards the Collaborative Learning Strategies

The data reveals that students had a good attitude towards the implementation of the

CLS, both students and CT responding positively to the question about their conclusions of the

implementation of the CLS and the results. Additionally, as a common ground, the students and

CT perceived the CLS as a tool that fosters production in the target language, at the same time

they suggested that there is a need ¿for the integration of different teaching strategies to CLS to

assure that students achieve their own learning objectives.

The process and the triangulation of the data show a positive attitude towards the

implementation of the CLS from the stakeholders. Regarding the students, 57.69% (15 students)

responded to the conclusion about the implementation and results, of which 50% (13 students)

had a positive answer about the overall results obtained thanks to the implementation of such

strategies. As one student's comment reads: " Mi conclusión es que los resultados con las

técnicas de aprendizaje colaborativo fueron en su mayoría satisfactorios, ya que el profesor

consiguió explicar muy bien y el trabajo en grupo me ayudó a resolver las actividades de clase."

(Student 26, Questionnaire). Another student reflects his positive attitude about the

implementation of the learning strategies through the comment: "Creo que (las estrategias de

aprendizaje colaborativas) son muy buenas" (Student 25, Questionnaire). Likewise, the results of

the interview with the CT indicate a positive attitude since she pointed out on several occasions

that these strategies facilitated the collective work among students, and this positively influenced

the production of students who benefit from the collective work.

The Role of the Collaborative Learning Strategies in the Language Learning Process

It was found that even though the stakeholders perceived the CLS as a tool that fostered

production in the target language, they concluded that there is a need for the integration of

strategies different from collaborative learning for the assurance of the achievement of the

learning objectives. This was evidenced in the transcript of the interview with the teacher when

she pointed out on numerous occasions the need to integrate other pedagogical strategies beyond

collaborative learning. She commented: "De repente, ¿qué me faltaba? Faltaba la comprobación

de cómo cada alumno había capturado y transcrito a sus cuadernos el ejercicio de Word Webs

realizado en la pizarra." (CT Interview). This means that beyond the implementation of CLS, it is

necessary to apply strategies such as checking for understanding to ensure the successful

achievement of learning objectives by students. Another comment, this time by a student in the

questionnaire, reflects agreement with the CT. The student wrote: : "Gracias a las estrategias

aplicadas, se consiguió el objetivo de hacer frases cortas (frases simples) en inglés, pero no

obtuve resultados más allá de lo esperado (los objetivos de la unidad de expresión escrita y de la

unidad de expresión oral)" (Student 18, Questionnaire). As Cephe (2022) points out, the

integration of macro language skills requires, beyond the use of tools or strategies, the

implementation of appropriate teaching and learning methodologies to develop communication

such as Content Based Language Instruction or Task Based Language Instruction.

Conclusions

Considering the research question that orientated this project—*how can the*

implementation of CLS to integrate the macro skills foster students' written and oral production

in eighth-grade section nine at Institución José Felix de Restrepo? and the objectives outlined

above, I conclude it is necessary to integrate macro linguistic skills through different

mechanisms like collaborative learning strategies. When English macro skills are taught in a

segregated way, teachers do not ensure later success in formal or informal communication.

 Throughout my action learning project, I observed that the inclusion of CLS made it possible

to articulate the different activities and integrate the English macro-skills of the teaching units.

It was possible to integrate the macro-skills by planning units around the same theme, where the

activities were related to each other and delivered using the CLS. This facilitated the transition

from one activity based on one macro-skill to another based on multiple skills. In this way, it

was possible to integrate the macro-skills (Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing) by

implementing CLS to articulate the different activities into a unit.

Furthermore, the implementation of CLS allowed students to work in a collective way

that positively influenced students' written and oral production. According to the findings, the

majority of the students were able to achieve the objectives, such as expressing themselves with

simple sentences about what a good citizen is and what he or she acts, how they are going to be

good citizens, and to understand and use vocabulary to express duties and rights.

 As mentioned above, students were previously instructed on the reading skill alone and there

was no integration with the rest of the skills. The implementation of CLS allowed students to

work in a collective way that positively influenced their written and oral production. As it

pertains to their written production, most of the students were able to achieve the objectives,

such as expressing with simple sentences what a good citizen is and what he or she does, how

they are going to be good citizens, and to understand and use vocabulary to express duties and rights. Regarding oral production, it can be concluded that for the students who performed the evaluation activity, the strategies were successful because the students were able to express in simple sentences their plans and predictions for one, five and ten years from now. In addition, they were also able to say hello and goodbye, and to talk about themselves, mentioning aspects such as their name, age, the place where they live, and talk about family and hobbies.

Regarding the perception of the stakeholders, I concluded that most of the participants, including the learners, the TC and myself, had a good attitude toward the implementation of the collaborative learning strategies. The participants expressed their satisfaction and gratitude, and even improved their discipline during the application of the CLS. In addition, there was a noticeable improvement in the learners' discipline during the various activities. However, according to the participants' comments, it is essential to find ways to use the CLSs to help learners achieve objectives beyond those selected and set for the learning units, such as in their daily lives. In addition, it is necessary to plan and articulate different teaching strategies with CLNs to help learners achieve their personal objectives in the target language.

Finally, from the experience gained in conducting this project, I make some recommendations for future research. I consider the implementation of CLS to motivate students to produce language. In addition, when implementing the strategies, it is important to know beforehand the students' opinions and preferences, their learning goals, and objectives, what they like and dislike, what kind of activities make them feel comfortable so that the activities are directly related to their context and meaningful learning can be achieved. Therefore, it is also a good consideration to investigate how CLS related to students' motivation can develop their productive skills. Finally, considering that this action research project was

limited to some CLSs, it is important to consider how the use of different CLSs can influence

students' written and oral production.

Reflection

I dedicate this section to reflect on how teaching practice and teacher action research

contributed to my professional development. The teaching practice at Inem José Félix de

Restrepo represented for me a great challenge that tested my abilities to adapt to a constantly

changing environment. Unlike what I thought at the beginning of this process, I was far from

possessing the sufficient skills that my context demanded of me. But the constant and passionate

search for knowledge that would respond to the challenges of my context, rewarded me with the

acquisition of skills that have marked a before and after in my professional life. I acquired

planning, execution and organization skills that have meant achievements in my academic

practices as well as in my professional projects.

On the other hand, the research process represented a constant learning process and at the

same time a tool that I used to look for answers to the different problems that arose in the

classroom. The research process was not easy and required a lot of responsibility and hours of

work reading, writing, and correcting repeatedly. However, the tools that this research process

gave me allowed me to answer the many questions and difficulties I faced in the classroom.

Today, I am completely sure that the research skills acquired not only during this project but also

during my university career, will be a pillar for me in the search for new knowledge.

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Appendix A

Students' Questionnaire

Nota:

Este cuestionario fue diseñado para recoger información sobre las actividades realizadas durante el tiempo que fui tu profesor. Durante este periodo, se implementaron varias estrategias donde tú y tus compañeros debían colaborar para conseguir los objetivos de la clase, mi finalidad es reconocer cómo la colaboración promovió tu capacidad para escribir y para hablar en inglés. Tu sinceridad es fundamental para mí, es por ello que este cuestionario no será usado para evaluar tu conocimiento ni aprendizaje. Por favor responde a las preguntas planteadas a continuación.

Fecha: _____   **Lugar:** _____

1. Durante el desarrollo de la unidad "**Un buen ciudadano**" se utilizaron estrategias tales como Encadenamiento de sucesos Word Webs, Sequence Chains y Test-Taking Teams con el objetivo de facilitarte a ti estudiante la realización de un póster sobre la buena ciudadanía. Teniendo en cuenta el contexto anterior, responde de 1 a 5 como dicha estrategia facilitó los siguiente objetivos:

1 (Muy en desacuerdo)	2 (Desacuerdo)	3 (Ni de acuerdo ni desacuerdo)	4 (De acuerdo)	5 (Muy de acuerdo)	NA (No Aplica)

Objetivos Unidad didáctica "Un buen ciudadano"	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Logré describir a través de una oración simple lo que es un buen ciudadano						
Logré describir a través de una oración simple lo que hace un buen ciudadano						
Logré expresar con oraciones simples como voy a ser un buen ciudadano						

2. Para la producción del poster "**Un buen ciudadano**" se llevaron a cabo diferentes estrategias de trabajo colaborativo. Teniendo el cuenta el contexto anterior, responde de 1 a 5 como la estrategia te ayudo a completar la actividad:

Estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Word Webs						
Sequence Chains						
Test-Talking Teams						

3. Durante el desarrollo de la unidad "**Planes para el Futuro**" se implementaron estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo llamadas Word Webs, Talking Chips y Test Taking Teams con el objetivo de facilitarte a ti estudiante la realización de un video sobre sus planes a futuro. Teniendo en cuenta el contexto anterior, responde de 1 a 5 como dicha estrategia facilitó los siguiente objetivos:

Objetivos Unidad didáctica "Un buen ciudadano"	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Logré hablar a través de una oración simple mis planes dentro de un año						
Logré hablar a través de una oración simple mis planes dentro de cinco años						
Logré hablar a través de una oración simple mis planes dentro de diez años						

4. Para la producción del video "**Planes para el futuro**" se llevaron a cabo diferentes estrategias de trabajo colaborativo. Teniendo el cuenta el contexto anterior, responde de 1 a 5 como la estrategia te ayudo a completar la actividad:

Estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo	1	2	3	4	5	NA
Word Webs						
Test Taking Teams						
Talking Chips						

5. ¿Cuál es su conclusión sobre la implementación y sus resultados?

Appendix B

CT Interview

Contexto de la entrevista:

Durante el tiempo como Estudiante/Profesor-Investigador, se desarrolló un proyecto investigación-acción con una pregunta problematizadora. La pregunta problematizadora es *¿Cómo la implementación de estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo para integrar macro habilidades lingüísticas promueven la producción oral y escrita en los estudiantes de grado octavo sección 9 en la institución Educativa Inem José Félix de Restrepo?* Con el objetivo de responder a esta pregunta problematizadora, se planteó esta entrevista. Por favor responda de acuerdo al contexto planteado.

1. Durante el desarrollo de la unidad **"Un buen ciudadano"** se implementaron las estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo llamada Word Webs, Sequence Chains y Talking Chips con el objetivo de promover la producción escrita y oral en los estudiantes:

    i. *¿Considera usted que la implementación de dichas estrategias promovió la producción escrita en los estudiantes? ¿cómo?*

    b. Se aplicaron las estrategias Word Webs, Sequence Chains y Talking Chips con el objetivo de facilitar a los estudiantes la realización de un póster sobre la buena ciudadanía. De acuerdo con la anterior información:

    i. *¿Considera usted que la implementación de la estrategia facilitó la posterior producción escrita del poster "Un buen ciudadano"? ¿por qué?*

    c. Los objetivos dentro de la unidad didáctica eran describir a través de una oración simple lo que es un buen ciudadano, describir a través de una oración simple lo que hace un buen ciudadano y expresar con oraciones simples cómo ser un buen ciudadano.

    i. *¿Considera usted que los estudiantes consiguieron los objetivos propuestos? ¿por qué? ¿cómo?*

2. Durante el desarrollo de la unidad **"Planes para el Futuro"** se implementaron estrategias de aprendizaje colaborativo llamadas Word Webs, Talking Chips y Test Taking Teams con el objetivo de facilitar a los estudiantes la realización de un video sobre sus planes a futuro. De acuerdo con la anterior información:

    i. *¿Considera usted que la implementación de dichas estrategias promovió la producción oral en los estudiantes? ¿por qué? ¿cómo?*

    b. Se aplicaron las estrategias Word Webs, Talking Chips y Test Taking Teams con el objetivo de facilitar a los estudiantes la realización de un video sobre sus planes a futuro. De acuerdo con la anterior información:

    i. *¿Considera usted que la implementación de la estrategia facilitó la posterior producción oral del video "Planes a Futuro"? ¿cómo? ¿por qué?*

3. En el desarrollo de las unidades didácticas "Un buen ciudadano" y "Planes a Futuro" se implementaron estrategias de trabajo colaborativo con el objetivo de integrar las macro habilidades lingüísticas.

    i. *¿Considera usted que se logró integrar las macro habilidades lingüísticas a través de las estrategias de trabajo colaborativo? ¿Cómo se evidenció esto? ¿La integración fue exitosa? ¿por qué? ¿cómo podría haber sido más exitosa?*

4. Teniendo en cuenta las estrategias de trabajo colaborativo que se implementaron con el objetivo de que mejoraras tu producción oral y escrita, *¿Cuál es tu conclusión sobre la implementación y sus resultados?*