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Fostering Spontaneous Spoken Discourse Through Class Debates

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Abstract

This action-research aimed at identifying and reflecting on the implementation of debates to foster spontaneous spoken discourses. It was conducted in a public school in El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia with 28 tenth graders. Action strategies included involvement and exploration of how the ability to produce spoken discourses foster with class debates. Data gathering instruments included teacher's journal, student's audio recordings and focus groups. Findings referred to four cases-participants. Data showed that debates in a EFL classroom can develop spontaneous spoken discourses in terms of agreeing and disagreeing and stating points of view about a particular issue however, it was not the same in terms of asking for and giving clarifications and stating facts. Finally, it was evident that the implementation of debates does not produce meaningful effect on students' spontaneous spoken discourse.

Keywords: Debates, spontaneous spoken discourse, Project Based Learning.

Título en español: Fomentando el discurso hablado espontáneo a través de debates en clase

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 also want to thank myself.

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Preface

I am a student of foreign languages teaching program from Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia. I am a teacher interested in learning more about how to foster spontaneous spoken discourse in the EFL classroom. The desire for this research has originally come from my willingness for researching on debates fostering spontaneous spoken discourses with the application of Project-Based Leaning Approach for language acquisition in young learners in the EFL context. This research study was carried out from late August, 2022 to June, 2023. As a pre-service teacher, I conducted the project in a public school in El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia and I was assigned to observe a group of 28 tenth graders. This research project is mainly addressed to educators, who acknowledge the importance spoken discourses in EFL contexts.

Jonatan Alzate Patiño

El Carmen de Viboral, Antioquia, June 30th, 2023

Description of the Context

The institution where this action research took place was a secondary school located in the municipality of El Carmen de Viboral, in the eastern region of Antioquia, Colombia. The mission of the school is to educate boys, girls and young people with a spirit of improvement, responsible, respectful and committed to the preservation of the environment; promoting significant learning that students take advantage of in the construction of their life project and in the transformation of their family and community environment. As for its vision, it will be recognized as an educational institution, with a holistic pedagogical proposal and comprehensive quality management that promotes the formation of upright, competent, autonomous people who contribute to the construction of a society that generates peace and conservation and improvement of its social and cultural environment.

The English area of the school allows students to work with a - variety of components, including critical, communicative, and linguistics, that will help them to develop the different language skills, such as, listening, reading, speaking, and writing; to obtain a high-middle domain of the English language (B1). This level is based on the Common European Framework (CEF) and "Ministerio de Educación Nacional" (MEN) policies. Moreover, the textbook used in the English class was designed according to the Colombian context and globalization we are now, which is the guide for teaching English in the school.

Concerning the participants of this study were 28 tenth graders, whose ages range from 15 years old and 18 years old. These students had a good English level if we consider the English objectives proposed for the tenth grade, they participate, and they feel engaged

in the English class. Regarding the cooperating teacher, she holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish and English languages and has two specializations. She has been working at this school for 13 years and has been a teacher for 16 years.

Statement of the Problem

In English class "The EFL learner must be given the option to practice spontaneous speech using real-time, more unpredictable interaction that reflects genuine communication" (Byram & Méndez García, 2009; Christie, 2016). In this tenth graders class, there were different activities proposed to work on the four language skills, however the oral skill was not worked enough, the input presented in class was not sufficient to develop a more meaningful output, therefore the oral production was almost never developed as a spontaneous process.

Spoken production in foreign language classes is one of the most difficult skills for students to acquire, therefore it is one of the skills that we must work on the most as teachers. This English class proposed different activities focused on different language skills, but classes did not propose activities for the development of real spoken abilities. Based on the observations done in this class there were some moments when students participated orally, but the only way students could speak English was with a planned discourse, repetitions, memorizations or reading from notes or slides. To exemplify, in some classes the "Teacher plays the song and students should read the lyrics and sing while the song is playing" (Observation excerpt, August 17, 2022), on other occasions, "The teacher asks again for adjectives after the clarification about what is an adjective and students start to say a lot of them (some in English and some in Spanish): Amazing, Kind, Lovely, Great, Good, Favorite" (Observation excerpt, August 10, 2022). As seen in the

classes' development, most activities fostered pronunciation and repetition of some words or simple vocabulary rather than the use of the language in a communicative context.

In addition, the use of language skills in a communicative context should be spontaneous, natural, and meaningful. As reported in the observations, the activities where students had to present orally some projects, those students demonstrated that they cannot produce non-planned discourses, for instance, "The student presented their family with using poor English. The student confuses a lot of English words even when she is reading the discourse" (Observation excerpt, August 5, 2022) and other students, in another class, expressed "Jairo does a decent job with their pronunciation since he read the sentences" (Observation excerpt, August 26, 2022). The students could not express their ideas with their own words. Considering these situations, activities proposed should be more focused on fostering spontaneous oral production.

Furthermore, the development of language skills requires time, effort, and purpose to be developed. English as a foreign language context requires a good lesson planning considering spaces to practice all the language skills, but in this public context, classes were just one or two hours a week therefore limited time affected this planning. Even more, the number of activities students must do per lesson and outside class were overwhelming. As reported in the observations, students expressed their thoughts about this with expressions like: "Students express that there is a lot of homework to do, and those new activities take a lot of time, but the teacher reaction was "it's short to do" (Observation excerpt, August 26, 2022). "All students look lost with the activity; they express that with their face expressions." "There is a lot of work in this new task" said one student" (Observation excerpt, September 7, 2022). "ohh no, that's a lot of work" "teacher, haaa it should be the

complete grade for the course, what is that?" (Observation excerpt, September 9, 2022)

Students did not feel comfortable with all the tasks they must do, this could affect the

process and their engagement towards the English class.

As a conclusion, lack of development of spontaneous spoken discourses was present

in this classroom and there were some factors that can affect the students' process. In this

case, the implementation of a Project-Based Approach focusing on the development of oral

debates can contribute to fostering students' spontaneous spoken discourse.

Theoretical Background

This section presents a brief conceptualization of the notions that underpin this

research project. In the following paragraphs first, I define the concept of 'debates' in the

EFL classroom. Then, I explain the concept of authentic spoken language and finally, I

present a definition of Project-Based Learning (PBL), as well as the description for its

implementation.

In general terms when dealing with languages acquisition it is outmost to discuss

the concept of language, for that Firth and Wagner (2007) define that "Language is not only

a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual brain; it is also fundamentally a

social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of context for myriad

practical purposes" (p. 768). In this action research, language through 'debates' in an

English Foreign Language (EFL) classroom was the strategy selected for looking for an

improvement in the student's spoken discourse.

Hence, a debate, in the EFL setting, is an equitable structured communication event

about any topic of interest, with opposing advocates alternating before a decision-making

body (Snider & Schnurer, 2002). With this definition in mind, implementing debates as an

activity to work in an EFL classroom is a viable and meaningful option for students to acquire and practice speaking skills.

Moreover, debates can support English spoken language and foster interaction amongst learners by sharing ideas about different topics in the EFL classroom. In a study done by Bonwell and Eison (1991) they concluded that, "students learn more effectively by actively analyzing, discussing, and applying content in meaningful ways rather than by passively absorbing information" (p. 240). Although using debates in EFL classroom reinforces all language skills, speaking and listening are the ones that benefit the most. Furthermore, students learn to organize their language production and focus on such aspects as word choice, coherence, fluency, development of ideas and persuasion, which are all salient to oral and written communication (Allison, 2002).

Moreover, according to Branham (1991) the use of 'debate' has been developed following this structure: (a) development, through which arguments are advanced and supported; (b) clash, through which arguments are properly disputed; (c) extension, through which arguments are defended against refutation; and (d) perspective, through which individual arguments are related to the larger question at hand. Additionally, other authors state that "Debate's interactive nature requiring contextualized and meaningful language use from preparation to actual debate" (Aclan & Abdul Aziz, 2015, p. 2). The focus of this project was to use 'debates' to aid students to improve their spoken language, specifically, their spontaneous discourse.

In the same vein, the concept of 'speaking spontaneity' is defined as an ability to speak naturally and instinctively to be a good speaker. Speaking has become one of what the literature described as basic skill in mastering a language (Bozkirli & Er, 2018). It

means that when students produce discourses to initiate a conversation or respond to an external stimulus, without any pre-planning and without relying on any sort of support (e.g., vocabulary lists, talking mats, dictionaries, written notes, etc.). In other words, spontaneity equates with unplanned autonomous speech production.

Regarding authentic spoken language, theorists also agree on the fact that it is one of the most important abilities to learn a language because it allows people to interact with others and, at the same time, to interrelate the other skills into one. Similarly, one of the goals of spoken language involves interpersonal characteristics, these must deal with those social relationships when interacting with other people such as in informal conversations which are essential to take into consideration when fostering spoken skills in students (Burns, 2016). For that reason, implementing debates to foster spontaneous spoken discourse is advisable and valid considering that spoken language is an interactive action that implies the process where students should focus on understanding the message and produce a logical answer (Kathirvel & Hashim, 2020).

Furthermore, Celce Murcia (2014) proposes a set of skills that are to be developed when dealing with spoken language, namely: stating opinions, agreeing and disagreeing, interrupting and clarifying. Also, the use of words for structural organization (openings, closings and transitions), turn-taking (the structure and distribution of turns), sequence structure (the linking of the turns to the performance of like requesting, greeting, etc.), and repair (mechanisms for rectifying problems of hearing and understanding in conversation). For the purposes of this action research project, we focused our attention on the students' ability to state points of view and facts, agreeing and disagreeing and asking for or giving clarifications.

Another important element to discuss is Project-Based Learning, as the teaching approach implemented in this study. According to different scholars, Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a language education approach that involves student-centered learning processes (Fried-Booth, 2002). Students can learn content exploring themes and they can develop language by working together and completing some specific tasks (Stoller, 2002). This model includes activities that contextualize language, integrate skills, and point toward authentic, real-world purposes. This type of contextualization can be also explained with the perspective of language teaching, namely 'experiential learning' proposed by Brown and Lee (2015), in which they assert that

> "Experiential learning emphasizes the psychomotor aspects of language learning by involving learners in physical actions in which language is subsumed and reinforced. Through action, students are drawn into the utilization of multiple skills. The educational foundations of experiential learning lie in the advantages of "learning by doing", discovery learning, and inductive learning" (p. 50)

Therefore, to comply with the previous perspectives, this action research project followed the 10 steps for developing PBL proposed by Stoller (1997):

- Step 1. Agree on a theme, and Step 2. Determine the outcome: represent the stages in which students and the teacher are negotiating the nature of the project.
- Step 3. Structure the project: The teacher and students specify a project proposal.
- Step 4. Prepare students for the language demands of step 5: The teacher plans language interventions (lessons/activities) with strategies of gathering from different sources.
- Step 5. Gather information: students gather information inside and outside the

classroom.

- Step 6. Prepare students for the language demands of step 7: The teacher discusses
  with students' techniques for compiling and analyzing information.

- Step 7. Compile and analyze information: students think about what they have
  collected, how one part relates to another, and begin summarizing.

- Step 8. Prepare students for the language demands of step 9: students receive input
  from the teacher on possible language demands.

- Step 9. Present the final product: students will be ready to present their project to
  their classmates.

- Step 10. Evaluate the project: time for reflection on and evaluation of the entire
  project.

Therefore, the implementation of Project-Based Learning through debates could

provide pertinent insight for the students to understand the topic, and language tools to

produce spontaneous spoken language. The goals and the actions that were developed in

this study for achieving the objectives will be described in the following section.

Research Question

How can Project-Based Learning through debates foster spontaneous spoken discourse in a

group of 10th graders?

Objectives

General Objective

To explore how Project-Based Learning through debates foster spontaneous spoken discourse in a group of tenth graders in a public school.

Specific Objectives

1. To evaluate how the development of debates foster students' abilities to state facts, agree or disagree and ask for and give clarifications.

2. To determine the improvement of students' spoken skills when debating different issues

Action Plan

To answer the research question stated for this project, a ten-step cycle was applied over a period of three months, following the proposal from Stoller (1997). The first step was to select and agree on a theme and present an oral justification for that selection. The second step was to determine the outcome, nevertheless for the purposes of this project, we decided to work with debates. The third step was to determine the structure of the project which included activities like selection of the team's names and distribution of the debate's roles. The fourth step was to prepare students for the language demands, that consisted of working with activities like brainstorming of ideas, presentations, and practice. The fifth step was to gather information where each member of the team offered an information source. The sixth step was to prepare students for the language demands of step 7, compile and analyze information, I presented some strategies to compile and analyze information, considering the most important, and using graphic organizers. The seventh step was to

compile and analyze information, where each team created a general organizer with the information previously worked. The eighth step was to prepare students for the language demands on step 9, presentation outcome, which included the formation of arguments. The nineth step was to present the outcome, that was the development of a formal debate. The tenth step was to evaluate the project which included a short reflection by each student about the project development.

Data was collected by means of audio recordings with students' oral production, teacher's journals and one focus group. Journals were written and codified weekly, audio recordings and focus group were transcribed, codified, and analyzed.

Development of Actions

I chose four case-participants following the intensity strategy suggested by Pattom (2012). The step 1, selection of theme, the students and I proposed some themes for the debates, we discussed about controversial themes in the present as sexuality, sexual orientation, drugs, abortion, social media, sexting, etc. At the end, by voting, raising the hands, students chose 'drugs' as theme for the debate and each student had to say, in English, why she or he chose that theme, using the one of the common expressions for agreeing and disagreeing, which were taught earlier in the class. The step 2, determine the final outcome, involved the presentation and explanation of the outcome of the project that was previously selected considering the purposes of the project, which refers to oral skills, particularly spontaneous discourses. Considering that, I selected debates as outcome and in this step, I presented some samples of debates to students, I used some videos and slides

about what a debate was and how to work with it. The step 3 was to determine the structure

of debates, as the roles, timing, etc. For that, students had the opportunity to choose their

debates teams, just with the specifications of be 4 member's teams. After that, I presented

and explained the structure of debates: development, clash, extension, and perspective with

some slides and a video which explain the roles in debates; after watching the video

students chose their specifics roles in each team, 2 members of the team had to be against

drugs and the other 2 members in favor. In step 4, I did some preparation activities where

students practice for the language demands of the following step. First, I used a Power

Point Presentation where I presented a list of common expressions for asking for or giving

clarification and after that, the students proposed some strategies to look for information

and discussed about why they use them and what are more recommendable to work in this

case to look for information about drugs. Then, I proposed some strategies such as videos,

books, podcasts, asking someone and then, I distributed the strategies to the teams. The idea

was for each team to look for information using the strategy that I selected for them and

then, they shared the information they found. In the step 5, gather information, each one of

the students brought one source of information about drugs but in specific information

which help to defend their own role (favor or against), and they could use the information

they want, like videos, texts, etc. That step was carried out from home since students must

present their sources in the class. The step 6, prepare students for the language demands of

step 7, I presented some strategies to organize the information through graphic organizers,

the presentation was by slides and one video which showed different kinds of graphic

organizers. Also, I presented an extra slide with common expressions to state points of view

and facts in debates. In step 7, compile and analyze information, students used the graphic

organizers, they organized the information they got from the previous step in one big piece of paper, mixing the information taken from in favor and against, forming a big graphic with a lot of information related to the topic. After that, we continued with the step 8, preparing students for the language demands of the following step, in which students practices their oral skills with activities to re-check the debates' structure, students played a game, and the looser team must explain the debates' structure worked in the third step of the project. Also, I presented again some expressions commonly used in debates to agree and disagree, giving or asking for clarification, and state points of view and facts. In the step 9, present the outcome, each team presented the final debate with the teacher as moderator. All the students presented and participated in the debates, everybody respected their turns in the debate and their roles. Most of them tried to talk in English and some of them used many common expressions to agree and disagree. In step 10, evaluate the project, students completed a check list to assess the development of the project and they wrote reflections about their process, while the final debates were carried out.

Data analysis

Data was analyzed using the 5 stages proposed by Burns (2010): assembling the data, coding the data, comparing the data, building interpretations, and reporting the outcomes. As a first step of assembling the data, I saved all the audio recordings on my cellphone, after that, I transcribed the audios and saved them on an online and an offline folder. I took the audio recordings transcriptions and put them in the journals worked each week. Then, I brought together the data and uploaded it into the Software *Atlas.ti.* Then, I started creating codes, looking for patterns, I also did a chart in word to organize the codes

in categories. To interpret this data, the analysis was done in *Atlas.ti,* which helped to organize the frequency and recurrent codes in the raw data. Afterwards, I made the connections between the codes, categories, and themes with the theory. In the last stage, I organized the findings from the most important to the least important to be present in the final written report.

Findings and Interpretations

This study aimed at fostering students' spontaneous spoken discourses through class debates using Project-Based Learning. The findings present evidence from the four case-participants, namely Case 1, Case 2, Case 3 and Case 4. Analysis revealed three findings: Development of Students' Spontaneous Spoken Discourses in Terms of Agreeing and Disagreeing and Stating Points of View about a Particular Issue, Lack of Development of Students' Spontaneous Spoken Discourse in Terms of Asking for and Giving Clarifications and Stating Facts, and the Implementation of Debates did not Produce Meaningful Effect to Foster Spontaneous Spoken Discourse. In the following paragraphs I provide an in-depth explanation of each finding.

Development of Students' Spontaneous Spoken Discourses in Terms of Agreeing and Disagreeing and Stating Points of View about a Particular Issue

Data showed that students' spontaneous spoken discourses was developed in terms of agreeing and disagreeing and stating points of view about a particular issue, in this case, the advantages and disadvantages of the consumption of drugs in teenagers. Comparing the audios recordings from beginning to end, in the moment of performing in the debate students showed an increase in the use of expressions for agreeing and disagreeing. For

instance, in the fourth step of the project, students had a short conversation where they

discussed strategies to look for information. The following excerpt from the journal shows

their conversation:

Case 1: Chrome

Case 3: Chrome

Case 1: And you?

Case 3: It is ok, just try it, relax.

Case 2: No teacher

Case 1: Our books, videos, docs and texts.

Case 1: Yes?

Case 3: Glugluglu

Case 1: Agree? O disagree?

Case 2: I buscasion the informasion in Google

Case 1: You agree o disagree the information in page, books, texts and books

Case 2: Agree agree agree agree agree

Case 1: Yes, and you?

Case 3: Oh, yeah yeah yeah

(Journal entry, March 13th, 2023)

This activity was developed without working or learning the expressions to agree

and disagree in the discussions done in class. Even that, there was evidence of improvement

from Case 1, the student showed a certain improvement in this skill, to work with

expressions to agree and disagree. In the next example, this student used the most common

expressions, but she used it asking one classmate, contributing to the discussion with

simple questions, even presented in one word "Agree? O disagree?", "You agree or

disagree the information in page, books, texts and books?" (Journal entry, March 3rd, 2023).

The rest of cases did not show any knowledge about expressions to agree and disagree in

English, except Case 2, who used the word 'agree' several times to answer to a question posed by Case 1.

Additionally, comparing the first audio recording with the last (the debate) we can notice different changes in terms of agreeing, disagreeing and stating points of view. The interventions were more valuable in terms of vocabulary and organization of the language at the end of the project. The following excerpt shows their last conversation:

Case 1: The drugs are good for mental health and much person are use for escape their reality

Teacher: That's perfect, who's next? You?

Case 2: I disagree for topic medical for bad health for the future

Teacher: That's ok.

Case 3: I disagree because the drugs benefits, control depression and increase positivism

Teacher: What do you think Ana?

Case 4: I disagree because it generates addiction

**Teacher:** What can we conclude? ¿Qué podemos concluir de este tema de las drogas?

Case 1: The drugs is news benefits for the health, for health, and it is dangerous because generate addiction. (Journal entry, April 24th, 2023).

To illustrate, Figure 1shows the improvement on spoken discourses when agreeing and disagree. In Case 1, the student from the beginning of the process showed a good English level. The comparison in this case in terms of the use of agree and disagree

expressions is not evident. In Case 2, the student showed an improvement of 2 points in the rating scale used to assess the use of expressions to agree and disagree, since in the beginning of the project these expressions had not been presented to students. At the end of the project were the cases showed an improvement when students had already seen and worked with the proposed expressions in terms of the general topic they were working on. Similarly, in Case 3, the student moved from not using any expression to agree and disagree to starting to learn the necessary vocabulary to use these expressions in a spontaneous conversation. Finally, Case 4, as Case 3, they showed an improvement of 2 points in their repertoire of expressions when discussion spontaneously in class activities.

Figure 1

Diagnostic of Ability to Use Expression to Agree and Disagree
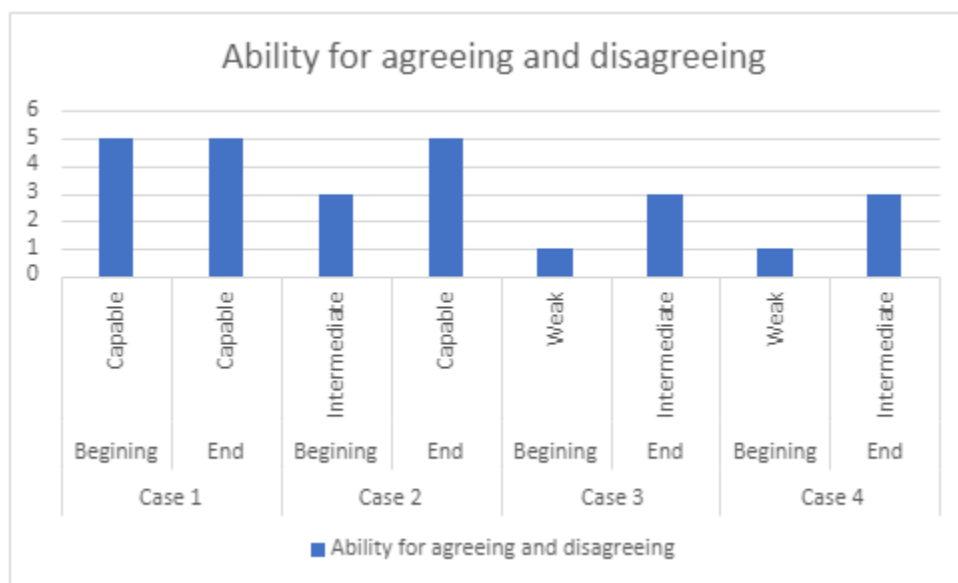
Note. Increasement in the ability to agree and disagree

This figure exposes the level of improvement in most case-participants in terms of the use of expressions to agree and disagree. Some of the cases showed improvement as they moved from weak to intermediate, although the progress was low in all the cases, it is evident how work with debates to foster spontaneous spoken discourses could, somehow foster students use of the target language spontaneously, since we noticed how each case increase their spoken skill in terms of agreeing and disagreeing about a particular issue. As Bonwell and Eison (1991) mention "students learn more effectively by actively analyzing, discussing, and applying content in meaningful ways rather than by passively absorbing information" (p. 240).

In addition, we can infer that the low increase in this skill might have happened due to the lack of time to implement the project. As reported in the journal "[...] with more time, or a project for all the academic year, the changes in students use of the foreign language in a spontaneous way, will improve a lot" (Journal entry 6, April 24th, 2023). Several sessions were reduced in time or even cancelled because of extracurricular activities at the school, limiting the time of the class to develop more activities that could have helped students become more proficient in their spoken production. In Case 1, we could see how the student had a good level along the process, and he continued at the same level keeping the knowledge he had to improve and learn more expressions apart from how to agree and disagree.

Lack of Development of Students Spontaneous Spoken Discourse in terms of Asking for and Giving Clarifications and Stating Facts

Data revealed that along the implementation of the project's steps, the cases did not improve in some respects proposed by spontaneous spoken discourses. To illustrate,

the abilities for "asking for and giving clarifications" and "stating facts" that were introduced to students for helping them use their linguistic resources to speak freely, did not show a meaningful improvement in the cases-participants. Comparing students' performance at the beginning and end of the process, the final debate, we can observe how the expressions to present facts did not increase as expected. Moreover, the increase in the ability to ask for or give clarifications was null throughout the process.

Figure 2

Diagnostic of Asking for and Giving Clarifications and Stating Points of View and facts
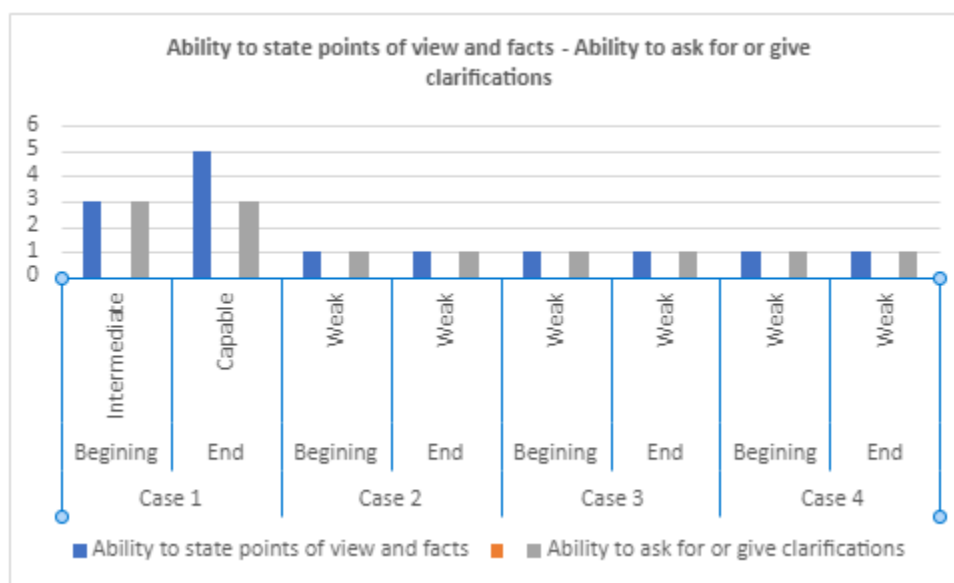
Note. Non increasement in the ability to state facts and the ability to ask for or give clarification

Figure 2 revealed how low was the increase in terms of stating facts and the ability to ask for or give clarification in most cases. Case 1 showed a low increase in the ability to state point of view and facts, but it was the only case who did it. This case showed a high level in terms of vocabulary in the foreign language from the beginning of the project, it could be the reason why this was the only case with a different level. As reported in the

journal "The Case 1 try to speak, and she did an excellent job, even that the other students in the teamwork, the second cases mentioned didn't speak." (Journal entry 2, February 27th, 2023). The analysis of the results presented in the figure show that even working with vocabulary and expressions to state points of view and facts and asking for or giving clarification, it does not mean that students would implement them on their conversations in the target language. Keeping a conversation in a foreign language is a difficult process for any learner and considering that spoken language is an interactive action that implies the process where students should focus on understanding the message and produce a logical answer (Kathirvel & Hashim, 2020). The cases focused their attention on creating a logical answer to different questions more than in implementing or using the expressions or vocabulary to state facts and asking for giving clarification.

Implementation of Debates Does not Produce Meaningful Effect on Students Spontaneous Spoken Discourse

The implementation of debates might have not been the best or more meaningful strategy to foster spontaneous spoken discourse in this context. Debates can be an excellent activity or task in an EFL classroom to promote the use of the language in terms of all skills development as debates reinforce all language skills, being speaking and listening the ones that benefit the most. Furthermore, students learn to organize their language production and focus on such aspects as word choice, coherence, fluency, development of ideas and persuasion, which are all salient to oral and written communication (Allison, 2002).

Nevertheless, during the implementation of the project it was evident that debates and steps and organization to be properly developed can restrict the use of spontaneous

spoken discourses. The implementation of the debate in this project was based on Branham (1991) steps: (a) development, through which arguments are advanced and supported; (b) clash, through which arguments are properly disputed; (c) extension, through which arguments are defended against refutation; and (d) perspective, through which individual arguments are related to the larger question at hand. In general terms, the action of debate includes many aspects of spoken discourse, even spontaneous ones. However, if the expected result is a big or more evident change in terms of spontaneous discourse debates can limit the spontaneous production. The steps of a debate always respect and follow a specific organization and the order in which the members of the debates can participate orally. In this case, it aimed to be a very organized sharing of arguments more than a spontaneous conversation. Students seemed to be only focused on transmitting the message and the meaning of their position more than continuing with an open conversation where everybody could speak freely about the issue and provide comments, insight and responses that were not previously planned or memorized. This was evidenced in the journal reflection when I reported the following:

> **Case 1:** The drugs are good for mental health and much person are use for escape their reality
>
> **Case 2:** I disagree for topic medical for bad health for the future
>
> **Case 3:** I disagree because the drugs benefits, control depression and increasing positivism
>
> **Teacher:** What do you think Ana?
>
> **Case 4:** I disagree because it generates addiction
>
> **Teacher:** What can we conclude? Que Podemos concluir de este tema de las drogas?
>
> **Case 1:** The drugs is news benefits for the health, for health, and it is dangerous because generate addiction.

(Journal entry, April 24th, 2023).

The previous discussion held during the debates shows that students' performance was reduced to a simple sharing of ideas. Students felt the debate as a moment to defend their point of view with some ideas but not as a conversation or a continuous intervention of different ways of thinking, hence, while doing the debate, students could not continue with a conversation and a clash of ideas among themselves. Even though, it did not helped students to speak spontaneously, they found the strategy as useful for learning English, as reported in the discussion held in the focus group.

> Case 2: sí, profe a mí me pareció una opción muy nueva porque, como dice Simón, nunca había llegado a trabajar con un debate, sobre todo en inglés, pues que es un nuevo reto, claro. Entonces sí pareció muy bien.
>
> (Focus group, May 3rd, 2023)

This is what case two mentioned in the focus group concerning the implementation of debates in the English class. It shows how students had not used debates before and did not know about how to work with them. At the end, in the debate, students present just their arguments stating their points of view, but they did not propose or continue with the discussion. This finding corroborated what Firth and Wagner (2007) state when they define that "Language is not only a cognitive phenomenon, the product of the individual brain; it is also fundamentally a social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of context for myriad practical purposes" (p. 768). Considering that we can work on our language with different social events, it can be a good option always to look for an event which does not have a set of limitations for spontaneous and free conversations in or outside the classroom.

Finally, we can infer that the students' discourses were not entirely spontaneous as the information presented on the debate was previously worked in class, students had a lot of time to prepare and revise the information to be used in the final debates. They were instructed to have good arguments to present to the opposition, therefore, the theme or issue affected their performance as well. They could use the target language somehow to an accurate state, but their spontaneity was limited.

Conclusions and Implications

Data showed that debates in a EFL classroom can develop spontaneous spoken discourses in terms of agreeing and disagreeing and stating points of view about a particular issue however, it was not the same in terms of asking for and giving clarifications and stating facts. Finally, it was evident that the implementation of debates does not produce meaningful effect on students' spontaneous spoken discourse.

When implementing this type of approach, teachers must consider the time of the project since it was one of the biggest implications in the development of the study. With more time to prepare work on the project and lesson planning focusing on debates, the impact on students' language acquisition would be better, in terms of all the language functions proposed for spontaneous spoken discourse.

We could think of different possibilities for a future project based on fostering spontaneous discourses. In this case, of spontaneous spoken discourses, there are different options apart from debate which can let students or participants to speak freely and spontaneously when producing orally. An open discussion can be an optimum option since the discussion has a specific or clear theme. For a good development can be nice to let students to study or search for information about the selected topic and after that, start the

open discussion where students will, for sure, be able to increase and improve their spontaneous spoken discourse, even more than with debates.

Reflection

This last stage of my program was enough to know in first person what teaching a foreign language in a public school in Colombia is. I even did not know what I expected before the practicum process, but I hoped that to be fast. The first time for everything is the most difficult moment in the process of any project; when I arrived home from the first implementation, I felt so bad because of the development of the class. The rest of the classes were enough to not feel bad about something that I could not control at all.

Working with teenagers was amazing, they always teach you a lot of things, even more than to be verb and grammar structures of a foreign language. That is life, all relations you have with people who are around you is a constant teaching and learning opportunity about the most random themes. At the end of the process, I can say that I enjoyed teaching English, that is important as I understand that it is my profession.

Time in the university was a great stage, for me it was the transition between being a child thinking that life is pink with some money problems to an adult who thinks that life has a lot of aspects that we cannot control and that is ok. But you have a responsibility about the things that just happen in your life. Life is making decisions, and the decision to study 6 years to learn about how to stand up in front of a numerous group of people who want something from you, it is crazy and difficult to understand it before living it.

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