



Motivational Teaching Strategies to Foster Oral Production Skills

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project to my family. All the effort and passion registered in this project is nothing but the support and encouragement of my family who always believed I was able to achieve great things. My parents, in their particular ways, are the ones who brought me where I am. I am strong, confident and persevering thanks to them. Those who I considered my family, who were there while I was facing this great challenge, who were always helping and understanding the ups and downs of this experience, who never stopped supporting me and encouraging me to continue, this achievement is for them.

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Abstract

This action research project intended to explore the impact of implementing motivational teaching strategies to foster oral production skills in foreign language learners of eighth grade in a public school in Medellín, Colombia. To collect data, the instruments used were a research journal, two questionnaires which were conducted at the beginning and at the end of the implementation of the project, self-assessment, oral presentations and voice recordings, an external observation, and an interview with the cooperating teacher.

Data analysis revealed that the implementation of motivational teaching strategies helped to promote students' commitment and responsibility to their learning process. This also helped students to improve their oral production skills and participation in the classroom. While these improvements are significant for students and the strategies were successful, it is important to develop them in a context where the time is more suitable for the implementation of the strategies and the creation of study routines.

Keywords: Motivational teaching strategies, oral production skills, participation.

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación-acción tiene como objetivo explorar el impacto de la implementación de estrategias de enseñanza motivacional para fomentar las habilidades de producción oral en estudiantes de grado octavo en una escuela pública en Medellín, Colombia. Los participantes fueron estudiantes de octavo grado del Instituto Técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo. Para recopilar datos, los instrumentos utilizados fueron un diario investigativo, dos cuestionarios que se realizaron al principio y al final de la implementación del proyecto, autoevaluaciones, presentaciones orales y grabaciones de voz, una observación externa, y una entrevista con el profesor colaborador.

El análisis de datos reveló que la implementación de estrategias de enseñanza motivacional ayudó a promover el compromiso y la responsabilidad de los estudiantes con su proceso de aprendizaje. Esto también ayudó a los estudiantes a mejorar sus habilidades de producción oral y la participación en el aula. Si bien estas mejoras son significativas para los estudiantes y las estrategias tuvieron éxito, es importante desarrollarlas en un contexto donde el tiempo sea más adecuado para la implementación de las estrategias y la creación de rutinas de estudio.

Palabras clave: Estrategias de enseñanza motivacionales, habilidades de producción oral, participación.

Introduction

This action research project was carried out in an eighth-grade group from Instituto Técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo. In this group there were 37 students from 12 to 14 years old. The institution's main focus is their technical subjects, for that reason the English courses only have 2 hours per week. The class is scheduled on Thursdays from 4:00pm to 6:00pm.

This research project began after observing a lack of motivation, mainly related to speaking, in an English language classroom from a public school in Medellín, Colombia. For this reason, I decided to implement Motivational teaching strategies as a plausible way to solve the problem. Those Motivational Teaching Strategies proposed by Dörnyei (2001) were designed to have an organized and lasting positive impact on students by developing goal-related behaviors. Those strategies were mainly directed to foster oral production skills. Based on that, in the first semester I designed an action plan including the main strategies that could be helpful for encouraging the speaking skills of students. These actions were planned to be implemented in the second semester during ten weeks.

In the second phase of the project, the action plan was implemented, with some time difficulties. The actions implemented were analyzed using data collections instruments such as: research journal, interviews, questionnaires, among others. That data was analyzed, discussed and interpreted following a process of triangulation for more reliable results.

In conclusion, motivational teaching strategies were useful to foster students' engagement and responsibility towards their learning process; also, it was helpful for students to improve their oral production skills and participation in the classroom. Nevertheless, although the improvements were significant for students, it was lower than expected, concluding that those strategies need to be developed in a context where time plays in favor, in order to build routines and understanding of the autonomous work.

Description of the Context

The Instituto Técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo is recognized as one of the earliest public schools in Medellín, Colombia. Established on October fifth, 1935, it is located in Robledo Pilarica neighborhood within Commune seven of Medellín. The institution has approximately 2,000 students organized into 51 groups. The school shares its infrastructure with the Institución Universitaria Pascual Bravo occupying block one of the university. The institution only offers high school education from 6th grade to 11th grade, and due to its prestigious reputation, it welcomes students from different areas of the city.

The institution's mission is to educate individuals who are able to make decisions through training for work, production, and competitiveness in humanistic labor fields, in order to higher education (Instituto técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo, n.d). The vision emphasizes the institution's goal to be a leader in training technical-scientific baccalaureate, fostering knowledge builders capable of utilizing and producing technology to solve both personal and community problems. (Instituto técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo, n.d) The school's strength lies in its technical emphasis, offering technical training since sixth grade. This allows students to graduate as technicians who are ready to enter the work field immediately after high school or continue their professional studies. (Instituto técnico Industrial Pascual Bravo, n.d)

The English curriculum follows the General Education Law which aligns with the curricular guidelines and standards. The English department is composed of five teachers, distributed among the 51 groups, each teacher has their own classroom which is equipped with a whiteboard and a medium-sized TV. The cooperating teacher holds a bachelor's degree in Language Teaching (Spanish, English, and French) from the Universidad Industrial de Santander. He believes in the importance of English learning and teaching for cultural, economic, and social opportunities. The Cooperating Teacher has approximately 21 years of experience teaching in schools and universities, which has allowed him to find his own way of teaching and has formed his character and beliefs around teaching and learning English. His methodology is a mixture of grammar focused and communicative approach since he tries to

provide students with opportunities to use the language but, he always adds to his classes a moment to explain the grammar content before students use the language. He oversees 11 groups from 6th to 9th-grade, English and Spanish classes. He usually enjoys teaching English more than Spanish, as for him English is his comfort zone. He is a very serious person and this is reflected in the classroom since, although he is kind and understanding, he uses this personality trait to maintain order in the classroom.

The focus of this study is an eighth-grade course in the afternoon shift, in which there are 37 students, 17 girls and 20 boys. They are between 12 and 14 years old, and they reside in different areas of the city. They receive two hours of English class per week, scheduled every Thursday from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Based on observations and discussions with the Cooperating Teacher, students demonstrate a basic level of proficiency in English but three students that have a higher level. Their attitude towards English is quite good and they do not seem to dislike English classes, nevertheless, they expressed not being able to understand or use the language to communicate. Moreover, some students expressed their desire to travel or work in different countries and based on that, they know the importance of learning English for those purposes.

Statement of the problem

Oral production skills constitute a significant part of the communication process in language. In this regard, Bula (2015) points out that "speaking is one of the most fundamental and common human behaviors. We speak on a daily basis to communicate and exchange meaningful information" (p. 350). In this sense, oral production skills play a crucial role in the language learning process since language was created for communication, and "to fulfill the task of communication, speech is required. So, speech is imperative for communication" (Akhter et al., 2020, p. 6022). Nevertheless, for EFL students, it can be challenging to find spaces to practice their speaking skills outside the classroom, which means that the possibilities to keep practicing and improving their oral production skills are reduced compared to the possibilities to practice the other skills (Vaca & Gómez, 2017, p. 58). For this reason, it

is essential to keep stimulating and fostering oral production skills in the classroom, as it is the primary place where most students find the opportunity to practice.

In the context of the eighth-grade group seven, the group observed, students are rarely motivated to speak. Eighth graders showed that when they are asked to speak, they feel fear, lack of confidence, and show disinterest. In the second class I taught, I showed a video from which students had to answer several questions related to the video and to their own lives. When they were asked to answer the questions, the majority of the students asked if they could answer in Spanish or tried to speak lower so as not to be heard, others preferred not to participate in the activity, but they mentioned it was because they did not know how to express their ideas using the target language. Moreover, few students took the risk to answer the questions even if I proposed to help them, by expressing that they do not know how to speak well. (Personal journal Entry. February 2nd, 2024). This evidence shows how students feel when they are asked to speak; most of them were ashamed and consistently avoided being heard by their classmates during the task where they had to speak.

There is a lack of motivation in the classroom when students must participate in oral production activities, as they feel ashamed, not good enough, and not possibly able to do it. Thus, when students are asked to write or read, they feel more confident and complain less about the tasks. Nevertheless, during the observations, it is evident that students have previous beliefs about learning English which work as barriers and limitations. In the fifth class I taught, I asked students to present a dialogue they prepared orally. When they had to come to the board the reaction was negative since students mentioned that they did not want to do it for several reasons: others might laugh at them, they did not know if the task was well done, they felt uncomfortable talking in English in front of their classmates, among others, (Personal journal entry. March 21st, 2024) which evidences there are external barriers that could be mitigated to improve their oral performance fostering oral production.

In some informal conversations I had with some students, I asked them about their thoughts about English, and the common answer I found was "English is just very hard to learn", "I don't understand, and I don't like to speak", "I would like to know but it is too hard for

me" (Personal journal entry, March 7th. 2023). This shows that they believe the language is mainly an unreachable thing to learn. To change these beliefs, I find it important to make changes in the methodology and activities done in the classroom as well as to set clear goals for students to find the right motivation to develop the right skills to be able to speak with no fear or disinterest.

Motivational strategies were defined by Dörnyei (2001) as "those motivational influences that are consciously exerted to achieve some systematic and enduring positive effect." He also mentioned that motivational strategies are different techniques that can be used in the classroom, setting clear goals to foster students to improve their behavior (p. 28). In this way, motivational strategies seek to motivate students to learn the language by making changes in teaching practice. Introducing motivational teaching strategies, proposed by Dörnyei, in English classrooms can be helpful in improving students' interest toward English learning. Bernaus et al (2009) mentioned that "differences in methodology influenced learners' attitudes towards the target language and their speakers" (p. 28), meaning that introducing different kinds of activities and strategies could be useful and more effective in motivating students to develop, in this case, their oral production skills. Implementing these strategies in this context can be effective in helping students improve their speaking skills and feel more confident, less fearful, and more motivated about speaking in English.

Theoretical Framework

In the following lines, I will present the main concepts that guide this action research project. First, I will address the concept of Oral Production Skills and its importance in the language learning process. Following that, I will refer to Motivational teaching strategies and how it has been implemented in English as a foreign language classes.

Oral Production Skills

Oral production skills encompass a fundamental aspect of the language learning process, emphasizing the ability to convey thoughts and ideas verbally. Oral production skills

are “conceived as one facet of overall oral proficiency that involves the production of foreign language words and the way those words are blended together to create meaning” (Antía, García & Arcila, 2018). When talking about communication, “speaking skill occupies a prominent place in the communication process especially when mother tongue is not being exploited for communication and the medium of communication is Foreign language”. (Akhter et al., 2020) That is to say, speaking is mainly important in the language learning process when talking about communication since it is one of the first and most practical ways people find to communicate.

In this way, Oral skills are not limited to mere grammar but involve a broader spectrum of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural dimensions. Oral production skills to be effective “should aim to achieve communicative goals. It requires understanding how the language works, its components and functions; and how and when to speak adequately according to circumstances of real life” (Vaca & Gómez, 2017). Hence, speaking means more than just saying words correctly but organizing ideas, thinking, and expressing complete ideas and, although grammatical structures are important, they should not be the main purpose of Oral Production tasks. This focus on the skills helps students to achieve the main goal of communication, finding useful learning the language.

To achieve the main goal of communication and being able to express ideas using the language is mainly important to know enough vocabulary related to what it is wanted to say. Afna (2018) mentioned that vocabulary is considered one of the most important things when learning a foreign language because it is impossible to speak without a variety of words (p. 47). In this sense, vocabulary acquisition allows learners to have more instruments to be able to structure complete sentences coherently and with a clear meaning. Moreover, Suryanto et al. (2021) pointed out that Oral production skills depend largely on the quality and quantity of the vocabulary. If a person has a larger and richer vocabulary, then they have a better chance of becoming a speaking expert (p. 11). In this sense, as students acquire vocabulary, they are improving their oral production skills by being able to find the correct words to express their thoughts and ideas.

Knowing enough vocabulary to express ideas is connected to pronouncing it in the best way. Pronunciation plays a crucial role since it will allow students to be understood when speaking and this will lead to confidence when speaking. Prashant (2018) mentioned “the fact that pronunciation is extremely important. In many cases of misunderstanding in communication were caused by the mispronouncing of words or the improper intonation”. highlighting the reasons and needs of pronunciation when talking about oral production skills. The sense of pronunciation has two main abilities: Intelligibility and comprehensibility. The possibility that the speaker and the listener have to understand each other and maintain a conversation is called “intelligibility” (Munro & Derwing, 2011 p. 29). Thus, to have a conversation or to express ideas orally the way each individual pronounces it is crucial for understanding. In this sense, how easy or how difficult it is to understand the individual’s pronunciation is called “comprehensibility” (Munro & Derwing, 2011 p. 29). This leads us to, more than native or perfect pronunciation, what is mainly important is to be able to express or understand comprehensible ideas.

Therefore, the focus should never be on teaching grammar structures. Consequently, the conventional emphasis on grammatical structures in teaching strategies, as noted by Akhter et al. (2020), tends to create passive listeners, limiting students' opportunities to achieve the communicative goals essential for language proficiency. Thus, prioritizing oral production in the classroom is vital for a more effective language learning experience. In summary, the need to consider oral production, away from traditional grammar-focused methods, to actively engage learners and facilitate their achievement of communicative language goals. By doing so, educators can create an environment that fosters active participation, enabling students to develop essential language skills and move beyond passive learning approaches.

On the other hand, as Shumin (2002) mentioned, “Speaking is one of the central elements of communication. In English teaching, it is an aspect that needs special attention and instruction” (p.210). Moreover, “learning how to speak a foreign language can be very challenging, indeed. It requires learners not only to know the grammatical and semantic rules

of the target language, but also to know sociocultural aspects of the language” (Bula, 2015, p. 361) which give us a very clear view of the importance of bringing Oral Production Skills to the scene and to keep working on them for students to develop speaking as a whole and not only by saying correct grammar sentences. Vocabulary and pronunciation will be helpful to gain confidence and to generate in students the ability to create complete ideas allowing them to achieve the goal of communication fostering the oral production skills.

Motivational Teaching Strategies

Motivation was broadly defined as “to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered motivated”. (Ryan & Deci 2000). In the learning atmosphere, motivation has played a very important role since it is considered one of the main determinants of students' success or failure. However, it is erroneous to perceive motivation as the only variable of students' achievement or nonachievement, as various factors contribute to the complexity of the learning process. Besides, In several situations and cases, students, regardless of their language skills or other cognitive traits, who are sufficiently motivated can typically acquire a working knowledge of a second language (L2). Even the most gifted students, however, are unlikely to persevere long enough to acquire any truly useful language without adequate incentive. (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 5).

Motivation tries to answer questions related to the intentions and perseverance of students to reach a specific goal. Therefore, It tries to answer three main questions: “*why, how long, and how hard*” since it tries to explain the reason behind people's decisions, their level of effort, and the duration of time they are willing to dedicate to an activity. (Dörnyei, 2001, p.7) But these questions can be answered in many different ways which propose many variables to be considered. “Yet, even brief reflection suggests that motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. People have not only different amounts but also different kinds of motivation” (Ryan & Deci 2000).

In fact, there are different kinds of motivation considering that all students have different ways of learning, understanding, and setting goals which means that it is important to vary the ways of motivating students since not all of them can be motivated in the same way; more than varying in the amount of motivation, it is important to vary the nature and focus of the motivation. (Ryan & Deci 2000, p. 55). On the other hand, Mart (2011) noted that "In a learning environment developing motivation is a difficult task for the teacher considering that every student learns differently, and every student is diverse in their own ways." Hence, motivation is divided into four categories: intrinsic, extrinsic, integrative, and instrumental. The first two explain motivation in general and the second two explain motivation related to language learning.

To begin with, Intrinsic motivation was defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfactions rather than for some separable consequence" (p. 56) explaining that intrinsic motivation is from inside of individuals which do not need any external incentive to want to achieve their goals but the interest and feeling of joy that the task gives them. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, was defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) as a construct that pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable outcome. (p. 60). This kind of motivation is totally contrary to the first one. The individual wants to achieve the goal for an external incentive or an "instrumental value".

Dörnyei (2001) mentioned the importance of taking into account other dimensions when talking about motivation that has not been considered in several studies, which is "the time". He stated that when talking about a long-learning process, Time is an important factor since motivation can change due to the changes students may experience during the time they spend mastering the foreign language. (p. 19) Subsequently, the author proposed a model with three main stages to follow to foster motivation in students. The initial stage is to generate motivation in which students set goals, the second stage is to maintain motivation since it is not only promoting motivation but helping students to keep the focus despite all the distractions they might find in the process. The final stage is to evaluate motivation for students

to self-assess their past experiences in retrospect to determine what motivates them for the future. (p. 21)

With this model in mind, Dörnyei (2001) presented techniques to foster the students' goal-related behavior. These techniques, applied consciously, aim to achieve an organized and ongoing positive effect on students. I am going to explain these techniques based on the book "Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom" written by Dörnyei (2001) These techniques named Motivational Teaching Strategies are divided into four main aspects:

Creating the Basic Motivational Conditions

It is mainly important to place certain preconditions before trying to foster generation. These preconditions are "appropriate teacher behaviors and a good relationship with the students; a pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere; and a cohesive learner group with appropriate group norms". (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 31) These three with the idea of generating a good classroom environment. For these conditions, the author proposes 8 strategies for teachers to find the best way to apply them.

Generating Initial Motivation

The author mentioned the importance of considering that students' motivation is not automatically there. It is necessary to actively generate positive attitudes and think about ways to encourage students to accept and set the class goals. For this, this stage was divided into five substages. (a) *Enhancing the learners' language-related goals* by promoting "positive values related to the actual process of learning the target language and to the consequences and benefits of having learned the target language (p.51). (b) *Increasing the learners' expectancy of success* since it is effective to raise students' expectations by purposefully setting up the environment in order to place the student in a more positive or hopeful attitude. (c) *Increasing the learners' goal-orientedness* by discussing goals in order to balance students' personal goals with the class goals for students to pursue both types of goals simultaneously.

(d) *Making the teaching materials relevant for the learners, although there is a curriculum to follow, it is important to always consider students' real contexts.*

Maintaining and Protecting Motivation

Over time, the initial motivation tends to lose power since different and new influences come to the scenario. For this reason, it is very important to keep nurturing motivation. To do so, Dörnyei suggested eight steps: making learning stimulating and enjoyable, presenting tasks in a motivating way, setting specific learner goals, protecting the learners' self-esteem and increasing their confidence, allowing learners to maintain a positive social image, promoting cooperation among the learners, creating learner autonomy, and promoting self-motivating learning strategies. Each stage is provided with specific strategies to help teachers to find ways to conserve and nurture motivation.

Encouraging Positive Retrospective Self-evaluation

Lead students to review their past actions is mainly useful for them to understand, more than their level of success, how they interpret that success. "Teachers can help learners to consider their own achievement in a more positive light". (p. 117). It can be possible by (a) *Promoting motivational attributions* to change negative attitudes; this attributing failure to variables that can be changed by students such as effort. (b) *Providing motivational Feedback*. (c) *Increasing learner satisfaction* by recognizing students' accomplishments, celebrating success, making the progress tangible, among others. (d) *Offering rewards and grades in a motivating manner*.

Motivational teaching strategies can be useful and effective in fostering students' motivation toward learning the language. In research done at a University in Saudi Arabia, Elashhab (2020) concluded that "Motivation could be the base for a successful English as a Foreign Language learning process. Students highly valued the strategies that are relevant for their life" (p. 16). That is to say, changing teachers' strategies was useful and helpful in improving students' view of the language and their willingness to learn it. The author also

mentioned that “Motivated classroom atmosphere also provides opportunities for students to speak regularly in the target language as it aims at cultivating confidence, competence and autonomy” (Elashhab, 2020, p. 16) demonstrating the effectiveness of the Motivational Teaching Strategies in the language classroom.

Research Question

How implementing motivational teaching strategies can foster oral production skills in foreign language learners of eighth grade in a public school in Medellín, Colombia?

Objectives

General Objective:

To assess how the implementation of motivational teaching strategies can foster oral production skills in eighth-grade foreign language learners in a public school in Medellín, Colombia.

Specific Objectives:

- To monitor how creating a pleasant and supportive environment in the classroom promotes the participation of students in the oral production activities.
- To examine how setting clear goals per class related to oral production skills fosters student’s motivation to participate in speaking activities.
- To determine how administering teaching materials that are relevant for students develops self-confidence when speaking.
- To explore the impact of self-assessment on students’ participation and involvement in their own learning process related to oral production skills.

Action Plan

For this action research project, I proposed an action plan with a duration of ten weeks divided into two cycles of five weeks each. The first cycle named *initial motivation* focused on generating motivation in students. This cycle contained two actions: (a) Create the basic

Motivational Conditions which aim to achieve the first research objective (b) Generating Initial Motivation which suggests activities and materials to engage students and foster expectations in order to achieve the second research goal. Next, the second cycle was named *Existing Motivation* which focused on protecting the motivation we (teacher and students) have already created. This second cycle also contained two actions (a) Maintaining and protecting motivation which proposes activities to involve students in their learning process and improve self-esteem in order to achieve the third research goal. (b) Encouraging positive self-evaluation to allow students to assess their progress and effort in relation to the fourth research goal. The action plan aimed at implementing the Motivational teaching strategies framed by Dörnyei (2001) expecting to foster students' Oral Production skills. Although there was a first time to implement each action, this did not mean that it ceased being implemented. After each action was administered for the first time, it continued being present during the following actions, as these strategies are cumulative and each one was necessary for the next one.

To measure the effectiveness of this action plan, I used several data collection instruments during each action, such as: a personal journal, questionnaires, interviews, audio recordings, external observations, class activities, and a diagnostic activity. The purpose of these instruments was to triangulate all the information collected, interpret the results from different perspectives, and in that way, the findings from this action research could be unbiased and objective.

The first cycle was planned to be developed in five weeks. The first action of the first cycle was named: "The Basic Motivational Conditions". I intended to start in the first week by Informing students about the project and distributing the consent form. In the second week, I planned to do the diagnosis activity to know students' English level, oral production, and Motivation followed by creating and negotiating class norms, rules and, routines to be accepted and followed by students. The second action of this first cycle was named: "Generating initial motivation". Starting in the third week, I planned to allow students to set clear and realistic goals for the term related to oral production and start promoting group work. In the following weeks I projected to implement the strategy "Set Personal Goals for the class"

Allowing students to create their own personal objectives each class. This strategy was planned to be followed by introducing materials that are relevant for students considering their contexts and their interests. This material should contain, as well, clear goals following the previous strategy and promote oral production. The final activity of this action was conducting a Spanish online questionnaire to get to know students interests and perceptions towards learning and speaking in English.

The second cycle was planned to be developed in five weeks as well. The first action of the second cycle was named "Maintaining and protecting motivation" in which I projected to start with involving students in the class choices in order to bring possible topics taken from their interests and allow them to choose one for the class. Then, implement the strategy "Students as teachers" in which they will have the opportunity to practice among them their oral skills by giving and receiving suggestions and feedback to and from their classmates in order to reduce anxiety and shame. In this action a focus group was going to be conducted as well as an external observation. For the final Action, which was named "Encouraging positive self-evaluation" students were expected to present the Final Project which consisted of preparing an oral presentation related to the school content. Then, I would propose a self-assessment sheet for students to evaluate their own performance during the course, their feelings and how they have evolved. In this final action an interview with the cooperating teacher was planned to be conducted.

The data collection tools planned to be used in this first cycle were (a) A personal research journal to collect data from what I observed, understood, learned and felt during the classes and after the implementation of each strategy. (b) A diagnostic assessment to collect data about students' oral performance and English level. (c) A questionnaire to find what are students' interests and needs related to language learning to implement them in classes. (d) Class activity audio recordings to evidence the progress of students related to oral production skills. (e) A focal group to collect data from students' perspectives related to the strategies implemented, how they felt during the semester and their progress in oral production skills. (f) An external observation to know the perception from a third person on how the strategies

implemented worked and on students' progress. (g) Interview with the cooperating teacher to know his perspectives towards the implementation of the different strategies and the students' process.

Development of Actions

This action research project aimed at implementing motivational teaching strategies to foster oral production skills. These strategies were planned to be implemented in two different cycles of five weeks each. Nevertheless, due to some classes being canceled by the school, the first cycle was developed in 5 weeks while the second cycle had to be developed in 2 weeks. These two cycles intended to create motivation in students and maintain it in order to foster the participation of students in speaking activities. In this way, students would be able to practice and improve their oral production skills.

In the first cycle, which began on March 21st, I implemented the first two actions planned in the action plan. During the first week of implementation, I informed the students about the project and distributed the consent form to be signed by them and their parents. As Canals (2017) mentioned, the issue of the protection of participants' personal data is very important in research projects, especially when working with children and young people in disadvantaged or socioeconomically difficult situations. Arrangements should be made to obtain the consent of all participants and their legal guardians. (p.398)

In this way, when I received the consent forms signed, I started with the implementation of strategies. The first activity implemented was the diagnosis activity which aimed to diagnose students' English level mainly orally. This activity set the starting point of the research. The following week, I started with the second action which was divided into two stages. In the first stage I asked students to set a goal for the semester, thinking about what they wanted to achieve at the end of the first semester. In the third week, we started the second stage of the second action in which students set goals for each class, allowing students to think about what they wanted to achieve in each class and how. This became the class routine since I always started classes showing the agenda and asking students to set

their class goal. Lastly, the classes began to be planned to include group work activities that allowed students to interact and speak with each other as part of the second action planned. I collected data using my research journal since I wanted to register all that happened in the classroom, my feelings, and conclusions. Phillips & Carr (2010) highlighted that “the researcher’s notebook is the mind, heart, and soul of the teacher-researcher chronicling their own reactions to data collected, analytic memos, and interpretation” (p.87), describing the importance of the research journal for the project and for the teacher.

For the second action of the first cycle, I sent an online questionnaire to be answered by the students. Doing this questionnaire aimed to know students' interest, needs and motivation towards English learning. This questionnaire was divided into two sections: (a) Language interests and needs, where students answered questions related to their language level, content preferences, and language strengths and weaknesses; and (b) Motivation for learning English, where they answered questions related to their relationship with English learning and how they felt their process had been going. I used the information from this questionnaire for several purposes. First, as a diagnostic activity to set the starting point of students regarding their motivation and perceptions towards learning and speaking English; second, to know students' interests and needs to include them into the lesson planning and the materials I was going to use; and finally, to allow students to choose what they would like to know and address during the classes. This questionnaire provided me with several starting points to continue with my project. As Phillips & Carr (2010) suggested that surveys and questionnaires are mainly used for data collection about students' opinions, feelings or attitudes about skills, concepts or other classroom aspects. These data collection strategies can be efficient and effective when the class teacher does not have time or opportunity to visit Individual students (p. 197). On the other hand, students constantly did oral activities and presentations in class, and they had the opportunity to self-assess their performance and feelings after the oral presentations. The self-assessment was proposed as paper sheets with a likert scale in which students could answer how they felt in relation with several aspects This strategy was originally included in the last action of the plan, but I found it

appropriate to include it at the end of the first cycle as a way to collect information and compare it with the final self-assessment.

For the second cycle, which started in the sixth week, we maintained the previous actions in each class (the class routine, setting a goal per class, and group work activities). I designed a teaching unit based on the results of the questionnaire adding the following actions to be implemented. The topic, which was exotic animals, and the activities were very well received by students who recognized that they chose the content we were going to cover. Due to time constraints and class cancellations, it was not possible to apply all the actions planned. The strategy of "involve students in the class choices" was not possible to be implemented, as well as "students as teachers". Instead, as they regularly worked in groups, they had the opportunity to practice speaking among themselves which was a very helpful strategy to foster confidence and security when having to speak in public. During the second cycle, there were two weeks in a row in which we could not have class due to different activities in the school, this resulted in having to shorten the second cycle into 2 classes and jumping directly to the final oral presentation and self-assessment. In the final presentation, which was created, planned, and presented in the same class, students showed more interest in participating by raising their hands, asking to be next and bringing well-designed and complete presentations and posters.

Due to time constraints and class cancellations from the Institution, I could not conduct the focus group as planned. Instead, I sent a questionnaire to the students asking them about how they felt with the strategies implemented, the content used and their learning process during the course. The questionnaire was designed with open-ended questions expecting to know students' perspectives about the strategies implemented and their progress during the semester. Furthermore, I conducted an interview with the CT, following what Phillips & Carr (2010) stated "the most important thing you can do as a student teacher is to carefully interview your mentor-teacher about various aspects of the classroom. It is much better to ask rather than to assume through uninformed judgments" (p.

51). In this way, I used the interview to ask the CT about his perspectives, observations, and conclusions related to the strategies implemented and how the strategies impacted students.

For the final action, students did an oral presentation which was also recorded. This activity aimed to give enough evidence to measure students' progress in their oral production skills and it was compared with the diagnostic activity. Based on this final presentation, students filled in a self-assessment sheet in which they could assess themselves and their process related to speaking.

Data Analysis

In the following lines I will describe the data collection and analysis process implemented in this action research project. It is very important to mention that action research is understood as “the ability to daily recognize areas in your classroom that need improvement and then seeking to discover methods that will help make a needed change” (Phillips, D. Carr, K. 2010, p. 13). In this way, this project is based on a real problem observed in the classroom and a proposed strategy to solve that problem. The data collection strategy was done following the principles proposed by Altrichter et al (2018) in which the most useful is to do hybrid of the two methods (the deductive and inductive methods) which involved selecting categories based on the researcher's theoretical knowledge and searching for relevant passages in the data but remaining open to what could emerge from the data.

To solve my research question, I started with the categorization. The categories were previously outlined based on the theoretical framework as in the deductive method. Afterwards, I analyzed the data from my research journal, the interview with the CT, and the students' questionnaires. I started coding with colors in order to identify recurring themes and patterns within the data and organize them according to the categories (Altrichter et al. 2018, p. 122). The quantitative data from the questionnaires, the self-assessments, and the oral presentations/audio recordings were analyzed according to pre-design rubrics aiming at “looking for similarities and differences, for groupings, patterns and items of particular significance” (Bell & Waters 2018, p. 203).

Following the categorization stage, I started comparing the diagnostic activity with the final activity in relation to the strategies implemented in order to assess changes in student perspectives and oral production skills. Additionally, student responses in questionnaires were compared with teacher observations documented in the research journal and interview.

Finally, to ensure the trustworthiness of the results, I will use triangulation. I analyzed data from various sources: research journals, questionnaires, oral presentations, and the CT's interview to obtain more complete and convincing results and understand the effects of the motivational strategies in this context. Triangulation is defined by Phillips, D. & Carr, K. (2010) as "seeking multiple perspectives, insights, or "voices" provides for layers of interpretation the teacher- researcher could not attain in isolation" (p. 92).

Findings and interpretations

In the following lines I will present the main results that were found after the analysis process was completed. The results confirmed that the utilization of motivational teaching strategies was useful to foster oral production skills and to involve students in their own learning process promoting responsibility and confidence when speaking. The results were organized in three main categories: *goal setting for confident speaking, how a transformed classroom boosted student voices, and students are responsible for their own learning process.*

Goal-Setting for Confident Speaking

One of the strategies implemented from the motivational teaching strategies was "setting personal goals per class" which worked successfully to foster student's motivation to participate in speaking activities, as well as students' involvement in learning English. Dornyei (2001) highlighted that setting goals is especially important for subjects such as L2 studies, where it can take years to acquire even minimal working knowledge. In this case, specific short-term goals can provide immediate additional motivation (p. 82).

As evidence, the analysis of the first questionnaire implemented revealed that students had neither clear nor reachable goals about learning and speaking in English. In the

questionnaire 44% of students answered they had not clear goals related to speaking in English. The 56% of students remaining mentioned they had goals related to English learning and speaking, nevertheless those goals were very wide and unclear. For instance, English learning goal from Student A: "Aprender a hablar inglés más fluidamente" while the goal of student B was: "Mejorar mi nivel de inglés para dominarlo mucho más, como un nativo". Evidence shows that they had big dreams related to English Speaking rather than clear goals related to English learning. On the contrary, the final questionnaire implemented revealed that setting goals for the semester and per class was a successful strategy to help students chart a path supported by reachable actions scaffolding the learning process. In the final questionnaire, 83% of students mentioned that setting clear goals at the beginning of the classes was a useful strategy for them to improve their learning process and to gain confidence when speaking in English. Some students said that, even if they could not achieve all the goals they set, it helped them to pay more attention. The goals they set during the project implementation were reachable and realistic and students were able to achieve them; for example, achieved goal of Student A: "Decir una oración sobre los monstruos mitológicos", achieved goal of Student B: "Describir una criatura mítica y aprender más vocabulario". This shows that students were able to scaffold activities and find the way to achieve their personal goals which were mainly related to speaking.

On the other hand, during the classes, students usually set their goals consciously and actively as stated in my research journal "when students started writing their goals most of them were very engaged with the activity thinking about what they wanted to achieve in the following weeks" (Personal journal entry, April 4th, 2024) showing students interest towards the strategy. Most of the goals were related to English speaking and there were several students that could achieve them, goals such as: "ser capaz de decir una frase completa en Inglés", "aprender cómo decir cuatro palabras", "ser capaz de describir un animal exótico" (Personal journal entry, April 11th, 2024), thus demonstrating that students were willing to learn and participate in the class activities and in their learning process. Moreover, in the interview conducted with the CT, when I asked him about his perception of this specific

strategy, he mentioned that “it was pragmatic, realistic and assertive for this context since students needed to develop responsibility and motivation; and this strategy was useful to foster these two abilities” (CT’s interview, May 30th).

In this way, the goals they mentioned at the beginning in the diagnostic questionnaire revealed that students had no clear and reachable objectives that could guide them to a successful learning process, maintaining the belief that the language was an unreachable thing to learn. Nevertheless, evidence supported that setting-goal activities did provide students with immediate additional motivation since they found encouragement to complete the goals. As many goals were related to oral production skills, students constantly made an effort to improve their speaking. “Personal goals such as reading a chapter of a book every weekend or learning 10 new words every day may energize learning just as well because goal setting dramatically increases productivity.” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 82). Indeed, this action research demonstrates that students increased their productivity by being energized by their own goals. Students felt comfortable and moved having to achieve their own goals and not imposed goals.

How a Transformed Classroom Boosted Student Voices

I found that including materials that are relevant for students and intending to create a more pleasant and supportive class environment helped students to improve oral participation and their engagement in the class activities proposed, helping them to develop their oral production skills and self-confidence. Sayadi (2007) highlighted that “In second language learning, classroom participation provides opportunities for the students to use and practice their linguistic and communicative skills” (p.12). On the other hand, engagement means participating or sharing with others in ongoing classroom activities. Engagement refers to how students have registered or added to the ongoing task. (Warayet, 2011, p. 3)

Materials that are Relevant for Students:

When talking about materials that are relevant for students, which is one of the

strategies implemented, Dörnyei (2001) mentioned that for lessons to be motivating, we need to relate them to students' everyday experiences and context. If students do not feel that the material being taught is worth learning, they will not be motivated to learn (p. 63). This was applied in this context and there were positive results that demonstrate that implementing materials that students find interesting makes a change in students' engagement and they are willing to participate and learn more in the class activities.

At the beginning of the implementation, when I asked students to participate, they seemed not interested and they used to mention "I don't want to speak in front of others", "I don't know how to speak in English" (Personal journal entry, March 28th, 2024). Nevertheless, in the process of implementing the project students had a second oral presentation in which "they were very involved and interested. Students brought the materials and the ideas from their houses as it was asked. When presenting, some of them were raising their hands to be next and risking themselves to present" (Personal journal entry, May 2nd, 2024), for this second presentation students were more engaged and participative than in the diagnostic activity. Furthermore, For the last presentation all the students volunteered to participate and present what they had prepared. Students were very engaged with the activity and with the topic comparing their favorite animals with the exotic animals proposed (Personal journal entry, May 30th, 2024). This evidence shows that the topics and activities proposed were interesting for students and it helped to increase students' engagement and consequently students' participation.

The external observer, who was the advisor of my research project, mentioned that students were focused on the class material from the beginning of the class. "During the warm-up, the students were asked about what they knew about Axolotls, and most of them raised their hands to say something about the creature; for example: "They are from Mexico", "They can regenerate their parts", "They are cute", among others" (External observation, May 30th, 2024). This shows that the topics were interesting for them, and it was related to their current lives. Also, the external observer mentioned that "Students were engaged with the video about the axolotl, some of the students wrote words down to remember them" (External observation,

May 30th, 2024). In this way, students were highly motivated with the topic and materials brought to the class, and they enjoyed learning about the topic. Also, the external observer noted that “In this class, there was less noise than the ones I have observed. Students seemed very interested in the topic and wanted to understand and participate with their comments.” (External observation, May 30th, 2024), which shows that the engagement and participation evolved during the application of the project since students' attitudes at the beginning of the semester were more dispersed, unfocused and disinterested by the English class. At the end of the semester, most of the students were added to the tasks and attentive to what they needed to keep learning. On the other hand, “when they were asked about their favorite animal, almost all students wanted to participate whether in English or Spanish.” (External observation, May 30th, 2024) demonstrating that bringing topics that students could relate to their real-life experiences enhance students to the class and to English learning.

Furthermore, In the final questionnaire, 92% of students mentioned they liked and enjoyed the topics covered in class. 75% of them mentioned that the topics and materials used were appropriate for them and helpful to continue learning and developing their oral production skills. Students mentioned being engaged and motivated by the topics, videos, readings, and activities proposed; a student mentioned “I was more focused on the videos and the activities, and I acquired new vocabulary that I could use later” (Personal journal entry, May 30th, 2024) which corroborates that using materials that are relevant for students were useful to foster students engagement and participation. The evidence supports that students get to practice their communicative skills by having the opportunity to speak their ideas; and while the project was being implemented, they got more engaged by wanting to know about the topics proposed and participating in the class activities actively.

Pleasant and Supportive Class Environment

A pleasant and supportive class environment is highly important to promote English language learning, but to foster oral production skills is even more important. Dörnyei (2001) pointed out that “in a safe and supportive classroom the norm of tolerance prevails, and

students feel comfortable taking risks because they know that they will not be embarrassed or criticized if they make a mistake” (p.41). For students, feeling safe and not criticized is very important mainly when they are speaking in front of the class since they feel vulnerable and scared about making any mistake. Thus, in language learning, students take significant risks even when saying simple statements, as it is easy to make mistakes when having to pay attention to pronunciation, intonation, grammar, and content at the same time (Dörnyei, 2001). Finally, the author also highlighted that the psychological environment of the classroom consists of different components. One of them is the teacher-student relationship, and the other is the relationship between students. (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 41)

In the diagnostic questionnaire, 39% of students answered that they felt less motivated about speaking in English due to the class environment and their classmates. While, in the final questionnaire, 33% of students mentioned that they felt that the class environment was not safe enough to speak in English. Nevertheless, 67% of students mentioned that the class environment improved to the point they felt more confident to talk in English; a student mentioned “Me sentí mas seguro por que el ambiente era más amigable”. From this, we can conclude that having a pleasant and supportive environment is indeed mainly important for developing oral production skills. Even if it is important to keep working on it in order to help students keep feeling more comfortable, there was a decrease in the number of students who mentioned that they felt that the class environment was not safe enough, and a high percentage of students who noted that the changes in the class environment were helpful; demonstrating that the strategy was gradually working.

On the other hand, in the interview with the CT, he pointed out that the development of oral production skills is very challenging, but that students gained self-confidence as the student-teacher provided them with good feedback and was patient and stimulating (Interview with the CT, May 29th, 2024). This indicates that the teacher-student rapport constructed during the semester was helpful in fostering students' process and confidence when speaking. Moreover, the external observer highlighted the way students behaved in the last class when their classmates went to the front to present; “the class listened to the ones sharing the

comparisons and after the participation, they clapped the presentations. They enjoyed this class and wanted to participate” (external observation, May 30th, 2024). This indicates that the student-student rapport was also strengthened and significant for students' oral production development.

When I started this research project, students were very afraid and unconfident when they had to say something in English. Students constantly mentioned that they felt ashamed and scared because others may laugh at them or judge them. They felt that the class environment was not a safe place to speak and that they were vulnerable by speaking in English in front of other students (Personal journal entry, March 3rd, 2024). Nevertheless, for the final presentation of the first unit, students were very involved and interested since they brought to the classroom all the materials and ideas as it was asked. When they had to present, they were raising their hands to be next and risked presenting (Personal journal entry, May 2nd, 2024). For the final presentation, a great number of students were willing to participate and were very focused on the activity. Additionally, some of them did a great job when presenting their comparison in English (personal journal entry, May 30th, 2024). In this final activity, students showed understanding of the topic, vocabulary acquisition and they were able to express complete ideas in an understandable way demonstrating an advance regarding their oral production skills corresponding to the changes implemented in the classroom environment.

All this evidence shows that implementing changes in the classroom and introducing topics and materials that are relevant for students, foster students' relationship to the class and with English language learning. These two strategies implemented in this context were helpful to engage students in the class development; students enjoyed the topics and started feeling less pressure when having to speak in English inside the classroom which fostered their willingness to participate and confidence allowing them to practice and improve their oral production skills.

Students are Responsible for their own Learning Process

The final strategy implemented was “Self-assessment” in order to foster students’ participation and involvement in their own learning process related to oral production skills. This strategy was partially useful to foster students’ responsibility and to provide them with the opportunity to reflect on their own process. Self-assessment was defined by Andrade & Du (2007) as a formative assessment process where students are able to reflect and evaluate the quality and achievement of their own work and learning. They also judge their stated goals by identifying their strengths and weaknesses (p. 160).

In the diagnostic questionnaire, students were asked how often they self-assess and measure their learning process and 66,7% of students mentioned they rarely or never assess their own learning process. Meanwhile, in the last questionnaire, after constantly carrying out self-assessment in the classroom, all the students recognized the importance of using this strategy. Student A mentioned “Es importante porque me ayuda a reflexionar sobre lo que hice en la clase y en el período”, student B mentioned “La autoevaluación me ayuda a reflexionar sobre mi proceso de aprendizaje porque veo en que puedo seguir mejorando” showing students understanding of the importance and use of the self-assessment. Nevertheless, student C mentioned that the importance of self-assessment was “ponerme una buena nota que me ayuda a ganar la materia”, student D mentioned that “La autoevaluación ayuda para ayudarse con la nota”. In this way, although there were some students who understood the importance and the objectives of doing self-assessment, there were students that kept having the belief that it is only worthwhile due to the grade.

In the interview conducted with the Cooperating teacher, he mentioned that using self-assessment was useful to involve students and promote participation. He highlighted that “self-assessment was never used in the classroom with the aim of enabling students neither to reflect after any class activity nor to measure their learning process and goals achievement” (Cooperating Teacher’s interview, May 29th, 2024). Nevertheless, when carrying out self-assessment some students were serious about it while some students did not take it seriously.

He also mentioned that it was important to bring strategies to help those who are not conscious when self-assessing themselves and do not reflect on their learning process, areas to improve, and achievements (Cooperating Teacher's interview, May 29th, 2024).

In my research journal, I stated that self-assessment has been a very interesting tool. Students were used to doing self-assessments only at the end of the course as a grade they gave themselves without reflecting on their process. In this way, fostering self-assessment in this classroom has been very interesting. Many students take self-assessment seriously and reflect on their learning process and feelings. This allows them to understand their processes and to know what is next for them to keep learning. Spiller (2012) mentioned that "Further learning is only possible after the recognition of what needs to be learned" (p. 4). Nevertheless, there were some students that do not care about the self-assessment but about what the teacher will say or do with it, as one student mentioned "Teacher I answered with good answers for you so can you give me a good grade" (Personal journal entry, May 18th, 2024). The self assessment in this case was not about grades but feelings. However, he answered that he felt good only thinking about how I could react and the grade I could assign. (Personal journal entry, May 18th, 2024) This reflects that as there were some students for whom this strategy was useful, there were some students who did not take it seriously. However, even if some students did not fill out the self-assessment sheets in a very conscious way, we had the opportunity to reflect at the end of the classes if they achieved their goals or did not and why. This, which was a kind of self-assessment, was received by students differently as most of them participated in saying whether they achieved or did not the goal and why. (Personal journal entry, May 23rd, 2024)

I think it is very important to train students on how and why we carry out self-assessment. Spiller pointed out that "students need coaching, practice and support in the development of self-assessment abilities"; I add that it is a matter of time for students to understand how and why self-assessment is used and the importance of using the information from the assessment to reflect about themselves. The results showed that this strategy partially helped students to revise and improve their oral production skills since some students

were very critical about their process, reflected on what they had improved and what they needed to keep improving, and evaluate themselves consciously. Nevertheless, few students relate and connect with the strategy due to the preconceptions that self-assessment is only a grade they can assign themselves without the teacher's opinion.

Conclusions

When assessing the implementation of motivational teaching strategies, the results show that it was effective to foster oral production skills in the eighth-grade group from the Instituto Tecnico Industrial Pascual Bravo. The data collected demonstrate that the different strategies implemented were mostly useful to foster students' speaking skills as well as engagement and participation achieving the goals proposed for this action research.

The participation of students in the oral production activities were effectively promoted by the creation of a pleasant and supportive environment. Evidence supported that the changes implemented to improve the classroom environment significantly intervened in the students' behavior towards the English Class activities; students were less anxious and ashamed when having to speak in front of their classmates which promoted participation. Furthermore, the changes in the class environment were also enhanced by administering materials that were relevant for students. These materials were also very helpful to develop self-confidence when speaking since, as mentioned before, they were less anxious, but also, they could relate the materials with their interests and experiences allowing them to be more confident about what they wanted to say. On the other hand, students' motivation and participation in oral activities successfully improved by implementing "setting clear goals per class" since every student had the possibility to challenge themselves based on their own process and they were responsible for it. Finally, the impact of self-assessment had not the results expected due to the previous beliefs students had and the lack of opportunities to train students on this process. I was not completely aware of the importance of firstly teaching students about the importance of self-assessment and, although some students

were able to reflect based on their self-assessment, many of them only mind about the grade it could provide them.

Recommendations

For further research, it is recommended to revise and go further about the implementation of self-assessment to be meaningful and useful for students. In this research, self-assessment did not have the results expected due to the previous beliefs students had that were very difficult to modify. Also, the time was a factor that played against this project; I barely had time to train students and reflect on the use of the self-assessment tool, we usually used it to reflect about their process. I think it is very important to teach students how to use and why it is important to use this specific tool since it will provide students with lots of benefits and critical self-thinking.

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Appendix

Self-assessment sheet for the students after Oral presentation of Unit 1

	MUY DE ACUERDO	DE ACUERDO	NORMAL	DESACUERDO	MUY DESACUERDO
Sé cómo describir una criatura mítica y mencionar sus habilidades					
Fui capaz de expresar mis ideas en inglés de manera coherente					
Aprendí nuevo vocabulario y soy capaz de usarlo cuando hablo en inglés					
Me siento seguro/a y tranquilo/a cuando hablo en inglés					
me siento motivado/a para hacer más actividades orales					
me gustó la actividad y disfruto realizándola					

Self-assessment sheet for the students after Oral presentation of Unit 2

	MUY DE ACUERDO	DE ACUERDO	NORMAL	DESACUERDO	MUY DESACUERDO
Sé cómo describir y comparar un animal exótico y un animal normal					
Fui capaz de expresar mis ideas en inglés de manera coherente					
Aprendí nuevo vocabulario y soy capaz de usarlo cuando hablo en inglés					
Me siento seguro/a y tranquilo/a cuando hablo en inglés					
me siento motivado/a para hacer más actividades orales					
me gustó la actividad y disfruto realizándola					