

**ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITECNICA DEL LITORAL**

**Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y Humanísticas**



**AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING  
FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM  
APPLICATION**

**PROYECTO DE TITULACIÓN**

**Previa la obtención del Título de:  
MAGISTER EN ENSEÑANZA DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA  
EXTRANJERA**

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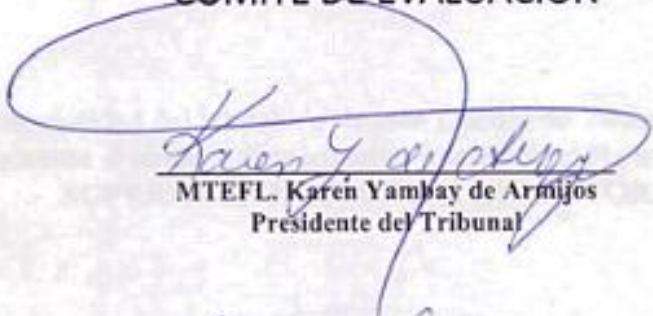
Special thanks to my thesis director Jenny Villarreal for sharing her vast expertise and all her guidance during this process.

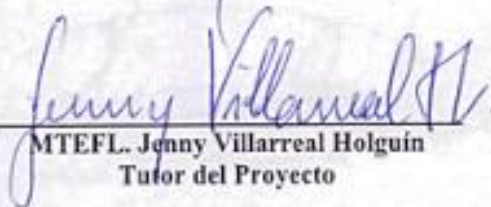
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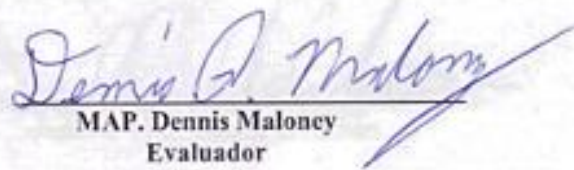
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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions that a group of EFL teachers have regarding speaking fluency and to obtain insight as to whether or not these views were reflected in their classroom practices. There were a total of 17 participants for this study. There were 10 males and 7 females. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 50 years of age. All of them are full time teachers in the institution and all of them teach Advanced levels which according to the CEFR are actually a B1+ or Intermediate level. This study was a qualitative study due to the nature of the research questions which were three: What do teachers define as speaking fluency, are there any differences between those definitions and what the teachers do in class, and to what extent are speaking fluency activities developed in class? In order to obtain the necessary data semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions were used, classroom observations were also done and lesson plans were requested in order to triangulate the data. The classes were specifically requested to be one hour and to be a speaking fluency class. The study found that for the most part the teachers' perceptions matched their classroom practices. However, it is the view of the teachers that was a cause for concern. While there was a certain degree of understanding by the teachers about speaking fluency, these views and their classroom actions showed that some major concepts related to speaking fluency were absent or completely misunderstood. It is suggested that further training on the concept of speaking fluency be given to these teachers.

## RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio era explorar las percepciones de un grupo de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera acerca del desarrollo de la fluidez oral y obtener información para conocer si estas opiniones se reflejaban, o no, en sus prácticas de clase. 17 docentes participaron en el estudio. De estos 17 participantes 10 eran hombres y 7 eran mujeres. La edad de los participantes fue de entre 25 años a 50 años de edad. Todos los docentes que participaron en el estudio trabajan a tiempo completo en la institución y dictan el nivel de Avanzado el cual según el Marco Común Europeo es B1+ o un nivel Intermedio.

Este estudio fue de carácter cualitativo, debido a la naturaleza de las preguntas de investigación las cuales eran tres: Cómo definen los docentes la fluidez oral, existe alguna diferencia entre esa definición y las actividades que realizan en la clase, y hasta qué punto implementan actividades que fomentan el desarrollo de la fluidez oral. Este estudio es cualitativo. Para obtener la información deseada se utilizaron entrevistas semi-estructuradas con preguntas abiertas, se realizaron observaciones de clase y se solicitaron los planes de lección con el objetivo de triangular la información. Se solicitó preparar una hora de clase para el desarrollo de la fluidez oral en los alumnos. El estudio encontró concordancia entre las percepciones de los docentes y sus prácticas de clase. Sin embargo, son estas percepciones las que causan inquietud. Mientras hay un nivel de entendimiento de los docentes sobre lo que es fluidez oral, estas percepciones y las actividades de clase muestran que ciertos conceptos relevantes están ausentes o han sido mal interpretados. Se sugiere entrenamiento extra sobre estos conceptos dirigidos a estos docentes.

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# CHAPTER 1

## 1. THE PROBLEM

This chapter aims to explain the importance of the topic in the field of education, the level and characteristics of the institution where the research took place and the objective the researchers had in conducting this qualitative study.

### 1.1 Introduction

A well-balanced language course should be planned in such a way that it includes meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language focused learning and fluency development, which means that students will have contact with language features, and language items and have the opportunity to convey ideas and messages to another person (Nation & Newton, 2009). These authors state that teachers tend to neglect one of two areas during their classroom sessions and that this in turn affects the achievement of the learning goals that have been set for a course. It could happen that teachers focus on formal features of the language without giving learners enough opportunities to use what they have learned in class, or there are courses in which teachers try to balance the input and output processes but do not provide opportunities to develop fluency to express what they know. (Nation & Newton, 2009)

This study seeks to understand teachers' perceptions of speaking fluency activities and to comprehend the differentiation between their perceptions, what they have planned and the fluency tasks they actually implement in the classroom. It is hoped that through this understanding, both authorities and teachers may gain some insight into the current situation in the classroom. This understanding is pertinent to the effectiveness of the current curriculum of the English language department and to the objectives of this Ecuadorian public university as the major learning outcome pursued nationwide is that students of the university can communicate effectively in English and reach a B2 level of proficiency as defined by the CEFR.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

A series of classroom observations and peer observations, where speaking fluency activities were specifically requested, left us in doubt regarding teachers' interpretation of speaking fluency activities. This occurred because the requested activities (for the most part) were not developed during those classroom observations. This was particularly surprising as the teachers had (prior to these observations) attended workshops about speaking fluency activities. This lack of or underdevelopment of speaking fluency skills might have a direct negative impact on students' fluency acquisition. Therefore, what the researchers aim to determine is what is occurring in an Ecuadorian public university EFL classroom regarding speaking fluency activities as seen from the point of view of the teachers versus the activities they implement.

The specific objectives defined by the researchers are:

- To explore the teacher's perspectives of speaking fluency activities.
- To compare these perspectives to the teachers performance in the class.
- To identify to what extent speaking activities are developed in class.

The findings of this study will redound to the benefit of both the institution and the students, as well as, helping to achieve the national objectives regarding the level of English students are expected to have reached at the end of their undergraduate studies. Clearly, there is a high demand for professionals who are able to communicate fluently, and speaking is an important area that needs to be developed, in the sense of providing graduates confidence in the expression of their ideas. Productive skills, this is, writing and speaking, reveal the true ability someone has to convey ideas. Thus, all the efforts made by teachers and institutions, all the techniques and activities developed in class will influence the graduates' abilities to communicate. In addition, this study aims to contribute to a better understanding of how the teachers' of this university define speaking fluency and its related activities, and to discover if these views are in some way reflected in the planning of their classes and actual implementation of that plan. With these findings, certain decisions can be made or courses of action can be taken if deemed appropriate and /or necessary. The relevance of this study extends well beyond a single institution or a single classroom.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Nowadays, fluent communication in English contributes to personal, institutional and national development. Ecuador is a developing country that is working toward an extensive improvement in the standards of higher education institutions, for the purpose of better preparing students and ultimately making them more proficient in the English language. Having proficient non-native speakers of English is one of the goals that the country has set itself in order to fulfill all of the demands of a globalized world and bring about the overall development of Ecuador.

Globalization implies that people from different countries share knowledge, technology and scientific findings with each other, and very often journals, scientific magazines and papers are written in English, even the ones that come from countries where English is not the first language, such as China and India. This contribution becomes the starting point for further local studies, which may opt to compare the local conditions with those obtained elsewhere. This way, each country can obtain real data and information about what their specific necessities or problems are, and decisions can be made with greater accuracy.

Universities, and in this case, the public Ecuadorian university where the study took place, are also part of this worldwide evolution where research is valued as the acquisition of new knowledge, leading to opportunities for national growth and the improvement of living conditions. Students who have a good level of English have more job opportunities, are accepted in foreign universities, can communicate with English speakers and can understand academic and daily information in English.

The institution where the research took place was created in response to the increasing demands for scientific and technological education for the inhabitants of the coastal region. Nowadays, it is involved in a variety of projects that include scientific innovation and responding to the needs of the Ecuadorian community. To be able to respond adequately to these new societal responsibilities, new facilities for students have been incorporated, such as laboratories, internet access and green areas together with all the needs of a modern university, all of which has led the institution to be ranked as one of the best universities of the country.

As with most public colleges, students who attend classes in this university, they are usually middle or working class students and come from both private and public high schools. Students from the private schools are general a little more proficient in English at the outset Regarding the English level of the students from the private schools; they are generally a bit more proficient. However, students who come from public schools are the ones who show a lower performance, this will be discussed in greater detail later but for the moment suffice it to say that public schools are just beginning the process of enhancing the level of English of both the teachers and the students.

Because public education is free, students do not have to pay tuition unless they fail the subject. Alumni from this university are considered studious people since classes are extremely demanding, and they always have to develop projects for a great majority of the subjects that are taught in each major. The English teachers of the foreign language department have all gone through and passed a rigorous a selection process that requires a specific type of professional profile. Part of this profile involves having a teaching degree granted by a national or international university that is recognized by SENESCYT in Ecuador. In addition to this they have to have a C1 level according to the Common European Framework, teaching experience in high level institutions, and a Master's degree, this latter a current stipulation of the institutional authorities and the Commission of Higher Education Institutions (CES). As part of the qualifications that are reviewed for teaching staff, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of how to write and publish papers, which means, the teacher has to be involved in research and projects. The aim is that these studies can produce scientific knowledge relating to diverse aspects of teaching, in this case the teaching of English as a foreign language. The concept of research and being involved in it is quite a new occurrence inside the educational world in Ecuador and with it, it has brought about a series of other changes in the system and while these changes are not the focus of this investigation, they are an important part of its background.

The current government promised to change Ecuadorian education at all levels, starting with the universities. The "Ley de Educación Superior" or Higher Education Law was created after thousands of meetings, reaching a consensus and creating some specific institutions like the CEASES, CES and SENESCYT whose objective has been to oversee and regulate these universities. According to the new law, there are different kinds of

institutions: some universities maintain academic programs oriented towards research, others were created with the purpose of guiding students to become professionals and not with the intent of preparing, them for investigation, and the third ones are oriented towards continuing education (Ayala, 2015). Nevertheless, the author does not agree with this classification and argues that all universities should prepare students for doing research, since according to him; teaching and investigation are closely related. According to the current Ecuadorian law, the first kind of institutions have to enroll a high number of Philosopher doctors (PhD) for them to be considered a high ranking institution, and, as it was said in the previous chapter the institution where the research was conducted is considered to be an institution aimed at investigation. Ecuador is a South American country that is currently in the process of development and one which has traditionally consumed new foreign technology and knowledge. It is fair and logical that current and new generations work hard toward their own discoveries related to technology, engineering and social sciences. Having the ability to communicate in English would prove to be exceedingly beneficial to current and future graduates in these areas. This would allow them to share innovative ideas with others as well as share their experiences and do research. Moreover, they would be able to publish articles and papers in relevant journals of their profession and contribute in some way to its expansion.

This thesis is directed at the last area mentioned above. This being Social Science and specifically the area of English teaching which has expanded in the last years, professionals necessarily have to communicate in this foreign language and to understand documents, both primary and secondary sources that can help them during their research processes. This process started when the government decided to intervene in the programs and curriculums used to teach English in Ecuador. One of the first findings was the necessity to evaluate the level of English held by the English teachers, as well as the level of English required by students prior to culminating their under-graduate studies. The current Ecuadorian President, Rafael Correa Delgado, signed a contract on July, 2012 to require that all the English teachers from public schools take the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) which measured about 5000 teachers. The Education Minister acquired the right to use the online exam at a special price, so that teachers did not have to pay anything. According to the Agencia Pública de Noticias del Ecuador y Suramérica, the results showed that only 10% of teachers could speak English; this was considered as the principal factor behind students' low performance in that subject and their subsequent

difficulties to find opportunities to study and /or work abroad. For this reason, the government decided to request the minimum level of B2 as the required parameter for teaching English in public schools. According to the agency mentioned above, the main objective is that students manage an excellent level of English when they finish high school, which will enable them to be accepted into foreign universities, and fulfill the necessity of a fluent communication in a globalized world. As a result, and as a way to help teachers to improve their English level, some teachers were sent to American or British universities that had signed agreements with the government, so that they could learn more about teaching processes as well as the language itself (Ecuador Universitario, 2012).

The results showed that there was a lack of well-prepared English teachers in the country and that students did not have enough preparation in the language to be accepted into foreign universities, nor the sufficient level to fulfill the need for fluent communication in a globalized world. As a result, exams were given to teachers to measure their level. Some teachers were sent to American or British universities that had signed agreements with the government, so that teachers could learn more about teaching processes as well as the language itself (Ecuador Universitario, 2012).

The institution where this research was conducted has been teaching English for more than 25 years. However, teachers (not only of this institution but on a national level) were only devoted to academic activities until Master's program for Teaching English as a Foreign Language began and all the national changes contributed to the implementation of research in the area or until a major event took place. This event was that of a new law being established where teachers would not be able to work in a university unless they had a master's degree in the area that they were teaching. A grace period of five to ten years was given by the committee on higher education for all university teachers to fulfill this requirement. The master's program for Teaching English as a Foreign Language in the university where the study was done began before this law was instated with the purpose of trying to begin to change the views of the teachers about their roles as researchers. Both the internal and external national changes contributed to the implementation of research in the area of teaching English. The government and institutional authorities have seen the need of obtaining reliable data related to the Ecuadorian reality. The English teaching area has not been the exception, therefore, the study of the different aspects that influence Ecuadorian students during the learning process, such as, their economic condition,

teaching techniques, metacognitive processes, infrastructure, language backgrounds, national programs and others, require a deep study that leads authorities and teachers to make better decisions. It is always more effective to start a program based on the context of the ones who will give and receive a service. (Marzano 2007)

Regarding teaching language skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing, there are many aspects that affect their efficient performance. However, the perceived definition that teachers have of what each skill is, and what is necessary to help students to master them, or at least to reach a certain level in each area, will be determinant in getting the desired results as established by the government, the university and the faculty. This study aims to examine teachers' perceptions of what, as seen from their point of view, oral fluency is and to gain insight as to how these views match with what they do in class to develop this productive skill in their students. The results of this study will stakeholders know if there is a close relationship between those perceptions and classroom praxis, and hence provide authorities with a basis for discussing the various options to take how thesis might affect the quality of learners' communication.

The main focus of this study was on comparing teachers' perceptions of the definition of speaking fluency with the activities they plan and develop in class. For the purpose of this research, teachers who are in charge of intermediate level courses were interviewed and observed in their classes and their lesson plans were analyzed. All of this was done to compare their definitions with the ones formally recognized by experts as speaking fluency activities, and to observe how those definitions matched up with the teachers' performance in class. Close attention was paid to the Speaking Fluency activities developed in class, the time devoted to them, the teacher and students talking time, strategies, time pressure and other aspects that will be explained further in the methodology section.

A crucial point of this research was the previous observations made by the institutional authorities who were concerned about the efficiency of the productive skills shown by their intermediate students. According to the Common European Framework of Languages, an Intermediate level student is labeled in the B1 band, and these students should be able to communicate messages related to their life or academic major with some confidence. In addition these learners can exchange, check and confirm information on familiar topics, explain reasons for a problem, and express opinions. To get to that point, students need to be exposed to a wide range of phrases, patterns, structures and vocabulary



and be given the time to use them to express ideas about different topics. The pattern observed by the authorities was that teachers were not using speaking fluency activities in the class, even though workshops are regularly given about different teaching areas, including speaking, and even though class observations are previously announced. Hence the research questions explored by the researchers were:

RQ1: What do teachers define as speaking fluency?

RQ2: Are there any differences between those definitions and what the teachers do in class?

RQ3: To what extent are speaking fluency activities developed in class?

#### **1.4 Scope and delimitation**

This study focuses on the perception teachers have of speaking fluency in general and the activities associated with it directed at intermediate level students in one of the most reputable public Ecuadorian universities. Out of the 32 English teachers who work in the Foreign Language department, 17 were used as a sample to conduct the study, since they all have intermediate level classes. The study limits its coverage to that level and it was done during the first semester of the school year 2016-2017. Its main purpose was to discover and obtain an overall view as to how the teachers conceptualized speaking fluency activities in general and in particular for intermediate level learners by listening to how teachers defined speaking fluency activities, by analyzing the stages, steps, resources and aims they had stated in their lesson plans when being asked for the development of these kinds of activities, and by scrutinizing what they did during the class observations. By doing so, the study attempted to consider every aspect of a class, starting from the teachers' perceptions, to their lesson plans and ultimately to the implementation of those tasks in class. All the teachers were asked the same questions during the interview, they were all asked to create and hand in a lesson plan with the implementation of a speaking fluency activity, all the class observations were scheduled in advance, and they all signed the informed consent, accepting their participation in the study.

To sum up, Ecuador is a country in the process of development which is just now getting involved in the area of research. More importantly, as an initial step, the level of English with which existing students graduate is a primary objective and concern so that when these graduates enter the workforce, they will be able to communicate in English. The

focus of this ability to communicate extends to all areas of work, from being able to manage an interview both as the interviewer and the interviewee, to doing formal presentations, to socializing with colleagues, bosses and future or possible clients. One of the reasons for such an effort being made in this area is so that by having the most fundamental elements well in place this will serve as a stepping stone to reaching the national objectives and paving the way for a more developed country.

To reach this nationwide objective, the government has included profound modifications in all the areas that have relevant influence or impact in these changes, such as education. Ecuadorian universities have been part of the first wave of changes, which have implied modifications in procedures such as the teacher hiring process as well as the admissions process such as students and the profile of students entering the university, which directly affects the way classes are taught, as they must respond to the needs and interests of the learners. Students entering also face methodological changes. This implies that teachers and students need to be prepared to face these changes and those professionals who graduate from Ecuadorian institutions have to show a high standard and command of the language to confront the demands of a globalized society. Hence, a higher level of English proficiency will be likely to contribute to attaining this goal. By influencing the way future professionals are able to communicate accurately either in their native language or in English.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

#### 2.1 Related literature

The human being and his or her ability to speak are closely related to the projection humans have of themselves in the world and in their milieu. Different aspects come together to determine successful communication such as culture, social interaction, politics, general norms and aspects related to grammar and vocabulary. Successful communication is a matter of being able to expand identity and speak appropriately according to the context where the person is living or at least developing the oral communication (Hughes, 2011). Hughes (2011) points out those spoken events are generally unplanned as they happen spontaneously, in a dynamic way that depends largely on the context. Topics might change continuously, and the participants have the ability to adapt to each other, to negotiate meaning, refer to previous or related information and other abilities which are closely related to fluency.

A person that shows fluency in a language is able to speak easily, fairly quickly and without too many pauses. A fluent speaker is able to communicate and receive messages naturally with few errors (British Council, 2016). In addition, Kellem (2009) defines oral fluency as transitory aspects of speech that incorporate speech rate, pauses and length of speech between pauses. According to Kellem (2009) a recommended source for fluency speaking activities is the vocabulary and grammar structures that students have learned in the past but they have not had the possibility to use either in class or outside. However, Brown (2000) defines fluency as letting speech flow, without focusing on the other aspects of speaking such as pronunciation, intonation, accuracy, the use of facial expressions and interactive strategies. Nation & Newton (2009) defines it as one of the goals of speaking activities in the classroom, which depends largely on having access and control of lexical and syntactic instruments that allow learners to decide how to use them efficiently. According to Nation & Newton (2009), the familiarity with situations, interaction and schemata motivated by the use of different speaking fluency activities in

the classroom help learners develop a higher level of it.

Like Nation, Ur mentions experiences and moreover, prior experiences and knowledge when describing topic based activities as a means of promoting fluency (Ur 1996). In addition, Stern (1983) suggests that teachers have to be careful with the way they treat the language learner and the process, giving the language the corresponding value, and having learners actively involved in the teaching-learning process. Stern (1983) emphasizes that teachers have to create the necessity to communicate, so that fluency might become worth having. Furthermore Bygate (1998), in Fattah (2006), argues that teachers have a relevant role when they design or plan activities to develop fluency, which should involve monitoring during and after the task, and the correct management of communication under a range of pressure. There are different layers of speaking, that are mentioned by Hughes (2011), which are discourse grammar and phonology that he describes as necessary components of a speaking class, and gives the teachers the responsibility to bring those elements together the way learners are able to produce spoken utterances with appropriate meaning and change their condition of beginners into the condition of a fluent speaker of English.

Furthermore, Yang (2014) states that teachers have to adjust the traditional curriculum, in such a way as to promote class interaction with emphasis on the message, rather than the accurate structure, so that students gain more confidence to let their ideas come out. At this point, the necessity of training teachers arises in all the institutions whose main objective is the development of communicational skills of the EFL students; Fattah (2006), explains that teachers should be prepared to instruct their students effectively, through different methods such as training learners to reflect on their own and others' processes and strategies which might help them learn at an individual pace. Teachers should also be prepared to give learners enough opportunities for interacting about different topics, so that they can be prepared with a vast repertory of topics they could face in their real life.

As mentioned above, phonology constitutes an important element of a speaking class. Nation & Newton (2009), states that good pronunciation can help in normal communication and also describes the “phonological loop” which consists of a brain

function that says a word or phrase over and over that way these words and phrases can move to a long-term memory, similar to the way we memorize names, common phrases or telephone numbers, because we repeat them many times. The authors state that good pronunciation helps in the process mentioned above, and emphasizes that L2 learners are affected by their previous knowledge of patterns of pronunciation and grammar. This means that it is easier for learners to store structures, chunks, pronunciation and vocabulary when they have previously learned related information. In addition, some teachers avoid teaching pronunciation in class, which will be likely to affect the quality of communication the learner might have in the future. All aspects of pronunciation, like the articulation of single sounds, voicing, aspiration, features of voice setting, stress and intonation as well as the omission of sounds, and their blending should be considered by teachers when planning a speaking class. An inconvenience that teachers might find, especially in upper intermediate and advanced learners, is the fossilization of pronunciation, vocabulary and structures: this can be overcome if teachers motivate students to practice outside the class in order to make the necessary adjustments in their speech. If more attention is given in class to these learners, and non-verbal language related to speaking and pronunciation is worked into the class, the quality of communication can be improved. Regarding this area of speaking, Nation & Newton (2009) believe in using as many strategies as can be used in class, according to the students' needs, for instance, teaching the sounds directly, dictation of unreal or unfamiliar words, identifying sound using pictures, repeating sounds, using the written forms of the pronunciation and correcting pronunciation mistakes. Once students feel more comfortable with what they say, that is, they feel they are understood by others while speaking; they will be more likely to speak with a better level of fluency. However, there are other relevant aspects that determine how fluent new speakers are, and this is the methodology used by the teacher.

Regarding methodology, teachers need to select the procedures that best fit the class objectives and take into consideration that one of the principal goals of EFL students is to improve their ability to speak intelligibly and coherently about different topics, which is also the new institutional goal. There is a variety of methods, but not all of them agree on the role played by oral language in the classroom, as has been widely discussed in the literature about this topic. Some of the more widely-known methods include: Grammar

translation, Total Physical Response, Audiolingualism, Direct method and Situational Language Teaching, Comprehension Approach, Natural Approach, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Task-Based Approach, Communicative Language Learning and Communicative Language Teaching.

The three last approaches are the ones that include peer interactions, for instance, during a class that uses the Task-Based approach, students develop practical tasks to emphasize oral communications, whereas in a CLT class there is a great amount of peer-to-peer, free and guided speaking activities that consider notion, function and linguistic aspects, while CLL also encourages peer-to-peer interactions that enhance the community spirit and allow students to incorporate spoken utterances into the syllabus. Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the kind of methodology they need as well as of the English level of students, given that some methods are not appropriate. For instance, Total Physical Response, The Silent Way and Suggestopedia do not respond to the learning objectives of a course that aims to have students able to communicate fluently and effectively. On the other hand, Larsen Freeman (2000) and Mellow (2000) in Praveen (2013), propose the Eclectic method, which is defined as a combination of different methods of learning and teaching approaches, hence it implies a variety of language learning activities. The use of this method provides the teacher a variety of opportunities to plan different activities that might be in one way or another suitable to students with different kinds of intelligence. Difficulties have been reported as the result of using one single methodology, which might affect the development of the language skills.

Richards (2006) argues that nowadays, when teachers are asked about the methodology they use in their classrooms, most of them say they use the Communicative Language Teaching CLT method. However, the author emphasizes that a variety of answers are given by teachers when they are asked what CLT is. Communicative Language teaching (CLT) is being used worldwide to get more effective results regarding the process of learning a new language, considering that the objective of teaching a language is to prepare students to communicate in authentic contexts (Yang 2014). Alongside this, the use of Cooperative Language Learning CLL is gaining space in the EFL classroom. According to Johnson & Johnson (1999), this methodology is based on the Social interdependence theory which establishes that people are affected by their own

and others' actions and that there are different kinds of interactions; however, they argue that teachers should encourage the positive ones. For instance, motivating students to be engaged with the activity and fully participate in it, giving each person a role of responsibility, promoting success through common goals to develop the task, motivating them to help each other when something is unclear and through the development of effective communication and group skills such as decision-making, leadership, conflict-management skills and communication. In addition Johnson & Johnson( 1999) mention the importance of groups self-assessment that help the group members to reflect on their actions that could draw them to make decisions about what aspects of the group work can continue or should be changed.

According to Richards (2006) CLT implies the development of communicative competence, which includes being able to achieve a high level of language production. Murphy (1991) additionally explains that CLT can be developed through many peer-to-peer, guided or free speaking activities based on notional, functional and/or linguistic considerations, as well as through a task based approach that uses activities centered upon practice that allow students to practice oral communication and develop their fluency. Yang (2014) suggests that the materials chosen by the teachers should motivate students to convey their thoughts and opinions, the way they are understood clearly, without paying a great deal of attention to perfect structures. This way, the author motivates the use of critical thinking techniques, which is defined by Scriven & Paul (2015) as the process by which a person can analyze, conceptualize, apply, synthesize and evaluate information. In addition, the author emphasizes that teachers should avoid overcorrection, so that students develop their fluency in language use.

Kellem (2009) presents seven principles that teachers should consider when designing and doing a fluency class. These principles are:

1. Incorporate repetition
2. Increase speaking time
3. Prepare before speaking
4. Use familiar and motivating topics
5. Ensure appropriate level
6. Impose time limits

## 7. Teach formulaic sequences

Regarding the necessity of a continued repetition, the author argues that using the same language over and over will increase fluency significantly as students will be more confident at the moment of using the language. The author clarifies that the kind of repetition suggested in the article does not consist of only repeating what the teacher says, or doing drills, but in using other activities where students are pushed to repeat the same phrases in front of different audiences or with different purposes. One example suggested to incorporate repetition in class is the well-known game “Find someone who” where students need to repeat the same questions as many times as it is necessary until someone answers the question with the expected response. In addition, the exercise “Interview and Report” is also regarded as an excellent way to increase oral fluency. In this exercise, two students A and B have a conversation or an interview, students take notes of the answers so that in the next step they report answers to student C who has to take notes as well.

Another suggested activity is the “Class Photo” where students have to take a photo of a group and then take turns to lead others to move the way they are similar to the photo. According to the author, this activity avoids mindless repetition and pushes students to find the correct way to express what they want to say, but without using gestures. In addition, the author mentions that the limited time devoted to the target language use is an issue that is present in many high level institutions where the number of English class hours is limited to about 4 or 5 hours a week, time that has to be distributed among the other three skills. The author recommends using pairs or small groups to make students speak, as well as, free conversations and the use of English outside the class, and activities such as interviews, group discussions, role plays and information gaps. The level English learners have will also indicate how easy the exercise might be, given that advanced learners have enough vocabulary and structures to talk about any topic when necessary, whereas elementary to intermediate learners need more initial support like techniques of scaffolding that provide a guide to be used during the conversation. This guidance might make students feel they are using the target language fluently, which will give them more confidence in the future.

Furthermore, recording conversations might be another option to develop oral



fluency in learners since they contribute with a gradual confidence gained by students when getting used to listening to themselves in a recorded conversation. The author emphasizes that these recordings should be done outside the classroom and care should be taken with the topics assigned, so that students feel comfortable with the activity and the subject. This can be done individually or in groups. When it comes to preparation time, Kellem (2009) adequate planning has a strong influence in the development of oral fluency and shorter pauses, especially when teachers work with low and intermediate level learners. The author recommends asking students to write a general plan that gives students a sort of support when they have to keep focused on the act of speaking and transmit a meaningful message with an interlocutor.

Kellem (2009) also recommends assigning homework where learners have to collect information about a topic, write answers or prepare a set of questions that might be used in a conversation by them or their interlocutors. Providing them with just a few minutes to think or read their notes before the speaking task might benefit the oral fluency of learners during the activity, as well as the level of comprehension and attention during the communication process. Another principle suggested by the author is the familiarity with chosen topics students should have. The author argues that it is not only a matter of easing the task for learners, but also a way to maintain the level of confidence to produce ideas and the level of fluency. The topics that are pertinent to developing fluency are usually the ones related to recent events or activities, and common interests according to their preferences, studies, gender or age. In addition, the appropriate language level should be ensured by teachers by promoting the use of grammar or vocabulary that has been previously studied in class. This can be done through a review activity that reinforces what learners will need to use in the communicative activity, so that, students will feel more satisfied with their own performance.

One important principle suggested by Kellem (2009) is that time limits should be set to include intensity during the task. This creates pressure to speak faster and reduce pauses, and can be done with any speaking exercise, especially with intermediate and advanced levels that have a wider range of words and structures to convey ideas. One suggestion here is the use of the 4-3-2 minute speech, where students have to give the same speech three times, combining pressure and repetition. Students work in groups and

each member of the group speaks for four minutes, then, they join other groups where the same message has to be said in three minutes and then in two minutes. This way, teachers help learners improve the level of confidence and fluency. In addition, the author mentions that among other advantages this activity has is the freedom the speaker has to choose the words or expressions to convey ideas, and the opportunity to adjust the content to the time used in order to talk to a different audience. As an extension to this exercise it might be much more beneficial if speeches are recorded to check if there was an improvement or not.

The last principle suggested by Kellem (2009) is related to the necessity of teaching chunks, formulaic sequences and collocations to help learners improve not only their fluency but also the accuracy with which those messages are transmitted. This will help learners a lot in recognizing when to use certain expressions in conversation, such as requests to borrow items, asking for permission, agreeing or disagreeing, stating opinions, and others. The author also states the importance of assigning easy tasks that are defined as all those speaking activities where students have to talk about familiar topics or ones related to the learner's experience. Learners can also provide some input to their classmates by presenting short talks based on a writing exercise that made them think before speaking.

Bygate (1987) in Nunan (1991) states that oral communication can be developed either as a transactional or interactional function of the language, that are somewhat different considering that the first one is a predictable way to convey ideas, and the latter implies the necessity to manage the interaction and negotiate meaning. However, the author suggests that interaction can be both, a predictable and unpredictable process that depends on the context, topic, interlocutor and relationships. To reinforce this, Nunan (1991) introduces the term "genre" to define the socially-constructed, communicative event that determines functions that can be used as reference for future communications. Regarding this topic, Halliday and Hasan (1985) in Nunan (1991) suggest that context and text are closely related if other factors as setting, participants and the role assigned to the language are also considered in the process. As a consequence, teachers need to be aware that students will learn more effectively when they face language events where they are pushed to communicate and use the language; this is more likely to happen when teachers

use the Cooperative Language Approach explained above. This is to expose students to some situations similar to the ones they might be faced with outside. At the same time, the author proposes the use of top-down approaches, which means working from larger elements to smaller elements of the language. This is supported by Ellis (1997) who presents evidence of what he calls “expansion strategy” that helps learners extend messages discursively rather than structurally. However, this is countered by Hatch (1978) in Nunan (1991) who argues that once learners are able to manipulate structures, they can build their own discourses to communicate.

Teachers’ training in pedagogy provides professionals with a variety of activities to enhance students’ fluency, accuracy, phonology and pronunciation, as part of the development of conversation activities (Brown, 2000). The development of conversational competence depends largely on the dynamic use of strategies that encourage students to use the repertoire of vocabulary and phrases they have previously acquired, to express what they think or feel fluently (Stern, 1983). According Stern (1983), teachers should know that this level of competence and proficiency follows a process in which students start producing unstructured and inefficient structures that become relatively fluid and more structured when there have been enough fluency development class activities.

Classroom activities to develop speaking fluency are a basic part of the course that has to be included in most of the sessions a teacher plans. These activities are not that easy to prepare, since teachers need to be aware of what an effective speaking activity is. (Ur 1996). The author states that a successful speaking activity encourages learners to talk a lot. This is because some classes present a high level of TTT (or teacher talk time), which impedes the development of fluency in students. The second characteristic mentioned by the author is the even participation that takes place when activities involve all the students and therefore, they all have the same chance of participating. There are usually talkative participants that dominate the conversation, which becomes a challenge for teachers who need to keep track of this in order to promote fair development of abilities. In addition, motivation is also mentioned as one important factor to consider at the moment of selecting activities to develop fluency. This depends mostly on the topics. If students enjoy the topic, if it is familiar to them, they will find the way to express what

they feel or think. Furthermore, the author also mentions the level of language students use in conveying their ideas. That is, students should use language according to their level, which should be easy for them to use and comprehensible to each other.

Designing speaking fluency activities will depend largely on several characteristics that are determined by the learning goals (Nation, 2009). Another suggestion is the activity “message focus” that leads teachers and learners to achieve the outcomes through problem solving, ordering, classifying, ranking, completion, matching, listing and providing directions. Furthermore, the time learners take to prepare their ideas before taking part in a conversation also has a level of influence in the quality of the oral performance. Crookes (1989) in Nation (2009) recommends 10 minutes as the ideal time for learners to prepare ideas they would use in a conversation whose topic has been previously announced by the teacher. This provides not only time to think, but also the time to produce longer utterances with more appropriate vocabulary and structures. This activity can be done individually or in groups, and also in different ways like brainstorming the topic, predicting, watching a video or observing others while doing an activity, reading and even using language 1. The author also emphasizes the relevance of repetition when it comes to developing oral fluency, but considering the detail that every time the message is repeated the audience should be different, and also that the activity should be meaning-focused so that, the speaker will retain the message in every repetition.

Brown (2000), states that a teacher should establish clear objectives that focus the activities developed in class either on fluency or accuracy, or both. The author suggests that teachers have to prepare language-based tasks, and distribute the class time in such a way that students have the opportunity to speak and use the building blocks of language. On the other hand, Hughes (2011) emphasizes that teachers and administrators should decide in advance if the English course will be designed to teach the spoken form of a language, or they aim to teach a language through speaking. The author has found out that form and delivery, grammar and vocabulary are being taught separately from pronunciation and fluency, which causes a huge gap in the spoken mode that should be developed in class, and includes an example related to teaching some idioms at low levels of productive speech which can cause confusion. The author advises teaching these idioms when students have acquired enough timing, fluent and accurate delivery and

enough cultural knowledge to use them in a conversation.

In addition, Brown (2000) recommends finding out students' goals and interests, as well as their necessities, such as, knowledge, autonomy, status, so that teachers can use intrinsically motivating techniques that will benefit students' oral skills, since talking about familiar topics is appealing and productive. Another recommendation he makes is the use of authentic language in meaningful context, which will provide relevant interaction to students. However, he recognizes that finding these resources might be difficult, though in the end it is worthwhile. Another important aspect the author mentions as crucial to developing fluency is the appropriate corrective feedback and correction that teachers provide to students.

Nation & Newton (2009) argues that all exercises that aim to develop oral fluency should be planned considering certain features, such as being meaningful to students, having specific communication outcomes, having limited demands on the learners. The activities should be closely related to familiar topics and experiences. According to the author, this will largely depend not only on the students' background, but also on the contact with certain material that students might have had before the oral fluency activity such as a listening exercises, pictures or written texts. Consequently, as the authors say, the use of all these principles encourages students to attain a high oral performance through repetition, prediction, use of previous knowledge and a faster speed of output. At the same time, Nation & Newton (2009) suggest other techniques for developing fluency in speaking, such as the Best Recording that consists in recording students' voices in the laboratory. Of course, this can be done when there is a computer lab in the institution, so that students can record what they say for a limited time, and then they can listen to themselves, receive feedback from the teacher or even listen to others and do peer correction. Repetition can be done to correct all the necessary weaknesses until the learner feels satisfied with the oral production. Alternatively, the ask and answer technique can also develop oral fluency, given that, once learners have read a reading comprehension text, another group of classmates can ask a set of questions given by the teacher. The objective of this technique is the use of the ideas given when answering the questions as a summary, and to have students ask those questions in front of the class, and by doing so the learners are forced to rehearse their presentations, which implies repetition

and internalization of words and expressions all of which are really useful in enhancing oral fluency in our learners. Another technique suggested by Nation & Newton (2009) is what he calls “rehearsed talks” that involve learners in the preparation of an individual talk that has to be practiced in advance in front of a classmate before sharing the ideas with the whole class.

The development of speaking strategies is another principle that Brown (2007) suggests as rewarding in a language class, since they provide special language chunks or phrases that might be useful when students need to convey ideas, not always focusing on accuracy. It is important to mention that having students speak in class might have different objectives like helping students gain awareness of aspects of linguistic such as grammar rules, application of certain phonemes, or to practice rhythm, intonation, vowel-to-vowel link, and the practice of some socio-linguistic points (Hughes, 2011). Marzano (2007) also offers some suggestions regarding the development of different skills such as teaching students the art of questioning, summarizing, predicting and clarifying. Students can assume different roles when doing an exercise, asking them to rotate their roles so that they can practice more according to the demands of their roles.

Nation & Newton (2009) recognize that the activities described above can be used not only to develop oral fluency, but also other basic skills, especially listening, which is closely related to speaking, arguing that teachers should devote at least the quarter of the class to developing these activities. This is suggested in view of the reality that there are only a small number of opportunities for students to practice outside the classroom. Another dynamic aspect is that time can be increased when students have received enough input to produce ideas. It is also recommended to gradually use the language taught in class, or the language learned in the course for doing oral exercises, so that learners can practice in a more relaxed environment, using familiar words. However, the author mentions that when no specific material is presented, fluency directed activities can be done, which are called “holes” or “gaps”. At the end, the precious preparation means that the earlier activities will be the support of the other activities, so that they will likely have a positive impact on the level of performance. A unit should have certain characteristics to ascertain that fluency is one of its goals. Aspects like a relationship between the first part of the unit with the last activities of that same unit should be considered. These activities or topics should also be linked to the learners’ experience and all of the formerly

mentioned characteristics should be linked to the learning goals of that unit. On the other hand, the objectives of a course might be different from those of a given unit, but they should be linked to the desire to practice, a cultural component, and a necessity for repetition and practicality.

Being able to speak a language goes farther than the grammatical knowledge a person might have, and implies being aware of how native speakers use the language in natural settings, which can be an obstacle for speakers who want to reach a native-like fluency that implies the use of paralinguistic elements like stress, intonation and pitch as well as nonlinguistic elements such as body language and gestures, thus, the closer a context is to a real situation, the more meaningful the communication might be. Consequently, exposure to real language will help learners to improve their fluency and quality of communication (Richards & Renandya, 2002). The authors emphasize that teachers need to be aware that the acquisition of speaking abilities is closely related to the amount of practice and exposure to the language students have. However, many teachers assume that spoken language skills can be developed by simply assigning students a general topic to discuss, or by asking them to talk about certain subjects. In addition, the author suggests that teachers should also consider certain factors that can affect the development of speaking abilities like age or maturational constraints, aural medium, sociocultural and affective factors. Krashen, Long and Scarcella (1982) in Richards & Renandya (2002) explain that the earlier the learning process starts, the better results might be obtained. The authors present the term “fossilization” to justify what happens when the language development stops or limits the ability to pronounce the target language fluently. Regarding the aural medium, this is the term the authors use to explain the influence listening has on speaking, describing how the listener can keep information and integrate it with incoming information and prior knowledge, before giving a response. If a person is not able to understand, he/she will not be able to respond. On the other hand, the sociocultural factor can also affect the development of a native-like fluency, since all languages have certain patterns of usage according to the context, this is, what speakers are expected to do regarding certain conversational patterns, as well as, the non-verbal expressions that might hinder a fluent communication. When the authors mention the affective factors, they refer to emotions, self-esteem, motivation, anxiety, empathy, which according to them have one of the most important influences on language learning

success or failure, since learners can be susceptible to self-doubt, apprehension, uneasiness and frustration when facing situations where they have to speak, especially if they have to talk to native speakers. The authors point out that adults are more likely to suffer these kinds of problems due to their concern with how they are judged by others.

Throughout all of these activities teachers and instructors should motivate students to express their ideas, to use every opportunity to speak that they have, such as talking to the teacher and their classmates, and even at home talking to themselves for a certain time, as this will help them to find the words so that flow easily when learners speak. In addition, learners need to be aware of their limited vocabulary and of the structures that can be used to express ideas without any fear of making mistakes or paraphrasing too much, since the most important thing is to transmit a clear message. The use of communication strategies is also an ability that teachers must encourage in class to help learners feel more confident when performing this competence.

## **2.2 Related studies**

### **Study One:**

A study by Karim Sadeghi and Jack C. Richards (2015) in an Iranian private language institution was done with the purpose of exploring how institute teachers manage the teaching of spoken English. While this study was done in a private language academy, it is quite relevant because part of the study revealed that the instructors did not seem to understand the difference between the skills needed for or used in a discussion and those needed or used in a conversation. In addition to this, the context of teaching English in a private institution in Iran is quite similar to that of teaching English in this particular Ecuadorean University. That is, that the skills are integrated and that speaking and writing are not taught as separate courses and that the core methodology is communicative language teaching. In this Iranian study, a survey was given to the participants, classroom observations and interviews were conducted. 89 teachers were surveyed and they ranged in age from 19-39. This questionnaire contained 64 items and consisted of four parts. The objective of the questionnaire was to obtain information about the teachers' backgrounds, the speaking courses they taught, perceived difficulties they must confront when teaching



speaking and for them to express what kind of workshops related to teaching speaking they would like to have. What was interesting in this study was the type of activities done by the teachers. These were drills, role plays, group work, pair work, pronunciation work and dialogues. 57.3% of the population said they often did role plays, 70.8% did pair work and 41.6% did group work.

In this study the authors stated that due to the numerous studies already done in Iran that are related to the challenges in teaching /learning of English focused on all subskills, this particular study focuses only on the teaching of speaking and the major focus is on what is perceived to be "spoken English" and on ways to promote speaking outside the classroom. A comparison is made between conversation and discussion. The conclusions made by the authors are that the level of proficiency of the teachers and the resources used by them can be improved through workshops and courses as well as the techniques being used by them to teach speaking, but the fundamental issue here is the teachers and curriculum designers understanding of the nature of spoken English. Sadgehi and Richards (2015) insist that the perceptions of speaking English must be modified and updated to incorporate the idea that discussion and conversation are different and both require distinct skills and tasks.

### **Study Two:**

A study was done by Bahram Mowlaiea and Ali Rahimib (2010) in Iran provided much valuable insight in to while not identical but a very similar context of EFL and communicative practices. The aim of this study was to gather information about teachers' attitudes about communicative language teaching and to discern if these teachers in fact followed through with their opinions in their classroom practices. CLT has as one of its major tenets the development of communicative skills such as speaking as noted earlier in the literature review.

The study was done in one the of the most prestigious language schools in Tehran and like the study done in Ecuador the participants of the study were EFL teachers with a varied level of qualifications. One of the links between the two studies is that there were both done in the context of English as a foreign language and not of English as a second language as the two are different and require different approaches. The other link between

the two studies is that of the qualifications of the teacher participants. Forty percent of the Tehran teachers held a BA and 20% held and MA in English. The sample in the Iranian study was made up of 100 EFL teachers who were randomly selected from 600 teachers from the different branches of the institute making it much larger than this study. The two questions that the study sought to seek answers to were: What are EFL teachers' beliefs about different CLT principles and how do EFL teachers practice CLT principles in the context in which they teach. In order to answer these two queries, the methods used for data collection were a questionnaire that consisted of 20 statements to which the subjects responded on a 6 point scale of agreement, class observations and post observation interviews.

The survey also took into consideration the teachers' perceptions about how often they felt they adhered to their views. This is a similar idea which was also investigated by the authors of this thesis with the question of how often did they (the participants of the study) implement the speaking fluency activities they had previously mentioned. Some interesting topics or themes emerged from the survey; one of these being that 74.7% of those who completed the survey agreed completely with the idea of emphasizing communication and not mastery of language form. Moreover, what is important about this is that 31% of the teachers also perceived that they did this in class. Another aspect in that survey which is related to this one is the idea that students should interact primarily with each other rather than with the teacher. 92% of those surveyed were in total agreement with this idea and of that 92%, 62% of them felt that they actually did that in class. Another principle of CLT with which 63% of the sample population agreed with was that of grammar first communicative activities next. Again of that 63%, 85% perceived that they did so in class. Finally the last relevant idea was that of grammar not being taught formally or explicitly which 77% of the participants agreed with and 70% felt they did in their classrooms.

These views were observed and stated in the Ecuadorian university. In the interviews conducted, many subjects stated that it was important to give the students the freedom to speak, and that what was more important was for them to be understood. Also in this study it was stated and observed in class that the interaction pattern was students engaging in discussion with other students either in groups or in pairs. In the majority of the observations it was noted that quite frequently grammar was presented first as a

prelude to a communicative activity. In tandem with this it was also noted that grammar is not taught explicitly but rather implicitly. All of these factors create a link between the two studies. Following the surveys done by Mowlaeia and Rahimib, classroom observations were done for 30 of the participants.

The researchers of the Tehran study saw that there was a discrepancy between what the teachers believed, what they thought they did in class and what they actually did in class. The Iranian researchers had the chance to do a post observation interview where 25 of the participants tried to explain these discrepancies by stating that because they liked the principles of CLT did not necessarily mean that they followed it principles. The second reasoning was that they were initially attracted to CLT because it was a new and interesting method for them as opposed to the Audio-Lingual method they had been using. However, as they began to implement CLT they began to see that certain principles were not applicable in their context and reverted back to using certain aspects of the Audio-Lingual method. The authors of this investigation conclude in part that what also had an impact on the teachers' performance in the class was that instead of implementing CLT they implemented other methodologies that they had been exposed to as part of their training and during their school years. It would seem, as highlighted by Mowlaeia and Rahimib, that while the teachers might have a theoretical knowledge of CLT they have an extremely hard time putting it into practice. This might be the result of not knowing exactly how to do so. As will be mentioned later in the conclusion portion of this study, prior experience using a certain type of methodology can possibly hinder the application of techniques and activities that give way to the development of communicative competence and to counter attack this effect perhaps more training in this area as has been suggested by the Iranian authors is required.

### **2.3 Definition of terms: Perceptions, communicative competence, techniques, activities, transactional, interactional, input, interaction.**

Before continuing with the methodology of this study, and to clarify any doubts about the concept of perceptions which is the main focus of this thesis it is suitable to define it. Perception as defined in the online Oxford dictionary is the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted. In this particular case it is how the

teachers interpret or understand speaking fluency. In tandem with the notion of perceptions it is also salient to ensure that the concept of communicative competence be distinctly defined. The definition of communicative competence has developed over time, but perhaps it is best explained by Savignon (1976) when she states that:

“First of all communicative competence is not a method. It is a way of describing what it is a native speaker knows which enables him to interact with other native speakers. This kind of interaction is, by definition, spontaneous, i.e. unrehearsed. It requires much more than knowledge of the linguistic code. The native speaker not only knows how to say something but what to say and when to say it.” (p.4)

Savignon (1976) continues:

“The acquisition of the linguistic code is, to be sure, a part of the acquisition of communicative competence as a whole. But the focus on surface features of language-verb forms, use of prepositions, noun endings, word order, pronunciation and the like all those things with which we as language teachers have traditionally been concerned does not begin to account for the what and when of language use in interpersonal transactions. More important, accuracy in the use of all of these discrete linguistic elements is not essential to communicative competence”. (p.4)

Two other terms that quite often represent confusion are techniques and activities used in an ESL/EFL classroom. Perhaps the best way to begin to distinguish the two terms is by defining them. A technique as defined by the Cambridge online dictionary is a way of doing an activity that needs a skill. John Kay a teacher trainer from the British Council in a video about speaking techniques best explains techniques by providing a number examples such as the use of a warmer, grouping the students by using different animals and having the students ask what animal do you have and saying to their classmate no you're not in my group, by doing so student are already engaging in some speaking fluency. This technique can also help the teacher group students according to levels so that stronger students may work with weaker students. There are other techniques such as repetition and drilling, and oral controlled practice that are available to teachers. Activities

are related to techniques but differ in that they are the work of a group or organization to achieve an aim as defined in the Online Cambridge English dictionary.

Some of the activities mentioned in the video were debates, prediction tasks, and in particular making predictions about what will happen in a story. Another activity that can be done is to give each student in the group a picture and have them predict the order in which the events will unfold in the story. Students can also retell a story in their groups and finally they mention information gaps as another form of engaging learners in speaking. The video also lists three characteristics that an activity should have or be which are that they should be about useful topics, they should be something the students are interested in and they should also be relevant to the class.

The next two terms are those of transactional discourse and interactional discourse. The two as noted by Jack Richards serve two distinct purposes and require two different sets of skills. A transactional discourse is one according to Richards that is an interaction that focuses on getting something done. Richards makes a note of the fact that in communicative language teaching these transactions are called functions. Some examples of transactional types of discourse are ordering food in a restaurant, getting a haircut and buying something in a store. Richards remarks that because this kind of discourse normally requires a sequence of individual moves or functions, that it mostly becomes scripted. The primary goal here is to transmit information. Some skills that are needed to achieve this task are:

- Using scripts for specific transactions and situations
- Confirming and repeating information
- Using communication strategies
- Using fixed expressions and routines

Richards (2016) states that Interactional discourse "refers to communication that primarily serves the purpose of social interaction" Richards (2016) cites the example of small talk and conversation as being interactional. However, Richards also states that unlike small talk, conversation involves a joint interaction around topics and the introduction of new topics. Some of the skills needed for conversation are:

- Initiating a topic in casual and formal conversation
- Selecting vocabulary appropriate to the topic
- Providing relevant comments through back-channeling
- Using discourse strategies for repairing misunderstandings

Two other terms that need to be defined are input and interaction. In the field of second language acquisition these two terms have undergone major transformations and for this reason can create some confusion. Input is referred to as the oral and/ or written corpus of the target language to which L2 learners are exposed through various sources and recognized by them as input (Farahanynia ,2015). As noted by the British Council input refers to the exposure learners have to authentic language in use. This can be from various sources, including the teacher, other learners and the environment around the learners. Input can be compared to intake which is input then taken in and internalized by the learner so it can be applied.

In talking about interaction it is noted by Prabhu (1987) in Farahaynia (2015) that "The development of competence in a second language requires not systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in an effort to cope with communication". As also noted by the British Council interaction and its patterns In ELT, interaction patterns are the different ways learners and the teacher can interact in the class. Using the right interaction pattern is a fundamental factor in the success of any activity and the achievement of aims.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3. RESEARCH PARADIGM

#### 3.1 Methodology

Due to the nature, the objective and the perspective with which this study was done, the methodology best suited to undertake it was a qualitative one. Qualitative research as noted by MacKey & Gass (2005) has a number of characteristics which matched with this study. The first of these features being that this examination proposed to investigate a number of individuals in their natural setting. This natural setting was the classroom and the participants were requested to create a one- hour speaking lesson where speaking fluency activities were included. One of the fundamental aspects of this study is that it is based on interpretivism because the desired path was to investigate and explore the teacher's perspectives in order to better understand their reality and to observe how their views corresponded to their actions in the classroom and not to intervene or change them in anyway. The intent of interpretivism is "to retain the integrity of the phenomena investigated, efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within." (Cohen 2007). This study is an ethnographic one however, on a very small scale as it was conducted for a brief period of time. As noted by Creswell (2012) such a study is done " ..when the study of a group provides understanding of a larger issue." The larger issue in this case is that of obtaining information about the group of participants and not of each individual participant. Moreover, it was the hope of this pair of researchers to build a distinct variety of the reality of this given context through this study and to achieve this goal a constructivist view was also adopted. With a constructivist approach " the researcher always presents a specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive. Knowledge is viewed as indeterminate". (Bryman 2012) Taking into consideration the paradigm of the study and thus the qualitative approach used, the following methods were employed: interviews, observations and documents which were all analyzed. The analysis of those three methods was also a primary factor as triangulation was a major concern for both researchers in the design of this study.

Triangulation as noted by Bryman (2012) “.. is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” .(p.390) It is also described by Cresswell (2012) as “the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals (e.g., a principal and a student), types of data (e.g., observational field notes and interviews, or methods of data collection (e.g., documents and interviews) in descriptions and themes in qualitative research”.(p.259) For this research to be trustworthy not only was validity, as previously described, a major consideration, but so was the concept of reliability. Due to the complexity of the nature of reliability in qualitative research as noted by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) “Establishing the reliability of ethnographic design is complicated by the nature of the data and the research process, by conventions in the presentations of the findings and by traditional modes of training teachers”. The issue of reliability for this study was foreseen by implementing internal reliability. (p.35)

### **3.2 Nature of the data**

Having established the methodology, goals and perspective from which this study will be set forth, the methods and instruments that were used can now be explained. The interviews done were semi-structured interviews using open- ended questions. Owing to the uniqueness of the study and given the desired objectives of the research questions, no current or single set of interview questions used in prior studies were deemed to be appropriate for this study. Therefore, a group of six interview questions was created and piloted by 9 non-participant teachers. In the light of their feedback, one question was revised and another eliminated. By piloting these questions, receiving feedback and making certain modifications, these questions were validated preceding the interviews. This step was a pertinent one because as described by the Association for Qualitative Research it allowed the researchers “.....to test aspects of the research design and to allow necessary adjustments before final commitment to the design”. The final total number of questions used in the interviews was five. Prior to doing the interviews, there were two major concerns.

The first being the fact that this was the first time for both researchers doing interviews and the second was that one of them is the acting director of the Centre of Foreign Languages and as such, the participants would feel pressured to give a specific



kind of answer or be shy about responding. The main objective then was to create a relaxed environment such that the participants would be willing to open up and express themselves. In order to do this it was necessary for the researcher/director to approach the participants not in the position or attitude of head of the department, but as another master's student who was doing her thesis and investigation. By doing this, the intention was to minimize any negative effect being interviewed by the acting director of the department might have and consequently to avoid or curtail any skewing of these interviews thus, possibly compromising the reliability and validity of them.

As previously mentioned, this was the first time interviewing for the two investigators, therefore in order to facilitate the task, the use of a semi-structured interview using open-ended questions was chosen. In this type of interview according to MacKey & Gass (2005) the researcher uses a list of questions as a guide and because it is a guide it still permits the interviewer the freedom to digress and to continue to probe for more information. This type of interview was extremely helpful to the novice interviewers because it served as a paradigm while also allowing certain flexibility and the opportunity to delve a bit more seeking additional insights. Moreover, it was the intent of the investigators that by engaging in this type of interview any negative impact due to their lack of experience might be diminished and by doing so avoid disrupting the reliability of this instrument. In addition to this, all interviews were tape recorded and transcribed so as to add to the validity and reliability of them. After the interviews were conducted, classroom observations followed.

These observations were done by both researchers, and were unstructured, overt, direct and non-participant. The researchers asked the participants for the one-hour class to be a speaking fluency class. By following these procedures the researchers assured internal reliability which according to Bryman (2012) is when there is more than one observer and the members of the research team agree with what they saw and heard. As indicated earlier, triangulation was also subscribed to by the researchers as a means of safeguarding validity. All observations were video recorded using a video recorder or an iPhone. This was done so as to be able view them later in order to corroborate notes taken and to serve as a reminder in case an observer had missed something vital. For these observations, an observation sheet was created. The foundation for the observation list was the CEFR (Common European Framework) and the descriptions of speaking abilities for

intermediate level learners as well as some aspects of speaking fluency as described by Nunan, Nation and Ur. There were four categories and twenty- two items in the observation sheet. As with the interview questions, the observation sheet was piloted by 8 non-participants. They were asked to use the sheet while scrutinizing a speaking fluency class of another non-participant. Once these observations were done and the feedback collected, minor modifications to this instrument were made. It is fitting to mention the fact that both instruments had to be created by the researchers because no one existing instrument was considered to be useful for the type of data collection that was needed for this specific sort of research. As noted in the literature review a number of studies have been done related to similar topics but not on same topic nor in the same context. Again this was done to enhance both the reliability and the validity of the instrument.

Finally a document analysis was done. The documents were the lesson plans from the participants. No set format for the lesson plans was established or given to the teachers in this study. This was done purposefully so that the teachers would be able to express their plans as they had visualized them without having any preconceived ideas and without being influenced by the vision of the investigators who would have created it. By freeing the participants to create their own lesson plans, the investigators objective was to draw further information about the teacher's perceptions of speaking fluency tasks by analyzing the lesson plans with the interviews, and the classroom activities that were actually done. All of these instruments were employed in order to assure triangulation which means using a number of independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation so as to arrive at the same research findings. (Mackey & Gass, 2005). Furthermore, triangulation promotes the validity, reliability and accuracy of the information. (Johnson, 1992 as cited in Mackay& Gass, 2005)

### **3.3 Nature of the data analysis**

The analysis of the data was done inductively. In other words, this process meant going from specific information obtained from the different data collection tools to more general themes that arose during this constant analysis (Creswell, 2012). This process also required a continuous going back and forth between the data collected and making notes on emerging topics and those most relevant to answering the queries of this study.

### **3.4 Participants**

There were a total of 17 participants for this study. There were 10 males and 7 females. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 50 years of age. All of them are full time teachers in the institution and all of them teach Advanced levels which according to the CEFR are actually a B1+ or Intermediate level. The majority of the participants are Ecuadorean and were born in one of the largest and most cosmopolitan cities, Guayaquil with the exception of 4 of the teachers in this study who are native speakers having been born in the United States and the United Kingdom. These foreign teachers have resided in Ecuador on average for the past 15 years. As far as the level of education of the partakers of this study, 41% have a master's degree in teaching English as a foreign language or related field. The other 41% are currently working on their thesis project to complete their master's studies and the remaining 18% have yet to do their Master's studies. It is fair to mention that 41% of the members of this group did the CELTA (Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults) offered by the University of Cambridge. Finally in regard to the number of years of experience working as an EFL instructor, the average number of years is 12 overall and within the university approximately 8 years.

### **3.5 Ethical Considerations**

Diener and Grandal (1978) in Bryman (2012) state that researchers have to consider some ethical principles during the research, like not harming the participants, using informed consent, respecting privacy and avoiding deception. Therefore, given the importance of the ethical practices explained above, the researchers of this study followed all the necessary procedures to respect and protect the privacy and identity of the institution and of the participants. Thus, the researchers requested institutional permission by submitting a permission request form to the Vice-Provost of the university, the Dean of the Faculty and the Academic Coordinator of the Foreign Language Department. In this document, the nature of the research, objectives and procedures were stipulated. An informed consent form was created by the researchers which addressed the context and certain ethical aspects specific to this investigation. The researchers prepared a study information sheet, as suggested by Bryman (2012), to let teachers be aware of the objectives of the study, the data protection, the confidentiality of names and personal information (Holmes, 2004 in Bryman, 2012). Some of the items included in this consent

form that was given to the teacher participants prior to the start of the study were, the length or the time that the study would take, the purpose of the study, the tools for data collection and the fact that their identities would be protected among others. A coding system was used to identify participants and classrooms. This system was quite simple as it only consisted of a numbering system of the participants. The structure was simply to number the participant. So for example X teacher was assigned the code T1 and so on. This was done for both the recorded interviews as well as for the classroom observations.

Bryman (2012) emphasizes the relevance of data protection through eight principles that establish researchers have to make sure information is “fairly and lawfully processed, processed for limited purposes, adequate, accurate and up to date, not kept for longer than is necessary, processed in line with the researchers` rights, secure and not transferred to other countries without adequate protection”. Hence, the university authorities will never be informed of teachers´ performance with names, they will never have access to information gathered during the process either. On the contrary, any positive or negative result might be used to help the whole staff. The issue that the director of the department was involved in doing this study was consistently reflected upon by her. There were boundaries well implanted in the mind of the director so as not to take advantage or act in function as a boss but to act solely as another master´s student doing her final investigative project. With this thought in place, certain actions on her part were avoided such as pressuring anybody who was not willing to take part in the study to do so, or allowing previous class observations to create a bias or a pre-conceived idea of what the teacher would say in the interview and do in the classroom. Most importantly it was her conviction to not only convey to the participants that who they are and how each one of them performed during the observations, would not be revealed to anyone including the Dean of Faculty and that these findings would not be used to their detriment nor to their benefit.

Likewise, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) and Creswell (2008) argue that the principle of informed consent is the right the participants have to decide to take part in the study or not, based on their self-determination, and other aspects like competence, voluntarism, full information and comprehension which are defined as the level of commitment participants might show, participants freedom before and after signing the

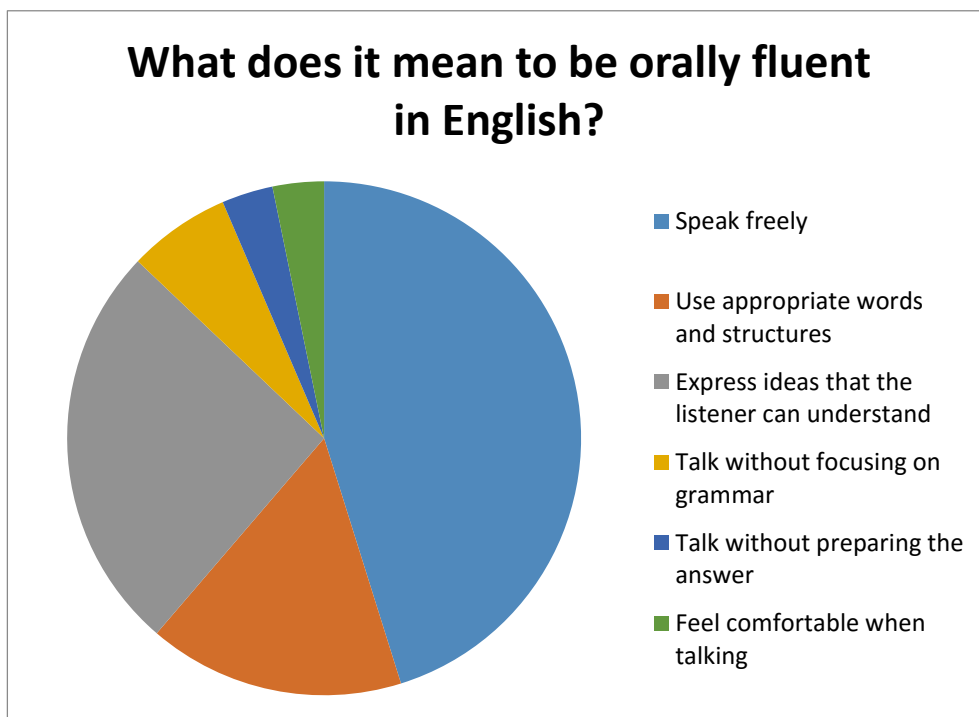
informed consent, the right of being informed of any benefit or drawback as a result of each person's participation, and the awareness of the nature of the study respectively.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The analysis of the data collected during this research is presented in this chapter in order to answer the research questions and show the findings. Data is interpreted in a descriptive form as well as graphics that back up what is said in the written information. The analysis and interpretation of data are based on the results of the interviews, class observations and lesson plans used by the teachers. To start with, the analysis of the interviews will provide information regarding the teachers' perceptions of what oral fluency is, the activities and time that should be devoted in class to enhance this basic communicative skill.

Figure 4 1 What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

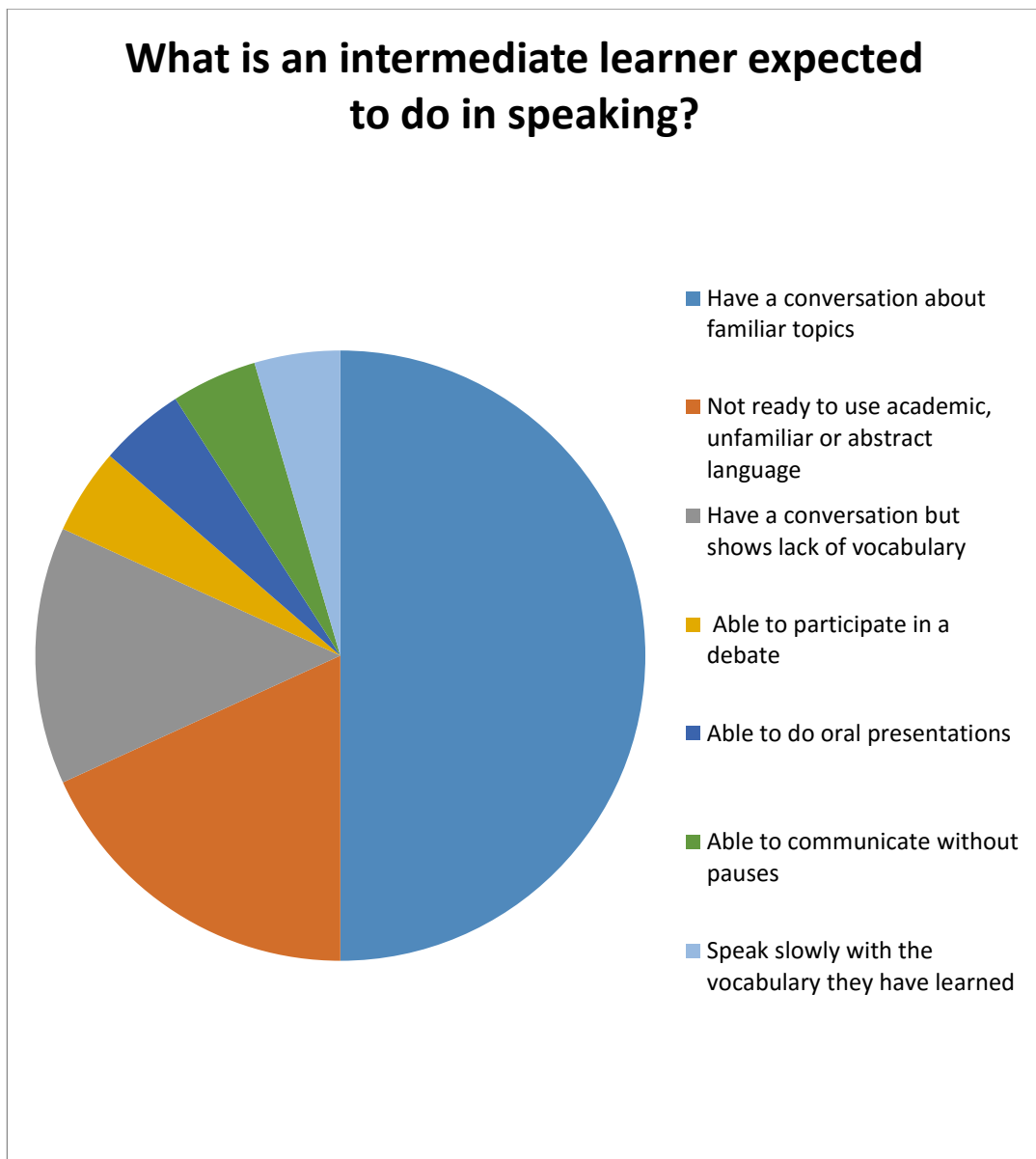


Chambers (1997) defines fluency as a widely used term in a communicative language teaching that contrast with accuracy, and is used as a synonym of oral proficiency. It can also be defined as filling the time with talk, speaking coherently Fillmore (1979) in Nation (1991) and being able to talk with creativity about different topics (Ascione, 1993). In addition, fluency is also considered as the ability to speak

quickly and easily without making unnecessary pauses (British Council , 2016). As is seen in figure 4.1 of the seventeen participants interviewed fourteen of them mentioned that being fluent means speaking freely, without making unnecessary pauses. For example, one participant stated that "I think that it means that you can find the words, the language that you want to express your ideas in a reasonable amount of time so that you can keep talking and connecting your ideas without long hesitations or repetitions or errors ...". Another participant expressed a similar idea "... and not to hesitate so much when you're speaking while you're thinking but that you have the ability to communicate what your thoughts are in a fluent way." On the other hand, fluency was also defined as the ability to express ideas that are understood by the listener. Of the seventeen participants eight of them expressed this idea in some way. One participant said the following " Well uhm my students often wonder the same thing and I normally try to define fluency for them as in terms of the listener." or " Uhhh I tell my students that if the listener is ahhh tapping his foot, scratching his head looking uncomfortable and clearly impatient for you to get the message across then you can consider yourself to be not so fluent." Another participant expressed the following idea " .....or what I try to get people to think about is that there is always someone listening uhhh..." A third participant stated the following " Uhhh to be orally fluent in English means that you are able to communicate first of all your ideas secondly to be able to interact with somebody.." Furthermore, fluency was also defined as the ability to use the appropriate words and structures when speaking. Five of the seventeen participants expressed that idea as it is shown in the figure above. For instance, one participant said "Well from my point of view that means that uh you can communicate accurately and precisely....", and another one said "...and speak as soon as possible , ok using the new vocabulary, new phrases and the, with the correct structure.". Of the seventeen participants, two of them indicated that to be orally fluent in English means to talk without focusing on grammar, and one of them stated " .....one of the things I usually tell them, that I always tell them, is that if you want to improve fluency, we do not have to focus on accuracy". However, a balance between fluency and accuracy can help students use the acquired language properly (Cotter, 2016). The author argues that the more students practice, the better their results will be at the end of the course, since this necessity to communicate can push students to use the language they have previously practiced in class as well as the use of new structures. The next idea that came out from one participant was that of the students feeling comfortable when talking "We

need to make them, or make the students feel comfortable.”. Finally, the last notion that was derived from the interviews was that of talking without preparing the answer in advance “Ahh fluent means about you don’t have to think about what you are gonna say. Someone asks you a question and you just have to answer.....”.

Figure 4 2 What is an intermediate learner expected to do in speaking?



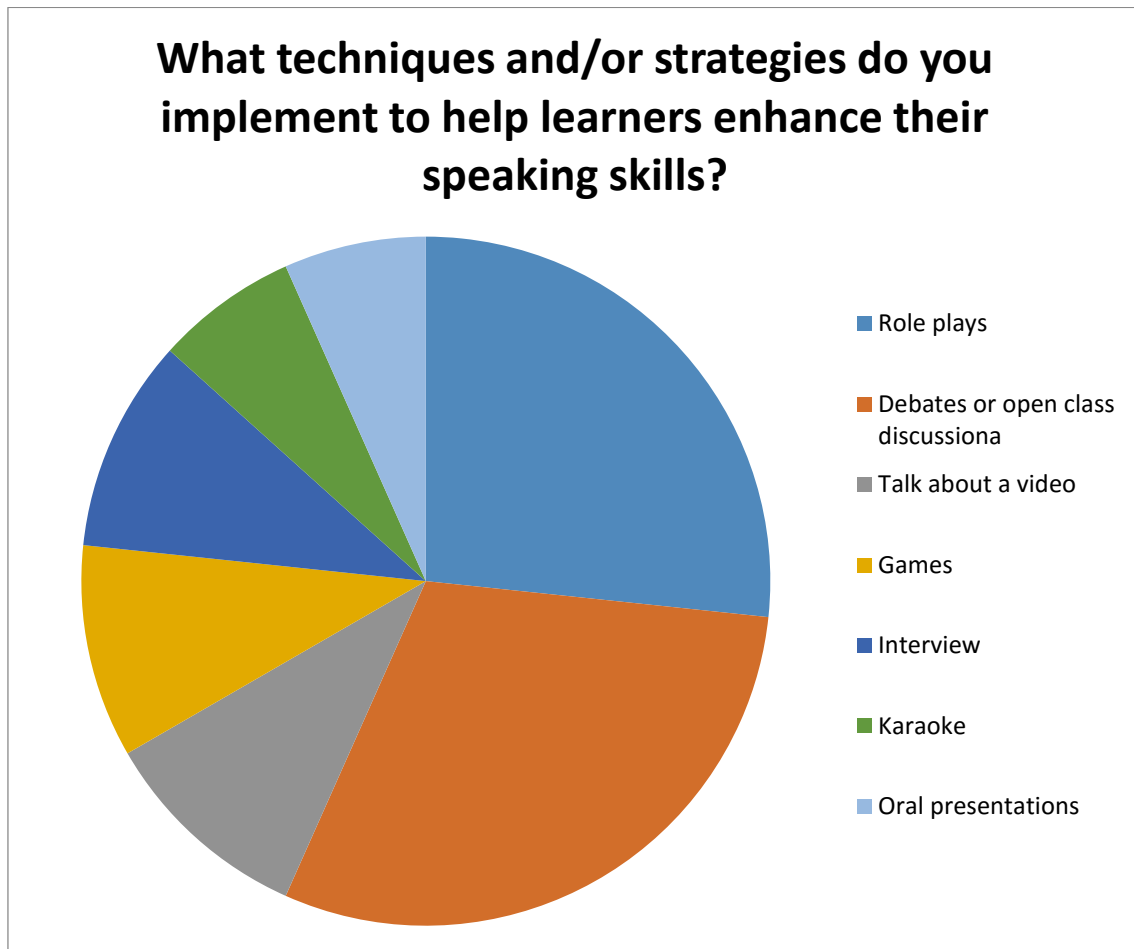
The second question was related to what an intermediate learner is expected to do regarding speaking fluently. The ability to speak English well can determine the level of English a student has. An intermediate student is able to talk about a wide number of topics, with a certain lack of vocabulary and some structural mistakes. They are ready to



use the main tenses and some two-word verbs and modal verbs. (ICALTEFL, 2016). As shown in Figure 4.2. of the seventeen participants eleven mentioned that intermediate students are able to talk about familiar topics, for example one of the participants said “...they can talk about some every day topics ..” Another person also said the following “...around if they are in a foreign environment uhh simple things just to go to a restaurant and order for food to be able to talk about their past experiences...” Yet another stated the following “...talk about topics that are related to their context like habits or routines they have, or they can talk about their holidays uhmm...”. Another important detail that was mentioned by four participants is that intermediate learners are not ready to handle academic language, or to deal with abstract topics. Teachers said things like “... but they can’t use like academic level or more formal English but more casual. Another person expressed the following idea “...but when you tell them to write ,uhh to speak about a certain topic like the environment or about general knowledge it’s more difficult...”. In addition three participants stated that intermediate students need to learn more vocabulary to be fluent in English. They said things like “sometimes the students have a lot of silence because they don’t know what to say, and that the vocabulary might not be perfect but that they can be understood”, or “Well obviously one of the limitations is vocabulary. The intermediate level learner does not have a wide vocabulary and probably can’t talk very fluently about abstract topics..” One participant said that there might be obstacles when communicating and when asked what kind of obstacle the participant’s response was “Ehhh for example vocabulary problems that would be like stopping the communication because the student would be like you know stopping to think how do you say that...”. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, and intermediate student has enough vocabulary and structures to convey their ideas, even when they are not about predictable situations. It points out that students of this level get by better when the topics are familiar to them, this is, hobbies, family, friends, work, travel and others. However, it recognizes that these students tend to repeat ideas, and paraphrase due to lexical limitations and have certain problems when it comes to formulate utterances with the precise time (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment., 2013). In addition, one participant pointed out that intermediate level learners can participate in a debate, and do oral presentations “for example, when they have to do a presentation, they are able to communicate without having a lot of silence because sometimes the students have a lot of

silence because they do not what to say". Two other participants expressed two different ideas, the first idea is that students can communicate without pauses, and the second idea is that students can speak slowly.

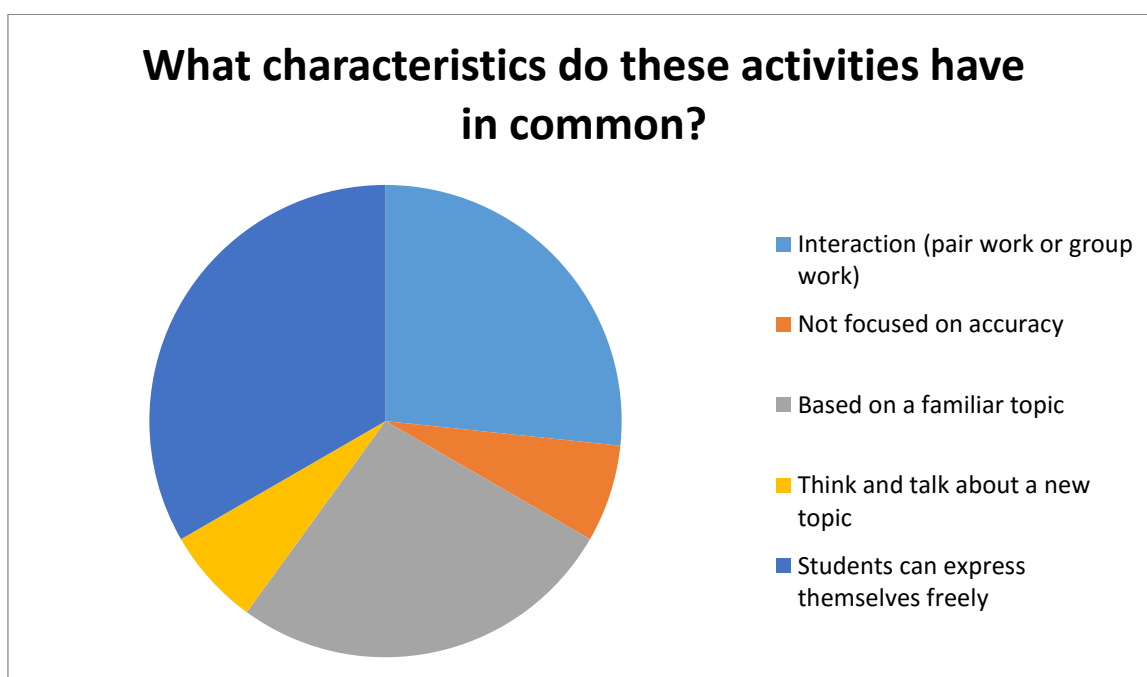
Figure 4 3 What techniques and/or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?



Schneider (1997) in Al-Sibai (2004), points out that even intermediate level students usually have a good range of grammar and vocabulary, they do not feel confident enough at the moment of using their knowledge in productive skills, so he recommends to focus exclusively on fluency during classes, this way students can gain more confidence to convey ideas. This author also recommends the use of two strategies: The speech rate and the use of pause fillers and lexical phrases. It is important to state that when asked this question only two or three of the participants consciously mentioned techniques and the others gave activities. As noted earlier in this study, there is a marked difference

between the two as one helps or enables the learner to achieve or complete the activity. Figure 4.3 shows that the favorite activities of nine participants are debates and open discussions. One of them said, “They watched a short video about the game and about the possible consequences, you know, this might be on the TV these days, and ahh they were engaged in the conversation, and at the end we had like a short debate, you know what are the good things, what are the bad things, who is in favor, who is against the game and you know they had a good practice.” In addition, in the discussion part, two participants expressed the idea that they used a conversation or a discussion prior to a writing activity and as a tool for organizing ideas. One participant also mentioned the idea that when students do the open class discussion not all students participate. “... writing but before writing I said to them work in pairs and discuss tell your partner who is that person who has influenced you try to explain it to them, that will help you to order your ideas.” However, only two out of the seventeen participants interviewed mentioned a technique and that technique is presenting students with certain expressions to use. These expressions are either written on the board, (projected on the overhead) or given to the students on a paper. Prior to this, the teacher drills the phrases and has the students use these expressions in mini-conversations so that the students become familiar with them prior to the actual speaking activity. “... so for example when we do these kinds of activities I always give students little pieces of paper or I project on the board the expressions so I first before the activity, the speaking activity I ask them to repeat the phrases and to complete them...” Regarding this topic, Brown (2000) also argues the need to use speaking strategies, and mentions others such as asking for either clarification or repetition, the use of fillers and verbal and non-verbal expressions that they can use during the speaking activity.

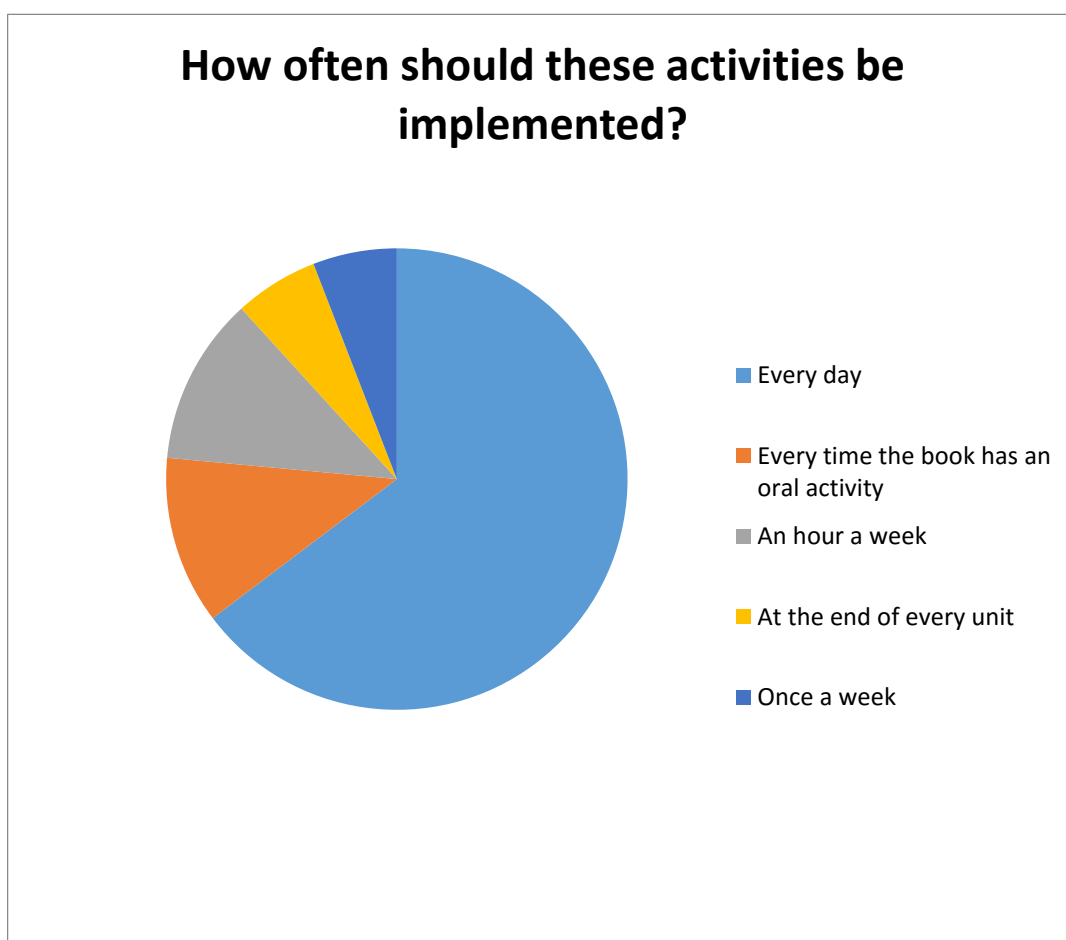
Figure 4 4 What characteristics do these activities have in common?



Of the seventeen participants 5 of them say that what these activities have in common is that the students can express themselves freely. In other words they can express their opinions mostly based on their own personal experience: "....that they express their ideas, they express the way they think ohhh or they give their opinions so they're expressing themselves..." Another person said "... they have more freedom to express their ideas." Four of the seventeen participants said that interaction is a common characteristic and that this interaction is normally between students and not student to teacher. They said that this made their students feel more comfortable when talking because they (the students) did not feel pressured by having the teacher listen to him or her and they want their students to feel relaxed in order for them to produce more. " Well the interaction for example because there is a lot of interaction in those activities." And yet another expressed the following idea " Yeah cause the interaction they have and students get engaged when there is interaction you know because it's kind of giving them the main roles in the class and they like it, they enjoy it." (Figure 4.4.). One participant said that most of the activities he implements are interactional and not transactional and that is the characteristic his activities have in common. "...so the activities that I do are more

interactional uhmm and what they have in common is or what I try to get people to think about is that there is always someone listening uhmm whether that person is responding immediately or not..."One participant said that the speaking activities are related or connected to topics in the book. "Right they are usually connected to what we are seeing in the lesson." According to Hartmann & Stork (1976) in Al-Sibai (2004), fluency speaking activities should focus on content rather than form, using the vocabulary and structures automatically at a normal speed. On the other hand, Brumfit (1984) expresses that fluency is the natural use of the language, while Richards (1985) points out that speaking fluency exercises should make students speak naturally, and use native-like pauses, rhythm, intonation and interruptions. According to a participant, these activities are not focused on accuracy "I always tell them is that if we want to improve fluency, we do not have to focus on accuracy. We need to make them...or make the students feel comfortable...", while another said that students think and talk about a new topic " so, I think the challenge is to think of something that is a new topic that they haven't talked about and I give them something to discover, something new about each other".

**Figure 4 5 How often should these activities be implemented?**



As shown in Figure 4.5., ten out of seventeen participants argue that speaking fluency activities should be implemented every day. One participant said “Well, you are gonna have speaking fluency activities every class, at the beginning of class, in the middle of class, at the end of class, you constantly get students to talk because that’s the aim of the...”, and another said “I would say yes, at least one short speaking activity, make them speak at least about a topic. It has, It doesn’t have to be a family conversation, at least something that allows them to express themselves about any topic.” Regarding this topic, The TESOL International association recommends doing fluency speaking activities every day, maintaining the balance between accuracy and fluency itself (TESOL International Association, 2016).

**Figure 4 6 What portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?**

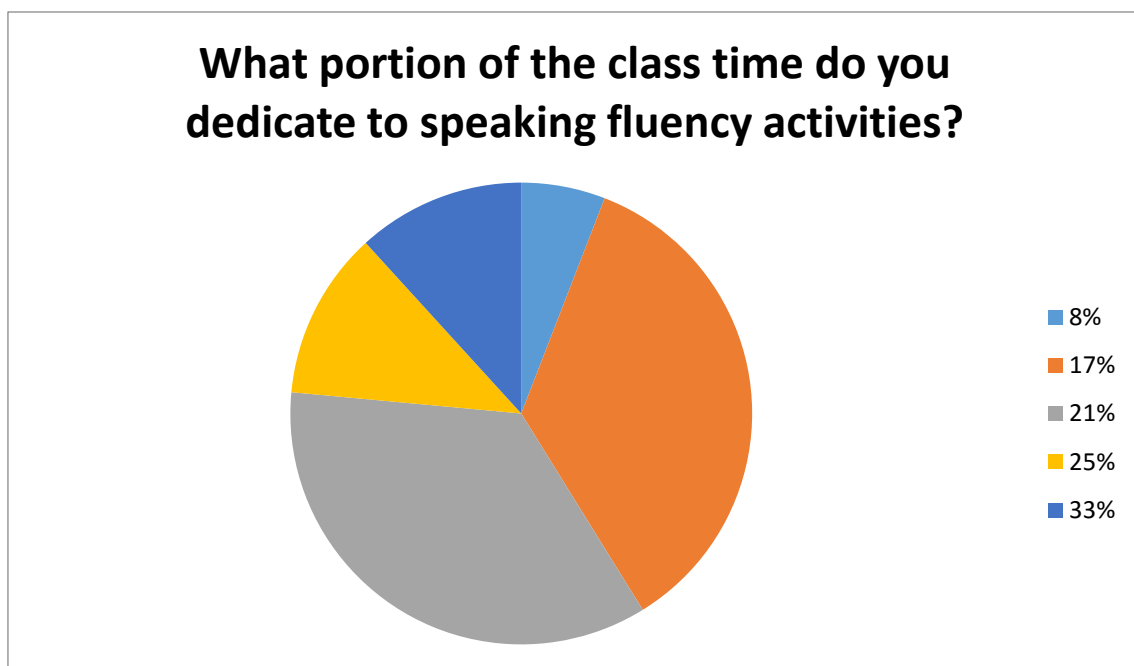


Figure 4.6. Shows that only one out of seventeen participants stated that he or she dedicated 10 minutes a day to developing speaking fluency. The majority of the participants indicated they set aside anywhere between 15-20mins (6 participants), another 5 teachers state that they devoted about 20-25 mins to speaking, 2 from 25-30 mins and

lastly 2 from 40-45 mins. When it comes to the time, it is recommendable to distribute the time into preparation time and the speaking task. Students could spend an average of 5-10 minutes preparing a 3-minute oral description of a familiar topic. During the preparation time, they can make notes, but these notes should not be read during the exercise to get effective results. In addition, this site recommends shuffling partners, so that students can repeat and get more practice in fluency (TESOL International Association, 2016).

**During the observations:**

**What does it mean to be orally fluent?**

Certain aspects that are related to this question were taken from the observation sheet in order to provide the following table.

**Table 4 1 Instances observed during the class observations**

<b>During the class observations:</b>	<b>Number of instances</b>
The teacher models the speaking fluency activity before students work on their own.	4 /17
The teacher reminds the students of the use of conversation Strategies.	0/17
Students are given time to prepare before speaking.	9/17
The teacher maintains the flow of the activity.	16/17
The teacher does more than one speaking fluency activity during the class hour.	9/17
The task has an element of time pressure.	1/17

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Each of the elements was taken from the observation sheet as they in some way corroborate the opinions expressed by the teachers. There are two notable aspects in this table and they are the element of pressure and the use of conversation strategies. The fact that none of the participants reminded the students of the different conversation strategies available to them is noteworthy in the sense that it might be indicative of the lack of use of said strategies in the classroom perhaps due to a lack of knowledge of them on the part of the teachers, or perhaps as an oversight on their part due to the type of activities that were implemented in the class which may not have warranted such techniques from the teachers' view point. This table also indicates that there is concern for accuracy as the majority of the participants gave preparation time to their students but there were also 8 participants that did not provide time for their students to prepare which would indicate a contradiction between their perceptions and actions.

**Table 4 2 Characteristics of the Speaking Fluency Activities done during the Class Observations**

<b>Characteristics of the Speaking Fluency Activities done during the class observations.</b>	<b>Number of instances</b>
Students talk in response to reading a text hearing a recording, watching a video , answering a question or other	13/17
The task requires some spontaneous speech	7/17
Tasks type: debate, discussion, role play , just a minute, picture description or other	8/17 discussions, 2 presentations, 2 interviews, 1 role- play, 1

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	retell a story, 3 create a story.
The students talk about familiar and engaging topics	11/17

For the most part the perceptions are reflected in what is being done in the classroom. Only 7 of the 17 classroom activities gave way to the possibility of the students using spontaneous speech: This would confirm the view of the majority that their students are unable to use abstract language or to talk about topics that are unknown. In other words, the teachers feel that the students are not capable of handling any kind of speech that has not been planned for the activity. The participants' views as to the most common activities they use for speaking fluency matches what they did in their classes.

**Table 4 3 Techniques and/or strategies Implemented during the Class Observations**

<b>Techniques and or strategies implemented during the class observations</b>	<b>Number of instances</b>
Techniques : chunks	2 /4 that mentioned a technique used it.
Task type	8 discussions, 2 presentations, 2 interviews, 1 role- play, 1 retell a story, 3 create a story
Type of interaction	17/17 pair and group work

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According to our review of the classroom practices videos, the following activities were done as noted in the earlier table.

Techniques such as flashcards, using chunks of language, writing the target phrases or language on the white board or overhead projector were mentioned in the interviews. Two of the 4 participants that mentioned the technique of writing the target language on the white board did so in class; however the other two that mentioned chunks and flashcards did not use these techniques in their classes. Group and pair work while not mentioned directly to the relevant question, were nevertheless mentioned by all the participants in some form during the course of the interviews. In viewing the activities done in the classes, all of the activities required some form of interaction except for the presentations where in reality a group of students spoke while the others listened. The only type of interaction that was observable during these presentations was the question and answer portion, which was done in only one of the instances but not the other.

**Table 4 4 Activities Developed during the class Observations**

<b>Activities Developed During the class Observations:</b>	<b>Number of instances</b>
Interaction type	17/17 pair work and group work
Students talk in response to reading a text hearing a recording, watching a video , answering a question or other.	13/17

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Task type	8/17 discussions, 2 presentations, 2 interviews, 1 role- play, 1 retell a story, 3 create a story.
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The information in the table reflects the views expressed in the interviews as in 50% of the classes the main activity was a discussion, which would also lead to the idea that this task type was chosen because the teachers' perspective discussions are synonymous with speaking freely.

**Table 4 5 What portion of the class do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Time Spoken</b>	<b>Preparation given for speaking task</b>
T1	8 minutes	No
T2	12 mins only speaking	15 mins for last activity. No preparation was given for the other activities
T3	20 minutes	No
T4	15 minutes	No
T5	7 mins only speaking	11 mins preparation time
T6	24 mins speaking	No preparation time was given
T7	3 mins speaking	No preparation was given

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T8	20 minutes	Yes 5 minutes
T9	20 minutes	No
T10	1 hour	Yes 21 minutes (7 minutes per task and there were 3 tasks)
T11	7 mins speaking	45 minutes
T12	20 mins speaking	No preparation was given
T13	2 mins speaking per group total time 10 mins.	15 minutes was given
T14	Avg 10 mins per group, speaking time	No preparation was given in the class.  Students were given that time outside of class.
T15	35 minutes	Yes 5 minutes
T16	1 hour	Preparation time was given outside of the class
T17	35 minutes	No time was given

While more than 50% of the participants stated in the interviews that they used between 15-25 mins of the class for practicing speaking, Table 3 indicates otherwise. There were two interesting things seen during the classes. The first observation to be made is that the time spent speaking was quite high and this is probably due to the fact that 9/17 participants did not provide their students with preparation time. In two of the instances the preparation time had been given to the students outside of the class time or in the previous class. In the majority of the cases, the students went from one activity to the next with no preparation. One question that immediately comes to mind is if for example the students only spent 8 minutes speaking and were given no preparation time as is the case

with T1, what was done in the rest of the 52 minutes of that class? One could dare to suspect that those 52 minutes were spent on input. This will be discussed further when talking about the lesson plans. It would seem that the teachers are used to providing the students with large amounts of input in the class resulting in very little time allotted for speaking. This could be the consequence of the fact that many of the teachers have had training in the CELTA which as part of its methodology requires the teacher to provide substantial amounts of input.

**Lesson plans:**

**Main aims of the lesson:**

<b>Main aims of the class</b>	<b>Secondary aims of the class</b>
Students will be able to talk about acts of kindness and bravery	SS will be able to express themselves using the former vocabulary
Tell someone about a news story	none
Students will be able to talk about unexpected travel situations and use the correct modal verbs in context	SS will discuss options and decide what to do
Skills objective: practice speaking fluency	Language objective: SS will analyze how vocabulary is used to describe travel problems
Students will be able to speak about the story of the reader they chose using past tense.	SS will be able to interact and discuss about parts of that the story has relation with their own lives

<p>Students will read and understand simply written news stories,</p> <p>Students will learn ways of reacting orally to new stories they have heard</p> <p>Students will develop oral fluency by recounting and discussing news stories they have heard</p> <p>Students will learn the structure and the uses of the passive voice as exemplified In the new stories)</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>By the end of the class students will criticize past actions</p>	<p>Students will be able to use expressions such as be allowed to and be supposed to</p>
<p>will develop speaking fluency</p>	<p>SS will be able to take part on a discussion using vocabulary related to reacting to the news.</p>
<p>Improve, practice and develop the ability to speak fluently using the third conditional.</p>	<p>Develop the ability to speak speculate about the past.</p>
<p>Students will be able to discuss about different jobs.</p>	<p>S will be familiarize with a job interview.</p>
<p>By the end of this lesson learners will have used orally the modals must/might/could/can't to deduct and speculate on different situations.</p>	<p>By the end of this lesson learners will have developed the ability to discuss with their partners and work cooperatively on the discovery of possible situations.</p>

Talk about the ways of protecting our environment giving advice.	Use vague language to describe things.
Have a conversation in a group about stuff, possessions, clutter and rubbish.	None
By the end of this class, these young-adult, state university, B1+ - intermediate level-students will have recalled and practiced some lexis MFP – meaning, form, pronunciation- as well as a number of grammar functions that will be graded during their upcoming oral exam.	None
No lesson plan	
No lesson plan	
None	None

A summary of the primary and secondary aims of each of the participants' objectives for the class was done as a means to gather further information from them in relation to the research questions. Before continuing it is pertinent to mention that two participants never provided the researchers with a lesson plan. There are a number of observations to be made here. The first being that some of the language used to convey the main objective is vague. For example one participant states as his or her main objective that by the end of the class students will criticize past actions, and in viewing the secondary aims of that same teacher they do not match with the primary aims or complement them. Another teacher's aim is related to meaning and focus and not to speaking fluency. Two other teachers state as their main goals to develop speaking fluency. The other observation to be made here is whether or not these written aims were actually achieved in the class and in the case of one participant; he or she had stated six

main aims which could made it complicated to determine exactly which of the six was the main focus of the class.

**Speaking without hesitation, use of appropriate words, structures and express ideas that can be understood:**

These perceptions about the first interview questions are again reflected in the lesson plans. 2 of the teachers as noted in their lesson plans had their students prepare what they were going to say by writing it down prior to the class. Another 2 teachers in order to help their students prepare for speaking activity had their students write down what they were going to say. Yet another teacher gave his students time to also create and write a dialogue for a role play. In the lesson plan one teacher in the section of the Task: speaking fluency wrote: Students change groups and start a discussion with their ideas. They need to interact and pay attention to their friend's ideas. Moreover, they need to use the expressions they have learned. Teacher monitors all the time in order to check for accuracy. Another participant in his or her lesson plan in the column of the aim of speaking fluency activity wrote: Fluency discussion about reaction to news. Some practice of target language (hopefully).

These two facts confirm the concern the teachers have for the students being able to speak without hesitation, that they speak accurately and that there are doubts as to whether or not the students are motivated enough/ engaged enough to complete the task as well as if they have the set of skills to complete it.

**Have a conversation about familiar topics, not ready to use academic, unfamiliar of abstract language, have a conversation but shows lack of vocabulary:**

In 11/17 instances the students seemed engaged and the topics were familiar. In three of the instances where the activity was to re-tell a news story and to react to it, the students did not seem engaged. It is interesting to notice that on these three occasions as noted in the lesson plans and seen in the class, that the news items or list of possible news items was chosen by the teacher and were about topics that were unfamiliar to the students. For example, the news item used by one of the three participants was about a



woman named Malala Yousafzi. Another participant had the students use a link to: [www.newsinlevels.com](http://www.newsinlevels.com) which, while great for grading the language of the news read, it did not appear to contain news that the students could personalize and as consequence be motivational and engaging. Yet from the presentations done by the students of another participant, it was difficult to determine whether the students were free to choose the source of the news or if the teacher assigned them a particular web site. Having said this, the topics were varied during the presentations. One was about Brazil and the Olympics; another was about food and wasting food in the USA. While the students seemed engaged during their presentations it was impossible to determine whether that was because of the news item or because of the activity. The same question could be asked for the role-play that was done. The students seemed familiar with the topic of events that went wrong like planning a trip and then getting lost, but it was impossible to determine if the students were engaged with the topic or the activity. It would be fair to also note that of the 8 lesson plans 6 of them used the words discuss and tell your partner. The other two which are the role-play and the oral presentation do not use either word and none of the 8 use the word have a conversation.

#### **Techniques and or strategies do you implement/ activities:**

Of the seventeen teachers one mentions the technique of drilling, but did not do it. 6 others did write in their plans different techniques such as projecting the target language or having the students write their sentences prior to speaking and working in pairs or groups. This find is noteworthy because in the interviews only two participants mentioned techniques yet 6 of them actually used a technique. This could mean a number of things. The first being that they may not be consciously aware of the techniques that could be used in the class to foment speaking fluency, and the other is the other is that they might be unfamiliar with these techniques. As far as activities are concerned, all of the participants mentioned some kind of activity in their lesson plans such as presentations, role-play, and for the most part discussions.

#### **What characteristics do these activities have in common? Interaction, based on a video, reading or a familiar topic, students can express their ideas freely:**

In this part it is valid to wonder how the video, reading, listening etc. was used. In other words was it used as input or was it used to have the students react to it or both. In

reviewing the lesson plans this confirms the following: That 4 of the seventeen instances the text, listening or reading was used as input. For example SS will read a situation and discuss choices and decide what to do (fill in the blank). In another 4 instances the reading, video, and question was used as a source for the students to react to after having received input. For example: teacher asks students to read a comment and agree or disagree. Another example: teacher asks students to read the following question and give their opinion (Is it easy to help other people? Why?). In yet another instance, one participant used some pictures to activate the students' previous knowledge as well as to review the grammar that had been studied before their class session.

### **Interaction:**

15 lesson plans mention some form of interaction such as students work in pairs, students will work in groups of four or five, students will share their ideas in groups, students will change groups, students work in groups to answer these questions and tell their partner what the story was about, students discuss in groups of 4, they tell their partner. Then they tell another partner their other partner's story, students will say the summary in one minute without reading their summary, each group will discuss and choose the best experience, the group presents their news stories and the questions from their peers.

### **Students can express their ideas freely without hesitation:**

The views of being able to speak without hesitation are a bit contradictory. On the one hand the participants appear concerned with giving students more confidence by having them write what they are going to say before they say it, but on the other hand many of them never gave their students any time to prepare. Those who did give them time perhaps over did it and gave them too much time in class or by having the students come prepared to speak in the class such was the case for the presentations. There does not seem to be a consensus between the participants as to how much time if any, should be given. One could speculate as to the reason why this discrepancy exists. Perhaps the participants felt pressured to have their students only speak because a speaking class had been requested and for this reason they decided to either disregard the necessary steps to promote fluency or they decided it was best to for the students to prepare outside of the class time.

### **What portion of the class do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?**

In reviewing the lesson plans it was virtually impossible to discern just by reading them how much time the teacher had planned to invest in these activities. The problem stems from the teachers not clearly separating and identifying the stages for the speaking task. The time allocated for input nor input itself was written in the lesson plans, neither was the time nor the activities for the pre-production stage written and ultimately neither was the time established for the speaking task. This could lead to the idea that the participants do not know the difference between these stages and that they might be confusing them. The other possibility is that they are confusing input with the other stages and in their minds it is all one thing. Another possibility is that many of the teachers have had training in the CELTA which as part of its methodology requires the teacher to provide substantial amounts of input for this reason they have focused a greater portion of the class time on providing said input and not on the fluency task.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **5. SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

The presentation and analysis of the data above showed that the participants' views from the interviews match what they did in the classroom and what was planned by them prior to their class. There would, however appear to be a contradiction with the views the teachers had regarding what it means to be fluent and with their actions in the classroom. As far as techniques and activities are concerned, the views of the participants matched according to the three data collection instruments used. The same can be said for the type of interaction used which was pair and group work in almost all of the cases. Below is a more detailed articulation of the findings.

#### **5.2 Findings**

This study was done in order to explore the answers to the following research questions:

- To explore the teacher's perspectives of speaking fluency activities.
- To compare these perspectives to the teachers performance in the class.
- To identify to what extent speaking activities are developed in class.

In looking at the first question, we can determine that the teachers view speaking fluency as a skill that needs to be worked on and promoted in the class. That it also requires some form of interaction, and that the teachers are concerned with accuracy and with trying to eliminate or decrease the number of hesitations and pauses that occur. However, at the same time they have a great desire for the students to be engaged and have freedom of expression; hence, the use of discussion. Nevertheless, for the most part, the participants did not see the need to give students time to prepare before speaking which would have been helpful to decrease the number of hesitations and to improve accuracy. When comparing these views and the classroom performance of the teachers,

which is the second question in this investigation, the teachers did what they had expressed in the interviews. In other words, if a participant expressed the idea that he or she used role plays that teacher did exactly that in the class. If a teacher stated that he or she used the technique of using chunks or projecting the target language on the overhead projector, he or she did that in class. Another teacher stated that for him if a student could speak for a good 30 seconds then that person had in some way, developed fluency and this was observed in the teacher's actions in the class. For the most part, the views expressed by the participants was reflected and corroborated in the observations and in their lesson plans. It is these views that have been uncovered that raise additional questions and issues.

It was evident during this study that the teachers made an effort to tackle speaking tasks and to refine in their students their ability to communicate orally. The issue that was brought to light was that the participants do not seem to have a complete grasp as to what speaking fluency encompasses nor the elements or stages needed in order to obtain a true measure of progress. As noted in the literature review there are unequivocal features for a task to be considered directed at enhancing speaking fluency. Some aspects such as repetition, the use of techniques such as the 4/3/2, having an element of time pressure, the use of drills, marking the difference between a conversation and a discussion and the strategies needed for managing a conversation were absent. These characteristics were notably absent in the participants responses in the interviews as well as in their actions in the class and in their minds prior to the class as detected in the lesson plans. Having expressed these findings, it is also fair to mention that it would seem to be that the teachers have a good foundation based on their years of teaching experience, level of training and education from which to embark on furthering their knowledge of these concepts.

### **5.3 Limitations**

In reflecting upon the actions and steps taken prior to, during and after this study, we have identified four primary limitations. A second interview performed after the initial observations were finalized perhaps would have provided us, the researchers, with a more complete and well- rounded view as to what the participants were thinking and why they had planned or done what they did during the class. Additional questions could have been posed to the teachers about their actions, and thought process. This brings us to another

limitation, which is the lack of a second observation performed after the second interview. This might have aided the teachers in self-reflecting their own practice and would have allowed us to observe whether they made any modifications based on these reflections. The next limitation was that two of the participants did not hand in a lesson plan. By not handing in the lesson plan, it made it more difficult to verify some of their views with respect to their actions. While this is not a prime limitation it is valid to make note of it as it did to some extent (however slight) impact this study. Lastly, the fact that the acting director had to observe and interview the teachers in the department was also a constraint. Measures on the part of the director were taken so that this would not negatively impact the study, however, it was perceived during the interviews that some of the interviewees were trying to respond in such a way as to please or satisfy the director. The same can be said for the observations, where some participants came up to the director prior to the observation asking her how they had done when she (the director) had specifically stated previously that they were not going to be evaluated. In general, these were the limitations that were most notable upon a heartfelt introspection by both researchers.

## **5.4 Conclusions**

There are certain indications that the participants are trying to help their students to develop speaking fluency through the activities that they implement in their classes, but the activities that are being used are not being set up nor implemented as prescribed by experts in the area. A perfect example of this is one of the participants whose students were intended to react to a news story. The participant in this case never drilled the target language with the students and so the students did not have any prior practice using that chunk of language. The activity itself was in theory a good one; however, the class fell flat. This was probably due to the fact that the news topics that the students had to read were not engaging as the students could not personalize them probably because it was international and not local news. This same problem occurred with another participant who had the same activity and who had her students read about a person from India who was also not engaging for them. Eight of the seventeen participants used discussion as a means to develop oral fluency. While the activity itself is a valuable means of helping learners acquire fluency, most of the participants allowed these discussions to go on for long stretches of time with no element of time pressure. These examples support the idea

that the participants make an effort to use speaking fluency activities but these activities lack certain characteristics such as being engaging and being time sensitive. Moreover, the participants did not provide their students with the necessary tools to complete them.

It first became apparent that the participants had difficulty discerning between activities and techniques from the interview. This was proven true in the class observations as well because all of the participants had some form of interaction to a greater or lesser degree be it pair work or group in their classes. Furthermore, many of them used cooperative strategies but yet when asked the question regarding what techniques they used in the class they responded with activities. Digressing to the discussion activity it is pertinent to mention that none of the participants taught nor reminded their students of conversational strategies in order to help them better prepare to engage in these discussions as could be observed during this study. In fact, none of the participants in this study mentioned conversational strategies in their classes at all. It can be said that the participants have either forgotten or are unaware of the difference between speaking fluency techniques and speaking fluency activities. Another kind of confusion presents itself in the lesson plans.

The objectives of the class as stated in the lesson plans were vague, related to grammar, or not fulfilled during the class thus leading to the conclusion that the participants did not have these objectives clear in their minds or misunderstood what the objective of a speaking fluency class should be. For example one participant had as the objective of the class: *Tell someone about a news story*. Yet another participant stated that: *By the end of this class, these young-adult, state university, B1+ - intermediate level-students will have recalled and practiced some lexis MFP – meaning, form, pronunciation- as well as a number of grammar functions that will be graded during their upcoming oral exam*. Speaking fluency is not mentioned as the goal of this class. Another example is that: *By the end of the class students will criticize past actions*. The intention of achieving this goal was never apparent during the class. These aims for the lessons reflect the lack of insight the participants have regarding the development of speaking fluency.

This study provided enough information to bring to light the fact that the participants must be made aware of the tenets of speaking fluency activities in addition to the techniques that will best assist their students in developing them. Through this study it

was observed that the participants wish to or would like to plan classes that focus on speaking fluency nevertheless, from the moment of planning their goals are not well established nor well- articulated and one could speculate that the participants are not sure how to handle these kinds of classes in a curriculum that also requires the attention of the other skills and grammar. Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations can be made.

## **5.5 Recommendations**

The first recommendations would be that of doing another study in which the number of participants is larger so that the views of all the teachers of the foreign language department could be explored. By doing so, this might provide further findings which in turn, depending on the results of this second study, could be catalyst for further studies connected to the concept of speaking. There are many other universities in Ecuador that teach EFL and that might have similar misconceptions about structuring speaking fluency tasks resulting in learners that graduate from these institutions with underdeveloped speaking abilities. Of course another option would be to replicate this study in another university that has a similar context and compare the results of both universities to try and collect information and determine how far reaching these misconstrued views are. Both are strongly suggested.

Given that fact that the population for this study represented approximately 46% of the total population these views can be accepted as generalizable for this department and in this particular context. Taking this into consideration then the recommendation would be to give the teachers training so that they may better comprehend the concept of speaking fluency, the steps, techniques and tasks that are required and aimed at promoting it. This training can come internally, externally or a both.

There were a number of participants that did have a better sense of the procedures who could be requested to do a workshop for their peers about certain aspects that they fully understood. These participants could exemplify the organization needed to successfully implement a speaking fluency activity during this workshop. Internally the academic coordinator, and the teachers themselves could look for and supply links to



literature related to the topic for everyone to read and become more familiar the topic. In addition to this, the teachers and department heads could also make use of free webinars and videos so that the participants not only read about the topic, but they can also hear and see what a speaking fluency class looks like.

The academic coordinator and the director of the department could also seek experts in the field outside of the institution to collaborate with seminars regarding this topic. By having these guest speakers that can personalize their talks specifically to this group of professionals this would help address particular issues that the participants may be confused, concerned or interested in. This would also be more motivational for the teachers. The ultimate test of course would come in the form of classroom observations.

This is to say that after doing all the reading, watching videos attending webinars, workshops and listening to guest speakers, the participants must implement this knowledge in the classrooms with their students. The heads of the department must visit these classes and analyze and evaluate the performance of the teachers. They must also give feedback and recommendations for improvement if deemed necessary. Looking towards the future it will also be necessary for everyone in the language department to remember what they have learned and to use it to the benefit of their students and hopefully to the benefit of the Ecuadorian society.

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## **Appendix A**

June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016

Cecilia Paredes Ph.D.  
Vice-Provost  
Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL).

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Dr. Paredes:

We are writing to request permission to conduct a qualitative research study at CELEX (Center of Foreign Languages at ESPOL), that belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. We are currently enrolled in the MTEFL program (Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, and we are in the process of writing our Master's Thesis. The study is entitled "AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION". The objective of the study is to research what is occurring in an Ecuadorian public university EFL classroom regarding speaking fluency activities as seen from the point of view of the teachers and to seek to comprehend the differentiation of the activities being implemented by them. By undertaking this study, it is the hope to gather valid, real information so as to inform all those who are responsible as to the current situation as this might be an area of weakness in the program.

We hope that the school administration will allow us to recruit 20 Intermediate level English teachers from the school to be interviewed and observed during classes (a copy of the interview questions is enclosed). Interested teachers, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed (copy enclosed) and returned to the researchers at the beginning of the research process.

Once approval is granted, and the consent form signed, the teacher participants will be interviewed in a classroom or other quiet setting of the school site previously scheduled

with them. These interviews will be semi-structured interviews using open ended questions. All of them will be tape recorded and then transcribed so as to add to their validity and reliability. Classroom observations will follow and they will be done by both researchers, and will be unstructured, overt, direct and non-participant.

The interview and observation results will be pooled for the thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your school/center or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. We would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact us at our email addresses: [jmaldon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:jmaldon@espol.edu.ec) or [kpleon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:kpleon@espol.edu.ec)

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed envelop. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for us to conduct this study at your institution.

Sincerely,

Karina León Dávila

Janella Maldonado Guzmán

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016

Leonardo Estrada Ph.D.  
Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL).

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear Dr. Estrada:

We are writing to request permission to conduct a qualitative research study at CELEX (Center of Foreign Languages at ESPOL), that belongs to the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. We are currently enrolled in the MTEFL program (Master in Teaching English as a Foreign Language) at Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral, and we are in the process of writing our Master's Thesis. The study is entitled "AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION". The objective of the study is to research what is occurring in an Ecuadorian public university EFL classroom regarding speaking fluency activities as seen from the point of view of the teachers and to seek to comprehend the differentiation of the activities being implemented by them. By undertaking this study, it is the hope to gather valid, real information so as to inform all those who are responsible as to the current situation as this might be an area of weakness in the program.

We hope that the school administration will allow us to recruit 20 Intermediate level English teachers from the school to be interviewed and observed during classes (a copy of the interview questions is enclosed). Interested teachers, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed (copy enclosed) and returned to the researchers at the beginning of the research process.

Once approval is granted, and the consent form signed, the teacher participants will be interviewed in a classroom or other quiet setting of the school site previously scheduled with them. These interviews will be semi-structured interviews using open ended questions. All of them will be tape recorded and then transcribed so as to add to their validity and reliability. Classroom observations will follow and they will be done by both researchers, and will be unstructured, overt, direct and non-participant.

The interview and observation results will be pooled for the thesis project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential and anonymous. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your school/center or the individual participants.

Your approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. We would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. You may contact us at our email addresses: [jmaldon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:jmaldon@espol.edu.ec) or [kpleon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:kpleon@espol.edu.ec)

If you agree, kindly sign below and return the signed form in the enclosed envelop. Alternatively, kindly submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and permission for us to conduct this study at your institution.

Sincerely,

Karina León Dávila

Janella Maldonado Guzmán

Approved by:

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## Appendix C

June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2016

MTEFL. Jenny Villarreal.  
Academic Coordinator CELEX  
Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral (ESPOL).

RE: Permission to Conduct Research Study

Dear MTEFL. Villarreal:

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Sincerely,

Karina León Dávila

Janella Maldonado Guzmán

Approved by:

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## Appendix D

### Informed Consent Form for a QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

#### ESCUELA SUPERIOR POLITECNICA DEL LITORAL GUAYAQUIL – ECUADOR

RESEARCHERS: Karina León Dávila. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral

Janella Maldonado Guzmán. Escuela Superior Politécnica del Litoral

#### AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION

**Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in the pilot interview for this study, sign it at the end of the form. If you do not understand something and would like more information, please ask.**

I ..... hereby voluntarily consent to participate in **the pilot interview** and **observation** for the study "AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION". I have read and understood the following:

- The purpose of this pilot interview and observations is to preview the questions that may or may not be used in the actual study in order to determine if there are any inconveniences with the proposed questions.
- These pilot interviews and observations will take no longer than 60 minutes
- Because these pilot interviews and observations will be treated the same way as the ones in the actual study, they will be taped and video recorded
- Your anonymity will be assured through the use of a pseudonym.
- You may withdraw from this pilot session at any time with no negative repercussions and request the destruction of all data related to your person.
- There are no reasonable foreseeable (or expected) risks.
- You will receive neither benefit nor discomfort from your participation in this pilot interview.

- No information of this pilot interview or observations shall be passed on to a third party such as another institution.
- All data will be kept for three years and then will be destroyed.
- You will receive a copy of this form.

If you have any questions or issues I can contact Karina León or Janella Maldonado at [kpleon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:kpleon@espol.edu.ec) , [jmaldon@espol.edu.ec](mailto:jmaldon@espol.edu.ec) .

Subject's Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Subject's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Investigator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Karina León Dávila

Janella Maldonado Guzman

## **Appendix E**

### **Official interview questions:**

1. What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?
2. What is an Intermediate level learner expected to do in speaking?
3. What techniques and/or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?
  - a) What speaking fluency activities do you usually include in your classes?
4. What characteristics do these activities have in common, if any?
5. How often should these activities be implemented?
  - a) How often do you implement them?
  - b) What portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

## Appendix F

### Transcript formal interviews

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#### PARTICIPANT 10

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Hi, thanks for accepting being part of this study. As you know. Our study is based on the development of fluency speaking activities in class, the first question is..

What does it mean to be fluent in English?

For me...ah to be orally fluent in English means that you can talk freely , without restrictions about any topic, as long as you have a pretty good idea or knowledge about what is expected from the topic. Ok, you can not , you can not talk about something that you don't know, basically that.

Ok What is an intermediate learner expected to do in speaking?

In our courses?

Yes

That's in the syllabus...ahhhh, it's out of my mind right now, but we try to establish ahhh the CEFR descriptors, and in this case, that's a B1 level

OK, what techniques and/or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

Eehh I mostly do a pair work , and group work . I don't usually have individual ones , unless I try to give them immediate feedback, which means, they work together and what I do in for instance "Karina, after the conversation, what did she say, or what did she think", so they are kind of ready for, for an honest answer , ya, but there is another thing that I usually do, that's usually at the beginning of the course , specially when the students are a...kind of bored , I make them do a circle which is two circles, one inner circle doesn't move , the outside circle moves, ahh the objective is ahh is for them to use usually short, to answer and ask short questions, like Do you

usually do this? No, I don't, or I try them to make them elaborate a little more, that's those are the techniques I usually do.

Ya OK

What characteristics do these activities have in common? If any?

What characteristics do these activities have in common? If any...ahhm they include a lot of interaction, and the interaction is vital when you want to ..develop oral fluency. I have thought, well, not thought, I have given words, or workshops based on the topic, and I have trained people, specially teachers on how to develop this, but one of the things that I usually tell them, that I always tell them is that if we want to improve fluency, we do not have to focus on accuracy. We need to make them ....or make the students feel comfortable. That's how, that's how it really happens, that's how you become fluent.

Yap. Now the time. How often should these activities be implemented?

Well, it depends. I have a whole class, oh no..in the place where I work we have two-hour classes, and from those two-hour classes, I've had, one hour just to work on fluency, and it's, it's very tiring, I mean, on the teachers' part because it means to, have everything ready and understand that this is gonna be loud, that these kids are gonna have the need of correction, of peer assessment, specially an immediate feedback. Everything that is immediate will be very tiring for the teacher, but after that one hour of doing that which usually includes about six or seven exercises, they love it, they they they feel at ease because the vocabulary they use is something they have been, they have been studying, or being practiced like for the last two or three weeks, and everything was step by step, it was scaffolded, ok jaja it was scaffolded in that way because that's the way it works better, and and, it usually has this component of interaction, ok.

So, what portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

To speaking fluency activities...I wish I could say a lot, but it's not too often, We really don't have a lot of time to develop fluency, you can practice it, you can look for ways and opportunities to talk, even though the book is very interactive, fluency is not something that you would get out of a five-minute conversation. It's a process, and it takes time, and if you really want to develop this sort of skill if you wanna call it like that you need time. I would usually try to have another fluency class maybe three times in the semester, which means three hours of just speaking. I mean of course they have to make notes and stuff, that's just part of the process. That's for them to identify the weaknesses and strengths, like I told you, all the people who I have done this with, have really enjoy it, I'm sorry enjoyed it, and what they usually say is that they wish it could happen more, but I always tell them it could happen more often if I were aware of their strengths in grammar, because even though I told you that accuracy is not important for developing fluency, once you are in the process of it there are some things that you need to get rid of. You need to get rid of fossilized mistakes, and you need to be aware of the differences between slips, between errors and between misconceptions. Once you have been able to, tooo understand those concepts. That's when you can start identifying what are some of ..you can tell them This is wrong, stop. It's just something that

That's the ideal thing, but on your classes, how often do you implement them?

The real thing. Ahhhh in a semester. I try to make them at least once, at least once

A real, a real fluency speaking activity

A complete one

Yeah a complete one

The short ones take about 15 to 20 minutes , but the long ones like I told you, that's that's one hour. But, in order to do that , they need to have at least covered , three, four units, and everything, the vocabulary , and the grammar and so and so but it must also has to find a way to link all those things together. The topic flows, so , it's not like OK, I'm gonna talk . No, it's like you talk about what they like , then about the things they have done , and stuff like that, so you go from passive to present perfect simple , to present and stuff. oK That's the ideal thing, that's difficult to do

Ok thanks a lot for sharing all this information and experience.

### PARTICIPANT 3

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Ok, thanks for your participation

The first question is What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

Mmm that's a good question, but I think that , being orally fluent means that you can carry out a conversation, without making unnecessary pauses for ooo to talk to other people , again without making unnecessary pauses , thinking too much about what you are going to say

Yeahp, what is an intermediate learner expected to do in speaking?

Mmmm, ahhh I would say that probably they could be able to have a conversation with another person about a number of everyday things in the spot without having to prepare it , probably create a basic, very simple presentation on a diverse number of topics , but always thinking about their every day context.

Ok what techniques and/or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

I don't know if you can talk about techniques or strategies , but I basically have them speak , you now, about topics from the book , topics that I bring from ..from from from the internet , things that are current ...the other day I was , I had my advanced B class to do a conversation about Pokemon Go

Oh, interesting,



They watched a short video about the game and about the possible consequences , you know, this might be on the TV these days, and ahh they were engaged in the conversation, and at the end we had like a short debate , you know what are the good things, what are the bad things, who is in favor, who is against the game and you know they had a good practice. There were some problems here with grammar , pronunciation, because you know , our groups are very very heterogenic but that's the kind of think you should deal with in class.

What characteristics do these activities have in common? If any?

.....I think is basically the function of the activity, that makes them speak , you know, of course you have some activities that are designed for fluency or that you have done for fluency, or to practice forms and that but I think the one that encapsulates the more is to have the students to speak.

How often should these activities be implemented?

Every day, every day, every single class.

And how often do you implement them?

I try to do it every day because we have to follow the content of a book , everyday we can have a long speaking activity, but within every class, I try to at least have a short speaking activity for students.

Yahp..What portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

When I plan a speaking class, it's usually 20 minutes or 15 minutes probably, when they do a speaking activity during the whole class you know but it's probably about that.

## PARTICIPANT 16

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The first question is: What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

Mm for me or for my students?

For you, no, What you think

To be fluently in English doesn't mean to be able ahh to use the appropriate words related to the topic they are talking about

OK

...and speak as soon as possible , ok using the new vocabulary, new phrases and the, with the correct structure.

OK, what is an intermediate level learner expected to do in Speaking?

He expect to use, the use of English related to their careers , specially, because sometimes they ask for a reading or articles about their ahh careers, specific because sometimes they tell me to send different assignment in English spite of...the subject is in English, that's it they need to be fluently in order to be to be more productive orally Ok and the can communicate in the correct way.

OK, what techniques and /or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking fluency ?

Well, I think is to start when I send them some videos they have to listen for the pronunciation, and then in the class I try to do ahh any activity related to the video in order they have learned for the vocabulary they have seen or they can learn from the video and they put in practice , they make questions or working in groups , Ok related some questions . It depend on the topic, could be interview, conversations , dialogues, and even though they adapt a role play in order to practice speaking

And what's your favorite activity?

My favorite one, believe me is writing, I like writing because I can observe how they can use the words , the phrases the vocabulary , but but I have a special activity talking about speaking, is the karaoke , I practice karaoke with them ahhh talking about speaking, because you focus on speaking

Yeah yeah

Focused on speaking is the karaoke, ok they sing a song, and then I listen to their pronunciation, or sometimes just they have to just to listen some information about a film or any kind of video, and I just make questions, but I don't put subtitles in order they can identify the words , something like....

What characteristics do these activities have in common?

Have in common?

Yes, Fluency speaking activities, what re their common characteristics?

With my students?

In general.

Yeah, the activities have in common because they can practice more English , they use more the use of English is really really important for they if they want to improve their speaking because as I they are building vocabulary they are able to speak fluently.

Ok, how often should these activities be implemented?

Well, I try to do it most of the times, because speaking is one of the I want to improve in my students

How often do You implement them?

Well, the most time I can do it, the both because speaking and writing , the skill, I try to do more activities

Productive no?

And when you do these activities, what portion of the class do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

Ahh I take time , I take time because in spite of the work in groups for some time, I need to monitorate all the groups . ok ah in order to be sure they are using the correct words, they are doing specific conversations , using the correct words, the correct form.

## PARTICIPANT 13

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Ok ,this is the first question, remember that everything is about speaking fluency activities

The first question is, what does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

For me, like to be orally fluent means to have a lot of vocabulary and that you can also communicate without stopping, without stopping what you are going to say, and when you are saying, basically, related to the topic

What is an intermediate level learner expected to do in speaking?

Ahh, for example, when that they have to do a presentation they are able to communicate without having a lot of silence, because sometimes the students have a lot of silence because they don't know what to say, and that the vocabulary might not be perfect but that they can be understood .

Ok, that's what it means

what techniques and /or strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking fluency ?

I think that debates are very useful for speaking , and something that I also like to work a lot is when they have to collect information , they have to gather information to do ah these bars, like a survey . Surveys are really good because , this type of students likes to do that. Sometimes I thik that is not very effective , I do these questions with their partners because they are not very engaged with them

Yeah with these activities. What speaking fluency activities do you usually include in your classes , it's like, your specific ones.

Ok, I have done find someone who, which is like a speaking activity. I have made presentations where everybody has to talk . I am preparing a debate in this unit. I think that the drawback of this is that they take a lo of time

Yeah, uhum

Ok, what characteristics do these activities have in common?

Ah, for most of them is that students usually, they usually read and they basically present the information to the class but I have noticed that there are students who are not able to basically to communicate , they need the paper to read it, and then they can basically tell what they think to their classmates.

How often should these activities be implemented?

I think that speaking activities, for me , they have to be like at the end of the unit , not at the beginning or in the middle, because I think that since speaking is a productive skill, you need to have like ah an input a lot of input in order to produce output .

Yes, and how often do you implement them?

Well, I follow the book, so according to the book they are through all the unit but if I have the chance to do it by myself I would probably do it like at the beginning and then at the end .

Ok. And what portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities ?

I usually like from 20 to 25 minutes, but I I, They have the speaking fluency activities because the book is highly oriented to speaking

## PARTICIPANT 4

---

Ok, What does it men to be fluent in English?

.....fluent?

Ahs

Ahhh Fluent means about you don't have to think about what you are gonna say. Someone asks you a question and you just have to answer. If you think, if you think about it, you know, thinking about the language, you are just thinking about what's the best answer

Yeah, OK

What is an intermediate level expected to do in speaking?

Ah, ok..ahh they should be able to communicate about ahhh normal topics , topics like ahh every day topics, just for conversation, and aah living in a real world. And...it's not necessary to have perfect grammar. That means to me.

Ok, What techniques and/strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

Ahhh, ok there different kinds of activities, so we just follow the book which has good questions, discussions about different topics and opinions, things that are supposed to be interesting for students but students often don't find them interesting . I think is important to break down you topic into smaller questions an that's what I could scaffolding. I f you got students are not interested or have a low level ,then you can ask questions, so they answer yes or no.

Oh ok

You got more interesting and more enthusiastic or more competent students, you just give the a topic, one word, and you just have to say, discuss..

It depends

Ad what is your favourite activity?

Ahh, I would say questionnaires

Ok, what characteristics do these activities have in common?

They have to have something that there is, something that students are going to find about each other, anhhmmm if you give them a question they already have discussed many times, or something they already know the answer , it's not interesting. So, I think the challenge is to think of something that is a new topic that the haven't talked about an d I give them something to discover, something new about each other

Ok

And for example, yesterday, I had a topic, roles family roles, a topic like single mother, or divorce, or without children or that's a good kind of topic because it's controversial and that everyone is going to have an opinion about, and or maybe a topic they have never talked about in their own culture or language .

Ok ehh how often should these activities be implemented ?

...well, you should have ..what kinds of activities exactly?

Fluency speaking activities

Well, you are gonna have speaking fluency activities every class, at the beginning of class, in the middle of class, at the end of class , you constantly get students to talk because that's the aim of the....

How often do you implement them?

Well,, like I said, I try to have at least two activities every two hours class . Once an hour, we are gonna have interaction.

And what portion of the class time, do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

Ok, I try, this is a little tricky jajajaja

Jajajaja

The class time that I dedicate...

Yes

Ahh, I would say, I give them 10 minutes , they need a little bit of preparation , usually, they need, they need preparation and and no no

You need you need 10 minutes for a topic discussion, but if they got a questionnaire you can have even 20 minutes, or 30 minutes. It depends ..it often depends on how much interest the topic is and how many questions they have because sometimes you can have a topic which they ask each other the question, and they answer, so 2 minutes is over and they say, teacher we finished, we discussed it, we are not interested any more and that's Ok if they produce some language , right? You can communicate about a topic and give your opinion,ahm so for me that's the aim, obviously they have more time

Yahp

Dedicate it to fluency and speaking... ehm I think it also depends on the quality of answer that you want creating, you can have a questionnaire which is yes or no questions, yes or no answers you can keep asking and asking and asking a half an hour

Jeje

But It doesn't really produce , it doesn't really produce

It's not really producing more

You don't have to produce much , but on the other hand you can not get a dialogue. You can have a 2-minute conversation and you can produce something that is a little more sophisticated , and it's important , so when you ask me about time I would say, ask one more question and that would be about the quality of your dialogues.

## PARTICIPANT 8

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The first question is: What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

Ok...mmmI would say that to be orally fluent is try to give a message without hesitation, ahh probably not exactly focused on grammar errors but try to make your ideas understandable to the other speakers, so in a fluent way without pauses , without too much hesitation

Ok, what is an intermediate level learner expected to do in speaking?

Ok, so probably I would say topics like ah family related, ah professional related, work related and liking friends, situations, family situations like in daily activities, so I would try to express that to be able to interact and in speaking forms to those daily situations, daily routines.

Ok, What techniques and/strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

So, I would try to come out with situations like to state situations that are familiar to the students and make them like role plays so they can interpret this kind of role or person in which, I don't know like to say, for example, this person has this kind of characteristic, so students will try to perform this kind of role with each other in this case in the classroom with the classmates and I would try to do is just not just to do it in pairs but also to interact, try to interact with at least 3 or more students, so they can get like, a different kind of feedback from each other.

OK What speaking fluency activity do you usually include in your classes?

So, fluency activity... I would say, I would give them like a topic, so for example, something they are familiar with, so that way they don't have to come out with new vocabulary with new grammar that probably they know, handle it very well, so that way they have like more freedom to talk. They don't have to worry about grammatical errors. I would I would what we look for in that situation is to make them speak without hesitation, without being afraid.

Ok, what characteristics do these activities have in common? If any?

So..characteristics

Og fluency speaking activities

.....Normally we try to encourage, for example, when we have this oral exam by the end of the partial, so there is one for example in the rubrics that we focus on fluency but it is also important to focus on grammar. By the end of the day, they also have to focus on grammar, soooo characteristics ah they all have in common the thing that they have to communicate, they try to express an idea and the speaking activities, when they are in class, mmm for example, after we have covered a topic about grammar, so after that I would say that yes they definitively we want to speak fluently, we use like the grammar, the grammar structure on that unit, so it's kind of we constantly give on that topic.

How often should these activities be implemented?

Ahhmmm I would say if we are talking about our classes, at least twice a week, and if for example we see our students three times a week basically, so I would say at least twice a...

And with advanced students every class

I would say yes, at least one short speaking activity, make them speak at least about a topic. It has, it doesn't have to be a family conversation, at least something that allows them to express themselves about any topic.

Ok, how often do you implement

I would say I try I try to do it like twice a week with intermediate and advanced too

And when you do it, what portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

mmm I would say 15 to 20 minutes from 15 to 20 if I am actually doing an specific activity

5 minutes but we are dedicating to specific activities at least 15 minutes

You could do it, but the important thing is to give students like some kind of feedback.

## PARTICIPANT 14

Ok thanks for being part of this study. Remember that the study is based on the fluency speaking activities that are developed in class. The first question is :

What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

Mmm Good question. To be orally fluent in English mm to me is ahhhh an ability a person can have which consist in ah speaking ah without making too many pauses, having a number of synonyms, which can be used..so that it can be fluent ..that's the question. Basically, basically, having knowledge in English ...the rest is just vocabulary and practice .

Ok Ok, what is an intermediate level learner expected to do in speaking?

The question is based on speaking ok?

Aja

Ok, ahh to me an intermediate level student is expected to ahmmm speaks slowly, very slowly , be able to produce ahh information that ahh can be come across. An intermediate student does not have enough knowledge or practice to be able to speak with certain fluency but He or she can have enough vocabulary , or structure to come across her or his idea.

What techniques and/strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

Oh what I do is ahh I mix them, we all have mix ability groups classes, so I try to get them in one group where students have a better ahh understanding or knowledge of English with students that have no. I assign them a particular task in which they have to produce English ahh the key is as they produce English, they have the peers to correct the speaker, so this is basically what I do, ok? Speaking production with peer correction and that, only when they don't have, a h when they have a question that can not be answered by the peer, they can come to me and answer.



OK. What characteristics do these activities have in common? If any?

Characteristics they have in common? I don't know if I don't understand the question? What characteristics do these activities have in common?

The fluency speaking activities

Ahhmmm.....we are talking about all the techniques we use...

All the activities you plan to develop speaking fluency activities.

Well, they have in common ahhhhh

For example that they work in groups

Ok Ahhh

Basically that's it ahhh almost in all my speaking activities are done in groups. I would say that is the first one that comes to my mind. They have to be in groups. It's much better than having one to one production, English production. When we have three or more each one can learn more from each other.

How often should these activities be implemented?

Ohhh...basically in every opportunity that we have because one of the weakest , the weakest abilities that they have is speaking , why ? because first of all I think they don't have the opportunity , they don't have the time, they are not given the time to practice, and it's very difficult for students to practice out of class, because to practice out of class they have to have the drive to do it, they have to have a goal " I am going to learn English this semester". We know The most of our students, don't have that dry. They take English because they have to , so ot's very difficult to get them, to get them into having that, that goal, but basically, ahmmm I would say that we should implement at least one activity in our classrooms which involves speaking.

Ok

Everyday every day

And what portion of the class time do you dedicate to speaking fluency activity ?

Mmmm Good question. It's hard to say because we have to develop reading activities and all those abilities. You have to work ahh an that ...when I start classes the first thing I do, as I get my materials ready , I have them, I don't like to be ...to do nothing, so the first thing I do I to , the first question is ...ok you are going to have to speak about what you did yesterday or or or over the weekend , stat speaking English. Every single class, every single class the first thing I do is have them speaking English , using, basically using past tense , always asking what did you do yesterday? Or sometime what are you going to do? Plans for this weekend, so the first thing I do in every single of my classes is speak in English, and we can have another speaking activity later on or not , at least I have them speak English the first five minutes of class every single class, every single class.

And other activities...

Other activities, besides what we have in the book, basically what comes up is something out of the news. I ask the opinions, for example, what is your opinion about this issue that came up out of the news and start speaking about this or that.

## PARTICIPANT 1

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Ok, Thanks for participating in this study , as you know this is about fluency speaking activities developed in class, no?

The first question is: What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

Ok, to be orally fluent means to be able to speak in a connected way and in a form that people can understand what you are saying without too many, without too many ehh broken lines, too many broken sentences. For me that's to be orally fluent.

Yeah Ok, What is an intermediate level learner expected to do In English?

Well, he's expected to be able to understand what's being said to him, and it's expected to answer or to give some sort of feedback. It's also expected to be able to initiate a conversation a Basic conversation, to ask for directions, to tell a story, an anecdote about something, or to give any sort of information.

What techniques and/strategies do you implement to help learners enhance their speaking skills?

There are two things I do. First, I do a lot of pair work activities, information gaps where they exchange information, where they practice questions, then they are able to give back answers, real answers that's what I do often in my class. But I also, I also help them by having them do pronunciation exercises because that would make him more confident, make them more aware of the pronunciation. Features or characteristics of native speakers and it helps in their speaking and it also helps in their understanding.

Ok, what's your favorite speaking activity? What speaking fluency activities do you usually include in your class?

I always include information gaps, all the time, all the time. I ask them just to sit with a partner to find out some sort of information. If they have done something , if they've done, ask them for an opinion , ask them to complete something , ask them to do a trivia game, ok anything that the partners can exchange information .

OK What characteristics do these activities have in common? If any?

Ok, I would say that they all give the possibility to the speaker of a students to be speaker , ok the way the activity is made is that students can be can be ehhhh can ask questions and can also

answer question both ways . I usually, what I don't what I don't allow them to do is to have the questions in front..they usually have some sort of charts and I ask them before I prepare them I tell them make questions, how would you ask this information , for example, place of birth so how do you ask for a place of birth where were you born? Or Where are you from?

How often should these activities be implemented?

Ok, the activities of fluency should always be included in every class, right? But more than that they are included, they should be genuine interaction. It should be real, real information . If I want to do, for example a , to practice the present perfect , ask them to do a serious Have you done.... I don't want to sit with a partner who already knows the answer or have them sit separately, other partners, or mix them with different partners . I usually do that type I don't like to do too much open work because I lose too much time making them stand up , walk around and I can't control if they are speaking Spanish.

How often should these activities be implemented in class?

Ok, at least one every class . It should at least once every class. I implement them one every class.

What portion of the time class do you dedicate to speaking fluency activities?

What portion? Let me see, I would say 50 % of my class, 50% to speaking fluency activities?

Yes

For me group work also improves fluency. Now if you are asking about pure fluency, pure fluency activities, for pure fluency activities I would say 20% . By pure fluency I understand activities that students are asked only to speak and work on their pronunciation and the connection on the language . That would be a pure fluency activity

### **Transcript One:**

**R1:** Ok so I am here with T1 and the first questions I had was. What does it mean to be orally fluent in English?

**T1:** Well uhm my students often wonder the same thing and I normally try to define fluency for them as in terms of the listener. If the listener is comfortable with the pace at which you're speaking and the rate at which the ideas are coming out then you are fluent as far as I can say in other words it's a somewhat subjective thing. Uhhh I tell my students that if the listener is a tapping his foot, scratching his head looking uncomfortable and clearly impatient for you to get the message across then you can consider yourself to be not so fluent. So I mean it's not a very scientific or precise description but it's the one that works for me, yeah.

**R1:** We're considering that the advanced level that we teach here is really an intermediate level so Q2.

**T1:** Well obviously one of the limitations is vocabulary the intermediate level learner does not have a wide vocabulary and probably can't talk very fluently about abstract topics but I think that he or she should be able to talk about familiar everyday things such as daily routines, what they like to eat, preferences , relationships , family , friends and practical things . There are some very practical task at the intermediate level that learners should be able to do like book a room in hotel, book a meal in a restaurant, ask for directions in the street etc. All of these are like A2 B1 level tasks . B2 then perhaps slightly more ambitious things like making a phone call in a work context in a professional context, placing an order or something like that, making a complaint and having social conversation ok asking people about their family, their interests and so on expressing interest, responding appropriately.

**R1:** And that has basically been your experience in your classes as well.

**T1:** To be honest, I don't think that we systematically cover all these things in the current intermediate course , we don't have time and it's not even necessarily part of my experience of teaching that those two levels of AA and AB has been you know obvious areas that you know we don't cover at all, particularly the more practical things you know, uhm I am not sure that any, most of my students would be able to in a business context pick up the phone and make an order you know to a supplier or something like that which in theory at a B2 level should be able to do but I don't think my students could do that. I don't think we have enough time to practice fluency adequately uhm and also the materials we use are less than ideal for that.

**R1:** Q3

**T1:** Uhm I use a lot open full class discussion because I see a problem with motivation with the students many of them a lot of time they are coming into class, they're there because they have to be , they don't necessarily see English as a high priority so II I try to try to especially at the beginning of classes I try to use full open class discussion to try to get them interested in the topic we're talking about then comes the more structured teaching and then at the end of the class I would use pair work or groups small groups usually, 3, 3, 4 students maximum but very often I ask them to work in pairs and discuss the topics we have covered in class sometimes as a prelude to do some writing so for example today in class we were talking about talk about someone who influenced you my I gave them the task of writing 2 or3 sentences about a person which was then going to lead on to their composition/ writing but before writing I said to them work in pairs and discuss tell your partner who is that person who has influenced you try to explain it to them, that will help you to order your ideas. So I think the important thing is take the pressure off uhm part in the class discussion many of the students don't participate because they feel nervous "I'm speaking in front of everybody" when they work in pairs especially if they have a task and have to put something into writing, then the pressure is off performance and they don't think you know people are judging me by what I am saying uhm it's something more practical you know I am going to say whatever I need to say in order to get my ideas clear so I can write a sentence. So if you kind of distract them by giving them some other objective which is not just speaking then I think they're more comfortable and happier with doing that.

**R1:** Q3a

T1: Ummm well as I said repeat myself here ummm I normally use class discussion at the beginning of the class to introduce a topic make sure, to check they understand the topic and its implications whether it's ummm, yeah it's a fluency activity the other problem is that it's very often a lot of students are not participating, they're listening ummm but apart from that as I say I try to use pair work discussion because I think that working in pairs with somebody you have chosen to sit next to because you trust that person takes a lot of the pressure off I mean the main point is to get people talking [...]

R1: In addition to discussion what other activities do you do?

T1: Ummm well there are certain specific activities I have done in the past particularly with the TOEFL group for example because of the requirements of the exam there is something called "Just a minute" based on a british radio show where you give them a topic and you say talk for exactly for one minute on this topic without hesitation or interruption you know and the other students are listening and trying catch you out. So it's a great thing for the TOEFL I don't know how useful or relevany it would be for other ...

R1: Have you tried that with your Intermediate class?

T1: No I haven't uhhh maybe I should I used to years ago when I had a bit more time you know a bit more freedom to explore things like that but you know with the requirements of the course we are bit more pushed for time but yes, with the TOEFL classes they love it it's very useful.

R1: Ok the discussions and the...

T1: Just a minute

R1: Just a minute ok any other activities you can remember?

T1: Occasionally I do role plays probably not as much as other teachers do I would imagine but I was taught as a teacher that roles plays is very important a very valid thing but you know they take quite a long time to step up and there's lots of checking to make sure students understand what their role is and what they're supposed to do, but I do use that occasionally and ummm collaborative learning where each student in the group has a role right you're the researcher you're the person who organizes everything etc. Again I have used that but not very much.

R1: The next question is these role plays, discussions, just one minute Q4

T1: Free production. I mean for mean fluency by definition of fluency activities is one in which I mean maybe this is the wrong definition but for me it's uhhh you know it's the standard class organization you start with presentation, practice, controlled practice for me that's not fluency free practice that is the fluency part as far as I am concerned so the, the, the most important characteristics is that the student you know they don't have to fill in a gap in the sentence or they are simply reproducing a pattern but they have more freedom to express their ideas. And ummm the other important aspect of fluency is the students need to be aware that the that they're not going to be graded or judged or corrected during the activity. I mean if they are doing a fluency activity I will walk around and occasioanly make a note of something they said

that requires attention but I won't jump on them and correct them in that moment obviously because that wouldn't be fluency that would be accuracy.

R1: Q5

T1: Ideally every class I think every class ideally in practice that doesn't happen.

R1: And that was next my next question Q5a

T1: Uhmm

R1: Twice a week , once a week. I don't know.

T1: Yeah I mean as I say my ideal lesson plan would always include a part especially at the end where there is free practice at whatever they've been doing in the class there would be free practice in the end . In practice that sometimes gets pushed out cause there's just so much to do in a particular class and oh there's this speaking activity at the end and I just don't have time so you know just do that some other time. That tends to happen sometimes uhmm but yeah as I say in theory it should be every class but in practice it's every other class.

R1: Q5b

T1: Uhmm that depends a lot on the content of the class I mean for example if there is a it's class focused on a grammar point and that point is incredibly complex you find that you've covered it adequately in an hour so you've got a whole other hour in which to where you've got a bit more freedom and then I would try to find ways of making them practice that in a freer way whether it's with writing or speaking so yeah it could be anything upto half the class.

R1: Ok but on average more or less

T1: 30 minutes

R1: Those were the questions I had for you. Thank you for helping me out.

## **Transcript Two**

R1: So I am here with T2 and Q1

T2: Uhmm to be orally fluent in English means that you are able to communicate first of all your ideas secondly to be able to interact with somebody and to be able to answer correctly and not to hesitate so much when you're speaking while you're thinking but that you have the ability to communicate what your thoughts are in a fluent way. In a way that you can just uhhhhh throw things out.

R1: We're taking into consideration that our AA level is really an Intermediate level so Q2

T2: They are expected accordingly to the level they have to reach which is B1, is it B1?

R1: Yeah at the moment yes B1

T2: at the moment so they are able to communicate habits, personal experiences, maybe they can a little bit about their career , their degree about their activities for school for doing at home stuff like that yeah but they can't use like academic level or more formal English but more casual.

R1: Q3

T2: Yeah some techniques that I have found lately are when you want them to use some expressions. Some expressions don't usually make much sense because there's not a grammatical or even the collocations sometimes doesn't make sense for a Spanish speaker, but you just have to learn in the way it is so if you want them to acquire that you need I put it on the board so that they can see them and then they I organize speaking activity where they have to use this I say please pick two or three phrases that you never use because you are just learning them and use it and then they become a little more interested because then you challenge them to really understand what the phrase means so that they can put it in their speech and then they got more interested and started using it. That's one ehhhh I don't know.

R1: Q3a

T2: Include, I include a lot of conversation in pairs but you know like in columns one column and another column, I think we all do this but that's good because you always have to relate that with something that already know. So that is something that is interesting for them to share. So that is always what I do , also other fluency activities usually it's always related to their lives their experiences.

R1: So do you do things like role plays for example?

T2: Role plays yes they help for fluency but yeah they could help in the development because they are using the language , they are practicing the language but I am not so sure how much they uhhh they can help them in fluency I am not so sure I'd have to think about that more.

R1: Any other activities that you normally do?

T2: Yeah uhhh role.. could you tell me some other ideas so that I can remember?

R1: Yeah maybe perhaps debates, discussions

T2: Yeah well discussions I do I do a lot of discussion debate also but right now I am also implementing that in my class because I have the unit in the book that talks about debates and I am going to do it now but that's also very helpful. But I do a lot of like open conversation but always with some material they have reflected before they have learned before but I recycle a lot of the material a lot .

R1: Ok from Q4 what do they have in common

T2: Well the characteristic they have in common is that they have the opportunity to express so they have the opportunity to talk ehh but when you mentioned the role plays I am not so sure about the role plays maybe the help to acquire the language but maybe we need to do it more seriously. Because I feel when they do it in class they do it and it's just funny and it's just and I don't know..

R1: How could you make it more serious?

T2: Maybe creating a chapter of serious a chapter for example, I'm just thinking out loud, ehh I don't know maybe if you create like a soap opera for instance or like a tv series like a sitcom and maybe then they will think ok this is serious and we can record this and that would be a project and then they know they have to present this maybe at the end of the semester and they can put it on YouTube and that kind of role play would be more seriously and they will like oh wow I really have to pronounce well, I really have to use these expressions because if it's in class sometimes I feel they don't take it seriously. Maybe that's why that's the reason I don't do it so much.

R1: right and that's why you do the other activities that you mentioned like discussion for example

T2: Yes.

R1: Uhmhm Can you think of another characteristic of,of... discussions for example

T2: Oh another characteristic ... ok students are shy when they are shy so but if we help them when they have a discussion like showing them the expression like I said before where they can see them it helps them to remember and to say it correctly so they don't feel that shy they are more confident that they are saying the whole expression correctly and the other day I did a presentation of some countries where they had to present a country a panel kind of thing like a panel

R1: ok

T2: and that worked out really well because all of them had a little part about the country, something different. They had to speak about culture dance activities

R1: nice

T2: holidays, economics the economy of the country so they had a little bit of the country so that, that was kind of ...serious that was more serious and they were like, they knew what they were doing and they were into the role so like when it's something serious they do it better you know either serious or free.

R1: When you say free you mean..

T2: I mean more casual. They don't have to remember a grammatical structure.

R1: ok, ok Q5



T2: Every single class.

R1: Q5a

T1: I try to do every single class to be honest even if it's something that will take 5 minutes. Well I have two different kinds of activities the ones that are more planned where you have the lesson plan and the debate, the presentation, the role play but I don't do it so much or the casual activities that is like the warm up also. I always do a warm ups that are part of talk about how was your weekend or holiday we just had three day holiday what did you do every single day and don't tell me sleep because you ate you went to sleep you had a conversation with your mother, all these little things that for us maybe it's obvious is not obvious for them because I didn't do anything and they don't know how to say I didn't do anything they don't know in IB so these phrases come up with the conversation and I encourage them I do it like almost every Monday when they come back I do it and switch them with different people so they can do it and meet new people and stuff.

R1: Q5b

T2: Portion?

R1: Yah like 20 mins, 30 mins but like on average.

T2: Yeah the average maybe 40? Sometimes 30 sometimes 40 Sometimes it could be like an hour if I have planned an activity that's for developing fluency but usually it's like everyday 30 mins. They always have time for speaking.

R1: ok

T2: Yes sorry I didn't have so many activities but I always try to include speaking even if I don't have many activities planned.

R1: Cool thank you.

### **Transcript three:**

R1: Ok good morning and I am here with T3 and I am going to ask you some questions, ok?

T3: ok

R1: Ok so the Q1

T3: Well from my point of view that means that uh you can communicate accurately and precisely and uhhmm and you can express yourself without hesitating too much.

R1: Ehh for this study we are considering that your AB students are really an Intermediate level so the next question is Q2

T3: Well these students are expected to have a kind of interaction express their ideas, talk about topics that are related to their context like habits or routines they have , or they can talk about their holidays uhmm and at the same time they can relate their experiences to the topic that they're talking so if they have some academic themes in class they can relate that to their life and that can help them to produce much more.

R1: Q3

T3: Ok I know that my students are very visual so what I tend to do is to show them some videos and after that they answer some gist questions, specific questions and I give them time to interact and after that I have an open class where they can express their ideas and if I see that if they need to give me a bit more I squeeze them, ok and that's it.

R1: Q3a discussion , role play ehh I don't know

T3: Ok my students enjoy having role plays , discussion topics, sometime debates but no too much , and for AB they have times to uhhhh have presentations in class and they choose a topic they want to talk about and that way they work individually , but most of the time they are always working in groups with debates, with discussions with uhhhh poster presentations and that it's it.

R1: Ok. Q4

T3: That my students can use their own experiences and can relate that information with the information that I asked them to produce . I always ask them, ok if I have a topic any topic I always ask them to give me their point view about that topic or tell me about an experience so that connection for me it's that important and I can see that they are not uhhh just finding, surfing the net and finding some info that answered the topic it's much more it's like more production because it's something that they have to internalize much more.

R1: Ok Q5

T3: How often? Well I work with them twice a week two hours eh hh once a week

R1: Ok so you implement them once a week Q5a

T3: Once a week yeah but not like an hour sometimes because the groups are very large and sometimes I have like 35 students uhh once a week I try to divide the groups and I uhh a give them the chances to produce in class. Well as a group work once a week but individually sometimes the half one week and the other half the other week .

R1: Ok Q5b

T3: You're talking about time?

R1: Yeah

T3: Uhmm

R1: Of the 60 minutes..

T3: 45 minutes

R1: 45

T3: 45

R1: Yeah that's all the questions I had for you. Thank you.

#### **Transcript Four:**

R1: Q1

T4: Well orally fluently I would say that when you have ahh it would be easy to put all together the ideas , it would be easy not to struggle at all, like it would take a short time for the student to develop the structures sentences correctly uhmm not suffering or taking long while you, you write that I would consider that they seem pretty relaxed or just fluent in what they are doing.

R1: Ok and are you referring to speaking or to writing?

T4: I'm sorry.

R1: That , that description that you just gave me you were referring to speaking or to writing.

T4: I'm sorry yeah I would say writing and also for speaking . Speaking fluently, yeah I'm sorry I think I was ..

R1: Yeah ok

T4: Yeah I think that they would be fluent in speaking more when they, they feel relaxed when they talk to each other I see them that they uhhh feel comfortable about it and they're not so concerned about what words they using so much ehh so I see that when the students talking to each other more than when they talk to me to the teacher or in front of the whole class so I would say that when they are very uhhh they're pretty fast when they speak ehh...

R1: ok. For the purpose of this study our AA and AB students are really at an Intermediate level Q2

T4: Well an Intermediate learner usually ahhh they write compositions they write ahh how to write a paragraph they learn about that and finally with the AB that I have they learn how to write an essay which is not that easy.

R1: Right. But I refer to speaking not to writing

T4: uff I keep saying writing oh my God, sorry ok so yeah they speak about themselves it's pretty easy when I tell them to write uhh to talk about families I see that they're pretty good at that point but when you tell them to write ,uhh to speak about a certain topic like the environment

or about general knowledge it's more difficult I think it's because the lack of vocabulary that they have uhh they're not so fluent the way they're supposed to be in advanced courses.

R1: Ok. Q3

T4: I usually give them sometimes kind of games or activities where they could be excited about it or interested to motivate them to speak up and it depends also the level so for AB I usually show them like a picture or a flash card and they look at and they have to describe it according to what they're learning also like modal verbs or complete sentences with linking verbs or things like that so a little bit more advanced up to that level so that's what I do.

R1: Q3a You mentioned games, you mentioned flashcards. Anything else?

T4: I.. speaking also I sit them together in groups of two or it could be up to 4 , 4 members in a group and I tell them to talk about something that they wrote uhh a day before like if I tell them ok we're going to talk about the environment it's because they already did a homework based on that so they so they talk about ok so what are the problems we have at the moment so something they have already seen in the lesson so they are kind of prepared with the vocabulary that they will use on their speaking in class. So something based on the lesson.

R1: Ok you have mentioned so far the flashcards , the games and uhh and I think we can include discussions talking about what they have written..

T4: uhhuh

R1: Q4

T4: What they have in common? I think that they have in common that, that they express their ideas , they express the way they think ohhh or they give their opinions so they're expressing themselves and I think that it's necessary for our students to do that in more realistic situations of what we live today so ehh so while they investigate and they're doing research especially for the pilot course in AB they do research before ehh ahead of time and then they practice in class so they're kind of ready to speak and well in this case yeah to speak and they're also ready to write with the new vocabulary they have learned and I think they do need to express more themselves communicate with each other. That's important.

R1: Q5

T1: How often? Well with this class with the AB I usually implement at least each time when I meet them in class, uhh in each class at least for 10 mins. Uhh I don't do it during the whole period, no I just do it for maybe 10mins and they discuss about it and then after a while we talk uhhh with the whole class what was their opinion in general to get feedbacks .

R1: Ok so on average more or less you dedicate 10mins of the class time...

T4: Yeah

R1: to doing these kinds of activities

T4: Hmm yeah

R1: And Q5a I mean on average

T4: I try to do at least once every time I meet them

R1: Ok

T4: Yeah in each class I try to do at least once for them to communicate with each other because they don't have a chance to do that outside the class. That's it so uhh this is the opportunity where they get together and they feel comfortable I think with each other by doing this and every time I put like in groups of two maybe in pairs, I .. then they get together in fours and then they have more opportunity to communicate ehh spend more time like that ehh and getting more ideas and expressing themselves so I do that once every time I meet , every time.

R1: When you say expressing themselves would say only opinions or...

T4: In general expressing their idea, opinions or whatever they .. the activity is like if they have to describe a picture it's, it's, it depends , it depends on the activity there are so many activities that I would like to do with them but we just meet 3 hours a week so it's not much . I would like that also to have more time with them well, but I just take the opportunity I have and every time I meet them I try for them to work together in the speaking section, yeah speaking skill.

R1: Yeah ok . Thank you.

#### **Transcript Five:**

R1: Q1

T5: I think that it means that you can find the words, the language that you want to express your ideas in a reasonable amount of time so that you can keep talking and connecting your ideas without long hesitations or repetitions or errors that mean that the other person cannot understand you.

R1: Hmmm our AA and AB are really not advanced they are an intermediate level so Q2

T5: I think that they should be able to speak for between 30 secs to a minute on a topic that is fairly familiar to them so not something abstract that is thrown at them but something where they, they either know something about it or they , they've had some time to prepare some ideas uhhh that they should be able to, to speak fluently using the criteria I just mentioned for about 30 sec to a minute.

R1: Q2

T5: So when we're looking at uhhh , when we're going to do a speaking task the way that I usually set that up is by looking up written and spoken text uhhh and analyzing the language and also sometimes the uhhh the supra-linguistic aspects like the interaction aspects uhhh

how are the people talking to each other uhmm what is the language that they can use uhmm give people a chance to practice that and then a chance to speak and ideally a chance to speak various times so they get a chance to repeat it in that class or in other classes, that doesn't always happen because of lack of time and probably organization as well.

R1: Q3 eh for example role plays,

T5: Ahh ok uhmm yeah so they sometimes, sometimes do role plays or simulations of a situation uhmm a group activity where they have to present an idea to the group and the other people will listen and ask questions or have to complete a table with the information and that means that if it's not clear that they're asked questions to, to clarify points uhmm and quite a lot of opportunities where they sit or stand in pairs and the pairs change around and they have to talk about different topics for the period of time that was indicated or if we're working on a topic that they have some time to prepare their ideas and then stand up and talk to someone about it uhmm and then I try to give them some feedback on that so for speaking fluency it's, it's more like free speaking activities in pairs or in groups.

R1: Ok so from what I understood you do mini-discussions , you do like role plays or simulations so Q4

T5: Ok I don't do that many role plays because I think that role plays are more suitable for like transactional type of situations where they're for example buying something in a shop but because I, I find that students, not many students have the aspiration at the moment that they're going to be in another country uhmm they , they struggle to really get hold of that language uhmm or get the idea of their transaction so the activities that I do are more interactional uhmm and what they have in common is or what I try to get people to think about is that there is always someone listening uhmm whether that person is responding immediately or not you have to think about the way that the person is receiving your message , the way that the person is understanding you uhmm and try to adjust how you speak accordingly uhmm and I try to use rubrics to get people to think about that , the interactional aspect what am I communicating.

R1: uhmmm Q5

T5: Uhmm I think at an intermediate level uhmm people need a chance to speak so like regularly every.... and probably every week they need a chance to be doing something not necessarily with the full task set up because , because we have to consider the other skills as well but they uhh at least the chance to talk about something properly for 30 secs where they're really concentrating on trying to uhmm make a coherent response and evaluate what they have done so,so I think the, the because we always feel that we're pressured on time uhh one of the things that we could do more to enable them to get the speaking practice is to repeat activities they've already done and so then you're not teaching at all from new you're just saying remember look at what you did , remember what you did last week and try and do it again because that's what people need.

R1: Q5b of the 60 mins that we have no sorry of the 120 mins

T5: oh ok of the 120 mins ..... probably 20 mins but that's not 20 good speaking mins there's because uhh speaking activities , the actual speaking should be short so if we consider that all the other activities are working towards speaking uhhh there's I'm not including that but even if , if we're reading or listening to a text and the focus isn't on speaking there's a chance to talk and reflect on the task so that's, that's a speaking fluency but then I might give them a few minutes uhhh but that might happen two or three times in a class however sometimes that time just doesn't get used very effectively so uhh if someone has to talk for 30 secs it's in pairs it's a 2 mins activity but it's a ....and then some time for feedback but sometimes it goes on but that's a challenge for all of us.

R1: Great thank you for your time.

### **Transcript 6**

R1: Q1

T6: Orally fluent..well uhh I believe that to be orally fluent uh means to express or to communicate your ideas without hesitation in a normal pitch and pace without any interruption or maybe any obstacle to communicate what you want to mean.

R1: What could be a possible obstacle?

T6: Ehhh for example vocabulary problems that would be like stopping the communication because the student would be like you know stopping to think how do you say that or maybe any doubts between saying this or not like for example level of formality or ehhh maybe phrase that might be suitable for the context or not.

R1: For the purpose of this study our AA and AB are really at an intermediate level so with that in mind Q2.

T6: In terms of ...

R1: Of speaking in general what would expect them to be able to do?

T6: abilities?

R1: yeah

T6: Well for example for them to express their opinions debate about any topic uhhh make presentations and establish natural conversations at a normal pace.

R1: Ok. Q3

T6: Well this is something that I've been doing since last semester ehh with the belief of how I learned English that worked for me. I learned English by chunks. Ok so I had phrases and then like the set phrases and then I just had to complete and these phrases we have in the book , ok like when we have for example [...] can I go to or may I have and then to complete so for example

when we do these kinds of activities I always give students little pieces of paper or I project on the board the expressions so I first before the activity ,the speaking activity I ask them to repeat the phrases and to complete them with whatever they want to see if they make sense, once I see that they .... Or drill some of these and have little conversations like you know, questions answer, question answer , and once I see that they manage the expressions I give them the topics to develop but without the papers so in that I it's like I believe at least that helps them to be a little bit fluent because they have the tools like bridges that join one piece with the other so and it's been working.

R1: Q3a You mentioned drills some people do role plays

T6: In this term yeah in the last especially with the Intermediate , uhh with the Advanced uhh we have this kind of games with cards when we were talk ... and with the question have you ever right? Then they have some funny ideas have you ever swum naked or something like that and then the questions are open to start asking you know so I believe that in that way the students develop fluency because they only have an idea and then they work in groups and the others start asking as a curiosity right and when did you go there who did you go with and why did you do this so they start asking because it's like the feel interested. I mean the situations are funny but, but it develops like a confidence for them to continue asking so I've done that with the present perfect have you ever and also with what would you do if and then you know they continue asking so I believe that has helped them.

R1: Other than the games anything else that you do?

T6: uhhh techniques..... Well the common conversation in pairs but I believe that's more like a controlled practice on speaking it's because they have only like a very short conversation it's not like an open question so they can...

R1: develop

T6: develop more their ideas

R1: Do you do debates, discussions

T6: Debates , discussions, It's not really like a debate but for example there is like a this general question ok I've been using this padlet

R1: Yeah ok

T6: Besides they write we discuss so I believes it's more like a discussion and not a debate because everyone defends their own opinion right on why they wrote that so discussion group I believe I would say

R1: So between the games and the discussion/debates because they have to defend their opinion, Q4

T6: The interaction



R1: ok

T6: Yeah cause the interaction they have and students get engaged when there is interaction you know because it's kind of giving them the main roles in the class and they like it, they enjoy it.

R1: Ehhh Q5

T6: Well I believe that every week, and not only the activities that I mentioned, I believe and I am pretty sure that there are more activities right but ehhh speaking is one of the main skills right and that is why the students demand for "we want to speak, we want to finish the course speaking" and they.. especially these Advanced course students say "no it's because I am applying for one of these interchange programs you know and I have speak English and I don't know so much" so they demand activities on speaking at least on this course I've been, in this advanced they asked me, teacher let's do more speaking activities, because we I need to finish speaking so I say ok let's do it. So I believe that every week, every week we have to include three hours or two hours I believe of speaking

R1: So you include about 2 or three activities

T6: In the week?

R1: uhmmm

T6: One hour , one hour and a half as we only have 4 hours of class because I do the writings in the class, so writings and some there is not so much uhmmm explanation of grammar because they already know all the tenses so it's only refreshing and then we develop the productive skills

R1: Q5b of the 120 minutes

T6: Of the 120 mins I believe 45 from giving the introduction giving the instructions and then you know setting groups and then develop the activity 45 mins

R1: Of those 45 mins how time are they actually speaking?

T6: 40

R1: 40?

T6: Yeah 30 or 40 because most of the time they are open questions so I let them go.

R1: Those were that questions I had for you. Thank you.

### **Transcript 7:**

R1: Q1

T7: Well I think that it's to be able to express yourself in a way that it doesn't sound choppy or there not unnecessary stops so the .. your audience of the other person who's talking to you can understand your ideas without much problem

R1: For the purpose of the study our AA and Ab students are really at an intermediate level Q2

T7: Small talk, he should be able to they should be able to to find their way around if they are in a foreign environment uhh simple things just to go to a restaurant and order for food to be able to talk about their past experiences and also their future and to express themselves in a way that is acceptable [...] nearing an advanced level but not totally there.

R1: Q3

T7: Mostly practice uhmm eh hh group work a lot of group work where they can listen to another and also I give them feedback after we finish the sessions. I try to give them feedback general feedback which is when you tell everybody you found these things about their performance and if I find this necessary I also talk to specific students because you know everyone is different.

R1: Q3a role plays, games. I don't know

T7: ok alright. For example we sing. I think that singing is great for developing fluency so sometimes I bring songs which are somewhat connected to the thing of the unit that goes through a certain selection process and then I bring, the, the lyrics to the class and we practice before actually singing and then we sing. I think that is more realistic so to speak and they do develop fluency because they're doing something they like.

R1: In addition to singing what other activities do you do?

T7: Alright. Sometimes we do role playing so I tell them to prepare a conversation but with information provided by them. We take dialogues sometimes from the book, sometimes from other sources as models and I tell them what I expect to hear from them and then they do they write the dialogues themselves and then they go in front of the others and they role play it.

R1: Anything else that you?

T7: right now nothing else comes to my mind but there are other activities

R1: I am sure there are ok. Q4

T7: Right they are usually connected to what we are seeing in the lesson. For example if we are doing the present perfect I try to find lyrics where present perfect is used for role play, role play is more connected to the theme of the units so for example tourists and they have to go sightseeing and they need information about the place they're visiting so the dialogues are oriented to that.

R1: Ok Q5 and Q5a

T7: Well I try to not make it a routine because then they get, I mean they develop, they become expecting and they get bored so I try to role plays every two weeks and songs also every two

weeks but for example one week we have a song and the next a role because to listen to everyone is a bit difficult especially when we're role playing so in groups it's easy but still we have students and that means 8 groups so it's difficult to do it every class but every two weeks it's nice

R1: Right so every two weeks. Q5b

T7: I usually try to dedicate to the songs for example when we're doing that 15 mins because there are several stages it's not only singing we explore the vocabulary we practice, what is when you sing but you don't actually sing when you say the lyrics there is a name.. a capella. We do the acapella and then the singing is the actually the final stage so that usually takes 15 mins sometimes the song is long sometimes 20 but the role play that takes long, that's takes a lot because sometimes I make comments after the performance

R1: So of the 120 mins of class time how much time would you say...

T7: I'd say 90 mins of the 120.

R1: Of that 90 mins including instruct..

T7: because I ask them to, to go for four minutes and I tell them at least each one of you should give me a total speaking time of one minute, one minute and a half to be to have the opportunity to grade something pronunciation grammar if they are using the expressions that we explored in the unit and things like that so that would be 5 mins per group so we have 8 groups so that would be 40 mins but of course until they go to the front and they take time and until they of course it's role so sometimes there is a little bit of acting and they bring props and stuff like that. Optimistically it's only like 50 mins, but I am trying to be pessimistic and saying 90 mins, 90 mins but it's usually less than that.

R1: So that's 90 mins with instructions preparation time.

T7: I also make comments this is what I noticed , this is what I liked. I always try to go for the positive and I tell them this is something you should pay attention to.

R1: Ok thank you.

### **Transcript Eight:**

R1: Q1

T8: Orally fluent... that students don't hesitate or don't stop when they are speaking that they can speak in a natural dialogue and how do you measure that? By the number of words that you speak in a specific time, I think.

R1: Ok, all I want is your opinion in your experience. Considering that our AA and AB are not really advanced that they're an intermediate level Q2. What would you expect your AA and AB students to be able to do in speaking?

T8: Well to at least speak naturally because they sometimes, what they are, they are used to do is to get prepared for the things but when you say ok let's change the partners, they so oh no but I memorized. No but it's a natural item it doesn't matter if you don't say everything in the same way as is in the book you can improvise by it but it's hard for them that.

R1: Q3

T8: Speaking in general or speaking fluency?

R1: It can be both general and fluency.

T8: Ok in the first weeks I ask them to do videos eh hh so I watch the videos at home then also expositions and while they're also doing expositions they're doing role plays, conversations... what else? That's it I think. Similar conversations that are in the book... debates, in advanced levels debates because they like that to discuss about topics.

R1: these debates, conversations, role plays, eh hh videos these activities Q4

T8: Well first I am not sure of your question but first according to the book and the methodology of the book we have readings and listenings, then we have the grammar part that they deduct and then with those inputs they can produce.

R1: no, no my question is based on your experience I am not looking for a particular answer

T8: Well that is what I do but sometimes I feel that I am pushing them to speak. I have noticed that I have to relax and give them the time to especially for basic courses so I don't ask them to show what they are doing just maybe to in groups if they are working in pairs ok to show it to the other pair but not to me because they get nervous

R1: ok

T8: in advanced levels it's different

R1: they show them to you and in what ways do you push them your advanced students to speak because you said you pushed them..

T8: Aha because I want them to speak in front of the class .

R1: Ok, so you push them by making them speak in front of the class.

T8: Yes aha because I want to know if they are really practicing so I say ok I am going to choose two and I notice that it doesn't work, not in the first weeks maybe in the 2<sup>nd</sup> partial but not in the first weeks they are like stressful about that.

R1: So in general you do debates, conversations some role plays, yes?

T8: Uhmm

R1: ok Q5

T8: After each unit well no we have three no not each three units. We have one unit with three sub...

R1: three subunits

T8: so practice three because the last one is always writing and things like that so at least three but if I don't have time to do it in the class I send them to do it at home like a video or an interview related to the topic so I can see that they are practicing the grammar and the expressions especially in the advanced levels in basic it's easier because we have time they are smaller they have to do and they can produce quickly but debates or express ideas about something or create an innovative product those things take time and sometimes I don't have that time in my classes.

R1: Ok say basically you could say that you do that every week?

T8: Yes at least every week ,one or twice no .... Everyday

R1: Ok and Q5b

T8: Hmm it could be 20 mins

R1: 20 mins

T8: aha yeah because they need to prepare sometimes I ask them no preparing anything just use what is in the book and they say no "Miss I need to write" , and I say ok . That's why I say I am pushing them because I say ok no books but I notice that they need to do it but I guess it's like a mental process, I don't know.

R1: aha ok

T8: When I studied it was different I didn't write anything, just use the vocabulary from the chapter ok and just try to do it but some of the aren't able to do it.

R1: Yeah ok those were the questions I had for you. Thank you.

### **Transcript nine:**

R1: Q1

T9: Uhmm it means that you are able to communicate uhmm without hesitation without thinking sometimes the students what they' re usually trying to do is think in one language and then to translate in another one which actually doesn't help the person to be kind of fluent. Uhmm let's see it actually means that somebody is at the same time not only able to talk but also able to listen in the same way like you know to communicate in such a way that the person manages a conversation and also to give and talk about any kind of topic uhmm easily or not easily but fluently something like that.

R1: Ok. No no I just wanted your opinion. Our student here in our advanced levels are not really advanced they are at an intermediate level so taking this into consideration for the next question Q2.

T9: what are they expected to do.

R1: As far as speaking

T9: before or speaking or for speaking?

R1; For speaking

T9: Huh I don't feel kind of like ready for this right now

R1: No just like in your experience.

T9: I just didn't get it very well

R1: Sure . If we say this group of students is an intermediate level a B1

T9: Yeah aha

R1: what would you expect them to be able to do in terms of speaking?

T9: Ok that they can manage like basic conversations , that they can talk about some every day topics , that they use not like basic language but you know like the language they know not only to write but they are also able to speak and uhmm to do it in a such a way that they are not thinking really what they are saying what they want to say because many times it's like they stop [...] they are maybe translating or they're just I don't know but they're trying to put it together the words to then say something in that moment instead of like uhmm just saying what you have in your heart and you have in your mind and then you just say whatever that comes and just throw it. That's all that I could add.

R1: Ok. Q3

T9: Oh well we have for example in the same way we have freewriting , we have free speaking. We give them a topic it doesn't matter if they make mistakes , we don't measure grammar mistakes or even pronunciation uhmm not trying to do any kind of correction when they're speaking, not trying to interrupt them just let them talk and feel kind of confident and what I usually do is to try and tell them look it doesn't matter if you make mistakes because if you're thinking about the mistake or what to say and how to say, then you won't say almost anything and in trying to say everything correct you're just going to mess it up so instead of that, with knowledge that you have and the vocabulary you have, so we give them a topic and have them talk about that. Uhmm try to create ,. Well if we say create a conversation that would be a not real conversation , so like put into a situation in which they can think and the based on that situation they can talk like in pairs or in groups and what I usually tell them is like for example I am going to give you a situation like here, here you go if you go to a party and you're going to meet someone there, you would never take a piece of paper an write it down the questions

you're going to ask. You just go straight the person you're going to ask in that moment you just go and then you say, so in the same way I am going to give you some situations even though they don't sound kind of real, but still you know, the point is don't write anything don't before [...] only in the moment and just like try to role play in some way that. Uhhh try to ..in the... what else. Let's see try to create a lot of pair work activities in some way to help them talk. Among the students sometimes [...] they have to do in front of the class for example but if they are like in a group so they can do it better. What I have seen for example in advanced also it's like those students when they are by themselves they talk more than when they are in front of the class[.....] sometimes it's necessary you know uhhm but most of the time it's not necessary, you're just monitoring them just see how they're doing and if they're talking and they perform really well sometimes.

R1: Q3a eh hh role plays I don't know if you do what other specific activities do you do like debates

T9: ohh ok. Case studies. There is a game called crack the case in which you give them a case and then they try to solve that problem. Uhhh I tell my students for example for the next class we're going to work on this and then bring a case. Obviously before that I give a case to the class, I interact with them so that they can see how's it going to be done. And the second thing uhhh are also stories. So I tell them I am going to tell you a real life story and then when I tell you the story what would you have done if you had been there like trying to figure out an imaginary situation in the past for example. Uhhh ok so we got case, stories, we also mentioned pair work but there is like a variety of activities that you can do doing pair work. What else.. ok debates are really nice that helps because they are actually getting involved in the activity because they want to win and they takes me to a competition also there is kind of like a difference between them but still that works very well. Uhhh what else.. oral presentations but that is kind of more formal but still even if you do oral presentations it's like for example you need to be careful what you actually grade them and then you need to tell them if you're actually working on fluency, then it's actually on fluency that you need to grade you know and not something else because then they'll be thinking about something else like my grammar is not correct why I am saying this, is this correct or not. That is what comes to my mind right now.

R1: Q4

T9: For example, what do you mean?

R1: Uhhh is there anything in common that those three activities have that you mentioned? The games, the role plays, the debates is there any common descriptor or characteristic that you can think of.

T9: Well the interaction for example because there is a lot of interaction in those activities. If you're talking about the case, they have to explain the case and the other students have to make questions to the person that told that case so that he would answer only yes or no because that is the only clue that he can give and based on that so they have to interact, that is the activity, interaction. And with the story maybe there is less interaction but still they're about if they had been in those positions what they would have done, what they could have done, what they

should have done and then that also makes them think and there is still an interaction but the interaction is kind of different because this one is in group and the other one is like to the whole class, the case study that is also called crack the case and when they do for example oral presentations what usually happens is that they give the oral presentation but the students also need to think about questions that they can ask them related to the topic to see if they really know more and also we can also measure the questions that the students are asking in those activities

R1: Q5

T9: Hmm as often as you can

R1: Q5a

T9: I mean like it should be at least one per class

R1: One per class

T9: yeah that actually helps the students to feel kind of like freer, more relaxed when they have to talk . builds more confidence in themselves when they have to say , want to say something knowing that the teacher is not actually grading like mistakes, but only trying to help them speak more. If you have the time.

R1: If you have the time. Of the 120 mins Q5b

T9: Wow that's hard ..

R1: on average I know that's not easy.

T9: I have never measured that really. But a percentage you said.

R1: Yeah on average.

T9: Well you know I am just trying to work more on that and as especially aware that we are dealing with advanced in some way and try to put that in my mind even though that is not the reality, but in some way but still that is my context so at least I do try to have at least 25%

R1; 25% of the time dedicated to that. Ok, ok. We're finished. Thank you.



## Appendix G

### OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

OBSERVER:.....

DATE:.....

TEACHER OBSERVED:.....

<b>AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SPEAKING FLUENCY ACTIVITIES: PLANNING AND CLASSROOM APPLICATION</b>		
<b>PRE-TASK</b>	<b>DONE (Yes/No)</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
The teacher provides clear instructions		
The teacher models the speaking fluency activity before students work on their own		
The teacher reminds the students of the use of conversation strategies		
The teacher sets up groups/pairs to develop the activity.		
Students are given time to prepare before speaking.		
<b>During the Task</b>	<b>DONE (Yes/No)</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
The teacher monitors the speaking fluency activity		
The teacher gives feedback at the end of the speaking fluency activity.		
The teacher maintains the flow of the activity		
Students work in pairs/ groups		
All students participate in the activity and nobody monopolizes it		
Students talk about familiar and engaging topics		

The fluency activity flows without any interruptions or pauses.		
<b>Post-Task / Others</b>	<b>DONE (Yes/No)</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
The teacher gives general feedback after the speaking fluency activity		
The teacher creates a positive learning environment		
The teacher does a speaking fluency activity during the class hour		
The teacher does more than one speaking fluency activity during the class hour		
Students seem to be familiar with speaking fluency activities.		
Students talk in response to reading a text hearing a recording, watching a video , answering a question or other		
<b>Characteristics of the task</b>	<b>Done (Yes/No)</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
The task requires some spontaneous speech		
The task is authentic		
The task has an element of time pressure		
Tasks type: debate, discussion, role play , just a minute, picture description or other		
Interaction is required for the task		

