
ESTRATEGIAS INTERACTIVAS PARA EVALUAR LA EXPRESIÓN ORAL EN INGLÉS PARA ESTUDIANTES DE LAS INSTITUCIONES DE EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR - PROVINCIA DEL CARCHI

INTERACTIVE STRATEGIES TO EVALUATE ORAL EXPRESSION IN ENGLISH FOR STUDENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF CARCHI.

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EDISON BOANERGES PEÑAFIEL ARCOS

Magister en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés. Magister en Educación y Desarrollo Social, Ingeniero de Empresas. Licenciado en Administración de Empresas Privadas. Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación Especialidad Inglés. First Certificate in English Level B2 Universidad de Cambridge-Londres.

Trabajó como auditor y administrador de empresas en la Compañía Arthur Andersen, Consultora Industrial, Productos el Chinito Cía. Ltda., Fundación Sara Espíndola, Centro Comercial Jardín del Norte, Cooperativa de Ahorro y Crédito Tulcán.

Se ha desempeñado como docente en el Colegio San Antonio de Padua, Academia American Language Center, Universidad Tecnológica América y Docente Titular en la Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi desde 1999.

STALIN GUSTAVO CEVALLOS LEITON

Magister en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés.

Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación Especialidad Inglés

Diplomado en Docencia Universitaria – Universidad Técnica de Ambato

Se ha desempeñado como docente de Inglés en la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (11 años), Colegio “Sagrado Corazón de Jesús” (1 año), Colegio “Hermano Miguel La Salle” (1 año), Universidad Politécnica Estatal Del Carchi (4 años – en diferentes períodos)

ESMERALDA CARMITA BASTIDAS PARRA

Magister en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Idioma Inglés.

Magister en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del idioma Inglés por la Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador. Diplomado Superior en Investigación de la Educación a Distancia por la Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes. Diplomado Superior En Ciencias de la Educación

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por la Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes. Licenciada en Ciencias de La Educación, Mención: Inglés por la Universidad Central del Ecuador.

Ha laborado como docente en el Instituto Bolívar, Instituto Sagrado Corazón de Jesús, Coordinadora del Área de Inglés y docente en la Universidad Regional Autónoma de los Andes, docente en Universidad Politécnica Estatal de Carchi. Actualmente docente en SENESCYT, Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro.

Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi (UPEC) – Ecuador.

edisonpenafiel@yahoo.com

gustiacele@hotmail.com

Docente en SENESCYT, Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro - Ecuador.

esmebas@hotmail.es

Resumen

Las estrategias interactivas que desarrollan y evalúan la expresión oral en el idioma inglés constituyen un conjunto de actividades que permiten al estudiante apartarse de las presentaciones memorizadas y optar por el trabajo en parejas o grupal que propicie la comunicación participativa. Los objetivos de esta investigación son describir algunas estrategias interactivas sugeridas por expertos en este campo y averiguar con qué frecuencia son usadas en las instituciones de educación superior en la provincia de Carchi: Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi, Universidad Regional Autónoma de Los Andes y el Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro. En cuanto al tipo de investigación, se utilizó el método descriptivo porque es apropiado en el campo de las ciencias sociales y permite a los investigadores describir situaciones y eventos. Con respecto a los métodos de estudio empírico, también llamados técnicas generales de investigación, este estudio aplicó la encuesta como un medio para obtener información primaria. Las tres instituciones de educación superior mencionadas utilizan actualmente libros publicados por la empresa National Geographic Learning. La Universidad UPEC también utiliza textos de la Cambridge University Press. Estos textos desarrollan fluidez en el inglés americano y británico a través de diálogos, descripción de imágenes, textos y videos del mundo real. Además, los estudiantes tienen la oportunidad de realizar trabajos autónomos en plataformas

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virtuales. La principal conclusión obtenida fue: el material didáctico es apropiado para implementar la mayor parte de las estrategias propuestas en esta investigación para desarrollar la expresión oral. Sin embargo, algunas de estas estrategias no se utilizan o no se aplican permanentemente.

Palabras clave: *estrategias interactivas, expresión oral, frecuencia, evaluación.*

Abstract

Interactive strategies to develop and evaluate oral expression in English language constitute a set of activities that allow students to move from memorized presentations and opt for pair-work or group-work which encourages participatory communication. The objectives of this research are to describe some interactive strategies suggested by experts in this field and to find out how often they are used in institutions of higher education in the province of Carchi: Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi, Universidad Regional Autónoma de Los Andes and Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro. Regarding the type of research, the descriptive method was used because it is appropriate in the field of social sciences and allows researchers to describe situations and events. With respect to empirical study methods, also called general research techniques, this study applied the survey as a means to obtain primary information. The three higher education institutions mentioned before currently use books published by the National Geographic Learning. UPEC University also uses texts from the Cambridge University Press. These texts develop fluency in American and British English through dialogues, description of images, texts and videos of the real world. In addition, students have the opportunity to perform autonomous work on virtual platforms. The main conclusion obtained was: the teaching material is appropriate to implement most of the strategies proposed in this research to develop oral expression. However, some of them are not used or are not permanently applied.

Key words: *interactive strategies, oral expression, frequency, evaluation*

1. Introduction

This research was carried out to present trustworthy information regarding the development and evaluation of English oral expression which has been considered the most stressful skill of a foreign language. This source of anxiety lies in students' limited ability to hold a conversation; for that reason they only memorize dialogues in class (Pawlak, Wanic, & Majer, 2011). This anxiety is not only present in students but also in non-native teachers who commonly avoid conversational activities (Litlewood, 2007)

English teachers usually mostly take oral lessons to determine the domain of their students' speaking productive skill. This fact poses a problem because it stops students from developing oral expression properly. According to some authors (Litlewood, 2007; Pawlak, Wanic, & Majer, 2011), both students and even teachers, especially non-native, feel fear and distrust when talking because they realize their foreign language limitations. This research proposes alternative strategies to foster and evaluate oral expression based mainly on biographic contributions of several experts on the

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subject.

Assessment has been considered as the most sensitive and important aspect in education because it allows teachers to accredit learning and promote students to their next level. However, traditional forms of assessment called tests affect learning negatively and are still present everywhere (Broadfoot & Black, 2004). These traditional forms of assessment, according to Santos (1988), are decontextualized, competitive, stereotypical, and quantitative, use inappropriate assessment tools, only control discipline and do not apply self- evaluation, peer evaluation and meta-evaluation. Moreover, Betancur (1976) through a survey found out that students think their teachers are rarely fair and their scores are subjective.

How to teach oral expression is still under debate because it lacks empirical data (Horwitz, 2008). Furthermore, to evaluate oral expression may become difficult since it requires the analysis of many components, such as vocabulary, grammar, semantics and phonology and for a more accurate evaluation must be taken into account the use of communication strategies, linguistic structures, and socio-cultural competence. (Nunam, 1991).

The goals of this research are to describe some interactive strategies that develop and evaluate students` oral expression as well as its use among students of English who study in High Education Institutions in the province of Carchi. It is presumed that some of these activities are not well known by English teachers or are not frequently used in class. A survey was conducted to prove this hypothesis.

2. Materials and methods

As for the type of research, the descriptive method was used because it is appropriate in the field of social sciences and allows researchers to describe situations and events; That is to say, under what circumstances a certain phenomenon is manifested. (Dankhe, 1986) considers that descriptive studies specify the important properties of people, groups, communities or any other phenomenon that is subject to analysis.

This research was carried out in three institutions of higher education of the Province of Carchi: Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi, Universidad Regional Autónoma de Los Andes y el Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro. The students surveyed belong to level A1 and A2 of linguistic domain because their level of knowledge is pertinent to the proposed strategies. All students were surveyed: 280 students of UPEC, 300 of Uniandes and 500 of ISVF.

With regard to the methods of empirical study, also called general research techniques, this research applied the survey as a means to get primary information. The choices were aimed to determine the frequency with which students use interactive strategies to improve their oral expression. Moreover, this research disclosed the scientific criteria of a group of researchers whose information was obtained from different virtual libraries, mainly EBSCO, Taylor & Francis, to determine the theoretical fundamentals that support the proposed investigation.

3. Results and discussion

Speaking is a productive skill which is developed through listening and reading. It means that

if people do not read or listen, they will not be able to speak. For Chaney & Burk (1998) speaking not only involves verbal communication but it also implies gestures which match with utterances and help the interlocutors' understanding. Other authors as Pierce & O'Malley (1996), define speaking as the human beings' capacity to communicate with others through sounds produced with the mouth, in order to interchange messages and negotiate meaning, taking into account their contexts.

Because speaking has been considered of vital importance for communication, some researchers have put special attention to its development. Bruks (1999) ensures that monitoring speaking is the best way to know the student's learning development. Castañeda & Rodriguez (2011) point out that learners become more active and give teachers more responsibility if they practice their oral target language. Lazarton (2001) declares that only people who know the language will be able to communicate.

On the other hand, some authors point out that speaking is harder than any other skills. Some reasons that support this assertion are:

- Nunam (2003) states that in order to speak, users need accuracy without having time to hesitate. This means to deal with discourse, syntax, morphology, and phonology.
- Pawlak, Wanic, & Majer, (2011) manifest that speaking is considered to be the most stressful skill in learning a foreign language, because of the limited ability to hold a conversation; consequently, students, most of the time, memorize dialogues in class.
- Littlewood (2007) found that English is not spoken in class because teachers, especially the ones who are not native, evade speaking activities due to their limitations and anxiety.
- Horwitz (2008) says that researches do not agree about how to teach speaking. That implies they are still discussing this matter.

Fluency and accuracy are the speaking components that need each other to communicate naturally. A person can be accurate but not fluent, or fluent but not accurate, making grammar mistakes (Nation, 1989). In this regard, Underhill (2005) declares that liaison, rhythm, and reductions give a good flow and neutrality. Pierce & O'Malley (1996) point out that contractions, reductions, and ellipsis may reduce accuracy. Therefore, to reach fluency and accuracy in speaking, it is needed balance between speed and quality of the utterances, interacting together in order to get flow in communication. (Torres, 2008).

Fluency. A practical concept of fluency is given by Torres (2008, p. 44), who defines it as "the ability to use the language spontaneously and confidently and without undue pauses and hesitations". In other words, fluency requires to speak as a native. To achieve this aim, non-native speakers need to acquire a great range of vocabulary and precise grammatical structures. As a consequence, in order to increase fluency, Nation (1989) found that if learners repeat the oral tasks, they could improve fluency and accuracy but they should not be interrupted during their performance.

Accuracy. Yuan & Ellis (2003) (as cited in Rahnama, Rad, & Bagheri, 2016) mention that accuracy is "the extent to which the language is produced according to language norms" (p. 3). These norms cover the main linguistic elements, such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

Other authors like Ano (1998) points out that accuracy includes something more than linguistic skills; that is, accuracy in speaking should take into account the kind of person, the genre (male or female), the topic, and the situation. Furthermore, to have accuracy in a conversation it must be included the socio-linguistic and pragmatic competences. The same author clarifies that accuracy in speaking depends much on the social group. For instance, some teenagers use words that adults do not understand; therefore, there is not accuracy in their utterances.

3.1 Linguistic elements involved in speaking

The speaking skill embraces linguistics, socio-linguistics, and pragmatic competences; being the linguistics ones the fundament base of a language which highlights four main components: discourse, syntax, morphology, and phonology; they also include other elements such as text, utterance, clause, phrase, word, morpheme, phoneme, and the suprasegmental elements (rhythm, intonation, and stress) Nunam (2003, pp. 51, 52). The following figure shows the speaking areas and elements clearer.

The linguistic elements involved in speaking are explained below.

3.1.1 Discourse is a general term for examples of language use, i.e. language which has been produced as the result of an act of communication. Whereas grammar refers to the rules a language uses to form grammatical units such as clause, phrase, and sentence; discourse normally refers to larger units of language such as paragraphs, conversations, and interviews. (Longman Dictionary, p.160)

3.1.2 Syntax is related to grammar and deals with how words are put together to build phrases, how phrases are put together to build clauses or bigger phrases and, how clauses are put together to build sentences” (Miller, 2008, p.1)

3.1.3 Morphology is the study of a language and tries to discover how it is formed. Morphology analyzes the morpheme which is the smallest unit of language that conveys meaning. Examples of morphemes are suffixes, prefixes, infixes which can be inflectional and derivational. (Miller, 2008)

Other concepts directly related with speaking are given by Nunam (2003, pp. 51, 52)

- Utterance is a word, phrase/s or sentence/s that someone says. An utterance may be grammatically structured or not. For example, it can be asked, would you like a cup of coffee? Or only, coffee?

- **Phrase** is a set of words without a subject-verb considered as tense. There are verbal phrases, noun phrases, and others, but in sentences the most important is the verb.
- **Clauses** are sentences that are included in larger sentences and can be divided in dependent

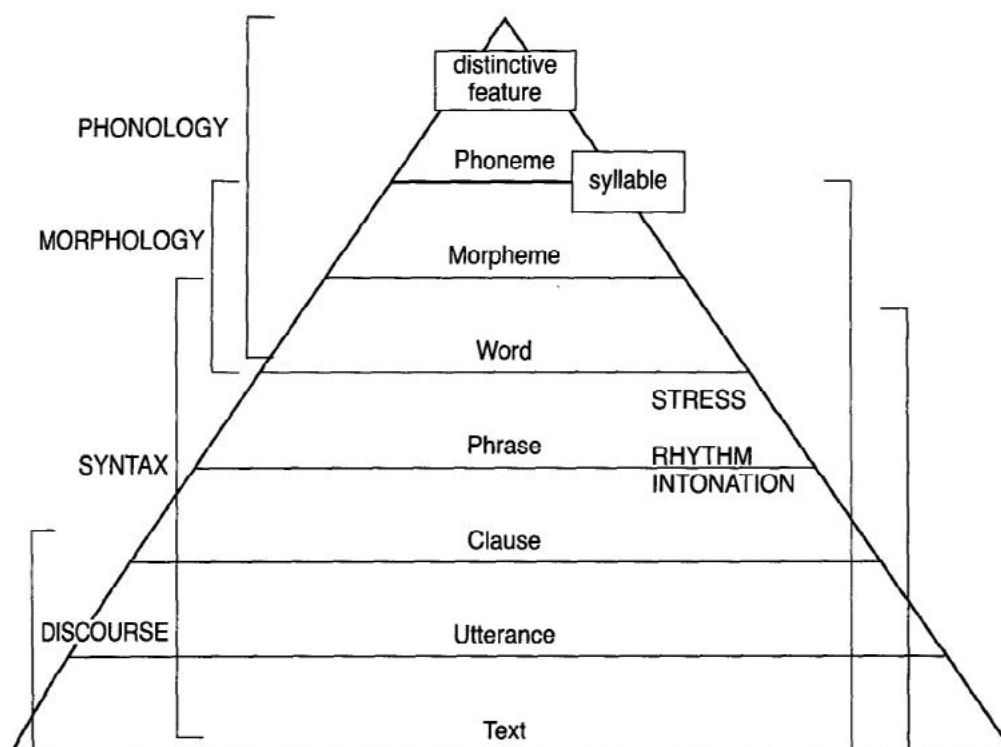


Figure 1. Speaking Components
Source: (Nunam, Practical English Language Teaching, 2003, p. 51)

or independent clause, that is, if the clause is able to be alone, it is called independent clause otherwise, it is dependent.

- **Morpheme** is a word in which may be added affixes; if the word does not have affixes, it is called free morpheme; but if it has affixes, it is called bound morpheme. For instance, the word ‘helpful’ is a bound morpheme (help – ful) and has seven phonemes (h-e-l-p-f-u-l).
- **Phoneme** is a vowel or consonant called segmental, because each one can be studied alone. For example, the phonemes /p/ and /b/ are confused, especially for non-native speakers because /b/ is vibrated and /p/ is not vibrated.

3.1.4 Pronunciation (Phonology)

According to Underhill (2005) “Pronunciation is the physical side of language, involving the body, breath, muscles, acoustic vibration and harmonics.” It means that pronunciation is not only the capacity to articulate words, but it includes other features, for instance, physical, visual, aural, spatial, affective, and intellectual. In addition, Torres (2008) states that “Pronunciation is the act of speaking clearly and correctly and being understood by those around the speaker” (p. 32). What is more, this author affirms that foreign English learners can pronounce better if they are conscious of the features involved in pronunciation; consequently, teachers should teach pronunciation holistically or integrally, not phonetically, and they should explain their students the suprasegmental characteristics of pronunciation.

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Pronunciation is constituted for segmental and suprasegmental features. However, nowadays with the development of communicative approaches, suprasegmental features are given more importance.

The suprasegmental characteristics consist of **stress, intonation, and rhythm**.

Stress: has the following characteristics “loudness, pitch change and a longer syllable” (Kelly, 2013, p. 3). There are four kinds of stress: primary, secondary, third, and low, represented by the following symbols ‘, ^, ˇ, ~; but in English one word can have only primary and secondary stress. The first one has stronger stress than the second. For example, the word “impermissible” \ ^im-pər-’mi-sə-bəl\ has primary and secondary stresses. Furthermore, one-syllable words sound strong in isolation but weak in connected speech. (Rainey, Chamot, & Baker-Gonzalez, 2002).

Hence, some words can change their meaning depending on the stress, for example, ‘export is a noun which has stress in the first syllable, different from ex’port that is a verb because it has stress in second one. Moreover, derivative words (words that change meaning when they are added affixes) may also change meaning when they change stress, for instance, ‘photograph, pho’tographer, photo’graphic, photo’graphically. (Underhill, 2005)

Additionally, **compound words** are formed by two words sometimes separated, and in other cases joined or hyphenated; when the compound word has two separated words, the second word is stressed, for example, town ‘center; by contrast with the compound word that is joined or hyphenated, the first word is stressed, e.g., ‘hand-bag. (Stanberg, 1981)

When words are connected in speech the word stress is called accent and sentence stress prominence. The accent is determined by the language while the prominence is determined by the user; consequently, the accent determines the rhythm and prominence of intonation. In other words, rhythm depends on the word stress and intonation depends on the user’s utterances, which are influenced by their context and mood. (Kelly, 2013)

Rhythm is a set of sounds forming an audio pattern that is defined by regular intervals of phonemes, syllables, or accents depending of the language utterances. (Wagner, 2008). Languages have different rhythms, for instance, Spanish rhythm pattern is based on the number of syllables different from English which is based on the number of accents. To sum up, English is stress-timed language and Spanish, syllable-timed language. (Stockwell & Bowen, 1973)

That implies that English speakers take the same time saying utterances with different amount of syllables but the same amount of accents, so English speakers reduce weak vowel sounds to attain this stress-timed. In other words, if these two utterances (1. you they friends; 2. you and they are friends) are pronounced by an English native speaker, the timing is the same because the weak forms, “and, are”, are reduced to a neutral sounds /ə/, /v /, /I/ which increases speed in pronunciation. This weak forms are produced in connected speech but in isolation they are strong (Kelly, 2013). For example:

	Stron	Weak
you	/ju:/	/jʊ /
she	/ʃi:/	/ʃɪ/
and	/ænd/	/ən/

As can be noticed in English, there are some words that have strong stress and others do not. The stress words are generally content words and carry out the main part of the meaning, e.g., main verbs, adjectives and adverbs. By contrast, the unstressed/weak words are function words and have less meaning, for example, articles, pronouns conjunctions, prepositions, and auxiliary verbs. (Andriyani, 2016; ESLprintable.com, 2010).

In conclusion, Spanish and English have different rhythms; therefore, if students, whose mother tongue is Spanish, want to foster their communicative skills, they should master the rhythm of their target language. The differences between English and Spanish rhythm can be summarized in the following chart.

Intonation. A simple definition given by Stockwell & Bowen (1973) says that intonation consist of a series of significant pitch levels occurring at certain points in the phrase. These significant pitch levels, which represent high or low tones of the speech, joined with gestures convey attitudes, feelings, and thoughts that give as much information as the utterances. That is to say, it is not important what people say but the way the say it. (Kelly, 2013)

In this regard, an utterance without context can have many meanings. Depending on rising or falling intonation, the utterances can show questions, irony or sarcasm. This may be learned with exposure and practice. Moreover, intonation matches with social conditions and culture; hence, people with different socio-cultural conditions originate different dialects (Torres, 2008)

Furthermore, every utterance intonation has its tone unit that can be a word or sentence. This basic element of intonation has a tonic syllable that conveys the most important of the message. So, speakers can raise or fall the pitch of the tonic syllable according to their intentions. For example, the utterance “I never take your **clothes**” means I (stressed word) do not take but maybe other person does. “I never take your clothes” means I never take your clothes (stressed word) but I do take other of your things. (Nunam, 2003)

Lastly, it is convenient to clarify the differences between pitch and tone because these two terms are almost similar showing the degree of sounds, highness or lowness, with the only difference that the tone includes emotion. (Stockwell & Bowen, 1973)

Simplification in connected speech.

English native speakers, in connected speech, use a lot of simplification and word reductions making this language hard to understand, especially by students who are starting to learn it. For Underhill (2005) the most common simplifications are:

Assimilation

Assimilation is the influence of the neighbor sound causing its variation. For instance, in the phrase “good boy” the consonant sound “d” changes to “b” in connected speech. The phonemes depict it clearer.

Good boy \Longrightarrow \Longrightarrow /gɒd bɔɪ/ in isolation /gɒb bɔɪ/
in connected speech

Elision

Elision is the omission of a phoneme in connected speech. For example, in the phrase “next please” the phoneme “t” is omitted in connected speech.

Next please /nekst pli:z/ \Longrightarrow in isolation /neks pli:z/ \Longrightarrow i n
connected speech.

Liaison

Liaison is produced when two words are pronounced as one. It is very common in English because the last consonant joins with the following vowel and can be pronounced as one word. e.g., in the phrase “car accident” the consonant “c” joins with the vowel “a” in connected speech.

Car accident /kɑ:r 'æk-sɪ-dənt / in isolation /kɑ:r'æk-sɪ-dənt/ in connected speech.

Moreover, there is a kind of liaison called intrusive that consist in inserting a sound between two words, such as intrusive /r/, /w/, and /j/.

Contractions

It occurs when two words are pronounced as one and sounds as a single syllable. It means that sounds are omitted (elision) and this fact occurs in writing too where an apostrophe is used instead of the omitted letter/s. Common contractions are between the pronouns and the auxiliary verbs or verb be. For instance, I am = I'm, you have = you've, he will = he'll.

There are other contractions which are casual and informal but they are very used by native speakers. For example, where did = where'd, what does = what's, got to = gotta, going to = gonna, what are/did/do you = watcha. (King, 2014).

Juncture

Juncture is produced when the boundaries of two different phrases sound similar creating ambiguity or confusion. For instance, the phrases “grey tapes – great apes” sound similar but they are different.

Vowel reduction: schwa sound

Kelly (2013) considers really significant to know a neutral vowel sound called ‘schwa’ /ə/ because it is very common among native speakers and because the majority of students whose mother tongue does not have this sound, cannot distinguish it. Schwa sounds can be produced with all vowels when the syllables are weak/unstressed. For example, the word can /kən/ when it means ability is heard “cn”. What is more, British people frequently use the schwa sound /ər/, e.g., father, never, better, etc. In longer utterances occurs the same. For instance, in the sentence “There was a call for you” the only clear word to hear is “call” because of its stress, the others are weak sounds and are not clear. For that reason, it is difficult to understand native speakers. (Linguaspectrum, 2011)

3.2 Strategies/activities to develop oral expression

According to (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010) several speaking activities can be performed individually, such as oral report and speech, but most of the time they are found in interaction with others, especially with listening, because it is difficult to separate listening from speaking. Complementary, O’Malley & Pierce (1996) claim that “tasks should be designed to challenge the proficiency level(s) of your students without frustrating them” (p. 69).

Some researchers propose the following alternative strategies to develop and evaluate oral expression.

3.2.1 Picture-cue description

Taking into consideration that most students are visual and pictures can say much more than words, picture-cue description is a great option to elicit students’ information and avoid memorizing. However, it is important to choose pictures carefully because these may be ambiguous, complex or too simple. O’Malley & Pierce (1996) claim that Picture cue description is the most common assessment activity that could be performed individually and is suitable for students from beginner or intermediate level and its main functions are: describing, giving information or giving opinion.

With the purpose of making picture-cue descriptions more interesting, they should be prepared according to the students’ age to catch their attention; they should be involved in doing these tasks developing speaking as much as possible using open questions in order to avoid professors talking too much. (Brown & Yule, 1983)

Picture-cue descriptions tasks may be simple; for example, describe single pictures mentioning colors, objects, people, etc.; or more difficult, asking to order a story, inferring, or describing what is happening in each situation. The assessment of this activity ought to be done at the end of the task through an appropriate rubric scale. If professors do not use rubric scale, they could assess other criteria such as creativity instead of oral assessment. (O’Malley & Pierce, 1996)

3.2.2 Oral interview

O'Malley & Pierce (1996) claim that oral interview is an assessment activity that could be performed individually or in pairs and is suitable for students from all levels. Its main functions are: describing, giving information or giving opinion.

To get this purpose the examiner must make a list of questions according to students' interest and level of difficulty. These questions should be planned to allow students to balance their interaction and avoid only one person dominate the conversation (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). For beginners, the topics may be related to family, friends, school, hobbies, food, etc. On the other hand, advanced students can be evaluated through an oral proficiency interview which asks for opinions and discussion. (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010)

Canale (1984) states that an effective oral interview has four stages: warm up, level check, probe, and wind down.

- Warm up is the stage in which both interviewer and interviewee introduce each other. The interviewer explains the methodology and tries to reduce anxiety making an easy conversation.
- Level check: the interviewer verifies the interviewees' level through questions that are suitable for the interview.
- Probe: interviewees are probed answering challenging questions in order to know their limits. This information may allow teachers to know students' strengths and weaknesses.
- Wind down: the interviewer provides information about when and where the interviewee will receive the results.

In order to provide timely feedback O'Malley & Pierce, (1996) consider that oral interviews can be assessed through a holistic or analytic rubric which offers detailed and valuable information on the student's performance.

3.2.3 Video clip

This activity is one of the most motivating ones because students love videos and technology. Students can spend hours watching videos because most of them are digital native and can do two or more things at the same time. Moreover, they are able to get information quickly; they prefer graphs and games instead of texts or serious work. All these features make them very different from their teachers who are digital immigrants and inclusive their brains may be changing. (Marc, 2001)

(Choi and Johnson, 2005) are cited by Lei Simon (2010, p. 32) who claim that video instruction is thought to be important in problem-based learning. Video instruction is able to convey characters, settings, and action in a more interesting way, as well as can portray more complex and interconnected problems. This technological tool enhances interactions and activities in a constructivist approach and boosts learning and comprehension. Moreover, there is a significant difference in learners' motivation in terms of attention between the video- based instruction and traditional text-based instruction. All in all, a critical attribute of video instruction is the ability to use both auditory and visual symbol systems which get students involved by acting out real situations that students can

relate to, and therefore give a clear picture of what they are trying to convey.

Keddie (2009) points out how useful YouTube is nowadays for language teachers. He affirms that teachers can find many sources of material for teaching English language in You Tube. Donaghy (2014) mentions some reasons why films are very important for teaching; they are motivating and enjoyable, provide authentic and diverse language, give visual context, there is a wide variety and are flexible. It means that teachers can teach through videos the four skills and save time.

The advantage of short videos is that they only last a few minutes, so students can watch again and again for a better understanding. Also, in order to focus students' attention, it is advisable to take notes about the video. Although there are countless videos, to select the videos that match with the topic, level, and interest of the students could be a hard task (Donaghy, 2014).

The evaluation of this activity should be done at the end of the task through an appropriate rubric scale. The most common form of evaluating video clips is through comprehension questions and the criteria that professors want to highlight (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

3.2.4 Role-play

Role-play is a group dynamics technique. It is also known as a technique of dramatization, simulation or role-playing. It consists of two or more persons who represent a specific situation or case of real life, acting according to the role assigned to them and in such a way as to make them more lived and authentic.

Although in this activity students take a role of another person, they act as in real life. It means that students express their utterances with the intonation and body language according to the assigned role. When students act with other identity, they reduce stress, increase confidence, and enhance motivation especially when these characters fit students' personality. On the other hand, if they dislike the assigned character, they can feel uncomfortable. (Luoma, 2004)

In addition, a role-play can be an enjoyable way of eliciting vocabulary that normally is not used for those people. In order to make a good performance, students need to rehearse before presentation (Luoma, Assessing Speaking, 2004). Besides, this activity provides additional and important information to the evaluator, which should be taken into account at the moment of assessing, such as the ability to deal with the situation and unpredictable answers. (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010).

3.2.5 Information gap

Information gap is one of the most useful activities to give information to other persons. It means that this activity should be performed in pairs and it is suitable for students from all levels. The two students have to ask each other questions to which they don't know the answer. Its main functions are: describing, giving information, and giving directions (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

O'Malley & Pierce (1996) identify three kinds of information gap: describing information in order to take a message, draw, or construct something; **finding differences on pictures, order story sequences, put together a jigsaw using oral language, giving directions of maps, giving**

instructions, guess the card, find your partner are examples of information gap activities. To develop them it is advisable that both listener and teller do not see their information each other and ask questions to clarify listener's doubts. Then, students can change roles (Brown & Yule, 1983).

Information gap does not need to solve a problem but connect the information; therefore, some aspects such as accuracy and clarity of the description, result of the reconstruction, listener's ability to follow instructions and complete the task should be taken into account at the moment of evaluating this activity. (Brown & Yule, 1983)

3.2.6 Story/text retelling

Retelling a text or story is similar to paraphrase, with the difference that paraphrasing is shorter than storytelling. To be successful, these tasks need to be appropriate to students' level and the vocabulary should be familiar to them because the task consists in retelling or paraphrasing a text or story in students' own words. Therefore, it is convenient that students write their own stories or teachers choose a well-known topic for them (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010)

The advantage of storytelling is that students have the opportunity to talk using their own utterances about stories/texts without questions that interrupt. They may talk about a sequence story or tell their personal ones. Moreover, if students have to retell texts/stories successfully, teachers must provide clear directions. (Luoma, 2003)

Story/text retelling can be used to evaluate listening understanding and talking; students are expected to describe the setting, characters, and sequence. Moreover, it is advisable to record students' performance to make a detailed assessment using an analytic or holistic rubric (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010)

3.2.7 Oral report

At the end of course students are asked to present a project named oral report or oral presentation (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010). This activity has the following features:

- The topic should be about the students' interest but it has to contain new and interesting information in order to generate opinions and discussion, and therefore, listeners should take notes to participate in the discussion (Melony & Thomsom, 1980)
- Students must prepare their oral report in advance with the teacher's guide who must clarify instructions in order to get an effective presentation which brings authenticity to this project. (Brown & Abreywickrama, 2010)
- Depending on the students' level, oral presentations may last between five to ten minutes and although this activity is more appropriate for advance students, beginners may participate with realia or describing objects. (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996)
- Slides, posters, cues can be helpful for oral presentations, but they should contain only key words which allow students to explain their topics and not only read slides. Moreover, in

this activity students have the opportunity to put into practice public speaking skills such as tone of voice, eye contact, and body language. (Melony & Thomsom, 1980)

- To evaluate oral presentations, it is convenient to specify the criteria and establish practical and reliable scoring procedures. Moreover, a checklist can be used to add some comments (washback) and ask for self-assessment.

947 students enrolled levels A1 and A2 at UPEC University for the term October-February 2018. A significant sample of 273 students was taken (level of confidence of 95%). The results are shown below.

The tabulation of results shows that **Role-plays** is the strategy most commonly used by Uniandes students (**64.5%** used it permanently) followed by **Oral reports (55.1%)**. The other strategies constitute a remaining percentage which needs to be incorporated in the process. This table is further evidence which confirms that not all students are proficient speakers. Not using interactive strategies can turn students into passive speakers whose performance will affect the class speaking goals and assessment.

For a confidence level of 95% a **sample of 198 students** were surveyed out of a population of 406 who enrolled in levels A1 and A2 at Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro for the term October – February 2018. The results were:

Table 1
Frequency of use of strategies that develop and evaluate speaking skill at Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi

Instrucción: Por favor, lea detenidamente y frente a cada actividad coloque una “x” para señalar la frecuencia con la cual su docente de Inglés utiliza dichas actividades para desarrollar y evaluar la destreza oral (speaking)												
N°	Institución: Universidad Politécnica Estatal del Carchi	Siempre		Frecuentemente		A veces		Rara vez		Nunca		Total %
		ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	
1	Picture description (descripción de imágenes/cuadros)	104	37.9%	114	41.8%	39	14.6%	10	3.8%	6	2%	100
2	Oral interviews (entrevistas)	58	20.9%	98	35.7%	82	30.2%	27	10%	8	3.2%	100
3	Role-plays (juego de roles)	67	24.8%	93	34.1%	69	25.6%	28	10.1%	16	5.4%	100
4	Video clips (fragmentos de videos)	106	38.8%	93	34.1%	57	20.9%	17	6.2%	0	0	100
5	Information gap activities (crucigramas, rompecabezas, dar direcciones, adivine la carta, encuentre a su compañero, etc.	64	23.3%	80	29.5%	72	26.4%	51	18.5%	6	2.3%	100
6	Story retelling (contar historias o narraciones)	49	17.8%	74	27.1%	81	29.5	49	17.8	20	7.8%	100
7	Oral reports (presentaciones / lecciones orales)	150	55%	70	25.6%	44	16.3%	9	3.1%	0	0	100

Source: survey conducted at UPEC University

Made by: authors

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Table 3
Frequency of use of strategies that develop and evaluate speaking skill

Instrucción: Por favor, lea detenidamente y frente a cada actividad coloque una "x" para señalar la frecuencia con la cual su docente de Inglés utiliza dichas actividades para desarrollar y evaluar la destreza oral (speaking)												
Nº	Institución: Instituto Superior Vicente Fierro	Siempre		Frecuente-mente		A veces		Rara vez		Nunca		Total %
		ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	ni	hi	
	Picture description (descripción de imágenes/cuadros)	44	22%	60	30.5%	77	39%	13	6.8%	4	1.7%	100%
	Oral interviews (entrevistas)	33	16.9%	33	16.9%	61	30.6%	47	23.7%	24	11.9%	100%
	Role-plays (juego de roles)	13	6.8%	67	33.9%	81	40.7%	20	10.2%	17	8.4%	100%
	Video clips (fragmentos de videos)	30	15.3%	60	30.5%	57	28.8%	40	20.3%	11	5.1%	100%
	Information gap activities (crucigramas, rompecabezas, dar direcciones, adivine la carta, encuentre a su compañero, etc.)	23	11.86%	50	25.42%	60	30.52%	38	18.64%	27	13.56%	100%
	Story retelling (contar historias o narraciones)	37	18.64%	47	23.73%	47	23.73%	44	22.04%	23	11.86%	100%
	Oral reports (presentaciones / lecciones orales)	67	33.9%	70	35.6%	40	20.3%	17	8.5%	4	1.7%	100%

Source: survey conducted at ITSUF

Made by: authors

Analysis: With regards to the activities that are always and frequently used, ISVF students were precise to note that Oral reports (**69.5%**) is the activity most commonly used to develop speaking, followed by Picture description (**52.5%**). The overall results show that the other activities are not used frequently. This fact determines the need to strengthen and implement these strategies proposed in this research, without neglecting many other strategies which can be used according to the teacher's class management and experience.

4. Conclusions

Researchers suggest that assessing speaking is more difficult than any other skills due to the lack of agreement to set qualitative and quantitative criteria. This fact leads to fall into subjectivity if teachers do not have enough knowledge or experience. Furthermore, assessing speaking must take into account several components related to linguistic, social, and pragmatic competences.

Applying alternative strategies to develop and assess speaking is worthwhile because language is a tool for communication and any gap in communication might end up in misunderstandings. Its use allows teachers to verify their students' progress, providing immediate feedback and increasing their motivation.

The three institutions of higher education that participated in this study use currently LIFE books published by the company National Geographic Learning. UPEC University also uses the EMPOWER text of the Cambridge English company. These texts develop fluency in American and British English through dialogues, description of images, texts and videos of the real world. In addition, students have the opportunity to perform autonomous work on virtual platforms. The teaching material is appropriate to implement most of the strategies proposed in this research to develop oral expression. However, some of them are not used or are not frequently applied.

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Table 4
Proposed rubric for interactive strategies that evaluate oral expression.

Name _____		Course _____		Date _____	
A2	GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY	PRONUNCIATION	DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT	INTERACTION	FLUENCY
4	All structures are used effectively and the student uses a wide range of vocabulary to conduct the topic. 2	It is generally clear enough to be understood. 2	All utterances are logical, have sense, and use a great range of connectors (effective coherence and cohesion) and match with effective use of body language and enthusiasm. 2	Asks and answer all longer utterances about the topic effectively . 2	Constructs phrases on the topic smoothly with natural pauses 2
3	Most of the structures are used appropriately (a few mistakes) and the student has sufficient vocabulary to conduct the topic. 1.5	It is generally clear enough to be understood but need to ask for repetition from time to time. (a few errors in pronunciation) 1.5	Most utterances are logical, have sense, use sufficient connectors (appropriate coherence and cohesion) and match with appropriate use of body language and enthusiasm. 1.5	Asks and answer most of questions exchanging short utterances about the topic appropriately . 1.5	Constructs phrases on the topic even though a few pauses, false starts, hesitation and reformulation are very evident 1.5
2	Some of the structures are used correctly (frequent errors) and the student uses some vocabulary and expressions to conduct the topic. 1	It is difficult to understand due to some errors in pronunciation (frequent errors) 1	Some utterances are logical, have sense, uses few connectors (vague coherence and cohesion), and match with vague use of body language and enthusiasm. 1	Asks and answers some of questions exchanging very short utterances about the topic 1	Constructs a few phrases in spite of presenting frequent Hesitations and showing some difficulty when speaking 1
1	Most of the structures are incorrect and the student only uses few isolated words 0.5	It is impossible to understand due to lots of problems with pronunciation 0.5	Most utterances are illogical , do not have sense, and expresses isolated words (inappropriate coherence and cohesion) and the student does not express body language or enthusiasm 0.5	Tries to ask and answer questions but cannot do it. 0.5	Hesitates too often and show great difficulty when speaking, which interferes with communication. 0.5

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Summarized version of the current speaking rubric used by the Foreign and Native English Center – UPEC

UPEC SPEAKING MARK SHEET				
NAME	_____			
DATE	_____			
TOPIC	_____			
QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE				
GRAMMAR AND VOCABULARY	Poor (0-1 points)	Average (1-1.5 points)	Very good (1.5-2 points)	Excellent (2-2.5 points)
DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT	Poor (0-1 points)	Average (1-1.5 points)	Very good (1.5-2 points)	Excellent (2-2.5 points)
PRONUNCIATION	Poor (0-1 points)	Average (1-1.5 points)	Very good (1.5-2 points)	Excellent (2-2.5 points)
INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION	Poor (0-1 points)	Average (1-1.5 points)	Very good (1.5-2 points)	Excellent (2-2.5 points)
TOTAL: /10 points				
<div style="border-top: 1px solid black; margin-top: 10px; text-align: center;"> TUTOR </div>				

Source: Foreign and Native Language cCenter_ UPEC

The tabulation of results shows that the Carchi State Polytechnic University has higher percentages in the use of the proposed strategies to develop oral expression of the students enrolled in levels A1 and A2.

5. Recommendations

While doing speaking activities, it is advisable to use rubrics. The rubric is a valuation matrix in which the criteria and indicators of competition are established by means of the use of scales to determine the quality of the student’s execution. It allows to obtain an approximate measure of the student’s performance.

At national level, the problem of learning English as a foreign language persists. It is essential to know and put into practice interactive strategies that develop the productive and receptive skills of this tongue, looking for activities that capture students’ attention and foster their motivation.

English teachers should update their knowledge in the teaching-learning process. To get this purpose, they must review the new strategies that foster meaningful knowledge of this language whose learning represents a complex process. The practices aimed to develop speaking must be aligned in a communicative and functional approach of this lingua franca.

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