

NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF NICARAGUA
UNAN

MATAGALPA



RESEARCH WORK OF GRADUATING SEMINARY TO GET A DEGREE IN
ENGLISH

Theme:

Methodology in the English teaching process at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.

Sub Theme:

Problems of the speaking and listening skills in 3rd, 4th and 5th years of the
English career at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.

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Matagalpa, March 26th 2006.

DEVELOPMENT

Learning to speak a foreign language requires more than knowing its grammatical and semantic rules. Learners must also acquire the knowledge of how native speakers use the language in the context of structured interpersonal exchange, in which many factors interact. Therefore, it is difficult for EFL learners, especially adults, to speak the target language fluently and appropriately. In order to provide effective guidance in developing competent speakers of English, it is necessary to examine the factors affecting adult learners' oral communication, components underlying speaking proficiency, and specific skills or strategies used in communication.

Speaking a language is especially difficult for foreign language learners because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions. Diversity in interaction involves not only verbal communication but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as pitch, stress, and intonation. In addition, non-linguistic elements such as gestures and body language/posture, facial expression, and so on may accompany speech or convey messages directly without any accompanying speech. In addition, "there is tremendous variation cross- culturally and cross- linguistically in the specific interpretations of gestures and body language" (Brown 1994:241).

Furthermore, different cultural assumptions about the purposes of particular interactions and expected outcomes of encounters also affect communication. Consequently, due to minimal exposure to the target language and contact with native speakers, adult EFL learners in general are relatively poor at spoken English, especially regarding fluency, control of idiomatic expressions, and understanding of cultural pragmatics. Few can achieve native-like proficiency in oral communication.

EFL learners need explicit instruction in speaking, which as any language skill generally has to be learned and practiced.

However, in practice, it is too often assumed that spoken- language skills can be developed simply by assigning students general topics to discuss or by getting them to talk on certain subjects. Evidently, not enough attention is given to the factors that inhibit or facilitate the production of spoken language.

Therefore, in order to provide guidance in developing competent speakers of English, instructors of EFL should keep these questions in mind:

- *What affects adult EFL learners' oral communication?*
- *What are the components underlying speaking effectiveness?*
- *And how can adult EFL learners' speaking abilities be improved?*

Concepts of Listening and Speaking

The Listening skill is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This involves understanding speaker's accent or pronunciation, his vocabulary and grasping his meaning.

Is the receptive skill in the oral mode. When we speak of listening what we really mean is listening and understanding what we hear.

The speaking skill is the productive skill in the oral mode. It, like the other skills, is more complicated than it seems at first and involves more than just pronouncing words.

Speaking means clear, concise and effective oral communication of arguments, concepts, emotions, feelings, ideas, problems and their solutions. Speaking as a core competencies, activities, and strategies for enhanced learning in General Education, within the linguistic environment in which communicative exchanges are occurring, consists of the ability to express orally one's thoughts, as well as reactions and responses to other's thoughts, in a manner that :

- Allows for accurate interpretation by others.
- Acknowledges and draws on such evidence and external sources of information as may be required by the situation.

- Is clear, concise, focused, relevant to the point or issue under consideration grammatically acceptable, syntactically appropriate, comfortably audible, and free of distracting vocal or other paralinguistic mannerisms.

Importance of Listening and Speaking

Both skills are important for communicating between Human Beings and nations. If one of these fail will fail the process of communication and the development of the world will stopped immediately.

As English students and teachers these are elemental to develop ourselves in our profession and for living. Being more specific most of the English Students at UNAN CURM are needing urgently to develop these skills because it is obvious that is not only enough to manage the reading and writing skills, to domain English as a foreign language and as English teachers.

Speaking in any language is all about imitating other people. We want to be able to speak like native speakers do. Before we can form our own sentences, the student first need to see lots of similar ones in the language that they are learning. When we speak in our native language, we don't have to think about the grammar or the words we use. Correct sentences just come to us. In fact, our brain uses sentences we have already seen or heard. If we want to speak a foreign language fluently, we have to learn it the way that we learned our native language by massive input.

Reading and listening will help to develop our language intuition. It's all about putting lots of correct sentences in our head. Then our brain can imitate them, producing similar sentences to express the meaning that we want. When we read and listen a lot, paying attention to useful vocabulary, we will soon start to use new words and phrases in our speaking and writing. Not only that, we will develop language intuition. We will start to feel what sounds good and what sounds ugly just as we do in our native language.

It may seem like we need more time to learn a language by reading and listening, as opposed to learning based on grammar rules. For example, to get a good feeling for the use of articles in English we need to read lots of sentences, analysing them closely. Wouldn't it be easier to read a unit on articles in a grammar book? Well, the problem is that it takes lots of time to build a sentence when we have to think of grammar rules. When we talk to someone, we don't have time for that. The input-based approach may seem to be more demanding, but it's the only way to achieve fluency.

The art of Listening and Speaking

Human Beings have the mental and physical conditions created to develop all the things that we want to do or hear and speak, would must be an art everything we do, including the faculty of speaking and listening. But not all the Human Beings are conscious about it. So, first thing we must do as Teachers or simply as individual is to be aware about this talent or gift and to show our students that they can do it also. Is something like to be open internally to achieve it and do it, inspite if the person has not the physical faculty to listen or speak. More than the physical faculty to listen and speak, is the internal disposition or attitude to do it.

The main purpose to develop the listening and speaking skills is give the student the complete ability to manage the language because most of them already are English teachers or will be teaching English soon.

To domain completely a language we need to develop four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. The main problem for the English students of the 3rd, 4th and 5th year on Saturday course is, the lack of fluency to speak and listen the language. This is a constant worry in students because some of them already are teaching English that in some way, they are achieving experience but most of the students are teaching other subjects or simply they are teachers in primary school and in few cases they don't teach at all.

During the process of communication occurs some kinds of situations in the listening and speaking abilities and these are:

LISTENING SITUATIONS:

There are two kinds of listening situations in which we find ourselves:

- *Interactive.*
- *Non-interactive.*

Interactive listening situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner.

Some non-interactive listening situations are listening to the radio, TV, films, lectures, or sermons. In such situations we usually don't have the opportunity to ask for clarification, slower speech or repetition.

Most of the English students can understand at the beginning of the career a little bit what the teacher is saying or other classmate, but they can't understand everything because don't know enough vocabulary and less speak with fluency because they haven't had this experience due to the most of the subjects are in Spanish instead being in English. For instance students of the 5th year began to have the experience of listening and speaking more English, face to face with their teachers in the classroom, until the 4th year, when most of the subjects are in English and students have to read long handouts, make summaries, memorize concepts and do expositions in the Target Language.

SPEAKING SITUATIONS:

There are three kinds of speaking situations in which we find ourselves:

- *Interactive.*
- *Partially interactive.*
- *Non-interactive.*

Interactive speaking situations include face-to-face conversations and telephone calls, in which we are alternately listening and speaking, and in which we have a chance to ask for clarification, repetition, or slower speech from our conversation partner.

Some speaking situations are partially interactive, such as when giving a speech to a live audience, where the convention is that the audience does not interrupt the speech. The speaker nevertheless can see the audience and judge from the expressions on their faces and body language whether or not he or she is being understood.

Some few speaking situations may be totally non-interactive, such as when recording a speech for a radio broadcast.

“By exposing students to authentic speech and giving them the opportunity to use it, we accomplish much. Richards (1983) considers both to be essential in developing listening comprehension. If students master the various norms, their speech sounds more English. Perhaps even more significantly, if they manipulate the norms properly, they are, in fact, “acting” more English” (Deborah Osborne is currently teaching freshman writing at Maui Community College, Hawaii, USA.

An able listener is capable of doing these things simultaneously. Willis (1981:134) lists a series of micro-skills of listening, which she calls enabling skills. They are:

- *Predicting what people are going to talk about.*
- *Guessing at unknown words or phrases without panicking.*
- *Using one’s own knowledge of the subject to help one understand*
- *Identifying relevant points; rejecting irrelevant information*
- *Retaining relevant points (note-taking, summarizing)*
- *Recognizing discourse markers, e.g., well; oh, another thing is; now, finally, etc.*

- *Recognizing cohesive devices, e.g., such as and which, including link words, pronouns, references, etc.*
- *Understanding different intonation patterns and uses of stress, etc. which give clues to meaning and social setting*
- *Understanding inferred information, e.g., speaker's attitude or intention.*

In our first language, we have all the skills and background knowledge we need to understand what we hear, so we probably aren't even aware of how complex a process it is. Here we will briefly describe some of what is involved in learning to understand what we hear in a second language.

Richards (1983, cited in) proposes that the following are the micro-skills involved in understanding what someone says to us. The listener has to:

- retain chunks of language in short-term memory
- discriminate among the distinctive sounds in the new language
- *Recognize stress and rhythm patterns, tone patterns, intonational contours.*
- *recognize reduced forms of words*
- *distinguish word boundaries*
- *recognize typical word-order patterns*
- *recognize vocabulary*
- *detect key words, such as those identifying topics and ideas*
- *guess meaning from context*
- *recognize grammatical word classes*
- *recognize basic syntactic patterns*
- *recognize cohesive devices*
- *Detect sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, prepositions, and the like.*

Most of the English students can understand at the beginning of the career a little bit what the teacher is saying or other classmate, but they can't understand everything because don't know enough vocabulary and less speak with fluency because they have

not had this experience. They begin to have the experience of listening and speaking face to face with the teacher.

An able speaker is capable of doing these things simultaneously. Here are some of the micro-skills involved in speaking:

- *Pronounce the distinctive sounds of a language clearly enough so that Use stress and rhythmic patterns, and intonation patterns of the language clearly enough so that people can understand what is said.*
- *Use the correct forms of words. This may mean, for example, changes in the tense, case, or gender.*
- *Put words together in correct word order.*
- *use vocabulary appropriately.*
- *Use the register or language variety that is appropriate to the situation and the relationship to the conversation partner.*
- *Make clear to the listener the main sentence constituents, such as subject, verb, object, by whatever means the language uses.*
- *Make the main ideas stand out from supporting ideas or information.*
- *Make the discourse hang together so that people can follow what you are saying.*

Languages are all about communicating with people and most communication is through speech. Yet curiously, speaking is often the one skill which is neglected, both in the classroom and when working independently. There are however various ways that you can improve these skills.

Face-to-Face

Clearly the best way to improve the speaking skill is to talk with a native speaker of the language, and the presence of native speakers in the University will represent an ideal opportunity to exchange conversation in the target language. This will greatly improve the fluency, although this should not be at the expense of accuracy. Making sure that the partner corrects the mistakes, or they could develop bad habits.

In five years of experience with this career, UNAN CUR MATAGALPA have developed only one activity of encounter between English students and native speakers from United States, United Kingdom and Canada, which was a nice and productive activity because they shared techniques to help increase the speaking skill in students and they had the opportunity to know how much is their understanding of the language. This was a very useful experience especially to motivate them to continue studying the English career.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF LISTENING AND SPEAKING

The most important aspect of these skills is that they are useful to set a communication in a fast way with other persons, for instance: in case of emergency with personal health problems or other kind of problems in any place, whether in Nicaragua or out of here. The person can establish contact immediately to ask or give help to someone. We can say this is a great advantage.

There are more opportunities to get a job if a person can understand and speak the language, for example practical jobs like: selling fruits, vegetables, minor things on the streets; to drive cars; to clean and care buildings, houses; to care children; to serve in a restaurant, including to be an occasionally interpreter of persons in a special situation. In other words, a job that not requires a great amount of grammatical knowledge or a high academic level.

Another advantage is for fun. These skills give us the opportunity to enjoy life in many ways, for instance: If we can understand English, perfectly we could catch immediately the content of a song and sing it; to laugh instantly when someone say a joke through the radio, a movie, talk show, etc. Enjoy a movie without subtitles in Spanish, or a good play. But especially, the simple things of life happening around us in our environment like understand what children are saying and asking to us.

There are some problems in listening that we can name them as disadvantages which are evidences that show why listening is difficult comes mainly from four sources: the message to be listened to, the speaker, the listener, and the physical setting.

The Message

+Content: Many learners find it more difficult to listen to a taped message than to read the same message on a piece of paper, since the listening passage comes into the ear in the twinkling of an eye, whereas reading material can be read as long as the reader likes.

The listening material may deal with almost any area of life. It might include street gossip, proverbs, new products, and situations unfamiliar to the student. Also, in a spontaneous conversation speakers frequently change topics. The content is usually not well organized. In many cases listeners cannot predict what speakers are going to say, whether it is a news report on the radio, an interviewer's questions, an everyday conversation, etc.

Messages on the radio or recorded on tape cannot be listened to at a slower speed. Even in conversation it is impossible to ask the speaker to repeat something as many times as the interlocutor might like.

+Linguistic Features: *Liaison (the linking of words in speech when the second word begins with a vowel, e.g., an orange/ən'ɔrɪndʒ/) and elision (leaving out a sound or sounds, e.g., suppose may be pronounced /spə'zəʊz/ in rapid speech) are common phenomena that make it difficult for students to distinguish or recognize individual words in the stream of speech. They are used to seeing words written as discrete entities in their textbooks. If listening materials are made up of everyday conversation, they may contain a lot of colloquial words and expressions, such as stuff for material, guy for man, etc., as well as slang. Students who have been exposed mainly to formal or bookish English may not be familiar with these expressions.*

In spontaneous conversations people sometimes use ungrammatical sentences because of nervousness or hesitation. They may omit elements of sentences or add something redundant. This may make it difficult for the listener to understand the meaning.

The speaker

Ur (1984:7) points out "in ordinary conversation or even in much extempore speech making or lecturing we actually say a good deal more than would appear to be necessary in order to convey our message. Redundant utterances may take the form of repetitions, false starts, re-phrasings, self-corrections, elaborations, tautologies, and apparently meaningless additions such as I mean or you know." This redundancy is a natural feature of speech and may be either a help or a hindrance, depending on the students's level. It may make it more difficult for beginners to understand what the speaker is saying, on the other hand, it may give advanced students more time to "tune in" to the speaker's voice and speech style.

Learners tend to be used to their teacher's accent to the standard variety of British or American English. They find it hard to understand speakers with other accents.

Spoken prose, as in news broadcasting and reading aloud written texts, is characterized by an even pace, volume, pitch, and intonation. Natural dialogues, on the other hand, are full of hesitations, pauses, and uneven intonation. Students used to the former kinds of listening material may sometimes find the latter difficult to understand.

The Listener

Foreign-language students are not familiar enough with clichés and collocations in English to predict a missing word or phrase. They cannot, for example, be expected to know that rosy often collocates with cheeks nor to predict the last word will be something like rage when they hear the phrase he was in a towering. This is a major problem for students.

Lack of sociocultural, factual, and contextual knowledge of the target language can present an obstacle to comprehension because language is used to express its culture (Anderson and Lynch 1988).

Foreign-language learners usually devote more time to reading than to listening, and so lack exposure to different kinds of listening materials. Even our college

Students majoring in English have no more than four hours' regular training per week.

Both psychological and physical factors may have a negative effect on perception and interpretation of listening material. It is tiring for students to concentrate on interpreting unfamiliar sounds, words, and sentences for long periods.

Physical Setting

Noise, including both background noises on the recording and environmental noises, can take the listener's mind off the content of the listening passage.

Listening material on tape or radio lacks visual and aural environmental clues. Not seeing the speaker's body language and facial expressions makes it more difficult for the listener to understand the speaker's meaning.

Unclear sounds resulting from poor-quality equipment can interfere with the listener's comprehension.

A beginner learner must deal with all these obstacles to understand clearly the situation that is occurring around him/her, for this reason these could name them disadvantages. But when a person gets more ability with the language, all these can be overcome in an easy way.

Factors that influence in Listening and Speaking

Power nations like United States of America, England but especially USA which is near to Nicaragua. In the economic aspect it represents an enormous influence over our country and our language.

Many Nicaraguan citizens including teachers, have decided to study English because it means to get the opportunity to overcome his/her status of life. It represents better opportunities to get a better job and increase their incomes if this ability is included for example into the Curriculum Vitae, or like translating documents, being an interpreter, teaching private class or teaching English in private centers where the salary is better than centers of the Government or Public Schools. There are a vast gamma of economical benefits for any person of any profession just if she or he knows English with fluency. In other words: To know English means Wealthy and this is such important to survive as Human Being who wants to overcome difficulties in life.

However, there are some specific factors that influence in the learning of the language like:

-Social Factors:

The ability to learn language is innate to human beings both physically and socially. As babies our brain have an incredible capacity to absorb information and especially elements of language. Even though this gradually declines towards the end of childhood, children up to the age of 12 can very easily pick up a new language in the environment for learning enables and motivates them. In order to learn language children need:

- 1- *A stimulation, playful and pleasurable environment that motivates and satisfies their need to explore and experiment.*
- 2- *An emotionally supportive environment that builds their confidence.*
- 3- *Constant verbal interaction and feedback with other human beings in the language or languages being learnt and its cultural context.*

In most cultures children have an additional advantage of song, story-telling or poetic oral traditions, that help to cement and broaden language skills. When these stories, songs or poems take a written form children advance more rapidly in learning to read and write the language they speak, and many experts in early childhood learning

recommend the introduction contents due to repetition and recognition of patterns of language.

This is what a Human Being needs in his/her first phase of life to learn a language. But we must take into account that students who are older have to enter another world with the new language. This means speaking all the time in the new language using, as much as possible, drawings and gestures to explain and associate meaning, and only as a last resort translation into their mother tongue.

English is the language which represents the prosperity of the rich nations therefore it means a great social influence in countries like ours where a good number of our inhabitants have left Nicaragua to go there for working and live in better conditions of life. Of course, most of the English students of the career, entered because they felt attracted to the English language for understand movies, songs, to understand and speak with tourists around the city, etc. Some cases to travel out of the country and fun. Some entered to study by invitation and casualty.

In this way, cultural aspects from the American society are transfered to our culture and the internal will of the nicaraguan people is more open to learn first English than other language. An example of this is, the tradition to celebrate "Halloween" at the end of October in United States, is well known and celebrated in Nicaragua lastly.

In the nicaraguan culture the same celebration is known as: "Death's Day" and is celebrated in different way; but now "Halloween" is known with this word and celebrated in the same american way also. For this, the cultural aspect is a main factor that influence socially in the speaking and listening skills.

Cultural characteristics of a language also affect L2 or foreign language learning. From a pragmatic perspective, language is a form of social action because linguistic communication occurs in the context of structured interpersonal exchange, and meaning is thus socially regulated (Dimitracopoulou 1990). In other words, "shared

values and beliefs create the traditions and social structures that bind a community together and are expressed in their language" (Carrasquillo 1994:55).

Thus, to speak a language, one must know how the language is used in a social context. It is well known that each language has its own rules of usage as to when, how, and to what degree a speaker may impose a given verbal behavior on his/her conversational partner (Berns 1990). Due to the influence or interference of their own cultural norms, it is hard for non-native speakers to choose the forms appropriate to certain situations. For instance, in Chinese culture, paying a compliment to someone obligates that person to give a negative answer such as "No. It is not so good," and so on in order to show "modesty," whereas in North American culture such a response might be both inappropriate and embarrassing.

In addition, oral communication, as mentioned above, involves a very powerful nonverbal communication system, which sometimes contradicts the messages provided through the verbal listening channel. Due to a lack of familiarity with the nonverbal communication system of the target language, EFL learners usually do not know how to pick up nonverbal cues.

As a result, ignorance of the nonverbal message often leads to misunderstanding. The following example is a case in point. One day, when a Chinese student heard, "Let's get together for lunch sometime," he immediately responded to fix a specific date without noticing the native speaker's indifferent facial expression. Undoubtedly, he was puzzled when his interlocutor left without giving him an expected answer. It is evident that the student had not understood the nonverbal message, which illustrates that the sociocultural factor is another aspect that affects oral communication greatly.

-Age or maturational constraints:

The interactive behavior of EFL learners is influenced by a number of factors. Perhaps age is one of the most commonly cited determinant factors of success or failure in L2 or foreign language learning. Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1982) argue that acquirers who begin learning a second language in early childhood through natural exposure

achieve higher proficiency than those beginning as adults. Oyama's study (1976) also shows that many adults fail to reach native-like proficiency in a second language. Their progress seems to level off at a certain stage, a phenomenon which is usually called "fossilization"-the permanent cessation of second language development.

This shows that the aging process itself may affect or limit adult learners' ability to pronounce the target language fluently with native-like pronunciation (Scarcella and Oxford 1992). Even if they can utter words and sentences with perfect pronunciation, problems with prosodic features such as intonation, stress, and other phonological nuances still cause misunderstandings or lead to communication breakdown. Adult learners do not seem to have the same innate language-specific endowment or propensity as children for acquiring fluency and naturalness in spoken language.

Aural medium:

The central role of listening comprehension in the L2 or foreign language acquisition process is now largely accepted. And there is little doubt that listening plays an extremely important role in the development of speaking abilities. Speaking feeds on listening, which precedes it. Usually, one person speaks, and the other responds through attending by means of the listening process. In fact, during interaction, every speaker plays a double role-both as a listener and a speaker. "While listening, learners must comprehend the text by retaining information in memory, integrate it with what follows, and continually adjust their understanding of what they hear in the light of prior knowledge and of incoming information" (Mendlsohn and Rubin 1995:35). If one cannot understand what is said, one is certainly unable to respond. So, speaking is closely related or interwoven with listening, which is the basic mechanism through which the rules of language are internalized.

The fleetingness of speech, together with the features of spoken English-loosely organized syntax, incomplete forms, false starts, and the use of fillers, undoubtedly hinders EFL learners' comprehension and affects the development of their speaking abilities, as well.

Affective factors:

"The affective side of the learner is probably one of the most important influences on language learning success or failure" (Oxford 1990:140). The affective factors related to L2 or foreign language learning are emotions, self-esteem, empathy, anxiety, attitude, and motivation. L2 or foreign language learning is a complex task that is susceptible to human anxiety (Brown 1994), which is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, and apprehension. Speaking a foreign language in public, especially in front of native speakers, is often anxiety-provoking. Sometimes, extreme anxiety occurs when EFL learners become tongue-tied or lost for words in an unexpected situation, which often leads to discouragement and a general sense of failure. Adults, unlike children, are concerned with how they are judged by others. They are very cautious about making errors in what they say, for making errors would be a public display of ignorance, which would be an obvious occasion of "losing face" in some cultures such as in China. Clearly, the sensitivity of adult learners to making mistakes, or fear of "losing face," has been the explanation for their inability to speak English without hesitation.

Methodology of Listening and Speaking

The 20th century has seen an immense amount of activity in language teaching methodology. Grammar Translation, the Direct Method, Audio-Lingualism—all preceded what some have called the Age of Methods, comprising most of the last decades of this century (Richards and Rodgers 1986). During this period a number of new methods clamored for attention and vied for adherents.

Inevitably a reaction set in to what some saw as scatter-fire approaches to language teaching, leading to an "anti-methods" view of language teaching methodology. Long (1989) stated that "methods don't matter because they don't exist"; Nunan (1991) supported criticisms of the profession and its preoccupation with methods; Brown (1994a) opined that "The era of methods is over"; and Woodward (1996) noted that the profession is now in a period of "post-method thinking."

Several alternatives were offered to the view that methods were at the heart of methodology. Brown (1994a) argued that methodology should comprise putting into practice certain general principles of good language teaching derived from research or observation. Another view was that methodology should build on conscious modeling by less experienced teachers of the practices of expert or experienced teachers, whatever these practices might be (Freeman 1992).

A late 20th century maxim of language teaching has been “Don’t teach about language, teach language.” Content-based instruction proponents say, “Don’t teach a second language, teach content in a second language.” But language appears to be the natural content for language teachers to teach. If we are not to teach about language (e.g., grammar), but are to teach content about something, what is the “about something” that we are supposed to teach? In most academic situations, language teachers are neither invited nor equipped to use a second language to teach mathematics, science, history, physical education, or other traditional academic content areas.

Some teach, in a second language, content, such as astrology that does not compete with the academic curriculum. This brings its own set of problems. If content is inherent in language use, and if content-based approaches to language learning and teaching seem to promise more effective routes to second language mastery, then we must ask ourselves what content is best for the language class. The natural content for language people is language itself and literature. We are beginning to see a resurgence of interest in literature and in the topic of language as “the basic human technology,” as sources of content in language teaching. More such attention will develop in the future.

The second question is “How much content?”. As in other ELT matters, there is often a polar, yes-> all-or-nothing approach to content-based approaches. Often there is a hidden assumption that language learning gains are only appreciable when content blocks comprise entire courses or blocks of courses, as in immersion or sheltered immersion teaching. However, much shorter blocks of interesting, meaning-structured units are also highly productive in language learning.

Samuel Johnson (1755), in the discussion of his plan for the famous Johnson dictionary, provides persuasive support for the use of individual sentences as content blocks. A major feature of the Johnson dictionary was the set of sentence quotations accompanying each word entry. These provided “special precedents” drawn from great writers. Johnson considered these sentences as necessary and sufficient contexts to exemplify the best use of word entries in speech and writing. Johnson’s practice of using sentence citations to show word meaning became standard for most of the major English dictionaries. So sentences, as Johnson proved, can be interesting, useful, and content-rich.

The centrality of L2 input as the driving force in language development is a product of the comprehensibility, interest, authenticity, and relevance of the input to the learner. Sentences and longer texts can be judged against these criteria. Consider the following sentences of somewhat parallel grammatical structure in terms of these criterial attributes.

Roger Ted have written about ten scenarios which may, individually and collectively, shape the teaching of second languages in the next decades of the new millennium. These speculations are presented in several brief outline sketches. I have given the millennial candidates identifying labels in a somewhat tongue-in-cheek style, perhaps reminiscent of yesteryear’s method labels.

These candidate predictions are as follows:

- 1. Teacher/Learner Collaboration: Using matchmaking techniques to link learners and teachers who have similar styles and approaches to language learning*
- 2. Method Synergistics: Crossbreeding elements of various methods to find those practices which best support effective learning*
- 3. Curriculum Developmentalism: Viewing methodology as an integrated component in a larger view of instructional design*
- 4. Content-Basics: Assuming that language learning is a by-product of a focus on meaning, on acquiring some specific topical content*

5. *Multi-inteligencia: Basing instruction on a “multiple-intelligences” view, in which different approaches play to different learner talents*
6. *Total Functional Response: Recon-structing the Notional/Functional idea with some new systemic twists*
7. *Strategopedia: Teaching learners the strategies they need so that they can learn on their own*
8. *Lexical Phraseology: Recrafting both the nature and substance of language learning (LL) to focus on lexical phrases and collocations*
9. *O-zone Whole Language: Engaging all aspects of language study—literature, language history, linguistic analysis, and so forth—in support of second language learning*
10. *Full-frontal Communicativity: Engaging all aspects of human communicative capacities —expression, gesture, tone, and so forth—in support of second language learning*

We want write this work what objectively happened with our teachers and us, during these five years of studies with them, without damage their images as professionals and Human Being, because we recognize that they are well prepared and they have done their best effort helping us in our training to become better English teachers and having the first experience with us as their students to conclude a program of five years of English studies. The experience has been good in two ways, because it has allowed us to grow. To them, as teachers at UNAN and to us, as Teachers in High Schools and some day in any University too.

Recently in the event of NICATESOL in August 2,005 at UCA in Managua, the presenters Gloria García and María Ivania Rodríguez suggested us through their work, the follow procedure for planning units of work in teaching Methodology: “Carefully prepare enabling activities, tasks and techniques useful to help the students to progress towards the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Remember to sequence logically each activity to establish what Piaget call “construction of progressively logical structures”. Involve the students in

engaging and challenging learning procedures. The most engaging and meaningful activities are those by which students are given an active role in the class. Always plan pair work in detriment of individual performances. It is also important to keep in mind the promotion of the four skills in all teaching units that you create.”

The Methodology used by the English teachers during all these years of the career at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA, have been the same that UNAN MANAGUA uses. Nevertheless, we must observe that the material resources are few or none to support the work that they do.

Teachers receive the program of the subjects that they will develop but don't receive the text books where they can consult and select the topics, exercises to their students. They have to reach them by other ways out UNAN, like their own libraries, or another libraries from other institutions or friends and internet. They photocopy the handouts that select from internet or some material (also photocopies) that they receive during their time of students at UNAN MANAGUA or another Academy. Thus, there is not a regular contact from the English Department of Managua with the Matagalpa's English Department to exchange experiences, to receive old or new materials and participate in courses of refreshment , or some new methodology training.

In this case, what they can get is material to develop the reading and writing skills but they can't get enough material or nothing to develop the listening and speaking skill. The few times that teachers have done activities with tape recorder has been because they bring the tape recored machine from their home and get some material to listen and practice some exercises. This is their own initiative. There is a new teacher who has brought a T.V., VHS by his own and showed educative videos to help students to develop their listening and speaking skill later in a discussion class.

This is his own initiative and all the time is speaking in English with students, encourage them to speak and practice the language, including during the break time and once in the holiday time in middle of the year , he gave a course to

students who wanted increase their grammar, vocabulary, understanding and fluency to speak and many students came to participate in this. This situation has been during 2,005. Of course each teacher has his/her own way of being and character and each one put a personal way of teaching and they have dedicated the best of them to transmit knowledge. However, it has not been enough to fill the great need to increase the development of the four skills in students.

There is another teacher who speak in English during her time of class and have tried to encourage students to speak through written exercises in class and homeworks, but it is obvious that students need more vocabulary to lose the fear to speak and feel confidence in themselves and to be more open to begin to participate more in class. But the other teachers sometimes are dynamic and ask students speak in English. They don't demand their students use the target language including when they want to know anything else out the topic of the class, they answer them in the native language too.

We wanted to know more about what would be the ideal situation and conditions to develop these skills with the English students of the career toward help them develop the four skills and we have found the following activities:

TEACHING FOR LISTENING ACTIVITIES

Listening is as important as reading. It's a bit more difficult, but also more beneficial it helps us improve our pronunciation and conversational skills. We can't speak if we don't develop the ability to listen to have a complete communication with others, this way learners will be able to understand what other are speaking to them. They will need a lot of experience listening in the target language.

When we learn a foreign language we should start to listen as soon as we can. This way we will get familiar with the sounds of the language. Learning pronunciation will be much easier for us.

If the student is a beginner will be useful audio recordings with transcriptions. Whenever we don't understand a word, check it in the transcription and look it up in the dictionary.

Listen to the same content repetitively, it's a good idea. Pick an interesting recording and listen to it lots of times. Making sure we can understand every single word of it. While listening, try to remember useful sentences, or even whole passages. Then practise saying them from memory, imitating the speaker's pronunciation. After while, we will notice that words and phrases from the recording become part of us. We will start using them in our own sentences. Our pronunciation and listening comprehension will surely improve too.

There are many different techniques and strategies to develop both skills which will help students learn in an easier way. We have among these:

- *Give them a simple listening task, e.g. a table of information for students to complete as they listen.*
- *Give them one or two guiding questions before the listening; students listen and find the answers.*
- *To help students listen:*

+ *Introduce the topic before, so that students are able to predict what they might hear. This simple activity encourages students to predict language for situations before they listen. It is closely related to question styles often found in EFL exams, but could be easily adapted for other listening work. Its main use is in listening skills development.*

- *Choose a lexical group, such as feelings, locations/places, types of people, jobs. For example:*
 - *Locations / places - A bank, a petrol station, a school, a hospital...*
 - *Jobs - A doctor, a shop assistant, a bus conductor, an office worker...*
 - *Feelings - Happy, excited, sad, disappointed, bored, fascinated.*

- *Place the students in small groups. Put each word on a separate piece of paper and put them in a pile for each group, face down.*
- *A student takes a slip of paper and says something that would be spoken in the context given by the piece of paper. The other students have to guess the context.*
 - *For example, a student picks the word 'doctor' and says, 'I'll give you these, and you need to take them twice a day, before meals.' The other students shout out the word 'doctor'. The fastest wins a point. The next student draws a card.*

You could use more than one context at a time, but be sure the students know which lexical sets are in use.

Once students are used to this kind of work, you should find that pre listening tasks such as 'Predicting the language used in an argument between a parent and a teenager' are more fruitful.

+ Divide the listening into stages:

a-students listen for main idea.

b- students listen again for details.

+If the listening text is long, divide it into sections, and check comprehension after each section.

Using a cassette recorder for intensive listening:

- *Play the whole text and check general comprehension.*
- *Play part of the text again, pausing after particular remarks to see if students could 'catch' what was said. If necessary, rewind the cassette a little way and play the remark again.*

With all these exercises the purpose is motivate students to be active participants in the development of their listening skills.

There are two basic listening processing skills known as “top-down” processing (using background knowledge and context) and “bottom-up” processing (using primarily the individual words uttered) are both extensively practiced.

Students develop essential listening skills through the interaction with others and their teacher, because communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas, it is an active process, it involves encoding, transmitting, and decoding intended messages.

There are some principles used for listening and these are:

Listening for a purpose: *Students are always given a clear purpose in listening. This purpose helps them select the appropriate listening strategy such as listening for key words or listening for information.*

Listening for a meaning: *Students listen for the main point of the speaker’s message. Students are taught that the aim is not to remember the specific words or phrases the speakers use but to extract the main ideas or information.*

Listening in realistic situations: *The listening activities are contextualized through illustrations and photographs. This visual support acts as a bridge between the classroom and the real world.*

Many students are poor listeners because they think it is important to try to understand everything the speaker says. To help develop better strategies for listening the exercises must contain a task that helps students identify a purpose for listening. This encourages students to ignore language that is not related to this purpose.

Students develop essential listening skills through the interaction with others and their teacher, because communication is the process of exchanging information and ideas, it is an active process, it involves encoding, transmitting, and decoding intended messages.

Some teachers think that listening is the easiest skill to teach, whereas most students think it is the most difficult to improve. This contradiction tells us that there are some things about teaching listening that need to be explored. Perhaps those who say it is “the easiest to teach” mean that it does not require much painstaking lesson preparation and all they need to do is play the tapes and test the student’s comprehension. But is there nothing more to teaching listening than testing? We must find out all we can know and these activities in our own classrooms.

TEACHING FOR SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

COMPONENTS UNDERLYING SPEAKING EFFECTIVENESS:

Language proficiency is not a unidimensional construct but a multifaceted modality, consisting of various levels of abilities and domains (Carrasquillo 1994:65). Hymes (1971) also assumes that L2 learners need to know not only the linguistic knowledge but also the culturally acceptable ways of interacting with others in different situations and relationships. His theory of communicative competence (1971) consists of the interaction of grammatical, psycholinguistic, sociolinguistic, and probabilistic language components. Built on Hymes' theory, Canale and Swain (1980) propose that communicative competence includes grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence, and strategic competence, which reflect the use of the linguistic system and the functional aspects of communication respectively. In the framework of Canale and Swain (1980), we can show graphically the abilities underlying speaking proficiency.

In addition, oral communication, as mentioned above, involves a very powerful nonverbal communication system, which sometimes contradicts the messages provided through the verbal listening channel. Due to a lack of familiarity with the nonverbal communication system of the target language, EFL learners usually do not know how to pick up nonverbal cues.

As a result, ignorance of the nonverbal message often leads to misunderstanding. The following example is a case in point. One day, when a Chinese student heard, "Let's get together for lunch sometime," he immediately responded to fix a specific date without noticing the native speaker's indifferent facial expression. Undoubtedly, he was puzzled when his interlocutor left without giving him an expected answer. It is evident that the student had not understood the nonverbal message, which illustrates that the sociocultural factor is another aspect that affects oral communication greatly.

Grammatical competence:

"Grammatical competence is an umbrella concept that includes increasing expertise in grammar (morphology, syntax), vocabulary, and mechanics. With regards to speaking, the term mechanics refers to basic sounds of letters and syllables, pronunciation of words, intonation, and stress" (Scarcella and Oxford 1992:141). In order to convey meaning, EFL learners must have the knowledge of words and sentences; that is, they must understand how words are segmented into various sounds, and how sentences are stressed in particular ways. Thus, grammatical competence enables speakers to use and understand English language structures accurately and unhesitatingly, which contributes to their fluency.

Discourse competence:

In addition to grammatical competence, EFL learners must develop discourse competence, which is concerned with inter-sentential relationships. In discourse, whether formal or informal, the rules of cohesion and coherence apply, which aid in holding the communication together in a meaningful way. In communication, both the production and comprehension of a language require one's ability to perceive and process stretches of discourse, and to formulate representations of meaning from referents in both previous sentences and following sentences. Therefore, effective speakers should acquire a large repertoire of structures and discourse markers to express ideas, show relationships of time, and indicate cause, contrast, and emphasis

(Scarcella and Oxford 1992). With these, learners can manage turn-taking in conversation.

Sociolinguistic competence:

Knowledge of language alone does not adequately prepare learners for effective and appropriate use of the target language. Learners must have competence which involves knowing what is expected socially and culturally by users of the target language; that is, learners must acquire the rules and norms governing the appropriate timing and realization of speech acts. Understanding the sociolinguistic side of language helps learners know what comments are appropriate, know how to ask questions during interaction, and know how to respond nonverbally according to the purpose of the talk. Therefore, "adult second language learners must acquire stylistic adaptability in order to be able to encode and decode the discourse around them correctly" (Brown 1994:238).

Strategic competence:

Strategic competence, which is "the way learners manipulate language in order to meet communicative goals" (Brown 1994:228), is perhaps the most important of all the communicative competence elements. Simply put, it is the ability to compensate for imperfect knowledge of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse rules (Berns 1990). With reference to speaking, strategic competence refers to the ability to know when and how to take the floor, how to keep a conversation going, how to terminate the conversation, and how to clear up communication breakdown as well as comprehension problems.

INTERACTION AS THE KEY TO IMPROVING EFL LEARNER'S SPEAKING ABILITIES

The functions of spoken language are interactional and transactional. The primary intention of the former is to maintain social relationships, while that of the latter is to convey information and ideas. In fact, much of our daily

communication remains interactional. Being able to interact in a language is essential. Therefore, language instructors should provide learners with opportunities for meaningful communicative behavior about relevant topics by using learner-learner interaction as the key to teaching language for communication because "communication derives essentially from interaction" (Rivers 1987:xiii).

Communication in the classroom is em-bedded in meaning-focused activity. This requires teachers to tailor their instruction carefully to the needs of learners and teach them how to listen to others, how to talk with others, and how to negotiate meaning in a shared context. Out of interaction, learners will learn how to communicate verbally and nonverbally as their language store and language skills develop. Consequently, the give-and-take exchanges of messages will enable them to create discourse that conveys their intentions in real-life communication.

Small talk:

The ability to get along with people in society may correlate somewhat with how well a person can engage in brief, casual conversation with others or an exchange of pleasantries. Talk of weather, rush hour traffic, vocations, and sports events etc., may seem "meaningless," but it functions to create a sense of social communion among peers or other people. So, at the initial stage, adult EFL learners should develop skills in short, interactional exchanges in which they are required to make only one or two utterances at a time, such as:

Yeah. I hope it'll stop raining.

1. A: *I hate rush hour traffic.*

 B: *Me too.*

 A: *Boy, the weather is lousy today.*

 B: *Yeah, I hope it'll stop raining.*

As the learners get more experience, they will be able to use some of the simple exchanges and know how to open conversations.

Interactive activities:

Since most EFL learners learn the target language in their own culture, practice is available only in the classroom. So, a key factor in L2 or foreign language development is the opportunity given to learners to speak in the language-promoting interaction. Teachers must arouse in the learners a willingness and need or reason to speak.

Extensive exposure to authentic language through audio-visual stimuli and with opportunities to use the language. Likewise, teachers should integrate strategy instruction into interactive activities, providing a wealth of information about communicative strategies to raise learners' awareness about their own learning styles so that learners can tailor their strategies to the requirements of learning tasks.

In designing activities, teachers should consider all the skills conjointly as they interact with each other in natural behavior, for in real life as in the classroom, most tasks of any complexity involve more than one macro skill (Nunan 1989). Effective interactive activities should be manipulative, meaningful, and communicative, involving learners in using English for a variety of communicative purposes.

Specifically, they should:

- (1) be based on authentic or naturalistic source materials.*
- (2) enable learners to manipulate and practice soap movies. A possible way of stimulating learners to talk might be to provide them with ecific features of language.*
- 3) allow learners to rehearse, in class, communicative skills they need in the real world and*
- (4) activate psycholinguistic processes of learning.*

Based on these criteria, the following activities appear to be particularly relevant to eliciting spoken language production. They provide learners with opportunities to learn from auditory and visual experiences, which enable them to develop flexibility in their learning styles and also demonstrate the optimal use of different learning strategies and behaviors for different tasks.

Aural: oral activities. With careful selection and preparation, aural materials such as news reports on the radio will be fine-tuned to a level accessible to particular groups of learners. These materials can be used in some productive activities as background or as input for interaction. In practice, students are directed to listen to taped dialogues or short passages and afterwards to act them out in different ways.

One example which we have used in our micro-teaching practice in Northern Illinois University is jigsaw listening. A story is recorded into several segments on an audio cassette tape. Teachers either have each student listen to a different segment or divide the class into small groups and make each group responsible for one segment. After each student/group has listened to a segment, students are provided with a worksheet of comprehension questions based on the story. Then, students work together in groups on an information gap activity. They negotiate the meaning of the story and answer questions, which motivates students to speak.

1. Visual oral activities:

Because of the lack of opportunity in foreign language settings to interact with native speakers, the need for exposure to many kinds of scenes, situations, and accents as well as voices is particularly critical. This need can be met by audiovisual materials such as an operas.

They can provide (a) "the motivation achieved by basing lessons on attractively informative content material; (b) the exposure to a varied range of authentic speech, with different registers, accents, intonation, rhythms, and stresses; and (c) language used in the context of real situations, which adds relevance and interest to the learning process" (Carrasquillo 1994:140). While watching, students can observe what levels of formality are appropriate or inappropriate on given occasions. Similarly, they can notice the nonverbal behavior and types of exclamations and fill-in expressions that are used. Also, they can pay attention to how people initiate and sustain a conversational exchange and how they terminate an interactive episode. Subsequent practice of dialogues, role-playing, and dramatizations will lead to deeper learning.

2-Visual stimuli:

Can be utilized in several ways as starter material for interaction. Short pieces of films can be used to give "eyewitness" accounts. An anecdote from a movie can be used to elicit opinion-expressing activity. Likewise, nonverbal videos can be played to have students describe what they have viewed. While watching, students can focus on the content and imitate the "model's" body language. In this way students will be placed in a variety of experiences with accompanying language. Gradually, they will assimilate the verbal and nonverbal messages and communicate naturally.

3-Material-aided oral activities:

*Appropriate reading materials facilitated by the teacher and structured with comprehension questions can lead to creative production in speech. Story-telling can be prompted with cartoon-strips and sequences of pictures. Oral reports or summaries can be produced from articles in newspapers or from some well designed textbooks such as *Culturally Speaking*, written by Genzel and Cummings (1994). Similar material input such as hotel brochures can be used for making reservations; menus can be used for making purchases in the supermarket or for ordering in a restaurant. In fact, language input for oral activities can be derived from a wide range of sources that form the basis for communicative tasks of one sort or another, which will help learners deal with real situations that they are likely to encounter in the future.*

4-Culture-awareness oral activities:

Culture plays an instrumental role in shaping speakers' communicative competence, which is related to the appropriate use of language (e.g., how native speakers make an apology and what kind of form the apology is to take). Generally, appropriateness is determined by each speech community. In other words, it is defined by the shared social and cultural conventions of a particular group of speakers.

Therefore, it is essential to recognize different sets of culturally determined rules in communication. Just as Brown and Yule (1983:40) say, "a great number of cultural assumptions which would be normally presupposed, and not made explicit by native speakers, may need to be drawn explicitly to the attention of speakers from other cultures." Cultural learning illustrated by activities and strengthened through physical enactment will motivate students.

Teachers can present situations in which there are cultural misunderstandings that cause people to become offended, angry, and confused. Then, thought-provoking information and questions can follow each description or anecdote for in-class discussion. Students can be asked to analyze and determine what went wrong and why, which will force students to think about how people in the target culture act and perceive things, and which will inevitably provide a deeper insight into that culture. This kind of exercise can strike a healthy balance between the necessity of teaching the target culture and validating the students' native culture, which will gradually sharpen students' culture awareness.

By and large, using audiovisual stimuli brings sight, hearing, and kinesthetic participation into interplay, which gets students across the gulf of imagination into the "real experience" in the first place. Meanwhile, the task-oriented activities give students a purpose to talk. Ideally, the flexibility and adaptability of these activities are essential if the communicative needs of learners are to be met. With the limited time available in class, it is necessary to follow open language experiences with more intensive structured situations, dialogues, and role-playing activities. These will give students both the chance and confidence actually to use the language.

In conclusion, speaking is one of the central elements of communication. In EFL teaching, it is an aspect that needs special attention and instruction. In order to provide effective instruction, it is necessary for teachers of EFL to carefully examine the factors, conditions, and components that underlie speaking effectiveness. Effective instruction derived from the careful analysis of this area, together with sufficient language input and speech-promotion activities, will gradually help learners speak English fluently and appropriately.

There is always a reason to communicate because it is a need to do it. We can create a similar need to communicate by introducing an 'information gap', some students have information that others do not have, so there is a reason to talk and ask questions.

- *Guessing games: The teacher or a student at the front has a picture or a sentence, which the class cannot see. Students guess what it is by asking questions. Guessing games can also be organized in groups; one student in each group has the information, the others guess.*
- *Information gap exercises for pairwork: Students work in pairs. To create a communicative need, the two students in each pair are given different information.*
- *Exchanging personal information: Students work in pairs, and exchange information about their own lives, interests, experiences, etc. As they listen, they make notes about their partner, using a grid. There is a natural 'information gap', because every student has slightly different experiences and interests.*
- *Dialogs: This activity means providing clear provision for student, including opportunities for feedback from the teacher(s), recitation leaders, and/or peers. This involves activities that communicate effectively and invite reaction. These could include individual projects, group assignments, oral conversations, written submissions, and the manner of creative expressions such as poetry or dance. It does not include methods that focus on the mere transmission and memorization of information.*

Rationale for information gap activities:

In all too many English classes, teacher-pupil exchanges have little communicative value because there is no real information being exchanged. In a traditional, grammar-oriented class, for example, teachers often spend a large proportion of class time asking questions for which they and the students already know the answers; thus, there is no information gap to fill. Typically, a teacher asks a "display" question (that is, a question the teacher knows the

answer to), an individual student answers, the teacher evaluates or corrects the answer, and then the cycle begins again with another student and another question that everyone already knows the answer to. It's an unrealistic use of language (Talebinezahd 1999).

Here are three examples of typical display questions:

1. When presenting the new word book, the teacher holds up a book and says, "This is a book. What is it?"
2. When teaching the sentence pattern for habitual actions, the teacher asks a student, "Do you sleep every day?"
3. When demonstrating the present continuous tense, the teacher performs the activity, such as walking to the door, and while doing so says, "I am walking to the door. What am I doing now?"

In each of these examples, the teacher has devised a situation that makes the meaning clear, but the situation also makes the question inappropriate in terms of the principle of information gap because the answer is already known. These display questions serve only to elicit inauthentic language practice to: present a new word (example 1), elicit a sentence pattern (example 2), or practice a grammatical structure (example 3). They are not communicative, and they have clear limitations in terms of how much genuine communication practice the student receives. They demonstrate usage rather than use of the target language (Widdowson 1978).

Over use of display questions is harmful to language learning because it leads learners away from the use of language for communicative purposes. There is no communicative need for students to learn display questions because they are rarely heard in real life situations except in such special places as courtrooms and hospitals. Display questions can only demonstrate knowledge of forms and structures, while neglecting communicative functions. Function is not always the same as the form. For example, saying "Why don't you close the door?" has the form of an interrogative, but functions as an imperative, as in "Please close the door."

Display questions do not encourage improvisation or creativity. Yet, using language creatively, without previous preparation or rehearsal, is part of the normal process of communication. Outside the classroom, students without improvisational ability tend to repeat only what has been learned or memorized in the classroom. For example, a student seeing a teacher going to the library, asked him a classroom sentence: "Are you going to the library?" thus making the puzzled teacher reply: "Why ask? You see me going there."

Finally, without information gap practice and genuine communication, the appropriate use of language in different contexts is neglected. Students without this knowledge may be able to compose grammatical sentences but still not be able to use them appropriately with other people. Without information gaps, classroom activities will be mechanical and artificial (Richards, Platt, and Platt 1992).

Creating information gaps:

For genuine communication to occur in the language classroom, teacher-student (and student-student) exchanges must go beyond display questions and should be based on the gap that occurs between interlocutors when one does not know in advance what the other is going to say (Prabhu 1987). Teachers must thoughtfully prepare so that oral interaction involves a transfer of information from one person to another.

Teachers should begin by using appropriate questioning and conversational strategies, particularly, by asking referential questions (that is, questions they do not know the answers to). Most display questions can be avoided by reformulating the question. Here are three examples:

Display

1. *Do you sleep every day?*

2. *Can you walk?*

3. *What's the weather like today?*

Referential

When do you sleep?

Can you walk on ice?

What will the weather be like tomorrow?

If you notice, for example, that one of your students got a haircut, exploit the gap in information by asking, "When did you have your hair cut?" instead of

"Have you had your hair cut?" Likewise, when teaching the word book, since the students know what a book is as an object, encourage them to use their language skills by asking something about the book, such as, "This is my book. Where is yours?" or "My book is blue. What color is yours?"

Teachers should also help their students learn basic strategies for requesting information or feedback (Stubbs 1983). Such strategies include requesting further explanation, restating ideas, and giving additional information. In order to make classroom conversation more realistic, students need to learn and practice the following kinds of expressions with the teacher and among themselves:

- *You mean...? I can't understand you. Please explain.*
- *Please sum up what you said.*
- *How do you say...? Will you please repeat it?*
- *You believe that...? I don't agree.*
- *Do you agree? Why or why not? (Ward 1984)*

The communicative approach method:

Has the goal to have one's students become communicatively competent, which means being able to use the language appropriate to a given social context. To do this students need knowledge of the linguistic forms, meanings, and functions. They need to know that many different forms can be used to perform a function and also that a single form can often serve a variety of functions. Almost everything that is done is done with a communicative intent, students learn by doing and using real, authentic materials. The student's native language has no particular role in this method and errors of form are tolerated and are seen as a natural outcome of the development of communication skills. Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators.

In this method there are principles to follow among these we write here some important ones to our research:

- *Whenever possible "authentic language" as it is used in a real context should be introduced.*

- *The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.*
- *Games are important because they have certain features in common with real communicative events there is a purpose to the exchange. Also, the speaker receives immediate feedback from the listener on whether or not she has successfully communicated. Having students work in small groups maximizes the amount of communicative practice they receive.*
- *Students' success is determined as much by their fluency as it is by their accuracy.*
- *The grammar and vocabulary that the students learn follow from the function, situational context, and the roles of the interlocutors.*
- *Students should be given opportunities to develop strategies for interpreting language as it is actually used by native speakers. (Littlewood 1981)*

Communicative drills :

Another type of information gap activity is a communicative drill, that is, "one in which the type of response is controlled but the student provides his or her own content or information" (Richard, Platt, and Platt 1992:223). In communicative drills the teacher controls the learners' speech primarily by ensuring that they produce short utterances. Here are three suggestions:

1. Practical situations: Students can practice requesting and providing information in situations such as asking for directions in a city and ordering meals in a restaurant. For example, after mechanically drilling the question-answer pattern "Where is...? It is...." and prepositions of location, students work in pairs, with one asking for directions to a specific location and the other giving directions according to a map:

Student 1: Excuse me, where is the bank?

Student 2: It's opposite the post office.

Student 1: Excuse me, where is the book store?

Student 2: It's next to the theater.

2. Guessing games Students can do guessing activities in pairs or groups. There are many variations. For example, one student chooses a famous

person, and the others ask yes-no questions until the identity of the person is determined. Or, one student draws a picture of a fruit or object and turns it over on the desk; the partner guesses what the item is by asking, "Do you have a...?" until the correct answer is found. Another variation is for the teacher to provide a short, incomplete story plot for students to discuss and guess the way it ends. For example:

A man has been found dead in a phone box. There is blood. We know that he was speaking to someone on the phone just before he died because the receiver is off the hook. How did the man die?

The teacher reveals the answer to only one student; the rest of the class must guess the answer by asking that student questions about the plot that can be answered only with yes, no, or irrelevant.

3. True answers: Unlike typical substitution drills, these questions are related to the student's life. For example, after modeling a sentence, such as "My father is a doctor," the teacher asks students to construct similar sentences, in this case, truthfully stating the occupation of someone in their family. If the class is noisy, the teacher can ask: "What are you talking about?", "Why are you not listening?", or "What are you laughing at?"

Communicative activities

According to Littlewood (1981), the communicative process consists of stages, with learners starting in a structural period and progressing to a social interaction period. At the final stage, students should be able to speak the target language appropriately in specific social situations. The drills suggested above are communicative drills with limited responses. In communicative activities, however, learners have opportunities to produce sustained speech with more variation in possible responses. Here are three examples of communicative activities that provide practice speaking in a social context:

1. A Role-play involves the teacher giving role cards to students for pair work. In the following role-play, paired students are asked to provide sustained speech for the specific purpose of persuading each other without causing offense.

Student A: You like dancing and going to discos. Suggest to your partner that you go out this evening. Try to persuade him/her to go where you prefer.

Student B: You don't like dancing and going to discos. You prefer going to the cinema or to a concert. Try to persuade your partner to go where you prefer. (White 1982:21)

2. An Opinion gap activity involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling, or attitude. The activity may require using factual information, formulating arguments, and justifying one's opinions. For some topics, there may be no right or wrong responses and no reason to expect the same answers or responses from different individuals or different groups. For example, the teacher divides the class into several groups that will discuss or describe a common object from different perspectives. After all groups finish, the teacher asks the groups to report to the rest of the class. Example: Describe a television set from one of the following points of view:

Group 1: prehistoric people

Group 2: modern people

Group 3: people from the future

Group 4: people from another planet

3. A Reasoning gap activity involves deriving some new information from given information through the process of inference or deduction and the perception of relationships or patterns. The activities necessarily involve comprehending and conveying information. Here is an ancient puzzle as an example:

A man is standing by a river with a wolf, a sheep, and some vegetables. He wants to get everything across the river, but he has a small boat that cannot carry all three things at one time. The wolf will eat the sheep if the man goes away, and the sheep will eat the vegetables if the man goes away. Discuss how the man can get across the river without losing any of his belongings.

Information gap activities give students opportunities to use English appropriately inside and outside the classroom. Unlike teacher-initiated display questions, which do not reflect real life language use, information gap activities

have genuine communicative value. When structural drills are necessary, after pattern practice at the mechanical level, teachers can use the structure in communicative drills and activities that rely on referential questions and establish a communicative need in the English classroom.

There are many means of communicating and many different language systems. Speech and language are only a portion of communication. Other aspects of communication may enhance or even eclipse the linguistic code. These aspects are: paralinguistic, nonlinguistic and metalinguistic.

- *Paralinguistic mechanisms signal attitude or emotion and include intonation, stress, rate of delivery, and pause or hesitation.*
- *Nonlinguistic clues include gestures, body posture, facial expression, eye contact, head and body movement, and physical distance or proxemics.*
- *Metalinguistic cues signal the status of communication based on our intuitions about the acceptability of utterances. In other words, metalinguistic skills enable us to talk about language, analyze it, think about it, separate it from context, and judge it.*

When students interact with dialogues whether be planned before or not, they are being prepared to respond in real, authentic situations out the classroom in their real lives. They experiment with appropriate utterances according the context that is taking place and will learn from their own mistakes and by the exchange of information with their interlocutor. Is the best way to learn correcting themselves at the moment when they have a real conversational situation with a native speaker, other classmate or any person who speak the language.

How does this need to teach skills for transferring information relate to the problem of motivation? In our attempt to develop effective instruction in spoken language, we need to address an important issue. To develop fluency, we must generate a need to speak, to make learners want to speak. The learners themselves must be convinced of the need to relate to the subject and communicate about it to others. They need to feel that they are speaking not simply because the teacher expects them to, but because there is some strong

reason to do so for example, to get or provide information that is required for a main purpose.

Students can have limited linguistic knowledge and still be successful communicators.

In 1983, Maurice developed the 4/3/2 technique, whereby a learner has three opportunities to speak on the same content to his audience albeit with a shorter and shorter time allowance.

Initially the learner is given four minutes for the first talk, then three minutes, and finally, two minutes. It was shown that students' speaking rate increased, while their hesitations decreased with each repeated talk. In addition, various types of grammatical errors were eliminated, and sentence structures improved with each repetition (Nation 1989).

Repetition as a form of oral practice has the inherent benefit in that the learner becomes more efficient as s/he focuses specifically on more important points and eliminates redundant words and phrases in her/his speech. Secondly, repetition creates an effect of rehearsal. That is, the student overcomes the tendency to rephrase, pause and search, to correct sentence structures and the misuse of words and phrases (before the final performance.)

Attention is also paid to the proper use of discourse markers, prosodic cues, systematic listing or itemization, and other cohesive links. Suprasegmental elements can be incorporated along with fluency practice. For example, learners seeking training in public speaking should be aware of their voice control, stress, and pitch. To be communicative is to be able to use voice quality to its fullest to enhance the meaning of the message. Simply put, fluency does not stand alone.

There are others activities that can develop a great motivation to speak and help to develop fluency, these are called "Circle games" and they are games involve the learners sitting in a circle and working as a whole class. See the related think article -

Think - Methodology - Circle games - for advice on how to manage these games and for more activity ideas.

- *Conditional chain game*

This game is good to revise and practise structures in the first conditional.

- *The teacher begins with a sentence, for example "If I go out tonight, I'll go to the cinema."*
- *The next person in the circle must use the end of the previous sentence to begin their own sentence. E.g. "If I go to the cinema, I'll watch The Last Samurai" The next person could say, "If I watch The Last Samurai, I'll see Tom Cruise" etc. etc.*

- *Word Association*

A very simple game where students must think of words connected to the word that comes before.

For example, the teacher says, "Fish", the next person thinks of a word they associate with fish, such as "water", the next person could say "a glass" the next, "window" etc.

- *You can decide as a group if associations are valid. Ask the student to justify the connection.*
- *To make it more competitive, set a thinking time limit and eliminate students.*
- *When they are eliminated they can become judges.*

- *Chinese whispers - telephone lines*

A sentence is whispered around the circle. The last student to receive the message either says it aloud or writes it on the board. This can be a fun way to introduce a topic and activate schema at the beginning of a class. For example, for a class on food, whisper the question, "What did you have for lunch today?" Equally, at the end of a class it can be a nice way to revise structures or vocabulary from the lesson.

- *Concentration*

- *To begin with, students sit in a circle and do the hand actions of lap (both hands to lap), clap, left click, right click.*
 - *When they get the hang of it, add these words in time to the rhythm "Concentration, concentration, concentration now beginning, are you ready? If so, let's go!"*
 - *On the first finger click, you say your name, and on the second click you say the name of someone in the circle.*
 - *You have passed the turn to the person you nominated on your second finger click.*
 - *Then they say their own name on the first click and the name of another student on the second.*
 - *When they have got the idea, use lexical sets. For example, everyone says their favourite sport first then use these to play the game.*
 - *For a competitive group, eliminate those students who make mistakes.*
- *I went to the shops and I bought...*
The classic memory game where each person adds a new item to the list in alphabetical order.
 - *For example, student 1, "I went to the shops and I bought an apple"*
Student 2, "I went to the shops and I bought an apple and a bike".
Student 3, "I went to the shops and I bought an apple, a bike and a coat".
 - *This game can be adapted to different levels and lexical sets. I recently revised sports and the use of do/ play/ go by playing "I went to the sports centre....." The same game but using different vocabulary. For example, student 1 "I went to the sports centre and I did aerobics", "I went to the sports centre and I did aerobics and played basketball", "I went to the*

sports centre and I did aerobics, played basketball and went canoeing"
etc.

- *Yes / No game*
 - *Nominate one student to be in the hot seat, slightly apart from the rest of the circle.*
 - *The rest of the group must think of questions to ask the student in the hot seat.*
 - *They can ask anything they like, the only rule is that the student in the hot seat must answer the questions without using the words "yes" or "no".*
 - *Also ban "yeah", head nods and shakes! For example, a student asks, "Are you wearing jeans today?" The student in the hot seat could reply, "I am" or "you can see that they're jeans!"*

We have read a lot about activities to do toward develop these skills but we have also an important tool to help teachers and students in this task, like is the importance and useful of a Laboratory of language. And about this topic we want to write now.

Use of a Language Lab:

We already have read a lot about activities to do and material resources to use toward develop these skills, but we have also an important tool to help teachers and students in this task, like is the importance and useful of a Laboratory of language in the process of learning and teaching of any language, but especially English which is or language of study. About this topic we want to write now because it is a theme of interest for all students of the career and with English teachers too.

Although students are unfamiliar with native speaker voices, authentic materials, and using a language lab, they are very excited and enthusiastic about coming to the lab to study English.

The objectives of the lab activities include exposing students to a range of purposeful listening experiences and building students' confidence in their own listening abilities.

EE have designed activities that expose students to formal and informal language spoken by native speakers and fluent nonnative speakers with a variety of listening materials, such as drills, stories, songs, and conversations. Realistic listening activities are integrated with other skills practice and with the main course materials.

Teachers assign pair- and group-work to eliminate feelings of isolation and anxiety, and give immediate feedback to students while the listening text is still fresh in their minds. Each student does two hours of lab work per week for a total of 64 hours per academic year, in addition to their regular English classes.

Lab sessions have different purposes:

* A motivational session

Is intended for first-year students who are excited about using the equipment in the lab but are unfamiliar with native speaker voices. During this initial session, the teacher explains some of these features of spoken English using sample voices on a tape.

*Hesitations and fillers

When fluent speakers are thinking of what they want to say, often they use expressions such as “er,” “um,” “well” “I mean,” and “actually.”

*Unfinished sentences

If a speaker changes her mind about what she is going to say or how she wants to say it, she may start a completely new sentence without finishing the previous one.

*Repetition and rephrasing

Speakers may summarize and/or repeat the most important point of what they've just said.

*Incomplete sentences

A fluent speaker frequently uses incomplete utterances (such as "Dinner?" with rising intonation) instead of saying a complete question ("Do you want dinner?")

*Grammatical errors

Fluent speakers focus on ideas and information and in doing so, they may make grammatical mistakes. We encourage students to get confidence in listening to English by reminding them not to try to understand every word and to concentrate on the message.

This first session can help reduce students' worries and anxieties and get them accustomed to working in the language lab.

Every lab session begins with a song, which is enjoyable. Popular songs in English are played on cassette. As soon as the students enter the lab and put on their headphones, they begin singing together with the music. Although this warm-up activity lasts only about five minutes, the students feel happy and a pleasant atmosphere is created in the lab. Students are motivated to do more challenging listening practice.

After the song, students are introduced to the pre-listening activities, which prepare them to achieve the most of their time in the language lab. One pre-listening activity is to look at pictures and discuss them. These pictures contain vocabulary related to the main activity. Sometimes the students are simply given a list of vocabulary items that they have already studied in order to refresh their memories. Another warm up that students appreciate is reading the text of a listening passage before they hear it. This makes them feel more secure while listening because they can check the printed text. As a predicting activity, the teacher can give students a list of comprehension questions based on the listening passage or some information about the topic and speaker. This helps them guess what they will hear.

While listening to the tapes, students are given different kinds of tasks to perform. They listen to the tape two or three times, depending on the task. Some of the simpler tasks are:

1. *Students do pronunciation drills to practice stress and intonation.*
2. *Students are given a set of pictures and have to arrange them in the correct order according to the instructions on the tape.*
3. *Students complete a worksheet of true/false questions based on information presented in the listening passage.*

Other listening tasks are:

4. *Students fill in blanks in a cloze exercise.*
5. *Students are given a work sheet with the main points of the passage in jumbled order. As they listen, they determine the correct order, and afterwards they check their work with classmates. This task combines listening and oral discussion.*
6. *Students are given some important vocabulary from the passage and asked to paraphrase the main ideas using those words. This task combines listening and writing.*

After listening to the tapes, students can give oral or written summaries using notes they took while listening. This can be done in pairs or small groups. As each pair or group retells the story or information presented on the tape, the rest of the class listens and corrects any errors or omissions.

Students are required to do listening practice outside of class. Once a week, they are asked to write about it in a chart on the wall in the language lab. In the last ten minutes of class in the language lab, the teacher selects some students to do brief oral reports to the class about what they listened to during the week.

English teachers at the Hinhada University believe in the value of listening practice in the language lab and have been conducting listening lessons enthusiastically. Students develop strategies to improve their listening comprehension and become better listeners. Moreover, with the purposeful sessions in the lab, students become more confident in their listening skills and take greater pleasure in practicing their English.

By the end of the four-year plan, universities and colleges will be graduating students who are proficient in the four language skills.

The use of Lab in other English Centers has been a successful in students who are learning this language and don't have enough contact with native speaker to develop their listening and speaking in a fluency way.

Use of Music and Songs

Music is a manifestation of culture and of the human need to communicate. Because it is inextricably associated with language, using music in foreign language teaching is a good way of promoting speaking and of encouraging students to create mental fantasies.

Music has been used in classes in many ways and for different reasons, particularly in Suggestopedia (Lozanov 1978) through which music creates a relaxed learning environment for students. Music stimulates images for the inner eye, even in students who claim to have no imagination. Music promotes conversation because listeners may interpret the same piece of music differently. Music makes people act spontaneously, not only on a dance floor but also in a classroom.

This article describes some language classroom activities that use music. All these activities were introduced to two different age groups in a local language school in Poland.

What kind of music?

Many teachers wonder whether they should play pop and rock music or classical music. It is believed that most young people prefer the former and would reject the latter. But any music that evokes images or associations can be used. Teachers should accept students' negative responses to any music, because these are as important for language learning as positive ones. Thus, a student may learn to say, "This music is gloomy and horrible." Jazz and classical music are good choices, because they often do not have lyrics or words, unlike most pop and rock music. Words may actually distract students and limit their responses and interpretive images.

Before beginning

Before starting any music activity, teachers should be well prepared. They need to select music that fits the activity, particularly music that students can associate with certain cultures. Teachers may need to listen to many selections before finding the best one for an activity.

Teachers should choose shorter pieces and excerpts rather than longer ones. In this way they will have various kinds of music on the cassette tape which can be used for many different activities. Finding out more about the background of the music and the composer will help teachers prepare students for listening (Cranmer and Laroy 1992).

Teachers should never tell students the title of a particular piece of music before listening to it. Allowing each student to visualize the music without anybody's interpretation expands the student's images.

It is essential to have a good cassette recorder. Hi-fi equipment is better if available. If activities require photographs or reproductions of paintings, teachers should use them.

Remember:

1. Teachers need to encourage students to participate in the class.

2. Music brings out unexpected talents, so teachers should try to give shy students, who may be more sensitive and feel the music more deeply, opportunities to express their ideas.

3. Also, since music may make students more relaxed, they may start fidgeting and talking with each other.

While playing the music, teachers should stay still so as not to distract students. Students will need moments of silence after listening, especially if they are writing comments about the music. All students' responses should be treated equally.

It is best not to correct students at the elementary level. Their responses to music tend to be spontaneous, unstructured, and frequently in the mother tongue. Teachers' corrections may cause them to not participate. However, when dealing with intermediate-level students, grammar and accuracy are more important.

Teachers can also use the same music with blind and partially deaf students. Students blind from birth cannot visualize easily but can feel the rhythm, so choose activities for them that do not require visualization. Partially deaf students can enjoy music as much as hearing students (Cranmer and Laroy 1992).

Activities

Most activities take from ten to thirty minutes. Some may be used as warm-up activities. These activities facilitate the introduction of new material but should be complemented with other activities that you usually use in your teaching. You should choose the appropriate activities according to the temperament of your class.

Creating an atmosphere:

Background music can be used at elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels for the following purposes: to create a relaxed atmosphere in a class; to help students concentrate while reading a text; to mark a brief pause in the lesson before moving to another activity; or to break silence at the beginning of oral work done in pairs and groups. Stopping the music is a good way of bringing oral work to an end.

When teachers use background music, they need to check that it is not too loud and that it is not directed to only one part of the room. Singing tends to be distracting, so teachers can use instrumental music, nature sounds like bird songs, or sound effects like a crackling fire.

Expressing feelings:

To help students create images and express feelings teachers should follow these steps. First, play the music and cut it off abruptly. Then encourage students to express how they felt while listening to it. A good way to do it is to ask them what colours or objects they associate with the music. My students' answers are rather creative. One said, "I felt like a lonely bird because the music was very sad." Another expressed his feelings by saying, "This music is blue for me because it reminds me of the sea and waves." Also ask students what the music makes them feel like doing. Children can beat out the rhythm or move to the music. At the intermediate level music may promote discussions about students' experiences. For this activity, I suggest Mozart's "Lullaby."

Making up a story:

Tell students not to open their eyes before they have listened to the entire musical selection. While the music is playing, quietly ask them questions such as "Where is it?" or "Who is there?" Also write a few key words related to the music before listening to it. For example, when students listen to Tchaikovsky's music, hints of a wizard, snow, a magic garden, a princess, and so forth will direct their thoughts to the world of fairy tales. After listening, invite them to share their interpretations with the class.

Using pictures with music:

Slides, photographs, magazine pictures, and reproductions of painted portraits are useful aids. First, show a set of portraits to students. Then ask them to write down what distinguishes the three portraits from each other for example: physique, age, clothes, expression, position in society. After listening to three musical selections, students decide which portrait fits each piece of music and After playing the music, ask students in groups to guess what kind of person (e.g., profession, character, family status) he was describing in each sketch. Then the groups report what they thought. Afterward, tell them about the composer. This activity is an excellent way to stimulate students' images and also allows students to learn about the great composers.

Weather in music:

Write the word weather in the middle of the board and five lines radiating from it. Ask your students to write more words and phrases related to it. Then play the selected music and ask them to imagine the type of weather musically described in the piece. Divide the class into groups to discuss the scene and the weather they have visualized. I use a sounds of nature recording or any other music that is selected for meditation.

The value of songs in motivating students to learn English and enhancing learner involvement is widely acknowledged by ESL practitioners (Reeve & Williamson, 1987; Giudice, 1986). Teachers and students alike find singing songs entertaining and relaxing. Songs offer a change from the routine procedures in the classroom. They are invaluable tools to develop students' language abilities in listening, speaking, reading and writing and can be used to teach a variety of language items such as sentence patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, rhythms, adjectives, adverbs and so on. Learning English through songs also provides a non-threatening atmosphere for students, who usually have great tension when speaking English in a formal classroom setting.

Although the communicative approach has become the mainstream in language teaching, learners are still very passive recipients of knowledge and play only a minimal role in the selection of learning materials and teaching methodology. Such under involvement constitutes a hindrance to successful language learning. In order to enhance learner commitment, learners should take part in

developing materials for themselves. Clarke (1989) outlines some advantages in involving learners in materials development through modifying existing materials. This not only increases learner commitment but also makes learners become experts in the tasks they designed.

Materials development through songs

Here are four classroom activities using songs as the chief materials for teaching. The design consists of teachers going through the language tasks with students based on the lyrics of the songs. On completion of the teacher session, students are asked to construct similar tasks in groups using songs of their own choice and do a mini-presentation of their work to the class in another session. They are required to indicate clearly which language items their tasks are designed for practice. The tasks in the teacher session can take more varied forms to suit the students' learning styles/. The number of tasks in the student session, however, is restricted to only one or two simple exercises depending on the ability of the students. This makes the construction task easier, more manageable and enjoyable but less intimidating for students.

I. Song dictation

The purpose of this activity is to sharpen students' listening ability in the pronunciation of shortened verb forms such as I'm, I've, It's, I'll, and the like, as well as the distinction between long and short vowels (/i/ and /i:/) in words like coming, receive, free, still, ribbon, three, see, and so on. The song used in the activity is "Tie a yellow ribbon round the old oak tree."

Students are first handed out the lyrics with the words missing. They are asked to go through the lyrics and try to guess the words in the blanks. The teacher then explains difficult words and lets students read the lyrics. This is followed by the teacher asking simple questions to check the students' overall comprehension of the song.

Students can listen to the song three times:

-The first time, purely listening and trying to work out what the missing words are.

-The second time, filling in the gaps.

-The third time, checking to confirm whether the answers are correct or not.

The teacher then discusses the answers with the students and practices pronouncing the words with them through further listening and singing with the tape.

The next step is to help students understand more about the song by engaging them in creative writing tasks which involve placing them into different roles related to the characters in the song. For example, students may be asked to imagine themselves to be the husband and wife in the song. Half of them will be the husband who will soon be released from prison and come home to reunite with his wife. Each of them is to write a letter to his wife to ask whether she will forgive him or not. The other half will pretend to be the wife who will each write a reply to the husband telling him what she feels.

Another writing activity can be done in groups. Each group will be asked to write a conversation between the husband and wife when they meet again. Students can express freely their ideas in the construction of the dialogue in a low anxiety environment.

This will naturally lead to a role-play exercise during which students can further stretch their imagination through exposure to other students' work.

Students may be unable to replicate the whole session as the design for creative writing tasks might be beyond their abilities. They can definitely work on the filling in the gaps task. To minimize the pressure on the task, students may do it in groups. First, they have to choose a song they like for the exercise. Then they decide which language items they want for practice (for example, vocabulary, adjectives, pronouns and so on) and delete appropriate words in the lyrics. At this time, teachers will need to give feedback to students to ensure that what they have prepared suits the purpose before they actually present

their work to their classmates. Based on the students' work, teachers may build up more exercises on creative writing or grammar tasks. Working on their own materials, students find learning more interesting and motivating.

II-Song reading

This activity aims at developing students' ability to comprehend the literal meaning of the song and at the same time analyze the hidden message. It may be more suitable for advanced students and can be done in groups. The song used in the present activity is "Lemon tree".

The teacher first hands out the entire lyrics to the students with a set of comprehension questions. The teacher then plays the song to the students and gives them some time to do the silent reading focusing their attention on the questions which are geared towards the surface understanding of the song. Students may work out the answers in groups in order to generate more conversation in English. The questions used in the activity are:

- 1) Who is talking in the song? (The father)
- 2) To whom is he talking? (The son)
- 3) What is the main subject of the song? (Lemon tree)
- 4) According to the father, what's wrong with the lemon tree? (The tree is pretty and the flower is sweet but the fruit is impossible to eat.)
- 5) Describe the girl the son met. (She was so sweet that when she smiled, the stars rose in the sky.)
- 6) What made the son forget about the father's words about the lemon tree? (The music of her laughter)

7) What happened after the girl left? (She took away the sun and left the darkness behind.)

8) Why did she leave the man? (She left him for another man.)

Students should have a general understanding of the song after they have completed the comprehension exercise. Teachers then discuss the answers with the students and focus on the development of the story in the song. The theme of the song may be introduced to the students, drawing their attention not only to the surface meaning of the song but also to the message it carries. This can be done by reflecting on the guiding questions below:

1) What does the lemon tree refer to? (love/temptation/woman)

2) What is the attitude of the father towards love? (never put your faith in love)

3) How is the father comparing love with the lemon tree? (Love is like a lemon tree which is very pretty but the fruit is too sour to eat.)

4) Should the son follow the father's advice? (Yes, this would help him understand more about the nature of love and not be easily cheated.)

There is more follow up work on the creative writing tasks:

First, teachers may ask students to imagine themselves to be the son in Lemon Tree and write a story about some possible events in the song.

Second, as the son in Lemon Tree, write a letter to his friend to describe his feelings of being deserted by the girlfriend. What advice will the son give to his friend? For the students' session, they may follow the same procedure of reading a song by first comprehending its literal meaning and then analysing its hidden message.

However, students may have difficulty in identifying an appropriate song due to their limited exposure to English. In this case, teachers may suggest a song for them to work on. For example, "Windflowers" may be a suitable song for this exercise. Students may construct the comprehension questions to look at the

literal meaning of the song while teachers focus on questions that examine the underlying meaning and the creative writing tasks.

III. Split song

This activity provides an opportunity for the students to improve their comprehension ability through approaching a song in an interesting way. It may be done in groups to promote interaction among students. The song "Diary" is used for illustration.

Teachers first identify several stanzas which are suitable for this exercise. This is indeed a matching exercise in which teachers divide each sentence of the stanza into two parts and jumble the order of those on the right. Students are required to restore the stanzas to their original forms. Before doing the exercise, teachers may go through the difficulty vocabulary with students first. Here is the sample of the exercise:

After students have completed the exercise in groups, teachers may let them look at the entire lyrics to check their answers. They may also listen to the songs several times and learn how to sing it.

The exercise may lead to more creative writing tasks. For example, students may be asked to imagine themselves to be the man in the song and write a composition to tell the reader something about the girl. They may also work in groups to write a conversation between the man and the girl, each telling one another their interests, background, plans for the future and so on. Students may find it easy to choose an appropriate song and construct the matching exercise. Teachers then add more exercises on creative writing to complete the activity.

IV. Word portraits

This activity attempts to stimulate students' imagination through construction of a story based on the words given to them. The words are taken from the song chosen by the teacher. The song "I am a rock" is selected for this activity. Students divide themselves into groups to write stories for different stanzas.

Teachers first present isolated words from various stanzas in the song and put them accordingly into boxes. Each box consists of words taken from one stanza. Before asking students to write, teachers explain difficult vocabulary and demonstrate to them how a story can be made up. Here is the sample of the material:

Students then work in groups to develop their own stories, each group writing a story based on the words taken from one stanza. After they have finished, they present their work to other groups. Teachers let students compare what they have written with the story described in the song by handing out the lyrics and playing the song to them. Through such a comparison, students can broaden the vocabulary use in a wider context.

This is definitely a simple design task which students can handle fairly easily. All they need to do is to identify a song they like and pick up appropriate words in each stanza for their peers to construct the story. Of course they need to write a short story for demonstration purpose.

The story construction task itself is already a creative writing task and so there is no need for teachers to build up more writing tasks in this activity. To complete the task, students have to utilize the four skills: listening and reading to understand the words used in the context of the song; speaking when interacting with other students in the discussion of the story and; writing when constructing the story based on the given words.

The series of activities described above offer a great deal of advantages in promoting the learning of English, the greatest one being to stimulate students' interest and enhance involvement.

The authors conducted the activities to a group of Secondary Three students in the form of an enrichment programme run fortnightly each in a one-hour session to boost students' proficiency in English. Students' reaction was that they showed tremendous interest in learning English through songs, particularly those chosen by them. They were very enthusiastic in designing exercises for their peers and felt great pride in chairing their sessions.

The authors found that the activities had helped creating plenty of teaching materials through teacher-student collaboration. The materials multiply themselves three or four times after each teacher's session, with each group of students working together to produce their own exercises. Through the designing task, students became experts in their own areas and hence were more familiar with the language items they were learning. The deep processing of language input involved in the creation of new tasks had greatly facilitated the learning process.

The co-operation between teachers and students had enhanced the rapport a great deal. In the joint development of learning tasks, teachers were like the students' friends in the provision of feedback and input in the revision of materials. The interaction among students was also increased as they worked together to do the problem-solving tasks and design learning materials.

The song activities mentioned previously integrate the teaching of the four skills nicely. In each activity, students are required to listen very carefully to the songs in order to complete the tasks set for them, whether it is to fill in gaps or answer comprehension questions.

In reading the song, they need to pay specific attention to a particular language aspect according to the demand of the task. For example, in "Split song," students have to comprehend the song very well before they can do the matching exercise.

In "Song reading," students' comprehension has to go beyond the literal level to symbolic meaning to find the hidden message carried by the song. The group work naturally engages students in a great amount of conversation. Finally, because each song provides a meaningful context for writing, students can stimulate their imagination and practice their writing skills through creative writing tasks at the end.

The combination of materials development with the uses of songs can definitely enhance learner involvement. Teachers might find the activities outlined here

suitable in a variety of teaching contexts: after school enrichment programme, extracurricular activities, ordinary classroom activities and so on.

The design can be a relief for the overworked teacher who usually does not have sufficient preparation time for innovative classroom activities but wants to conduct his/her teaching in an interesting way to help students learn more effectively.

The authors think that the activities are able to diversify teaching methodologies and transform passive learners to active participants in the process of learning.

We can observe all the activities that as teachers can do with a song, it is a good resource to develop some grammatical structure, increase vocabulary and motivate students to speak and understand the language.

Using other activities with songs in the classroom

Songs can be exploited in many ways:

1: The Cloze or gap fill. This is the most familiar and popular activity, and for that reason is probably over-used. However, there are many important things to bear in mind when using them, and there are many different ways to use them.

- *Have a point, be it vocabulary or prepositions or whatever.*
- *Don't cloze 3 or more in a row.*
- *For lower levels: give the first letter, miss out word endings, give dashes for letters, or give a glossary.*
- *Give vocabulary clues or synonyms for the missing words.*
- *Get students to work in pairs to predict words before you play the tape.*
- *Insert extra words which students then cross out as they listen.*
- *Change the words, as in "Careful Shouts" or "Countless Whiskies."*
- *Cloze unstressed, then stressed words in the same song, and have students discuss why one is easier than the other.*
- *Cloze several words in a row and Ss have to guess not only form (adj., adv., n., vb, prep.) but words, rhythm and rhyme.*

2: A-B activities.

Students match beginnings and ends of lines, such as "Another Day in Paradise" (simple) or "Private Investigations" & "If Only..." (more complicated).

3: Mixed-up activities. Generally, have the lines of the song on separate strips of paper

- *Students put down strips as they hear them.*
- *Mixed-up lines/verses.*
- *Students try to organize in advance (use prompts).*

4: Dictation

- *Wall dictation*
- *Self-dictation (whole song blanked)*
- *Part Dictation*

5: Translation.

- *Class chooses a song from their own language.*
- *Groups translate.*
- *Check with other groups.*
- *Combine the best. Then work on rhyme and rhythm.*

6: Jigsaw-listening.

- *Groups listen to different songs with the same (Luka/Behind the Wall) or different themes (Easy Street/Money for Nothing) and peer teach vocabulary, compare.*

7: Composing

- *Listen to the song*
- *Students add verses of their own. Good songs for this are, "Imagine" & "Man Gave Names To All The Animals" by Bob Dylan.*
- *Students finish the line in each verse, then listen to check.*
- *In groups, students then write their own verse.*

8: Writing.

Put random words from the song on the board. Students try and write the "tale of the song."

- *Students paraphrase the song*
- *Cut the song in half. Students predict the other half.*

9: Pronunciation.

- *He's got the whole world... /h/ sound*
- *Do I speak double Dutch to a real double duchess... /d/ sound*

10: Vocabulary

- *Miming verbs*
- *Dictionary work*
- *Matching*

11: Listening.

- *Give Ss word list. Ss number as they here them.*
- *Sound discrimination, e.g. tempted/tended*

12: Song Posters

Arrange lyrics and pictures, or just lyrics, or translate.

CONCLUSIONS

Our conclusions and suggestions are from observations that we have done of our English teachers, long talks with our classmates and teachers, from a survey that we gave to students of the 3rd, 4th and 5th level of the English Career, interviews with the Coordinator of the Career and other principals of English Centers in Matagalpa and Managua.

When students enter to study, their knowledge about English is minimal, they expect begin to study the language in a “formal and wide way” to remember a few what they received in high school and some of these students didn’t receive English in all their high school because they are normalists and the Normal school don’t teach English in their syllabus. So, many of them expect receive more knowledge of the English language until the first year at UNAN. Later, they realized that is not easy the first level because it requires to know enough vocabulary and a basic grammar at least and they didn’t received enough information about the content of the career, they need to dedicate more time to do this activity and to accomplish with their homeworks. Meanwhile, the normal rhythm of the classes go on, the students have to increase by his/her own these aspects and they are not doing it enough due the following reasons:

- 1- They work as teachers during the week and have to plan, to check homeworks and to evaluate exams as extra time work in home. These activities absorb them a lot of time.*
- 2- When students dedicate time to study during the week, they do it in Spanish because the other subjects that support the career like: Mathematics, Spanish, General Psychology, Educative Psychology,*

General Pedagogy, Seminary of Integral Education and Methodology of Research are all in Spanish from first to fourth year and the amount of tasks especially to prepare expositions are almost every Saturday and this is too much.

It doesn't mean that they are not studying English in home, at least they review what received as new knowledge on Saturday class and try to memorize it, but the other subjects demand memorize more concepts and say them with samples during a performance to gain a score. English activities don't claim enough like other subjects do. The exercises are limited to answer written questions from the student's seats. For all these situations, most of the students feel that they are not able to speak, understand and write with enough fluency when they are needing to manage these skills in fourth and fifth year to write their researches for example. They demand more dynamics to develop the listening and speaking skills.

As Ted says: " We must teach English not as a Second Language, we must do it in this Second Language", in other words in English. If a beginner learner has to listen and speak the language, since the first moment he is learning, he will develop the language. Only this way, they will increase their vocabulary and their understanding quickly from the variety of content and contact with their teachers and their dynamics to develop grammar, vocabulary, phonetic, all topics that teachers need to develop with them.

The CURM is the only Nicaraguan University which prepare Teachers to teach English in Matagalpa and UNAN is the only University in all Nicaragua that prepares professionals to teach English. The other academic centers and Universities teach English but as a second language and for translating documents or be an interpreter. Therefore, conditions should be better at CURM to teach and learn English.

Inspite of UNAN CURM applies the same syllabus of UNAN MANAGUA to the English career, they don't receive the appropriate support to the English teachers whether be with capacitation or any kind of didactic resources.

Although teachers have done their best effort to teach and accomplish with the content of their subjects, planning their classes, creating from themselves handouts or taking

them from others books and internet, they have not been enough energetic with students and themselves to speak the native language when this will be only necessary. This situation alters what Piaget said about “the knowledge that learn the individual is the result of the interaction between the subject and the object (construction)”. In this case the object is the language that very few use the teachers and students who are the subjects. Jean Piaget was the author about the constructivist conception of the knowledge acquisition. He did emphasis on knowledge that is always learned from what is acquired.

On Saturday Course most of the careers like ours, are for teaching and as Educational students need materials that support performances in class that inspite students come prepared from their homes sometimes need buy things like markers, papers for expositions, good photocopies, some prints, minas, correctors, diskettes at last moment and they can't find these things inside the University because there is not a place where to buy them. They have to lose time going out from the University and sometimes is raining or those places are also full of people.

There are some good students into the career who are also teachers and they have had the same conditions as all rest of students, however their grades are higher than the rest of their classmates.

Inspite of all limitations that UNAN CURM as University has in offer better conditions to its teachers to work, and for its students to study, it has been a good experience because help to develop a professionalism of the English language in the English teachers and students, and especially it has been a good experience because teachers and students also love teach English and they want to contribute to develop the English career here. It is wonderful that some students have entered to study the career without the vocation to teach English and now they are motivated to become an English teachers only because they have felt the contagious and love for teaching from theirs teachers and rest of classmates who also are teachers.

SUGGESTIONS

UNAN CURM should provide a huge information about the objectives, purposes and pensum of the English career to all those students who want to study English previous the registration through the channel 8, a letter of invitation to study the English career to all the principals of the High Schools in Matagalpa or at the moment of the registration where is taking place, whether be through a mural, a previous talk, a pamphlet with details giving to all who are interested to study the English career.

It is urgent to do some changes into the syllabus like:

Eliminate Mathematics as subject and add another semester of Integral English therefore would be two semesters of English in the first year. Because the knowledges of Math that teachers need in their work, they are elemental and these are learned with the practical function as teachers in the school where they are working.

To establish the English language to the follow subjects of service: General Pedagogy, General Psychology, General Didactic, Educative Psychology, Methodology of Research, Nicaraguan History, Seminary of Integral Education and Seminary of Education. These must be in English to help increase the level of professionalism of the future English teachers.

To provide better conditions to the teaching-learning process, it is useful and necessary to set a Language Lab in the University with enough didactical material to all levels. These materials can be created by English teachers of UNAN and pay them as a separated work from teaching.

To support the development of the teaching-learning process it is necessary a Print and photocopy center which supply a nice and economic service for teachers and students. This center must sell basic supplies as: diskettes, minas, pencils, whiteboard markers, permanent markers, paper for expositions, folders, tapes, discs, correction pens, etc.

Not all students have the same ability to learn a language, less to learn it in a non English spoken country like Nicaragua. Therefore, English students must create conditions around them in their daily life toward increase their vocabulary, understanding and dedication in an extra-time out the University with a nice and a good positive attitude toward increase their motivation and will to study and learn English.

Students of the fifth year who feel the need to continue increasing the four skills after their graduation, must create a kind of "Club of graduated English Students" to develop inside UNAN, a variety of activities which allow them grow more as professionals. This also will allow to UNAN a new experience and create future conditions to develop some English Mastership.

THEME:

**METHODOLOGY IN THE ENGLISH TEACHING PROCESS AT
UNAN CUR MATAGALPA**

SUB-THEME:

Problems of the speaking and listening skills in 3rd, 4th and 5th years of the English career at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.

DEDICATION

This is a reached goal
after long time of
effort and renounces,
therefore we dedicate this work to:

GOD, a permanent source of inspiration.

Our parents, for cheer us to study more.

GRATEFUL AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We want to give a special thanks to our English teachers: Lic. Ligia Pineda; Lic. Marisela Coronado, for guiding us during these five years of studies and to Lic. Julio Roa that inspite of being our teacher in this last year, he has encouraged us to develop the four skills of the language and guide us as our tutor in this final work of graduation. They have shared with us their knowledges, comprehension, dedication and their love for teaching.

To all those teachers who taught the subjects of service to complete our pensum.

To all those foreign teachers that we don't know in person, but we know their experiences as English Teachers through their educative articles on the Magazine FORUM and internet.

To our classmates who are students and English teachers like us, but we have learnt from their experiences during our time of class and homeworks too.

To conclude we want to give special thanks to our core families: Flavia Arevalo, Estela, Leonel, Fabiola and Tatiana, because they are our constant inspiration to continue growing as professionals and Human Beings.

HYPOTHESIS

The lack of fluency to speak the language in the English students of 3rd,4th and 5th year is due to the weak material conditions and the inappropriate language used in the syllabus from 1st to 3rd year, that the University has designed to support English Teachers to develop their job and English students have to study at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.

GENERAL OBJECTIVE:

To analyze the problems that English students of 3rd, 4th and 5th year of the Saturday course present in developing of speaking and listening skills and techniques used by English Teachers as well as experiences used in other places where English is taught (E.G. English Academies, Universities).

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- 1- To observe what the teachers do to develop and improve the speaking and listening skills of English students of the 2,005 course, inside and outside of the classroom.

- 2- To analyze with the coordinator of English career the syllabus, implementation of materials, kind of strategies used by the teachers of Saturday courses at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.
- 3- To know about the criteria of limitations in English students of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th year for speaking the language at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA during 2,005 course.
- 4- To compile other experiences of English schools about the way they teach speaking and listening skills.

BACKGROUND

In 2,001 UNAN CUR MATAGALPA opened the English career with the 1st group which had 40 students.

In 2,002 the University opened the 2nd course with 23 students who passed the first level and kept open the 1st level, which had a registration of 39 students.

In 2,003 the University opened the 3rd course with 18 students, who passed the second level and maintaining open the first and second level which registration was: 1st year: 55 students and 2nd year: 28 students.

In 2,004 UNAN_CURMAT, opened the 4th level with almost the same registration: 17 students plus 4 new students who came from other Regional Centres of UNAN_CURMAT and maintaining only open the 2nd level with: 35 students and the 3rd year with 22 students.

In 2,005 the University opened the 5th level with 21 students and keeping only open the 3rd year with 28 students and the 4th year with 14 students.

To develop these courses, UNAN_CURMAT, only has three classrooms available for students. On the other hand, English Teachers had been scant, because the same teacher had taught two subjects in the same group. UNAN has neither a specialized English library nor a language Lab, which is very useful for students can develop their English grammar, to listen to the intonation, stress of the words and to learn how to pronounce correctly. The language Lab is important because students live in a country where the native language is not English, so, they don't have a chance to practice it during the week

INTRODUCTION

As English students of the 5th year at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA during the 2,005 course, this is an opportunity to express in a scientific way through this written work, a common problem that we, as the first English Students group almost graduated of the English career, have felt for speaking the language with fluency.

We pretend to gather a vast information from different sources which allow us to observe, analyze the different points of view from the University as the higher

center of the English teaching in Matagalpa; the English teachers of the 5th year from UNAN CUR MATAGALPA and other centers to deduce the origin of this problem, thus to find the origin of this important aspect that is being feeling by all students of the English career.

JUSTIFICATION

The lack of fluency to speak and listen the language of the English students concern them because there is certain insecurity about their development as English Teachers.

On the other hand, there weak conditions at UNAN that are avoiding the gradual development of the English career with their English Teachers and students. Actually UNAN needs to create better material conditions and some changes in the syllabus of the career toward the appropriate development of the English students registered during the 2005 course, because this year UNAN is graduating the first group of students of the English career and the next two years will graduate two groups more and will be opening the career again to new English students.

Obviously, due to the increasing of the experience in having this new career at UNAN CUR MATAGALPA, it needs to grow more to cover the big demand every year of new students who want to study English and satisfying the needs of its students registered now by creating new classrooms with all the facilities such as: Internet, English Lab, equipped libraries with text books, photocopy and print centre and some other resources to develop the speaking and listening skills in our students and avoid insecurity and lack of fluency when they speak and listen to the foreign language.

Therefore, the quality of the English Teachers graduated in our University will be guaranteed as such the prestige of UNAN CUR MATAGALPA.

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**NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF NICARAGUA
CURM “ MARIANO FIALLOS GIL ”**

Interview with the Principals of English Centers or Academics

GENERAL DATA

Principal's Name: _____

Name of the Center: _____

Place of the Center: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Date: _____

Your collaboration will be useful to find problems and solutions of this research about the lack of fluency of the language of the English Students at UNAN CURM. Thank you very much.

1- What is the purpose of the Center, School or University to teach English?

2- How long time have you been teaching English?

3-What kind of Students do you receive in your Center (what academic level, profession, age)?

4-What kind of texts do teachers and students use?

5-What do you do for developing the speaking skill of your students?

NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF NICARAGUA
CURM “ MARIANO FIALLOS GIL ”

Interview with the Coordinator of the English Career at UNAN CURM

GENERAL DATA

Coordinator's Name: _____

Area: _____

Name of University: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer's Name: _____

Date: _____

Orientations:

Follow these questions as a guide to your interview

1) Does the syllabus have a special technique to develop the speaking skill to students?

2) What are the names of the text book for teachers and students?

*3) Do teachers receive seminars, refreshment courses from UNAN MANAGUA?
How often are these?*

4) *What kind of requirements needs a teacher to teach English at CURM?*

**NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF NICARAGUA
CURM “ MARIANO FIALLOS GIL ”**

Survey to English Students at UNAN CURM

GENERAL DATA

Level: _____

Date: _____

Orientations

This survey is for reaching the main problems about the lack of fluency to speak the language in the English students of the 3rd, 4th and 5th level of 2005 Saturday Course, your honest collaboration will be of great help to find solutions. Thank you very much.

1) *Do you think that you have learned English all these years at UNAN CURM?*

What percentage?

2) *There are four skills of the English language, in what percentage do you feel you are able to command each one?*

3) *What kind of support do you need from your teacher and from UNAN, to overcome your limitations?*

4) *Do you consider that English Teachers are well prepared to teach at UNAN?*

5) *It would be useful for you a specialized library and a language Lab at UNAN CURM? Why?*

6) *How did you know about this career?*

7) *What were your personal motivations to study this career?*

8) *What likes you more and not of the pensum of the English Career? Why?*

9) *You already know about the pensum of the career now. Do you really want to be an English Teacher? Yes or No. Why?*

10) *What kind of suggestions can you give to the University to create better conditions inside the English Career?*

NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS UNIVERSITY OF NICARAGUA
CURM “ MARIANO FIALLOS GIL ”

GUIDE OF OBSERVATION

Name of the observed teacher: _____
Teacher's Subject: _____
Level: _____ Observer
's name: _____
Date: _____

ORIENTATIONS

Answer the follow questions as a guide for your observation.

- 1) Does the teacher plan his/her class?*
- 2) What kind of methodology does she/he use?*
- 3) Does s(he) speak English all time to students?*
- 4) Does s(he) demand his/her students speak English all time?*
- 5) Is s(he) using other type of didactic materials than the board or handouts?*
- 6) How is the participation and attitude of the students?*
- 7) Does s(he) review the homeworks with the students?*
- 8) Does s(he) domain the topics and subject?*
- 9) Does s(he) receive any didactic material from UNAN to help develop the class?*
- 10) Does s(he) explain clearly to students the next homeworks?*
- 11) How much homeworks let to students practice and exercise at home?*
- 12) How much does the teacher encourage the students to learn English?*

