Going against the Tide: Teaching English in English

Javiera Salgado Y.

Tutor teacher: Gabriela Silva.

Alberto Hurtado University
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1. Introduction

In my experience as a trainee English teacher during the last three years, I have observed that teaching a communicative lesson to foreign language learners is a challenging task. My previous work experiences have proved me that speaking activities are complex in different levels, but possible to do achieving the aims of the class.

I worked in three completely different schools. On the one hand, Miguel Cruchaga School and Jose Domingo Cañas School are foundation’s schools and in there, teachers gave importance to speaking activities that were mostly successful. On the other hand, San Esteban Diacono School, as a private institution, prepared very well its students regarding English.

My perspective of the new background I was immersed last semester was totally different. Jose Antonio Lecaros School (CJAL), a subsidized school which belongs to Fe y Alegría Foundation and it is located on Villa Fracia, Estacion Central. In this school, I found a big problem that kept me very concerned. After two weeks of being observing 9th grade English lessons in this place, I realized that 9th graders have not develop their speaking skills. I paid special attention when I saw the third class, they had to do a dialogue presentation and they did not know the pronunciation of words. During the previous classes, I did not listen speaking or pronunciation practice leaded by my host teacher. The only preparation they had was to write the dialogue and just the grammar was checked. When I started my lessons speaking in English, my students were listening to me, but later on, they did not pay attention to me because they did not understand spoken English. For that reason I was forced to do my class in students’ mother tongue, Spanish.
Having the situation explained, the problem I faced with my 9th grade is evident; as the English class was not given in English by the previous teachers they had, speaking activities were not successful. My challenge as trainee teacher is to change this reality and hopefully to solve this problem at the end of this action research.
Chapter 1

1. Context

This project takes place in a 9th grade of thirty six students among the 14 and 15 year-olds. According to the English teachers of the school, it is the worst group they have taught in terms of proficiency and behavior. This class was especially hard, because their proficiency level of English was weak. The Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) asks 9th graders to be between the level 4 and 5 according to the “marco de progreso” of the Ingles Programa de Estudio Primer Año Medio (2011) and the abilities expected (See annex n°1). According to the Common European Framework (CEFR, 2009) (See annex n°2) and considering the MINEDUC “marco de progreso”, 9th graders should be classified in level A2 when they started their course, but the reality was that when I started to work with this group of students, they barely were in level A1.

Whenever I spoke in English, I lost them; students started to talk among themselves, made so much noise and did not let me explain the activities to do. An illustration of this is the first class that I had with 9th grade, my task was to make them a recap-work, because the results in their last test were awful. I greeted them in English and they answered in English. That is the only interaction that they can do in English. When I started to explain their situation about the test, in English, they completely ignored me. My first reaction was to raise my voice and scold them in Spanish. They immediately were in silence, observing me while scolding them. My host teacher was so surprised, that he brought the homeroom teacher of 9th grade to show her how good they started working with me. Later on, I started to talk to them in English again, and they started to talk, so I had to reprimand them again in Spanish.
After this situation, they behaved well with me, I did not have trouble to make them work, but the problem was the same in every class: they ignored me when I was speaking in English and they did not try to answer in the same way. Summing up the problem, they can speak in English but they are not used to do it because they always have had their English classes in Spanish, just receiving the keywords in English. Therefore, as the teacher has never spoken in English before, students do not have a model to follow and produce English in its spoken form.

2. Research Problem:

The main problem I had in this school was that I could not do the English class in English, because my students are not used to it. In the other schools I have worked in, teachers gave their classes in English, speaking in English, occasionally making clarifications in Spanish and students tried to answer in English. Nevertheless, in José Antonio Lecaros School the English class is taught in Spanish by the English teachers, just giving the keywords in English (written and spoken). 9th graders were not expected to produce any spoken language, only some sentences in writing.

When I started my practicum in this school, my host teacher tried to use English in the class, but rapidly he started to speak in Spanish. He excused himself saying that if he speaks in English, students will not pay attention and he could not do the class. I have experienced the same situation recently. Students had asked me to speak in Spanish when I was giving the class, but I insisted that English class must be taught in English and that they have to use the language to ask questions and give answers.
In this action research, I hope to find the way to make my students get used to English class in English and produce answers and make contributions in the target language. According to the previously mentioned, my research will be focused on a) classes taught in English, b) building vocabulary and c) spoken production of English.

3. Research Question

Having the problem explained and the focus points stated, the main question of this research arises:

How can I promote speaking skills during the English language class in a 9th grade who have never had an English class in English?

To solve this question in a suitable course and following the focus points, it is appropriate to set the objectives and develop them.

3.1 Objectives

The main goal of this action research is to make 9th grade students to communicate in English during the English class. Considering that this group of students had never had English lessons in English, we have to consider three specific objectives:

3.1.1 Restricting mother-tongue

As classes are usually taught in Spanish, being the new teacher means that I had to give the class in English, restricting the use of their mother-tongue
as much as possible. To achieve this objective I was determined and to employ several techniques that would be reviewed in order to avoid resorting to the target language. These techniques include simplifying language, cognates and use body language to mime meanings. Spanish can be used to contrast the two languages.

3.1.2 Work in building vocabulary.

9th graders lack of basic vocabulary. According to the CEFR they should know and recognize certain group of words, such as “read”, “write” or “work” to name a few.

3.1.3 Fostering speaking skills.

Foster the practice of speaking skills during the class according to the target proficiency level. Not only the “teacher” should speak in English but students also should be encouraged to speak, making pronunciation drills, producing short dialogues or even by doing short performances.
Chapter 2

1. Theoretical Framework

To make a group of teenagers speak in a foreign language is a very hard task, especially if they have never had a full class taught in the target language, in this case English. Considering this, we need to identify what methodology and techniques may be helpful in this process of making L2 learners speak in English.

Consequently, I had gathered specific information that was helpful at the moment of creating my action plans.

1.1 Speaking skills within Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative language teaching (CLT) can be understood as a set of principles about the goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006, p. 2). The main goal of language teaching is to develop communication inside the classroom using what is known as “Language Competence” which

(...) deals with knowledge of the language and the ability to use that knowledge to interpret and produce meaningful language appropriate to the situation in which they are used. Language competence is best developed in the context of activities or tasks where the language is used for real purposes (...) language competence should be developed through classroom activities which focus on meaningful uses of the language and on language in context. Tasks will be chosen based on the needs, interests and experiences of students. (MCFO, 2009, p.19)

Richards (2009) explains that some teachers think that CLT is just about keeping a discussion or avoiding grammar. What they do not know is that CLT involves speaking, writing and grammar, because we need voice, words and to follow a structure
to communicate something in any language. Both, speaking and writing, are important when we try to convey a message and we have to know how we are going to use these skills during our class.

1.2 Building vocabulary

According to my own experience, if teachers want their students to speak during the English class, a very important point is building vocabulary.

In this 9th grade, students did not have a wide knowledge of vocabulary in English, what reminds me that during one of my lexical grammar class at university, it was mentioned by a teacher that in order to be understood by others we do not need to use a complete sentence. For example, my mother is a hotel employee. She replaces drinks and snacks of the minibars. Occasionally, she has to interact with American guests to greet them and ask them permission to do her job. My mother does not speak in English, but she uses her basic knowledge of vocabulary to communicate her intentions. For instance, when she wants to check the minibar she says “check minibar” or if she wants to know if the guest is leaving the hotel she asks “check out today?” and using meaningful keywords she is understood by native English speakers.

*By learning new words, students can increase their listening, speaking, reading and writing vocabularies and can improve comprehension and production in L2* (Al-Jarf, 2006, p.2). According to Al-Jarf in his text *Making Connections in Vocabulary Instruction* (2006), students can build vocabulary by using different strategies, but as L2 students, they will mainly build vocabulary inside the classroom. Teachers have to make use of as much resources as they can, such as flashcards with the word and the picture, select
cognates and easy words, vocabulary games, to pick a topic, for example, “my hobbies” and teach vocabulary related to the topic, for example, “drawing”, “dancing”, to name but two, and make students to practice those words through speaking or writing activities (Al-Jarf, 2006,p.3).

Presenting vocabulary is not only about students being exposed to the meaning, but also its spelling and pronunciation, as well as the use, which are some of the characteristics mentioned by Nation (2002) The need to relate the word to a picture is not enough. If students know how “x” word is pronounced, they will be more confident at the moment of producing speaking language (Al-Jarf, 2006, p.3). Students need to internalize vocabulary in order to understand and access it effectively, and need to develop personalized vocabulary in order to talk about their own worlds (Glisan, 1988).

The key in vocabulary instruction is to make the words taught have sense for students. To make a connection between the word and the picture, the word and the situation is so much meaningful than say “make means hacer in Spanish”, which is an example that I have often seen used by teachers as a way of presenting vocabulary, because according to my experience, students will have a cognitive understanding of the word, putting it in a context, not in isolation.

1.3 Topic – Based Language Learning

In order to concrete this, I applied the topic-based language learning. Topic-based language learning means that the emphasis of the lessons in language learning is on a subject, a topic or a theme, and the contents of the book are arranged around this topic (Wordpress, 2010). Basically, it is about adapting the respective content of the semester to the selected topic with specific vocabulary that will be used to be developed in
classes. For example, if the topic is “vacations” I will select vacation places such as “the beach” or “the forest” and vocabulary related to those places, for instance, “see”, “sand”, “sunglasses”, “camping”, “river” etc. I believe that a topic-based learning language will be useful when teaching my students, because by introducing the new lessons associating them to topics of students’ interest, they will be willing to participate during the class. I need them to be focused and engaged on only one topic at the time to avoid misunderstandings and in that way teach them the content needed for the semester.

1.4 Promoting Speaking Practice

As language teachers, we have to give our students the freedom to experiment with language in a safe place. Teachers of the New South Wales University (2011) suggest that it is very important to carefully create pair or small group work of students where the environment is friendly and non-threatening in order to facilitate communication.

If teachers want their students to speak a foreign language, the first question they have to ask themselves is “how do we learn our first language?” If they have investigated about that, they would know that humans acquire the first language like Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell explain in their natural approach (1970-1980) method of language teaching, but in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms the reality is quite different.

In an EFL classroom students do not acquire the second language but learn it, because in order to acquire a language, teachers have to immerse students into an environment where they received a lot of input of the target language the entire time
and, as we know, Chilean reality is completely different and luckily we only have 3 hours a week to give our classes. The time and resources are limited and the commitment of my students depends on several factors that might be positive or negative for the development of their learning. For that reason, I planned to focus my attention mainly in two skills: listening and speaking.

In my experience, teachers have tended to exploit reading and writing skills, neglecting listening and speaking. Nevertheless, with this I am not saying I will eliminate reading and writing, but I will try to equalize the four strands in my class. According to the NSW Department of Education “talking and listening” are the foundations for reading and writing, and are both necessary for supporting the continued development of skills, knowledge and understanding in reading, writing and viewing (2006). Listening and speaking are the two first communicative skills that children develop during the first years of life and it should not be different in English teaching classrooms. Children, adolescents and adults can learn a second language (L2) in a similar way but the process is different. For example, for little children is enough to hear the name of the object, see it and repeat its name to have a meaningful learning, but older people, to complete the entire idea of a concept, need to watch the object, listen its name, repeat the name out-loud and see its written form. For instance, I am learning to speak Italian and personally I need more than just the figure and the name of the new concepts, I need to know everything about this new language to find a point of connection with my prior knowledge.

Having observed my 9th graders, I decided that the best first step to follow is to start with controlled pair work, in which students had a partner to work with. From my
personal point of view, this brings benefits for students such as self-confidence when speaking, support and feedback from a peer. When students have a certain level of practicing speaking and have earned more confidence, they can work in activities which involve more people working in it such as plays, making discussions and debates about important issues of students’ concern; everything depends on students’ progress.

In order to achieve positive results, it is important to ask students to pay attention to their partner and later on, to give him or her feedback. Speaking a new language does not have to be a traumatic experience. Teachers can make it a challenging but entertainment process of learning.

1.5 Generation Y

When teaching adolescents, teachers have to take into consideration the context in which these young people were born. My 9th graders belong to the generation known as “Generation Y” or “Gen Y” this generation came into being during the last two decades of the 20th century (Reilley, 2012, p.3). They are technological teenagers; they have modern mobile phones, MP4s and tablets. They prefer to work and study in things that passionate them, easy and didactic activities. This generation does not have a single preference at the moment to express their likes, they like to share experiences with adults and be treated as what they are: adolescents who are becoming into adults (Maciel, Liedke, Rodrigues, 2012).

From my point of view, the previous information is very important to consider when teaching, because 9th graders are experiencing a complicated stage in their life. I remember when at their age my parents and teachers asked me to be mature and responsible, but at the same time, they did not treat like that. This confusion about how
teenagers have to behave is stressful for them; therefore, as a teacher, I must decide my posture with 9th graders and how I will treat them.

1.6 Grammar-Based Teaching

Despite of my main focus is speaking production, I decided to consider to grammar-based teaching (GBT) uses grammar as the base, the starting point and foundation, for the development of all language skills — speaking, listening, writing, and reading (Azar, 2006). GBT was chosen to be used in my class in order to give explicit information about the structure of language (2006), to give my students confidence about what they will produce in speaking.

GBT is not about teaching or making to memorize grammatical rules, in my students case, it is about to give them a base where they can find a stable guide at the moment to produce spoken sentences. My 9th graders are used to grammar centered classes of English, and from my point of view they will still need it, but in a restricted way, for instance, give the grammatical structure of present simple.
Chapter 3

1. Instruments

The instruments used to measure the progress and learning development of students in speaking practice are a) observation of pair work conversations, b) games to check recognition of vocabulary learned in class, c) oral presentations about a specific topic evaluated with a rubric and d) a survey to know students opinion about the classes of English with the new teacher and their feeling about speaking English.

2. Methodology

During my professional practicum in CJAL, my action plan was broken down into two cycles. These cycles were based on texts and articles suggested by my university tutor and from my own selection according to my main objective.

On the one hand, the first plan used in classroom was mainly inspired by the topic-based approach in order to engage students with a meaningful topic and promote speaking practice in a foreign language during the English class. On the other hand, the second plan emerged from the results of the first plan. Topic-based approach (Wordpress, 2010) needed grammar-based teaching (Azar, 2006) in order to create stability in students understanding of the lessons.

2.1 Action Plan: Cycle 1

Having met the main objective of this research, I will proceed to explain how I developed my first plan. The first intervention consisted of a radical change in the teaching method students were receiving until their last class. I decided to create my own material of teaching, which is more interactive and dynamic than my host teacher's,
following the Chilean curriculum of education (MINEDUC), in order to continue with the content planned for 9th graders.

The procedure was to plan three lessons for the first topic and its respective content. The topic was “Abilities: I could be a rock-star”, the contents used were the modal verbs “can” and “could”, because teenagers of 14-15 years old are developing their abilities, demonstrating what are the characteristics that make them special. Besides, from my personal experience, most of adolescents enjoy to talk about themselves.

During those classes, we practiced the vocabulary needed for the topic. The vocabulary selected was known words by students, such as “play” and “football” or “sing” and “song” and unknown words by students such as “climb”, “ride” or “drive” (See annex nº3). The practice of the vocabulary was about a) associate the word to a flashcard/picture, b) pronunciation, making my students repeat after me word by word, and c) spelling, to make them know the written form of the words. This practice was planned because I wanted them to be familiar with the pronunciation and sound of the selected words and in that mode at the moment to practice, it would not be a problem for them to produce speaking. Students can check vocabulary by using their mobile phones. As they belong to the Gen Y (Reilley, 2012, p.3) and most of them had Android system, there are a lot of application with free dictionaries they can use to facilitate their work.

After practicing the vocabulary, I started to give my students examples in context about my abilities. I wrote on the whiteboard “I can paint, I could be a painter” to
illustrate with an example what I wanted from them. Later on, I asked to two students about their abilities and I wrote their abilities and what they could do on the whiteboard.

To assess students’ progress, to check the effectiveness of the *topic-based approach* and to assess speaking, I decided to make them to do a presentation talking about their abilities and the things they could be. They had to follow the same structure that we used with the examples I wrote on the whiteboard previously. To evaluate them, I did a rubric known as check list, where I wrote a list of conditions students had to follow to obtain the maximum score. I considered presentation, creativity, vocabulary, speaking and comradeship. Also, I aggregate a “comments” section where to make suggestions and contributions to my students’ job. (See annex nº4).

As a closure of this first plan, I made a game to check if vocabulary remained in their knowledge or at least on their memory. The vocabulary procedure was effective, but students did not achieve the main goal. Speaking production was not clear and structures were misunderstood.

2.2 Action Plan: Cycle 2

Topic-based approach was not enough for 9th graders. It is appropriate because in that way I can keep their attention following just one line of focus, but there was something missing. As students were used to complete grammar-based classes, I decided to include grammar in my classes, but only to give them and structure to follow.

The second cycle consisted in four classes; the content to teach was the modal verbs “may” and “might”. The speaking assessment was based on the topic chosen to teach “may”, which was “weather forecast”. The vocabulary selected were words such
as “sunny”, “hot”, “windy”, “cold” or “rainy” to name a few. Also, I taught them the words “Celsius” and “degrees” to refer to the temperature degrees. The practice of the vocabulary was the same procedure than with the previous plan: a) associate the word to a flashcard/picture, b) pronunciation, making my students repeat after me word by word, and c) spelling, to make them know the written form of the words. (See annex nº5).

After practicing vocabulary, I started with the grammar-based part. I did the same procedure of putting in an example what I want them to do. I asked “It may be sunny and hot tomorrow?” helping them with body language to make them understand the question. They answered “no, cloudy and cold”, then I wrote on the whiteboard “Tomorrow may be cloudy and cold” underlining “may be” to highlight that part of the sentence. I read the sentence and made them repeat after me to practice pronunciation. Later on, I asked for examples and students suggested to talk about the weather of other Chilean cities. I agreed. They gave examples such as “Antarctic may be snowy and cold” or “Monday Osorno may be rainy and cold”. I wrote the examples on the whiteboard and underlined the “may be”.

To assess their understanding about the vocabulary and the modal verb use, I made them to report the weather. They had to do their own weather forecast show and present it in front of the class. The rubric used was the same one that I used to evaluate the previous presentation.

As a closure of the content, we made a brief review. I was eliciting information from students to get the answers and in that way to make a summary of what they learned during the last four classes. Students responded successfully to this plan.
3. Survey: Students give their opinion about the teaching changes

My classes were centered on my students and not on the teacher. Therefore, I wanted to know 9th graders’ opinion. To know what students were thinking about the modifications I did, with my host teacher’s permission, I created three questions with alternatives and one open question (See annex nº6). As I wanted them to answer freely, I wrote the questions in Spanish for them. I pretended to obtain specific information and those questions gave me that. My purposes were the followings:

3.1 Question nº 1: I want to know if my students are actually enjoying my class and according to each alternative to know why they like or dislike my lessons.

3.2 Question nº 2: I want to know if students have noticed an improvement in their English class performance and if they can tell me how they have improved.

3.3 Question nº 3: I want to know if students are afraid of speaking English and the factors that increase that fear or if they feel confident at the moment to face the speaking part of the class.

3.4 Question nº 4: I want to know my students’ suggestions to improve my lessons. Even if they answer that they would not change anything, they are giving me feedback and I will have the opportunity to know if my students want to try something different in future classes.
Chapter 4

1. Data Collection

The data collection was gathered by using rubrics to evaluate two oral presentations represented in the chart below and a survey to know students’ opinion about the changes in their English class and how they feel with the idea of speaking a foreign language represented in the set of graphics below.

2. Presentations’ results

Two presentations were performed to contrast the effects of the cycle 1 and 2 of my action plans. The presentations of “cycle 1” represent the results of the first changes I did in the methodology. The presentations of “cycle 2” represent the results of the modifications I did in the action plan of “cycle 1”.

2.1 Chart 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cycle:</th>
<th>Presentation:</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>25/36</td>
<td>32/36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Topic-Based</td>
<td>Topic-Based + Grammar-Based</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic and Content</td>
<td>“Abilities: I can sing, I could be a rock-star” Modal verbs “can! And “could”</td>
<td>“Weather Forecast” Modal Verb “may”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>25 students did the presentation. Marks over 4.0: 25. 11 students did not present. Evaluation mark: 2.0.</td>
<td>32 students did the presentation. Marks over 5.0: 29. 4 students did not present. Evaluation mark: 2.0.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Survey’s results

3.1 General view of students’ opinion

3.2 Results to question 1

Do you like your current English classes? Why?

- a. Yes, I understand better these classes than the previous ones.
- b. Yes, I think these classes are fun
- c. No, I prefer the classes we had before.
- d. “a” and “b”
3.3 Results to question 2

Would you say that you have improved your English during the last two months? How?

- a) Yes, I have improved my English because I know more words.
- b) Yes, I have improved my English because I can understand more words but I do not get better marks.
- c) A little bit, because I know more words but I do not get better marks.
- d) No, I am just like at the beginning.

3.4 Results to question 3

Are you afraid of speaking in English? Why?

- a) Yes, because I do not know how to pronounce the words.
- b) Yes, because my classmates mock of me.
- c) No, I think that I have a good pronunciation.
- d) “a” and “b”.

Would you say that you have improved your English during the last two months? How?
3.5 Results to question 4

Would you change something of the teacher’s classes? What? (Open question)

4. Data Analysis

Having presented the data collection is appropriate to start with the analysis of the information gathered during my practicum in CJAL.

4.1 Presentations

“Cycle 1” presentations were good to be the first time, but when students were presenting, confusion was the dominant emotion in students’ faces. Even though students did a great job in terms of vocabulary, what they were saying did not make sense in any context and some of them used vocabulary that did not belong to the lesson taught. During the first presentation, only 25 of 36 students presented and 11 did not present. I presume two possibilities: first, they did not do the presentation because of irresponsibility, and second, they were afraid of presenting because of their pronunciation.
“Cycle 2” presentation improved a lot. This was after having applied the cycle 2 of my action plan. 32 of 36 students presented their weather forecast as the rubric pointed out and doing a very good job, and 4 students did not present. This time, the reason why these students did not presented was because they were irresponsible, fact that they accepted.

4.2 Survey

The graphic 1 represents an overview of the final results of the survey. Generally, my intervention in this 9th grade has brought a positive influence on these teenagers. They are more confident in different areas of the English class and they are more engage with the class I am giving them. Besides, I could receive more accurate information about what I am doing well, what things I can improve and what things I can include in my classes. Thus, the feedback I received is helping me to keep going with the things that are working and work harder in my weaknesses.

In the graphic 2, question 1, On the one hand, I can see that most of 9th graders prefer my class, because they think that my classes are more understandable and entertainment than the classes they used to have with my host teacher. Comparing my classes with my host teacher’s classes, the difference between us is that I connect the content with a topic of students’ interest or that are fun to use for a while, but my host teacher connect the content with any topic. On the other hand, there were three students that preferred to have the classes they had before. I presume that this is because my classes did not achieve to engage them. I think that the topics I selected were not of their interest and for that reason they circled letter “c”.
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In the graphic 3, question 2, my 9th grade students recognize that they have improved somehow in the English class. Thirteen of them say that they know more vocabulary than before, but they still get confused and not notice an improvement in their tests results. Twelve of them say that they understand more the subject and eight students say that they know more vocabulary than before, recognizing their own improvements. However, again three students, the same ones I presume, selected the option “d”. They think that they are just like at the beginning, with no improvements. If I think about these three students, I would say that they have not given the best of them, especially because one of them wrote his name in the piece of paper and he one of the students that does not do anything in class. After to know his opinion, I decided to monitor his work more frequently, but even I was there, he just did not work.

In graphic 4, question 3, students have different perceptions about speaking English in classes. Sixteen of my students are confident about their performance when speaking English, they think they have good pronunciation and are not afraid of speaking English. Twenty of my students are afraid of speaking English, twelve of them expressed that they are afraid because they do not know the pronunciation, five of them are afraid of mocks, and the last three students are afraid of both pronunciation and mocks. For those fears, I started to practice the pronunciation of vocabulary with them and make them speak aloud. Also, we have agreed to respect others when they are talking and avoid mocks to create a safe environment inside the classroom. I think that they need to have a safe place where to practice and I will try to build that the time I have left.
In the graphic 5, question 4, the open question asks for changes in my teaching method. If students think I have to make modifications or not. Twenty seven students are comfortable with my teaching style, saying things like “la verdad nada porque la dinamica que se utiliza es muy buena”, which in some way is good because it means that what I am doing is working for them and that makes me happy, but there were nine students who contributed with feedback. Six of them said that they liked my classes but they asked to include songs, more dynamic games and group work.

The song and the games were include after their suggestion, because I think that is important to demonstrate students that their ideas are considered. But the group work, with more than three people by group was out of discussion and I explained them why. The reason was that when they were more than 3 people, the group work turned into a monkeys’ party, was a mess. They need to learn how to work in pairs, and then in trios and when they will be ready, we are going to increase the number of people by group work. Finally, three students said that they would change me for their previous English teacher, what is totally valid. I think that no matter what I do, they will not like me. I know that this rejection is not because I am a bad teacher, sometimes we do not fit with every student learning style and despite of these three students, I feel satisfied with the acceptance of the rest of the class.
5. Conclusions

When I started to work with this 9th grade, I heard from my host teacher that these teenagers were a lost case in terms of proficiency and behavior. Now that I have finished my practicum, I see what they really are: they are very intelligent, capable and energetic students. It was not that they were not interested about the subject; it was that the topics were not engaging enough to connect them to the class; it was not that they did not understand the lesson because they were not able to; it was that they did not possess the appropriate English vocabulary to produce something. If these students were not able to understand a word in English was because they never were taught as it is supposed they should be taught.

I started with a group of students who did not dare to speak in other language, who used to say that they did not know anything, and with a little bit of help, they started to form phrases and sentences in the target language. Therefore, my research question was partially answered, because I could promote speaking by giving them a vocabulary base, but still including Spanish inside the classroom. At the beginning was hard decreasing the Spanish language and increasing the English one, but 9th graders started to accept this foreign language slowly. I would say that of the 100% of Spanish spoken during the English class, now there is a 40%.

Making them to repeat after me the pronunciation of the vocabulary used in class and practicing the vocabulary using the flashcard and the spelling exercises, it help them to be more confident at the time to make sentences either in writing or speaking. They were so confident to speak in English during the English class, that
when I gave them the opportunity to select an evaluation, between a speaking test and a presentation, they chose the presentation, making an awesome job.

Concluding this paper, I would like to say that I feel thankful with my 9 graders and with my host teacher. My students received me in a friendly and respectful way and my host teacher gave me the freedom to experiment with this group of students, supporting every idea I had during the semester. Thanks to them, I could grow up as a teacher and I could experience challenges and great opportunities. I made mistakes, but I had the opportunity to fix those mistakes at time, earning priceless knowledge. In few words, these adolescents have taught me that teachers cannot catalog their students because of their marks; we cannot just blame them because there is no improvement. Everybody has their own rhythm and process of learning.

We have to be honest and reflect about the possibility that we may be the problem of not having good results and to be the brave enough to face and solve future problems in the best way we can, looking the solution and never give up.
6. References


Azar, B. (2006) A Description of Grammar-Based Teaching


http://www.ehow.com/about_5209931_topic_based-learning.html

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_approach


http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faYL6b4-vqQ
7. Annexes


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td>Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes &amp; ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.</td>
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</table>

Annex n° 2: Common European Framework (CEFR)

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<tbody>
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Annex 3: Lesson Plan 28-08-2013

**Objective:** At the of the class, students will be able to use the vocabulary of the topic “I can sing, I could be a rock-star”

**Materials:** Whiteboard, markers, worksheets.

**Vocabulary:** Can, can’t, could, couldn’t. I can …. (play the guitar), I could… (run fast), I can’t …. (drive a car), I couldn’t …. (go out alone). Play, climb, run, sing, dance, song, tango, guitar, drums, mountain, paint, painter, guitarist, dancer, singer, football player, soccer player.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>STAGE AIM</th>
<th>PROCEDURE</th>
<th>INTERACTION</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Greetings and introduce vocabulary.</td>
<td>T greets ss. T will show pictures of the vocabulary. Picture by picture t will show and say the word and students need to repeat after the T, first to practice pronunciation and then spelling. Later, T will show the pictures and nominate one student to say the vocabulary that the image represents. If he or she does not know, T will ask for somebody to help his or her peer. T will elicit information asking to students “is this vocabulary about food?” or “is this vocabulary related to abilities?”</td>
<td>T-ss</td>
<td>5 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>To introduce the use of the modal verb “can” through a reading. While reading, ss are reinforcing their speaking skill.</td>
<td>T will hand them a worksheet with information about teenagers driving in other countries, such as USA, Germany and Japan. T will ask for volunteers to read out load and the rest of ss have to follow the reading (If nobody volunteer to read, T will pick one by draw) At the end of every paragraph, T will ask for someone to paraphrase what was said (picked by draw). At the end of the whole reading, teacher will ask ss to answer 5 questions about the reading. The questions are in the worksheet.</td>
<td>T-ss</td>
<td>10 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15 min</td>
<td>Ss will be able to circle the words in bold and deduce how these words work. Ss will be able to create 2 list of what they can and can’t do.</td>
<td>T will ask ss to have a look to the reading part of the worksheet. T will ask ss to circle the words in <strong>bold</strong> “can” and “can’t” (T will explain what is a word in bold). T will ask: What are indicating those words? Which is the difference between “can” and “can’t”? T will listen to 2 or 4 ss’ answers and then, T will show them a final explanation T wrote on the board when ss were working on the worksheet. Ss have to write the explanation on their notebook. <strong>1st Activity:</strong> ss will have to write in</td>
<td>Pair Work T as monitor</td>
<td>15 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Duration</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ss will be able to underline the words in bold and deduce how these words work. Ss will be able to create 2 lists of what they could and couldn't do.</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>To give a more formal content to ss, who are used to receive the information in this way. Then, T will make a short review of what they have been learning during the current class.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3rd activity: To draw or indicate what are ss abilities making a big mural.</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Can/can't game: Ss should be able to apply what they have been learning during the lesson through a game.</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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</table>
five points for saying "Yes, we can" and then successfully doing it - 1 point for failing after saying Yes. Though ss can just make lots of silly questions like "Can you punch through this wall?" they should hopefully spot that the best tactic is to ask something that ss think they can do but actually can't. T will provide verbs or complete questions that they can or should use.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Get the final results of the competition, ask what they did learn and say good bye.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Characteristics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation: Cardboard is clean and clear handwriting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Vocabulary: Students used the vocabulary learned in class.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Speaking: Students speak loud and clear. Good pronunciation.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comradeship: Students are in silence when their classmates are presenting.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Annex 4: Rubric**

### Abilities Presentation

| Names: _____________________________ | Date: _______________ | Mark:                      |

#### Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>5pts</th>
<th>4pts</th>
<th>3pts</th>
<th>2pts</th>
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Comments: ____________________________________________________________________
Annex 5: Lesson Plan 02-10-2013

Objective: At the end of the lesson, ss will be able to apply the modal verb “may” to ask for permission or request something, possible situations, and to report the weather.

Vocabulary: sunny, rainy, cloudy, snowy, windy, hot, cold, degree, Celsius.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage Time</th>
<th>Stage Aim</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To give the results of the test to ss.</td>
<td>T will greet ss. T will recall their knowledge asking them to give examples of their abilities and imagining themselves with a job saying what they could do. T will nominate ss to write examples on the board.</td>
<td>Whole class.</td>
<td>10 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To present and exercise vocabulary.</td>
<td>T will show pictures of the vocabulary. Picture by picture t will show and say the word and students need to repeat after the T, first to practice pronunciation and then spelling. Later, T will show the pictures and nominate one student to say the vocabulary that the image represents. If he or she does not know, T will ask for somebody to help his or her peer. T will elicit information asking to students “is this vocabulary related to the school?” or “is this vocabulary related to the weather?”</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To do predictions using may. Activity 1.</td>
<td>T will make a prediction about the “weather forecast” for example: Thursday: It may be sunny and hot. 27º maximum. T will ask ss to do a chart with the seven days of the week making their predictions about the weather that may be the next week. T will draw the chart on the WB, writing the days of the week and ask to complete the chart with information like the example T gave at the beginning.</td>
<td>Whole class</td>
<td>15 min</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Game: meeting my classmates.</td>
<td>T will ask ss to write three questions on their notebooks in a chart like this one that will be drawn on the WB:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>name 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>name 2</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>What is your favorite food?</td>
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<td>What makes you happy?</td>
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<td>What is your favorite place in the world?</td>
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<td>Ss have to ask the questions to 3 different classmates they don’t know very much. When they finish, they have to go back to their seats. When everybody have done, T will nominate 3 to 5 ss and ask them who were the people they polled and what they learned of their classmate.</td>
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<td><strong>Activity 2:</strong> Ss will have to make assumptions about their classmates.</td>
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<td>T will ask ss to write five assumptions about their seat classmate. T will show an example: &quot;Pepita may like oranges&quot;. When they finish writing the assumptions, they have to share it with their partner. If what they thought was right, they have to write the word &quot;True&quot; next to the supposition. But if the supposition is incorrect, ss have to write the word &quot;false&quot; next to the supposition. T will be monitoring.</td>
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<td><strong>Worksheet:</strong> Recognize in a text the word may/may not and to test ss reading comprehension</td>
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<td>T will give ss a worksheet with a short text. Ss will have to circle the words in <strong>bold</strong> (may- may not) and answer the questions to every situation which are at the end of every paragraph. Then they will have to complete a series of exercises.</td>
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</table>
7 To check their answers of the worksheet. T will ask ss to see the words in bold they circled. T will ask: How is working the word in bold? To talk about permission/possible situations/future (not) possible situations? Then the T will nominate ss and ask them to read and share the answer that they answer for each situation. T will give the results of the test to those ss who took the test and want to know their mark. T will congratulate them for their effort and bid farewell. whole class 10 min

Annex n° 6: Rubric

Weather Report Presentation

Names: _____________________________ Date: __________________ Mark: __________

Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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Comments:
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