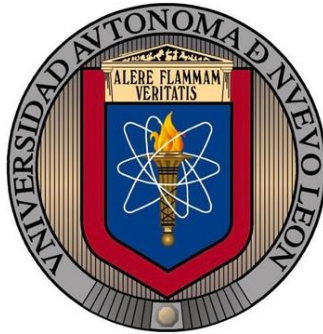


UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN

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READING CIRCLES AS A STRATEGY TO FACILITATE YOUNG ADULTS' ORAL  
PRODUCTION THROUGH TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING

PRESENTA

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AGOSTO 2021





## ACTA DE APROBACIÓN

(De acuerdo al RGSP aprobado el 12 de junio de 2012 Arts. 77, 79, 80, 104, 115, 116, 121, 122, 126, 131, 136, 139)

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## **Acknowledgements**

I acknowledge the Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACyT-México) for the sponsorship awarded in this postgraduate study.

## **Abstract**

The reading circles strategy offers an opportunity to both practice and improve the four skills, mainly reading and oral production due to the interaction among peers about reading passages. This study sought to promote the use and benefits of reading circles in order to improve the students' oral production through the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) method. Ten out of thirty-two students from a private university of Nuevo Leon, Mexico volunteered to take part in this study; participants took the Preliminary English Test as pre and post-test. The intervention was virtual and during sessions, participants received proper instruction among stages. The stages were the same as those proposed by Willis (1996), 1) the pre-task, 2) the task cycle and 3) the focus on language. The activities began with reading passages which looked for a collaborative environment so students not only exchanged ideas but also gave each other feedback. At the end of the process, students created their own language evidence. Results were favorable as the post-test demonstrated an increase in the students' pronunciation and interactive communication. Additionally, students reported to be more confident while speaking English and while sharing a reading passage with their classmates. Implementing reading circles periodically is recommended as well as changing team members and providing students with the opportunity to choose reading passages other than the ones in their textbooks. Finally, face-to-face reading circles may produce superior results as both students' interaction and teacher's supervision would be simultaneous.

*Key words: Reading circles, Task-based language teaching, shared reading, reading comprehension strategies, oral production.*

## Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	5
<b>Abstract</b> .....	6
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	8
<b>1.1 Literature Review</b> .....	9
<b>1.2 Rationale</b> .....	19
<b>1.3 Statement of the Problem</b> .....	19
<b>1.4 Objectives</b> .....	20
<b>1.4.1 Main Objective</b> .....	20
<b>1.4.2 Specific Objectives</b> .....	21
<b>1.5 Research Questions</b> .....	21
<b>Chapter 2 Theoretical framework</b> .....	21
<b>2.1 Reading Circles</b> .....	22
<b>2.2 Shared Readings</b> .....	24
<b>2.3 Reading English in a Foreign Language</b> .....	26
<b>2.4 Speaking English as a Foreign Language</b> .....	28
<b>2.5 Task-Based Language Teaching</b> .....	29
<b>2.6 Task-Based Cycle</b> .....	31
<b>2.6.1 Pre-task Stage</b> .....	31
<b>2.6.2 Task-cycle Stage</b> .....	32
<b>2.6.3 Focus on Language</b> .....	32
<b>Chapter 3 Research methodology</b> .....	33
<b>3.1 Context of the Study</b> .....	34
<b>3.2 Participants</b> .....	34
<b>3.3 Data Collection</b> .....	35
<b>3.3.1 Pre-test: Preliminary English Test</b> .....	35
<b>3.3.2 Students' PET Questionnaire</b> .....	38
<b>3.3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire</b> .....	40
<b>3.3.4 Narrative Frame</b> .....	41
<b>Chapter 4 Data analysis</b> .....	42
<b>4.1 Pre-test Results</b> .....	43

4.2 Students' Questionnaire about their PET Speaking Section Experience.....	46
4.3 Teachers' Questionnaire.....	50
4.4 Narrative Frame .....	53
<b>Chapter 5 Didactic proposal.....</b>	<b>57</b>
5.1 Action Hypothesis.....	57
5.2 Materials.....	57
5.3 Procedures .....	58
5.4 Proposal.....	59
5.5 Results.....	69
<i>5.5.1 Students' Reflection on their Experience with Reading Circles .....</i>	<i>72</i>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Appendix A: Cuestionario sobre la sección de producción oral del Preliminary English Test.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Appendix B: Cuestionario para maestros de Nivel 3.....</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Appendix C: Marco narrativo.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Appendix D: Lesson plans.....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>Appendix E Collaborative evidences.....</b>	<b>98</b>

## Chapter 1 Introduction

Communication has been a key factor to reach agreement in society so human beings try to understand and master their language in order to have more effective results in their daily actions. Communication is a process that not only happens with spoken or written words, it also occurs with signs, images and gestures. So, learning one or more languages will determine the level of success in the exchange of information with people not only from the speakers' own country but also with foreigners. As Akmajian et al. (2010) stated people have been intrigued with communication and its components such as language for a long time. However, it continues to be a mystery the way in which human beings acquire it as they grow up.

Maintaining proper communication depends on a well-accomplished process where the participants share a language. So, learning one or more languages will determine the level of success in the exchange of information with people not only from the speakers' own country but also with foreigners. The communication process and its study have been extensive. Through the years, the learning theories have evolved and impacted in the language teaching methods.

Among the different methods that exist in the present, the one adopted for this research is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) as it carefully divides the classes into stages and because it aims to achieve communicative goals at the end of the course. Willis (1996) proposed a three TBLT stage process: 1) pre-task, 2) task cycle and 3) focus on language. This process aims to give students a proper amount of modeling through input and teacher instruction that will later lead to an independent language production among students. Further details about TBLT will be provided in the chapter 2.

Input can be given to students through texts or audios so they can encounter new language to reproduce, to experiment and to practice with. In this sense, different alternatives to provide students with more impactful and appealing input were sought and that was the moment where literature/reading circles and shared reading gained popularity inside and outside EFL



environments. These alternatives are convenient because, as mentioned by Holdaway (1979), they replicate the native language learning process which occurs during the bedtime stories between children and parents. In this process, individuals find themselves in a comfortable environment that allows a better learning flow and where there is a guide that does not only provides security but also comfort through accompaniment in the reading sessions.

The purpose of this research project was to discover the advantages and disadvantages of using reading circles with a TBLT design in order to improve the oral production of young adults. In order to achieve this goal, students were engaged in collaborative activities where they interacted with their peers, with the teacher and with the text. Therefore, participants constantly participated in teams while using a reading passage and elaborating evidence of their interaction to then focusing on language. In other words, reading circles worked as both the basis and the bridge to generate new language through the use of prior language, the teacher's guidance and modeling, the new input and the students' exchange of ideas.

### **1.1 Literature Review**

Learning a language requires covering a wide range of aspects to have effective communication. However, communication takes place in different ways such as using words either spoken or written and using gestures or signs. Regarding a foreign language class, as stated by Shabani (2013), speaking is an important skill that tends to be highly relevant but it also becomes a challenging one among learners. This means, that for students to start producing language orally, there are many little details to learn, practice and master. As shared by Hamzaoğlu and Koçoğlu (2016) and Mohamed Kassem (2018) motivation, anxiety and interaction are examples of personal and social aspects that play crucial aspects in the speaking process.

As a consequence of the evident necessity and demand to speak a foreign language, many authors have focused on the problems related to speaking within foreign language learning. In

this section, the various projects proposed by different authors will present the possibilities that a language teacher could implement in their classrooms to facilitate and/or to improve the mastering of speaking English as a foreign language (EFL).

This section will provide examples of projects that explored different ways of promoting interaction between students and teacher. Some researchers have focused on the use of technology such as applications and internet-based material (Manurung 2015; Nguyen 2015; and García, Díaz & Artunduaga 2017), others on the use of voice and video recordings (Göktürk 2016; and Hamzaoğlu & Koçoğlu 2016). Meanwhile, authors such as Fauzan (2014) explored the benefits of improvisation as a technique to improve the oral production; others have done the same with the support of a reading strategy or role-plays (Aliakbari & Jamalvandi 2010, Ninsuwan 2015; Marzuki, Ananto Prayogo & Wahyudi 2016; Nyoman Mantra & Maba 2018, and Chol & Lewis 2018). Other teachers focused on the integration of reading and speaking through the reading circle strategy (Carrison & Ernst-Slavit 2005 and Ibrahim Abdelrasoul 2014). Finally, other practitioners used a task-based approach plus a strategy (Salimi 2015; Yu 2015; Khoshshima & Shokri 2016; and Yegani & Jodaei 2017). All projects mentioned above shared the interactive aspect among participants and teachers as similarity which allowed them to have a positive constant feedback resulting in improvements in areas such as anxiety and motivation levels, vocabulary, word knowledge, pronunciation, and fluency. Authors reported that the more interaction students had, the more improvement they reached. Additionally, it was observed that even when learners produced many mistakes while speaking and collaborating, they felt more comfortable while performing in class; they were not afraid of participating, they were just exploring language through their capabilities.

As first example, technological applications and internet-based material, Manurung (2015) proposed to engage students in classes that were more appealing to them. The author realized that speaking classes in an Indonesian university made the students feel dissatisfied, so they

showed no eagerness to comment or ask questions in a conversation. In this way, the proposal was the creation of oral presentations through the use of internet material to improve the students' speaking skill. The experiment had a division of two cycles where twenty-nine Indonesian university students from a Speaking IV class participated in expressing their difficulties and in the preparation of their presentations. Students had the opportunity to use the internet to research and to download material regarding a topic of their interest.

Later in the project, students worked in teams in order to show and discuss the information they found. When the discussion ended, participants chose a classmate to start with the presentation by only using cards with key words as a support. At the end authors discover that students showed improvements while speaking as their explanations and descriptions became more constant and solid. The author of the study concluded that these results came from the independence experienced by the students at the time of doing their research and from the interaction in the meetings in order to prepare and to witness presentations.

Nguyen (2015) presented a different strategy based on oral presentations; he used the PechaKucha format which consists of PowerPoint presentations with twenty slides and with twenty seconds to present each one, that it 6 minutes and 40 seconds. This author worked with Japanese students who expressed reluctance to participate and practice English. The experimental group continued using their normal course books but within the sessions they were working with the PechaKucha presentations. After the sixteen weeks of classes, students watched different presentations and prepared two on their own. The results showed that students experienced a solid improvement in their speaking skill and that it came from the large number of readings they checked for their presentation. However, Nguyen (2015) proposed to use this alternative tool with longer time of preparation as many students experienced difficulties to adapt to the speed of the presentations.

Colombian students also reported problems with the limited amount of opportunities to practice their English speaking skill. In this sense, García, Díaz and Artunduaga (2017) committed to explore the benefits to the speaking production by using Skype. Four students participated in the experiment which was divided in two cycles. In the first one, the teacher assigned topics to students that were prepared and presented through Skype sessions. In the second cycle, students had the chance to choose a topic from a given list. After the students focused on vocabulary, structures and ideas, they started with extra Skype sessions based on discussions. Even though there was not a significant benefit, students liked the quick feedback received while skyping and also, it was seen that their ideas were slightly better structured.

As for researchers that decided to take on ideas related to voice and video recordings, a good example is Göktürk (2016) who used digital video recordings with Turkish students from the Hacettepe University who were at an intermediate proficiency level. This project lasted a semester where the EFL learners had three hours of English classes per week. The research design aimed to improve the speaking level as well as the students' confidence. Students were required to video record themselves once a week for about three minutes trying to avoid memorization of their speech. However, during classes, participants were working with presentations, lectures and discussions as a way to practice before the final products.

Later in the course, students had to upload their videos to a Facebook group so everyone could see their speeches and make comments on them; feedback was taken into consideration as an important basis of this pedagogical intervention. There was not any significant improvement in the learners' fluency. However, it was seen that students built up confidence as they showed eagerness to participate more and to produce both longer and more complex ideas, which implies that benefits can be seen in a long-term period. The researcher expressed that one of the biggest limitations is that much of the information shared by students in the

recordings is not information that can easily be brought to an everyday conversation in the everyday life and that is why this technique does not many benefits to speaking accuracy.

Also in Turkey, a different group of researchers applied an experiment to reduce the anxiety levels of students through the use of podcasts. Students reported having problems during conversations, as they could not take an active role so it was difficult to keep a conversation going. As an alternative to improve this problem, Hamzaoğlu and Koçoğlu (2016) worked with thirty students for a period of twelve weeks. They had two groups that followed a similar methodology except for the creation of podcasts by the experimental group. At the end, experimental students outperformed the control groups in aspects such as reporting less anxiety, more confidence, better pronunciation, fluency and vocabulary. The authors suggested integrating podcasts to the language learning programs and not to limit their use only for listening and pronunciation activities through the recording of lectures.

Another researcher who attributed the low speaking levels of some EFL students to anxiety and confidence was Fauzan (2014) who worked with Indonesian university students. After some conversations and questionnaires, the researcher found that students felt that their speaking level was not high due to a low level of vocabulary and, on the contrary, a high level of lack of confidence when speaking in front of their classmates or teacher. Some of the learners even mentioned to be afraid of being mocked for their mistakes. As a possible solution, Fauzan (2014) proposed improvisation as a technique to develop the speaking skill and confidence.

According the improvisations, students based theirs on the drama genre out of books, and classes were carefully designed. There were three stages that follow the next order: The presentation of the technique, then speaking activities in an improvisation way and finally, feedback. The teacher only corrected the students at the end of the stages. After the sessions, Fauzan (2014) concluded that improvisation is effective due to the amount of practice and

freedom that students receive. He mentioned that there was a friendly environment and that despite the mistakes, students were not afraid of speaking which gave them fluency.

Moving to researchers whose projects addressed speaking improvement through a reading strategy or the role play strategy, one of the first examples are Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010). These researchers used role-play as a means of facilitating oral production. Around sixty Indian students were selected after an IELTS speaking test, which students were required to take again after the project application. Teacher divided students into the experimental and control group which had classes twice a week. The difference was that the experimental not only received cards with the specifications of their role but they also received Task-based instruction. The control group also had the cards but the instruction was traditional; which means that their experience was not divided into stages going from less to more independence. Aliakbari and Jamalvandi (2010) concluded that role-plays produce a fruitful impact on speaking EFL proficiency levels so it needs to be taken more and more into consideration in further investigations.

Reading aloud was the strategy that Ninsuwan (2015) applied to EFL learners after finding that students in a Thai university not only experience problems when it came to practice their English orally but also when comprehending readings. Students expressed that their difficulties were a consequence of a lack of mastery over grammatical structures. Ninsuwan (2015) worked with twenty students who used the reading aloud technique as a vehicle to impact on both the reading and speaking ability. Regarding the procedure, students started with dictation exercises to then move to the reading aloud techniques in which the teacher helped with pronunciation and led the readings to a series of questions for the students to expand their participation. After comparing pre and post-tests the author stated that students showed an improvement on their reading comprehension as well as an increase in their pronunciation and vocabulary knowledge.

In Indonesia, there was also a project that focused on the improvement of oral production through a reading strategy. In this way, Marzuki, Ananto Prayogo and Wahyudi (2016) worked with high school students who were exposed to an interactive storytelling strategy. The project was divided in two cycles where the teachers used two folktales as instruments. The folktales were presented with images and/or videos and students were in charge of asking and responding questions. The teacher was the model for the first part of the experiment but then, he was only in charge of monitoring the students' conversations. At the end of the experiment, the results found that the numerous times when the students were expressing reasons for their ideas, their likes and dislikes as well as responding and asking questions while participating or helping their peers were the factors that boosted the mastery of vocabulary and fluency. However, the authors mentioned that the first cycle was not as effective as they expected so they suggest not to use only one folktale per cycle and probably, to have more cycles using not only folktales but other reading resources such as legends, comics, myths, among others.

A different case that used folktales was the one applied by Nyoman Mantra and Maba (2018). They decided to put that reading resource into practice as they were not able to find research projects based on the benefits of folktales in EFL classrooms. The researchers chose thirty Indonesian students to work with. The experiment was divided into two cycles in which students had to listen or read folktales, to retell them and to have interactive activities out of them; either in a spoken or written form. At the end of the cycles, students expressed more engagement and motivation to speak in the foreign language. As a conclusion, Nyoman Mantra and Maba (2018) stated that folktales not only inspired students to improve their speaking ability but also increased their cultural awareness.

Chol and Lewis (2018) decided to propose the application of reading alouds as a tool to enhance the fluency, accuracy, confidence and prosody of the Korean EFL students after finding that Korean students experience a great amount of difficulty to practice and to improve

their speaking skill even when they are exposed to a big amount of vocabulary and to a proper grammar teaching. The researchers worked with two groups of teenagers who had been studying EFL for more than five years. During the experiment, which lasted six months, students took classes by using graded readings but also, sometimes, students used some dialogues from their own course books. The experimental groups focused on phonology and on extra activities out of the readings. As a result, students experienced benefits in fluency and accuracy as well as in their confidence because collaborative activities led them to give beneficial feedback.

Reading circles were an alternative for researchers who were looking for ways to enhance speaking skill. For instance, Carrison and Ernst-Slavit (2005) worked with twenty-four elementary students; five out of the total had a different cultural background. In this research, teachers showed the students a wide range of previously selected books, they also gave them a summary of each story. Students had the chance to choose their three more appealing books. In a three-week period of time, students met in order to read the book selected, to discuss about it and to perform a project adapted to their age such as maps, bookmarks, summaries, among others. After the readings, students were evaluated and the findings stated that reading comprehension was not the only area that benefited from reading circles. Both, the attitude toward reading and the oral communication showed a clear improvement among the participants.

In a different reading circle project, Abdelrasoul (2014) worked with more than forty Egyptian preparatory students during thirty weeks. In the beginning, students took a proficiency test to discover how well they did in their English skills. During sessions, students not only read passages they also received a role to play in order to interact with the text and to make a little summary or presentation out of it. The assessment of the project was through the collection of reports, students' portfolios, questionnaires towards reading circles and a post-test. Finally, the research generated positive results in the students' reading comprehension, word knowledge



but also in the social skills which allowed them to become better speakers through asking and responding questions, commenting, agreeing, and disagreeing, giving opinions, among others.

Many of the projects discussed so far have explored on the collaboration as an aspect that leads positive outcomes in the students' speaking performances. If analyzed, one language teaching approach that advocates having students working in groups and exchanging meaning back and forth then, the conversation will turn to the Task-Based Language Approach (TBLT). Salimi (2015), worked with sixty Persian and Turkish guys who received classes in which the experimental group focused on problems that implicitly taught them grammatical structures.

In this project, the EFL learners had a total of eighteen sessions, all of them in a summer course. The key factor for these experimental students was the number of examples provided within classes and not only the implicit exposure to grammar. Students had to face a problem-solving situation every two weeks, the solution of the tasks were recorded and transcribed to keep track of improvements. When the summer course concluded, the experimental group showed more accurate performances in the speaking skill due to the exposure to the classes in which they did not receive a traditional grammar session.

Yegani and Jodaei (2017) explored the benefits of the Iranian EFL students by working with topic-based/project-based instruction. In this project, sixty students participated in groups; two experimental of fifteen students and the rest belonged to a control group. Participants had to achieve a specific score in an English language proficiency test called Nelson. Here, students had sessions where they chose a topic of their interest, discussed it and tried to find a solution to a problem related to their choice. This research found that students get more motivated to participate and to discuss when it comes to a topic of their interest which also means that this proposal will allow the students to be constantly working in groups. However, Yegani and Jodaei (2017) mentioned that this suggestion will show positive effects only after a long period of practice.

Yu (2015) focused a project in which college Chinese students received constant exposure to task frequency. The twenty participants had as main strategy the retelling of stories. First, they listened to a story extracted from an English proficiency test designed for undergraduate students in China. The text contained around 350 words and it was recorded from an English native speaker. Students were not able to take notes from the listening and then, it was their turn to retell the text. There was not limit to the number of times to repeat the process of listening and retelling the story. Actually, the process took place two weeks after the first time. Yu (2015) claimed that the exposure to frequency allowed the students to make adjustments little by little after listening to details they were not certain about, not only in the story ideas but also in pronunciation. However, it is a time consuming procedure and it does not provide students a real conversation in a classroom.

Finally, Khoshsima and Shroki (2016) also worked with a task-based approach and they focused their stages on engaging students to a topic, studying about it and then activating the students' performance. The thirty Persian students who participated in this study had to take proficiency tests to ensure they had a similar level. There were two groups, the first one received classes where they did not have enough communicative opportunities, and their speaking practice relied basically on drills. Contrary to that, the experimental group experienced a Task-based design so they had activities such as discussions, picture stories, interviews, role-plays, among others. At the end, students took a FCE speaking exam and results showed that the task-based design was influential. In this way, the authors recommended to pay more attention to this and to apply it more in classrooms as it has significant effects on the students' speaking performance.

All of these researchers applied pre and post-tests to assess the students' speaking performances. The most constant conclusion is that the task-based instruction leads students to be cooperative and to give feedback each other. This brings a major exchange of vocabulary and a decrease of the students' anxiety or fear to speak. Another similarity among these

projects is that there is a clear decrease in teacher talking time; that means, the teacher figure becomes a guide and a supporter, so students take greater responsibility on the learning process. The constant exchange of ideas that is experimented in TBLT environments urges students to analyze their ideas better and to speak with more confidence.

After revising different strategies implemented towards the improvement of the speaking skill and discovering that most of them generated positive results, it is evident that many of the researchers focused on the use of texts as a support to produce a beneficial impact on the speaking skill; that means, they used input to improve output. This also evidenced that the nature of the TBLT brings an environment that surrounds students with plentiful opportunities to participate as well as enough teacher instruction and feedback. For this matter, the central strategy of this project will also focus on the integration of skills within the EFL classes. In other words, the project will rely on the use of reading circles with a TBLT design aiming to have improvements at the time of producing language orally.

## **1.2 Rationale**

This study focused on finding evidence on how a reading strategy can work as the basis for a positive outcome in the oral production of young adults who are taking EFL classes. As sessions used reading circles with a TBLT design, the project sought to see how the students feel towards a different and more interactive way of learning and practicing a language. This projects attempted to catch other EFL teachers' attention so they can see how students experience progress in their oral production through a collaborative strategy; the reading circles. In other words, the project proposes a not so traditional way of language teaching based on the integration of skills.

## **1.3 Statement of the Problem**

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Mexico focuses mainly on grammar; this was the result of an investigation by Borijan (2015). Findings reported that many teachers in

Mexico feel that classes center on teaching grammar and that they lack communicative activities. Teachers, after the surveys, reported that sometimes the material is repeated over and over in the school years and that the grammar-based policy is detrimental in the long-run. Even when the books suggest activities from the four language skills (Speaking, reading, writing, listening), teachers are pushed to pay extra attention to the rules of the language and students are forced to practically memorize them.

Both teachers and students need to work cooperatively to meet the school language program standards even when the learning process lacks dedication, meaning and use of the language. This means that students do not spend enough time dealing with the language and meaningful input within classes to be able to connect with and to understand a language, so they fall short of reaching a stage where they can produce their own language.

In addition, students do not have enough opportunities to be immersed in communicative situations related to real-world problems in interaction with their classmates; the only oral practice they receive involves replicating and memorizing phrases. Teachers need to create a space that provides opportunities for learners, especially beginners, in which they feel comfortable collaborating with friends while exchanging meaning and knowledge from proper input in order to reinforce their background knowledge while receiving new knowledge and feedback. This strategy needs to be carefully done while students have a monitor who helps them with corrections but more importantly, that leads them into a process of comprehension and production of ideas.

## **1.4 Objectives**

### **1.4.1 Main Objective**

\*To explore the influence of reading circles with a Task-based instruction in the B1 level students' speaking skill of a private university in Monterrey, Nuevo León.

### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

\* To identify, through a standardized test, the EFL oral production difficulties experienced by B1 level students from a private school in Monterrey, Nuevo León.

\* To analyze both the methodology and strategies implemented by teachers in order to enhance and evaluate the B1 level students' oral production in that private university in Monterrey, Nuevo León.

\* To discover the students' reading perspectives and experiences towards the use of reading passages in order to improve their oral production.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

\* What are the main EFL oral production difficulties that students have in a private university in Monterrey, Nuevo León?

\* What are the methodology and strategies that teachers in a private university in Monterrey, Nuevo León implement to enhance the oral production

\* What are the students' perspectives towards the use of reading passages in order to improve their oral production?

## **Chapter 2 Theoretical framework**

This chapter focuses on the description of the most important concepts for this research project. First, reading circle definitions and background is discussed to understand their birth, evolution, adaptation in EFL and, benefits. Additionally, this section provides not only a definition of shared reading but also different reading styles which help to understand how reading circles can be adapted in EFL environments. Then, there are general explanations of the reading and speaking skills in EFL as this project seeks to integrate them to enhance the oral production. After that, the Task-Based Language Teaching is discussed through its history, definitions and, principles. Finally, the Task cycle and its stages are defined in order to understand how this proposal structured lessons during the pedagogical intervention.

## 2.1 Reading Circles

Abdelrasoul (2014) stated that the term reading circles (RCs), also known as literature circles, is “a classroom instructional strategy that connects all aspects of literacy for students with varied interests and levels of reading achievement” (p. 17). He also shared that these circles require students to work in small groups where they explore passages within a collaborative structure which provides students the chance to listen, reflect, and share thoughts about literature. This strategy allows learners to share their comprehension with their classmates while there is always an opportunity to build better knowledge through the exchange of meaning.

Reading circles have been around for many years but there are different stories about their birth. The earliest example of its benefits dates back to 1878 in Chautauqua, New York, where Dr. Vincent announced the organization of the Chautauqua Literacy and Scientific Circles. According to the *Book List 1878-2018* of the Chautauqua Institution (2018), these RCs set as their purpose to promote reading habits to adults that were not able to continue with their learning in higher institutions. Their outcomes were successful and later they became a model which internationally spread.

A different story mentioned by Graham Schoonmaker (2014) explains that the creator of reading circles was Havery Daniels who worked with his team in order to apply and analyze reading circles in some schools in Chicago in the 1990's. Actually, Xiaoshi (2005) discovered that “the national literacy standards sanctioned by the National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association in 1996 explicitly identified literature circles as one of the -best classroom practices- in the teaching of cultural literacy” (p. 124).

D Imamyartha *et al* (2020) discovered a contrasting beginning of reading circles which occurred in Phoenix, Arizona at Lowell School in 1982. The main character of this story is a teacher called Karen Smith who, supposedly, coined the term as a consequence of an accident.

According to the anecdote, Karen Smith received some leftover materials which mostly had novels. As days went on, Karen disregarded them and put them in the box in the back of the classroom. Then, a kid found them all and shared them with their classmates. They began to read them in teams so Karen was surprised about their willingness and passion so she continued with the practice and helped them to read. Finally, she reported the incident with her colleagues and other educators in order to do more research on the reading circles benefits.

Despite their success, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms did not experiment with RCs until the year 2000 as shared by Bedel (2012). Some authors have done researchers whose findings show that the speaking ability experiments a positive influence through RCs. One example is a research by Zhang (2009) who decided to integrate the speaking and reading skill after finding that intensive reading classes influenced on the students' acquisition process by providing them topics and opportunities for discussion.

Another author that found a relation between reading and speaking is Tugrul (2012) who said that "reading will help learners acquire vocabulary and grammar" (p. 3) and since these two components are essential to learn a language, they will directly impact on the speaking performance. Finally, the last example is Elhess and Egbert (2015) who not only found that RCs benefits the oral proficiency, but also comprehension skills, expansion of participation and discussion, an increase in responsibility, motivation and scaffolding opportunities and last but not least, an improvement in writing skills.

Reading circles offer a wide variety of benefits in the four language skills. However, this strategy goes beyond skills and positively impacts on critical thinking, socialization, turn-taking, and reflection, among others. Ellis and Fellow (2018) declared that learners absorb all these benefits from reading circles due to the communicative activities engagement that leads them to the exposure to formulaic expressions of the target language. In this way, learners get to internalize language and rules while reading and conversing with classmates. Finally, it is

important to mention that the support of native language in reading circles is not prohibited. Contrary to that, it is welcomed as it will create more cemented bridges to the target language. However, as commented by Hussein (2013), the native language should be used by the teacher or students only when needed as it will help students to learn the target language by having different strategies to benefit from. In conclusion, reading circles is a strategy that offers flexibility and a great myriad of benefits but in order to achieve them, students must be equipped properly with different strategies provided by the mediator in order to acquire and learn as much target language as possible.

Daniels (2002) created a list of requirements to create effective reading circles. At the time, he mentioned that “they may be intentionally omitted in accordance with specific conditions and goals” (p.18). Throughout the list, the researcher explained that giving students the opportunity to choose the book or passages is a factor that enhances the circles. He also mentioned that students should work in temporary teams so they can interact with different people. At the same time, arranging a specific schedule for reading is discussions plays an important role. During readings, students are allowed to take notes and it is better if they initiate discussions in a natural way. Finally, it is important to highlight that the teacher must remain as a facilitator and not as an active member in the discussions.

## **2.2 Shared Readings**

Exposing students to comprehensible input is important; it needs to have adapted materials to their proficiency level so students do not feel overwhelmed. An example given by Boyle and Peregoy(2017) regarding the beginning second language readers is that they still find themselves figuring out the sound/symbol correspondence so, students in this stage must be guided until reaching a safe zone where independent reading is met. The most important stage for a beginning second language reader is pre-reading. Peregoy and Boyle (2017) say that this stage helps students to connect with what they will read; so, having a proper connection



between the readers' background and the reading topic is crucial to achieve accurate comprehension. The more familiar the readers are with the topics, the better they will work and understand.

Intensive reading occurs in sessions where there is a specific objective for the activity which leads to a different subcategory; shared readings. According to Fisher and Frey (2008), shared reading is a practice where everyone works collaboratively and where there is a specific lesson related to a class' goal and to a comprehension strategy. One of the first advocates in history for this subcategory is Holdaway (1979) who started to analyze and conceptualize the term. He mentioned that shared reading is a practice that emulates the parents-children bedtime story cycle. This comparison was that established and influential that different practitioners such as Parkes (2000) used Holdaway's name in order to conceptualize shared reading; "it is a collaborative literacy learning activity based on the research of Don Holdaway" (p. 1). Finally, a different author who contributed to the study of shared readings is McGill-Frazen (2006) who referred to them as a form of read-along practice which leads students from an emergent reading stage to a conventional socialization and independency.

Honchell and Schulz (2012) elaborated on the basic principles for an effective shared reading practice. They mentioned that it is important that the teacher orients learners to a zone where they develop predictions about the passage in order to be familiarized. Next, it is essential to have a teacher-led experience to achieve two goals; the first is to help students to keep track of the passage and second, to make invitations during the reading in order to experience discussions. Finally, rereading plays an important role as students will confirm language and work in different tasks that will drive to a more independent reading habit.

Shared readings offer access to reading passages and tasks to students while receiving support from a fluent reader (Burkins & Yaris, 2016). During shared readings, the teacher becomes a guide capable not only of monitoring the reading of the text, but also as a model for

students so they recognize pronunciation, intonation, punctuation marks, among others. Regarding the comprehension strategies used in shared readings, Fisher and Frey (2008) describe a number of them such as inferring, summarizing, predicting, sequencing, visual organizers, questioning and responding, among others. All these strategies are useful to experience scaffolding from time to time. With this, students will feel protected and feedback will be an everyday situation.

Shared reading is a result of a literacy perspective that was born at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the balanced comprehensive perspective. Boyle and Peregoy (2017) discussed about theoretical perspectives on literacy where the balanced comprehensive perspective is relevant to this research project. It supports the idea of the emergent literacy perspective that states that a rich exposure to readings will make learners acquire the language, given that immersion alone is not enough; therefore, explicit instruction with the use reading strategies is necessary. In essence, shared reading meets the requirements of the balanced comprehensive perspective, as it exposes students to extensive input while the teacher performs as a guide within the activity and is in charge of giving instructions and providing help to model language.

### **2.3 Reading English in a Foreign Language**

Now, it is time to talk about the benefits of reading in the context of language teaching. Reading is a skill that allows students to absorb lots of knowledge. Unfortunately, few teachers give credit to its value. In other cases, reading practices are not long enough. According to Brown (2007), research on reading in a second language did not appear until 1970 in the article called *Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game* by Kenneth Goodman. From there, various, and enriching studies have been conducted; still, despite the positive results, the existence of reading activities/sessions in second language learning classrooms seems to be minimal.

Nunan (2003) explained that reading is a process where the reader will experiment between background knowledge and the text in order to build meaning through comprehension. There

are other practitioners that have highlighted the importance of reading. Tugrul (2012) defined it as “the most effective way of language learning” (p. 92). Another example is Gunning (2008) who stated that “reading is, first and foremost, magical. It opens the door to a vast world of information, fulfillment and enjoyment. Reading is a process in which we construct meaning from print. Without meaning there is no reading” (p. 4). In other words, a reading passage can be represented as a mirror that helps students as a guide to understand how to transfer information from the text to oral production. The more guided reading practices a teacher provides to students, the more they immerse in the language so they may both learn and acquire knowledge.

Harmer (2007) is another scholar who advocates to the study and promotes the advantages of reading within the processes of acquiring and learning a language, he proposed the following as reasons for teaching reading in EFL:

Exposure to reading as an activity that promotes acquisition needs to more frequent as it will have a positive effect on their vocabulary knowledge, on their spelling and on their writing. It will introduce students to interesting topics, discussions and imaginative responses, so it will also impact on the speaking ability. (p.99)

Reading is not only an activity that leads to comprehension of a text but its benefits widely spread through all the language use of a student. So, the more the students read, the more proficient they become in a language whether it is the native language or a second one. Harmer (2007) also distinguished between the different kinds of reading and mentions where they tend to take place. The first is *Extensive Reading*, which is the kind of reading that normally happens outside the classroom; it is often called ‘reading for pleasure’. The second is *Intensive Reading*, which commonly takes place within classrooms and uses activities for text analysis and class discussion.

## 2.4 Speaking English as a Foreign Language

As shared in the literature review, many practitioners have looked at ways to improve the speaking ability. Many of those researchers also marked the speaking ability as the one that learners expect to master first. However, it is an ability that requires plenty of teaching, analysis and practice. Goh and Burns (2012) defined the speaking skill as a challenging one as it involves different processes that take place, overlap or combine at the same time. Actually, based on the complex nature of speaking, it entails some difficulties that lead students to experience anxiety and/or a lack of confidence and dissatisfaction.

Pakula (2019) stated that speaking involves not only the knowledge of the rules and functions of language but also a series of sub-skills that must be developed by the student in order to communicate. One of the factors that contributes to the complexity of the speaking skill is the influence of its different sub-skills such as vocabulary (e.g. slang and idioms), pronunciation (suprasegmental and segmental features such as rhythm, intonation, stress, word reductions, and elision among others), grammar, and even paralinguistic features in the case of face to face communication. The above may have led Brown and Manasche (1993) (cited in Gaikwad and Karekatti, 2018), to label speaking as the most challenging skill for students. To this, the need for interaction with at least one other speaker must be added.

Speaking in an EFL classroom can cause students to experience insecurities or satisfaction, depending on how the practice takes place within a lesson as shared by Harmer (2007). According to Alzaboun, Smadi and Baniabdelrahman (2017), speaking is the medium in which students use language the most. They also shared that if the speaking skill is not well-accomplished neither the communication process will. In other words, learners do not only need to memorize a long list of vocabulary or a series of grammatical rules; they actually need to know how to apply them in order to have a fully fluent and natural conversation. By doing this,

their communicative competence will play an important role so they will know how to adapt their language according to the situations they deal with.

Harmer (2007) also commented on how speaking activities need to be designed so students can get the best of the practice. He said that activities need to be as engaging as possible and that they need to deal with real-world problems. By doing this, students will link the class with their set of experiences which will lead them to a more constant sharing of ideas. Another important aspect to handle within classes is correction, knowing how and when to correct. Even when little, a correction may be detrimental or it may destroy the flow of the conversation as Harmer (2007) stated. So, a good way to help students with their speaking is to let them express their thoughts and at the end of an activity, to give them feedback.

In conclusion, students need to face activities where they can extract as much language as possible such as words, structures, situations, etc. but at the same time, they need to find a good model to follow as they also require to learn aspects such as pronunciation, intonation, turn-taking, among others. In this way, after reflecting on what they learned and heard, students will execute their oral production in a more adequate and prepared way, so they will give the best of their ability.

## **2.5 Task-Based Language Teaching**

The language teaching that many students face in EFL classrooms nowadays is a mixture of the Grammar Translation Method and the Direct Method described by Brown (2007), as classes pay too much attention to grammar rules and not enough to the content of the books. Teachers use many drills, there is a constant correction of pronunciation and speaking practice is the result of controlled dialogues. There is no space or opportunity to engage in activities where students feel attracted to language learning and where interaction among students and teacher coexists; these reasons agree with results found by Borijan (2015).

For this reason, the communicative wave was born in the 1970's and 1980's as shared by Richards (2006). He also mentioned that during that time teachers started to reflect on the main importance in their classes, so they started to focus more on meaning and less on form. In other words, teachers realized that focusing on grammar was no longer the most effective or beneficial aspect to cover so they started to explore ways to engage students in more active and experiential activities.

As a result of this new communicative perspective and need, the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approach came to life. Nowadays, many are the advocates of this approach such as Bygate (2011), Long (2015), Nunan (2004), Skehan (2011), Willis (1996), among others. The first question that arises to debate is the definition to the word 'task' as it is the basis of the approach. According to Bygate, Skehan & Swain (2011) "a task is an activity which requires learners to use language, with emphasis on meaning, to attain an objective" (p. 11). For others, such as Brown (2007), it is acceptable to not only compare the term task to the term technique; this author also said that in some cases a task is an idea that groups various techniques. However, Nunan (2004) shared a more consistent and pedagogic definition:

A task is a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey meaning rather than to manipulate form. (p. 4)

In other words, a task is an activity designed to expose students to language and then to make them use and experiment with that language using both, background knowledge and new knowledge. It is also important to mention the value of interaction. As Nunan (2004) stated, the interaction will represent a cornerstone as the tasks will lead to activities where students work in teams while exchanging information and negotiating meaning in the target language.

The principles of Task-Based Language Teaching are given by Nunan (2004) as follows:

1. Learning to communicate through interaction in the target language.
2. Introduction to meaningful input.
3. The provision of opportunities to focus not only on language, but also on the learning process.
4. Personal experiences as an important contribution to classroom learning.
5. The linking of classroom language learning with language use outside the classroom. (p.1)

The TBLT is, then, an approach that seeks to set and work on real-world problems which are, as Hummel (2014) explained, situations that students will face outside of the classroom such as giving or asking directions, expressing their feelings, talking about likes and dislikes, their plans, accepting, or refusing an invitation, among others.

## **2.6 Task-Based Cycle**

As TBLT has increasingly gained attention of different practitioners as mentioned before and with this on mind, many have suggested their personal definitions not only for the word 'task', but also to the name of the TBLT stages. However, the TBLT cycle that has been constantly used among researchers and, as a consequence, the most accepted is the one provided by Willis (1996). The author proposed a cycle divided into three stages: 1) pre-task, 2) task cycle and finally, 3) focus on language. Of course, every single stage has its own characteristics, but they need to be carefully both planned and executed in order to achieve a mutual goal.

### **2.6.1 Pre-task Stage**

As explained by Rubaiat (2018), "the pre-task stage can be considered as a warm-up activity to start the class interestingly" (p. 10). The author also stated that this stage works as an

introductory section, here is where the students need to be both activated and engaged. The goal of this stage is to catch the students' attention while they also get familiarized with the topic. The teacher will decide how long this part is going to be but the main idea is to let the students participate so they activate their prior knowledge and speculate about what the next activities are going to be.

### **2.6.2 Task-cycle Stage**

In this part, the students find themselves in front of total exposure to meaningful input and to the task itself. This is the stage where they make their efforts to analyze new input in order to combine it with their prior knowledge so they can come up with new ideas. According to Willis (1996) here, students have freedom to use the grammar and vocabulary they want. Meanwhile, the teacher should not let them know what structures they will be learning or reinforcing with that specific lesson.

As for the teacher's role in this section, Branden (2016) suggested that "the teacher plays a crucial role as he or she will be in charge of being a conversational partner-supporter" (p. 168). In other words, the teacher's main objective here is to monitor the class, to become a guide who will give prompts or clues so the conversations remain fluent and meaningful. Willis (1996) also mentioned that teachers need to be able to make the activities communicative and to let the students know what the goal of the class is so everyone can be in the same channel.

### **2.6.3 Focus on Language**

As one of the most essential parts of the TBLT is to let the students speak their minds up as they wish and in the way they can, this last part is where they get to check more on language structures. According to Willis (1996), this stage will reinforce certain mistakes that were gathered while monitoring the class. In this sense, it is common to have the students working on grammar exercises so they can create more solid ideas. In other words, as Rubaiat (2018) said, in this stage the teacher looks for accuracy on their students' use of language. So, it is normal



for students to face tests, task repetition or feedback in order to see the amount of improvement that their language has reached.

### **Chapter 3 Research methodology**

This study follows the qualitative paradigm of research and given the fact that students do not experience any speaking examination in their courses, this project focused on improving the students' oral production through a strategy that involves reading passages and students' interaction. As a result of this objective, the proposal took an action-research approach as it is imperative to take action in a specific social situation in order to discover changes among participants. Despite the existence of other research methods, this one allows to have cyclical processes where intervention can be both analyzed and repeated.

Authors have given their own definitions of action-research, as well as their models or requirements. For instance, Latorre (2013), defined action-research as a cycle of cycles due to the process of finding a problem, the analysis of it, the creation of a plan to intervene, the analysis of the intervention and then the repetition of steps according to the results. Simultaneously, Latorre (2013) mentioned that two of the most essential aspects of action-research are the reflection of actions as well as the collaboration.

The specific methodology that this project followed is the one proposed by Whitehead in 1991 (cited in Latorre, 2013) who proposed a model that seeks for an improvement between educational theory and self-professional development. This model is seen as a cycle that starts with the analysis and experimentation of a problem. Then, he stated a new phase where the researcher needs to imagine a solution for the problem. After imagining and planning, the possible solution needs to be applied to then, evaluate results. Finally, according to results, modifications will occur so the process needs to start over. Reflection is a vital feature throughout this model as it will lead the proposal to a more convincing and honest written paper.

### **3.1 Context of the Study**

This proposal took place in a private university in the north of Mexico, Nuevo León. Hence, the majority of learners' age is around the seventeen and twenty-one years old. This university offers English as a foreign language to students which are required to prove their language proficiency by the end of their studies. Students of this university take five hours of English as a foreign language class a week and they share classes with students from different majors. This project occurs in the Health Area which encompasses five different majors; medicine, nursing, veterinary, physiotherapy and chemistry.

English as a foreign language classes are divided in five different levels and groups normally have up to thirty-five students where they learn through the Touchstone book series by Cambridge University Press. This series has the following order: Touchstone 1 to 4 and then, Viewpoint 1 and 2. Every book contains twelve units and a digital platform for students to reinforce their classroom learning. Each level lasts an entire semester where students experience two partial exams which do not evaluate the speaking skill.

### **3.2 Participants**

For the current study, the group that was taken into consideration is a Level 3 which corresponds to the B1 level of the CEFR from the private university already described. Students received a verbal invitation to participate in the project and ten out of the total of students accepted to volunteer for the intervention; these students were learning with the Touchstone 3 book. Out of the ten, two were men and the rest were women around seventeen and twenty-one years old. These volunteers expressed that they had received English lessons before but at a basic level and that they did not feel comfortable with their speaking. The information reported was gathered through a small group conversation at the beginning of the study. At the same time, there were teachers as participants. There were three teachers in total who not only work

for the same university but that also teach Level 3; they only helped by responding a questionnaire. Two of the language facilitators were men and one was woman.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

In this section, a detailed explanation of the instruments designed is be given. With the combination of these, it is intended not to only discover the students' speaking difficulties but also their perception of their speaking proficiency level and of reading as a skill. Additionally, there is an instrument that intends to explore the Level 3 teachers' methodology as well as their speaking strategies repertoire to improve oral production.

#### **3.3.1 Pre-test: *Preliminary English Test***

Students in this project were enrolled in a private university in Monterrey, Nuevo León that does not have a speaking section in their exams. However, when it comes to English language certification, learners are required to take a test which contains a speaking section. As a result, a standardized exam was essential to find their difficulties at the time of speaking so it can help them to further preparation towards their certification exam. Among the ideas to evaluate the speaking skill there are national options such as the one used by Yu (2015) called Test for English Majors 4 (TEM4), which is an English exam for college students in China. A different example is Retos del Saber, a Colombian exam that was used by García, Díaz and Artunduaga (2017). However, those certifications would not be effective according to the students' cultural aspect in this project.

In the context of this project, it was important to find a standardized test which is world-wide accepted. Göktürk (2016), used the speaking section of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) but this is an exam that evaluates general English; which means that some activities could be too difficult to participants in this project. Then, Khosima Khoshshima and Shroki (2016) examined their students with the speaking section of the First Certificate in

English (FCE) which is an exam from Cambridge and that is designed to evaluate B2 level.

Although it was an effective and validated option, the level of tasks was too high.

At the end, the final decision was the same as Arfaei Zarandi and Rahbar (2016) that is; to implement the speaking section of the Preliminary English Test (PET), which is a test designed by Cambridge that focuses on the B1 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). According to the B1 Preliminary for Schools Teachers' Handbook (2020) the speaking section evaluates the following:

**PET**

**LEVEL B1 (Threshold)**

**Limited but effective command of the spoken language.**

Able to handle communication in most familiar situations.

Able to construct longer utterances but is not able to use complex language except in well-rehearsed utterances.

Has problems searching for language resources to express ideas and concepts resulting in pauses and hesitation.

Pronunciation is generally intelligible, but L1 features may put a strain on the listener.

Has some ability to compensate for communication difficulties using repair strategies but may require prompting and assistance by an interlocutor.

The PET exam is divided into four sections which last around 10-12 minutes. Another important feature of this exam is that speaking is the only skill where students go through the tasks in pairs; that is, they must interact with each other. The sections design and focuses are the following:

Part	Timing	Interaction	Task type	What do candidates have to do?
<b>1</b>	2 minutes	Interlocutor ↓ Candidate	Interlocutor asks questions to each candidate in turn	<b>Respond to questions</b> , giving factual or personal information.
<b>2</b>	3 minutes	Candidate extended turn	Extended turn	<b>Describe one colour photograph</b> , talking for about 1 minute.
<b>3</b>	4 minutes	Candidate ↕ Candidate	Discussion task with visual stimulus	<b>Make and respond to suggestions</b> , discuss alternatives and negotiate agreement.
<b>4</b>	3 minutes	Candidate ↕ Candidate	General conversation	<b>Discuss likes, dislikes, experiences, opinions, habits, etc.</b>

As seen in the image, the PET has a design that allows examining the students' speaking at different levels. In the first part, participants respond to one-on-one questions that look for personal information as well as preferences, likes or dislikes, etc. In the second part, students continue working individually but the task is more complex. In this case, students are given a picture which needs to be described for one minute. After that, in the activity number three, candidates start with interaction and they are expected to negotiate, to exchange ideas, to discuss, to make and respond to suggestions, etc. This task last around three minutes and candidates receive a picture that gives them alternatives to elaborate on their conversation. Finally, candidates experience a second interactive part where the interlocutor asks questions and they are in charge of exchanging information back and forth. In this part, candidates are required to express not only their answers but also some comments on the other candidate's information.

Finally, regarding the grading of the students' performances assessors will use a rubric which provides students a total of twenty points for the speaking section. The score will take into consideration four aspects which are 1) grammar and vocabulary, 2) discourse management, 3)

pronunciation and 4) interactive communication. At the end, students are given a general score for the speaking section but they do not discover their strengths and/or weaknesses throughout the examination.

B1	Grammar and Vocabulary	Discourse Management	Pronunciation	Interactive Communication
5	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms, and attempts some complex grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary to give and exchange views on familiar topics.	Produces extended stretches of language despite some hesitation. Contributions are relevant despite some repetition. Uses a range of cohesive devices.	Is intelligible. Intonation is generally appropriate. Sentence and word stress is generally accurately placed. Individual sounds are generally articulated clearly.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Maintains and develops the interaction and negotiates towards an outcome with very little support.
4	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 3 and 5.</i>			
3	Shows a good degree of control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a range of appropriate vocabulary when talking about familiar topics.	Produces responses which are extended beyond short phrases, despite hesitation. Contributions are mostly relevant, but there may be some repetition. Uses basic cohesive devices.	Is mostly intelligible, and has some control of phonological features at both utterance and word levels.	Initiates and responds appropriately. Keeps the interaction going with very little prompting and support.
2	<i>Performance shares features of Bands 1 and 3.</i>			
1	Shows sufficient control of simple grammatical forms. Uses a limited range of appropriate vocabulary to talk about familiar topics.	Produces responses which are characterised by short phrases and frequent hesitation. Repeats information or digresses from the topic.	Is mostly intelligible, despite limited control of phonological features.	Maintains simple exchanges, despite some difficulty. Requires prompting and support.
0	<i>Performance below Band 1.</i>			

In conclusion, the selection of this exam relied on the fact that it has both individual and interactive tasks which are aspects that students will also experiment through the application of the reading circles strategy and their collaborative nature. Furthermore, it is an accepted examination in different countries that require proving a certain English proficiency level.

### 3.3.2 Students' PET Questionnaire

After the PET examination, it was important to essential to explore the students' perceptions of their performance as well as their strategies and thoughts about the test. For this reason, students responded to a questionnaire designed with different kinds of questions; questions to prioritize, open questions, multiple-choice ones. The questionnaire aimed to cover different

areas that then will help with the categorization of the information collected. This questionnaire was given to students one day after the exam so they could reflect better on their performance.

There were questions whose main objective was to discover the students' emotions before, during and after the exam. A different question focused on the strategies used by students in order to prepare for the exam. This was a key question as students received test design presentation, so there was interest on analyzing whether they would practice collaboratively or not.

Regarding their performance, students had the opportunity to express their strengths and their weaknesses taking into consideration the four different sections in the exam; 1) personal information, 2) describing a photograph, 3) making an agreement and 4) a general conversation through questions. This section was important in order to find out the students' perspectives regarding the areas where the need to improve.

4. Según tu opinión, ¿en qué parte del examen te desempeñaste mejor?

- a) Información personal
- b) Descripción de una fotografía
- c) Interacción para llegar a un acuerdo
- d) Conversación general a través de preguntas

Being more specific, participants responded to some questions whose focus was to detect how they perceived interaction in the test and which aspects of interaction resulted beneficial or not. It was essential to determine the interaction areas in which they need more help as they are not used to have speaking exams. The interaction areas that were shown to students were: 1) Starting a conversation, 2) Responding or reacting to the other candidate's comments, 3) showing agreement or disagreement and, 4) turn-taking.

10. Ordena los siguientes aspectos de la sección interactiva del examen del más fácil (1) al más difícil (4):

- \_\_\_ Iniciar la conversación
- \_\_\_ Responder / reaccionar a algo dicho por el otro candidato o el moderador.
- \_\_\_ Mostrar acuerdo o desacuerdo con las ideas del otro candidato.
- \_\_\_ Tomar y dar turnos para participar.

Furthermore, participants also had a question in which they self-evaluated their performance; then, they had the opportunity to mention what they would do differently to take the exam with a higher satisfaction level. Finally, there was a question that centered in the strategies they find effective and attractive to improve their oral production. This last question could provide interesting information for the project.

### **3.3.3 Teachers' Questionnaire**

This questionnaire had as main objective to find out the methodology that teachers use in class, their teaching style and the activities or strategies that they implement in order to facilitate oral production. At the same time, it helped to analyze how much the teaching styles meet the students' interests and needs in the English as a foreign language class. In the beginning, teachers responded to some questions that helped to discover whether the methodologies they implement are similar or not as well as whether these implemented methodologies contribute to the speaking skill. Along with this, they had the opportunity to speak their mind up about the number of hours that the university devotes to the English as a foreign language program.

Later in the questionnaire, teachers had questions where they provided their perspective to the book that is used in relation to the oral production and the students' interaction in the classroom. By discussing the last information, teachers also discussed about the importance given to communicative activities within the class and about the skill that they believe



contributes the most to foreign language learning. In a certain question, participants faced an integration of skills section where they will express which skill produces better results in the oral production.

Finally, the questionnaire explored on the different methods that participants use at the time of evaluating the speaking skill. Furthermore, they provided examples of the strategies that, in their experience, have contributed with better results in both the students' oral production and confidence. Last but not least, teachers prioritized some sub-speaking skills (Pronunciation, grammar, coherence, fluency, vocabulary, and communicative interaction) in order to find out which ones they consider more important at the time of evaluating the speaking skill.

12. Ordena los siguientes aspectos de la habilidad oral según la importancia que le otorgues en su evaluación. El número uno (1) es el más importante y el seis (6) el menos importante.

- \_\_\_ Pronunciación
- \_\_\_ Gramática
- \_\_\_ Coherencia
- \_\_\_ Fluidez
- \_\_\_ Vocabulario
- \_\_\_ Interacción comunicativa

### **3.3.4 Narrative Frame**

This instrument had a unique characteristic in this project as it is the only one that focused on reading and not in oral production. Its main objective was to discover the students' reading perspectives in their native language taking into consideration their experiences in the past and in the present as well as their point of view of reading in English. Secondly, this narrative framework looked forward to identifying the availability of using the reading skill to both engage and enhance the oral production.

Participants worked differently in this instrument; they read and completed situations according to their experience. For instance, in the beginning, they elaborated on who influenced and helped them to read when they were children as well as their feelings about it. Additionally, they expressed what kind of lectures they were told and they mentioned the first book they read on their own and their feelings about finishing it.

Regarding the present, students talked about the kind of books they enjoy reading as well as the reason for that preference. Furthermore, students expressed what benefits they got from reading. These aspects aimed to discover the kind of text that best cater to the students' interests. Then, the narrative framework explored on how students perceive the readings in Spanish that they do in university. By doing this, students suggested what kind of modifications they would implement in order to make those readings more appealing.

At the end, this narrative addressed to reading in the English as a foreign language class. Students did not only talk about the kinds of readings they face but also the strategies they use to achieve better comprehension. Furthermore, these instruments attempted to find out whether students prefer to have collaborative readings. Finally, they expressed the importance they give to reading in English as well as the advantages they obtain from it.

#### **Chapter 4 Data analysis**

After collecting data, all information was distributed in tables. These tables had two levels, the primary in which the information was synthesized according to all questions in the questionnaires. Then, in the secondary level, the most influential categories for this project were interpreted in order to find patterns among the participants. It is imperative to mention that the students' questionnaires were first analyzed according to their English performance in class, not their performance in the pre-test. In this regard, there were three different levels; high-level performance (Four participants: 1 to 4), medium-level performance (Four participants: 5 to 8)

and low-level performance (Two participants: 9 and 10). This selection was used to guarantee the representation of all levels of performance in the class.

#### 4.1 Pre-test Results

While students were taking PET speaking section, they were being recorded to have evidence of their performance. Once recordings were ready, an English language teacher listened to them and scored them by using the rubric provided by the standardized exam (e.g. Table1). The assessor was someone with experience with the PET exam and had no relation with students so results were not biased. This section worked as a starting point to discover which speaking aspects were the most disadvantaged according to the participants' level.

**Table 1**

*Pre-test results by category*

	<b>Grammar and vocabulary</b>	<b>Discourse management</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>Interactive communication</b>
<b>Participant 1 (High-level performance)</b>	3	3	2	2
<b>Participant 2 (High-level performance)</b>	3	3	3	4
<b>Participant 3 (High-level performance)</b>	4	5	4	5
<b>Participant 4 (High-level performance)</b>	4	5	4	5
<b>Participant 5 (Medium-level performance)</b>	2	1	2	1

<b>Participant 6 (Medium-level performance)</b>	4	4	4	4
<b>Participant 7 (Medium-level performance)</b>	3	3	3	3
<b>Participant 8 (Medium-level performance)</b>	3	3	3	3
<b>Participant 9 (Low-level performance)</b>	2	1	2	1
<b>Participant 10 (Low-level performance)</b>	3	4	3	3
<b>Total</b>	31	32	30	31

The first aspect to analyze was grammar and vocabulary, the number of grammatical forms that a candidate uses and combines. As well as the amount of vocabulary used during the exam. Here, only the 30% of participants scored over three points and from those participants one had a medium-level (participant 6) and two had a high-level performance (participants 3 and 4) in class. In other words, the majority of students did not achieve a high score regarding the grammar and vocabulary section. Two high-level performance students did not have an expected result while the rest of medium-level and low-level learners confirmed the speculation according to their performance in the first weeks of classes.

The second section was discourse management, a category designed to explore the students' ability to produce relevant language and without much hesitation and repetition. In this category, it was surprising to find out that one low-level performance student (participant 10) scored four points as his contributions were constant and were looking forward to maintaining

the conversation flow. On top of that, one medium-level student (participant 6) and two high-level students (participants 3 and 4) achieved four or five points. In this way, the 60% of participants only got three points or less, having a medium or low performance in the category.

The third category focused on pronunciation, on exploring how intelligible the students' ideas were. This section was similar regarding percentages and students who succeeded it. Only 30% of participants achieved four or more points (participants 3, 4 and 6). The other 70% were students from all the performance levels making this section the most challenging for them.

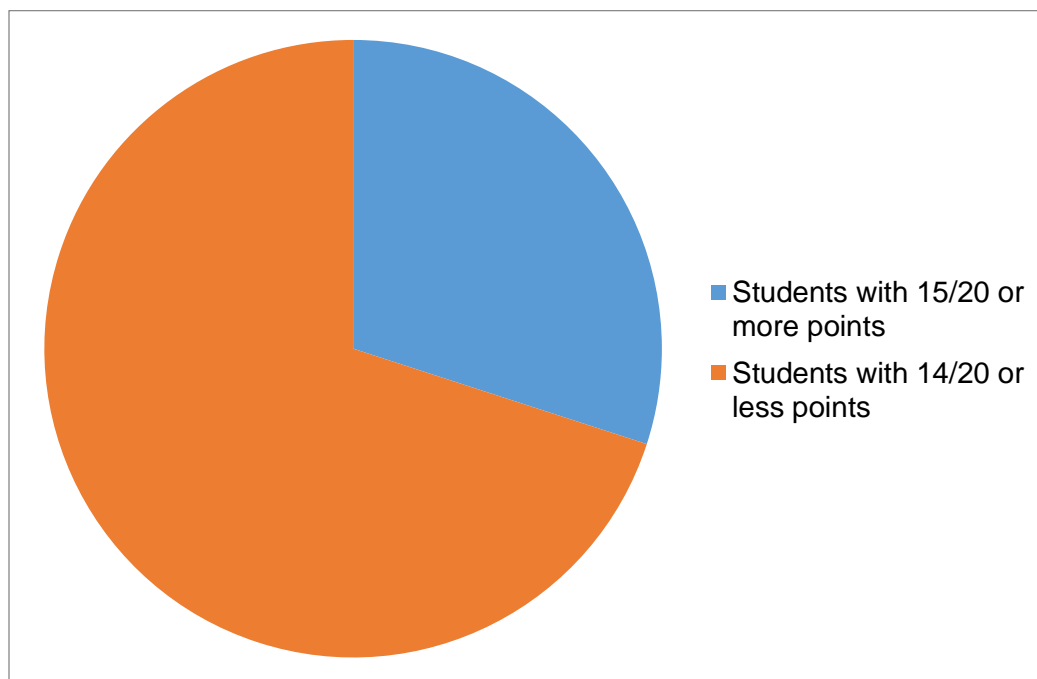
Finally, in the most important category for this present project the evaluator assessed the interactive communication. A section designed to analyze the participants' ability to initiate a conversation, to respond appropriately, to negotiate ideas, and to have proper turn-taking. Participants 3, 4 and 6 continued with their positive performance and, in this case, participant 2 also joined them with four or more points. The rest, the 60% scored three or less points. Actually, one medium-level participant (participant 5) and one low-level participant (participant 9) only achieved one point. Additionally, one high-level learner (participant 1) scored two points.

Considering that there are ten participants and that every category gives up to five points, the maximum of each category is fifty points. In every category, the combined results barely reached thirty points: 1) Grammar and vocabulary 31 points, 2) Discourse management 32 points, 3) Pronunciation 30 points and, 4) Interactive communication 31 points. The only students who performed at a high level were participants 3, 4 and 6 (e.g. Figure 1). Participants 3 and 4 achieved a score that corresponded to their attitudes in class, high-level students. On the other hand, the student 6 exceeded expectations as his results were consistent in all categories. Despite being qualified as a medium-level student, this participant outscored high-level students such as number 1 and 2.

In conclusion, the PET speaking test results demonstrated that the 70% of students experience difficulties in all categories. Based on the overall numbers, the lowest category was pronunciation with 30 points. However, the category which provided more negative numbers was interactive communication as three students had unfavorable scores; participant 1 had two points while participants 5 and 9 had 1 point. In other words, most of students show complications at the time of speaking when it comes to use a proper variety grammatical sentences, but even more when it comes to interacting with a friend in the target language and pronouncing properly.

### Figure 1

*Overall results in the PET speaking exam*



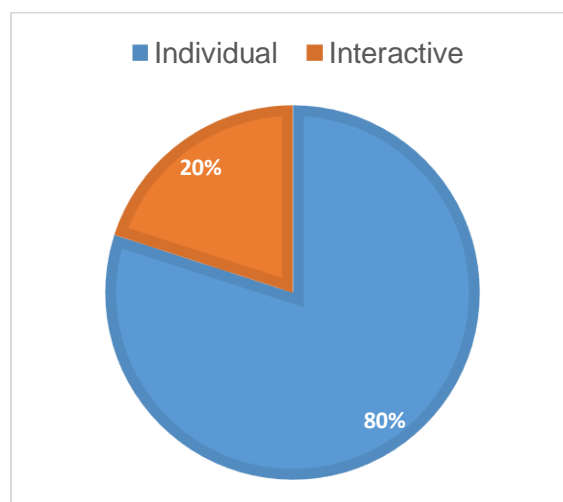
#### 4.2 Students' Questionnaire about their PET Speaking Section Experience

The first objective of this project was to find out the difficulties that B1 students have in the oral production through a speaking test and a questionnaire. The results (e.g. Figure 2) show

that the 80% of participants felt more comfortable while performing in an activity where there was no interaction and responses were short. This implies that this kind of activity is the one that they normally experience in classes; one-on-one questions that require responses with specific details and that do not provide them with options to elaborate longer on their ideas. Besides, even when the students were presented with the exam design, only 20% of participants commented that they practiced with a friend as a preparation strategy for the exam (e.g. Figure 3). The rest of the students practiced but they opted for strategies that do not require exchange of ideas with a peer. Probably, this is a result of lack of confidence to ask for help or this is evidence of how unfamiliarized they are with interaction and with other strategies to improve their speaking performance.

## Figure 2

*Students' preferences on the PET activities*



**Figure 3**

*Preparation towards the test with a peer*



Moreover, 50% of students expressed the necessity of improving in the interactive part of the exam which evidences that they do not have enough interactive activities in class. In fact, there were two categories that students pointed out as challenging. First, the 40% agreed on finding it very difficult to respond or to give comments on what the other candidate said. Then, 30% had difficulties with turn-taking which again, demonstrates the lack of practice of interactive activities for speaking in class (e.g. Figure 4). This possibly indicates that students are more used to individual oral participation or fixed activities where they just follow or drill a conversation and where they are not required to produce their own ideas with the consequent harm to motivation.

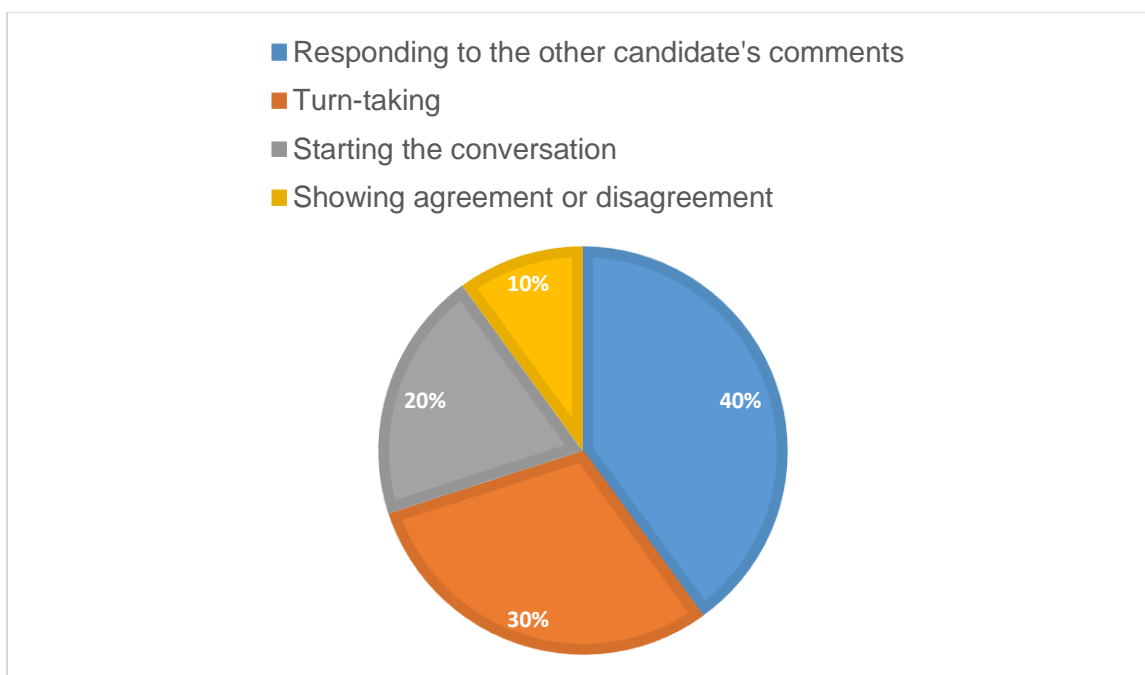
Unexpectedly, 70% of students showed a positive attitude towards the interactive part of the exam even when they were not used to it (e.g. Figure 5); perhaps because students find that interaction is the aim of developing speaking and ultimately, of learning a foreign language as mentioned in the literature. Finally, all participants suggested having more activities similar to the ones contained in the test to practice; to interact more; and to improve their oral production. Some students also demanded to practice more English through the use of meaningful input



such as reading passages, videos or audios. The comments provided by the students will serve to the next stage of this study where an intervention will be implemented.

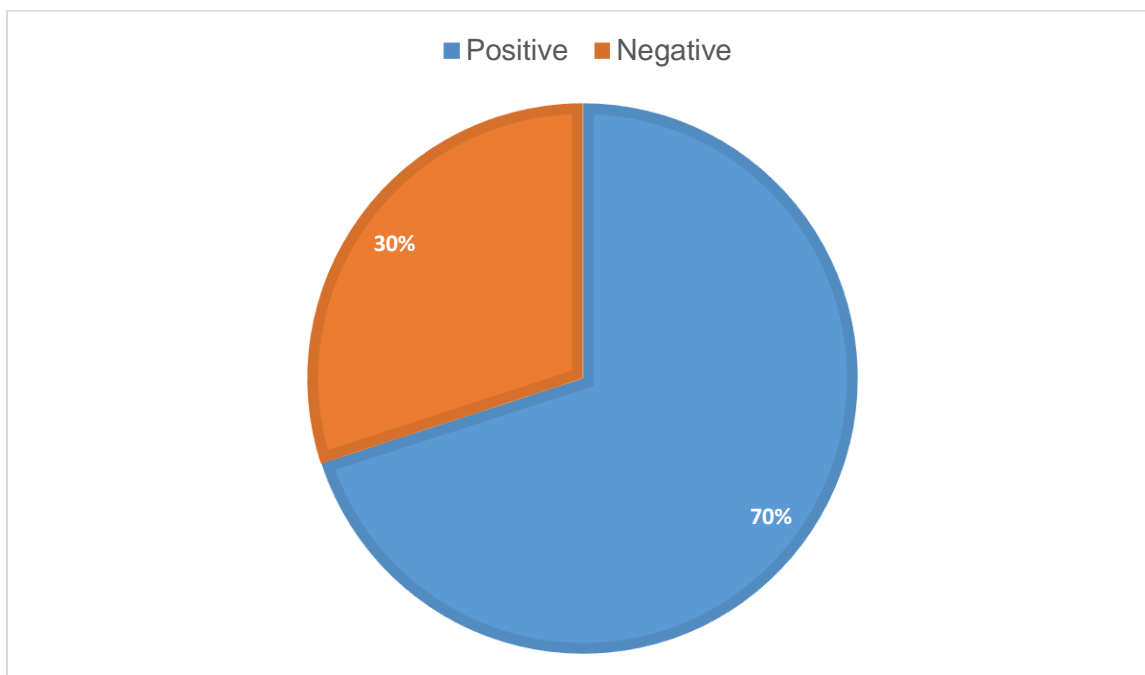
#### Figure 4

*Difficulties with PET interactive features*



**Figure 5**

*Attitudes towards interactive activities*

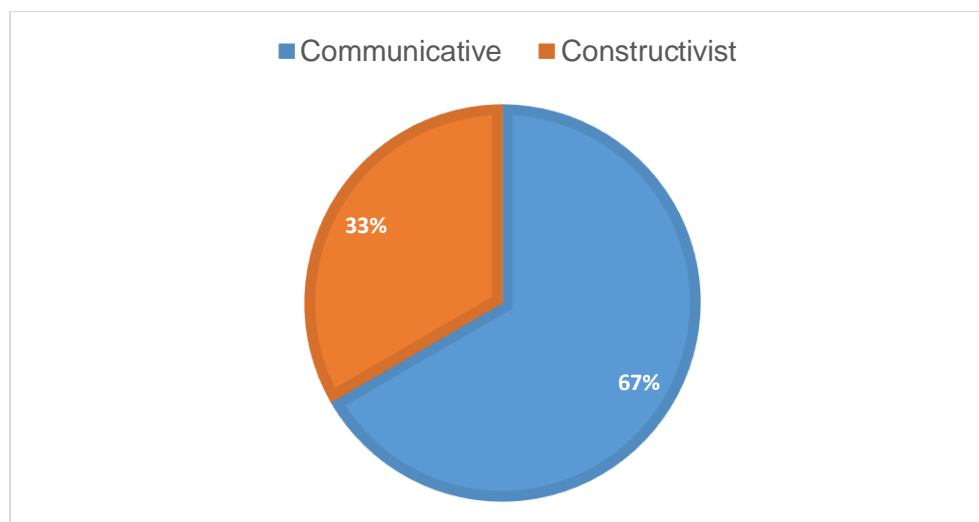


### **4.3 Teachers' Questionnaire**

Regarding the second objective, teachers' reports on their methodology and strategies to improve the oral skill were also interesting. The 66 % of the teachers commented that they implement a communicative approach in their classes (e.g. Figure 6); which results somewhat contradictory to the students' perception of their speaking skill as well as their oral production. They all agreed on the importance of having communicative activities in the EFL sessions; in this section the use of role-plays predominated. However, students did not report using this strategy in class nor they mentioned it as a suggestion to improve their oral production. Probably, students have not used role-plays in class or the role plays experienced have been limited in terms of realistic interaction or have failed to engage students' interest. On the other hand, students may not like to participate in front of their classmates.

**Figure 6**

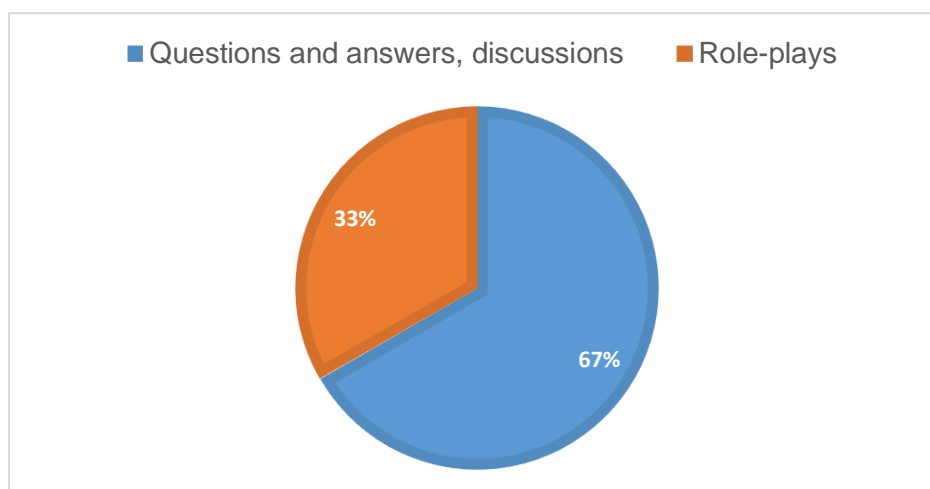
*Methodology used by teachers*



Teachers reported the activities they implement in order to enhance the oral production; 66% builds oral practice through questions and answers as well as discussions based in audios or videos (e.g Figure 7). However, a teacher reported more specific information; this teacher uses role-plays and competitions. However, the teacher reported that role-plays are used only in one out of the twelve units which is clearly not enough. If the students' participation in role-plays is positive, it should be put into practice more frequently and with varied topics, scenarios, and interaction patterns so they develop language in different situations.

**Figure 7**

*Activities to enhance oral production*



On the other hand, competences are based on Kahoot and in a writing contest. Kahoot is a well-known and widely used game application; however, there are certain limitations as to what can be done there in terms of the development of certain skills. It works well for sub-skills such as vocabulary, formulaic expressions, and grammar but how much it can help to the development of speaking activities, remains to be seen.

As for writing competences, the teacher reported that students get a topic to write about, the teacher selects some finalists and they tell the story to the class. At the end, the class votes and the winner gets a reward; in this way students get motivated to participate and to improve their writing. However, not all students may be comfortable with writing or with telling their story in front of their classmates. In this strategy both the writing capabilities and the eagerness to participate play a really important role. Additionally, students that tell their stories just read, they do not elaborate on their stories, which means that all their oral practice is limited to the story. Probably, a class discussion about the winner's story would be a positive suggestion to enhance that strategy from a speaking skill perspective.

In a different category, it was interesting to notice that even when all teachers evaluate the speaking skill, there is not a standardized instrument provided by the university. 2 out of the 3 teachers reported that they award much importance to interaction while evaluating oral production. Nevertheless, the EFL program from that university does not have an actual speaking section in the criteria; the closest activity is a project where students usually give presentations but they tend to memorize their speech, giving no room for interaction.

Regarding the different speaking evaluation strategies, a teacher reported to evaluate it through weekly audios and a different one through the use of rubrics, but the evidence graded to students was not mentioned. Furthermore, the last teacher did not give a solid response to his speaking evaluation process due to the number of students in class (30-35 per class). This lack of agreement among teachers and the university program seems to be affecting the students' English language learning as they might be prioritizing on the other skills that directly impact on the criteria. All in all, it seems that students' and teachers' reports are contradictory which denotes a necessity to pay more attention to both the students' and teachers' opinion to enhance the EFL class, as well as the speaking strategies and oral production.

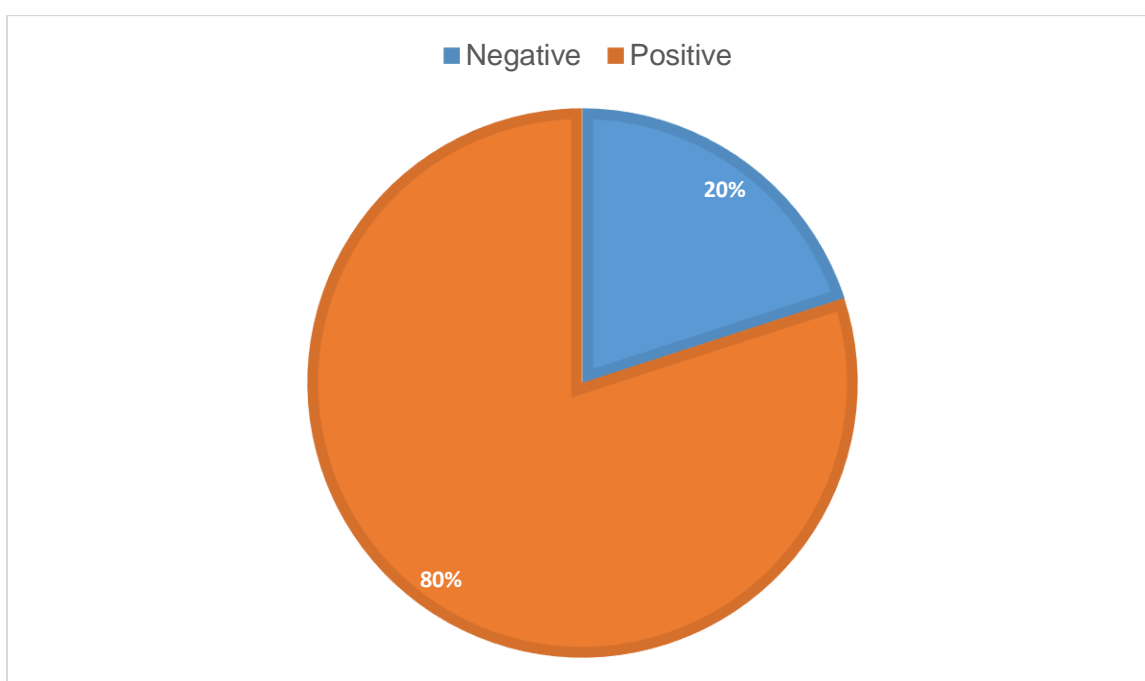
#### **4.4 Narrative Frame**

As this instrument was designed to discover the students' perspective of using reading to improve their oral production, it was decided to first explore their experiences and thoughts about reading in their native language. All the participants reported that, when they were children, the first people that helped to improve their reading were their parents or teachers. However, it was interesting to notice that 20% of the students reported to feel negative feelings, such as anxiety and pressure, at the time of being helped (e.g Figure 8). This, being one of their reading experiences, could negatively impact on the development of their reading skill and perspective.

Then students shared information about their first experience about reading a book on their own and results showed that there are aspects such as recommendations or movies that influence at the time of reading. All students reported positive emotions after finishing their first book while 50% of participants experienced an immediate necessity to read a second part of the story, to read about the author or to buy a different book. These experiences triggered positive feelings on the students' lives, not only they felt a sense of achievement but also engagement to continue reading.

### Figure 8

*Emotions while being helped with reading*

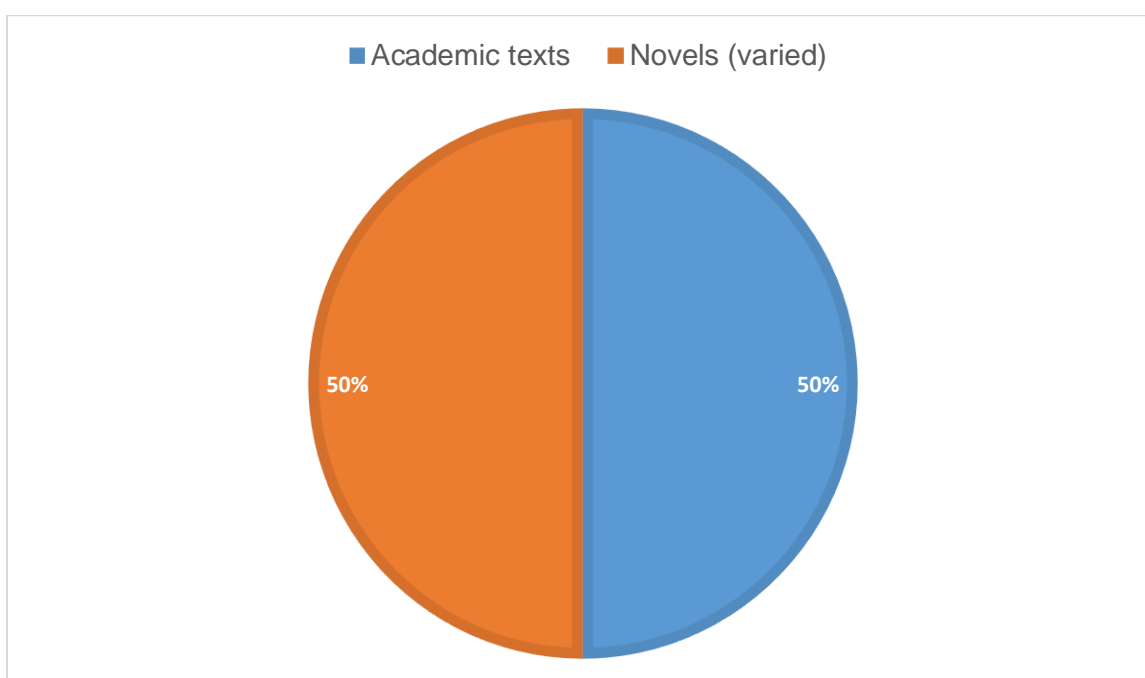


The present instrument explored the students' reading preferences and interests. In this section, 50% of the participants reported to prefer reading texts related to their university studies which implies that they enjoy combining reading with their studies (e.g Figure 9). However, none of the students mentioned to be totally pleased with the reading choices and activities chosen by their teachers; 30% of the participants complained about the lack of visuals in their readings

which shows that the use of images in the texts could have a great impact in both the students' engagement and comprehension. On the other hand, 30% of the participants reported that they would enjoy having a different reading approach. Among their proposals to enhance their reading activities they mentioned they would love to have more interactive activities, more explanations, and more comprehension activities at the end of the class.

### Figure 9

#### *Reading preferences*



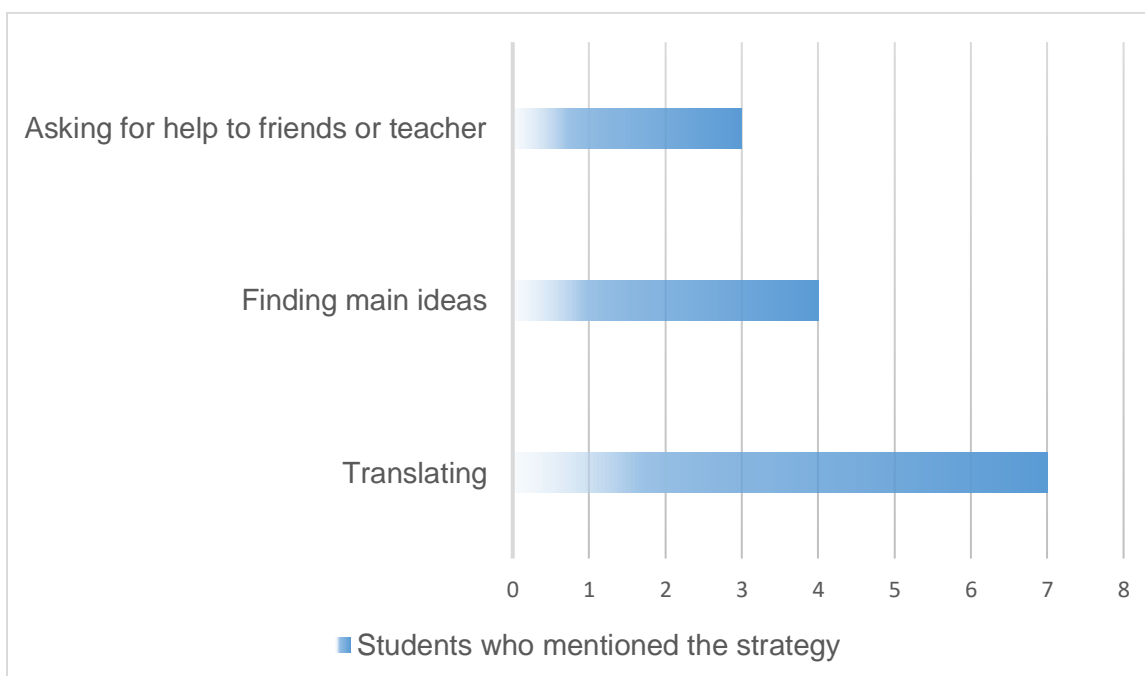
Finally, narrative frame explored the students' reading activities and strategies in English as a second language. Whereas 40% of the students mentioned to prefer reading activities in pairs, the rest reported to normally have individual readings. Nevertheless, out of the 60% who experiences individual reading activities, 30% reported to enjoy group activities at the end of the reading practice. This section shows that all students need a certain level of interaction in their EFL reading activities. Probably, in this way, students are capable of rechecking their

understanding or of finding a new perspective to what they read. Additionally, while collaborating, students may improve their vocabulary knowledge and pronunciation.

According to this instrument, results on the strategies that students use in an EFL reading comprehension activity were varied. However, 70% of participants mentioned, at least once, to ask or to translate words that they did not know. In this sense, it is important to have solid pre-reading activities that focus on discussion and vocabulary so they can go over their reading passage more fluently. In a different strategy, 40% of the participants mentioned to try to identify the main ideas of the text to both understand better and to find the meaning of some words. Finally, there was a 30% that expressed to ask for help with classmates or teacher in order to digest better the reading passage (e.g. Figure 10).

**Figure 10**

*Reading comprehension strategies in EFL*



In the last section, participants had the opportunity to express the benefits they get from reading in English and 50% of them pointed out that improving their EFL reading skill helps



them to understand better certain academic texts which results very important in their studies. In this sense, it seems that students require not only to have more reading activities in their EFL classes but also more catered ones to their needs along with the use of various reading comprehension strategies to enhance their general language learning.

## **Chapter 5 Didactic proposal**

In this final chapter, all the elements of the proposal are presented. The main purpose for this final part of the research is to inform whether the results match with the action hypothesis presented in this chapter. In order to do so, aspects such as the materials and procedures are presented so readers may have a better understanding of all steps taken into consideration during the application.

### **5.1 Action Hypothesis**

According to participants in this study, the application of reading circles as a constant activity within the English as a foreign language classroom may positively impact not only on the students' oral production but also in their target language confidence. This strategy may offer learners both an opportunity to discover language through texts and to have plentiful interaction among peers. It is important to see reading circles as an alternative to enhance the oral production through the integration of skills.

### **5.2 Materials**

For this current project, the materials to be used are from the book Touchstone 3. Its units contain reading passages at the end, which are the ones that will be used in the class design so this practice can be replicable in the future. This weekly designs will lead students to produce an evidence collaboratively before getting to the grammar part of the class. Due to the current pandemics, the project will occur in the Teams platform by Microsoft. This platform will allow having team works as one of its features is 'channels', which are smaller classrooms within the main one. There, students will be divided in teams of five to discuss, to plan, and to elaborate

their evidence. This project covered eight units from the book which translates to eighth different reading passages and evidences of collaboration. The material used requested is the following:

Unit 2: Experiences / Reading: Travel blogs

Unit 4: Family life / Reading: Barbara's blog

Unit 5: Food choices / Reading: Snacks around the world

Unit 6: Managing life / Reading: The art (and science) of doing less and achieving more

Unit 7: Relationships / Reading: Looking for love? Online is the way to go

Unit 8: What if? / Reading: If I could live my life over...

Unit 9: Tech savvy? / Reading: Savvy and safe

Unit 10: What's up? / Reading: Avatar is magnificent, mesmerizing, and memorable!

### **5.3 Procedures**

The design of this current proposal designed classes divided in three stages where the teacher monitored the activities, giving support only when needed. The stages replicated the Task-Based cycle proposed by Willis (1996): 1) pre-task, 2) task cycle and finally, 3) focus on language. Furthermore, it is important to state that students started classes with the reading passage of their book unit which represented the opposite order of their usual classes. This was planned on purpose to give importance to input and to provide them with an opportunity to interact better. So, in the pre-task stage students had a warm-up activity followed by the reading of a passage. Then, in the task-cycle stage students collaborated in groups while working on an activity based on the unit's reading passage with the objective to create evidence. Finally, in the focus on language stage the teacher helped and explained to students some specific aspects gathered through observation and analysis of their evidence.

## 5.4 Proposal

<b>Title</b>
Reading circles to enhance young adults' oral production
<b>Presentation</b>
The present proposal is designed as a strategy to provide students with plentiful and meaningful opportunities to collaborate through reading passages. Participants held a B1 English level according to their university program and they worked with the Task-Based Language Learning (TBLT) which lead them to create evidence of both their learning and collaboration through group tasks.
<b>General Objective</b>
To provide students with opportunities to improve their speaking skill through reading circles and collaborative activities.
<b>Specific Objectives</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To identify the oral production difficulties experienced by B1 level students through a standardized test.</li> <li>2. To explore the students' reading perspectives and experiences towards the use of reading passages in order to improve their oral production.</li> </ol>
<b>Foundations</b>
<p>The current study is based on the idea to give the students a weekly opportunity to collaborate through a reading passage in order to familiarize with the topic of the class. By doing this, they will integrate productive and receptive skills; such as reading and speaking. Reading circles will work as the strategy to provide students with input to experience them through a Task-based design which will lead them to discuss and produce evidence of their interaction.</p> <p>Reading circles, according to Abdelrasoul (2014), is a strategy that connects all</p>

aspects of a reading practice and that helps students to enhance speaking. As it requires them to work in a collaborative structure, there is always an opportunity for the exchange of ideas and the negotiation of meaning.

On the other hand, the Task-Based Language Learning is a method that seeks the integration of skills; learners are involved in the comprehension activities and manipulation of new knowledge through the interaction with classmates. As Nunan (2004) stated, students will combine their background knowledge with the input to create new knowledge with the aide of interaction.

### **Characteristics**

The design of this current proposal structured classes divided in three stages where the teacher monitored the activities, giving support only when needed. The stages replicated the Task-Based cycle proposed by Willis (1996): 1) pre-task, 2) task cycle and finally, 3) focus on language. The description of each stage is the following:

**Pre-task:** This stage made students become familiarized with the topic as well as to learn new vocabulary through a warm-up activity and discussions.

**Task cycle:** In this stage the class worked in a reading aloud activity. Students took turns to read while the teacher helped them with pronunciation and checked comprehension. Then, in groups, students worked collaboratively in an activity based on the reading passage to create an evidence of their learning/comprehension skills.

**Focus on language:** In this stage the teacher explained and clarified to students some aspects that were gathered during the observation of interaction and the analysis of evidence.

In previous semesters, students used to have five hours of English as a foreign language per week, following the sequence of the units and the contents of the Touchstone book. In the present time, the course is still designed to cover one unit per

week. During the proposal application, the teacher changed the original sequence of the activities in the book by suggesting the students to start the unit with the reading passage which was usually one of the last activities to be covered at the end of each unit. The pre-task and the task-cycle took around one hour to be developed, and the focus on language stage lasted around thirty minutes of the next class since the teacher required of more time to analyze evidence.

### References

- Ibrahim Abdelrasoul, M. (2014). Using reading circles strategy for developing preparatory students' critical reading skills and social skills. Ain Shams University: El Cairo.
- McCarthy, M., McCarten, J., & Sandiford, H. (2014). *Touchstone 3: Student's workbook*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-based language teaching*. University of Hong Kong: Cambridge University Press
- Willis, D. and Willis, J. (2007) *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press: New York.

### Content

Unit	Name	Reading passage sequence	Evidence
		<p><b>Title:</b> Travel blogs</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> The class worked in a brainstorming based on 'trips'. Then, students were asked to speculate about some vocabulary presented to them.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud. Teacher helped both in</p>	

Two	Experiences	<p>pronunciation and checked comprehension. Later, students worked in teams in order to discuss questions related to the reading passage. Finally, students individually wrote a brief experience of one of their trips and shared it with their teammates.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> The teacher analyzed their stories and in the next class, students were presented with the most recurrent mistakes. They also worked in grammar.</p>	A written experience about a trip (50-80 words)
Four	Family life	<p><b>Title:</b> Barbara's blog</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> Students were asked to talk about habits they have with their family. Learners volunteered to share it to the class. Then, all the class worked in a vocabulary activity; they had to link columns.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> The class took turns to read aloud and to discuss the passage. Once the text was finished, students went to their teams to continue talking based on a questionnaire. Then, they had to share an experience with their team to later write</p>	A written anecdote about a skill or habit that was taught by a family member (50-80 words)

		<p>about their personal experience.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After the teacher analyzed their evidence, students focused on grammar.</p>	
Five	Food choices	<p><b>Title:</b> Snacks around the world</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> Students learned from traditional food from Chiapas. Then, they shared traditional food from their state. They also discussed on the strangest food they have eaten, as well as the one they would love to eat again.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud and to give comments about every single paragraph and main idea of the entire text. Then, they worked in teams to continue discussing about food experiences. Finally, they were asked to invent their ideal restaurant by creating a poster to promote it.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After the teacher analyzed their posters, he asked more questions about it and then, this led the class to grammar aspects.</p>	A poster to promote their ideal restaurant.
		<p><b>Title:</b> The art (and science) of doing less and achieving more.</p>	

Six	Managing life	<p><b>Pre-task:</b> Student had a discussion based on how good they are at multitasking. They also had to express ideas about activities they are able to combine without mistake. Then, before the passage, they work in a vocabulary activity.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud and to check comprehension. When this was finished, they worked in teams to discuss how good they are at meeting deadlines and organizing their schedules. Finally, they were given a situation about camping, they had to create a timetable to establish their weekend activities.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After receiving the evidence, students had to respond questions based on their invented timetable. Then, they went to grammar aspects.</p>	Completion of a camping time table according to their future plans.
		<p><b>Title:</b> Looking for love? Online is the way to go!</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> The class had a series of questions related to personal love experiences and how the right person should be romantically speaking.</p>	



Seven	Relationships	<p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud, to ask questions and to comment on the reading passage. Then, in teams, they were in charge of discussing about finding a perfect catch. They had to write ten recommendations to find the right person in their lives. Finally, they had to design a poster about a love reality show they would invent.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After the teacher analyzed the evidence, students were asked some questions, and then the grammar aspects came along.</p>	A poster to promote a romantic reality show
Eight	What if?	<p><b>Title:</b> If I could live my life over...</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> Students and teacher had a discussion about what everyone would change about specific things if they had the opportunity and capability. Then, they prepared for the reading with a vocabulary activity where they had to choose the correct definition of a concept.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud and to ask about unknown words. The teacher helped with comprehension paragraph by paragraph. Then, in teams,</p>	An edited Word document where

		<p>two activities were given. First students talked about things they would change on themselves. Second, they worked collaboratively to become creative and complete some situations.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> The teacher analyzed the ideas written by students, and presented some sentences to correct with all the class. Once the activity was done, grammar aspects were highlighted.</p>	<p>students imagined and completed some situations.</p>
Nine	Tech savvy?	<p><b>Title:</b> Savvy and safe</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> Students and teacher discussed on the importance and dangers of technology. They also talked about the amount of time they use their phone a day as well as their favorite apps. Finally, they expressed whether they have helped someone to learn how to use a phone app.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud and tell personal experiences related to the reading passage. After checking the reading comprehension, students worked in their teams in some discussions and written activities. First, they talked about the advantages and</p>	<p>*A poster to present a new phone app.</p> <p>*An individual</p>

		<p>disadvantages of some applications. Then, they invented their own phone app.</p> <p>Finally, they became users of that app and rated it.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> Then, students went straight to grammar aspects of the unit that were implicitly used in previous activities.</p>	<p>written review of the phone app (50-70 words)</p>
Ten	What's up?	<p><b>Title:</b> Avatar is magnificent, mesmerizing, and memorable!</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> In this pre-task, students got together in their teams in order to discuss a series of questions related to movies. Then, they came back to a general activity where some people shared responses. A bit of vocabulary was also taught through conversation.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Students took turns to read aloud. Teacher helped with pronunciation and with comprehension. After reading aloud, students went to their teams again in order to work in two activities. First, they chose a movie that all knew and wrote together a summary/description of it. Then, they individually wrote a review of</p>	<p>*As a team, a written summary of a movie (50-80 words)</p> <p>*An individual review of the</p>

		<p>the same movie.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After checking evidence, the teacher asked some questions to students to help with corrections. Then, the class continued with grammar.</p>	<p>same movie (50 words)</p>
Eleven	Impressions	<p><b>Title:</b> El sistema</p> <p><b>Pre-task:</b> In this stage, students were asked to speculate about some pictures. The teacher implicitly corrected them in order to use the expected grammar.</p> <p><b>Task cycle:</b> Here, students took turns to read aloud. However, while this happened they also had to find within the text synonyms/definitions to some challenging vocabulary. They were provided with the synonyms/definitions. Once they finished, they went to their teams to work collaboratively. Students received some pictures and they had to write speculations about them.</p> <p><b>Focus on language:</b> After the evidence was analyzed, the teacher created some examples to students to discuss and correct. Then, the class continued with</p>	<p>An edited Word document where students provide speculations based on some images given.</p>

		grammar aspects.	
<b>Evaluation</b>			
<p>Every single task cycle was evaluated through teacher's observations during the collaborative work. As well as the analysis and questions about the evidences created by the groups. Despite the lack of a speaking test in the university syllabus, participants took the Preliminary English Test (PET) speaking section as a pre and post-test in order to explore both initial difficulties and developments in their oral production.</p> <p>The PET was selected due to its collaborative aspect regarding the speaking section which lasts from 10-12 minutes. In other words, it contains both individual and pair work activities which can reflect the impact of the reading circles. The exam is divided in four tasks which are 1) personal information, 2) describing a photograph, 3) making an agreement and 4) a general conversation through questions.</p> <p>In general terms, the speaking aspects that are evaluated during the PET are 1) Grammar and vocabulary, 2) Pronunciation, 3) Discourse management and, 4) Interactive communication. In this sense, pre and post-tests results were compared to analyze possible improvements.</p>			

## 5.5 Results

After the application of reading circles, students experienced their second PET speaking section round. Even when the exam's design was the same, materials within the activities such as images and topics were different. By doing this, students still felt anxious to discover more about the exam. Furthermore, learners were paired up with the same classmate in the pre-test to ensure an appropriate comparison at the end of the application. The results are the following (e.g. Table 2):

**Table 2***Pre versus post-test results*

	<b>Grammar and vocabulary</b>	<b>Discourse management</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>	<b>Interactive communication</b>
<b>Participant 1</b> <b>(High-level performance)</b>	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 3 Post: 5	Pre: 2 Post: 4	Pre: 2 Post: 5
<b>Participant 2</b> <b>(High-level performance)</b>	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 4 Post: 5
<b>Participant 3</b> <b>(High-level performance)</b>	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 5 Post: 5	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 5 Post: 5
<b>Participant 4</b> <b>(High-level performance)</b>	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 5 Post: 5	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 5 Post: 5
<b>Participant 5</b> <b>(Medium-level performance)</b>	Pre: 2 Post: 3	Pre: 1 Post: 4	Pre: 2 Post: 4	Pre: 1 Post: 3
<b>Participant 6</b> <b>(Medium-level performance)</b>	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 4 Post: 4	Pre: 4 Post: 5
<b>Participant 7</b> <b>(Medium-level performance)</b>	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 4

<b>performance)</b>				
<b>Participant 8 (Medium-level performance)</b>	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 4
<b>Participant 9 (Low-level performance)</b>	Pre: 2 Post: 2	Pre: 1 Post: 1	Pre: 2 Post: 2	Pre: 1 Post: 1
<b>Participant 10 (Low-level performance)</b>	Pre: 3 Post: 3	Pre: 4 Post: 3	Pre: 3 Post: 4	Pre: 3 Post: 4
<b>Total</b>	Pre: 31 Post: 35	Pre: 32 Post: 37	Pre: 30 Post: 36	Pre: 31 Post: 40

The first and more evident result is that the sum of all students' scores produced an increase of at least four points in all sections, denoting two possible ideas. First, it may be believed that participants were more adapted to the exam so they had a better performance as they knew how to approach all activities. The second idea is also based on a more positive students' performance due to the amount of interaction experienced through reading circles.

In a general analysis, it is easy to perceive that the section that benefited the most was Interactive communication with a rise of 9 points, followed by Pronunciation with 6 points, Discourse management with 5 points and, Grammar and vocabulary with 4 points. This means that whereas students did not showed a big difference regarding their ability to handle more complex or varied vocabulary and sentence structures, they had a greater capability to start conversations, to provide comments about their classmates' ideas, to ask and respond questions, to take turns, among others.

Any of the participants had a detrimental result according to the previous test in the beginning of the course. However, there were three students (candidate 3, 4 and, 9) who did not show any improvement in the post-test. Out of these students, candidate 9 is a low-level performance who hardly ever participated in classes and that experienced internet problems constantly. Candidates 3 and 4 are high-level performance students and even when their results are the same, their knowledge and personality were helpful during reading circles. They definitely became leaders and provided with recommendations and help to their friends.

In a more detailed analysis, candidate 1 and 2 (high-level performance) and, candidate 5 (medium-level performance) were the ones who had the most plausible results in the post-test. So, probably, reading circles may impact better on those learners who are more active in class and that have a better command of English as a foreign language. Additionally, it is important for the teacher to make groups with different performance levels so the low-level students find role models to learn from.

### ***5.5.1 Students' Reflection on their Experience with Reading Circles***

This proposal was the first time students encountered reading circles as a strategy within an English as a foreign language class to improve their oral production. Additionally, the strategy became repetitive during the semester so it was expected that they would adapt to it and that positive results would come along. However, the combination of being beginners with the strategy added to the fact that they had not experienced many interactive speaking strategies made this proposal somewhat challenging and complex. As an attempt to explore the students' perspective and learning, they received a reflection in which they had the freedom to voice any aspect related to their experience with the reading circles. In the following paragraphs, results are analyzed to discover whether the students found reading circles beneficial to their oral production or not.



The overall opinion was positive from students. They described reading circles with adjectives such as productive, good, motivating and, helpful. Although a couple of students mentioned that the strategy made them feel anxious and nervous, these feelings were later connected to positive situations. The student 5 reported that nervousness was only experienced in the beginning and as she progressed, she noticed favorable results that she awarded to constant participation and feedback. On the other hand, the participant 3 expressed feeling anxious as a consequence of over-speculating about the reading passage and collaborative activity would be at the end of the day. This students' perspective was the first analysis towards the use of reading circles to enhance the oral production as it is proved that participants enjoyed working with the strategy.

A specific area that was important to explore was the participants' opinion about using a reading passage as the basis of their English as a foreign language class as it represented the opposite to their previous levels. Here, the student 6 expressed that he did not like the reading passages from the book; he described them as "uncool". Other than that, learners provided confident feedback regarding the use of reading passages as starting points in their classes as they reported them to be engaging and persuasive. Their opinions support that reading passages provided them with a lead to comprehend better not only the passage but also the class topic. Other learners said that they discovered new vocabulary that later became useful for the class. This last opinion, according to them, led students to attempt to produce better-structured sentences as an effort to achieve more native-like target language.

Reading passages functioned as the basis to introduce a collaborative activity every week. In this sense, the reflection also sought the impact of having students collaborate in small teams in an environment where the teacher only oversaw the work and helped if necessary, which means that students experienced more autonomy during the activities. In this area, some students mentioned that the biggest upset was that not all participations were equal, it was

difficult for them to get all the team members to cooperate. In addition, some students felt that they require more time to develop the activities as the online environment did not allow them to manage time easily. On the bright side, the most constant advantage experienced by students was the amount of interaction as it gave them the opportunity to learn from others, to increase confidence to develop their ideas, to acquire vocabulary and, to be creative and the time of planning their activity. In fact, there was one participant that said that working with the same team during the course allowed him to meet new friends during the pandemics which meant something positive as most learners in class did not meet previous the lockdown and because online classes do not give them many opportunities to interact for long periods.

The interaction in the reading circles led students to self-evaluate in order to recognize their progress during and after sessions. Finding out their English as a foreign language self-evaluation resulted vital to compare it with what the pre-test and post-test analysis will generate. According to all participants, pronunciation was the most improved aspect of their oral production. However, it was not the only aspect that was positively impacted. Then, 70% of the learners expressed that their participation rate increased not only while interacting with friends in collaborative activities but also during the reading aloud section with the whole class. This last aspect leads to confidence, which was an aspect mentioned by 40% of the participants. They stated that by working in reading circles, they are less afraid of making mistakes, they are more willing to participate and to produce longer sentences as well as being less shy at the time of asking for help. In the end, there were a couple of students who acknowledged better reading comprehension and an increase in their vocabulary to the reading circles strategy.

Finally, some students provided some recommendations to have more efficient reading circles. The opinion that dominated, with a 40%, was to have more time as the online environment did not allow them to take advantage of time accurately. A different case was expressed by one student who reported she would have loved to choose her teammates from

time to time as some students were too participative in some activities. Then, another student asked to have a more grammar-centered approach to the reading circles as that is the learning style that most facilitates his learning.

In conclusion, the analysis of this instrument provided a promising report on the students' perspective towards the use of reading circles as a strategy to enhance oral production. Most of the areas had positive opinions and learners, after self-evaluating, discovered that both their speaking skill and their confidence improved. Reading circles might be even more beneficial if experience face-to-face in order to have better control over time. Additionally, the teacher would also play a more important role as he or she would have the opportunity to help students quicker in different scenarios or to check that they are speaking English during the activities.

### **Conclusions**

The present proposal sought to analyze the advantages and disadvantages in using reading circles through a Task-based design in EFL classes in order to improve the oral production. The application took place in a private university of the north of Mexico where students are not used to take speaking exams; for this reason the proposal used the Preliminary English Test (PET) as a pre and post-test, so the students' progress could be analyzed. The students were in the English level 3 (B1) and during nine weeks they started their book units with the reading passage, which led them to a collaborative activity to then, check grammar. Due to the pandemics, students took their classes through the TEAMS platform and their collaborative activities were done in "channels" which are private groups. In this way, the teacher was able to oversee students during the activities.

According to the post-test results and the students' reflections, reading circles made a favorable impact on the participants' oral production. Additionally, students reported to have increased their confidence which led them to become more participative and less afraid of mistaking. The PET evaluates performances according to grammar and vocabulary, discourse

management, pronunciation and interactive communication. Whereas the majority of students felt that pronunciation was the most benefited aspect of their speaking, the post-test evidenced that their interactive communication was the most developed. However, there were some cases in which the results showed minimum or no progress. For this reason, it is important to mention that it seems that reading circles are more effective with students with an intermediate command of English as it helps them to comprehend better a reading passage and to interact easily with their classmates.

Using reading circles in class is a strategy that might strengthen not only the students' oral production but also their attitude towards the language and participation. Reading circles will provide learners with a meaningful amount of input in which they will both listen to correct pronunciation and learn about semantics. Additionally, having collaborative activities will create a sense of autonomy in the students which will lead them to acquire roles and responsibilities to achieve a goal. In order to improve their impact, it is recommendable not to have large teams and to mix students according to their performance levels so they can blend meaningfully.

Despite the beneficial results, they could have been more impactful. At the beginning of the project, it was intended to apply the proposal in-campus. However, the pandemics and the lockdown did not allow it, so it was necessary to adapt both the strategy and application to an online environment. By doing this, overseeing in-progress team works became the most challenging aspect as it was impossible to monitor all teams simultaneously. Sometimes, students needed help but they had to wait for their turn. In other situations, students were speaking in Spanish which was not helpful at all. Another example is that some teams used to work in Google Docs but the teacher was not able to see their progress. Besides the difficult supervision, online classes provided introvert students with opportunities to hide easily in classes. Many students reported not to have a proper Wi-Fi connection or a useful microphone

to participate in class. These situations made the proposal a laborious activity and only students who were concerned of their language learning took advantage of classes.

As suggestions, it would be more impactful to apply reading circles in a face-to-face environment as it would allow experiencing both simultaneous interaction among students and support by the teacher. Additionally, in-campus classes may offer a possibility to take a better advantage of time as students would not be waiting for a classmate to fix something with his or her computer; and because the teacher would have a more meaningful time control over the activities. A different aspect that may enhance the use of reading circles is to constantly change the teams so students work with different peers. However, the teacher must analyze the students' performance level so the teams can be balanced. Besides the modality and the teams, it would be significant to have a selection of reading passages out of the book that students use in classes, they may be more engaged if they get to choose the text for the class. And finally, the teacher may alternate the use reading circles with the number of units. In this way, students will not find the strategy repetitive and students with a different learning style will benefit with different content presentation.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Cuestionario sobre la sección de producción oral del Preliminary English

#### Test

**Objetivo:** Conocer tus percepciones sobre el diseño del examen y sobre tu desempeño en el mismo.

**Instrucciones:** Responde las siguientes preguntas conforme a tu experiencia en el examen.

1. ¿Cómo te sentías antes de tomar el examen?
  
2. De acuerdo a lo que sabías del examen, ¿llevaste a cabo alguna estrategia para practicar tu producción oral? ¿Cuál?
  
3. ¿Cómo te sentiste durante el examen?
  
4. Según tu opinión, ¿en qué parte del examen te desempeñaste mejor?
  - a) Información personal
  - b) Descripción de una fotografía
  - c) Interacción para llegar a un acuerdo
  - d) Conversación general a través de preguntas
  
5. ¿Consideras que la interacción fue positiva o negativa en tu desempeño? ¿Por qué?
  
6. De acuerdo a tu experiencia, ordena las partes del examen de la más fácil (1) a la más difícil (4):
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Información personal
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Descripción de una fotografía
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Interacción para llegar a un acuerdo
   
 \_\_\_\_\_ Conversación general a través de preguntas
  
7. Haciendo una autoevaluación de tu examen, ¿en cuál de las siguientes categorías necesitas más apoyo?
  - a) Gramática y vocabulario
  - b) Manejo del discurso\*\*\*

- c) Pronunciación
- d) Interacción comunicativa

8. Según tu punto de vista, ¿qué tipo de actividades te ayudarían a mejorar tu producción oral?

9. Según tu consideración, ¿Cómo evaluarías tu desempeño en el examen?

10. Ordena los siguientes aspectos de la sección interactiva del examen del más fácil (1) al más difícil (4):

- \_\_\_ Iniciar la conversación
- \_\_\_ Responder / reaccionar a algo dicho por el otro candidato o el moderador.
- \_\_\_ Mostrar acuerdo o desacuerdo con las ideas del otro candidato.
- \_\_\_ Tomar y dar turnos para participar.

11. Si tuvieras la oportunidad de volver a hacer el examen, ¿qué harías diferente?

\*\*\* Manejo del discurso: La habilidad de manejar y organizar diferentes ideas y/o temas, así como también la habilidad de encontrar y corregir cualquier problema durante el discurso.

## Appendix B: Cuestionario para maestros de Nivel 3

**Objetivo:** Conocer las percepciones de los docentes hacia la metodología universitaria, su labor docente y estrategias para mejorar la producción oral.

1. De acuerdo al programa de inglés como lengua extranjera de la universidad, ¿Qué metodología es la que se debe implementar en las clases?
2. Del 1 al 10, ¿Qué tanto su enseñanza se ajusta a la metodología propuesta por la universidad? Justifique su respuesta.
3. ¿Consideras que las cinco horas semanales son suficientes para el desarrollo de los temas? Sí, no y por qué.
4. Según su criterio, ¿Qué habilidad se debe enfatizar en el salón de clases para mejorar el aprendizaje del Inglés como lengua extranjera?
5. ¿Considera que el libro Touchstone 3 aporta a la producción oral y a la interacción de la misma en sus alumnos? Defina su respuesta.
7. Del uno al diez, ¿Qué importancia le da a las actividades comunicativas en la planeación de sus clases? Argumenta su respuesta.
8. ¿Qué estrategias implementa en clase para mejorar la producción oral de sus alumnos?
9. ¿Cuál es su actividad favorita para desarrollar la habilidad oral dentro del salón de clases?
10. ¿Qué habilidad considera que aporta más a la producción oral? ¿Por qué?
11. ¿Evalúa la habilidad oral en sus clases? En caso sí, ¿Cómo la evalúa?
12. Ordena los siguientes aspectos de la habilidad oral según la importancia que le otorgues en su evaluación. El número uno (1) es el más importante y el seis (6) el menos importante.

- \_\_\_ Pronunciación
- \_\_\_ Gramática
- \_\_\_ Coherencia
- \_\_\_ Fluidez
- \_\_\_ Vocabulario
- \_\_\_ Interacción comunicativa

13. Si tuviera la oportunidad de proponer una idea para mejorar las clases de inglés como lengua extranjera en la universidad, ¿Cuál sería?



## Appendix C: Marco narrativo

**Objetivo:** Conocer tu perspectiva sobre la lectura tomando en cuenta tus experiencias en el pasado y en el presente.

**Instrucciones:** Complementa las siguientes situaciones de acuerdo a tu experiencia. En las situaciones en donde encuentres paréntesis, elije la opción que describa tu caso. Escribe tus respuestas con un color de letra diferente.

1. Recuerdo que cuando era chico, mis familiares (me leían / no me leían) cuentos. Los que más me gustaban se trataban sobre \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Cuando aprendí a leer (tenía / no tenía) quien me ayudara a leer. Las personas que solían ayudarme eran \_\_\_\_\_. Y cuando me ayudaban, yo sentía \_\_\_\_\_.
3. El primer libro que leí por mi cuenta era sobre \_\_\_\_\_. Y decidí leerlo porque \_\_\_\_\_. Recuerdo que cuando lo acabé lo primero que pensé fue \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Cuando me ponían a leer en la escuela las actividades normalmente eran (individuales / grupales) y a mí (me gustaban / no me gustaban) porque \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Cuando era más joven, lo que no me gustaba de leer era \_\_\_\_\_ y lo que sí disfrutaba era \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Hoy en día, las lecturas que más disfruto son \_\_\_\_\_ y me gustan porque \_\_\_\_\_.
7. He notado que cuando leo lo que más aprendo es \_\_\_\_\_. Esto (me / no me) motiva porque \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Las lecturas que hago en la escuela me parecen \_\_\_\_\_. Considero que, para sentirme más motivado, deberían ser \_\_\_\_\_.
9. En mi escuela (tengo / no tengo) lecturas en el idioma inglés. Mi estrategia para entender la mayoría del texto es \_\_\_\_\_. Cuando encuentro algo que no entiendo, lo que suelo hacer es \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Las lecturas en inglés (contienen / no contienen) actividades de comprensión. Normalmente, las realizo (individualmente / en pareja / en grupo) y preferiría que fueran \_\_\_\_\_ porque \_\_\_\_\_.
11. Considero que la lectura en el idioma inglés (es / no es) importante. Considero que los mejores beneficios son \_\_\_\_\_.

## Appendix D: Lesson plans

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 1		
<b>Unit:</b> Two, Experiences		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Travel blog		<b>Objective:</b> To practice past tenses through the sharing of vacation stories.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To activate their prior knowledge through the discussion of a list of vocabulary.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students work in a brainstorming based on the topic "trips/vacations".</li> <li>2. The teacher shows the students a list of vocabulary where they speculate about the meanings or synonyms.</li> </ol>	15 mins	A written experience about a trip (50-80 words)
Task cycle	To practice speaking while reading out loud and discussing with classmates about trips.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they share both their opinions about the reading passage and personal stories about trips.</li> <li>3. Individually, students choose of their stories and write a text of 50-80 words about it.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To improve both speaking and writing through the correction of examples.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes stories and collects the most common mistakes.</li> <li>2. Students work together in order to correct examples shared by the teacher.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 2		
<b>Unit:</b> Four, Family life		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Barbara's blog		<b>Objective:</b> To explore the habits that students share with their family.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To share family habits in order to activate background knowledge and to unlock confidence.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher asks for volunteers to tell habits they have with family members.</li> <li>2. Students are presented with a vocabulary activity where they need to link two columns to learn new vocabulary.</li> </ol>	15 mins	A written anecdote about a skill or habit that was taught by a family member (50-80 words)
Task cycle	To read out loud in order to discover and to comment on different family habits.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they follow a questionnaire to continue with discussion.</li> <li>3. Learners share their different habits and then, they individually choose one and write a text of 50-80 words about it.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To improve both speaking and writing through the discussion of some questions and the introduction of grammar.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes stories and collects the most common mistakes.</li> <li>2. The teacher asks questions to specific students based on their writing and students share their opinion.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 3		
<b>Unit:</b> Five, Food choices		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Snacks around the world.		<b>Objective:</b> To express their food preferences and their expertise in the kitchen.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To share a traditional dish for their hometown.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shows a traditional food from Chiapas and students ask questions about it.</li> <li>2. Then, students share traditional dishes from their state as well as the strangest dishes they have eaten.</li> </ol>	15 mins	A poster to promote their ideal restaurant.
Task cycle	To read out loud in order to discover traditional dishes around the world and to create an ideal restaurant.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation. In every paragraph, students discuss on the main idea of it.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they continue talking about food experiences based on questions given by the teacher.</li> <li>3. Learners discuss and together they design a poster to invent and promote their ideal restaurant.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To establish the basis of grammar through questions and answers about the restaurants.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the posters and prepares some questions.</li> <li>2. The teacher asks questions based on their restaurants and dishes.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 4		
<b>Unit:</b> Six, Managing life		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> The art (and science) of doing less and achieving more.		<b>Objective:</b> To discuss options to plan a weekend camping trip.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To discover the kinds of activities that students can do simultaneously.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The class develops the concept “multitask” and learners share examples of activities they can and cannot do at the same time.</li> <li>2. Then, students prepare for the reading passage with a vocabulary activity where students need to link columns.</li> </ol>	15 mins	Completion of a camping time table according to their future plans.
Task cycle	To read out loud and discuss about multitasking to then, plan a timetable for a camping weekend.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation. The teacher asks questions throughout the text in order to check comprehension.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where tell how good they are with meeting deadlines and organizing their schedule.</li> <li>3. Learners discuss and together they create their schedule for a camping weekend.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To analyze how common the timetables are despite being from different teams.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the timetables and prepares some questions</li> <li>2. The teacher asks questions based on their plans and leading students to use future tenses.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 5		
<b>Unit:</b> Seven, Relationships		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Looking for love? Online is the way to go?		<b>Objective:</b> To talk about what to look for in a couple and to give recommendations for a perfect match.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To discuss about the qualities that a couple should have to feel right in a relationship.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a series of questions related to personal love stories and students volunteer to respond one or a couple of them.</li> <li>2. Learners work in a brainstorming based on romantic TV shows.</li> </ol>	15 mins	A poster to promote a romantic reality show.
Task cycle	To read out loud in order to learn about a new normality in the love field.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation and with unknown words.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they discuss about a perfect match.</li> <li>3. Learners work collaboratively to invent a new romantic TV show and they invent a poster to promote it.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To familiarize students with the grammar through questions and a fixed phrase.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the posters and prepares questions based on their poster.</li> <li>2. Students practice some sentences which start with "I good friend is someone who..."</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 6		
<b>Unit:</b> Eight, What if?		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> If I could live my life over...		<b>Objective:</b> To use imagination to express wishes and possibilities.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To share ideas of what students would change in different situations or places.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares some questions and students use their creativity to express what they would change if they had the option.</li> <li>2. Learners work in a small vocabulary activity before the reading passage.</li> </ol>	15 mins	An edited Word document where students imagined and completed some situations.
Task cycle	To read out loud in order to reflect on what they would change in life.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The teacher shares a reading passage and students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation and checking comprehension.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they express what they would change in their life.</li> <li>3. Learners receive some fixed sentences and they have to provide different ideas to complete them while using their imagination and creativity.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To analyze their sentences and to find similarities among the groups.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the sentences.</li> <li>2. The teacher shares the fixed sentences with different ideas provided with the students. The teacher helps with correction and guides students to agree or to add more examples.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 7		
<b>Unit:</b> Nine, Tech savvy?		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Savvy and safe		<b>Objective:</b> To provide with perspectives about the importance of technology and applications.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To reflect on the use of both the internet and cellphone.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students respond to questions related to the amount of time devote to phones, as well as their preference about applications.</li> <li>2. Learners share how they have help someone to learn with a phone app.</li> <li>3. Learners discuss the meaning of a “scam”.</li> </ol>	15 mins	<p>*A poster to present a new phone app.</p> <p>*An individual written review of the phone app (50-70 words)</p>
Task cycle	To read out lout in order to learn about possible scams and to analyze phone apps.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation and checking comprehension.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they express their experiences with scams.</li> <li>3. Learners continue discussion about phone apps. Finally, they create poster to show a phone app invented by them. They also “become” the app users and write a brief review of it.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To ask and respond questions using the expected grammar.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the evidence.</li> <li>2. The teacher creates sentences using the unit grammar and their app ideas to discuss.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	



<b>Teacher:</b> César Montesinos		<b>Session:</b> 8		
<b>Unit:</b> Ten, What's up?		<b>Time:</b> 1 hour 30 mins		
<b>Reading passage:</b> Avatar is magnificent, mesmerizing, and memorable!		<b>Objective:</b> To discuss about both their movie preferences and similarities.		
<b>TBLT Stage</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Procedures</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Evidence</b>
Pre-task	To reflect on the use of both the internet and cellphone.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students got in their teams some minutes to discuss about movies and then shared final responses in the general call.</li> <li>2. The teacher introduces the text and asks about the movie.</li> </ol>	15 mins	<p>*As a team, a written summary of a movie (50-80 words)</p> <p>*An individual review of the same movie (50 words)</p>
Task cycle	To read out loud in order to learn about possible scams and to analyze phone apps.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students take turns to read out loud. The teacher helps correcting pronunciation and checking comprehension.</li> <li>2. Students are divided into teams of five where they choose a common movie.</li> <li>3. Learners write a brief summary of the movie and, individually, they write a review of it.</li> </ol>	45 mins	
Focus on language	To ask and respond questions using the expected grammar.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At the end of the class, the teacher analyzes the evidence.</li> <li>2. The teacher creates sentences using the unit grammar and their movie preferences.</li> <li>3. Finally, explicit grammar takes place.</li> </ol>	20-30 mins	

## Appendix E Collaborative evidences

Evidence unit 5: A poster to promote their ideal restaurant.



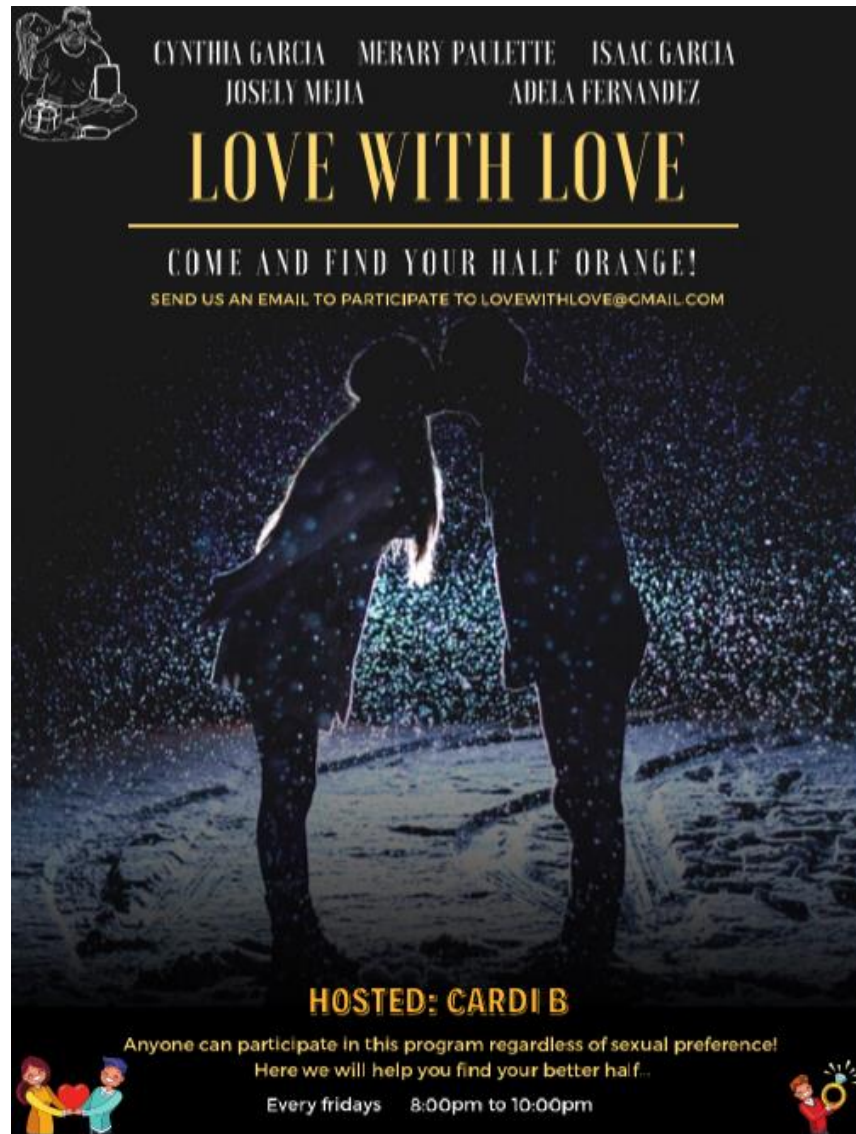
Evidence unit 6: Completion of a camping time table according to their future plans.

You are camping in two weeks from now. You already rented a cabin and you are going to stay there from Thursday night to Sunday evening. The camping site has different areas; you can invent which ones such as a lake, a fishing area, a bonfire site, a playground, etc.

Discuss with your friends what you will do there and make your plans, fill up a chart with the activities to do together and the times of the same. Plan your future plans as cool as possible.

Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12- 2pm: Organizing all your stuff.	-10am-2pm: hiking the mountain.	-7-9 am: work out	- 6-8am: packing all your stuff.
2:30 – 4 pm: Driving to the camping site.	-2-3pm : eating lunch	-9-10 am: breakfast	- 8-9 am: taking a shower.
4-5 pm: eating lunch	-3-5 pm: swimming.	-10am-1pm: fishing	- 9-11 am: eating breakfast.
5-9pm: swimming	5-8 pm : break time.	-2-3 pm: eating lunch	- 11am-4 pm: playing rally
9-10pm: eating dinner	8-12pm: bonfire site	-3-5 pm: playing different sports.	- 4-6pm: break time.
10pm- 12am : break time.		-5-6 pm : taking a shower.	- 6 – 7:30 pm: Driving back to your house.
		-6-8pm: break time.	

Evidence unit 7: A poster to promote a romantic reality show.



Evidence unit 9: 1) A poster to present a new phone app. 2) An individual written review of the phone app (50-70 words)

## Our App



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## Review of the App

### Vanessa Murillo

Biobelivered, it's excellent service, the plants are beautiful and fresh. They have a lot of variety.

They always arrive on time. The plants don't arrive battered. buy four plants, they are all pretty, green, the earth is fertile, the earth is not full of rocks. I bought two plants two years ago, and two a week ago, they are still the same quality. Your service is honest and friendly. The app is simple to use, you choose the plant you want to have, and it tells you the cost, all shipments are \$ 80.

### Daniel Alanis:

The service of this app it's excellent! I received my plant so fast, and you don't have to do too much things, only put your adress information and select whatever plant you want, they have all plants what you can think, and apart of that, there is a little information about the plant what you selected, so you don't have to search information on internet, really recommended.

### Karen Lugo:

This app is very good, there was no scam, I got My african violet in very good condition, my friends recommended this application and I thought it would not reach me, since where I live it is not very common for packages to arrive, but fortunately my beautiful little plant arrived, I will continue to buy more, I love biobelivered.