

UNIVERSIDAD LATINA DE COSTA RICA

"Analysis of the improvement in oral communication by using the methods from constructivism theory in teaching English as a Foreign Language"

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Over the years, an attempt to explain the way in whichhuman beings learns has being very important to psychologists and people in charge of teaching-learning. This has yielded different theories of learning for a range of subjects; among them is *constructivism*. This theory proposes that People learn by doing; it allows for approaches, methods, techniques, and activities that enrich the teaching and learning process. In the case of the acquisition of a second language, of course, the activities, methods and techniques from constructivism can be applied.

In this action research, the theory of learning referred to as constructivism approach as well as the method used to test their veracity when applied. To prove the theory, the Multiple Intelligences, method, especially the; interpersonal, intrapersonal, logical/mathematics, and kinesthetic intelligences, to work on a specific topic from the III cycle program, from the Costa Rican Ministry of Public Education (henceforth, MEP). The project is developed with six students from ninth grade at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School.

The project has three activities based on four stages proposed by Lazear (1991 cited by Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Lazer proposes that, in the case of Multiple Intelligences there is no syllabus as such; instead, it is the developmental sequence constructed by stages that lead the learner to acquire the new knowledge.

At the end of the action research, the analysis of results once the theory is put into practice is presented.

1.2 Abstract

Theories about the way in which the humans learn give origin to diverse approaches, which in turn give rise to methods; from, the teaching methods are deployed techniques that allow the teacher to propose diverse activities for the teaching process and learning. One of these theories, constructivism, proposes that human beings learn by doing; among these methods is the multiple intelligences formulated by Howard Gardner in 1993. This is a very significant theory from the pedagogical point of view, allowing the teacher to use the skills of his students to obtain the best results in the learning process. In this project it is analyzethe progress in oral communication in a group of twelve ninth grade students in an English as a Foreign Language program. Through the use of the multiple intelligences' method of the constructivist approach. The results show the importance of using the Multiple intelligences to help students to improve their level of oral communication in English language.

Keywords: theory, approach, method, teaching English.

1.3 Rationale

In 2012, the Technical Professional High School Rosario de Naranjo was founded; this is the only high school in the Naranjo county which offers a technical specialization. Here, in addition to the academic subjects, students are prepared in some areas such as executive for service centers, accounting and auditing, logistics and distribution management, support and business computing. Also, as part of the program, conversational English workshops are offered, where students have four hours per week of Conversational English from seventh to ninth grade.

Both, the conversational English workshops and the sub-areas of English for communication in the specialties focus on communication, so that, even though the study program established by MEP proposes that the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) be studies, the main emphasis is on speaking, and the objective is that students achieve effective communication at the end of the process.

The development of the present action research is relevant to give students and teachers from this high school the tools to be better and more effective in the development of oral communication skills in their students to achieve a high level of English graduate in tenth grade.

1.4 Purpose

The correct communication in English, as alingua franca, is one of the biggest concerns for the countries that go after offering an ideal education; Costa Rica pursues this goal, as it requires the teaching of this language as part of the public educational system. There are diverse modalities of public high schools, among them, Professional Technical high schools in which English has a relevant importance, offering academic English, oral conversational workshops, and technical specialties where all the specialties have English for communication as one of the

sub areasbeingtaught. The goal of this wide branch of teaching this language is to give society students graduated from technical schools with a perfect oral command in English. For this reason, it is important to carry out the present action project to ensure the correct forms of teaching and in this way, to help students to improve the level of communication in English.

1.4.1 General objective

To improve the English oral communication level in ninth grade students using the constructivism-theory to teach English as Foreign Language at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School.

1.4.2 Specific objetives:

- a) To diagnose the student's English levelin ninth grade at Rosario de Naranjo
 Professional High School.
- **b**) To apply techniquesderived from methods from the constructivist theory in the teaching of oral skills in English at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School.
- c) To evaluate the improvement of English oral communication once applied techniques based on constructivism in ninth grade at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School by means of a rubric of observation.

1.5 Research Question

Constructivism is a theory about the way human being leans; this theory is based on the assumption that people learn by doing. From this theory there are various methods that can be applied when teaching in order to help, students construct their own knowledge, this action research is important to determine:

To what extent does the use of Constructivism-Theory based techniques to teach English as a Foreign Language improve students' oral communication level in a group of ninth grade students at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School?

1.6 Definition of terms

- a) Theories of learning: "a diverse set of explanations that try to deep into a phenomenon as vital as learning". Sánchez (w.d)
- **b) Approach:** "Set of correlative assumptions dealing with the nature of language teaching and learning. An approach is axiomatic. It describes the nature of the subject matter to be taught". (Anthony 1963)
- c) **Teaching Method:** "It is an overall plan for the orderly presentation of language material, no part of which contradicts, and all of which is based upon, the selected approach is axiomatic, a method is procedural. Within one approach, there can be many methods..."

 (Anthony 1963)
- **d) Teaching technique:** "Technique is implementational, that which really takes place in the classroom. It is particular trick, stratagem, or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective. Techniques must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well". (Anthony 1963)
- e) Constructivist: "Constructivism is a learning theory found in psychology which explains how people might acquire knowledge and learn. It therefore has direct application to education. The theory suggests that humans construct knowledge and meaning from their experiences."

f) Lingua franca: "The term English as a lingua franca (ELF) refers to the teaching, learning, and use of the English language as a common means of communication (or contact language) for speakers of different native languages".(Nordquist 2017)

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The Conversational English Purposes in Costa Rican Educational System

According to Nordquist (2017), "English is a lingua francaworldwide," it ranks third in number of speakers as mother tongue and it is the third most spoken as a second language. Due to the evident relevance of this language, it is included in the program of study of Conversational English of the Technological Area in third cycle of Technical Education, the importance is explained by Bolaños, Blanco, Bogantes (2003), where they state:

The teaching of English in our school system responds to two basic needs: To offer students a second language that allows them to communicate with people from other countries, both in Costa Rica and abroad.2 Provide students a tool for direct access to technological and humanistic knowledge.

This is how the teaching of conversational English aims to offer the students opportunities to develop oral and written communication skills, generating greater knowledge about the culture and civilization of the countries where this language is spoken as well as a greater opportunity to be inserted into the labor market.

2.2 Teaching-Learning Approaches

According to Matthew and Olson (2016) Learning is one of the most important topics in contemporary psychology, yet it is an extremely difficult concept to define. Common, popular definitions of learning suggest that it is "comprehension," "knowledge," or "understanding" gained through practice or experience (p.1). The desire to explain how the people learnhas caused the creation of various theories of learning, among them, constructivism, which is a concept that

"a great number of sociologists, psychologists, applied linguists, and teachers have provided varied definitions of this concept. Also, many philosophers and educationalists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and Perkins suggest that constructivism and social

constructivism try to solve the problems of traditional teaching and learning". (Roya and Hanieh, 2015, P. 1).

In his regard, Hui-chin, L and Shih-chieh, P (2010) mention that there are several basic foundations of teaching methodologies to Teach English a Second or Foreign/International Languages, "they are primarily Structuralism, Constructivism, Behaviorism, Rationalism and Cognitive Psychology, Interactive Approaches, and Computer Assistant Language Learning". (p.21)

2.3 Constructivism in the Teaching of a Second Language

According to Geary (1995, cited by Schunk 2012), "a key assumption of constructivism is that people are active learners and develop knowledge for themselves" then, constructivism is not a method or a simple technique but the meeting of several theories that agree that learning is constructed, not transmitted, transferred or copied.

Solé and Coll (1995) point out that:

Constructivism is not, in the strict sense, a theory but rather a movement, a current or even better an explanatory framework that, starting from the social and socializing consideration of school education, integrates diverse contributions whose common denominator is an agreement around the constructivist principles.

In the constructivist movement the teacher plays a role of facilitator or guide who intervenes or recommends the use of learning strategies: Here, the teacher tries to help the students to discover their mental capacities.

Muñoz-Restrepo (2010) states:

The pedagogical conceptions derived from the cognitivist psychological current and social constructivism was taken to the field of foreign language teaching with great success, an example of this is the communicative approach that emphasizes the cognitive and social processes when learning a foreign language. (own translation)

From this point of view, the lessons are developed using contexts and language functions such as asking for information, providing an opinion, establishing a routine, among others. This conception also refers to the development of different skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing; It is presented in an integrated manner, helping to make the classes more focused on the students.

2.4 Methods from Constructivism in Teaching English As A Second Language.

There are several methods from the theories based on constructivism; among them could be mention Total Physical Response, Communicative Language Teaching, the natural approach, cooperative language learning, content-based instruction, task-based language teaching, and multiple intelligences.

This research study is based on the Multiple Intelligences Method, in which Gardner (1993, cited by Richards& Rodgers, 2001) claims that each person has at least eight mental skills or intelligences; he lists linguistic, logical mathematical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist intelligences. They are combined and classified into different degrees, in a personal and unique way. This theoretical approach allows the use of a variety of mediation activities in consonance with the various intelligences proposed by Gardner in his theory.

CHAPTER III DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Research Approaches

DeFranzo (2011) define qualitative research as follows:

It "is primarily exploratory research. Qualitative data collection methods vary using unstructured or semi-structured techniques. Some common methods include focus groups (group discussions), individual interviews, and participation/observations. The sample size is typically small, andrespondents are selected to fulfil a given quota".

Based on the characteristics of the present research, it is classified as qualitative because it is based on the analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of real data that can be seen using a constructivist approach to improve students' oral communication in English by a group of ninth graders in conversation workshops.

3.2 Sources and Subjects of Information.

Brenes (1995) argues that the subjects of information are: "who will provide the information to the researcher. The sources of information can be human or material" (p. 122). Based on this, the sources of informationare: books, articles and pages from internet, and the subjects of the investigation consist of twelve students from a workshop group in ninth gradefrom Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School; they represent the total of the population sample object of the study.

3.3 Population and Sample

The participants of this search are sixstudentsfromninth grade in a conversational English workshop from the Rosario de Naranjo Professional Technical high school. These learners represent fifty percent of the subjects of information,

3.4 Data Collection Procedures and Tools

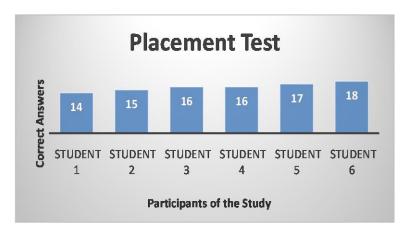
- a) Placement test. This placement test is based on grammar made up of fifty questions designed to determine the level of English was used. The proficiency levels which are determined by the test are: beginner, from 0 to 35 correct answers, elementary, from 36 to 50 correct answers. This diagnostic test is applied to the participants to determine their level of English (Annex 1 contains the diagnostic test applied)
- b) Linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences activitiesOnce determined the level of the participants, a class based on Multiple Intelligences was conducted, taken four of the eight intelligences described by Gardner as the base of the class, namely: linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences. The lesson is described in Annex 2.
- c) Rubric to determine the improvement of level to determine the improvement of the learners after the class making use of different intelligences, a rubric designed to evaluate the capability to produce and communicate short phrases regarding the topic is used (see Appendix

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS

4.1 Data analysis

Application of instruments:

a) Placement test. The diagnostic test applied to the six participants of this search shows that the participating students' English level was very low. As stated earlier, the diagnostic test has two levels, beginner and elementary, the beginner is classified from 0 to 35 correct answers, and the elementary level from 36 to 50. Once checked the placement test, the results are, a student answers correctly fourteen questions, another student answers correctly fifteen questions, two students answercorrectly sixteen questions, a student answer correctly seventeen and another one eighteen; the total number of questions was 50. The results are presented in the following graph:



Source: placement+ testapplied to participants of the action research

b) Linguistic, logical/mathematical, bodily/kinesthetic, interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences activities: during theimplementation of the techniquesfrom Multiple Intelligences, in a technical lesson of 4 hours, the students look for the information by themselves, find the right vocabulary, create sentences, questions, make descriptions of the electrical appliances and produce orally short statements.

c)Rubric to determine the improvement of level: at the end of the class students are able to talk about the topic, the scale used to observe and evaluate their improvement shows that the six participants were able to improve their level of Oral communication in English by using Multiple Intelligences from constructivism.

4.2 Restatement of question and discussion of results

The application of techniques using methods based on constructivism theory to teach English as a foreign language appears to improve English oral communication level in ninth grade students from Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School. This most likely occurred because students had to construct all the tools necessary to be able to communicate about the topic studied, in this case the third unit of study from the MEP program, namely, electrical appliances.

CHAPTER V CONCLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusions

- a) From the placement test to diagnose students' English level in ninth graders at Rosario de Naranjo Professional High School, it is concluded that their level is very low, as they are unable to answer simple questions about basic topics like those based on rules for the third singular person in simple present, prepositions, verb to be, and others.
- **b**) The techniques applied from Multiple Intelligences are very useful. It seems the case that activities based on learning by doing are excellent to develop and improve the oral communication level of students.
- c)The improvement of the participants related to vocabulary and phrases to communicate ideas about the topic studied orally is evident.

5.2 Implications

The results of this research serve as an input to propose new ways to make the process of teaching English as a foreign language better and more assertive, allowing future students to graduate from the Colegio Técnico Professional Rosario de Naranjo with the tools to communicate in this language correctly, moreover this investigation encourages to teachers to use anyone of the methods and techniques from constructivism, doe to in the present study have been demonstrated that students and learner from a second language learn effectively when they construct their own knowledge, the assumption from constructivism. Making use of the methods from constructivism students can get a good level of this second language, that fits with the purposes of English communicative language in the current days in Costa Rica and worldwide.

5.3 Strengths and limitations

About the strengths, can be enlist

- a) The access to physic material like pens, papers, scissors and others to develop the workshop with the students.
- **b**) The facility to technology, such cellphones and computers with access to internet for students to support and help.
- c)The disposition of the students to be part of the project, to do their best to participate actively in the activities proposed, in one of the major strengths.
- **d**)Another strength of this project is the accessibility of the tutor of the action project.

5.4 Limitations found during the process.

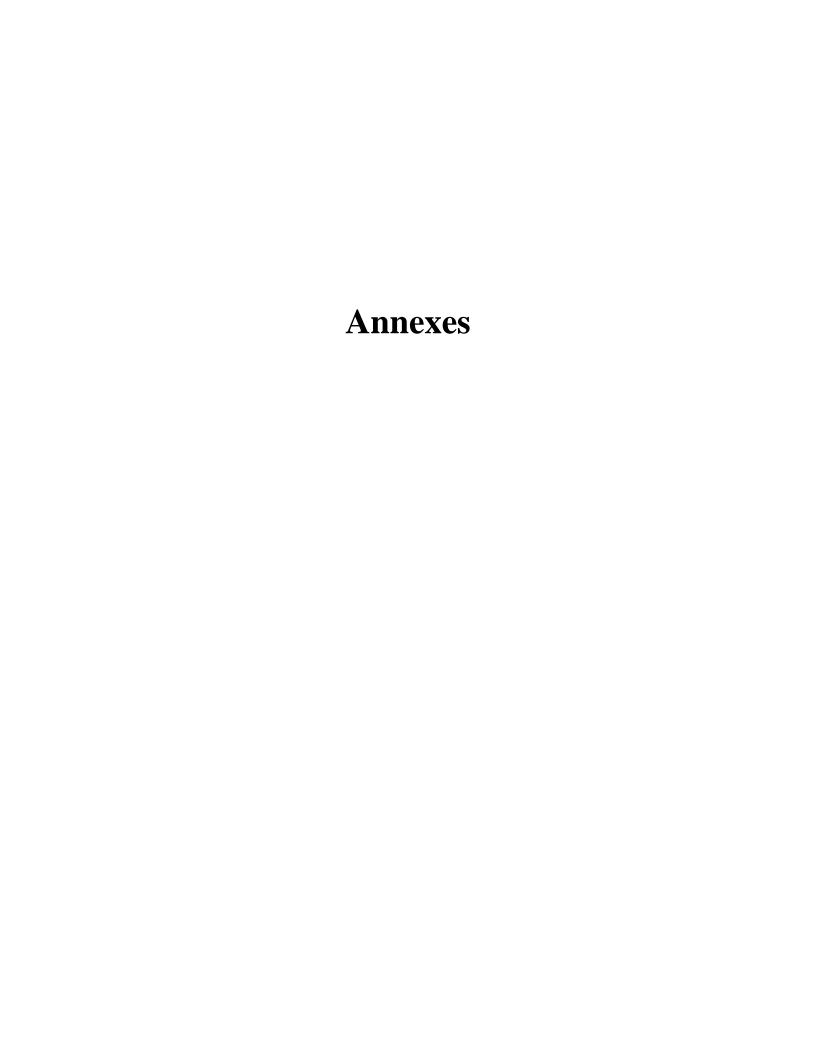
- a) The first big obstacle presented is the strike, that causes difficulties in the realization of the e project, because of the lack of attendance to classes.
- **b**) Health, the researcher got broken the coccyx, what make her difficult continue the research doe to the fact that it is hard to stay seat down even for short periods of time, moreover it causes complications to go to different schools to look for a group to apply the project and also the time for the search is limited because appointments with doctors and rehabilitation has been constantly.
- c) Lack of time is the last limitation found, since the period of time to develop a search is to short.

5.5 Recommendations

- **a**) Since ninth is a grade in which students should have a A2 level according to Common European Framework, what obviously is a higher level than found, it is recommendable that teachers work hardly on the techniques used with the students in the previous levels to achieve better results from students in their bases of English.
- b) It is recommendable to put in practice different methods from constructivism that allow students to construct their own knowledge, in the case of Multiple intelligences it is useful given that all people have different intelligences and ways to learn, then using this method is a way to let them to learn according to what is easier for each one.
- c) The constant evaluation to the learners and their process to ensure the success in de acquisition of English as a foreign language.

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ANNEX 1

Straightforward Beginner and Elementary Placement test

The *Straightforward* Beginner and Elementary Placement test has been designed to help you decide whether the *Straightforward* Beginner course would be suitable for your students or whether they would qualify for using the *Straightforward* Elementary Course.

The *Straightforward* test has 50 questions, each worth one point. The first 40 are grammar questions and the final 10 are vocabulary questions. The conversion chart below has been designed to assist you in making your decision but please note, however, that these bandings are a guide.

Total score	Level
0 – 35	Beginner
36 – 50	Elementary

Grammar ___'s your name? Thomas a How b Who c What d Where 2 This is Lucy and her brother, Dan. ____ my friends. a We're b I'm c You're d They're ____? I'm from Italy. a Where are you from? b Where you are from? c Where from you are? d From where you are? 4 I'm from Milan. ____ is in Italy. a They b It c He

d She

5	a b c	cuse me, how your last name? R-I-L-E-Y spell you spell do you spell spell you
6	a b	, are my keys! This These That It
7	a b c	like omelette, please. a an two
8	a b c	d here is your desk desks. a desk an desk
9	a b c	name's Pete and this is Sylvia doctors from France. I'm We're She's They're
10	a b	rry, Paul. My name's Eric. I isn't I is not I aren't I'm not
11	a b	? No, he isn't. Are they teachers? Are you from Italy? Is Mr Banning a teacher? Is this your phone?
12	a b c	is the school? It's 50 years old. How many years How much years What years How old

13	a b c	nat is? job Mary Mary job Mary's job job's Mary
14	Yo a b c d	to in
15	a b c	are the keys? On the table. What When Where Who
16	a b	o to work train. with by for in
17	a b c	e a dog. not have don't have don't has doesn't have
18	а	ephen in our company. work works is work working
19	a b c d	they live in London? Are Is Do Does
20	a b c d	to the cinema. We not often go We don't go often We don't often go Often we don't go

21	a b c	In	Mondays.
22	a b c	nat time work? starts he do he starts does he starts does he start	
23	a b c	two airports in the city. It is There is There are This is	
24	a b c	ere aren't here. a restaurants any restaurants any restaurant a restaurant	
25	a b c	afraid it's a hotel expensive expensive hotel expensive a hotel an expensive hotel	
26	а	ey popular TV programm are were was is	nes in the 1980s.
27	a b c	- /	
28	a b	ad Pitt is a popular actor but I on him his her them	don't like

29	WE	e the film last week.
	а	see
	b	saw
		sees
	d	were see
30		tennis with me yesterday.
		doesn't played
		didn't played
		not played didn't play
	u	didirt play
31	Sh a	e was born May 6th, 1979.
	a b	
	-	on
		from
32		nere last summer?
		you went
		did you went
		do you went
	u	did you go
33		ere you at the shops at 5 p.m. yesterday? No, I
33	а	didn't
33	a b	didn't am not
33	a b c	didn't am not wasn't
33	a b c	didn't am not
	a b c d	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99.
	a b c d Ex	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive
	a b c d Exa b	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much
	a b c d Ex a b c	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many
	a b c d Exa b	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much
34	a b c d Exc a b c d	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many
34	a b c d Exta b c d Sh	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price
34	abcd Exabcd Shab	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read
34	abcd Exabcd Shabc	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read can reads
34	abcd Exabcd Shabc	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read
34	abcd Exabcd Shabcd	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read can reads
34	abcd Excabcd Shabcd Thi	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read cans read can reads can reads cans reads is party is boring. We a good time. don't have
34	abcd Exabcd Shabcd Tab	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read cans reads cans reads cans reads is party is boring. We a good time. don't have aren't having
34	abcd Exabcd Shabcd Thabc	didn't am not wasn't weren't cuse me, is the T-shirt? It's £25.99. what expensive how much how many how price e's only four but she can read cans read cans read can reads can reads cans reads is party is boring. We a good time. don't have

37	a b c	rry, I you at the moment. can't help don't can help can't helping can't helps
38	a b c	my computer very often. am not using don't use doesn't use am not use
39	a b c	my mum's birthday next week. I her a present. buy buys am going to buy buying
40	a b c	nat do after school today? are you going to are you do you you
V	OC	abulary
41	a b c	na is married to John. He's her uncle husband wife parent
42	We a b c d	e usually the shopping in a supermarket. make do have go
43	a b c	ove this watch! It's cheap small beautiful ugly
	u	

45	a b c	on't go to on Sundays. job office factory work
46	a b c	you like Chinese? kitchen meal food cook
47	a b c	ey hardly visit us. ever sometimes never usually
48	a b c	Jeff Caine. Nice to you, Mr Caine. speak talk meet watch
49	a b c	n I help you? Thanks, but I'm just watching looking seeing shopping
50	a b	andy is over there. She's a blue T-shirt and jeans. having wearing doing walking

ANNEX 2

Project work: thematic based project and resource-based project

Stages	Activities
First stage Awaken the intelligence	Students watch the different electrical appliances provide and take them to observe the characteristics
Second stage Amplify the intelligences	Students choose one of the objects to work.
Third Stage Teach with/ for intelligence	Students look for vocabulary they need on internet and each student creates a brochure about the appliance they chose
Fourth stage Transfer of the intelligence	Students present orally the brochures with all the characteristics. Students do a role play in which they take turns to make the roll as seller.