

The implementation of Educational Games to Enhance Students' Speaking Skill in the  
Knowledge Construction Process

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### **Abstract**

The present alternative methodological proposal is presented under the title of “The implementation of Educational Games to Enhance Students’ Speaking Skill in the Knowledge Construction Process.” This type of proposal is designed to mostly benefit tenth graders within Costa Rican public high schools, and it aims to propose a pedagogical action for enhancing learner’s speaking skill through the implementation of educational games. This emerges as a means of facilitating the development of learners’ speaking skills in a more innovative manner since it has been shown that “learners who receive English lessons in elementary and high schools are not reaching the expected English proficiency levels after eleven or twelve years of instruction.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.12). In order to achieve this, three elements related to the topic at hand are utilized as the variables, these are: Educational games, Speaking skill and Knowledge construction process. Such variables are carefully analyzed along with their corresponding indicators in a literature review, where the information collected helps to determine how educational games can enhance the speaking skill through the use of the three innovative teaching strategies. Since this work is intended to be used by other English teachers, three data collection tools are presented as options for stakeholders when implementing this sort of proposal; diagnostic test, pre-test and posttest. At the end of this work, the reflections and conclusions can be found, with a number of recommendations for enhancing learners’ speaking skills.

**Key words:** educational games, speaking skills, knowledge construction process, fluency, natural communication

## Resumen Ejecutivo

La presente propuesta metodológica alternativa se presenta bajo el título de “La implementación de juegos educativos para mejorar la habilidad de hablar de los estudiantes en el proceso de construcción del conocimiento”. Este tipo de propuesta está diseñada para beneficiar mayoritariamente a los estudiantes de décimo grado de las escuelas secundarias públicas costarricenses, y tiene como objetivo proponer una acción pedagógica para mejorar la habilidad de hablar del alumno a través de la implementación de juegos educativos. Esto surge como un medio para facilitar el desarrollo de las habilidades del habla de los estudiantes de una manera más innovadora, ya que se ha demostrado que “los estudiantes que reciben lecciones de inglés en las escuelas primarias y secundarias no alcanzan los niveles esperados de dominio del inglés después de once o doce años de instrucción.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Cielo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.12). Para lograrlo, se utilizan como variables tres elementos relacionados con el tema que nos ocupa, estos son: Juegos educativos, Habilidad oral y Proceso de construcción del conocimiento. Estas variables se analizan cuidadosamente junto con sus indicadores correspondientes en una revisión de la literatura, donde la información recopilada ayuda a determinar cómo los juegos educativos pueden mejorar la habilidad del habla mediante el uso de las tres estrategias de enseñanza innovadoras. Dado que este trabajo está destinado a ser utilizado por otros profesores de inglés, se presentan tres herramientas de recopilación de datos como opciones para las partes interesadas al implementar este tipo de propuesta; prueba de diagnóstico, pre prueba y post prueba. Al final de este trabajo, se pueden encontrar las reflexiones y conclusiones, con una serie de recomendaciones para mejorar las habilidades de expresión oral de los alumnos.

***Palabras clave:*** juegos educativos, habilidades para hablar, proceso de construcción del conocimiento, fluidez, comunicación natural.



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<b>Chapter 1</b>	

## **1.1 Introduction**

Working as an English teacher is no easy task. This job involves interaction with hundreds of learners who may or may not like the subject. Most people who have the opportunity to attend public high schools may agree with the fact that classes can be dull and uninteresting. These individuals most likely experience long hours of sitting in a classroom with no desire to study what so ever. This common feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of interest seems harmless, but it causes serious damage to pupils who lose interest and eventually fail in the subject. As a matter of fact, Walter Vispoel and James Austin (1995) carried out a survey of two hundred learners where the results revealed that the major cause for academic failure was the lack of interest. (as cited in Woolfolk, 2006, p.393). Thanks to the large amount of responsibilities teachers have, it is easy to forget that learners are individuals whose academic performance can be affected either positively or negatively by their emotions. Therefore, it is not surprising that “when students feel enthusiastic or zestful, they are more disposed to engage in new behaviors and tasks.” (Marzano, et al., 2011, p.4). Teaching English is an enormous challenge, but despite the countless obstacles that undermine the English class, the instructors’ ultimate goal remains the same; “to help learners acquire language and skills that they will not be able to achieve on their own.” (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 4).

Throughout history, English teachers have brought numerous activities into the classroom with the sole purpose of facilitating the knowledge construction process. It is not surprising that

games are often some of the most outstanding elements that make a class dynamic, fun, and more importantly, effective. The constant implementation of educational games in the English class can bring about an important contribution since these enable social agents to sharpen their skills progressively as they practice, by improving their performance each time they play. In fact, it has been demonstrated that “when you play a game you continually develop better or alternative approaches every time you play, lose, and win.” (Whitton & Mosley, 2012, p.5). Although teaching can be quite overwhelming, it is illogical to look for one single solution that can fix all the problems that emerge when instructing teenagers. It is far more reasonable to consider that the smallest contributions to education can make a significant difference in the long run. This alternative methodological proposal focuses on the implementation of educational games given that they possess features that could enhance the knowledge construction process. Regardless of their content, games are arguably one of the most engaging exercises in which learners can participate.

Although skills such as listening and reading are absolutely necessary to those who attempt to learn a language, this alternative methodological proposal will concentrate on learner’s oral communication by proposing a pedagogical action, based on the available literature, for enhancing pupil’s speaking skill through the implementation of educational games. By doing this, it is expected to contribute positively to the EFL teachers and anyone interested in language learning.

This chapter presents some of the necessary elements for the completion of the alternative methodological proposal. First, the introduction provides context and background information regarding the topic at hand. Secondly, the rationale justifies the need for the implementation of educational games as a means for enhancing the speaking skill by discussing the practicality of English in this modern society and the negative consequences that can result from the inability to reach the respective proficiency levels during high school. This part addresses some of the most common issues that affect learners of English to create awareness and, therefore, better comprehend the importance of taking into consideration educational games. The following element will be the purpose. This part of the alternative methodological proposal is made of expectations that are intended to be achieved with this work. The main desirable outcomes discussed in this portion of the chapter are the development of a proposal for pedagogical action that involves educational games due to the promising elements they feature. For instance, “the GameFlow model contains eight elements: concentration, challenge, skills, control, clear goals, feedback, immersion,



and social interaction.” (Chang, et al., 2009, p. 2). Some other expectations included in this area are the following: To describe the implementation of educational games for improving learners’ English-speaking skill, to identify educational games for improving learners’ English speaking skill, and to propose English teaching strategies for implementing educational games for improving learners’ English speaking skill. The purpose will show what is expected to achieve by the elaboration of this alternative methodological proposal. At the end of the purpose, the objectives of this alternative methodological proposal are listed, starting from the general objective and continuing with the most specific ones. These objectives serve as guides that lead the alternative methodological proposal towards a particular goal and allow for a more organized work. The research questions will be included after the objectives and will also provide a path to follow. This means that, by selecting the information that needs to be discovered and listing it as questions, it will be easier to conduct the alternative methodological proposal through the areas of interest. The hypothesis of this alternative methodological proposal is stated afterwards, providing the researchers with an idea that can be either proven or debunked. Lastly, the chapter’s conclusion will be found after the hypothesis, summarizing the most relevant aspects of this chapter. In order to continue this first chapter with the order previously mentioned, the rationale will be the next element in this sequence.

## **1.2 Rationale**

This alternative methodological proposal starts from the premise that a significant amount of learners in high school are not exhibiting a level of fluency from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) that matches the expectations established by the Ministerio de Educacion Pública; understood from now on as MEP. Sadly, the fact that Costa Rica is as a popular tourist destination that highly depends on foreign investment does not change the fact that a significant fraction of its population does not show mastery of the English language. Indeed, Ceciliano, et al., (2010) argue that

Although the promotion of direct foreign investment, mainly that related to the generation of employment in specific areas of knowledge, such as science and technology, has required increasing personnel trained in skills such as computer science and the command of other languages, particularly English, this last aspect shows notable deficiencies, hence the interest in delving into the subject from the characteristics of the population. (p.11) It is necessary to

remember at all times that Costa Rica is no longer the rural place it used to be, but a country that houses international enterprises. This may sound optimistic at first, given that more companies equal more job opportunities that could sustain thousands of citizens that are usually affected by unemployment; however, not everyone is eligible for those jobs. Ceciliano, et al., (2010) continue to explain that “companies located in the country have a great need for staff who speak, read and write in English.”(p.27) It is impossible to escape from the fact that the expansion of the English language throughout the globe has compelled more and more professionals to widen their range of abilities by learning how to speak what is considered to be one of the most important languages; furthermore, it is undeniable that communicating in English can be tremendously helpful in numerous aspects of a person’s life such as starting a university major that requires basic levels of the language, attending a job interview for a prestigious company or simply for traveling.

In spite of the need for bilingual Costa Ricans, it is unfortunate that several pupils are incapable of communicating orally in the target language, even after all the hours they devote to the subject in the classroom. It is evident that society, as well as education are always in constant change, and it is because of this reason that the implementation of new engaging activities that attract pupils, such as games, is not just an interesting concept; it is a need. Klopfer, (2008) believes that “this wave of change has brought with it a demand for new tools and approaches that can address the new learning demands of elementary, secondary, university, and lifelong education.” (p.8). Learning languages is certainly a demanding task, but it is fortunately one that can be improved by the implementation of educational games in the classroom that stimulate learners to use English in various ways; in fact, “fluency is developed by creating classroom activities in which students must negotiate meaning, use communication strategies, correct misunderstandings, and work to avoid communication breakdowns.” (Richards, 2006, p.14). From all skills, speaking is perhaps one of the most practical abilities one can learn. Even though the four main language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) are necessary to fully master a language, technology has enabled people to easily use the language even if they do not possess the capacity to comprehend it on their own. For instance, secretaries can receive e-mails in a foreign language, which can be easily translated using plenty of apps that are available for free. In a similar case, they can write a document in their native language and send it in English with great accuracy.

These ways of compensating for people’s poor English skills can be effective in some cases, but there are significant limitations to communicate when it comes to listening and speaking that are

much more difficult to solve. It is clear that oral communication needs to be taught in high school, but not everyone is aware of the impact that the educational games which promote team work can have in the pupils' progress. Goh & Burns, (2012) claim that "although speech production is an individual endeavor, every learner's development of second language speaking can be greatly facilitated through working collaboratively with his or her peers." (p.6). The positive contribution of games to the knowledge construction process are greater than many people think. This element offers the opportunity to engage in a more realistic scenario, where social agents can use the target language meaningfully. As Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby (2006) point out, "games involve the emotions, and the meaning of the language is thus more vividly experienced." (p.2) The fact that humans acquire their native language by participating in social activities that are not necessarily related to formal instruction, but yet, allow them to build up their vocabulary progressively may be an indicator that games can facilitate this process. Whether this is the case or not, there is no doubt that most games are fun and can create a non-threatening environment for learners, which is advantageous since "the teaching and learning processes need to be supported by appropriate material that encourages students to start developing the speaking skill by expressing feelings, thoughts, and emotions in a less intimidating way" (Ramos Holguín, B. & Aguirre Morales, J. 2018, p.11).

It is vital to notice that the inability of pupils to make progress in the target language is an issue that does not affect only social agents, but parents, teachers, and many other professionals involved in the institution who make a substantial effort to give learners more preparation for the future. Indeed, the PNI (2008) pretends to "provide the national population with linguistic competences in the English language, which allows them greater personal and professional development, increasing their possibilities of access to universal knowledge and higher-paying jobs." (Ceciliano, et al., 2010, p. 9). An issue that must be considered to better understand the importance of enhancing the current education is the fact that a large number of individuals who attend public high schools come from backgrounds where the exposure to the English language is little or non-existent; additionally, some of these pupils do not have the economic resources to afford private English classes once they conclude high school and move into the business world. That being said, it is critical that learners acquire the skills to succeed in this modern society while they still have access to free public instruction. Otherwise, the future of many of those teenagers will be compromised by their inability to convey their thoughts in English, especially now that "the

use of a foreign language is one of those competences that has been recognized as an essential tool for the training and performance of future professionals.” (Badilla & Centro de Investigación y Docencia en Educación, 2016, p. 3). Due to the importance of guiding social agents to obtain the appropriate proficiency level on each one of the stages in high school (i.e., seventh grade, eighth grade, ninth grade), this work aims to offer some perspective on how educational games can serve as a means whereby pupils can become more fluent. Continuing with the development of this first chapter, the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal is the next component to be presented.

### **1.3 Purpose**

As shown in the previous part of this chapter, there is a high demand for English speakers in the current era, and the advantages of communicating fluently in such language can not only result in more professional opportunities but also personal growth. It is important to truly acknowledge the effects that the English oral communication can have in people’s lives because “all language teachers know that speaking is an important communication skill for their students, but not all are aware of how speaking can directly contribute to other important areas of their students’ personal success.” (Goh & Burns, 2012, p.15) Unfortunately, the appreciation for the target language alone is not enough to guide learners to success. It is equally important that social agents be eager to learn. In fact, the English subject should be entertaining, and must not be viewed as one more requirement to complete high school. When classes are not attractive, they run the risk of turning education into an unpleasant experience; therefore, this alternative methodological proposal attempts to propose a pedagogical action for enhancing learner’s speaking skill through the implementation of educational games. It is believed that, by providing variety to the learning experience with dynamic activities, certain learners could unleash some of their potential that has been restrained thanks to the lack of motivating activities. Klopfer (2008) believes that “people are seeing the value of games as models of pedagogically rich, highly motivating learning environments.” (p.8). In addition, educational games hold valuable characteristics such as the ability to put learners in situations that demand natural communication, as supposed to create simulations where they are instructed to act role-plays or dialogues that may be perceived as meaningless. In other words, "Games provide meaningful contexts for activity, which players can

explore and make personal sense of; they allow the player to take part in authentic and purposeful tasks that map on to real world activities." (Whitton & Mosley, 2012, p. 11).

Besides the contribution to the knowledge construction process with engaging activities, this alternative methodological proposal also attempts to describe the implementation of these educational games in a way that other instructors can easily replicate them in their classroom; but firstly, it is necessary to accomplish a fundamental goal, which is the identification of the right educational games for improving learners' English-speaking skill. Although there are infinite games to choose from, not all of them satisfy the pupils' needs. The word "game" is a broad term that includes all sorts of activities that people find entertaining; however, it is necessary to separate those activities that boost learners' knowledge construction process from the ones that only provide joy. In order to encounter the appropriate games, it is imperative to scan for the components that favor learners' abilities. For instance, "Immediate feedback and constant adjustments are two game elements that make them great tools for learning." (Boller, S., & Kapp, K., 2017, p.3) It is fundamental to point out that the purpose for including educational games in the classroom is not only to offer entertainment. Even though laughing can certainly affect pupils' mood in a positive manner, the benefits go beyond since it is known that "the deep learning that students do in games is more likely to persist than the superficial learning they do through memorization." (Klopfer, 2008, p.21) One more goal that is desired to reach is the proposal of English teaching strategies for implementing educational games that improve learners' English-speaking skill. Hopefully, by accomplishing all these expectations, more professionals in the English teaching field will receive some assistance in one of their most demanding tasks; training individuals to accurately convey information in the target language.

It must be clarified that the presentation of all this data is not intended to change the course of education; instead, it pretends to alleviate the arduous duties of the instructors since "developing the ability to successfully get messages across and interact in the target language constitutes one of the greatest challenges to learners and teachers." (Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015, p.1). It is always convenient to search for alternative solutions, not only to the most notorious problems in the educational system, but also to the least evident. By adding creative ways of teaching that contribute to a more compelling learning experience the exercise of learning could be more enjoyable for both, teachers and social agents. Moreover, by addressing the importance of games in the educational field and gathering the games' most significant advantages and disadvantages,

it is hoped to expand the view of those who have been teaching pupils for the past few years, so they can adjust their lessons in order to fulfill the learners' demands. It is necessary to notice, however, that the benefits of educational games are only a small contribution to education, and will not be the solution to many of the flaws within the public educational institution given that it is impossible to tackle every single obstacle in the knowledge construction process at once.

Nevertheless, "it is important to recognize that teachers and effective teaching strategies can impact learning." (Zemliansky & Wilcox, 2010, p.110) The next part in the sequence of this chapter is the list of the objectives of this alternative methodological proposal which can be found in the following segment.

### ***1.3.1 General Objective***

To propose a pedagogical action for enhancing learner's speaking skill through the implementation of educational games.

### ***1.3.2 Specific Objectives***

1. To describe the implementation of educational games for improving learner's English speaking skill.
2. To identify educational games for improving learner's English speaking skill
3. To propose English teaching strategies for implementing educational games for improving learner's English speaking skill

### ***1.3.3 Research Questions***

- How do educational games promote natural communication?
- How can educational games help to provide feedback?
- How is the learners' cognitive development affected by implementing educational games?
- How can fluency be improved in the speaking skill?
- How can appropriacy be improved in the speaking skill?
- How can complexity be improved in the speaking skill?
- How does the Action oriented Approach help to improve learners' knowledge construction process?
- How is the knowledge construction process improved by the use of didactic sequence?
- How does the implementation of tasks improve the learners' knowledge construction process?

## 1.4 Hypothesis

The implementation of educational games in the knowledge construction process helps to enhance students' speaking skill.

## 1.5 Conclusion

To summarize the main ideas addressed in this chapter, it is appropriate to say that this alternative methodological proposal mainly focuses on developing learners' speaking skill through the implementation of educational games due to the high demand of the English language and the number of companies that require bilingual employees. It is known that unemployment can be a devastating problem in Costa Rica; therefore, it is important to provide learners with abilities to increase their opportunities to succeed, both professionally and personally. Improving the speaking skill can be difficult for the majority of pupils, and even though the idea of utilizing educational games to address this issue may not be taken seriously by some, it is worth considering that these elements can bring about a series of advantages into the classroom. As it was demonstrated before, learners' fluency can be improved when playing. Moreover, games enable learners to communicate using natural and spontaneous, thereby making the learning exercise less intimidating and even fun. Furthermore, it has been proven that social agents tend to remember better when they play than when they try to memorize. It is evident that, in order to comprehend the actual value of educational games, it is fundamental to leave behind the misconception that learning implies hard work. However, it must be clear that not every game is appropriate for developing fluency in learners, but only those that gather certain characteristics. It is unfortunate that public high school can be often times described as an exhausting experience for most pupils. This is not surprising since learning is, indeed, a time-consuming process that requires a fair amount of thinking. Although discomfort can be associated with productivity, its effects are actually unfavorable when it comes to learning. It is because of this reason that the learning atmosphere should engage social agents. This is why educational games can be a key element to promote an enjoyable learning experience. It has been shown previously that learners' performance can drop significantly due to



the lack of interest. As a result, it is important to ensure that learners are engaged as much as possible, so classes do not become unpleasant. It is critical to bear in mind that some pupils will only have one opportunity to learn English during high school; hence, it is fundamental to work on the effectiveness of the English class to provide these individuals with one of the most important tools nowadays, otherwise, they can continue to invest several hours of their time in a classroom where they do not show enough progress. To continue with the development of this alternative methodological proposal, the second chapter will be presented next.

## **Chapter 2**

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter is the next element in the elaboration of the alternative methodological proposal for the implementation of Educational Games to Enhance Students' Speaking Skill in the knowledge construction process. In this chapter, the literature review is carried out, which is of great importance for the development of this alternative methodological proposal since through this "you can use the literature to support your identification of a problem to research and to illustrate that there is a gap in previous research which needs to be filled." (Ridley, 2012, p.3) It must be taken into account that this alternative methodological proposal is based on information from several authors who have investigated some of the topics used for this work; thus, "it is dependent on what others have done before and you will contribute to an ongoing story or debate." (Ridley, 2012, p.6) This second chapter is key in understanding the role educational games and the effects that they may have on learners' speaking skill and, as a result, the knowledge construction process. As it has been discussed previously, the improvement of the speaking skill is necessary in this modern world for different reasons; as a result, the English class must be as effective as possible in order to guarantee higher opportunities to succeed. Unfortunately, "learners who receive English lessons in elementary and high schools are not reaching the expected English proficiency levels after eleven or twelve years of instruction." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.12) It is true that learning a language can be a frustrating task, and that learners can sometimes be detached and

reluctant to participate; in fact, there is solid evidence to support the argument that a considerable amount of learners does not enjoy the English class. For instance, as Kim, et al., (2017) explain:

Many educators experience difficulty in their classes because their students are not motivated and do not actively participate in class activities. Due to practical experiences such as this, motivation and engagement are the topics that educators and researchers have been interested in for a long time. (p. 35)

Considering the fact that several learners lack motivation and would rather not participate in the class, it is clear that the English class is not as desirable as it should be. This is a major issue given that, according to Newmann, (1992) “student engagement is an important factor that affects academic success” ( as cited in Kim et al., 2017, p.7) It is, therefore, reasonable to argue that educational games can be an outstanding assistant in order to promote an enjoyable atmosphere in which pupils could feel more excited about learning.

This alternative methodological proposal seeks to emphasize the advantages of educational games since these can be a spectacular weapon when fighting stress, boredom and other negative feelings that prevent social agents from engaging in the classroom activities. Indeed, “most teachers would like to have tools through which they could easily motivate and educate students, but there is a paucity of such tools.” (Klopfer, 2008. p.14) In order to stress the value of the implementation of educational games, this chapter will highlight the importance of the variables in the knowledge construction process to analyze in depth the most significant aspects that characterize educational games, the speaking skill and the knowledge construction process. Furthermore, the relevance of each one of the nine indicators contained in this alternative methodological proposal will also be broken down into the most relevant advantages. In doing this, it is expected to inform people about the enormous contributions that games could potentially bring into the classroom given that Csikszentmihalyi (2004) has very well demonstrated that:

Individuals will engage in an activity when the activity is sufficiently challenging and performable. If the activity is too challenging, compared to an individual’s skill, the individual tends to feel anxious and sometimes gives up trying to perform the activity. On the other hand, if the activity is too easy, the individual may feel bored and not want to perform the activity. (as cited in Kim et al., 2017, p. 8)

Similarly to the first part, this chapter contains some of the vital elements for the completion of the alternative methodological proposal which are further explained in each one of the following segments: First of all, the general introduction covers the importance of this chapter by revealing its different components and briefly addressing their relevance. This provides a global view to better understand what will be analyzed later on. Afterwards, the introduction to the first variable, educational games, will be found. This segment explains the importance of educational games and describes the relevance of the natural communication, feedback and cognitive development in the knowledge construction process. The next part in this sequence presents the first indicator for Educational games, which is Natural communication. This fraction of the research points out the importance of using real-life communication to enable learners to be spontaneous and gather meaningful vocabulary based on their current needs. Next, the second indicator to be analyzed is feedback, and it is critical for pupils to make the corresponding corrections. Cognitive development is the final indicator in this section, and the benefits of incorporating cognitively challenging activities to grab learners' attention will be exposed. Once the first variable that is educational games and its indicators are explained, the second variable, which is the speaking skill, will be presented in the same manner along with its indicators; fluency, appropriacy and complexity. The speaking skill is relevant in the knowledge construction process because speech fluency cannot be improved only by reading books or listening to conversations. It is mostly through the use of the speaking skill that learners can become fluent in a conversation since a "natural way of speech is the prime requirement for development of fluency." (Mahendra, 2010, p.3) Fluency is the first indicator for this variable and holds an immense value due to the fact that "fluency is the soul of any language, so of English. Fluency transforms your personality as a charismatic and magnetic one. Fluency is the great booster of your self-confidence." (Mahendra, 2016, p. 8) Additionally, the importance of appropriacy as the second indicator is that, when speaking, learners will have to address different audiences that will demand certain levels of formality. Finally, the last indicator in this section is complexity, and, similar to appropriacy, it is tremendously beneficial when communicating with others because it gives individuals a broad range of topics that they can deeply talk about in a conversation. The last variable to be discussed is the knowledge construction process, and its indicators are: The Action oriented Approach, understood from now on as the AoA, the didactic sequence and the task. The influence of the AoA in the knowledge construction process is notorious given that a large percentage of educational games that encourage learners to use their

current knowledge to communicate naturally are taskbased. In fact, the AoA is, according to Samuda & Bygate, (2008) “one of the latest communicative language methodologies which places emphasis on what learners know and do to communicate successfully by completing tasks, using general and specific competences in meaningful context and real-life scenarios.” (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 25). The didactic sequence constitutes the second indicator for this variable and it is valuable to the knowledge construction process since “intellectual growth occurs when learners engage in and reflect on sequences of tasks.” (Nunan, 2004, p.12). The last indicator for this variable is tasks, and it is the essence of educational games. This indicator allows learners to have an authentic experience with the language among other benefits. For Ellis & Shintani, 2014; Long, 2015 “tasks are considered beneficial for language learning because they address learners’ real-world needs and promote their engagement with meaningful language use.” (as cited in Taguchi & Kim, 2018, p.1) The final element that composes this chapter is the conclusion, and it summarizes the most relevant aspects within this chapter. To conclude, there is a major problem that is causing learners to not reach the expected proficiency levels in the English language, the fact that they struggle to stay motivated throughout the class is certainly one of the causes for this issue given that evidence shows that engagement plays a part when it comes to learning. It is because of this that this chapter addresses the importance of the three variables of the proposal along with their corresponding indicators. In order to continue this chapter with the order previously mentioned, the introduction of the first variable, that is educational games, will be the next element in this sequence.

## **2.2 Educational Games**

As it has been exposed before, the first variable of this alternative methodological proposal is educational games. Such element, although not indispensable, is very useful when it comes to learning. Some of the advantages of this variable, as far as education goes, are the fact that they not only have the ability to maintain learners’ interest, but they can also increase it; additionally, classes can turn more active, individuals can feel motivated, and, this makes it easier for learners to obtain new knowledge (Bernabeu, N. and Goldstein, A, 2016, p.54) That being said, it is difficult to ignore the number of advantages that educational games have, and the great contribution that

they could make in the knowledge construction process. Bernabeu, N. and Goldstein, A. (2016) further explain that:

Play promotes and facilitates any learning, both physical (sensory, motor, muscular, coordination and psychomotor development, etc.) and mental: in this sense, as Piaget and Bruner have pointed out among others, play constitutes a fundamental means for structuring of language and thought. (p.52)

Aside from the facilitation of knowledge acquisition that comes from educational games, it is crucial to remember that learners spend a major fraction of their time in the classroom, usually sitting on uncomfortable chairs. This can possibly have a negative effect in their mood which can trigger stress, thereby compromising learners' attention in the class. One of the ways teachers can handle this issue with educational games is by utilizing the element of challenge because "when a competition is added to academic games, mild pressure provides another stimulus for attention." (Marzano, et al., 2011, p.168) Humans are quite competitive creatures, and teenagers are no exception. This is why taking advantage of their natural instincts to develop an entertaining English class is a great idea to cheer them up from time to time because "when students are in a boredom zone, it can be better to give the students another activity that is more challenging." (Kim et al., 2017, p. 8) As it has been shown previously, educational games function as attention grabbers as well as learning facilitators at the same time, which are both valuable for the knowledge construction process.

Three indicators emerge from educational games of this alternative methodological proposal, and their relevance in the knowledge construction process is equally important since this feature a number of elements that can be used to enhance pupils' fluency. These indicators are: natural communication, feedback and cognitive development. Natural communication is necessary in the knowledge construction process because it contributes to fluency, which is the primary goal of this alternative methodological proposal. Additionally, by utilizing speech in a natural way, social agents can get used to reacting spontaneously. This indicator also allows learners to use their own words to get their message across at the same time they learn other phrases and words they need to facilitate their transmission of oral messages. It is known that natural communication allows learners to be fluent when speaking. As a matter of fact, Mahendra, (2016) states that

“natural way of speech is the prime requirement for development of fluency.” (p.3) Therefore, in order to enhance learners’ fluency and make the English class more efficient, the use of educational games should be implemented since, according to Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, (2015), “we need a task-based methodology which will reproduce in the classroom the need for spontaneous production of language for a genuine communicative purpose.”(p.3) Feedback constitutes the second indicator for the educational games, and it plays an essential role in the knowledge construction process since it is through this indicator that learners can realize the mistakes they make in order to correct themselves. Reitbauer et al., (2013), claim that feedback “serves a confirmatory function. It is intended to reassure learners of their success in their learning endeavours and focuses therefore on the emotional aspect of the learning process.” (p.10) Besides being necessary to inform pupils about their progress, “feedback is an important component of the formative assessment process. Formative assessment gives information to teachers and students about how students are doing relative to classroom learning goals.” (Brookhart, 2008, p.1) There is no point in playing games that entertain pupils and create a welcoming atmosphere if these do not offer any value in terms of learning. It is critical to clarify that this alternative methodological proposal does not view educational games only as a way to please social agents and create rapport. Even though “innmediate feedback and constant adjustments are two game elements that make them great tools for learning.” (Boller, S., & Kapp, K.,2017, p.3) It is useful to remember that the purpose of educational games is, as the name implies, to educate. There is no doubt about the great importance of feedback in the knowledge construction process, indeed, for Brookhart (2017) “In education, feedback is one of the most important means to facilitate learning.” (as cited in Kim et al., 2017, p. 43) This is not surprising since learners require, not only to partake in the appropriate activities to gain knowledge, but to make the corresponding corrections in order to progress

The third and last indicator for educational games consists of cognitive development. This indicator, similar to the previous ones, has a great contribution to the knowledge construction process because it enables learners to unintentionally engage in class activities. Human beings are by their nature curious and even competitive; as a result, teachers can take advantage of this natural tendency that all people have to explore and learn to make classes more appealing through challenging tasks. According to Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider, and Shernoff (2003), “the level of student engagement is high when the students’ skills and the perceived challenge of a given



task are in balance and the task is challenging.” (as cited in Kim et al., 2017, p. 7) When people are faced with a challenge that is not very easy but presents an adequate level of difficulty, they are often attracted to solve it, and without even realizing, they may be learning something new.

According to Kim et al., (2017) “Game players can learn while they are playing the game and have achieved the objectives when they successfully complete the missions in the game.” (p. 29). To conclude, the importance of educational games is great because, aside from maintaining learners’ interest, they can increase it. They also have a positive influence on pupils’ mood which can stretch their attention span. The indicators that emerge from this variable can improve learners’ fluency in different ways since they can prepare pupils to react more spontaneously, realize their mistakes, and keep them engaged in the classroom activities. Based on the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the first indicator for educational games, which consists of natural communication, will be analyzed next.

### ***2.2.1 Natural Communication***

Natural communication, as mentioned previously, is the first indicator for Educational games, and it is fundamental since according to Nunan, D (2004) “learners learn to communicate by communicating.” (p.8) Before analyzing this indicator in depth, it is important to clarify what natural communication means. For the development of this alternative methodological proposal, the operational definition of natural communication will be the oral interaction of two or more participants, where the ideas that are exchanged are produced by themselves as a consequence of the need to communicate in different real-life situations. In other words, natural communication, in this case should be understood as the one that occurs when individuals desire to share information that they find meaningful. It is necessary to be aware that “it is very important for coteachers to provide authentic language situations.” (Sasson, 2013, p.36) because being able to communicate thoughts in real-life situations can be beneficial for learners in different ways. For example; when pupils are exposed to situations that require the use of natural oral communication to solve tasks, they eventually acquire practice so that they can then go out into the world and apply their knowledge in the real situations; thus, Piccardo, (2014) explains that “using the target language to communicate is what provides opportunities for modelling in the classroom and

prepares students for communication outside the classroom.” (p.12). The use of natural oral communication is of immense value to learners when it comes to improving their fluency, since they can learn easier when the language, they use is meaningful than when they try to learn lists of phrases through memorization. “Rather than endlessly repeating with the aim of memorizing or dissecting the language, particularly its grammatical structures, students must use the target language in meaningful ways to communicate a message either orally or in writing.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.12)

Natural communication makes the English class more efficient since it enables learners to become more spontaneous when speaking. “One of the difficulties with teaching and learning conversation is that learners have little idea what spontaneous spoken language looks like—or should I say sounds like.” (Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015, p.3) It is very difficult for pupils to acquire the ability to respond spontaneously to requests or questions if they never participate in activities where they can put their natural oral communication skills to use. Similarly, it is very difficult to develop aspects such as fluency and spontaneity when knowledge of the language is only received and not utilized because “language cannot simply be presented as a set of rules to be learned, and language learning cannot be reduced to imitation. Learners must learn the language, not just about the language.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.11) Hence, frequent natural interaction with other classmates is important for developing these skills. It is important to take into account that through the use of natural communication, social agents can progressively improve thanks to the corrections they receive when interacting with others to make the necessary adjustments that lead to a better level of fluency. Piccardo (2014) continues to add that:

In turn, through this social action and this sharing of language, the learner receives feedback that helps him or her to keep building up knowledge and competence. In other words, the learner acts in order to learn; he or she does not learn in order to act. (Piccardo, 2014, p.19)

Another benefit of interacting using natural communication is the fact that learners can learn English phrases, words, or sayings from other individuals around them. It is necessary to remember that there are different ways to communicate an idea; for instance, the word "hello" is not the only word that can be used to greet someone, there are countless ways to say “hello”, both formally and informally, and all of those different expressions can be learned by the pupil if natural communication is frequent. Piccardo, (2014) claims that:

We can say that language is used to accomplish speech acts in given contexts and situations. Through a speech act, a speaker seeks to act upon a listener through his or her words. Examples of speech acts include asking, instructing, affirming, and begging; each of these speech acts can be expressed differently. (p.11)

The effects of combining educational games with natural communication can lead to positive results in terms of the learners' knowledge construction process since performing exercises in which learners use their own words gives them an opportunity to exercise their ability to produce speech in the target language. "The task is designed not to provide learners with an opportunity to rehearse some out-of-class performance but to activate their emerging language skills." (Nunan, 2004, p.20) It is believed that "practice makes perfect", and in this case, that may be accurate. Using natural communication in the classroom to complete tasks is perhaps the best way to develop fluency as an EFL learner; after all "in real life, we read or speak as a means of achieving a specific goal other than (or in addition to) a language goal." (Piccardo, 2014, p.18). As it has been demonstrated, natural communication contains a significant amount of benefits that makes it worth using for English teaching. Not only does it prepare learners to use the target language in social context, but it also facilitates the learning of new meaningful vocabulary. It, additionally, enables social agents to become more fluent and spontaneous since they can put into practice their speaking abilities because language should not be learnt only by studying it thoroughly; rather, it needs to be utilized. The staggering amount of words and expressions pupils can get from their peers when interacting naturally is another good reason to keep this indicator in the classroom, and the fact that learners can practice their oral communication is valuable. The second indicator that is Feedback, is the next element to be analyzed. It will be explained in the following segment.

### ***2.2.2 Feedback***

Feedback is the next indicator of the variable Natural Communication, and according to Kim et al., (2017) "Feedback is a verbal or nonverbal message reflecting an evaluation result on performance." (p. 43) When learning a language, there are numerous areas that must be worked on before reaching advanced proficiency; for example, the conjugation of verbs, the differentiation between cognates and false cognates, the correct pronunciation of words that contain unfamiliar sounds, just to name a few. This leaves individuals confused and even overwhelmed. Fortunately, teachers can guide learners and assist them when they make mistakes to progressively improve

their performance. All this feedback received by the pupils has a very good effect on the knowledge construction process. Indeed, Leeman (2007) explains that “a large body of research shows that feedback from the teacher during communicative classroom interaction has significant effects on learning.” (Nation, 2008, p.6) The use of feedback is not exclusive to English teachers, in fact, feedback can be tremendously useful to correct errors of any kind. The advantages of using this indicator in educational games is the fact that participants can realize what they are doing wrong and correct it. For Hattie, (2009); Ruiz-Primo & Brookhart, (2018) “Feedback is arguably the most important source of assessment information that supports learning” (as cited in Brookhart & McMillan, 2020, p.64) In this sense, Feedback is valuable to the knowledge building process, and is particularly effective for educational games. Indeed, as Boller, S., & Kapp, K., (2017) pointed out, “Games are great tools for providing feedback, because players usually receive feedback immediately.” (p.3)

There are plenty of reasons for using feedback in the class, one of them being the fact that it makes social agents understand the aspects they need to improve in order to overcome their weaknesses. Nonetheless, this element can also serve as a motivator in some cases. Brookhart, (2008) claims that:

The power of formative feedback lies in its double-barreled approach, addressing both cognitive and motivational factors at the same time. Good feedback gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next—the cognitive factor. Once they feel they understand what to do and why, most students develop a feeling that they have control over their own learning—the motivational factor. (p.2)

It is easy to think that the function of feedback is nothing more than to reveal the mistakes that learners make; however, people must be aware that positive comments made to pupils regarding their performance can have a great effect on their motivation. Kim et al., (2017) shows that: Feedback can be divided into positive feedback and negative feedback in terms of the mood of the feedback content. While positive feedback is supportive, encouraging, and emphasizing on strengths, negative feedback focuses on what and how to improve weaknesses and poorly performed areas. (p. 43)

Another characteristic of feedback that makes it so precious when instructing is its versatility since it can be applied to any activity that requires learning or mastering some skill. As a matter of fact,

“feedback can be delivered through various media, such as oral communication, gestures, facial expressions, texts, or multimedia.” (Kim et al., 2017, p. 44)

Based on the data that has been presented about feedback, the use of this indicator in the knowledge construction process is extremely positive; nonetheless it is important to take a step back and analyze the utilization of feedback since it can be beneficial just as much as it can be detrimental, and according to Kim et al., (2017) “educators should be cautious in the way they provide students’ performance feedback.” (p. 41) First and foremost, it is necessary to bare in mind that there is a time to provide feedback. Although teachers may feel excited about helping pupils, it is important to not saturate their brains with information that they have not studied. One of the ways to do that is to “limit your feedback to the material covered. No surprises! Giving students unrelated feedback will not be helpful and may even be counterproductive.” (Sackstein, 2017, p.40) It is evident that feedback can be key when guiding learners, but teachers must be ready to deliver it in order to maximize its efficacy. According to Sackstein (2017), “providing feedback too early in the process can be damaging because the person giving the feedback may inadvertently take ownership of the work.” (p.40) To summarize, it has been proven that feedback can have significant effects on learning because learners can see the mistakes they make and can correct them. Moreover, its role in the knowledge construction process is priceless given that it can be used in numerous activities, including educational games. In addition, feedback can be a tool to enhance learners’ skills, and at the same time serve as a motivating element. Due to the fact that it can be provided in several ways, it is practical for any sort of situation. Nevertheless, it is important to take into consideration that “giving good feedback is one of the skills teachers need to master as part of good formative assessment.” (Brookhart, 2008, p.1). In order to proceed with the development of this proposal, the last indicator of educational games will be explained next.

### ***2.2.3 Cognitive Development***

It is said that children learn languages more easily than adults. In fact, “the plasticity of the brain at young ages enables children to acquire fluent control of a first and second language. This is why it is important to start learning foreign languages early in life.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.17) However, this does not mean that young people or adults cannot be able to learn a new language. There is a difference between language learning and language acquisition, in the case of high school

learners, they obtain the language through learning, which means that the process whereby they learn the language involves more grammar rules that might be understood, which would be facilitated with greater cognitive development since pupils need to have an introduction to the language in order to produce it. For this reason, Nunan (2004) believes that “lessons and materials should provide supporting frameworks within which the learning takes place. At the beginning of the learning process, learners should not be expected to produce language that has not been introduced either explicitly or implicitly.” (p.35) Certainly, human beings acquire reasoning abilities since they are infants, and this helps them to understand the world around them. Cognitive development allows individuals to conduct operations such as recognizing objects, solving basic problems and eventually analyzing deeper and more complex situations to provide more elaborate solutions. Cognitive development can prepare children to face a world full of tasks of all kinds, and this indicator can be very useful in teenagers’ knowledge construction process. One example of this is the fact that “when students are challenged to use the information, they have learned to solve problems, make decisions, conduct investigations, and create hypotheses regarding realworld issues, they are much more likely to see what they are learning as important.” (Marzano, et al., 2011, p.14) Learners’ engagement can be compromised by the type of activities that teachers use to develop the class. It is true that difficult exercises can be overwhelming for any learner; however, it is necessary to resort to activities that stimulate critical thinking in a mild way since these are more appealing due to their subtle level of challenge. It has been proven that, “when students are asked merely to regurgitate information in a repetitive fashion, they will not see the relevance of the information they have learned.” (Marzano, et al., 2011, p.14) It is possible to take advantage of cognitive development to improve the knowledge construction process since through the brain’s development with complex tasks, pupils tend to engage more easily; therefore, tasks are highly valuable when they encourage learners to use cognitively challenging. (Marzano, et al., 2011, p.15).

Cognitive development in early ages, such as adolescence, continues to have great significance during this stage, this also applies when acquiring a second language, therefore, it is important to develop methods and strategies in which social agents are able to develop the necessary skills for an effective learning. According to Brown (1993) “human cognition has its greatest development through the first 16 years of life. This factor is critical in the process of language development and second language acquisition.” (as cited in Programas de Estudio de

Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.18). It is possible to achieve the above through the implementation of educational games as there are different areas of learner's cognitive development that can be stimulated through classroom activities and educational games. According to Anderson et al., (2001) "The cognitive process dimension (i.e., the columns of the table) contains six categories: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create." (p.5) All these areas are intended to help professors to plan objectives and tasks that are closely connected to develop the cognitive area, as a result, thanks to the variety of areas that can be developed, it is possible to plan slightly challenging games or activities whose goals can go one step beyond pupil's current English level. When activities or tasks are cognitively challenging but at the same time engaging, it makes pupils concentrate on developing strategies or methods that help them to be able to achieve the assigned task without considering rewards or punishments. For Csikszentmihalyi's theory (2004):

We remain aware of the goals of the tasks and of the feedback generated by our responses to it, but we concentrated on the task-itself without thinking about success or failure, reward or punishment, or other personal or social agendas. At least for a little while, we focus completely on meeting the challenges the task offers, refining our responses strategies, our developing skills, and enjoying a sense of control and accomplishment. (p.11) (as cited in Marzano, et al., 2011, p.14)

As mentioned above, some of the different cognitive areas that can be worked on in the classroom are: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create. With each of them, it is possible to design activities and games that significantly benefit the knowledge construction process, since they can be created with the aim of developing the learners' critical thinking skills, ideas, or strategies, that go along with developing cognitive development in a positive way. For instance, "Remember means to retrieve relevant knowledge from long-term memory." (Anderson et al., 2001, p.30) This allows social agents with a very basic level of the language to partake in memory games whom they find a little challenging. However, other complex categories can be worked the same way. For example, "evaluate", which, according to Anderson et al., (2001) means "making judgments based on criteria and/ or standards." (p.30) can be utilized for learners with a more advanced level. To conclude with this segment of the last variable, which is educational games, cognitive development is the third indicator and a natural part of every individual, and



although it is most noticeable in childhood, it is possible to use it for learning in youth as well. Language learning and language acquisition have significant differences between them, and it is useful to keep in mind that high school learners get the language through learning. This process implicates more grammar rules that require to be understood; in this way, the cognitive development facilitates the comprehension. Moreover, teachers should not expect learners to use language that has not been taught since pupils need to get exposure to lessons in order to gain preparation. The level of complexity of the tasks used in the classrooms is of great importance for learner's engagement since, as mentioned above, an adequate challenge level can make the classes more appealing and as a result can lead pupils to concentrate. It is important not to forget that people are curious, and sometimes just challenging them a bit can get their attention. This same principle can be brought into the classroom; in other words, learners can become more easily engaged when the activities in which they participate are neither very easy nor very difficult. In order to continue developing this alternative methodological proposal, the speaking skill, which is the second indicator, is shown in the following part

### **2.3 Speaking skill**

Speaking skill constitutes the second variable in the development of this alternative methodological proposal. When the teaching of a language is focused on preparing pupils to use it in a way in which they can communicate through the transmission of messages and not only because it is a duty to teach it (Nunan, 2004, p.21), it may have a relevance on pupils' knowledge construction process. Although the speaking skill might be considered the final result of a long process of studying grammatical rules and memorizing vocabulary, it has been shown that it is necessary throughout the learners' instruction to optimize their knowledge construction process. In fact, Hughes, (2006), states that "the need for spoken communication in foreign language teaching has rocketed." (p.143). One of the benefits of frequent use of the speaking skill is that "speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities - chances to practice real-life speaking in the safety of the classroom." (Harmer, 2007, p.123) Nonetheless, the use of oral communication can also improve pupils' ability to convey thoughts in various ways. For Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, (2004); Marzano, (2004); Shanahan & Beck, (2007) "Students need regular opportunities to talk and use academic vocabulary and discourse to make concepts their own and to internalize the new ways of expressing ideas." (as cited in Sasson, 2013, p.24). This brings about advantages to pupils

because even though poor communication skills can sometimes work to transmit basic ideas to other English speakers, developing higher levels of complexity and appropriacy can make pupils 'speech far more understandable and even engaging. It is worth mentioning that the speaking skill can also inform teachers of their learners' progress because when social agents speak, teachers can listen to their errors and easily provide feedback. As Harmer, (2007) explains:

Speaking tasks in which students try to use any or all of the language they know provide feedback for both teacher and students. Everyone can see how well they are doing: both how successful they are, and also what language problems they are experiencing. (p.123)

This is critical for their knowledge construction process given that, according to Sasson, (2013) "providing guidance and feedback to students' output using English in meaningful and communicative contexts is crucial if teachers want to effectively increase students' oral English production." (p.25) Aside from the benefits of the speaking skill mentioned above, it is vital to acknowledge that the contribution of speaking skill in the knowledge construction process can also help develop other language skills such as listening. For example, it is known that oral communication involves both speakers and listeners because "people listen to each other to communicate with each other in conversations." (Farrell, 2006, p.126) This means that, in order for there to be a successful exchange of information, participants must employ speaking skills along with their receptive skills, in this case listening, to process the information that is being received from the other person; as a result, individuals could get various opportunities to work on the development of their listening skills. According to Nation, (2008) "There are good reasons for using information transfer activities to encourage meaning-focused listening and to support listening." (p.48)

The second variable for the alternative methodological proposal encompasses three indicators; fluency, appropriacy and complexity. These are all relevant aspects in pupils' knowledge construction process because they allow them to enhance their speaking skill, which is the primary goal of this alternative methodological proposal. First of all, speech fluency represents a significant component of the speaking skill, and even though this indicator is important in the business world, it also serves a function during the knowledge construction process due to the fact that it can raise pupils' self-esteem. Indeed, Mahendra, (2010) claims that "fluency is the great booster of your self-confidence." (p.vii), and as it has been shown previously, pupils' feelings can

determine the quality of their performance. Provided that speaking fluently empowers individuals, it is fair to say that this facilitates social agents' oral communication by making them feel more comfortable when taking part in speaking activities. The influence of this indicator on learners' personal lives is another aspect worth considering because "fluency transforms your personality as a charismatic and magnetic one." (Mahendra, 2010, p.vii) which can also make the knowledge construction process more pleasant; therefore, engaging. Appropriacy is the second indicator of the speaking skill, and it also plays a fundamental role in the knowledge construction process since it is through this indicator that social agents could obtain the necessary awareness to use the target language in a manner that addresses people correctly in real-life situations. It is known that there are formal and informal social contexts, and in order to fit in each of them, the language user is required to identify in which scenario they are located so they can adjust their speech accordingly. Due to the fact that appropriacy is a critical part of oral communication, it must be taught in the classroom. Indeed, pupils require activities that allow them to use the language in various contexts because mastering the grammatical rules is not enough. (Swain, as cited in Pawlak & WaniekKlimczak, 2015, p.190) The third indicator for speaking skill is complexity. Complexity is measured, according to Nation, (2008) "by the presence of more complicated constructions, such as subordinate clauses." (p.152) This has a great relevance in the knowledge construction process because it enables social agents to convey their ideas in a more understandable way. In fact, complexity is defined as "speech where the message is communicated precisely." (Goh & Burns, 2012, p.43) This means that learners could eventually attain the ability to communicate more efficiently. Although being able to express ideas clearly is an advanced skill, it may be one of the most desirable goals of the majority of language learners; fortunately, language complexity is not impossible to reach. "When some processes, such as lexical retrieval, are partially automatized, language learners may be able to demonstrate language complexity by formulating longer and more precise utterances." (Goh & Burns, 2012, p.43) To conclude, the importance of the speaking skill in the knowledge construction process is quite significant given that, as it was revealed before, language can be learnt easier when individuals utilize it to convey information; as a result, pupils can apply their knowledge to communicate at the same time they explore different ways of expressing themselves, which can enhance their abilities to be understood by others. In addition, the use of the speaking skill allows instructors to monitor pupils' progress and spot difficulties they may have. By doing so, they can proceed to provide feedback, which has been shown to be

imperative for their improvement. Furthermore, the speaking skill can also exercise the listening skill because communication implies an exchange of information that is received by the participants, in this case, via listening. The indicators that emerge from this variable are closely related to the knowledge construction process because they can increase pupils' confidence, shape pupils' language according to their context and enable them to communicate more precisely. Based on the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the first indicator for speaking skill, which is fluency, will be analyzed next.

### ***2.3.1 Fluency***

Fluency makes communication much easier. For example; when using native language to communicate ideas, speakers concentrate on the topics of conversation and the transmission of thoughts, and do not focus their attention on grammatical structures or verb conjugation. Thanks to this, participants in conversations can pay their attention to what they want to express without wasting time or effort thinking so much about the words they choose. According to Nation (2008) "fluent language use does not require a great deal of attention and effort from the learner." (p.151) Speech fluency is the first indicator for the variable speaking skill, and before going into details with what fluency means and its contributions to the knowledge construction process, it is worth remembering that this indicator is a fundamental part of learning a foreign language since it allows better communication with other people and helps to give a better impression when using English in work situations. That being said, this indicator, which is fluency, can be defined, according to Goh & Burns, (2012) as "speech where the message is communicated coherently with few pauses and hesitations, thus causing minimal comprehension difficulties for listeners." (p.43) This means that fluency makes it possible for individuals to transmit messages with ease, thereby making their oral communication smooth and easier to comprehend. Speech fluency is certainly an important part of oral communication. In fact, Mahendra, (2010) goes as far as to say that "fluency is the soul of any language, so of English." (p.vii), and this is not surprising since this makes the transmission of ideas more agile. Thanks to these benefits, speech fluency can be one of the most desired goals for those who study foreign languages, however, the benefits of speaking fluently are more than just personal satisfaction, and the feeling of accomplishment. Fluency is fundamental in the knowledge construction process because it is one of the components of a welldeveloped speaking skill; in fact, "when you speak or you talk with a flow without your speech getting broken down in

the middle, you can be called fluent in speech.” (Mahendra, 2010, p.62) this makes fluency a requirement in order to attain a high level of English proficiency. One of the reasons fluency is beneficial for pupils is that it facilitates the completion of certain tasks. In fact, Brand & Brand, (2006) explain their conception of the term with the following words: “Fluency to us is accomplishing a task effortlessly. Students are fluent when they complete tasks automatically, fluidly, rapidly, quickly, and accurately.” (p.2)

Provided that fluency makes up a fraction of the speaking skill, it is a good idea to exercise this element in the classroom. One of the ways teachers can do that is by promoting activities that involve pupils’ previous knowledge given that when they rehearse the language they already know; it is easier for social agents to become spontaneous speakers. Indeed, Harmer, (2007) explains that:

the more students have opportunities to activate the various elements of language they have stored in their brains, the more automatic their use of these elements become. As a result, students gradually become autonomous language users. This means that they will be able to use words and phrases fluently without very much conscious thought. (p.123)

This means that fluency, although it cannot be developed overnight, can be achieved through exercises in class; by doing this, pupils can get used to communicating their ideas unconsciously, which means less hesitation when engaging in conversations. It has been shown that fluency is disrupted when the speaker has the need to create the language, he/she will speak. In fact, Frieda Goldman-Eisler (1968) states that:

Hesitation is thus shown to be an indicator of the internal act of generating information rather than of the statistical predictability of the linguistic expression. In line with the expectation, as soon as this becomes habituated, the link between hesitation and information disappears. (p57) (as cited in Segalowitz, 2010, p. 51)

One benefit that social agents can gain from fluency is the ability to voluntarily make speech pauses when needed, something that is much more difficult when pupils have little control over the language and can barely get their point across. These small spaces of silence between ideas may seem as lack of fluency; however, Segalowitz, (2010) explains that:

listeners do not normally treat every pause and hesitation as evidence of dysfluency, a fact sometimes recognized in definitions of fluency that refer to the absence of undue

pauses and hesitations, implying that a certain amount of pausing and hesitation is acceptable and even expected in so-called fluent speech. (p. 48)

As it was demonstrated in the introduction of this chapter, fluency is useful to prevent insecurity in pupils, because it increases people's confidence, which is clearly a positive aspect that boosts pupils' performance. Undoubtedly, social agents are favored when they develop a certain level of fluency, since this implies less effort when performing tasks that require their ability to communicate orally. In fact, For Rehbein, (1987), "Fluency" means that the activities of planning and uttering can be executed nearly simultaneously by the speaker of the language." (p. 104) (as cited in Segalowitz, 2010, p. 46) To summarize, fluency is a significant ingredient in the knowledge construction process since it facilitates pupils' communication, which allows listeners to understand what they are saying more easily, and this makes conversation less interrupted. Fluency is essential to obtain a high command of English, and it helps to solve tasks effortlessly because the process of transmitting a message becomes less time-consuming. Following the sequence of this work, the second indicator of the variable will consist of appropriacy and will be exposed in the following fragment.

### **2.3.2 *Appropriacy***

Most of people have been in situations where the use of a certain language is frowned upon. For example; when politicians appear on television, they usually use a very structured and formal speech, different from the one used in a soccer game. Those variations in language are known as appropriacy. Canale and Swain (1983) talks about differences in language when referring to sociolinguistic competence, which is described as the "ability to use and understand language appropriate to different sociolinguistic contexts, and to choose suitable meanings and forms for the context." (as cited in East, 2016, p.26) The second indicator of the speaking skill consists of appropriacy and its role in the knowledge construction process is of vital importance since not taking into account the differences in context when speaking can develop in social agents an English that does not adapt to the different situations in which it is used; as a result, their speech might be perceived by some people as inappropriate. In fact, Gibbons, (2015) believes that "it is problematic to talk about overall "proficiency "in a language without taking into account the context in which the language will be used."(p.8) This is reasonable since there are several types of relationships between people, some closer than others, and the way in which an individual

expresses himself/herself can often lead to people labeling him/her as a nice and trustworthy person, or the exact opposite. When it comes to teaching a language, there are some essential elements that must be addressed during teaching to ensure proper language learning, and appropriacy is certainly one of them. After all, “knowing a language is knowing how that language is used,” (Tyler et al., 2008, p. 1) The way in which learners are prepared to speak a foreign language should not be neglected because even if individuals were able to handle the grammatical structures in an impeccable way, the application of the language in real life requires a certain sensitivity. Gibbons, (2015) continues by adding that "it is not simply a matter of getting the basic" grammar "correct, but of knowing the most appropriate language to use in a particular context." (p.9)

It is reasonable to believe, then, that the knowledge construction process is not complete without appropriacy, as this is a natural part of the English language. In fact, Gibbons, (2015) explains that:

As children learn their first language, they gradually learn not only the syntax or grammar of the language, but also how to vary the language they use according to the context they are in. In other words, they learn to vary the register of the language so that it is appropriate for the context. (p.6)

It is, undoubtedly, a good idea for learners to realize the effects that some words have in certain contexts while they learn the target language given that “we speak differently in libraries from the way we do in night clubs. We often use informal and spontaneous language at home, whereas we may use more formal pre-planned speech in an office or work environment.” (Harmer, 2001, p. 24). By pointing out those changes in the way people speak, social agents can develop an English that is suitable for all kinds of situations. Hence, Harmer, (2001) highlights that "it is important for students to be just as aware of this in a foreign or second language as they are in their own." (p. 25). It is worth mentioning that appropriacy is a fundamental part of the language teaching; indeed, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) refers to the learner’s role with the following words:

“The learner / social agent is not an empty vessel but a whole person with values, beliefs, an identity, and a language or languages. S / he possesses knowledge and experience that

can be used to face the challenge of learning a language.” (p.29)

It is for this reason that appropriacy should not be left aside since this is a requirement to train individuals with values.

The importance of appropriacy in the knowledge construction process is significant, so much so that Swain, (2000) recognized that "well-designed tasks need to focus on communication that provides an opportunity to use linguistic elements correctly, but also to express oneself appropriately within social contexts." (as cited in Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015, p.190) To summarize, it has been shown that appropriacy plays an important role in pupils' knowledge construction process because it allows them to see the differences in contexts, so that they can utilize the language in a suitable manner to avoid instances where they may be perceived as rude. It was also demonstrated that learning the grammar rules is not enough for effective communication because individuals must be conscious of the context in which they exercise their language. Moreover, this indicator (appropriacy), constitutes a necessary element for social agents since the current English program advocates values. In order to proceed with the development of this alternative methodological proposal, the last indicator of speaking skill will consist of complexity and is displayed in the following section.

### ***2.3.3 Complexity***

Languages have been a part of the human existence for thousands of years, and it is not surprising that people have developed ways to transmit messages to the individuals around them given that these collections of sounds which convey meaning when put together facilitate life when living in community. Learning other languages can be difficult for many, and although a few words and body language can produce communication that is understandable enough for simple situations, improving complexity with more descriptive words can give detailed information, which may be crucial in certain cases. Complexity is the last indicator of this variable, which corresponds to the speaking skill, and it is related to “the presence of more complicated constructions, such as subordinate clauses” (Nation, 2008, p.152) Similarly to the other previous indicators, complexity is advantageous for the pupils' knowledge construction process for a few reasons. Firstly, in order to be able to communicate without too much difficulty, it is necessary to take into account some aspects. Oral communication can be more than simply being able to say



certain words or follow certain grammatical rules so that the message that the speaker wants to transmit is understood. To achieve relatively easy communication, it is necessary to deepen a little more into the language and knowledge acquired in order to transmit the desired message in the most precise way. This facilitates the transmission of messages between the speaker and the listener since, according to Rickheit & Strohner, (2008) “speakers formulate their utterances with the goal of having their intentions recognized and recipients process a speaker’s remarks with the goal of recognizing those intentions.” (p.207). This is beneficial since the communication between social agents can become more complex and advanced. Complexity, is known as one of the five standards of communicative competence, which allows the speaker to extend their language for a clearer and more advanced communication. A stronger definition explained by Goh & Burns (2012) states that complexity is:

Speech where the message is communicated precisely. More advanced grammatical forms are used, such as subordination and clausal embeddings, which are appropriate for speech in relation to the social and cultural context, as well as the roles of, and relationships with, interlocutors. (p.43)

Complexity makes people more precise when speaking by expanding their knowledge of language through the acquisition of new vocabulary and more complex grammatical forms; when this occurs, the target language keeps evolving. In the classroom, learners can expand their English skills by solving tasks that pose a challenge; in fact, for Givón, (1995) “both accuracy and linguistic complexity are increased as long as task complexity is increased on a ‘resource-directing’ cognitive factor.” (as cited in Robinson, 2011, p.143) By developing complexity, learners are able to solve tasks more easily, for example dialogues, or give more precise answers to questions; therefore, it causes a positive impact on the social agents’ knowledge construction process. All these benefits can be successfully achieved by designing classes where the teacher develops certain activities or tasks related to this standard. Robinson (2011) explains that:

The need to meet the cognitive demands of a complex task leads learners to use more elaborate and varied lexis and produce more complex linguistic structures. For example, a task with many elements, rather than a few elements, is expected to call up more specific lexis and more complex syntactic structures because all the different elements need to be distinguished and compared. (p.143)

In other words, through tasks pupils can expand the level of complexity that is necessary for a more advanced level of English. Otherwise, if this is not carried out, the social agents are likely to continue using the same words and may not develop their language potential, thereby staying in the same comfort zone. Indeed, for Skehan 1996, 1998 “task design is also seen as means to promote ‘balanced language development’ in the areas of accuracy, fluency and complexity of production.” (as cited in Robinson, 2011, p.7-8). As pupils develop that capacity, they will have the ability to be more participatory in activities that can be developed in the class; as in the example given above, when answering questions, learners will have the ability to provide more elaborate answers with extra information. By enriching or expanding their vocabulary, it favors the social agents to be able to formulate more complete sentences facilitating their speech. As a matter of fact, “vocabulary knowledge influence language learners’ ability to comprehend language input and also to produce comprehensible output” (Nagai et al., 2020, p.110), and through the practice of the language, they automate the retrieval process.

When some processes, such as lexical retrieval, are partially automatized, language learners may be able to demonstrate language complexity by formulating longer and more precise utterances. They use grammatical resources such as subordination and clausal embedding to increase the preciseness of what they are conveying and to provide additional information. (Goh & Burns, 2012, p.43-44)

It is necessary for learners to go passed the language that they already know, in order to enrich their knowledge. It has been proven that when people face more complex tasks than they are used to, they tend to develop what Gibbons (2015) describes as “stretched” language, since he considers that when:

The situation you face requires you to use language that is beyond what you know how to do. You are pushed to go beyond the language you can control well and to try out ways of saying something that requires you to use language you are still unsure of, probably using faulty grammar or inaccurate vocabulary. (Gibbons, 2015, p.25)

Hence, when pupils are exposed to situations such as activities that require their knowledge to be “stretched”, their level of complexity will be worked on. To summarize, complexity is an important area in the knowledge construction process since through this it facilitates the communication of

the pupils in the classroom, and likewise the interaction between the listener and the speaker. Also, it expands the level of English by exposing the learner to using new knowledge such as vocabulary, lexical and grammatical structures, this is a positive aspect since it benefits the pupils to perform classroom tasks more easily. In addition, through these tasks, social agents are exposed to use the language more frequently, making their level of communication more and more advanced. Continuing with the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the upcoming part will introduce the third variable, which consists of the Knowledge Construction Process.

## **2.4 Knowledge construction process**

Enriching pupils' knowledge is perhaps the most fulfilling achievement of a teacher. Nevertheless, it does not happen by chance; instead, it results from guidance and instruction; after all, "Education is the process of helping ourselves or others to learn." (Kalmpourtzis, 2018, p.16) The influence of the knowledge construction process over pupils' learning is the reason this element was selected to represent the third and last variable for this alternative methodological proposal because both teachers and students are favored by following the right steps of a process that guides them to particular goals. In order to understand the importance of such process in pupils' learning, it is necessary to bear in mind that learning a language does not occur overnight.

In reality, "Development happens gradually. On very few occasions the changes appear suddenly". (Woolfolk, 2010, p.28) In spite of the fact that the development of the skills required to express oneself in the target language demand time and dedication, it also needs a process whereby individuals undergo a series of stages to progressively obtain knowledge and skills because "Development occurs in a relatively orderly fashion." (Woolfolk, 2010, p.28). This process by which learners gather new knowledge and abilities will be referred to as the knowledge construction process; having said that, it is worth mentioning that certain processes are more adequate than others; thus, some of them can lead to better outcomes than others, and this is precisely where the value of the knowledge construction process lies. In other words, the knowledge construction process is important because if it is disorganized and senseless, it is likely that individuals will struggle to make any significant progress because according to Woolfolk, (2010) "Human beings develop their abilities in a logical order. In childhood, they sit before walking, babble before speaking, and observe the world through their own eyes before beginning

to imagine how others see it.” (p.28) On the contrary, if such process is carried out in a coherent manner, according to the goals, individuals have higher opportunities of developing their communication skills more easily. It must be emphasized that there is no room for disorganization in the knowledge construction process given that there are numerous areas to be developed.

Moreover, not all the topics and skills can be taught at once because some areas of pupils’ learning should be formed at certain points of this process; for instance, “Listening is one important language skill and has to be developed in the early stages of language learning. Learners must be prepared to listen, understand, and answer in an appropriate way, which is essential for effective communication.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 41). Even though the knowledge construction process can be long and filled with challenges, it is possible to optimize the way in which students are being taught to facilitate the development of their abilities. It is for this reason that “By incorporating various tools and techniques, educators aim to support the process of other people’s learning.”

(Kalmpourtzis, 2018, p.16)

The knowledge construction process encompasses three indicators, these are the Action Oriented Approach, understood from now on as AoA, the Didactic Sequence and Task. These three indicators are linked to the knowledge construction process because they guide and facilitate instruction, which allows pupils to enhance their speaking abilities. First and foremost, the AoA enables learners to partake in meaningful activities where they perform tasks of different sorts. This results in not only more practice of their English skills, but also in higher interaction with other individuals given that in the AoA “learners are social agents placed in situations involving social action.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.21); hence, pupils can learn to express themselves in real-life situations. Secondly, following a didactic sequence means that teachers could take pupils through the right stages to maximize their learning experience while adding small challenges for them to grow. The didactic sequence also involves scaffolding given that “Teacher activates students’ background knowledge to perform the task.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.34) It is important to point out that the knowledge construction process requires organization. In fact, “the teacher follows a set of integrated sequence procedures (...) to develop the different linguistic competences” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 35). By doing so, the knowledge construction process becomes easier to develop. Finally, the

task is a valuable tool in the classroom since it assists students to develop various skills and expand their knowledge. On the one hand, “The task is designed not to provide learners with an opportunity to rehearse some out-of-class performance but to activate their emerging language skills. (Nunan, 2004, p.20) This means that, when performing tasks, students have the opportunity to learn and to put that new knowledge into practice. On the other hand, being able to carry out activities that simulate real-life situations can also be engaging because according to Nunan, (2004) “The role of task-based language learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. ” (p.1314) These are two ways in which this indicator contributes to an effective knowledge construction process. In short, the knowledge construction process was selected as the third variable of this alternative methodological proposal because of its high influence over pupils’ learning. The fact that development occurs gradually and in a fairly organized manner suggests that the process by which learners obtain new knowledge should be optimized as supposed to overlook. Certainly, not all processes have equal outcomes, and because of this, it is necessary to follow the right steps to ensure that learners can develop their English language abilities with relative ease. It is worth noticing that some skills have higher priority than others at different stages of the knowledge construction process, and this should also be taken into consideration when instructing individuals. Even though the knowledge construction process features a number of obstacles, it is possible to make it less challenging for students. In fact, the AoA, didactic sequence and the task, which correspond to the three indicators for this variable, can be outstanding elements to facilitate pupils’ learning because they enable them to interact in meaningful tasks, serve as a guide for teachers, and ultimately, motivate learners to activate their skills. In order to proceed with the next sections of this third variable, knowledge construction process, the next element to be presented will be the first indicator, which consists of the AoA.

#### ***2.4.1 Action Oriented Approach***

The MEP has been concerned about making improvements in the programs since it was previously revealed that “learners need an updated curriculum that reflects the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to communicate in a range of language use contexts and to succeed in the information age as 21st century learners.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.12) As a result, the MEP designed

a new program that reflected the needs of students according to current social demand basing much of its content on an approach that “has triggered powerful innovation at a practical level in the teaching of different languages” (Piccardo & North, 2019 ,p. 2) The AoA is the first indicator of the knowledge construction process due to its close relation to pupils’ learning, and in order to comprehend its importance, it is necessary to consider a few aspects. Firstly, effective English teaching is one of the main goals of the MEP; however, part of this process also requires learning other qualities that are essential for a good use of the language, which could ease communication. For that reason, besides learning a language, it is necessary to develop general competences, which are also a necessary part of good communication, those competences “consist of knowledge, skills, and abilities to learn and existential competence that are not language-specific but learners use them when performing all kinds of actions including language activities.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.22) Therefore, to ensure that students can develop all those skills, an approach that meets those expectations is used. Indeed, AoA views learners as “active agents responsible for their own progress in learning and sees communication as a social activity designed to accomplish specific tasks.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, 2016, p.25). In this approach, teaching goes beyond language because a person needs to learn to develop their autonomy and their cognitive development when they are exposed to problems that require a realistic solution. This is why “the language user/learner is seen in the AoA as a social agent, i.e. a person who exercises *agency*.” (Piccardo & North, 2019, p.84). It is necessary for students to learn to develop all these characteristics to be able to interact with the target language in a more natural way, since “language has many functions beyond communicating information. Language is used to express emotion, make contact, articulate thoughts, and elicit a reaction from a listener.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.11).

The Action Oriented Approach comes from the Communicative approach, and both of them use the Task-Based instruction. They commonly share tasks as a teaching tool; in other words, social agents are called to “doing things. It involves accomplishing tasks. And these tasks require both language and communication to varying degrees.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.22) These tasks do not have to be entirely related to the target language; however, it makes social agents solve exercises that are related to real-world tasks. This characteristic that this approach presents is essential for

the pupils' knowledge construction process since, apart from learning the language, it develops skills that are valuable given that it prepares learners to use the language not only within the class but also outside of it. This is confirmed by Piccardo & North (2019) when they claim that "The whole point of the AoA is to equip users/learners for real-life language use and part of that process must involve experience of tasks that are as authentic as possible." (p.139). The English program expects pupils to be able to solve multidimensional perspective problems, in this way they are able to perform as individuals and build communications and dialogues with other people when using previous knowledge (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.16) The AoA is ideal for this since it allows the teacher to plan classes where pupils can learn surrounded by real situations where they develop those skills. Moreover, in the AoA, activities are not carried out in small groups, but with various social agents, (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.30) This implies that students not only have the opportunity to practice their English but also to develop their socialization skills by working with their colleagues. When students work with other classmates, their knowledge construction process is more in-depth since, between classmates, they can learn from each other apart from the professor's feedback, resulting in a richer knowledge. In addition, when working collaboratively, students can function better since when working together they can feel mutually supported. "Articulating thoughts through the process of expressing them (*linguaging*) – and acquiring new knowledge by doing so – is at the heart of collaborative learning, which encourages learners to build upon each other's contributions in action-oriented project work." (Piccardo & North, 2019, p.77). AoA tasks require that individuals develop a series of skills that allow them to be able to perform them. The purpose of these tasks is not only to be completed; they are meant for learners to develop abilities that may be helpful in the outside world. This can be beneficial since this makes them familiar with more natural and real contexts and thus be able to act without any limitation. Piccardo & North (2019) explain that "tasks in the AoA, are projects and as such they require real problem solving and decision-making skills that enable actions here and now." (p.246). Summarizing, the AOA serves as a tool for practical knowledge construction, as it exposes individuals to a deeper language that goes beyond grammatical rules and structures. Moreover, it prepares individuals for possible situations that they may face outside of a classroom, and helps them to know what to do. This approach helps pupils to develop their mind and abilities to be able to solve problems that life may

present, making them able to face them using the target language. Furthermore, the tasks used in the AoA train students to work collectively, developing their social skills. The AoA also shapes social agents capable of functioning in real contexts while being valuable citizens in this society. Following the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the second indicator of the knowledge construction process will be exposed in the following section, this indicator is the didactic sequence.

### ***2.4.2 Didactic Sequence***

Humans are peculiar beings. Their ability to process staggering amounts of data to understand complex concepts is outstanding; in fact, humans are capable of applying their understanding of physics to build machines that facilitate transportation and even tools to make predictions regarding weather; nonetheless, people are not born with all that knowledge, but they slowly develop it over the years. In fact, Siegler (2000) explains that:

As children grow, they progressively develop better rules and strategies for solving problems and thinking logically. Teachers will help their students develop formal thinking skills by placing them in situations that challenge their thinking and reveal deficiencies in their logic. (Woolfolk, 2010, p.40)

This shows that people learn progressively and in a scaffolded manner, which is not surprising given that no one can successfully perform a complex activity such as an open-heart surgery without first having learnt more basic knowledge; in this case, the parts of the body or the function of each medical instrument. The concept of learning step by step not only works to obtain skills in the medical field, but it is very useful to learn other numerous things, since it helps individuals to increase their knowledge and skills more and more; in fact, Baralt et al. (2014) state that “task sequencing should be carried out by designing, and asking learners to perform, tasks that initially are simple on all relevant parameters of task demands, and then gradually augmenting their cognitive complexity on later versions of the tasks” (Taguchi & Kim, 2018, p.166). Fortunately, this form of learning can be brought into the English classroom to improve the acquisition of knowledge with this type of sequence.

The didactic sequence is the second indicator of the knowledge construction process and can be defined as "articulated sets of learning and evaluation activities that, with the mediation of



a teacher, seek the achievement of certain educational goals, considering a series of resources." (Tobón et al., 2010, p.20) This indicator is quite valuable when teaching English; as a matter of fact, "it is a tool that allows us to be more strategic." (Carmen et al., 2004, p. 15) Thanks to the didactic sequence, it is possible to establish different stages for the completion of a task, which is advantageous for learners because, in this way, they can be prepared to solve it. On some occasions, executing new tasks can be intimidating, and for that reason, a predetermined order for the accomplishment of a goal can be significantly helpful, and this is exactly what a didactic sequence provides since "learners are led step by step to the point where they are able to carry out the final pedagogical task in the sequence." (Nunan, 2004, p.35-36) It is important to keep in mind that when performing a difficult task, sometimes it is convenient to start from the simplest part; this helps to have a clearer idea of how to solve the problems that arise. Additionally, this makes people focus on solving small problems at a time rather than being overwhelmed by the large size of the task. This is why Baralt et al., (2014) believe that "the complexity of the task could be used as a basis for sequencing decisions with simple tasks performed first, laying the foundations and facilitating a more complex performance". (as cited in Taguchi & Kim, 2018, p. 160) Certainly, a difficult task can make people feel pressured, which is detrimental to learning, and for this reason, it is good to consider how pupils perceive the level of the challenge. Apart from promoting learning with a low level of anxiety, the didactic sequence is fundamental in the knowledge construction process since it facilitates the collection of new knowledge thanks to the fact that they offer small challenges that eventually get bigger. For example, speaking interaction seeks to plan what the pupils are going to do; subsequently, it is organized, then the learners rehearse the exercises orally, and finally, they interact with their classmates either in a group or in pairs. On the other hand, in spoken production, a very similar sequence is followed; however, in the producing part, the aim is for learners to expose to an audience, in this case their classmates, some material they have created. This didactic sequence is found in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) "Spoken interaction (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and interacting) and spoken production (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing)" (p.36) In this way, social agents are gradually guided in achieving their goal. Taguchi & Kim, (2018) explain this scaffolded process with the following words:

Sequences may foster cumulative learning, since each task version is only slightly different from the previous one, but also includes a slight increase in the conceptual and

communicative challenge. This has the potential to prompt learners to make adjustments and expand their interlanguage resources to meet those task demands.

(p.166)

The didactic sequence is, therefore, a great element in the English classroom thanks to the fact that learners are encouraged little by little to improve their skills. One of the most important characteristics of the didactic sequence is that it promotes learning by means of scaffolding, which results beneficial since, in order to create social agents, it is essential that they obtain knowledge from previous experiences and not only from teachers. This is why "the didactic sequences are no longer intended for students to learn certain content, but rather to develop skills to function in life." (Tobón et al.,2010, p.21) Following a sequence is helpful in the knowledge construction process because this enables learners to expand their knowledge and improve their skills without forcing them to accomplish goals that exceed their abilities by far. In fact, "Pre-task activities in listening, reading, speaking and writing are developed to help students recall, internalize and pronounce useful words and phrases demanded by the task that they will perform." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.34) This means that, instead of getting nervous about tasks they find challenging, pupils can get acquainted with information that will help them perform the task with success. Summarizing, the didactic sequence can be a remarkable element in the knowledge construction process due to the fact that it assists individuals to learn step by step. Although tasks can be intimidating for some, learners are more likely to accomplish the goal when they activate their knowledge and know what to expect next. The fact that a didactic sequence starts with a mild activity and leads to more difficult exercises helps learners have a better idea on how to find the solution. Furthermore, this drives learners' attention away from the biggest task because they are focused on solving smaller problems, which results in lower levels of stress. Finally, it allows for a progressive collection of information because pupils use scaffolding to tackle the next obstacle; this way, they are not obligated to perform a difficult task with no experience, but are prepared to reach their goals. In order to continue with the development of this alternative methodological proposal, the last indicator of the knowledge construction process will be presented next. This indicator corresponds to the task.

### 2.4.3 Task

Every day, people in their daily routine from waking up to going back to sleep are faced with various tasks that they have to accomplish throughout their day. These tasks can be simple such as greeting a friend, or more challenging such as answering an important phone call from work. Regardless of their level of difficulty, they require completion. Long (1985: 89) gives a variety of examples of tasks that people usually perform:

painting a fence, dressing a child, filling out a form, buying a pair of shoes, making an airline reservation, borrowing a library book, taking a driving test, typing a letter, weighing a patient, sorting letters, making a hotel reservation, writing a cheque, finding a street destination and helping someone across a road. In other words, by ‘task’ is meant the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between. (as cited in Nunan, 2004, p.2)

Task is the last indicator of the variable Knowledge Construction Process that will be developed throughout this chapter. This element is very important in the educational field because tasks challenge learners to complete certain objectives. In the area of education "a task is an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language." (Branden, 2006, p.4). Through tasks, teachers can encourage their students to use the language in a more authentic manner, in this way, social agents are benefited not only from performing tasks in the classroom, but also from using these skills to solve problems in real life. In fact, "tasks are socially situated, as learners' real-world communication needs are the major considerations of task design and implementation." (Taguchi & Kim, 2018, p.2) The implementation of tasks in the classroom arises from the desire of using the English language in real contexts. Indeed, one of the aims on the AoA is "to break down the walls of the classroom and connect it with the outside world." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.26). By using tasks based on real life situations, it is easier to develop an English that can be used not only in the classroom but in all sorts of situations. This gives pupils' great advantages since from high school they are presented with authentic scenarios that they will probably encounter once they leave the classroom; in addition, they will be able to develop the appropriate skills in each of these situations. According to the MEP "Assessment will also be authentic which means that the assessment task will simulate real-life situations within domains

and scenarios beyond the classroom setting” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.50). This indicator plays a very important role in the learners’ knowledge construction process because exposing social agents to tasks allows them to gain more independency, helping them to take responsibility for their own learning by utilizing agency to fulfill the objective of the task. This means that, when solving tasks in an organized way and under the teacher's guidance, learners will activate their critical thinking skills to complete what the task demands. Nunan (2004) explains that:

By using ‘task’ as a basic unit of learning, and by incorporating a focus on strategies, we open to the students the possibility of planning and monitoring their own learning, and begin to break down some of the traditional hierarchies. This is not to say that the teacher and learner will view the same task in the same way and attach the same ‘meanings’ to it. Nor does it absolve the teacher from the responsibility of ensuring that through an appropriate sequencing of tasks the appropriate ‘formal curricula’ are covered. (p.8)

However, in order to ensure that the tasks actually influence the knowledge construction process, it is important that the teacher utilize the appropriate tasks for their pupils. In many occasions, social agents do not meet the objective that the teacher expected; this may occur not because pupils were not ready to meet the objective, but because the task went far beyond their level. Harmer (2001) says that it is important to:

Choose tasks which the students, at their level, are capable of doing in English. While there is nothing wrong in ‘stretching’ them with challenging activities which engage them, it is clearly counter-productive to set them tasks they are unable to perform. (p. 133)

In other words, when tasks match the pupils’ level, this facilitates their knowledge construction process because in this way learners could perform the task and gain experience. Finally, tasks can create meaningful contexts and spaces, this allows pupils to get the chance to express their thoughts and opinions while they interact with their classmates, giving them another valuable reason to use language. In simple words, “tasks invite the learner to act primarily as a language user, and not as a language learner.” (Branden, 2006, p.8). To conclude, the task is essential in the knowledge construction process for the development of pupils’ learning. One of the reasons is that tasks confront learners allowing them to complete tasks with objectives, this makes learners progress little by little. In addition, tasks make it easier for teachers to motivate their pupils to use language

naturally. This is possible thanks to the fact that the tasks in the AoA are socially situated; this allows social agents to use the target language in all kinds of contexts. One more benefit of tasks is that they allow learners to become independent as they take responsibility for their own learning. It is recommended that the tasks not be excessively challenging because if this happens pupils will not be able to perform them. Finally, tasks encourage learners to be language users instead of just language learners. In order to continue with the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the following segment to be presented corresponds to the conclusion of the second chapter.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

For many years, there have been numerous obstacles keeping learners from developing their English proficiency level; indeed, the evidence presented in this alternative methodological proposal revealed that one of the reasons for this issue is the lack of engagement. As a result, this second chapter analyzed the importance of the three variables along with their corresponding indicators. First of all, it was demonstrated that educational games are useful because they not only maintain pupils' interest, but they can increase it. Additionally, they influence learners' mood positively, which results in a longer attention span. The three indicators that arise from educational games have also a great importance in the knowledge construction process because they can prepare social agents to react more spontaneously, realize their mistakes, and keep them engaged in the classroom activities. When it comes to natural communication, there are numerous benefits that make it valuable. It prepares learners to use the English language in real life while they learn meaningful vocabulary. Aside from that, it helps pupils' improve their fluency and become more spontaneous by putting into practice their English skills because as it was pointed out, the target language should be used. The use of natural communication in the classroom can enrich pupils' knowledge by promoting a learning environment where new words and expressions are exchanged. Feedback is another element worth using since learners can realize their mistakes and make the necessary corrections. One important feature that feedback has is that it can be used in numerous activities. Although feedback can serve as a motivating element, it can be counter-productive if teachers are not careful. The final indicator of educational games is cognitive development, and it is a natural part of every individual. Interestingly, humans are naturally curious, and sometimes small challenges can gain their attention. This same principle can be brought into the classroom to

engage learners. It is worth considering that, in order for this to work, activities should not be very easy nor very difficult.

Aside from this, the second variable for this alternative methodological proposal, which is the speaking skill, contributes significantly in the knowledge construction process because, as it was revealed, language can be learnt easier when individuals utilize it to convey information. Practicing the speaking skill can allow learners to express themselves in various ways; however, it can also bring benefits to the teacher because instructors can monitor pupils' progress when they talk, see what areas need to be reinforced and also provide feedback, a crucial element for their improvement. Furthermore, the speaking skill can also improve the listening skill because exchanging information involves both productive skills and receptive skills. The three indicators that emerge from this second variable are linked to the knowledge construction process because of numerous reasons. For instance, fluency allows listeners to understand the speaker more easily, and this makes conversation more continuous. Fluency also facilitates tasks because the process of transmitting a message becomes less time-consuming. Appropriacy also enhances learners' English skills by allowing them to see the differences in contexts, so that they can utilize the most appropriate words according to the situation. As it was shown in the presentation of this indicator, effective communication requires more than learning grammatical rules because individuals must consider context where they use their language. The last indicator of this variable, which is complexity, is a way of facilitating communication between learners in the classroom because it expands the level of English by exposing the pupils to using new knowledge such as vocabulary, lexical and grammatical structures, this enables learners to perform classroom tasks more easily.

The last variable of this alternative methodological proposal, which consists of the knowledge construction process, is not less important than the previous two. In fact, it was selected because of its high influence over pupils' learning. Provided that development happens gradually and in an organized way, it would be harmful to neglect the process by which pupils build new knowledge. It is useful to know that some skills have higher priority than others at different stages of the knowledge construction process, and this should also be taken into consideration when instructing individuals. In spite of the fact that the knowledge construction process features a number of obstacles, the AoA, didactic sequence and the task, which correspond to the three indicators for this variable, can be outstanding elements to facilitate pupils' learning. The AoA

prepares individuals for possible situations that they may face outside of a classroom because it helps pupils to develop their abilities to be able to solve problems that life may present, making them able to face them using the target language. Besides, the AoA exposes learners to collective work, thereby activating their social skills to become valuable citizens in this society. The didactic sequence, can also be a remarkable element in the knowledge construction process because, in this way, pupils can learn progressively. This is important since learners can activate their knowledge and know what to expect next. Some tasks can be intimidating, but following a didactic sequence that starts with simple procedures and leads to more difficult exercises helps learners have a better idea on how to find the solution. Sequencing tasks directs pupils' attention away from the ultimate result, and by doing this, they can focus on achieving small goals at a time, which lowers their anxiety levels. A didactic sequence also allows learners to gather information progressively thanks to scaffolding; consequently, they can gain experience and knowledge to tackle the next challenge. Finally, the task is important in the knowledge construction process given that they present challenges to learners with certain difficulty, which makes them grow. This indicator also makes it easier for pupils to use language naturally. This is possible thanks to the fact that the tasks in the AoA are socially situated; it is important to consider the level of difficulty of each task because there is no point in handing out tasks that cannot be completed by the learners; instead, pupils must be able to solve the exercises in order to learn. Having presented the variables and indicators, the development of this alternative methodological proposal will continue with the next segment, in this part, the third chapter; which consists of the design and method for the development of this alternative methodological proposal, will be introduced.

### Chapter 3



### **3.1 Chapter's Introduction**

The third chapter of this alternative methodological proposal is another fundamental part of this work. In this section, the methodology and design of this proposal is presented so that stakeholders can have a clear understanding of the parts that comprise this work. Such illustration is a major requirement in determining whether or not this present proposal can be considered convenient. Mertens, (2010) observes that “There are methods for designing research that make it more likely to be useful to educators.” (p.1) In addition, this chapter reveals the type of research on which this work is based and proposes a set of instruments for the collection of the data, describing them in detail so that stakeholders have a guide to put this alternative methodological proposal into practice if circumstances require so. To have a global vision of this third chapter, it is necessary to reveal that it is divided into six main parts; the introduction, the research method, type of approach, data collection tools, instruments and conclusion. All these elements are necessary for a clearer understanding of this alternative methodological proposal, in addition to

being requirements for its structure. The first part is the introduction. This section is necessary to understand the importance of this chapter since it is here where the elements that make up the design of this work and their relevance are presented. It is necessary to remember that this chapter is of vital importance for the development of this alternative methodological proposal because "A research design comprises the overall strategy followed in collecting and analyzing data." (Mills & L. R., 2016, p.28) This helps to provide a clearer idea of the role of this chapter in the development of the alternative methodological proposal and to give a global vision of it. The second section will present the research method, in this case, the action research. This method, as will be explained later, is an effective element to address existing gaps in the educational field, which facilitates finding solutions for evident problems in the classroom. Indeed, Cohen et al., (2007) describe action research as "a powerful tool for change and improvement at the local level." (p.297). It is worth mentioning that the action research used is collaborative and exploratory, since this work has as its main objective to propose a pedagogical action for enhancing pupils's speaking skill through the implementation of educational games. This means that this work does not have a very large scope, but is focused on delivering benefits within the walls of English classrooms; and besides that, it is intended to be performed by a small group of individuals. The next segment in this sequence is the type of approach, in this case the mixed method. It is important to point out that, both qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary in this case because when applying the instruments, the teacher will have to resort to the quantitative method to see the learners' performance, since according to Creswell, (2014) "Qualitative data tends to be open-ended without predetermined responses" (p.43); at the same time, it will be essential to use quantitative methods to collect the information yield by the data collection tools. At the end of this, the data collection tools will be the next section to be exposed, which is indispensable in order to provide the researcher with a course of action given that "The collection of data is an important step in deciding what action needs to be taken". (Ferrance, 2000, p.11) At the end of this part, the instruments are introduced. Despite the great advantages that arise from various data collection tools, the instruments on which this alternative methodological proposal focuses will be diagnostic test, pretest and post-test. These instruments in particular are important since it is through the diagnostic test that stakeholders will be able to determine if this proposal is worth implementing, to then proceed to using the pre-test to assess their pupils and the post-test as ongoing assessment. At the end of the chapter is the conclusion, where the most important points mentioned are synthesized.

In short, this third chapter presents the reader with the method and design of this alternative methodological proposal to allow for a greater comprehension of the structure of this present work. It reveals the type of research on which this work is based, as well as the instruments for the collection of the data that will be taken into consideration; as a result, stakeholders can have the guidelines to put this work into practice. This chapter is divided into six crucial parts, the first one is the research method. This corresponds to the collaborative action research with exploratory scope, which is outstanding for closing existing gaps in the educational field. The type of approach used for this proposal is the mixed method. As far as the type of approach, both qualitative and quantitative methods are necessary; thus, the mixed approach is essential. The data collection tools will also be explained along with the instruments that will be taken into account for the development of this proposal, which are diagnostic test, pre-test and post-test. To continue presenting this third chapter, the research method, which corresponds to action research, will be displayed in the following section.

### **3.2 Research Method**

Throughout history, people have used various methods to study and provide solutions to all kinds of problems in everyday life. When it comes to the educational setting, the reality is not different, because teachers can often be faced with problems that could be addressed to bring solutions. One way to achieve this is through action research. Mills & L. R., (2016) explain the meaning of this term by defining it with the following words:

Action research in education is any systematic inquiry conducted by teachers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching– learning environment to gather information about the ways in which their particular schools operate, the teachers teach, and the students learn. (p.36)

In addition, to further understand what this means, it is useful to also consider the words of Ferrance, (2000) since she refers to action research as “a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.” (p.1) In simple words, action research is a procedure in which teachers, or other individuals involved in the educational practice, can analyze the current situation in order to carry out the actions that guarantee an improvement in the quality of teaching. It is worth mentioning that action research

follows three stages that are used to search for better solutions. Firstly, stakeholders detect a flaw that can be corrected. Secondly, they take action to test a strategy, and finally, they analyze the results obtained to determine if the strategy affects learners in a positive way. That is why McNiff (2002: 15) states that “Action research combines diagnosis, action and reflection” (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p.298) The function of this element is, certainly, of great importance since it takes teaching to a higher level, and apart from that, it can bring benefits to those who exercise this process since it helps them gain experience in teaching; indeed, Burns, (2010) believes that “Action research (AR) can be a very valuable way to extend our teaching skills and gain more understanding of ourselves as teachers, our classrooms and our students.” (p.1) One of the things that makes action research a remarkable element in this alternative methodological proposal is that “It can be used in almost any setting where a problem involving people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution, or where some change of feature results in a more desirable outcome.” (Cohen et al., 2007, p.297).

It is important to mention that action research is divided into several types according to its magnitude (i.e. individual research, collaborative research, school-wide research); as a matter of fact, Ferrance, (2000) explains this in her words:

There are different types of action research depending upon the participants involved. A plan of research can involve a single teacher investigating an issue in his or her classroom, a group of teachers working on a common problem, or a team of teachers and others focusing on a school- or district-wide issue. (p.3)

Having said that, it should be noted that the type of research on which this alternative methodological proposal is based corresponds to collaborative action research since this proposal is intended to be carried out by a relatively small group of individuals to bring changes related to their pupils’ speaking skills; Indeed, these characteristics are reflected on the description declared by Ferrance, (2000) regarding this research method:

Collaborative action research may include as few as two teachers or a group of several teachers and others interested in addressing a classroom or department issue. This issue may involve one classroom or a common problem shared by many classrooms. (p.4) It is important to emphasize that this work consists only of an alternative methodological proposal, nonetheless, it holds value since it brings to light a common issue prevalent in the Costa Rican public education,

in this case, the difficulty learners have to reach the proficiency level established by the MEP (see chapter 2). Additionally, it suggests an alternative solution to tackle this problem, which consists of educational games for enhance pupils' speaking skills. The benefits of basing this alternative methodological proposal on the collaborative action research are numerous given that this is an outstanding way of working since the work is together; as a result, several people can participate and contribute to resolve issues easily. According to Revans (1971) "an individual can only work effectively to solve those issues, problems or dilemmas over which that individual has some power to change. Collectively, the power is greater." (as cited in Norton, 2009, p.31) Aside from that, there is also a benefit on a professional and even personal level that stakeholders who implement this proposal can receive since working collaboratively can enrich one's knowledge; in fact, "a group of colleagues working on a common research topic or area can create a very supportive way of doing action research that allows you to extend and challenge your own reflections and findings through ongoing dialogues" (Burns, 2010, p.44)

It is worth noticing that, in the same way that action research is divided into several types, collaborative action research has also different types of scopes (i.e. exploratory, descriptive, correlational, explanatory) In this case, given the scarcity of information, this alternative methodological proposal is exploratory. The term "exploratory" is used to describe a research scope when it dives into knowledge areas which have not been explored sufficiently; hence its name. In fact, Leavy, (2017) gives details regarding this type of scope with the following words: When you conduct a literature review and come up short, this absence of adequate research is often an indicator that exploratory research is needed. Such research may prompt further investigation, including the development of an appropriate methodological plan. Accordingly, this initial research may point you or other researchers toward certain research questions, methods for data collection, participants, and/or audiences. (p.5)

In this way, it is possible to expand the limits of knowledge. It is important to understand that the reason why this alternative methodological proposal leans towards this end of the spectrum is the fact that this work, which is based on a study program, has not been conducted before, this means that the implementation of educational games to enhance learners' speaking skills in the knowledge construction process is an innovative concept, and the outcome of the strategy proposed is, therefore, uncertain. It is worth mentioning that researchers often have other reasons for using the exploratory research; in fact, Creswell & Plano Clark, (2018) explain that "Such an exploration is

needed for one of several reasons: (1) measures, instruments, or experimental activities are not available; (2) the variables are unknown; (3) there is no guiding framework or theory.” (p.145) There are advantages that arise from this type of scopes since it makes it possible to collect information in areas that have been studied very superficially, or that have never been explored. It is for this reason that Leavy, (2017) states that “Exploratory research can help us fill a gap in our knowledge about a new or underresearched topic, or approach the topic from a different perspective to generate new and emerging insights.” (p.5) To summarize, action research is a systematic inquiry that is based upon diagnosis, action and reflection to achieve an improvement in a specific problem, and in this case, it allows an improvement in teaching. As mentioned previously, there are different types of action research depending on their magnitude, and in this case, the type of research on which this alternative methodological proposal is based is collaborative because the design of this proposal implies that it is carried out by a relatively small group of individuals. It is essential to emphasize that this work is only an alternative methodological proposal intended to address a common issue prevalent in the Costa Rican public education. Thanks to the fact that this proposal is based on collaborative action research, it is possible to work collectively with other stakeholders. It is worth mentioning that collaborative action research also has different types of scopes, and in this case, it corresponds to the exploratory type. This means that this alternative methodological proposal delves into areas of knowledge that have not been explored, and in this case, the fact that the use of an exploratory scope brings important advantages since it makes it possible to collect information in areas that have not been studied, and thus, it can help fill a gap in the knowledge. In order to continue with the sequence, the next part to be presented corresponds to the type of approach, in this case the mixed approach, and will be analyzed below.

### **3.3 Type of Approach**

There are different ways to go about collecting information when talking about research in general given that there are different types of information; some can be expressed by means of numerical quantities and others by means of words, such as opinions. Thanks to this, there are three approaches that can be used for the development of a research; those are qualitative approach, quantitative approach and mixed approach. For the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal, it is necessary that stakeholders use the mixed approach; however, before justifying this

reason, it is important to be clear about the function and the benefits of the qualitative and quantitative approach. First, it must be noted that qualitative is drastically different from quantitative in that it does not focus on numerical value; hence, “The process of research involves emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant’s setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the researcher making interpretations of the meaning of the data.”(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.43) Furthermore, this type of approach is usually employed when doing exploratory research, since it tries to answer open-ended questions in order to understand an issue, this is why Creswell & Creswell, (2018) claim that “Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.”(p.43) It should be remarked that the qualitative approach can become quite complex since it implies a detailed and deep interpretation of all the information obtained, and it is precisely for this reason that “Those who engage in this form of inquiry support a way of looking at research that honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation.”(Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p.43-44). On the other hand, when it comes to quantitative research, it is necessary to talk about numbers. This approach is often valuable when the intent of the researcher is to test a hypothesis by means of statistical analysis; indeed, Leavy, (2017) highlights that “Quantitative research is characterized by deductive approaches to the research process aimed at proving, disproving, or lending credence to existing theories.”(p.9) Moreover, contrary to qualitative research, quantitative approach is relatively simple in that the data collected in these cases is sound and objective; in other words, the information retrieved through numbers is clear, thereby leaving small room for debate. In this approach stakeholders avoid open-ended questions because they do not yield numerical data; instead, “Researchers may employ linear methods of data collection and analysis that result in statistical data.” (Leavy, 2017, p.9) Certainly, researchers must be aware of the differences that come along with both, qualitative and quantitative approach because they serve different purposes.

The type of approach that is selected will depend upon the purpose of the research; however, there are times when these two types of approach are combined to carry out a research, and in these cases, what is known as a mixed approach is used. Creswell & Creswell, (2018) helps to understand this concept by saying that “Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting

both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks.” (p.44) This means that both the qualitative and the quantitative approach are used in certain parts of the process when both are necessary.

The recruitment of these two types of approach to develop an action research has great advantages since this leads to a more detailed understanding of the topic at hand. That is why Mills & L. R., (2016) state that “The main purpose of mixed methods research is to use the advantages of both quantitative and qualitative research designs and data collection strategies to understand a phenomenon more fully than is possible using either quantitative or qualitative design alone.” (p.444) In the case of this alternative methodological proposal, it is imperative to resort to the mixed approach, since, due to the exploratory nature of this work, stakeholders see the need to use the qualitative approach to respond the research questions used in this proposal since none of them can be answered with a number because they correspond to open-ended questions. However, the qualitative approach alone is not sufficient for the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal either given that when applying the instruments (i.e. diagnostic test, pretest and post-test) the results will be revealed in numbers. It is precisely this reason what justifies the use of a mixed approach since according to Mills & L. R., (2016) “The choice of a mixed methods design also assumes that the research problem, and hence the research questions, cannot be answered adequately by either a qualitative or a quantitative research design alone.” (p.444) To conclude, there are three types of approaches when it comes to collecting data; qualitative, quantitative and mixed. The qualitative approach is advantageous when conducting exploratory research given that it can answer open-ended questions such as "How?" or "What?" which is critical when exploring a new topic. In addition, this type of research can be complex because the information obtained requires a detailed interpretation. Qualitative research has different characteristics from quantitative research since the last one is based on the collection of numbers, and it is often times used to test a hypothesis through statistics. The quantitative approach is considered relatively simple since the data obtained are objective. Despite their differences, these two types of approach can be used together; this is known as a mixed approach. The mixed approach can be useful because the results obtained are more detailed than if the qualitative or quantitative approaches were used separately. It is important to clarify that, due to the fact that this alternative methodological proposal is exploratory, it requires that stakeholders use the qualitative



approach to answer the research questions, which consist of open-ended questions. And at the same time, it is essential to use the quantitative approach in order to collect the information from the instruments; as a result, the mixed approach is essential for this work. To continue with the presentation of this third chapter, the following segment, which corresponds to the data collection tools, will be exposed next.

## **Chapter 4**

## **4.1 Introduction**

Education is a great privilege which is not accessible to everybody, and yet, many people take for granted. In fact, “there is ample evidence from around the world that the opportunities to access higher education are not equally distributed. In the developing world, access is generally still reserved for a privileged few.” (Mountford-Zimdars & Harrison, 2017, p.ix) Thanks to the fact that Costa Rica is one of those countries that enjoy a fairly accessible educational system, Costa Ricans can raise their level of knowledge and skills. However, the existence of education in the country does not necessarily guarantee individuals’ willingness to learn. It must be remembered that pupils come from different settings, some more supportive than others, and this has an enormous effect on their understanding and appreciation for high school instruction. Indeed, Rumberger, (2011) mentions that “family background is widely recognized as the single most important contributor to success in school. Socioeconomic status, most commonly measured by parental education and family income, is a powerful predictor of school achievement and dropout behavior.” (p.9) Certainly, not all high school pupils see education as a tool to improve their lives, and unfortunately, many of these individuals show no interest in the teaching that occurs in the

classroom. According to Rumberger, (2011) a number of tenth graders who dropped out in 2002 claimed that they did not enjoy attending school (p.6) This, as a result, makes it difficult for many pupils to pay attention and gain new knowledge. Barnett, (2007) remarks the importance of the desire to learn by stating that “Will is the most important concept in education. Without a will, nothing is possible. At any level of education, a pupil, a student cannot make serious progress unless she has a will to do so.” (p.16) It is important to acknowledge that the English classroom is no exception to this issue, and this means that making the right adjustments to the current way in which some uninteresting activities are conducted in the class could be advantageous to many social agents.

In an attempt to offer assistance to English teachers who may be affected by the monotony of the class and the poor performance of their learners, particularly in the speaking skill, the alternative methodological proposal has been prepared and contained in this chapter. The importance of this fourth chapter lies in that it provides stakeholders with decisive information to understand why the alternative methodological proposal and its implementation are necessary. This chapter is also vital due to the fact that it encompasses the three strategies that seek to enhance learners’ speaking skills. It is important to bear in mind that the methods contained in each strategy need to be carefully planned in order for them to be effective. This is why Bonnel, W., et al., (2013), state that “preparing a detailed plan and negotiating the best tools/approaches to take while keeping in mind the practical resources available are all considerations in planning your methods.” (p.112) Such high level of planning and organization can be reflected in this chapter four, where every single strategy is broken down to display every element in which they are supported; consequently, with a clear presentation of these strategies, the demonstration of the necessary materials to carry them out, and a detailed explanation on how the didactic sequence of each strategy is developed, this chapter can enable stakeholders to easily recreate them in their class. The strategies addressed in this chapter correspond to educational games that aim at making the English learning experience much more joyful and efficient. Although the concept of playing games in the English class to enhance pupils’ speaking skills may seem somewhat unrealistic, this goal is not unachievable due to the fact that good mood has been proven to impact the knowledge construction process quite positively. Indeed, “students who are having fun and are engaged tend to find the learning experience meaningful and memorable.” (Hirumi, A., 2010, p.44). This means that the chances of

pupils benefiting from educational games are high. It must be remarked, however, that the strategies contained in this alternative methodological proposal are not created randomly; instead, each of these strategies is sustained and carefully elaborated based on a level, unit, theme and assessment strategy to ensure that the games that derive from this proposal are not only as effective as possible to improve learners' speaking skills, but also strictly related to the current English study program. This close relationship between the games and the content from the English study program is an important aspect to consider given that "the most important thing for teachers is to match their goals and objectives with the appropriate means to achieve them. In some cases, a game may be an appropriate choice." (Hirumi, A., 2010, p.44) Additionally, the strategies found in this alternative methodological proposal are composed of a name, an objective, a process, evidences and evaluation, such elements will be explained in detail.

The present chapter features indispensable elements for the construction of this alternative methodological proposal. Such elements will be found in the following order: First of all, the Chapter's Introductory Paragraph serves as a guide that informs the reader of the content that lies within the entire chapter four, and thanks to this segment, stakeholders will be provided with a global view of the whole chapter. After this part is presented, the Title of the Proposal will follow; introducing in this way the reader to the most descriptive and detailed bodies of information regarding the alternative methodological proposal. The Justification of the Proposal will be next, and it is certainly a key component to better comprehend the necessity for the implementation of the alternative methodological proposal. Once the justification has been exposed, the Alternative Methodological Proposal will be the following element to be laid out. This part is vital as it exposes arguments that demonstrate why it is essential, and additionally, it introduces and explains, in a brief manner, the three strategies that will be proposed, which are based upon some of the variables and indicators presented in the second chapter. From this section come three closely related segments that are all vital to further explain the alternative methodological proposal; these are the Importance, the Necessity and the Scopes. The Importance clarifies why it is important to foster the knowledge construction process. The Necessity, as the name suggests, addresses the need for fostering the knowledge construction process, and the Scopes, which is the last of these three elements, gives an overview of the scopes of this alternative methodological proposal that aim at boosting the knowledge construction process. After this information has been shown, the next

element, which corresponds to the Alternative Methodological Proposal Implementation will be unveiled. In its introductory paragraph, the level, unit, theme, assessment strategy and didactic sequence on which each strategy is sustained will be shown to offer guidance to stakeholders. Moreover, the elements that compose the strategies such as name, objective, process, evidences and evaluation will be further explored. The Alternative Methodological Proposal Implementation will describe the three different teaching strategies; starting with the first strategy, which will present its respective name and objective before continuing with its process and evaluation. All three strategies will be presented in this manner, and the last element of chapter four, in which the main ideas will be synthesized, will be the Conclusion. To summarize, Costa Rican public education is a great benefit; unfortunately, many pupils find it difficult to learn as classes are uninteresting. Additionally, not all learners come from supportive backgrounds and this can have a negative result in their academic performance. It is vital to acknowledge the fact that pupils' willingness to learn is key in order to make significant progress; thus, it is a good idea to make sure classes are compelling. The alternative methodological proposal that will be presented in this chapter is based on the English study programs offered by the MEP, and uses three strategies to improve the way pupils learn the target language. This chapter is valuable as it exposes each of these strategies in detail, which are the center of this proposal. Additionally, this chapter is fundamental thanks to the fact that a thorough description of how the didactic sequence of each strategy is developed and the presentation of the materials used in each strategy can facilitate their application in the class. For the strategies, educational games will be used, such games aim at developing learners' speaking skills in a more dynamic and entertaining manner. This is possible thanks to the advantages that arise from having fun. It is important to highlight that the three strategies will be designed considering a level, unit, theme, assessment strategy to ensure that this alternative methodological proposal best suits each group of learners. It is worth mentioning that the strategies presented in this chapter will be conformed by a name, objective, process, evidence and evaluation; elements that will be further explained. To continue this chapter with the sequence shown previously, the Title of the Proposal will be the next element in this sequence; preceding the justification of the proposal.

#### **4.2 The implementation of Educational Games to Enhance Students' Speaking Skill in the Knowledge Construction Process**

### 4.3 Justification of the Proposal

Learning can be quite tedious at times; however, there are instances when people learn things with surprising ease. For example, it is common for numerous individuals to learn the lyrics of a popular song simply by listening to it, and although the song is not a requirement for the job they do, such a song is compelling enough for the listeners that naturally causes them to pay attention to it, and as a consequence, remember it for a long time. Certainly, people's ability to learn songs may not contribute significantly when trying to master a foreign language; regardless of this, the fact that individuals tend to retain information more easily when it is considered enjoyable may be the key to enhancing learners' performance. In fact, Sullo & Picone-Zocchia, (2007) highlight the advantages of entertainment in learning by stating that "when teachers and kids are having fun, learning is deeper and stronger, and students maintain the keen desire to learn that characterizes early childhood learning centers. (p.9) This alternative methodological proposal is a valuable contribution to English teaching since it targets some of the most common problems in the classroom such as learners' lack of interest, and disengagement. In addition, the use of educational games is intended to optimize the knowledge construction process by making activities more appealing at the same time they foster learners' speaking skills. Resorting to these elements is fundamental since "a joyless classroom never inspires students to do high-quality academic work on a regular basis." (Sullo & Picone-Zocchia, 2007, p.9) The implementation of such proposal in the English classroom is a necessity in order to guarantee that pupils will benefit from the English class, but in order to comprehend the need of implementing this alternative methodological proposal, it helps to notice the benefits that derive from educational games such as the positive attitude towards the subject and the active participation that pupils display when playing a game in the class. In fact, it is possible to observe that "students are very co-operative during games, since no one wants to risk being responsible for bringing a pleasurable activity to a premature end." (Steinberg, J., 2009, p.x) The fact that educational games stimulate learners in a positive manner and, consequently, possess the potential to create an inviting atmosphere makes their implementation fundamental in order to capture pupils' attention.

Undeniably, the English subject, as many others, has become a sort of negotiation between instructors and pupils, where teachers demand certain abilities from learners in exchange for points

that will allow them to advance to the next grade. This way of instructing has been proven to be counterproductive given that pupils can feel obligated to learn and classes can be perceived as intimidating. In reality, Sullo & Picone-Zocchia, (2007) claim that “when someone “makes” you do something, your goal is to get the other person to leave you alone. External control may lead to compliance, but it never inspires you to do your best.” (p.1) Aside from that, learners’ motivation to strive throughout the year can sometimes arise from the fear of failing the subject and the consequences that come along with it; therefore, “a system of education based on rewards and punishment is fundamentally anti-educational.” (Sullo & Picone-Zocchia, 2007, p.5) In order to cope with the negative feelings that result from learners’ pressure, it is helpful to be aware of the different motivations that are hidden in the knowledge construction process; intrinsic and extrinsic. According to Kember, (2016) “Intrinsic motivation is normally interpreted as motivation through an interest in the learning task undertaken.” (p.22), as for extrinsic motivation, Kember, (2016) states that it “is seen as motivation through rewards or factors external to the task.” (p.22) Certainly, pupils have external reasons to learn such as approving an exam or obtaining a degree; in this case, extrinsic motivation alone may be insufficient to keep social agents engaged in what is being studied given that “extrinsic motivation is normally seen as a less desirable or weaker form of motivation.” (Kember, 2016, p.22) On the other hand, social agents can learn for their own pleasure; in such case, pupils enjoy what they learn and their desire to engage in the class can grow as a result of this intrinsic motivation. Clearly, intrinsic motivation favors learners, and this makes it a remarkable element in the classroom. However, this type of motivation can be difficult to find if classes are dull because “the less interesting and relevant the task is perceived to be, the lower the level of intrinsic motivation.” (Kember, 2016, p.23) The implementation of this alternative methodological proposal is, therefore, important since the presence of educational games allows classes to be relatively more challenging and dynamic, which encourages pupils to participate given that “games often intrinsically motivate learners because the rewards built into the game increase content knowledge and thereby improve game performance.” (Hirumi, A., 2010, p.44)

A large number of teachers, if not all, are usually overpowered by the effects of learners’ boredom. As a matter of fact, Steinberg, J., (2009) forewarns instructor that “no matter how dynamic a teacher you are, there are bound to be occasional general lapses in attention.” (p.x) In these situations, the implementation of this proposal can be the spark needed to reactivate the class

given the fact that “a short, snappy game will raise attentiveness, revive the class, and make them more receptive to further learning.” (Steinberg, J., 2009, p.x) In addition, implementing this sort of proposal can make the knowledge construction process less punishing, this is so because, as Steinberg, J., (2009) points out, “playing games takes the drudgery out of learning and, thus, provides motivation.” (p.x) which essentially means that games make the class less tiresome. Although learning may be physically and mentally demanding at times, there are many things that can be learned in such a way that individuals will not feel overwhelmed. It should be noted that the contributions of this implementation are valuable to the knowledge construction process since it serves as a means to bring dynamic activities into the classroom that are based upon the current approach employed by the MEP in the English program. Indeed, when talking about the AoA, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) states that it “sees communication as a social activity designed to accomplish specific tasks.” (p.25) Considering this perspective, the educational games proposed in this implementation are adjusted to allow pupils to communicate with one another to reach specific goals. In conclusion, learning is not always easy; however, it can be less of a challenge when people enjoy what they learn. The alternative methodological proposal presented in this chapter provides valuable contributions to the knowledge construction process due to the fact that it focuses on decreasing learners' lack of attention by means of educational games, and this can certainly have a positive effect on pupils' attitude in the English class given that having fun while learning has been found to be beneficial. The need for implementing this sort of proposal can be understood more easily when considering the positive way in which learners behave when playing games in the classroom. Learners are often extrinsically motivated to do well in high school; nonetheless, this motivation has been shown to be less effective in comparison to intrinsic motivation when it comes to learning; thus, it is a good idea to incorporate activities that motivate pupils in this manner. Games have been demonstrated to intrinsically motivate individuals, and therefore, their implementation in the class should be taken into consideration. Learners' lack of attention is an issue that affects even the most experienced teachers. Fortunately, their attention, as mentioned before, can be regained by using short games; consequently, the knowledge construction process will become less unpleasant. It is worth mentioning that this alternative methodological proposal is also based on the AoA. In order to continue with the sequence of this work, the Alternative methodological proposal will be the upcoming fragment to be presented.



#### 4.4 Alternative Methodological Proposal

High school is a critical stage for teenagers. It is here where young individuals are given important skills to fit in a world replete of challenges. In fact, Güneş & Söylemez, (2018) consider that “Education is the single most important power developing individuals and shaping their future.” (p.2) Undoubtedly, English is one of the most practical subjects Costa Rican learners can take during this process of instruction given the country’s high influx of foreigners. Sadly, despite the ubiquity of the English language, a large portion of pupils struggle to use it in a spoken way, and this is not surprising because as Pawlak et al., (2011) state, “developing the ability to speak in a foreign language is an extremely difficult and arduous task.” (p.xiii) Having said that, it is worth highlighting that this alternative methodological proposal is simply an innovation for education which has been created in an effort to bring learners closer to their expected proficiency level. This sort of proposal is necessary given that it facilitates an improvement in pupils’ speaking skills thanks to the three strategies that are oriented to communicating in the target language. It is worth considering that, for Shaw (2008) “Language proficiency increases when we teach strategies that develop these interconnections” (as cited in Palmer, 2014, p.20) As a result, providing learners with educational games that activate their speaking abilities could certainly lead to speaking development. The alternative methodological proposal is also needed given that high school learners are expected to reach the A2 and B1 levels from the CEFR; this objective is mentioned in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), where it is stated that “By 2021, it is expected that progressively the learners will reach level A2 at the end of the Second Cycle and B1 at the end of Diversified Education.” Despite these expectations, such an objective would not be attainable unless pupils developed their speaking skills, at least to the point where they were capable of meeting the criteria for the desired proficiency levels. In case of second cycle pupils, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) shows that A2 level is granted to those able to “communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.” (p.10) As for diversified education, B1 level demands that they be able to “describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.11) This demonstrates how vital

it is for learners to work towards the improvement of their speaking skills, and this alternative methodological proposal enables individuals to make progress in this area.

Considering the necessity of developing learners' speaking abilities, the alternative methodological proposal presented in this chapter is made of three strategies that are based on tenth grade. The first one is called "Movie Tastes", and it uses spoken interaction to strengthen learners' natural communication by having face to face conversations with their peers. The strategy enables pupils to talk to their classmates about movies they are interested in; thus the name of the strategy, and it pretends to enhance learners' speaking skills by giving them opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations. The second strategy is entitled "Movie Open House". In this case, this strategy is created taking into consideration spoken production to target pupils' fluency by encouraging them to give opinions to their classmates about different scenes of movies they are familiar with. By having pupils present to their peers their opinions in a spoken way, this strategy aims at developing the ability to talk at a natural pace with little hesitation. The last of the three strategies in this alternative methodological proposal is designed for spoken interaction, and its name is "Gossip." Such strategy is intended to develop learners' language complexity by using reported speech; a relatively challenging grammatical structure. The game's activity consists of learners interviewing one of their classmates and then sharing this information with others; by doing this, pupils can acquire practice to transmit further information in real life situations. By utilizing all three of these strategies, learners will be able to advance to higher levels of English proficiency.

#### ***4.4.1 Importance***

The process by which social agents build their knowledge is critical because it determines whether they learn quickly, slowly, or in the worst case, do not learn at all. In fact, following the wrong procedures and using ineffective activities can prevent learners from exploiting their full potential; hence, when discussing about teaching flaws regarding the speaking skill, Pawlak, et al, (2011) mention that:

There are still situations where learners have virtually no opportunities for developing this skill due to frequent reliance on the L1, teacher-fronted classes with rigid control over all classroom discourse or excessive preoccupation with other skills and subsystems. Even

when efforts are made to teach spoken language, they are either aimed at preparing students for specific examination formats or simply misguided. (p.7)

It is evident, therefore, that the knowledge construction process can be reinforced to have strategies which guarantee that pupils will truly learn to speak in the target language, as supposed to only retain information for short periods of time that will be forgotten in a matter of days; for this reason, Güneş & Söylemez, (2018) claim that “In the learning process, it is necessary to develop skills such as understanding the learned, transferring it to practice, and structuring in the mind instead of getting knowledge through memorizing. (p.x) In other words, pupils ought to exercise what they learn, and this alternative methodological proposal allows social agents to do exactly that; to develop their speaking skills by putting them into practice in educational games.

It is important to foster the knowledge construction process through this alternative methodological proposal for a number of reasons. One of them being the fact that it promotes social interaction. Although learners are usually sociable and playful outside the classroom, this behaviour is sometimes appeased during the class as it can become distracting. However, it is possible to use pupils’ innate sociability for their own good since socializing can make classes more appealing. In fact, for Furrer et al., (2014) “working relationships with other students have been shown to increase academic self-perceptions, school engagement, motivation and academic performance” (as cited in Güneş & Söylemez, 2018, p.24) This, as a result, also contributes with the development of pupils’ fluency, because as Chodkiewicz & Trepczyńska, (2014) point out, “Learners also need to be ‘pushed’ to start speaking spontaneously, as it is in this way that they will develop strategies to keep the speech going.” (p.77) As explained in the second chapter, encouraging pupils to talk is vital for their speaking abilities because “In order to develop spoken competence learners have to be given opportunities to speak, in a variety of situations including longer turns.” (Chodkiewicz & Trepczyńska, 2014, p.77) Additionally, this sort of proposal allows learners to be participants and not only witnesses of the class, and this is fundamental because the amount of time they use the target language in the classroom will increase, enabling learners to sharpen their skills progressively. Harmer (2007) recognizes the benefits of this frequent usage of pupils’ speaking skills in the class, and, therefore, addresses what he refers to as “Teacher Talking Time” or TTT warning that “overuse of TTT is inappropriate because the more a teacher talks, the less chance there is for the students to practice their own speaking - and it is the students who need

the practice, not the teacher.”(p.38) Perhaps, the most important aspect of fostering the knowledge construction process through this sort of proposal is the fact that it takes learning to an entertaining level, which is surely advantageous given that a positive mood facilitates learning. As addressed in the second chapter, enjoying the learning experience not only helps maintain pupils’ interest, but it also helps to increase it even more, and this is something many people would agree with since, “everyone, who looks back on their former school days, might remember that learning was more enjoyable when the topics were interesting and furthermore, when they were handled in an exciting way.” (Okon, 2013, p.1) It is vital to acknowledge, however, that this alternative methodological proposal goes above and beyond entertainment, and in spite of the fact that its strategies are based on games, such games are strongly supported on the MEP’s English study programs, so much so that the three strategies described in this chapter are designed based on a level, unit, theme, assessment strategy, and didactic sequence. In this manner, such strategies provide attention-grabbing activities that are supported on relevant content.

#### ***4.4.2 Necessity***

High school instruction is not perfect. As much as public education attempts to equip social agents with the English language, there are still some remaining issues that drive learners away from this goal. Certainly, it is necessary to seek solutions for those flaws that surface along the way because if these are not corrected, the time and effort learners and professional put in will be partially wasted. Based on chapter two, it is evident that learners can be victims of stress, anxiety, frustration and other undesirable feelings that affect their willingness to learn due to the long time they spend in high school every day, but fortunately, there are actions that can be taken to make the lessons more manageable. This is why Okon, (2013) suggests making the English class more appealing to pupils by mentioning that “there are several ways of enhancing students’ motivation in the EFL classroom but an important one is to create the lesson on the basis of the learners’ interests.” (p.1) Having said this, it becomes easier to comprehend that fostering the knowledge construction process with this alternative methodological proposal is not just a good option to innovate English teaching, but a necessity given the current obstacles that harm learners’ progress. As discussed in the second chapter, “many educators experience difficulty in their classes because their students are not motivated and do not actively participate in class activities.” (Kim, et al., 2017, p. 35) Consequently, engaging activities such as the ones offered in this sort of proposal are

a requirement in order to lessen this problematic. Learners, additionally, need to be exposed to activities in which they utilize their speaking skills in a more natural way. As mentioned previously, it is important that pupils learn how to use the language in real contexts, but unfortunately, as Güneş & Söylemez, (2018) remark:

Most of the information learned at school is superficial and students do not know how to apply what they learn in the field. This situation causes important problems in terms of attaining educational goals, improving the language, and developing the mental, social and emotional skills of the students. (p.x)

Undoubtedly, the purpose of learning English is not merely to use it in a classroom, but to function in the real world; in different situations and to achieve various goals. It is for this reason that scarcity of opportunities to use the language in a natural way is detrimental to the knowledge construction process. It is important to notice that not all activities in which learners produce speech favor natural communication. In fact, Pawlak, et al, (2011) state that “the activities, such as role-plays that students recite from memory or exchanges that require minimal output, have little to do with authentic communication.” (p.7) As a result, teachers should be aware of the types of activities they bring into the classroom. Even though authentic communication improves pupils’ speaking skills, having social agents interact in the target language with one another is easier said than done. In fact, learners can sometimes be reluctant to speak English because they may feel bored, uncomfortable or even embarrassed to do so, and in these cases, such negative feelings can compromise their knowledge construction process. This is stated by Chodkiewicz & Trepczyńska, (2014), who forewarn that “speaking is a performance skill and may be strongly affected by anxiety, stress and other emotions” (p.64) Therefore, a strategy that can reduce these negative feelings is necessary to foster the knowledge construction process. Given that the three strategies from this alternative methodological proposal correspond to games, the learning experience will seem more engaging. This is necessary because for Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, (1999) “numerous studies have shown that many students become increasingly disengaged as they progress through school” (as cited in Goss & Andren, 2014, p.6) It may be impossible to fight against boredom and other undesirable feelings that cause learners to lose interest in the class, but it is possible that, by using appealing activities that break the monotony of the traditional English class and motivate social agents, they will be more likely to develop their speaking skills. After all,

Palmer, (2014) believes that “As students are developing speaking competence and confidence, they may need extra encouragement” (p.125).

#### **4.4.3 *Scopes***

This alternative methodological proposal is intended to foster the knowledge construction process in a few different ways. First of all, by creating three strategies that aim at developing learners’ speaking skills, English teachers can be assisted in this difficult duty. As mentioned in the second chapter, educational games are remarkable tools that can be used to develop natural communication in the target language. The way these games do that is by allowing learners to talk to each other in the same way they would in their native tongue; without someone telling them what to say. Natural communication is not always easy to find in the English class given that pupils are often times asked to repeat certain words or phrases that can be meaningless to them, and which offer very little in terms of developing their abilities to interact spontaneously with others. Indeed, certain activities which require memorization do not contribute to authentic communication. (Pawlak, et al, 2011, p.7) Such educational games are expected to serve as means for giving feedback, because as stated by Boller, S., & Kapp, K., (2017) “Games are great tools for providing feedback, because players usually receive feedback immediately.” (p.3) By telling learners about their strengths and weaknesses during and after the games this sort of proposal can provide pupils with awareness of their mistakes and make the necessary adjustments to continue improving. The main goal of this alternative methodological proposal is to produce development of the speaking skill, and the population to which such proposal is directed corresponds to tenth graders from any public high school within Costa Rican borders. This improvement involves areas such as fluency, natural communication and complexity among others. Fortunately, these elements can be targeted in the class so they can be further developed. In the case of fluency, the strategies in this type of innovation pretend to work this important component of the speaking skill by allowing pupils to rehearse language they are familiar with. As Harmer, (2007) points out, “the more students have opportunities to activate the various elements of language they have stored in their brains, the more automatic their use of these elements become.” (p.123) When it comes to natural communication, this element can be achieved in the classroom by enabling learners to participate in oral exchanges with their peers where they are expected to answer questions in their own words. Regarding

complexity, the transition of their speaking skills from basic to higher levels can be accomplished by the completion relatively challenging tasks, given that, based on the literature review, for Givón, (1995) “both accuracy and linguistic complexity are increased as long as task complexity is increased on a ‘resource-directing’ cognitive factor.” (as cited in Robinson, 2011, p.143) It is worth noticing that the three strategies will be developed following a didactic sequence to facilitate the learning of new knowledge due to the fact that, as discussed in the second chapter, Baralt et al. (2014) state that “task sequencing should be carried out by designing, and asking learners to perform, tasks that initially are simple on all relevant parameters of task demands, and then gradually augmenting their cognitive complexity on later versions of the tasks” (Taguchi & Kim, 2018, p.166).

To summarize, an alternative methodological proposal is an innovation in education, and in this case, it is necessary given that it allows for improvement in pupil's speaking skills. Such improvement is a major concern given that it is a requirement in order for learners to attain the A2 and B1 English proficiency levels from the CEFR; levels that are expected from pupils at the end of the second cycle and Diversified education respectively. Given the necessity of improving learners' speaking abilities, this alternative methodological proposal contains three strategies that pretend to make this possible. The first one, strengthens natural communication by means of face to face conversations. The second strategy targets fluency by encouraging learners to give opinions to their peers, and the last of these strategies promotes the improvement of complexity by having learners use what can be considered an advanced grammatical structure; reported speech. Certainly, it is important to foster the knowledge construction process with this alternative methodological proposal due to the fact that it motivates learners by giving them opportunities to interact with each other in the class, and this, at the same time, allows pupils to gain fluency as a result of these meaningful interactions. This alternative methodological proposal can also be an important tool to foster the knowledge construction process given that the strategies are designed in such a way that learners are no longer spectators of the English class, but active participants, which increases the time learners use the target language. It must be emphasized that such proposal brings entertainment to the classroom, and this is surely valuable since in order to strengthen the knowledge construction process, it is important that learners be in a good mood. When arguing about the necessity of this alternative methodological proposal to foster the knowledge construction process, it is important to bring to light the fact that multiple negative feelings are frequently

affecting learners. These undesirable emotions are byproducts of long hours in high school and can have a negative impact on learners' performance. As a result, it is necessary to motivate them if teachers are to re-gain their attention, and this can be achieved by educational games. One more reason why this sort of proposal is necessary to strengthen the knowledge construction process is that high school instruction can be too weak Günes & Söylemez, (2018), this causes deficiencies in their oral communication, and for this reason, pupils require strategies to practice their speaking abilities in a more meaningful way. It is important to also keep in mind that in order to truly foster pupils' knowledge construction process in the area of spoken interaction, it is necessary to resort to activities that promote authentic communication, and this alternative methodological proposal includes these elements in the strategies. Regarding scopes, this alternative methodological proposal is intended to foster the knowledge construction process in a number of ways such as helping English teachers cope with lack of motivation in their classroom. The strategies in this innovation pretend to accomplish improvements in the area of speaking skill by developing natural communication, fluency and complexity in social agents. This components of the speaking skill can be worked on with games that follow a didactic sequence and which can be used to provide feedback. As mentioned before, this alternative methodological proposal pretends to reach tenth graders from any part of Costa Rica who undergo public education, and whose teacher is interested in this innovation. In order to maintain the sequence of this work, the next section to be presented corresponds to the Alternative Methodological Proposal Implementation, where an introduction for each one of the three strategies will be presented.

#### **4.5 Alternative Methodological Proposal Implementation**

This alternative methodological proposal is sustained by a series of elements that will be fundamental for the development of the strategies and their implementation. These elements will consist of a level, a unit, two different themes, three assessment strategies and their corresponding didactic sequence. The first element is the level, which is focused on tenth grades. This grade is selected because indicators such as natural communication, complexity and fluency, which are the skills to be strengthened, are relatively easier to be developed at this level since learners have been exposed to the target language in previous levels. The second element is the unit, which corresponds to unit 2. Moreover, since each unit has different topics, this alternative methodological proposal will use specifically the topics “Thumbs Up /Thumbs Down” and “The



Reviews Are In\*.” The forth element is the assessment strategies that are focused on spoken production and spoken interaction, and were chosen according to the corresponding unit and topic. These strategies are: SI.2. Interacts in a face-to-face conversation talking in detail about tweets, memes, poems, posts, blogs, comics, and short stories, videos when interacting in pairs or small groups, SP.2. Sustain a conversational exchange with a peer, and finally, SI.1. Repeat what has been said and convey this information to another person. The last element by which each of the strategies are sustained is the didactic sequence, and it is obtained based on the assessment strategy found in Teacher’s Guide for the New English Curriculum Tenth Grade (2020). The first strategy (SI.2.), uses Planning, Organizing, Rehearsing, Interacting/Describing, the second one (SP.2.), uses Planning, Organizing, Rehearsing, Interacting/Describing and the last strategy (SI.1.) uses Planning, Organizing, Rehearsing, Interacting/Describing.

The implementation strategies of this alternative methodological proposal are made up of various components that will help to understand how to develop each of them and obtain positive results for both teachers and learners. The components are: the name of the strategies, objectives, process, evidence and evaluation. The first strategy is named “Utilizing educational games to promote pupils’ natural communication.” In the objective it is expected to make use of an engaging educational game to promote natural communication with the goal of interacting in face to face conversations where learners talk in detail. In the process, it is expected that, learners interact in face to face conversations talking in detail about videos when interacting in pairs or small groups. For the evidence, it is expected to use materials that can be accessible for teachers, for this reason, in this strategy, three videos, screenshots of different movie trailers, and copies for learners to write notes will be used. When it comes to the evaluation, it is hoped to create a similar activity that can demonstrate whether learners can handle face to face conversations naturally. By doing this, learners will play a game in pairs where one of the participants will have to cover his/her eyes while the other classmate talk in detail about screenshots from the videos previously watched; in this way, the teacher can observe if learners are able to talk in a natural way. The second strategy is named “Exercising learners’ speaking skills to enhance fluency.” In the objective, it is expected to exercise learners’ speaking skills in order to enhance fluency with the aim of sustaining a conversational exchange with peers.

In the process, it is expected that pupils will sustain a conversational exchange with peers by presenting information about one of their favorite artists in a museum. In the evidence, it is expected to use inexpensive and easily accessible materials, in this case pieces of paper and a personal item from each one of the learners. The evaluation activity for this strategy pretends to reveal if pupils are able to sustain a conversation with their peers fluently. The last strategy is named “Using learners’ speaking skills to exercise complexity.” In the objective, considering that learners do not have a great domain in reported speech, it is expected to utilize learners’ speaking skills to exercise complexity with the purpose of repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person. In the process, it is expected that learners will practice their language complexity by repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person. In the evidence, a video, an image of a button, copies with some questions and information related to the video will be used to carry out this strategy. As for the evaluation, it is expected to observe how well learners can repeat what has been said and convey this information to another person. To conclude, this alternative methodological proposal is sustained by a level, a unit, two different themes, three assessment strategies and their corresponding didactic sequence. The level being tenth grade and the unit corresponding to unit 2. The themes selected were "Thumbs Up / Thumbs Down" and "The Reviews Are In\*." As far as the assessment strategies, two belong to spoken interaction and one to spoken production, each following their didactic sequence. Moreover, each strategy is composed of other important elements such as name, objective, process, evidence, and evaluation. In order to continue with the sequence of this alternative methodological proposal, the next part to be presented will be the Description of the First Strategy, which is named “Utilizing educational games to promote pupils’ natural communication.”

#### ***4.5.1 Description of First Teaching Strategy First***

##### **strategy:**

Utilizing educational games to promote pupils’ natural communication.

##### **Objective:**

To make use of an engaging educational game to promote natural communication with the goal of interacting in face-to-face conversations where learners talk in detail.

##### **Variable:**

Educational games.

**Indicator:**

Natural Communication.

**Level:** Tenth

Grade **Unit:**

Two

**Scenario:**

Stories Come in All Shapes and Sizes.

**Theme:**

Thumbs Up / Thumbs Down.

**Assessment Strategy:**

Interacts in a face-to-face conversation talking in detail about tweets, memes, poems, posts, blogs, comics, and short stories, videos when interacting in pairs or small groups.

**Didactic Sequence:**

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Interacting
- Describing

**Implementation of first teaching strategy**

The first of the tree teaching strategies contained in this alternative methodological proposal corresponds to Utilizing educational games to promote pupils' natural communication. In an attempt to take advantage of the benefits of games to promote natural communication, the strategy will have learners use their natural communication through an engaging educational game based on the assessment strategy for speaking interaction corresponding to tenth grade, unit two and week

two, which will encourage pupils to interact in face-to-face conversations talking in detail about a video and its possible content. It is important for this strategy to maintain a close connection with the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada because, otherwise, the innovation would not offer relevant content. For this reason, it is designed combining four important factors; a variable, an indicator, an objective and an assessment strategy. In order to guarantee a strong relationship among those elements, the objective of this strategy has taken into account the benefits of engaging educational games that promote natural communication as a way to achieve interaction in face-to-face conversations between learners to talk in detail. In doing so, it is possible to match the English study program with this alternative methodological proposal.

### **Planning**

For the first part of the didactic sequence, the teacher will prepare learners for interacting in face to face conversations by explaining they will play an educational game in small groups, where learners in each group will have to talk in detail about a video and its possible content. The teacher mentions the videos will consist of two movie trailers, and that they will have to use their knowledge about the film they select to talk to their classmate about which scenes they believe could be included in the trailer. The videos for this educational game will be found in the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9POCgSRVvf0> (Trailer Alice in Wonderland)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zLkasScy7A> (Trailer Finding Nemo)

### **Organizing**

In this second stage, the teacher divides learners into five different groups to carry out the speaking interaction. In order to make these groups, the teacher will show the whole class two screenshots of different movie trailers and will ask learners to select the trailer of the movie they are most familiar with. By grouping learners according to movies they have watched before, it will be easier for them to interact in face to face conversations talking in detail about the video. Once all learners have selected their movie trailer, they will group up with classmates who chose the same image.

Screenshots found below:



## Rehearsing

In order to prepare learners for interacting in face-to-face conversations where they talk in detail about a video and its possible content, the teacher plays a video from the movie “The losers” from the beginning and until the minute 2:20. After pausing the video, the teacher asks learners to work in pairs. Learners talk in detail about the video and scenes they believe will be shown in the second half of it. Learner’s practice talking each other with scenes they expect to see. The link to the video is provided here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AoOOpLpcF28>

## Interacting

In this stage of the didactic sequence, each group will be given a piece of paper. Using their knowledge of the chosen film, learners in each group will start interacting in face to face conversations talking in detail about the video they selected and its possible content. While doing this, each of the five groups will make guesses as to what scenes of the film will be included in their trailer. After they have talked for five minutes, each group will write down, on the piece of paper, only seven of the scenes they believe will appear in their trailer and will hand these to the teacher. The teacher will wait until all groups hand in their guesses and will then begin to check which group got the most correct guesses. For this, the teacher will play in front of the class each group’s movie trailer, one after the other (two videos in total), and will cross out the scenes on the piece of paper as they appear on the trailer. Each correct guess will be worth one point. In the end,

the teacher counts each group's points to find the winner. Links to the videos are once again found below with the piece of paper:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9POCgSRVvf0> (Trailer Alice in Wonderland)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2zLkasScy7A> (Trailer Finding Nemo)

***Guess it!***

a. Write your guesses about what scenes from the movie will be revealed in the trailer

**1.****2.****3.****4.****5.****6.****7.****Describing**

In this final stage of the didactic sequence, the teacher will give learners feedback about their interactions. Then, the teacher will ask two pairs to come to the front and present their interaction to the rest of the group, while they present the teacher can make small corrections if necessary.

## Evaluation

For the evaluation of the assessment strategy, the teacher asks learners to get in pairs and asks one of the learners to cover his/her eyes. After one of the learners covers his/her eyes, the teacher gives the other learner four different screenshots of different scenes from all the two trailers previously watched. With the help of one screenshot at a time, the learner whose eyes are not covered has to talk to his/her classmate in detail about one of the two videos. The learner who has not seen the screenshot tries to guess which of the two movie trailers his/her classmate is talking about. The teacher evaluates the assessment strategy in a qualitative manner by walking around each pair and observing how well they talk in detail about a video during a face to face conversation and writing notes about it. The screenshots for the evaluation can be found below:

**b. Talk to your classmates about the details of the**

**videos with the help of these screenshots.**



ALICE IN WONDERLAND | New Official Full Trailer (HQ) | Official Disney UK



ALICE IN WONDERLAND | New Official Full Trailer (HQ) | Official Disney UK





Finding Nemo 3D Official Trailer #1 (2012) Pixar Movie HD



Finding Nemo 3D Official Trailer #1 (2012) Pixar Movie HD

Having finished this educational game and its evaluation, learners will have gotten the opportunity to engage in an educational game where they could use natural communication while working on the assessment strategy, in this case, interacting in face-to-face conversations where they talk in detail about a video.

#### ***4.5.2 Description of second Teaching Strategy***

##### **Second strategy:**

Exercising learners' speaking skills to enhance fluency.

##### **Objective:**

To exercise learners' speaking skills in order to enhance fluency with the aim of sustaining a conversational exchange with peers.

##### **Variable:**

Speaking

##### **Indicator:**

Fluency

**Level:** Tenth

**Grade Unit:**

Two

**Scenario:**

Stories Come in All Shapes and Sizes

**Theme:**

The Reviews Are In\*

**Assessment Strategy:**

SP.2. Sustains a conversational exchange with peers.

**Didactic Sequence:**

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Interacting
- Describing

**Implementation of second teaching strategy**

The second teaching strategy found in this alternative methodological proposal corresponds to Exercising learners' speaking skills to enhance fluency. Considering that fluency development can be attained through the use of the speaking skill, this strategy aims at exercising tenth graders' speaking skills in order to bring improvements to their speaking fluency while following the assessment strategy for spoken production, unit two and week three, which requires that pupils sustain a conversational exchange with peers. To make this experience more interesting, learners will set up an art museum where they will bring to the classroom an object or photo that represents an artist, they like to sustain a conversational exchange with their classmates about him/her. It is important to remark that, similarly to the first strategy, the strategy here presented is also strictly linked to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y

Educación Diversificada to maximize its impact on Costa Rican public high schools. To accomplish this, a variable, indicator, objective and assessment strategy are interconnected to serve as the foundation of this second strategy. In this way, the alternative methodological proposal can contribute to the current English study program. This strategy is developed with the following didactic sequence:

### **Planning (art museum)**

In order to carry out this strategy, it is required that the teacher notify learners in advance (using Whatsapp, e-mail or any other convenient way) to bring an object or picture that represents an artist they like. In the first stage of the didactic sequence, the teacher will prepare learners to sustain a conversational exchange with peers by informing they will be setting up an art museum where they will display a photo or an object representative of an artist they like, and additionally, they will have to tell a short story about how they got to like this talented person. The teacher explains this activity consists of using their speaking skills to present the short story to one peer at a time in a conversational exchange. The teacher also explains they will write this short story to facilitate this task, addressing how they became fans of this artist and what they like about him/her.

### **Organizing**

For the second stage of the didactic sequence, the teacher will organize the classroom by dividing learners into two groups with equal number of learners if possible. To do this, the teacher will draw an imaginary line in the middle of the class, dividing in this way all learners into two groups (group A and group B) Group “A” will be asked to set up their stands on their side of the classroom (left or right), placing on their table either the physical object or a picture on their phone that represents the artist or something about his/her work. Group “B” will do likewise using the opposite side of the classroom. All learners will be given a small tag to place on the stand with the artist’s name on it, simulating a museum. Having made these two different groups, it would be possible for learners from both groups to sustain a conversational exchange with their peers, and in this way, fluency could be developed as a result of using the speaking skill. The material for the tags is found on the following page:



ART MUSEUM _____ _____	ART MUSEUM _____ _____
ART MUSEUM _____ _____	ART MUSEUM _____ _____
ART MUSEUM _____ _____	ART MUSEUM _____ _____
ART MUSEUM _____ _____	ART MUSEUM _____ _____

**Rehearsing**

In order to facilitate a conversational exchange with their peers, each learner will be asked to devote five minutes to writing on his/her notebook a short story where they mention how they got to like the artist and what they like about his/her work. After doing this, learners will share their short story with a classmate in a speaking manner. While rehearsing, learners can take a look at their written work if necessary; in this way, they will be more confident when talking and fluency when speaking will increase as a result.

### **Interacting**

In order to accomplish a conversational exchange with peers, both groups will take turns to talk about the artist represented by their object or photo. First, learners from group A will stand by their object/photo while learners from group B will behave as museum visitors. Each learner from group B will walk up to one of their classmates from group A to know more about the artist behind such representation and talk to them about him/her. Each conversational exchange will last 1-2 minutes, and then the teacher will ask “visitors” to walk to another stand and continue speaking with their classmates. These conversational exchanges will take place for the amount of time the teacher considers convenient. Afterwards, group A will switch roles with group B to share their artist.

### **Describing**

In this part of the didactic sequence, the teacher will ask two different pairs to come to the front and present about their objects and artists to the group by sustaining a conversational exchange with their peers. While they present, the teacher will give learners feedback if necessary.

### **Evaluation**

To evaluate the assessment strategy, the teacher asks learners to get in pairs, this time with a classmate from their same group (A or B). Once learners have a classmate to talk to, they are given one minute to draw something that represents the artist they like. After they do that, learners sustain a conversational exchange where they show each other their drawings and speak about why they admire that artist in particular. While learners talk, the teacher evaluates the assessment strategy in a qualitative manner, by monitoring the conversational exchanges and writing notes about them.

### ***4.5.3 Description of Third Teaching Strategy***

**Third strategy:** Using learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity

**Objective:** To utilize learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity with the purpose of repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person.

**Variable:** Speaking

**Indicator:**

Complexity

**Level:** Tenth

Grade **Unit:**

Two

**Scenario:**

Stories Come in All Shapes and Sizes

**Theme:**

The Reviews Are In\*

**Assessment Strategy:**

SI. Repeats what has been said and conveys this information to another person.

**Didactic Sequence:**

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Interacting
- Describing

**Implementation of third teaching strategy**

The third and last teaching strategy found in this alternative methodological proposal corresponds to Using learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity. Given that developing complexity in English enables learners to utilize the target language in more demanding scenarios and to advance to higher proficiency levels, this strategy intends to exercise complexity by using learners' speaking skill in a game based on the assessment strategy for spoken interaction, unit two and week three, which requires that pupils repeat what has been said and convey this information to another person. To utilize this assessment strategy in a less traditional way, learners will make two teams to play a game where they will compete to hit a button and repeat what has been said, in this case by an artist, and will convey this information to the teacher, who will check if the information is correct or not. As with the other two previous strategies, a connection between the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada and this third strategy is vital for making a significant contribution to Costa Rican public high school instruction. To guarantee such connection, a variable, indicator, objective and assessment strategy are combined in the elaboration of this strategy, which follows the didactic sequence below:

### **Planning** (Harry Styles Answers Ellen's 'Burning Questions')

In the first stage of the didactic sequence, the teacher will prepare learners to repeat what has been said and convey this information to another person by informing they will watch a video in order to play a game using reported speech. The teacher mentions the video shows a famous artist answering a number of questions. The teacher also explains the game consists of making two teams of learners, which will compete against each other to hit a button, and that, the player who hits the button first will earn the right to repeat something that has been said by the artist about a particular question and convey that information to the teacher to score points on behalf of his/her team. To facilitate this task, every learner will be given a small piece of paper on which they can write down notes or key words (if needed) about the artist's responses before the game. Since learners will use reported speech to repeat what has been said and convey this information to a person, their speaking skills will get a chance to exercise complexity as a result of this relatively challenging structure. Once learners are informed about the game, the teacher plays the video and learners take notes. The link to the video and the material for taking notes are found below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzaJoyxRETQ> (Harry Styles Answers Ellen's 'Burning Questions')



a. Write your notes about the video previously watched.



<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	

In the second stage of the didactic sequence, the teacher will organize the classroom for the game by dividing the group in half, making two teams of learners (team “A” and team “B”). The teacher will place a desk in front of the board with an image of a red button on it (a real button or bell can also be used if possible). Team A will be asked to move to the right of the table and team B will move to the left of the table. Each team will have their players stand in line facing the button, one learner behind the other. The first player in each line will stand close enough to the button that they can reach it with their hands. The paper button for the game is found below:



**Rehearsing**

In order to prepare learners for repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person, each team will be given a sheet of paper with all the questions the artist answered in the video. The teacher asks learners to take five minutes to read the questions out loud. Using the help of their notes, learners try to repeat what has been said by the artist in each question and convey this information to a classmate next to them. By rehearsing in this way, learners can get used to repeating what has been said by the artist and can become more comfortable conveying this information to a person; consequently, learners' will not be taken by surprise when using reported speech and complexity in their speaking skill can increase thanks to scaffolding. The material with the questions and answers from the video can be found in the next page:

## **Harry Styles Answers “Ellen’s Burning Questions”**

**What are your three favorite body parts on a woman?**

- Eyes, smile and character.

**What is a lie you recently told?**

- I wanted to play this game.

**If you can’t sleep in the middle of the night, what do you do?**

- Meditate

**How old were you when you had your first kiss? -**

12

**Who was your first celebrity crush?**

- Jennifer Aniston
- Dying

**Are you dating anyone?**

- No

**What would your signature fragrance be called?**

- Boxers or briefs

**What is your guilty pleasure?**

- Working out to One Direction
- Yes

**If you weren’t singer, what job would you want? -**

A florist

**When you are alone in a car, what song do you play?**

- Cheryl Lynn, Got To Be Real

**Have you ever forgotten the lyrics to your own song while on stage? -**

Yes



**Interacting** In this stage of the didactic sequence, the three-minute video will be played a second time for learners to review the artist's responses once again. The game will begin once the video is over. The teacher will use a set of cards containing the questions and answers from the video and will ask the first two people in line a question related to the artist's responses. Both opponents will try to remember what the actor said using their notes and will hit the button if they recall the answer. The first learner to hit the button earns the right to talk, and only his/her answer will be valid (in case his/her opponent answers too). The player allowed to talk will be given twenty seconds to think about the artist's response; then, he/she has to repeat what has been said and convey this information to the teacher, who will check if the answer is correct or not looking at the cards, making small corrections if necessary. The first two people in line will move to the back of their lines once they have participated in one question; the next two players in front of each line will be next, and the game will continue in this manner. If a player reports the correct answer, his/her team will be granted one point. The link to the video will be once again found below along with the cards containing the questions and answers for the game.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CzaJoyxRETQ> (Harry Styles Answers Ellen's 'Burning Questions')

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
What are your three favorite body parts  
on a woman?**

- "Eyes, smile and character"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
What is a lie you recently told?**

- "I wanted to play this game."

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
If you can't sleep in the middle of the  
night, what do you do?**

- "Meditate"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
How old were you when you had your  
first kiss?**

"12"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
Who was your first celebrity crush?**

- "Jennifer Aniston"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
What is your biggest fear?**

- "Dying"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
Are you dating anyone?**

- "No"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
What would your signature fragrance be  
called?**

"Boxers and briefs"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
What is your guilty pleasure?**

- "Working out to One Direction"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
Have you ever been in handcuffs?**

- "Yes"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
If you weren't singer, what job would  
you want?**

- "A florist"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
When you are alone in a car, what song  
do you play?**

- "Cheryl Lynn, Got To Be Real"

???

**What did the artist say for the question:  
Have you ever forgotten the lyrics to  
your own song while on stage?**

- "Yes"

In this part of the didactic sequence, the teacher will point out the most common errors learners made when repeating what has been said and conveying this information to a person. Then, the teacher reads three questions from the game with their answers and asks three volunteers to come to the front and repeat what has been said by the artist, making small corrections if necessary. The questions for this activity are the following:

**How old were you when you had your first kiss?**

- 12

**What is your biggest fear?**

- Dying

**Are you dating anyone?**

- No

### **Evaluation**

For the evaluation of the assessment strategy, the teacher asks learners to get in pairs. Both learners (“A” and “B”) will receive a piece of paper with the name of an artist on it and four questions that were asked to him/her with their respective answers. Learner A will say the name of the artist on his/her piece of paper and will also read one of the questions along with the answer given by the artist. Learner B has to listen to the answer and repeat what has been said, conveying this information to learner A. Once classmate A has read the three questions and answers and classmate B has repeated what has been said for all of them, learners will switch roles. While learners do this evaluation activity, the teacher evaluates the assessment strategy in a qualitative manner, by monitoring learners and writing notes about them as they repeat what has been said and convey the information to their classmate. The material for the evaluation can be found below:



Student A. What did Taylor Swift say about...

- 1. What did the artist say about the question: What is currently your favorite TV show?**

Game of Thrones

- 2. Your friend invites you to a dinner party, what do you bring?**

White wine

- 3. What is your favorite holiday?**

Christmas

- 4. What is your favorite movie?**

Someone great



Student B. What did Adam Levine say about...

- 1. How many tattoos do you have?**

Too many

- 2. Who was your first celebrity crush?**

Lynda Carter

- 3. Have you ever forgotten your own lyrics?**

Yes

- 4. What are three words you would use to describe yourself?**

Cool, awesome and nice



### ***4.6.1 Social impact***

#### **4.6.1.1 Utilizing Educational Games to Promote Pupils' Natural Communication.**

This alternative methodological proposal contains the three teaching strategies intended to enhance learners' speaking skills, but regardless of the educational impact they may have, it is expected that each one of the strategies previously exposed will positively impact society as well. As it has been presented before, Utilizing educational games to promote pupils' natural communication is the first teaching strategy from this alternative methodological proposal, and due to the fact that its objective seeks to make use of an engaging educational game to promote natural communication with the goal of interacting in face to face conversations where learners talk in detail, it is reasonable to expect certain impacts on society. For instance, given that the strategy is presented as an educational game, individuals can learn the value of working collectively to achieve certain goals. This can be, then, applied to other scenarios outside the educational institution such as a work setting, where individuals will possibly interact with various coworkers who have different personalities and points of view. Considering that "previous research suggests that collaborative pair dynamics, high levels of engagement, and interaction with a dyadic partner of a higher proficiency level facilitates interaction." (McDonough & Mackey, 2013, p.4) this first strategy is expected to break the social boundaries that exist within the classroom, and encourage learners to socialize not only with their closest classmates, but also with other peers they rarely talk to. Given that learners will experience face to face interactions with other peers, not necessarily their "favorite" ones, they could learn to build relationships with other individuals out of their group of friends and interact respectfully, showing acceptance of personal and cultural differences. Such impact on society is not far from the sociocultural considerations advocated by the MEP, which "stress the importance of valuing and respecting the uniqueness of each existing culture at local, national, and global levels. It includes the notions of diversity, interdependence, and interconnection among others." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.18). In this way, individuals can not only benefit academically, but also socially.

#### **4.6.1.2 Exercising Learners' Speaking Skills to Enhance Fluency.**

The second teaching strategy provided by this alternative methodological proposal is entitled Exercising learners' speaking skills to enhance fluency. Because of the fact that its objective pretends to exercise learners' speaking skills in order to enhance fluency with the aim of sustaining a conversational exchange with peers, it is expected to impact society in two main ways. Firstly, by contributing with the development of learners' fluency, it is possible to give individuals one of the skills required to fight unemployment once they get out of high school, and therefore, contribute to the country's economy. As a matter of fact, "Alberto Cañas Escalante highlights the importance of increasing economic growth and creating quality jobs as a way to reduce poverty and inequality. Speaking English fluently is a skill that learners undoubtedly must develop to achieve this aspiration." (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.16). Aside from that, it is expected that, by sustaining conversational exchanges with peers, and sharing with each other their favorite masterpieces, this teaching strategy will teach learners to get along with individuals with various tastes. In this way, pupils can learn to respect what other's like, even if they do not share the same passion. Similar to the first strategy, the social impact expected from the second teaching strategy is also connected to the holistic view adopted by the MEP which states that "All educational agents accept and respect themselves. They are aware of the unity as well as diversity." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.20) In other words, the second teaching strategy could bring benefits to society by increasing individuals' employment opportunities and by understanding and appreciating diversity.

#### **4.6.1.3 Using Learners' Speaking Skills to Exercise Complexity.**

The third teaching strategy corresponds to Using learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity, and as exposed in previous sections, the objective of this last strategy is to utilize learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity with the purpose of repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person. Besides its educational advantages such as instructing individuals so that they can become English speakers capable of communicating relatively complex messages in the target language, this strategy is expected to cause positive impacts on a social level. For example, this strategy encourages learners to be competitive and ambitious; two common characteristics of successful people. Since learners need to work in teams against their opponents, this allows them to see the advantages of hard team-work. Additionally,

by working in groups, learners can get a chance to share with other classmates whom they may regard as annoying, weird or just different. This is not unusual given that Kirchner, (2005) claims that:

When students are first organized into heterogeneous groups, they may or may not know each other. They may also have negative feelings towards some members of their newly formed group or feel threatened because of previous experiences or preconceived notions about his or her teammates. (p.19)

In doing this, they could realize that some of the people they dislike may actually be great companions when working towards a common interest and this could, as a result, eliminate some of the stereotypes that exist in society which cause discrimination.

#### ***4.6.2 Educational Impact***

##### **4.6.2.1 Utilizing Educational Games to Promote Pupils' Natural Communication.**

The first teaching strategy found in this alternative methodological proposal corresponds to Utilizing educational games to promote pupils' natural communication. As exposed before, the objective of this strategy is to make use of an engaging educational game to promote natural communication with the goal of interacting in face to face conversations where learners talk in detail; as a result, it is expected that its implementation in the English class will produce favorable results given its close connection to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada. One of the impacts regarding education that are expected from such strategy is that learners will exhibit a more positive attitude towards the English class. This is because educational games, as argued in the second chapter, can make the learning experience less tiresome given that "Play promotes and facilitates any learning" (Bernabeu, N. and Goldstein, A., 2016, p.52). Additionally, this strategy is expected to gain learners' attention and, in this way, increase the amount of time they remain engaged during the class. Such educational impact surely lies within the range of possibilities given that, for Csikszentmihalyi (2004) "Individuals will engage in an activity when the activity is sufficiently challenging and performable." (as cited in Kim et al., 2017, p. 8) It is worth mentioning that promoting natural communication through this strategy can also make a positive contribution to education because it allows communication in the classroom to be more authentic and meaningful,

this is important given that the traditional ways to learn the target language that advocate memorization have been proven ineffective due to the fact that, as discussed in chapter two, “students must use the target language in meaningful ways to communicate a message either orally or in writing.” (Piccardo, 2014, p.12). Having said that, it is possible to observe that the first teaching strategy has a number of advantages which work together to impact education in a positive manner.

#### **4.6.2.2 Exercising Learners’ Speaking Skills to Enhance Fluency.**

The second teaching strategy presented in this alternative methodological proposal is equally valuable for learners’ knowledge construction process as the first one. The strategy is entitled Exercising learners’ speaking skills to enhance fluency, and given that its objective seeks to exercise learners’ speaking skills in order to enhance fluency with the aim of sustaining a conversational exchange with peers, it is expected to impact Costa Rican public high school education in three main ways. First of all, the fact that learners will get opportunities to exercise their speaking skills in the classroom means that they will be able to practice what they know under their teacher’s supervision, this is advantageous since pupils could get the necessary feedback to correct possible deficiencies to eventually gain fluency. This is why previous chapters discuss that “speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities - chances to practice real-life speaking in the safety of the classroom.” (Harmer, 2007, p.123). Secondly, by progressively enhancing fluency, pupils could become more independent learners, because as discussed in the second chapter, “Students are fluent when they complete tasks automatically, fluidly, rapidly, quickly, and accurately.” (Brand & Brand, 2006, p.2). This is a significant contribution to education given that the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, on which this strategy is based, follows an AoA, which “sees students as active agents responsible for their own progress in learning and sees communication as a social activity designed to accomplish specific tasks. (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.25). Thirdly, by exercising learners’ speaking skills, this teaching strategy could enable pupils to be more spontaneous when interacting in the target language because “the more students have opportunities to activate the various elements of language they have stored in their brains, the more automatic their use of these

elements become." (Harmer, 2007, p.123) These are some of the ways in which this second teaching strategy can make an educational impact in Costa Rican public high schools.

#### **4.6.2.3 Using Learners' Speaking Skills to Exercise Complexity.**

The third and last teaching strategy contained in this alternative methodological proposal is called Using learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity. As with the other two strategies, it is important to reiterate the strong bond that connects this strategy to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada because such connection is vital for creating a strong educational impact. As revealed in previous segments, the objective of the third teaching strategy is to utilize learners' speaking skills to exercise complexity with the purpose of repeating what has been said and conveying this information to another person. In order to execute this strategy, learners are encouraged to utilize a grammatical structure that goes further beyond their current capabilities, thereby exposing themselves to an environment that promotes language growth, which leads to complexity. In fact, for Givón, (1995) "both accuracy and linguistic complexity are increased as long as task complexity is increased on a 'resourcedirecting' cognitive factor." (as cited in Robinson, 2011, p.143) Although grammar itself is not the center of this strategy, it is important to give learners a taste of certain structures they are not familiar with so they can explore other areas of the target language that can enrich their complexity. It is expected that the implementation of this strategy will exercise language complexity thanks to the subtle challenges that learners undergo to complete the task at hand, this is because, as stated in the second chapter, "The need to meet the cognitive demands of a complex task leads learners to use more elaborate and varied lexis and produce more complex linguistic structures." (Robinson, 2011, p.143). Moreover, it is hoped that, by using learners' speaking skills, they will be able to not only expand their language complexity, but also to practice for using the language in real situations because as Piccardo, (2014) mentions, "using the target language to communicate is what provides opportunities for modelling in the classroom and prepares students for communication outside the classroom." (p.12). Having presented this information, it is possible to see the educational impact expected from the third teaching strategy.

### **4.7 Chapter's Conclusion Critical Analysis**

In an attempt to leave behind the traditional, and often uninteresting, ways of teaching the

English language, this alternative methodological proposal has been elaborated to innovate pupils' knowledge construction process and assist English teachers in their efforts to bring learners a few steps closer to their expected English proficiency level from the CEFR, stated in the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada. It is worth mentioning that the three innovative teaching strategies used for this purpose are important because, in summary, "educational innovations can improve learning outcomes and the quality of education provision." (OECD, 2016, p.13). Moreover, they can be easily applied by English teachers due to the fact that they follow the same didactic sequence found on the Teacher's Guide for the New English Curriculum Tenth Grade 2020, for both spoken interaction and spoken production. Besides, teachers do not require expensive materials to carry out these strategies and the amount of time needed for developing each one of them is not excessive for an English class. Having laid out the three teaching strategies in detail along with vital information from previous chapters, it is fair to present the following conclusion critical analysis, where the advantages of modern teaching methods and the importance of changing one's mindset about teaching will be addressed, in conjunction with the presenters' opinions.

First of all, to find appreciation for the three innovative teaching strategies and to better comprehend the reason for this alternative methodological proposal it is useful to analyze the advantages that modern teaching methods have over the traditional ones. This is because the three strategies proposed in this work are meant to innovate, rather than to follow traditional patterns. One of these advantages is that, according to Akbarov, (2014), "modern methodology is much more student-centered." (p.131) This is beneficial because the learner is encouraged to do more than just being a passive information receiver; in fact, "The teacher in the modern teaching process is there not to explain but to encourage and help students to explore, to try things out, and to make learning interesting." (Akbarov, 2014, p.131). In other words, by utilizing modern teaching methods learners can actively participate in their own learning and this makes their knowledge construction process much more appealing. Another advantage that modern teaching methods have over the traditional ones is that they do not gravitate around grammatical structures or other topics strictly related to the English subject, but they go beyond the classroom and have the ability to equip pupils with competences for modern citizens. Indeed, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) shows that modern teaching methodologies are necessary to accomplish this by stating that:

The purpose of studying English in the Educational System is the development of the learner's communicative competence as well as the knowledge, skills, abilities, values, and competences of a 21st century citizen. This requires the implementation of innovative communicative language teaching methodologies. (p.21)

When comparing traditional teaching methods to the modern ones, it is possible to observe flaws in the older methods, which make the modern ones seem far more adequate for teaching. For instance, when talking about characteristics of traditional teaching methods, Akbarov, (2014) points out that “there is very little interaction in the classroom and little chance for students to practice and improve, especially in foreign language acquisition and conversation.” (p.131) This is not ideal for learners' progress in the target language because they need to make use of the language frequently. Indeed, when discussing about student talking time (STT) and teacher talking time (TTT) Harmer, (2007), claims that “a good teacher maximises STT and minimises TTT.” (p.38) Additionally, traditional teaching methods are not as advantageous as the modern ones because they often prepare pupils for an exam and not for life. As a matter of fact, “all the students do the tests, which are the main measure of someone's knowledge, but they are not made to take into consideration their own background knowledge, abilities or interests.” (Akbarov, 2014, p.131).

In spite of the fact that modern teaching methods pretend to improve education, this goal could be difficult to reach if teachers refuse to change their mindset about teaching. Unfortunately, some teachers have not adjusted their teaching to fit the demands of the current era. In fact, “Talking to education ministers one quickly gets the impression that education systems in general are very reluctant to innovate, and that there is strong resistance to change among teachers.” (OECD, 2016, p.11) This is a major problem because, to maximize the impact of education, it is important for teachers to change their mindset about teaching; letting go of the old-fashioned teaching mentality and becoming updated and innovative since this would enable them to put into practice newer and better ways of teaching. This is because, for Kostoff, 2003; Mitchell, 2003 “Most of the literature defines innovation as the implementation not just of new ideas, knowledge and practices but also of improved ideas, knowledge and practices.” (as cited in OECD, 2016, p.15). Certainly, teachers' mentalities should not be detached from innovation because, as Cornali, (2012) claims “today's education systems are required to be both effective and efficient” p. 255 (as cited in Peter Serdyukov, 2017, p.5), and one of the ways this can be achieved is by innovating.



In fact, Peter Serdyukov, (2017), believes that “innovations in education are intended to raise productivity and efficiency of learning and/or improve learning quality.” (p.8). In other words, innovation tends to make education more efficient, and this is exactly what modern education pursues. It is important to emphasize that, despite all the efforts to make education more effective through modern teaching methods, teachers actions can determine whether learners receive the benefits of those newer methods or continue to be treated as empty vessels, and to prevent this last situation from happening, “teachers should work on themselves and keep improving their teaching skills every day.” (Akbarov, 2014, p.136).

Having analyzed the advantages of modern teaching methods and the negative implications of not changing ones’ mindset about teaching, it is worth addressing the importance of this alternative methodological proposal from the perspective of its presenters. First and foremost, it is believed that through the development of this sort of proposal, learners can become more engaged, and this could have a profound effect on their knowledge construction process given that, as presenters, it is considered that learning quality is highly influenced by pupils’ mood. Moreover, it is assumed that learners should develop their speaking skills through educational games because these could create interest in what is being taught and, as a consequence, they could enjoy learning. Perhaps one of the most important parts of this type of proposal is that, apart from providing support on the educational side, this alternative methodological proposal also seeks to help learners to develop as social agents through these activities that encourage them to work collectively to complete tasks, in this way, they could be able to develop skills that can be of great use to them as citizens. To continue with the development of this alternative methodological proposal, the fifth chapter of this alternative methodological proposal, which corresponds to reflections, will be found next.

## **Chapter 5**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The present alternative methodological proposal is presented under the title of “The implementation of Educational Games to Enhance Students’ Speaking Skill in the Knowledge Construction Process.” This type of proposal is designed to mostly benefit tenth graders within Costa Rican public high schools, and it aims to propose a pedagogical action for enhancing learner’s speaking skill through the implementation of educational games. This emerges as a means of facilitating the development of learners’ speaking skills in a more innovative manner since it has been shown that “learners who receive English lessons in elementary and high schools are not reaching the expected English proficiency levels after eleven or twelve years of instruction.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.12). In order to achieve this, three elements related to the topic at hand are utilized as the variables, these are: Educational games, Speaking skill and Knowledge construction process. Such variables are carefully analyzed along with their corresponding indicators in a literature review, where the information collected helps to determine how educational games can enhance the speaking skill through the use of the three innovative teaching strategies. Since this work is intended to be used by other English teachers, three data collection tools are presented as options for stakeholders when implementing this sort of proposal; diagnostic test, pre-test and posttest. At the end of this work, the reflections and conclusions can be found, with a number of recommendations for enhancing learners’ speaking skills.

The following chapter is made of the reflections derived from all the research questions utilized in this alternative methodological proposal. This is important because it is here that all nine research questions are clearly answered based mainly on the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016. It is important to remember that the answers to these questions are critical to expand people’s knowledge on the explored field. In fact, Alvesson & Jorgen Sandberg, (2013) state that “without posing questions it is not possible to develop our knowledge about a particular subject.” (p.1) This is certainly one of the advantages of answering these questions since, in this way, individuals can unveil new information; this is why Andrews, (2003) believes that “there is a clear reason for asking the question, and its answer will contribute to public debate as well as adding to the sum of knowledge.”(p.6) It is worth considering that the research questions are based on the variables and indicators from this alternative methodological proposal; more specifically, questions one, two, and three come from the first

variable, educational games, and its three indicators; natural communication, feedback and cognitive development. Additionally, questions four, five, and six are based on the second variable, which is the speaking skill, and its three indicators; fluency, appropriacy and complexity. Finally, the last three research questions emerge out of the third variable, which corresponds to the knowledge construction process, and its indicators; the AoA, the didactic sequence, and the task. Despite the numerous research questions, all of them share something in common, and this is that they help researchers to expand their knowledge about the topic they are investigating. Additionally, “the research question helps determine the methodology that will be used on a given study.” (Beyea & Slattery, 2006, p.74) Having discussed the importance of the research questions, the answers to these questions will be found in the following reflections.

## **5.2 Reflections**

### **Educational Games**

#### **★ How do educational games promote natural communication?**

In regards to educational games as a variable and natural communication as indicator, it is possible to say that natural communication can be promoted through the use of educational games because these can be designed to accomplish a goal, and this can allow learners to use language in a meaningful way, as a result, “the learner is not speaking or writing for the teacher or pretending to speak or write to another person, but rather speaking or writing in a real life context for a social purpose.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.26) As a result, natural communication is likely to take place in these interactions.

#### **★ How can educational games help to provide feedback?**

Considering the question for educational games as the variable and feedback as the indicator, it can be said that feedback can be provided in various ways, one of them being through peer corrections, which occur, according to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) “When students are given the responsibility to assess their classmates’ work with the purpose of providing feedback in the form of corrections to improve the original task.” (p.348)

#### **★ How is the learners’ cognitive development affected by implementing educational games?**

In regards to the variable educational games and its indicator, cognitive development, it is likely that cognitive development can be affected positively through educational games since these can provide experiences that stimulate learners' critical thinking. Indeed, Ausubel (1964) states that "young learners learn better from inductive teaching and experiential learning as it happens in their natural process of first language acquisition." (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.18)

## **Speaking Skill**

### **★ How can fluency be improved in the speaking skill?**

When considering this question based on the speaking skill as variable and fluency as its indicator, it was found that "the quality and quantity of learners' exposure to English as well as their use of English is fundamental. As the saying goes, "practice makes perfect"." (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.46) Additionally, considering that Harmer, (2007) believes that learners can speak more fluently if they activate the various elements of the language with frequency (p.123), it is possible to establish that fluency can be developed in the speaking skill when learners get regular opportunities to speak the target language.

### **★ How can appropriacy be improved in the speaking skill?**

Based on the variable speaking skill and its indicator, appropriacy, it was found that appropriacy can be improved in the speaking skill by exposing learners to speaking tasks, due to the fact that these allow them to gain awareness of the different social contexts in which they can use the language; as a result, they can use it appropriately. This is because, as Picardo (2014) states, "in order to communicate effectively, one must know not only how a language works, but also what parts of the language to use and when" (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 26) Tasks are ideal for developing this awareness because according to Swain, (2000), "well-designed tasks need to focus on communication that provides an opportunity to use linguistic elements correctly, but also to express oneself appropriately within social contexts." (as cited in Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak, 2015, p.190)

### **★ How can complexity be improved in the speaking skill?**

Considering the speaking skill as variable and complexity as its indicator, it is possible to say that complexity can be improved by posing subtle challenges to learners, which encourage them to expand their English level. This is why a strategy for teaching speaking contained in the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) suggests that, “as proficiency develops, provide learners with more complex tasks, which involve the use of words, phrases and later sentences on a more elaborate level.” (p.35) By doing this, learners can progressively accomplish a higher level of complexity.

### **Knowledge Construction Process**

- **How does the Action oriented Approach help to improve learners’ knowledge construction process?**

Regarding the knowledge construction process as variable and the Action oriented approach as indicator, it can be claimed that the AoA improves the knowledge construction process because in this approach, pupils are treated as the individuals they are and not as robots which can be programmed in certain way; as a result, the process by which they learn is more likely to prepare them for life and not just for a test. This view of the learner is presented in the CEFR, where it is stated that “an Action-Oriented Approach views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents’” (p.9). (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.29)

- **How is the knowledge construction process improved by the use of didactic sequence?**

Considering this question based on the knowledge construction process as variable and the didactic sequence as indicator, it was found that, according to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), teachers make use of sequence procedures for developing spoken interaction and spoken production. (p.35-36) This is beneficial for pupils’ knowledge construction process because in this way, “learners are led step by step to the point where they are able to carry out the final pedagogical task in the sequence.” (Nunan, 2004, p.35-36) In other words, a didactic sequence can improve the knowledge construction process because it allows learners to accomplish tasks using scaffolding, allowing them to progressively prepare for upcoming challenges.

- **How does the implementation of tasks improve the learners’ knowledge construction process?**

Considering the knowledge construction process as variable and task as indicator, it is possible to claim that learners' knowledge construction process can be improved through the implementation of tasks because these prepare them for using the language outside the class, in real life situations. In fact, the role of the task, according to the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), is “to break down the walls of the classroom and connect it with the outside world.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.26).

## Chapter 6



## 6.1 Introduction

The following chapter is devoted to the presentation of the nine conclusions derived from the research questions utilized in this alternative methodological proposal. This is an important chapter in the development of this work because conclusions provide a bottom line for all the work and information collected therein due to the fact that, as Berry, (2000) states, “the conclusion should return to the opening, and examine the original purpose in the light of the data assembled.” (p.113) It is worth noticing that each one of the conclusions drawn in this chapter is based on the reflections revealed in the fifth chapter, this is because both, reflections and recommendations must hold a relationship given that “It is a prime error to present conclusions that are not directly related to the evidence previously presented.” (Berry, 2000, p.113) It is worth mentioning that all conclusions contained in this chapter are drawn considering the three variables and nine indicators from this alternative methodological proposal; to be more specific, the first three conclusions involve the first variable, educational games, and its three indicators; natural communication, feedback and cognitive development. Moreover, conclusions four, five, and six are based upon the variable speaking skill, and its three indicators; fluency, appropriacy and complexity. Lastly, the final three conclusions are linked to the third variable, which corresponds to the knowledge construction process, and its indicators; the AoA, the didactic sequence, and the task. Similarly, to the reflections presented in chapter five, these nine conclusions share something in common, which is that all of them can be used to suggest a course of action because by laying out a number of conclusions, it is possible to use them as guidance to elaborate further recommendations to enhance learners’ speaking skill, and ultimately, contribute positively to the improvement in quality of English classes in Costa Rican public high schools. Having presented this information, the nine conclusions can be found below

## 6.2 Conclusions

For the variable Educational Games, the following conclusions are drawn for the indicators Natural Communication, Feedback, and Cognitive Development.

- **Natural Communication**

It is concluded that Natural communication can be promoted by using educational games due to the fact that they can be designed to achieve a goal, which can enable pupils to use the target language in a meaningful way. As stated in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la

Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) “the learner is not speaking or writing for the teacher or pretending to speak or write to another person, but rather speaking or writing in a real-life context for a social purpose.” (p.26)

- **Feedback**

It is concluded that feedback can be provided in a number of ways such as peer corrections, which occur, according to Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), “When students are given the responsibility to assess their classmates’ work with the purpose of providing feedback in the form of corrections to improve the original task.” (p.348)

- **Cognitive Development**

It is concluded that Cognitive Development can be affected positively through educational games since these can provide experiences that stimulate learners’ critical thinking. In fact, Ausubel (1964) states that “young learners learn better from inductive teaching and experiential learning as it happens in their natural process of first language acquisition.” (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.18)

For the variable Speaking Skill, the following conclusions are drawn for the indicators Fluency, Appropriacy, and Complexity.

- **Fluency**

It is concluded that learners can develop Fluency in the speaking skill when they receive opportunities to speak the target language frequently. This is because “the quality and quantity of learners’ exposure to English as well as their use of English is fundamental. As the saying goes, “practice makes perfect”.” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.46)

- **Appropriacy**

It is concluded that Appropriacy can be improved in the speaking skill by exposing pupils to speaking tasks, because these allow them to gain awareness of the different social contexts where language can be used; consequently, they can use it appropriately. This is why Picardo (2014) claims that “in order to communicate effectively, one must know not only how a language works, but also what parts of the language to use and when” (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés

Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 26)

- **Complexity**

It is concluded that Complexity can be improved by posing subtle challenges to learners, which encourage them to expand their English level; hence, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) suggests that, “as proficiency develops, provide learners with more complex tasks, which involve the use of words, phrases and later sentences on a more elaborate level.” (p.35)

For the variable Knowledge Construction Process, the following conclusions are drawn for the indicators Action oriented Approach, Didactic Sequence, and Task.

- **Action oriented Approach**

It is concluded that the AoA improves the knowledge construction process since this approach, treats learners as the individuals they are and not as programmable robots; consequently, the process by which they learn is more likely to prepare them for life and not just for a test. CEFR, states that “an Action-Oriented Approach views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents” (p.9). (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.29)

- **Didactic Sequence**

It is concluded that a Didactic Sequence can improve the knowledge construction process since it allows pupils to achieve tasks using scaffolding, allowing them to progressively prepare for upcoming challenges. Due to the fact that teachers make use of sequence procedures for developing spoken interaction and spoken production, (Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.35-36) “learners are led step by step to the point where they are able to carry out the final pedagogical task in the sequence.” (Nunan, 2004, p.35-36)

- **Task**

It is concluded that learners’ knowledge construction process can be improved through the implementation of tasks because these prepare them for using the language outside the class, in real life situations. Indeed, one of the purposes of the task is, according to Programas de Estudio

de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) “to break down the walls of the classroom and connect it with the outside world.” (p.26).

## **Chapter 7**

## 7.1 Introduction

The next chapter constitutes the final of all seven chapters that compose this alternative methodological proposal, and it is dedicated to the presentation of a set of recommendations directed to English teachers from Costa Rican public high schools for the future implementation of this work. Although the conclusions to the research questions have been presented in the previous chapter, this work could not be finished without including a vital component; the recommendations. In fact, recommendations are an important aspect to attach when the work that is being developed seeks to make improvements in certain areas, this is why Bisquerra & Bisquerra Alzina, (2004) claim that “when the research has an applied character and is aimed at improving reality, the final conclusions may include guidelines, suggestions and recommendations for practice.”(p.159) Therefore, the importance of this seventh chapter lies in that, by providing a number of recommendations that are based on the reflections and conclusions shown in previous chapters, as well as in the literature collected throughout the development of this alternative methodological proposal, teachers could receive useful guidance to take the most adequate actions that will ensure improvements in tenth graders’ speaking skill, this is because, as Lee-Man & Luk-Fong (2013) point out, “guidance focuses on helping individuals make important decision”(p.3) It is fundamental to notice that all nine recommendations are created considering the research questions, and have been closely linked to the conclusions in order for them to be relevant and effective. Moreover, every recommendation is connected to a variable and an indicator from this alternative methodological proposal. In the case of the first three recommendations, they are linked to the first variable, educational games, and its three indicators; natural communication, feedback and cognitive development. In addition, recommendations four, five, and six are based on the variable speaking skill, and its three indicators; fluency, appropriacy and complexity. Lastly, the final three recommendations are related to the third variable, which is the knowledge construction process, and its indicators; the AoA, the didactic sequence, and the task. Despite the fact that this chapter provides numerous recommendations, all of them have something in common given that every one of them is intended to suggest a path of action that could be taken by English teachers in order to bring improvements to English instruction.

## 7.2 Recommendations

From the variable Educational Games and its three indicators, which correspond to Natural communication, Feedback and cognitive development, the following recommendations are given to English teachers from Costa Rican public high schools for the future implementation of this alternative methodological proposal.

- It is recommended that the use of educational games that encourage learners to achieve goals be increased whenever circumstances allow so in order to dwindle the scarcity of natural communication in learners' knowledge construction process given that, when pupils focus on achieving goals, they often engage in meaningful interactions, and this is likely to result in natural communication. This is crucial since according to Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada (2016), "the student is not speaking or writing for the teacher or pretending to speak or write to another person, but rather speaking or writing in a real life context with a social purpose." (p. 26)
- It is recommended that peer corrections be employed during educational games in order to provide feedback during the knowledge construction process. These corrections can take place, according to Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), "When students are given the responsibility to assess their classmates' work with the purpose of providing feedback in the form of corrections to improve the original task." (p.348)
- It is recommended that those educational games which stimulate learners' critical thinking be implemented in the English class whenever possible in order to affect learners' cognitive development in a positive manner. The reason for this is the fact that, as Ausubel (1964) states, "young learners learn better from inductive teaching and experiential learning as it happens in their natural process of first language acquisition." (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.18)

From the variable Speaking Skill and its three indicators, which are Fluency, Appropriacy and complexity, the next recommendations are given to English teachers from Costa Rican public high schools for the future implementation of this alternative methodological proposal.

- It is recommended that learners be given as many opportunities to speak in the target language as possible in order to solve pupils' lack of fluency since the amount of immersion in the English language has been shown to be vital to improve in this area. In fact, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), state that “the quality and quantity of learners’ exposure to English as well as their use of English is fundamental. As the saying goes, “practice makes perfect”.” (p.46)
- It is recommended that pupils be exposed to speaking tasks as frequently as possible in order to improve their appropriacy in the speaking skill. This is a possible solution to the problem of developing appropriacy in the classroom since this enables pupils to become aware of the different social contexts where English can be spoken, and as Picardo (2014) warns, “in order to communicate effectively, one must know not only how a language works, but also what parts of the language to use and when” (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 26)
- It is recommended that pupils be faced with frequent speaking challenges that barely exceed their English level in order to decrease learners’ poor language complexity given that subtle challenges can expand learners’ English level, and for this reason, Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016) suggests that, “as proficiency develops, provide learners with more complex tasks, which involve the use of words, phrases and later sentences on a more elaborate level.” (p.35)

From the variable Knowledge construction process and its three indicators, which consist of Action oriented Approach, Didactic Sequence, and Task, the following recommendations are given to English teachers from Costa Rican public high schools for the future implementation of this alternative methodological proposal.

- It is recommended that the AoA be used not only when planning a lesson, but also when treating learners during the class, this in order to improve their knowledge construction process given that this approach envisions learners as more than just programmable robots; in fact, the CEFR states that “an Action-Oriented Approach views users and learners of a language primarily as ‘social agents” (p.9). (as cited in Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación

Diversificada, 2016, p.29) As a consequence of this view, the process by which pupils learn could enable them to succeed not only in a test, but also when using the target language in life.

- It is recommended that all the stages of the didactic sequence used in the lesson plan be carefully elaborated considering scaffolding in order to improve the quality of the knowledge construction process. This is because the didactic sequence is a useful way to progressively acclimate learners for tackling further challenges. This is a feasible solution thanks to the fact that teachers make use of sequence procedures for developing spoken interaction and spoken production. (Programas de Estudios de Inglés Tercer Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p.35-36)
- It is recommended that tasks be designed in an innovative way to place learners in real life situations in order to improve the quality of the knowledge construction process. This is because according to Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada, (2016), one of the purposes of the task is, “to break down the walls of the classroom and connect it with the outside world.” (p.26).



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