

**The Implementation of Critical Thinking Activities to Enhance Learners' Speaking Skill in
the Learning Construction Process**

Alternative Methodological Proposal Action Research Project

By

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Abstract

The present alternative methodological proposal is presented under the title “The Implementation of Critical Thinking Activities to Enhance Learners’ Speaking Skill in the Learning Construction Process” and it represents the final project that is required to obtain the degree of licentiate in the English teaching major at Universidad Latina de Costa Rica. In the same way, this action research project has been mainly designed to benefit tenth graders within the Costa Rican English Educational System through the implementation of three innovative strategies that involves critical thinking, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding for the main purpose of improving the speaking skill which is an essential component in the English knowledge construction process; due to, it involves producing, receiving, and processing information, and allows learners not only to interact and communicate with others, but also to express their ideas, their thoughts, their feelings, and their opinions. Additionally, by enhancing speaking abilities pupils can be able to develop their communicative language competence to manipulate the target language more effectively, and to increase their opportunities to progress in the working world and in life. 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, from Ministerio de Educación Pública, 2016, p. 12). As a consequence, the strategies that have been elaborated for the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal will aid English language educators to apply innovative and active learning tasks in the classroom in order to enhance the speaking skill and to help learners reach a high English proficiency level. Furthermore, the literature review presents valuable information regarding to the variables of the study; for instance, critical thinking, speaking skill, and learning construction process. Such variables have been carefully analyzed along with their corresponding indicators. Lastly, it is conducted critical reflections based on the research questions for the sake of making final conclusions concerning to the variables and indicators utilized, as well as recommendations which are directed to English language teachers to prioritize the instruction of speaking abilities through critical thinking activities for making pupils competent users of the English language in the knowledge construction process.

Key words: Critical thinking, speaking skill, learning construction process.

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Dedictory

This project is wholeheartedly dedicated to my wonderful and supportive family. It was their unconditional love, their words of advice, support, and encouragement what motivated me to finish this action research work.

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Chapter I Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The central point of this chapter and its main importance relays on the development of an alternative methodological proposal, in order to implement critical thinking activities into the English language classroom with the aim to develop learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process. It is important to take into account that, "strong critical thinking is not only useful for commerce, the law, and technology, it's absolutely crucial to a dynamic and thriving culture, and it defines an essential component of any solid education" (Foresman et al., 2016, p. 2). Knowing that critical thinking is essential for a solid education, English teachers need to adapt their teaching methodologies and strategies by incorporating critical thinking activities into their instructional process. Indeed, Parrouy (2016) stated that, "educators should adapt their teaching or assessment strategies to help students develop critical thinking in their course" (p. 84). Hence the importance to implement critical thinking activities such as role plays, discussions, debates, dialogues, and so on, because they provide learners with the opportunity to have a meaningful oral communication while improving their critical thinking skills and their ability to speak the English language. Nowadays, the speaking skill has become an important tool for academic and career success, and to communicate well in this global world. Likewise, speaking skills allow the speaker to convey his message in a passionate, thoughtful, and convincing manner. Regarding to the importance of the speaking skill Debbie & Christine (2007) mention that:

Good oral communication is essential to every aspect of life and work. Many surveys have identified it as one of the skills most highly valued by employers. People with good communication skills: can relate well to colleagues and customers, are able to get information they need from organizations and individuals, can explain things clearly and contribute to meetings and discussions, are more successful in their careers, have more positive and productive relationships with others. (p. 2)

It shows the importance for helping and encouraging pupils to enhance their speaking ability; due to, as the authors mentioned before, this skill is essential in every area of life; for instance, boosting confidence when using the English language, critical thinking, personal satisfaction, and performance skills, among others. Additionally, some crucial elements are going to be exposed for the development of this methodological proposal, in this case the

rationale, the purpose, the objectives, the research questions, the hypothesis, and the chapter's conclusion. Regarding to the rationale section, it plays an important role into this research project since it is presented with the intention to explain why the implementation of critical thinking activities into the English language classroom contributes to develop and improve the learners' speaking abilities which are influenced by some factors, and one of them is learners' critical thinking which should be applied and improved during the English knowledge construction process. In fact, Bassham et al. (2011) indicates that:

In college the focus is on higher-order thinking: the active, intelligent evaluation of ideas and information. For this reason, critical thinking plays a vital role throughout the college curriculum. In a critical thinking course, students learn a variety of skills that can greatly improve their classroom performance. (p.7)

It means that critical thinking skills should be embedded in the subject matter and implemented into language education, because language is an important tool for acquiring knowledge; therefore, it should be acquired into the nature of the critical thinking ability of the students, and its possible link to their language proficiency. In the same way, the purpose section of this chapter pretends to highlight the importance to reinforce the learners' speaking skill by the usage of critical thinking activities during the knowledge construction process; due to, such activities play an important role when it comes to improve the speaking ability, and they serve to practice a meaningful communication while reasoning, processing information, solving problems, making decisions, and so on. It is important to consider that the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from Ministerio de Educación Pública, from now known as MEP states that, "to succeed in this environment, second language users must demonstrate that they have the skills needed to process information, reason from evidence, make decisions, solve problems, self-regulate, collaborate, and learn –and they need to do this in their second language" (Programa de Estudios de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 12) .

Consequently, this chapter shows the significance of using critical thinking activities in which learners can be able to express their ideas, make decisions, and solve problems through real life scenarios. Besides, the most important aspect that is going to be developed throughout this methodological proposal is the speaking ability, and as a result, there is the intention to

analyze some essential elements to enhance this vital skill. On the other hand, the general and the specific objectives are relevant elements to conduct the current proposal, because they are the goals to be achieved, and they also summarize and detail the main idea and purpose of this project. Indeed, Sreejesh et al. (2014) explain that “research objectives form the heart of the study. They address the purpose of the project” (p. 265). Likewise, a specific, clear, and testable hypothesis is presented in the development of this research, and this element is important because as Daniel & Sam (2010) clarify “hypothesis helps the investigator in knowing the direction in which he should proceed” (p. 75). Moreover the hypothesis is testable, precise, comprehensible, and shows the speculation that the implementation of critical thinking activities in the learning construction process help to enhance learners’ speaking skill. Another important element presented in this chapter is the research questions that are pretended to be answered through the analysis and interpretation of the gathered information. Such questions are meaningful because they help to conduct the research process in an appropriate manner, and assist in determining the design of the study, the feasibility, appropriateness, and its relevance.

In brief, this chapter highlights the necessity and the importance to implement an alternative methodological proposal in which the main purpose is the improvement of the learners' speaking ability by using critical thinking activities such as role plays, discussions, debates, and dialogues among others, since they require learners to think, to reflect, to make decisions, and to solve problems. Moreover, through those useful and meaningful activities teachers can expose students to real world situations and provide them the opportunity to have a significant communication in which they can be able to improve the speaking ability. As it was mentioned before, the speaking skill has become an indispensable tool not only to achieve a better academic performance, but also for career success; and as a consequence, teachers not only need to adapt their teaching strategies and techniques, but also encourage students to upgrade this vital skill. Furthermore, this chapter provides some of the most important elements to conduct the present methodological proposal; for instance, the rationale, the purpose, the general and specific objectives, the hypothesis, and the research questions, as well as a general idea about them. Once the introduction has been finished, the rational element is developed in the following segment.

1.2 Rationale

Nowadays, the speaking skill has become one of the most important means of communication because through this skill learners can express their ideas, their thoughts, their opinions, and their feelings creating a smooth interaction with others. In accordance with Thornbury (2005) “speaking is so much a part of daily life that we take it for granted. So natural and integral is speaking that we forget how we once struggled to achieve this ability” (p. 1). Likewise, among the skills, the speaking skill is the most preferred skill as for the learners. Indeed, Kaharuddin & Hakim Yassi (2018) explain that “students commonly value speaking more than the other skills of reading, writing and listening since speaking skill is believed able to help them to attain some particular intended purposes” (p. 101). For this reason, there is the need to implement a variety of teaching strategies during the English knowledge construction process, so that pupils can be able to develop their speaking ability and achieve their different purposes; for instance, present education, future careers, personal development, visiting other countries, pursuing advance study, and so on.

Additionally, the modern world requires good communication skills, and as a consequence, the English professors should teach those needed skills to give learners the chance to improve their abilities in speaking and perform well in real life situations. There should be considered that despite the speaking skill is one of the most preferred for many English language learners, it is also regarded one of the most difficult skills some of them must face; due to, even though these learners learn the language for many years, they find it difficult to speak in real time situations when it is demanded. As Pawlak & Waniek-Klimczak (2015) expressed, “acquiring speaking ability can be seen as much more difficult for some students than other skills because there are many factors affecting speaking such as age, motivation or the context in which language is learned” (p. 143). In addition to this, learners have problems using their speaking skill for many other reasons including, lack of vocabulary, not being confident to speak, difficulty expressing words or sentences, being afraid of making mistakes, and so on. However, if teachers implement useful and innovative learning strategies and activities to involve learners more on learning speaking skills in their English classroom, probably they will gradually develop this ability and overcome the fear to communicate with their peers using the English language. According to the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer

Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP (2016) “teaching learning strategies are fundamental in the learning process, in order to enable learners to become intentionally controlled, more independent and autonomous” (p. 48).

Subsequently, this proposal has the intention to include critical thinking activities into the learning construction process; due to, it brings a lot of benefits for students to solve problems in class assignments, face real life situations, and accomplish a better academic growth. As Stobaugh (2013) stated, “the benefits for integrating critical thinking into the curriculum are apparent. Our job as educators then, is to create opportunities for students to develop and enhance these skills” (p. 9). Thus, being aware of the role teachers play when it comes to improve learners’ critical thinking skills, it is important to remark the necessity to incorporate critical thinking activities into their teaching methodologies and strategies, so that pupils can get such benefits during their academic performance. Additionally, it is important to take into account that the most successful classrooms are those that encourage students to think for themselves and engage in critical thinking. Stobaugh (2013) also mentioned that:

When teachers design cognitively complex assignments requiring students to analyze relationships and evaluate the best plans involving real-world topics, the students engage in the content in a meaningful and invigorating way. These instructional tasks actively engage students in complex problems while constructing meaning, a process that can transform students into attentive, eager, high-level thinkers. (p. 9)

Hence the importance to provide a quality education for all students by implementing critical thinking activities into their teaching instruction, so that pupils can have the opportunity to reach high levels of learning, engage in complex thinking tasks, and develop their speaking ability. Also, in this way learners are going to be using the language through authentic activities and tasks which provide the opportunity to use and practice the language in a more proper and meaningful manner. According to Thomas (2009) “learners need meaningful, authentic tasks that encourage them to produce meaningful, authentic output” (p. 289). It means that if teachers incorporate critical thinking tasks into the classroom, they could give learners the opportunity and the possibility to increase, foster and acquire the ability to speak the English language in a successful way.

As a conclusion, the rationale highlights the necessity to carry out this alternative methodological proposal, which aim is to implement critical thinking activities in the English classroom, in order to enhance learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process. As it was mentioned before, the speaking skill is considered one of the most important means of communication that allows learners to achieve many purposes not only in the academic area, but also in their personal development. It is important to remark that teachers play an important role when it comes to help learners to overcome the different difficulties they face when using their speaking skill. Thus, teachers should provide the best conditions, and adapt their teaching techniques to improve the learners speaking skill during the English lessons. It could be possible if instructors include in their teaching instruction meaningful and authentic tasks like critical thinking activities; due to, such activities enable students to acquire the English language easily. Likewise, when using critical thinking activities in the classroom pupils are more engaged and encouraged to think for themselves, make decisions, solve problems, and interact in the classroom through a meaningful and effective communication which help students not only in the improvement of their speaking ability, but also to avoid feeling afraid of making mistakes when using the English language. Furthermore, it is important to consider the benefits that students can get in their academic performance when they develop strong critical thinking skills. Once the rationale element has been developed, the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal is explained in the next section.

1.3 Purpose

This study attempts to develop a proposal for pedagogical action that involves the implementation of critical thinking activities to reinforce learner's speaking skill in the knowledge construction process. Hooks (2009) points out that "critical thinking involves first discovering the who, what, when, where, and how of things—finding the answers to those eternal questions of the inquisitive child—and then utilizing that knowledge in a manner that enables you to determine what matters most" (p. 9). Currently, teaching critical thinking has become an essential element which should be embedded in the academic curriculum. Additionally, philosophical considerations from the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, see the learner as:

A social agent at the center of the curriculum who is active, independent, critical, reflective, creative, innovative, inquisitive, and respectful of human rights and socially committed to their community, country, and the world. To achieve this aspiration, the learning environments and experiences promote dialogue and the search for creative responses and solutions to real-life problems. (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 17)

According to the previous reference learners need to be critical, reflective, creative, and innovative to search creative responses and solutions to real life problems. For that reason, the implementation of critical thinking activities such as dialogues, discussions, role-plays, and debates among others, fits with this philosophical consideration, apart to enhance learners speaking skill, since such activities expose learners to real life problems and require them to use their speaking ability, to interact, and to think critically. From the point of view of Hooks (2009) the most exciting aspect of critical thinking in the classroom is that:

It calls for initiative from everyone, actively inviting all students to think passionately and to share ideas in a passionate, open manner. When everyone in the classroom, teacher and students, recognizes that they are responsible for creating a learning community together, learning is at its most meaningful and useful. In such a community of learning there is no failure. Everyone is participating and sharing whatever resource is needed at a given moment in time to ensure that we leave the classroom knowing that critical thinking empowers us. (p. 11)

Besides the implementation of critical thinking activities, this methodological proposal has the goal to enhance learners' speaking skill, due to as English is widely used all over the world, there is a need for learners to acquire the speaking skill to get success in their respective fields. Thus, Palmer (2011) states that “ if students master speaking, their chances of success increase dramatically” (p. 5). Some students consider the speaking skill as one of the most difficult aspects to master, but it is because sometimes they do not have enough exposure to the English language and as a consequence, they can not speak clearly because they do not know how to express what they want to say and how to say that. For that reason, educators need to teach the speaking skill by using critical thinking activities in which learners are exposed to real language, so that in this way pupils can be able to have successful conversations inside and

outside of school. In the same way, this author mentions that “speaking well enables us to feel more confident and become more responsible” (p. 5). And it is because when students learn to master the English language they begin to overcome their fears.

To sum up, the essential aim of this alternative methodological proposal is to provide through critical thinking activities the opportunity to improve learners’ speaking skill in the learning construction process, setting specific objectives which contribute in the process to improve the learners speaking skill. It is important to take into account the philosophical considerations from the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, in which learners are considered active, independent, critical, and reflective among others. Nevertheless, if the educational system wants to achieve this goal there is the need to incorporate useful and meaningful activities such as debates, discussions, role plays, and so on, in order to develop the speaking skill as well as critical thinking skills which allow learners to become more independent, critical, creative, and innovative. As it was mentioned before by Hooks, critical thinking empowers us, and it is because when students are able to develop high critical thinking skills, they become better making decisions and solving real life problems. Moreover, it is necessary to help learners to acquire good speaking skills so that they can have more opportunities and success in any area of life, and since the ideal platform to acquire good communication skills is the classroom, teachers are the persons in charge to accomplish this goal; due to, during the learning construction process they play a fundamental role. As it was mentioned before it is important to expose learners to the English language, so that they can be able to overcome their fears and to feel more confident. The following section of this chapter consists on the general and specific objectives developed through this proposal.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General Objective

To develop a proposal for pedagogical action that involves the implementation of critical thinking activities to reinforce learner’s speaking skill in the learning construction process.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

- To state the need to enhance learners' speaking skill through the application of critical thinking activities in the learning construction process.
- To substantiate conceptually critical thinking activities to reinforce learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process.
- To plan sequential activities that allow the implementation of critical thinking activities to reinforce learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process.

1.5 Title

The Implementation of Critical Thinking Activities to Enhance Learners' Speaking Skill in the Learning Construction Process.

1.6 Research Questions

This segment corresponds to the research questions that were created and formulated as a fundamental ingredient for the development of the present alternative methodological proposal. These questions are researchable, interesting, relevant, clear, and by defining exactly what is intended to be found or answered, they influence most of the rest of the stages taken to conduct the research, and give a clear focus and purpose of it. Thus, Maxwell (2013) affirms that "in a research proposal or published paper, the function of your research questions is to explain specifically what your study is intended to learn or understand" (p. 75). In other words, they are more than handy tools; they are essential to the research process. Furthermore, these questions are necessary to determine the methodology of the project, and give guidance of how this process should be conducted. In fact, Alvesson & Sandberg (2013) state that:

Research questions provide the overall direction and decide the path for the development of knowledge, as well as indicate what to look for, how to design the study, what methods should be used and what contributions the study can potentially make. (p. 16)

Hence the importance to construct the right questions when conducting a research, since they help to collect relevant and useful information that influences the research work positively. On the other hand, a good research question should be clearly stated, it should be unambiguous, and it should comprise a concise statement of purpose about what is wanted to achieve.

Likewise, the questions should be specific, feasible, answerable, justifiable, ideally, and may provide answers that can describe, explain, identify, qualify, substantiate or even predict something (Cowan, 2009). From the previous reference it can be said that the process of creating research questions is challenging, takes time, and requires to be flexible and open to new ideas. For that reason, it is necessary to start in advancement collecting data, because these questions should be firmly established before beginning to design the research plan and methodology. Additionally, this alternative methodological proposal has the intention to examine the following research questions:

- How does collaborative learning help to improve critical thinking skills?
- How is critical thinking improved by implementing real-life scenarios in the learning construction process?
- How is critical thinking affected by instructional scaffolding?
- How does the communicative language competence help to improve learners' speaking skill?
- How is the speaking skill affected by learners' fluency development?
- How does the implementation of authentic spoken activities help to improve learners' speaking skill?
- How does the action-oriented approach help to improve pupils' learning construction process?
- How is the learning construction process improved by using didactic sequence?
- How does the implementation of tasks improve the learning construction process?

1.7 Hypothesis

Subsequently, this section has the goal to present a specific, clear, testable, and predictive statement about the outcome that is pretended to be achieved with the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. This statement corresponds to the hypothesis, and it is presented in order to know the direction in which this project should proceed. In fact, Kumar (2019) describes that “the importance of hypotheses lies in their ability to bring direction, specificity and focus to a research study” (p. 179). Additionally, the author mentions that “in formulating a hypothesis it is important to ensure that it is simple, specific and conceptually clear; can be verified; is rooted in an existing body of knowledge; and can be operationalized” (p. 190). In other words, there is no place for ambiguity in the formulation of a hypothesis,

because it makes the verification of the hypothesis almost impossible. In the same way, there should be available methods and techniques for data collection and analysis, since there is no point in formulating a hypothesis if it cannot be exposed to verification because there are no techniques to verify it. Furthermore, knowing that the hypothesis should be operationalisable, it has to be expressed in terms that can be measured; due to, if it cannot be measured, it cannot be tested, and as a consequence, no conclusions can be drawn.

In accordance with Singh & Bajpai (2008) “the hypothesis indicates not only what to look for in an investigation but how to obtain data. It helps in deciding research design. It may suggest what subjects, tests, tools, and techniques are needed” (p. 99). It means that the hypothesis has a strong relation with the research questions, since both indicate what to look for, the methods and techniques that are needed, and contribute in the design of the research. On the other hand, Pellissier (2007) remarks that:

The research hypothesis are tentative propositions set forth to assist in guiding the investigation of a problem or to provide possible explanations for the observations made. It is a logical supposition, a reasonable guess or educated conjecture about some relationships, factors or the problem under investigation. (p. 50)

In this case, the logical supposition, the predictive statement, and the outcome that is pretended to be achieved through this proposal is the following:

The implementation of critical thinking activities in the learning construction process helps to enhance learners’ speaking skill.

1.8 Chapter’s Conclusion

In summary, this chapter shows the importance and the necessity to implement critical thinking activities in the English language classroom with the purpose to improve learners’ speaking skill during the knowledge construction process. As it was mentioned before, speaking is so much a part of daily life and it has become one of the most important means of communication. At the same time, as it was stated by the authors Kaharuddin and Hakim Yassi, students commonly value speaking more than the other skills of reading, writing and listening, because as they also stated this skill is believed able to help learners to attain some particular

intended purposes. Therefore, it is necessary to provide students the opportunity to improve their speaking ability through critical thinking activities like role plays, discussions, dialogues, debates, and so on, since they require students to interact and to have a meaningful oral communication. Additionally, by using critical thinking activities learners can be able not only to solve problems, make decisions and face real-life situations, but also, they will be more encouraged to think for themselves.

Moreover, through the development of this chapter it was argued that critical thinking activities contribute to create an enjoyable learning environment and help students to become more independent, since it enables them to assess their learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. In the same way, it allows them to take ownership of their education. On the other hand, the classroom is the ideal platform to acquire good communication skills and during this process teachers play an important role. Hence the importance to adapt their teaching style and the different methodologies used in the classroom when it comes to improve learners' speaking skills. The present research proposal tends to improve the speaking skill by recommending the use of critical thinking activities; due to, as it was mentioned before; these activities require learners to use their speaking ability, and to think critically. Additionally, as it was indicated by the authors Bassham, Irwin, Nardone, and Wallace, critical thinking plays a vital role throughout the college curriculum, because students learn a variety of skills that can greatly improve their classroom performance.

Without a doubt, it is essential to expose students to the English language by using real life situations into the classroom, as it gives learners the opportunity to practice real language, so that in this way they can be able to use the English language appropriately and without fears. Likewise, learners must be encouraged to get better speaking and critical thinking skills to be able to achieve their intended purposes not only in the academic area, but also in their personal development and future careers. In this sense, teachers as the persons in charge into the learning construction process need to be aware about the different difficulties learners can have at the time to improve their speaking and critical thinking abilities. Therefore, they should adapt their teaching techniques and provide students the best conditions to learn. In this case, teachers must incorporate a variety of critical thinking activities; due to, this kind of activities allow students to interact with their peers, improve the speaking skill, and at the same time they are going to be

able to develop strong critical thinking skills which are essential to become better in making decisions, solving problems, and get better academic performance. Furthermore, throughout this chapter some important elements have been developed, for instance the rationale which highlights the importance and the necessity to carry out this alternative methodological proposal, the purpose, the general and the specific objectives that form the heart of the study, the different research questions which help to indicate the design of the investigation and to conduct its process in an appropriate way, and the hypothesis that is specific, clear, testable, and contributes to give direction of the research work. Once the first chapter has been concluded, there is going to be presented the literature review in which the variables and the different indicators that were chosen with the aim to develop this methodological proposal are going to be analyzed and developed.

Chapter II Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

The development of this chapter is conducted by the theoretical framework which is vital for the construction of this alternative methodological proposal; due to, “a theoretical framework helps the researcher explain or predict study outcomes and to link those outcomes to the existing body of knowledge” (Borbasi et al., 2011, p. 91). Likewise, the theoretical framework has the goal to give support and clarity to the present research work, and to highlight the necessity to improve the learners speaking skill by using critical thinking activities during the knowledge construction process. Even though, pupils are exposed to the English language around eleven years in the school system, most of them have poor language skills especially in terms of speaking. Indeed, Auer et al. (2018) mentioned, “it is common for teachers to come across students who have sufficiently mastered the writing and reading skills but are unable to express themselves verbally” (p. 334). It happens mainly because sometimes the speaking skill receives little attention in the classroom as it is not tested in examination, and besides that, the teaching materials to develop this skill are scarce. As a result, there is the need to upgrade the educational quality with the aim to seek for better teaching practices in which students not only can enhance their speaking performance, but also to enjoy during their learning process. Likewise, Portales & Portales (2005) argued that:

Since language is the key to everything that makes an education successful, considerable time and effort should be placed on how words can be made to work for students. If a student understands language as a vehicle for communicating ideas, he or she will soon begin to understand how words shape and create a great number of realities. Sharpening print and oral skills for that reason prepare students for school success so that students learn more effectively. (p. 154)

Therefore, it can be said that in the area of education all manner of ideas are constantly being devised and invented with the main purpose to help learners and to meet their education needs, which means that educators have been looking for the best strategies to treat some weaknesses learners have at the time to speak the English language. According to Shoro (2018) “the teacher assesses the needs and possibilities of a situation and creates and uses practice that has promise for the situation” (p. 99). Furthermore, through the theoretical framework, this chapter pretends to provide helpful information related to the improvement of the learners` speaking skill

through the implementation of critical thinking activities. As a consequence, it is required to underline the significance of this essential element into this alternative methodological proposal. Thus, Wallace (2010) cited, “in a research paper, it is important for the author to demonstrate sufficiently that they have drawn on appropriate theoretical frameworks to ensure that the data and analysis that are being presented carry conviction” (p. 27). In the same way McKenna (2006) argued that, “so important is the theoretical framework, that researchers could more easily dispense with the physical operations of a study than the framework which gives meaning to all the research activity” (p. 206). It means that the theoretical framework serves as the focus for the research and helps to guide its process. Moreover, the theoretical framework is useful to reinforce, support, and enrich the strengths of the study, and to specify the key variables that influence in the problem under investigation.

On the other hand, for the development of this chapter, different books have been reviewed in order to support and to reinforce the three variables; for instance, critical thinking, speaking skill, and the learning construction process. Regarding to the first variable that corresponds to critical thinking, it involves six vital skills such as problem solving, analysis, creative thinking, interpretation, evaluation and reasoning which are essential ingredients learners need for being successful not only in the field of education, but also in their lives beyond the classroom including the labor field. As reported by Moore & Stanley (2010), “critical thinking and problem solving skills are very important for incoming high school graduates’ successful job performance” (p. 21). Additionally, this variable is based on three indicators which are collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding. Collaborative learning can be defined as an educational approach to teaching and learning that involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, and to accomplish a common goal. Indeed, Gokhale (1995) as cited in Orvis & Lassiter (2007) defines collaborative learning as “an instruction method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal” (p. 23). Thus, this indicator comes to be an essential element to enhance the learning construction process through working together.

Additionally, anchoring instruction to real life scenarios serves two important purposes “first, it increases the relevance of the school’s curriculum because students can link what they learn in school with what they will do after graduation. Second, it helps students generalize skills

learned in school to actual performance settings” (McDonnell & Hardman, 2009, p. 173). Hence, this indicator is an essential element for the knowledge construction process, as it helps pupils to apply the knowledge and the skills they have learned in school, to situations they may face in their future life. On the other hand, for the author Bender (2008) the emphasis of instructional scaffolding is placed on “the adult assisting the student in the learning process with individual prompting and guidance, which is tailored to the specific needs of the individual student to offer just enough support for the student in a new task” (p. 72). Therefore, the instructional scaffolding is essential for the English learning process since it gives pupils the opportunity to receive support and guidance when it comes to accomplish a new task.

The second variable showed in this chapter is the speaking skill. Speaking is the first way to interact with others in the social community, and it is critical to perform well in a target language environment. Furthermore, speaking has acquired great importance along the history of English teaching since it is referred as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving and processing information (Napitupulu et al., 2019). Subsequently, this variable is supported by the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. The communicative language competence is “the ability to use the language effectively for communication. Gaining such competence involves acquiring both sociolinguistic and linguistic knowledge and skills (or, in other words, developing the ability to use the language fluently, accurately, appropriately and effectively)” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. x). Therefore, this indicator is necessary to strengthen the learning process, because it gives learners the opportunity to gain the knowledge and the skills needed for an effective communication.

Additionally, fluency can be defined as “the aspect of speech production that refers to the continuity, smoothness, rate, and/or effort with which phonologic, lexical, morphologic, and/or syntactic language units are spoken” (Cummings & Petscher, 2016, p. 3). As a consequence, teachers should provide learners with the opportunity to improve their fluency development so that they can be able to speak the English language quickly, smoothly, and with rate. Apart from that, the authors Conrad & Donaldson (2011) state that “one role of instructors is to provide students with meaningful experiences that will have relevance in their lives beyond the instructional situation” (p. 92). In this case, teachers can take advantage of the indicator of

authentic spoken activities, due to, they involve real world tasks that are relevant, applicable beyond the instructional situation, and provide learners with the opportunity to have meaningful experiences during their knowledge construction process. The last variable indicated in this research is the learning construction process. Learning is an active process of constructing knowledge that is supported by teaching or instruction, and the types of learning environments that support students in achieving the different learning outcomes are those that are designed to foster knowledge construction. Moreover, active knowledge construction is supported by learning experiences in which the learner is involved in the active and interpretive development of personal understanding and meaning; however, the design of learning experiences that promote knowledge construction is a complex process, and there is a lack of pedagogic models and explicit frameworks for learning designers (Lockyer et al., 2008).

The study of this variable is braced by the indicators Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and tasks. The Action Oriented Approach is the new English syllabus that has been gradually adapted by the educational system and which is considered a key resource for all those involved in language education, including teachers, researchers, curriculum developers, and so on. Along with this, the Action Oriented Approach has become extremely important for the knowledge construction process, because it “invites and requires learners to come out of their comfort zone and exercise their agency, taking some responsibility for their learning process” (Piccardo & North, 2019, p. 181). On the other hand, in a didactic sequence “the workshops and the activities should follow a progression. The activities integrate new information while consolidating and reinforcing previous knowledge” (Pardo et al., 2013, p. 34). Thus, the indicator of didactic sequence comes to be fundamental in the learning construction process because it can allow teachers to create and perform activities taking into account the learners’ progression as well as to reinforce their previous knowledge. Additionally, the indicator of tasks can be defined as “activities in which the learners are asked to use the target language in order to achieve a particular outcome within a particular context (e.g. solving a problem; planning a meeting; selecting candidates for an interview)” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. xvi). Since tasks require learners to use their target language, it can be said that this indicator plays a vital role in the learning process, especially when it comes to enhance the learners’ speaking skill.

Altogether, the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal is based on the principles of improving the learners' speaking skill by using critical thinking activities during the learning process. There is also considered to include this kind of activities for students to perform better in the course of their studies, and as it was mentioned before, the theoretical framework is conducted for the development of this chapter with the goal to give support and clarity to the research project, and to demonstrate through the examination of available and useful resources, how the speaking skill can be enhanced by the usage of critical thinking activities into the English language classroom. As it was previously mentioned by McKenna the theoretical framework gives meaning to all the research activity, and for that reason, a trustworthy information should be analyzed and provided in order to accomplish the purpose of this chapter that is to reinforce not only the variables of critical thinking, speaking skill, and learning construction process, but also its indicators as well as demonstrate the influence these elements have when it comes to improve the learners speaking skill.

As it was stated before the indicators from those variables correspond to collaborative learning in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal, real life scenarios which help pupils to apply the knowledge and the skills they have learned in school, to situations they may face in their future life, instructional scaffolding which gives pupils the opportunity to receive support and guidance when it comes to accomplish a new task, communicative language competence which gives learners the opportunity to gain the knowledge and the skills needed for an effective communication, fluency development which enables pupils to speak the English language quickly, smoothly, and with rate, authentic spoken activities which involve real world tasks and provide learners with the opportunity to have meaningful experiences during their learning construction process, the Action Oriented Approach which invites and requires learners to come out of their comfort zone and exercise their agency taking some responsibility for their learning process, the didactic sequence in which the workshops and the activities should follow a progression, and tasks which are activities in which the learners are asked to use the target language in order to achieve a particular outcome within a particular context.

Apart from that, it is important to consider that even though, teachers are constantly looking for better teaching techniques and strategies to help their students, there is the need to

provide more opportunities for learners to use their critical thinking and speaking skills during the English lessons. Thus, the use of critical thinking activities is an effective procedure to achieve this particular aspect; due to, these tasks involve discussions, dialogues, role plays, debates, and conversations among others, in which pupils are able to practice the speaking skill through a meaningful interaction and communication. Admittedly, the authors Portales and Portales give high importance to the improvement of the speaking ability as they think that when sharpening this skill students get prepare for school success and to learn more effectively. In addition to this, the following segment describes and develops the first variable that is called critical thinking in which relevant data is presented to show the impact it has on improving the ability to speak.

2.2 Critical Thinking

The aim of this variable is to highlight the significance of critical thinking in the knowledge construction process. Critical thinking is one of the most valuable skills that every student should learn mastering; due to, when learners improve on the critical thinking skills they also improve on their academic performance, on their achievement in the classroom, and on their overall knowledge. Indeed, Stanley & Moor (2010) mention that “there is a link between critical thinking skills and increased student achievement in the classroom” (p. 16). For that reason, educators should develop instructional pedagogy with purposeful learning activities to encourage and foster critical thinking abilities into the English language classroom. Additionally, these authors mentioned that “ many believe critical thinking skills should be limited to those subject areas that lend themselves to it, such as English, but these learning skills can be taught across the curriculum” (p. 17). It means that critical thinking should not be taught only in the English classroom, but also in the other classroom subjects since it is a domain general skill which can be taught across the curriculum, and gives learners the capacity to think in a more rational and clear way. On the other hand, critical thinking is not a result of simple growth and maturation; instead, critical thinking skills must be explicitly taught and consistently practiced. If pupils are expected to critically evaluate an idea or theory, then they need practice and instruction on how to do that. Thus, Naiditch (2016) points out that:

It is important to understand that critical thinking is a skill. As such, it needs to be practiced and developed. Students do not learn to think critically unless they are trained

to do so. Students need to be exposed to and engaged in pedagogical practices that require them to connect to what they know and do, to make meanings and consider possibilities, and to come up with creative and novel solutions to problems. (p. 4)

From the previous reference it can be said that by practicing critical thinking, learners are allowing themselves not only to solve problems and come up with new and creative ideas to do so, but also to evaluate those ideas and then using the best one and transforming or adjusting it if needed. It should be noted that one of the most important aspects of incorporating critical thinking during the knowledge construction process for students to become critical thinkers, is that it elevates autonomous learning into the classroom; due to, instead of complete dependence on classroom learning and teachers for complete guidance and instructions, critical thinking allows students to become more self-reliant and independent learners. Indeed, Dyer (2006) explains that “critical thinkers are self-aware, curious and independent. They introspect in their own thinking processes, they work at knowing their own biases, and can name the strategies they are using when they make judgements” (p. 2). As well as that, critical thinking helps the students to evaluate their learning style and recognize their areas of strength and flaws. By achieving this ability they can focus on the solution in a better way and set goals accordingly.

It is necessary to mention that all pupils should be taught how to improve their creative and critical thinking, because it helps them with all aspects of their lives, whether following instructions, using technologies safely, composing music, finding space on the playing field or resolving personal difficulties. In short, becoming a good thinker makes pupils happier individuals and their overall wellbeing improves. Moreover being able to think effectively increase young learners’ employability prospects (Grigg & Lewis, 2018). As well as that, learners can get many other benefits from critical thinking; including career success, better decision making, better citizens, improve relationships, enhance problem solving skills, and so on. In fact, for the author Stobaugh (2013) several benefits arise from practicing and refining students’ critical thinking skills, she states that “embedding critical thinking skills in the curriculum helps sustain an educated citizenry; prepares students for college, future careers, and life situations; and primes students to meet mandates of state and national tests and standards” (p.3). Therefore, the educational system should consider the possibility to incorporate critical

thinking into the English curriculum to enable students to practice and refine this skill to acquire such benefits. On the other hand, Halpern (2013) affirms that:

Critical thinking is best cultivated in a school environment that encourages students to ask questions, to think about their thought processes, and thus to develop habits of mind that enable them to transfer the critical thinking skills they learn in class to other, unrelated, situations. (p. 12)

In other words, academic institutions need to develop and implement a strong critical thinking pedagogy to promote students' engagement in the learning process and to cultivate in students critical thinking abilities so that they can be able to transfer those abilities which are necessary not only for their academic achievement, but also for their personal and workplace success. Additionally, it is necessary to take into account the role teachers play when it comes to develop and improve critical thinking in the classroom since they are the people in charge of students during their knowledge construction process. In fact, Robinson & Verna (2019) affirm that "teachers are an indispensable part of the debate on the development of critical thinking skills. Much research has centered on examining teachers' critical thinking skills, and on empowering teachers for more effective delivery of critical thinking in instruction" (p. 1). Therefore, educators need to develop a more effective critical thinking instruction with purposeful learning activities to promote the development of students' critical thinking abilities. Furthermore, these authors state that:

Efforts to cultivate critical thinking in the classrooms should involve teachers' use of a variety of appropriate strategies and methods, making time for thinking, developing, and using a language which supports thinking, making the classroom environment rich with the documents that stimulate students' thinking processes, and making their own thinking visible to students. (p. 5)

Likewise, teachers should receive a kind of training in critical thinking instructional strategies and give learners the opportunity for consistent and repeated practice of those skills over an extended period of time. On the other hand, the variable of critical thinking is based on three indicators, in this case, collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding. Consequently, it is fundamental to underline the importance of each indicator. Talking about collaborative learning, it is one of those successful teaching strategies in which

learners are allowed to work in pairs or small groups in order to help each other and accomplish a shared goal. This indicator has a great influence in the knowledge construction process because as Wilson & Conyers (2013) cited “social learning, including collaboration in pairs and small groups and peer tutoring, has been found to boost achievement as children share what they know and expand their knowledge by comparing their perspectives and learning strategies with others” (p. 155). Following with the indicator real life scenarios, it refers to have students working on different tasks or activities related to their daily life such as working on planning a trip to another country, practicing an emergency call to the hospital, and creating an interview for a job application. This indicator is relevant in the knowledge construction process since the use of real life scenarios into the English language classroom not only give students the opportunity to practice their speaking skill, but it also increases their engagement and their motivation to learn. Indeed, Hadley Dunn (2013) stated:

That is motivation for my students, because when they do not see anything related to their real life, they do not feel motivated. I mean some of them just do it because they have to do it... but most of them want a connection between the subject and their real life and so I need to think about real-life situations whenever I am teaching a particular lesson. (p.89)

Additionally, regarding to the last indicator from the variable critical thinking that is instructional scaffolding, it involves the variety of instructional techniques that teachers use in the classroom with the main purpose to help or to support their students in the achievement of the different tasks. Earley (2008) mentions that “at first, the teacher provides instructional scaffolding that helps the student construct knowledge. Gradually, the teacher provides less scaffolding until the student is able to construct knowledge independently” (p. 10). With this in mind, it can be said that instructional scaffolding is relevant in the learning process as it helps students to construct knowledge, to reinforce their skills, and to perform the different tasks independently.

Briefly, critical thinking plays an essential role in the knowledge construction process, since it comes to increase not only the learners achievement in the classroom, but also their academic performance. As it was mentioned before, teachers need to promote and encourage critical thinking skills into their lessons by implementing an instructional pedagogy in which a

variety of activities and techniques are incorporated in order to give students the opportunity to practice and develop such skills. Through this variable of critical thinking, it has been showed the amount of benefits learners have in their studies, and in their personal life when getting critical thinking skills, for instance, career success, better decision making, better citizens, improve relationships, enhance problem solving skills, prepares students for college, future careers, life situations, and so on. On the one hand, it is important to remark the essential role teachers have regarding to the development and improvement of students' critical thinking abilities, but on the other hand, it is also necessary to mention the need to give this educators an especial training based on critical thinking instruction and strategies, so that they can be able to support their students and foster critical thinking in their classroom. As it is known, the main purpose of this alternative methodological proposal is to enhance the learners' speaking skill by implementing critical thinking activities in the English language classroom. For that reason, the variable of critical thinking as well as their corresponding indicators that were mentioned in the previous paragraphs are a fundamental piece for the improvement of the speaking ability, and they have a notable influence in the knowlege construction process. Hence, in the following segment of this action research, the indicator collaborative learning is developed with the aim to highlight its importance in the knowledge construction process.

2.2.1 Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is an educational approach in which groups of two or more learners work together to solve problems, learn new concepts, and enhance learning. It enables learners to work in groups to achieve a task, communicate with each other and help one another with learning tasks, problems and ideas, develop appropriate social skills for working with others, process their achievement within the group, and monitor and evaluate the results (Walker Tileston & Darling, 2009). Hence, the importance and the necessity to promote collaborative learning into the English language classroom so that in this way learners can be able to communicate with each other while solving problems, and achieving tasks together to enhance learning. Furthermore, Orvis & Lassiter (2007) state that “collaborative learning is an unstructured, small group process that cultivates independence, free thinking, and dissent” (p. 32). Knowing this, it can be said that this indicator plays a fundamental role into the knowledge construction process because when pupils are allowed to accomplish their different tasks by

working in small groups, they become more independent. On the other hand, based on a research, Hunzer (2012) wrote the following statement:

Time and time again, the research told me that collaborative learning, when done well, is highly beneficial for everyone, both students and instructor. I read and reread that collaborative learning helps students become accustomed to their academic environment and helps them improve their communication skills, thus enabling students to more successfully negotiate discourse communities both in and out of class. (p. 1)

As the author mentioned in the above statement, collaborative learning is not only beneficial for learners, but also for instructors, because through this method they can be able to help students adapt or clarify their shared and individual goals, facilitate and encourage the positive and productive interaction of all team members, explain, model, and guide how to think critically and how to work collaboratively. On the other hand, “involving learners in collaborative learning activities could positively contribute to extending and deepening their learning experiences, test out new ideas, improve learning outcomes, and increase learner satisfaction” (Daradoumis et al., 2011). Thus, the use of collaborative learning activities is a great idea not only to provide learners with the opportunity to get the above benefits, but also to develop higher level thinking skills, to increase students retention, to promote higher achievement and class attendance, and to develop oral communication skills among others. In addition to this, Istiqomah & Bangsawan (2020) remark that:

Collaborative learning activities are useful for helping pupils to move from their social fluency in English to the acquisition of academic English. For collaborative learning to be effective, the instructor must view teaching as a process of developing and enhancing pupils’ ability to learn. The instructor’s role is not to transmit information, but to serve as a facilitator for learning. (p. 14)

Without a doubt, teachers play a vital role into the collaborative learning process, and for that reason, it is crucial that future teachers experience the practice of this useful tool during their educational preparation, not only as a learner but as a teacher too. It because most of the times teachers tend to teach in the way they were taught, and therefore, such successful experience may encourage them to implement collaborative learning techniques with the pupils in their classes. Furthermore, as Shonfeld & Gibson (2019) state “teacher educators should design and

implement collaborative learning and thereby create a community of learners” (p. 169). Thus, when planning and designing collaborative learning activities, teachers need to take into account the learners’ needs that may require attention, encourage learners to participate, facilitate ways for group members to learn from each other, manage and guide the group to achieve the learning outcomes, and create a safe environment, so that they can be able to create a community of learners. On the other hand, it is important to take into account some factors that influence on the implementation of the collaborative learning approach. As an illustration, O'Malley (2009) states that:

There are many factors that influence collaborative learning, including group composition, the nature of the task, and the nature of the environment itself. Collaborative learning is also influenced by the affordances of the tools, the context in which they are used, the role of the teacher as a facilitator of class discussions, as well as when the tools are used in the learning process. (p. 56)

It means that, despite educational systems have a constructivism vision in which the use of collaborative learning comes to be an indispensable strategy to foster students interaction and communication, and to strengthen the knowledge construction process, it also has some negative aspects that hinder the achievement of positive academic results. In relation to this limitations, Hmelo-Silver et al., (2013) noted that:

Despite the potential benefits of collaborative work, researchers have documented a number of debilitating processes that inhibit positive outcomes. Students may fail to share elaborated explanations, may not seek help when they need it, may disengage from interaction or suppress other students’ participation, may engage in too much conflict or avoid it altogether, may not coordinate their communication, and may engage in negative social-emotional behavior that impedes group functioning. (p. 22)

In short, the indicator of collaborative learning is an effective and essential approach into the knowledge construction process, because it brings a lot of benefits which contribute to the academic success. In this case students can learn and achieve different tasks working together, they can teach and support each other, they can improve their learning outcomes, increase their potential for rich and deep learning, and as the author Hunzer mentioned before, collaborative learning helps students to improve their communication skills, which shows the importance of

this indicator into this alternative methodological proposal in which the main goal is to enhance the students' speaking ability, through the implementation of critical thinking activities. It means that teachers can implement this kind of activities by using the approach of collaborative learning, so that students can share their ideas, their points of view and their learning strategies. It should be noted the important role teachers play when talking about the process of collaborative learning and the benefits they get from it, since as it was stated before, this method is not only beneficial for students but for instructors too. Likewise, it is necessary to take into account the importance of the classroom environment for students to feel safe and establish positive relationships not only with their peers, but also with the teacher. On the other side, the educational system needs to be aware of the existing factors and limitations regarding to the use of collaborative learning in the classroom, and if possible, try to find the best solutions in order to avoid such limitations from affecting academic success. Subsequently, in the next segment of this alternative methodological proposal, the indicator real life scenarios is presented with the purpose to provide valuable information on the influence that this element has in the knowledge construction process.

2.2.2 Real Life Scenarios

English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP (2016) states that “a scenario is a holistic setting within authentic situations, or domains. It integrates tasks, activities, texts and language data that encourage the combination of different aspects of competence in realistic language use” (p. 38). It means that the different elements that are incorporated in a scenario should be challenging, authentic, and as realistic language use as possible to enable learners to practice and improve the language they need to travel from one country to another, and to combine the different aspects of competence needed to success in the real world. Additionally, in the Core Inventory for General English, the authors North et al. (2010) stipulate that:

The significant point about (Common European Framework) CEFR-based scenarios is that they offer teachers and learners a way of keeping in mind both the macro vision of successful real communication and the micro focus on specific practice points. Scenarios are a tool for defining, teaching and/or assessing the competences needed to perform real world tasks. (p. 13)

Therefore, it can be said that the different scenarios should involve not only communicative activities for learners to practice and develop the four basic language skills that include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, but also they should embrace tasks in which pupils are allowed to improve other essential elements like grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and spelling with the purpose to achieve the desired learning outcomes and to perform better when facing situations in which real language use is required. Furthermore, Negash et al. (2008) emphasise that:

Real life scenarios are an essential learning tool. Throughout a course, taking time to pose real world scenarios as they relate to the course content allows students the opportunity to blend theory with practice and also bring their personal experiences into play. (p. 128)

Knowing that real life scenarios are an essential learning tool, it is indispensable to create and design scenarios based on real life contexts or situations learners can immediately associate with their daily life so that they can bring their personal experiences into the classroom. Likewise, the author McCain (2005) clarifies that “the real world context allows the student to connect the new data with what he or she has already learned about life” (p. 23). In this case, teachers should involve learners in real life scenarios such as going shopping, unexpected situations, getting from here to there, and love what we do among others; due to, the use of such scenarios help learners to connect the new information with what they have already experienced in their life. In the same way, by using real life scenarios pupils can put into practice what they have learned in the classroom. In fact, Sidharth et al. (2014) discuss that “the future depends on students’ ability to apply the knowledge they learn in the classroom to solve real life problems such as global warming, climate change, air pollution, waste disposal, energy generation, world poverty and food production” (p. 529). For that reason, academic institutions have the responsibility to prepare and provide learners with the essential tools needed to face and solve such situations, and the only way to achieve this, is by incorporating scenarios in which the tasks, activities, and content are based on real life. Moreover, McCain (2005) explains that:

We simply must begin to make a real-world link in our teaching. This will have two major benefits. First, students will begin to develop real-world thinking skills because they are tackling the kinds of tasks they will encounter when they leave school. Second, students will find the task of learning more interesting because they can see that the tasks

they work on in school have more relevance to their life, even if it will be a few years before the knowledge and skills acquired in school are fully utilized. A real-world context for learning is a key way to engage students in learning. (p. 24)

Therefore, teachers should plan lessons linked to the learners' real world in order to make the learning experience engaging, meaningful, and relevant so that in this way they can be able to reduce classroom management challenges, because when students are connected to real life they find the different tasks interesting and the possibilities to have bad behaviours are less. Furthermore, teachers should use different scenarios with tasks in which students are required to solve problems related to their daily life to support the learning process with engagement and motivation. In fact, Pollard (2014) remarks that "meaningful real-life problems have a key role to play in bolstering the relevance of the learning being undertaken, supporting both engagement and motivation" (p. 105). Apart from this, teachers have to use learning resources like authentic materials that are based on real life practices; for instance job applications, voice mail messages, radio programs, videos, and so on. Indeed, for the author Usuki (2007) "authentic materials are truly connected to real world situations when they provide a learning environment utilizing real life experiences, including collaboration with peers and teachers, and decision-making opportunities" (p. 40). Additionally, it is important to highlight the importance to expose learners to real life scenarios or examples through their English knowledge construction process, because when pupils are taught through real world scenarios they are capable to learn best, they are encouraged to participate more in the lessons, and they are allowed to remember what they have learned for a longer period of time; due to, they tend to relate what they are learning to their own experiences. In fact, Davis & Arend (2013) state that, "when a real life example is used, students tend to express more interest not only in learning, but also participate more in group discussion, often relating the problem to examples of their own" (80).

On the other hand, as Bellanca (2013) points out "real world scenarios provide students with motivation to develop the skills of making sound judgments while they read, write, and speak in mock trials" (p. 128). Thus, it can be said that the indicator of real life scenarios comes to be an essential element into the knowledge construction process since it contributes to keep students motivated and interested in learning. Furthermore, teachers should prepare interesting and valuable lessons not forgetting applications in every day life. It is true that some times

teachers face some challenges when it comes to develop lessons or activities linked to the every day life experiences of their students; however, it is their professional responsibility to create learning environments in which teaching and learning are related to real life scenarios. Indeed, Philpott (2012) emphasises that “the teacher takes on the role as facilitator and, by ensuring that learning activities are set as authentic, real-life problems that need to be solved, gives the learning immediacy and relevance” (p. 205). Similarly, Liao (2009) argues that “today’s educators need to focus on practicality, real-life scenarios, and how to bring about change in the major social issues confronting our country presently” (p. 89). Hence, the significance to incorporate real life scenarios into the academic curriculum, because by using this essential tool teachers can give immediacy and relevance to the learning process.

In short, when using real life scenarios, it is important to incorporate tasks, activities, texts, and all kind of authentic resources related to the learners' real life experiences, so that they can acquired the needed competences to success in life. As it was mentioned before, these scenarios should provide learners the opportunity to practice not only the macro-skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) but also the micro-skills (grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation) because it allows pupils to perform better when they need to use real language. Likewise, teachers have to plan their lessons thinking about their students' life; due to, when pupils relate what they are learning with their personal experiences they become more engaged and interested in learning, they have more participation, they learn best, and are able to retain what they have learned in the lessons to apply it later in life. It is important to consider the different real life scenarios, real life problems, and authentic learning materials that were mentioned in the above paragraphs, because they give learners the opportunity to get real and practical experiences for their daily life. At the same time, there should be noted the responsibility teachers have when it comes to create an environment in which their lessons should be connected to real life scenarios, so that pupils can acquired the skills they need to success in the real world. Subsequently, the indicator instructional scaffolding is developed in the following section.

2.2.3 Instructional Scaffolding

It is indispensable to highlight the importance of this indicator into the knowledge construction process, since it is a procedure in which teachers provide support to students with

the main goal to enhance learning, and to assist them in the achievement of their different assignments. Indeed, Fox & Hoffman (2011) clarify that “instructional scaffolding describes the process in which parents and teachers support a child’s learning by assisting them at their instructional level until such a point at which they become independent at the particular skill or task in question” (p. 23). Hence, the necessity to use instructional scaffolding into the classroom, because through the variety of instructional techniques teachers use during this process, pupils are allowed to reach high levels of comprehension, and to gain new skills to accomplish their academic practices without an expert assistance. In fact, Meskill (2015) argues that:

When scaffolding occurs, the expert does not provide answers to a learner. Instead, they invite them into a collaborative dialog through which the learner is not only able to accomplish the task, but also gains new skills that can be applied to a variety of similar tasks”. (p. 100)

On the other hand, Miletta & Miletta (2008) emphasise that “when teachers provide instructional scaffolding, students can move from what they know to what they need to know” (p. 228). Therefore, by using this instructional method students are allowed and encouraged to build upon their own experiences, knowledge, and skills to move into more difficult knowledge and skills. So, instead of criticize learners for what they do not know, there should be found the ways to use the knowledge and abilities learners bring to the classroom as a base for learning so that they can be able to move to what they need to know. Furthermore, it is important to remember that even when students have learned the purpose of the strategy and have memorized its steps, they may still not be ready to use the strategy independently, and as a consequence, they need support either from the teacher or from a more capable peer so that in this way learners can also be able to perform out-of-reach activities effectively. In fact, Hokyong & Parsons (2009) state that “scaffolding enables the learners to engage in out-of-reach activities; having a ‘more knowledgeable other’ or ‘more capable peer’ to support the learners and ‘share the cognitive load’” (p. 201). In order to clarify the term more knowledgeable other Gould (2012) states that:

To achieve effective learning, the person offering support must possess a greater knowledge than we do of the particular area in question. For this reason Vygotsky uses the term ‘More Knowledgeable Other’ (MKO) to describe anyone taking on this role,

stressing the requirement of having a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process or concept. (p.117)

Knowing that ‘more knowledgeable other’ refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, it can be said from the above references that even though there is believed that teachers or an old adult are those who can provide scaffolding to pupils, it not always happens in that way; due to, many times a learner’s peers may be the individuals with more knowledge or experience. In this case students can work together on the different tasks in order to support each other and learn from more skillful peers. On the other hand, instructional scaffolding helps to strengthen the knowledge construction process, because as Ortlieb & Cheek Jr, (2013) affirm “scaffolding allows students to use a strategy or engage in a process while they gradually gain control of it” (p. 9). Also, these authors discuss that “scaffolding promotes learning and self-control as long as it is gradually removed as students assume responsibility for the task or process” (p. 9). Thus, by applying scaffolding into the classroom teachers can expect good learning outcomes since it allows learners to gradually gain control of the tasks and to be more responsible in their learning activities. Likewise, through the instructional scaffolding students are encouraged to participate actively, they are given the support they need while learning something new, they become able to carry out tasks independently, and so on. It should be noted that:

Scaffolding is not simply another word for help. It is a special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Scaffolding is thus the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone. It is future-oriented and aimed at increasing a learner’s autonomy. As Vygotsky has said, what a child can do with support today, she or he can do alone tomorrow (Gibbons, 2014, p. 16).

Thus, if scaffolding is considered future-oriented and its main goal is to foster learners’ autonomy, there should be provided adequate support, guidance, modeling, and assistance into the classroom, to enable pupils to accomplish the tasks on their own successfully, and move toward new skills and levels of understanding. In accordance with Axford et al. (2009) “in classrooms in which the teacher provides high challenge but low or inadequate levels of support

learners will experience frustrations, insecurity and anxiety” (p. 5). As a consequence, teachers should provide both challenging tasks and high levels of support in the classroom for students to have an effective learning environment in which they can work beyond their current capacities and avoid bad learning experiences such as frustration, insecurity and anxiety. Moreover, as there are no rules for instructional scaffolding, teachers have to consider the learners’ needs in order to apply it, because as Stavredes (2011) mentions “some learners may require little or no support and others may require additional support” (p. 106). Besides the learners’ needs, teachers also have to consider the tasks and the strategies. In the same way, they need to provide learners with the tools that are necessary to accomplish the tasks as well as use their common sense and their teaching experiences to assess the type of scaffolding or support that is required for the students. Indeed, Renken et al. (2016) states that “scaffolded instruction implies that the teacher is aware of students’ needs for support regarding certain understanding or skills, but goes further to provide the tools students need to accomplish a specific task at a certain time. (p. 23).

Additionally, Bender (2008) points out that “scaffolded instruction emphasizes individual focus on particular students, the students tend to feel more supported when this technique is utilized, and that, in turn, tends to result in enhanced relationships between students and teachers” (p. 73). For that reason, the indicator of instructional scaffolding should be regularly used throughout the learning construction process in order to allow learners to feel more supported and to build up strong relationships with their teachers. On the other hand, teachers need to consider the amount of scaffolding learners need, because as it was also mentioned by Bender (2008) “too little support leaves the student stranded and unable to comprehend the assigned work and complete the task, whereas too much support would prohibit the student from independently mastering the task” (p. 72).

To summarize, instructional scaffolding plays a vital role into the knowledge construction process; due to, as it was mentioned before, by using this procedure in which teachers provide support and assistance to students, learners are allowed to gain the skills they need to accomplish their different tasks on their own, as well as encouraged to move into more difficult knowledge and skills. Furthermore, it is important to remember that when it comes to achieve effective learning, the person offering support needs to have a better understanding or a higher ability level than the student, which means that this support can be provided not only by teachers, but

also for students' peers and even for some learning materials. It is important and necessary to provide instructional scaffolding into the classroom, because by applying it, students can become more responsible in their learning tasks, they achieve good learning outcomes, they participate actively, they can build up strong relationships with teachers, they become more autonomous and independently, among others. Furthermore, teachers must ensure that the support, guidance, and assistance is appropriate, so that students do not experience frustrations, insecurity, and anxiety because of low or inadequate levels of support, and as it was mentioned in the previous paragraphs, when applying instructional scaffolding teachers have to take into account the learners' needs, the tasks, the strategies, and their teaching experiences. Subsequently, in the following segment of this alternative methodological proposal relevant information is provided in order to develop the variable of speaking skill.

2.3 Speaking Skill

The main goal of this variable is to demonstrate the importance that the speaking skill has into the knowledge construction process. According to Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor (2008) “the key role of the speaking skill in developing learners’ communicative competence has become evident, since this skill requires learners to be in possession of knowledge about how to produce not only linguistically correct but also pragmatically appropriate utterances” (p. 139). For that reason, instructors should help their students to develop this body of knowledge by providing authentic opportunities to practice grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and so on for students to use their speaking ability appropriately for real life communication and for developing their communicative competence. Furthermore, as most of the communication that takes place in real life situations is oral for either face to face or telephonic, for the author Dave (2010) learners need to develop this skill of speaking for their existence. She states that:

In a classroom, especially for professional courses, learners have to be proficient in English to be able to ask for the clarification of the problems and participate in group discussions or debates. In a situation outside the classroom, they have to appear for interviews for jobs, most of which are conducted in English. As a member of the society, they have to interact with others. They need oral proficiency to perform the functions such as seeking admission in a school or college, making enquiries for different purposes, complaining and arguing, among others. They need speech for survival. (p. 70)

Undoubtedly, the speaking skill is essential in all spheres of life, and it should be developed through exposure and practice so that learners can be able to be proficient in English for their professional courses, in situations outside the classroom, and as a member of the society. In this case, teachers should try to implement the strategy of classroom talk into their lessons, because it allows pupils to practice their speaking skill and because “where speaking is a priority, language classrooms need to become talking classrooms” (Thornbury, 2005, p. 131). Moreover, classroom talk can be motivating and involving, and helps learners not only to practice the speaking skill, but also to think and learn. On the other hand, learners should be encouraged to take responsibility of their learning, to improve their speaking ability, and to understand the nature and demands of speaking. In agreement with Apps (2012) “if you improve your speaking skills, you gain added confidence straightaway” (p. 14). Hence the necessity to provide learners the opportunity to reinforce this skill, so that they can gain the confidence they need to speak concisely and with clarity, and to convey what they want in a clear and efficient manner.

Most of the time students do not participate in the classroom because they do not have the confidence to use the English language, and as a consequence, their learning process is being affected; due to, they are hindered to speak the language because of the fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed at for the same. In fact, Dave (2010) points out that “most of the learners never open their mouths in the classroom. This lack of confidence inhibits the use of language later on in life” (p. 72). For that reason, academic institutions should pay attention to develop the speaking ability from the beginning at school. Besides that, Burns & Chuen Meng Goh (2012) affirm that:

Speaking is accepted by everyone as an essential language-communication skill, but its importance to language learners goes beyond just day-to-day communication. Speaking can facilitate language acquisition and contribute towards the academic development of many second language learners. (p. 15)

In addition to this, the authors explain that:

The development of good speaking skills is no longer a bonus for language learners, but an essential aspect of their language proficiency development because it can have a direct impact on the personal and professional success of many of them. (p. 21)

From the previous references, it can be said that when speaking is the major component of the learning process, students can be able to acquire second language skills; due to, the more they use the speaking skill the better they acquire the English language. Moreover, knowing that the development of good speaking skills is vital for personal, and professional success, teachers should create a classroom environment where students have real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language, so that students can reinforce this skill to be successful in those fields. Besides that, Celce-Murcia et al. (2014) state that “speaking skills are not only critical for communication within the classroom but they are necessary for communication both inside and outside the English-speaking world” (p. 118). In other words, if students want to pursue higher studies in a foreign country, interact with people all around the globe, make living abroad simpler and easier, travel to a foreign country, do good international business, and get better employment opportunities all over the world, they need the ability to speak, because as the authors mentioned in the previous reference this skill is also necessary for communication outside the English-speaking world. On the other hand, Renandya & Widodo (2016) emphasise that:

To teach speaking is to facilitate our students’ understanding of speaking processes and scaffold their development of speaking competence in a systematic and theoretically-principled manner. Speaking instruction should be more than putting learners in pairs and groups and giving them opportunities to communicate with one another in the target language. Giving students opportunities for practice does not automatically translate into learning the skills and language necessary for speaking effectively. Setting up an activity for oral practice is only one aspect of teaching learners how to speak. (p. 157)

Since teaching speaking facilitates the understanding of speaking processes, and scaffold the development of speaking competence, it is fundamental to reinforce this skill into the knowledge construction process, because it not only allows pupils to produce the English speech sounds, use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language, and select appropriate words and sentences, but also, it enable learners to organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence, understand the semantic, lexical, and syntactic linguistic processes, and to use the appropriate language, vocabulary, and grammar; due to, all of these elements are part of the speaking process as well as the speaking competence. Along with this:

Teachers not only should provide students the opportunity to practice the oral language, but also, they should focus their attention on important linguistic elements and oral communication processes that can further improve the learners' performance, and offer rich opportunities for practice while making the development of speaking competence a visible process that learners can increasingly regulate and control. (Renandya & Widodo, 2016, p. 158)

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the "english speaking ability is limited for a number of reasons: problems with grammar and pronunciation, insufficient vocabulary, inability to participate in sustained conversation and slow speaking rate, among others" (Burns & Siegel, 2017, p. 82). Likewise, there are other factors affecting the teaching of speaking; for instance lack of curriculum emphasis on oral development, teachers' limited English proficiency, examination systems that do not emphasise oral skills, class conditions which do not favour oral activities, and limited opportunities to practice outside of class. On the other hand, it is pretended to carry out the variable of speaking skill based on the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. Consequently, it is necessary to describe the relevance that these indicators have in the knowledge construction process. Regarding to the indicator communicative language competence, it is viewed as a synthesis of underlying knowledge and skills that are required for communication. According to Walker et al. (2018) communicative competence involves three types of knowledge:

Knowledge of grammar, lexis, morphology, syntax, semantics and phonology ("Grammatical competence"), knowledge of sociocultural rules of language use and rules of discourse ("Sociolinguistic competence"), and knowledge of how to compensate for breakdowns when faced with difficulties in communication ("Strategic competence"). (p. 4)

It means that through the communicative competence, learners can be able to acquire the knowledge they need to use the English language accurately, appropriately, and flexible for a successful communication. Subsequently, talking about the indicator fluency development, it refers to the ability of reading, writing, or speaking quickly, smoothly, without many errors, and with appropriate expression. Additionally, Wynne (2010) states that "fluency is based on a

foundation of oral language skills, phonemic awareness, familiarity with letter forms, and efficient decoding skills (p. 69). Hence, the importance to provide learners the opportunity to develop fluency in a meaningful context, so that they can achieve high levels of oral language skills, as well as decoding skills to become more confident when using the English language. On the other hand, the indicator authentic spoken activities refers to those activities that resemble a real life situation, that is a communicative experience that students could have outside of school. In other words, the main goal of this kind of activities is to teach students how to use the target language in real life situations. This indicator is relevant into the knowledge construction process, since speaking activities can be designed to encourage language learning (Newton & Nation, 2020). In addition to this, the use of authentic spoken activities into the English language classroom can contribute a great deal to students in developing basic interactive skills necessary for life.

To sum up, the speaking skill is a relevant element for the knowledge construction process, and learners need to develop and enhance this skill for professional courses, for situations outside the classroom, for interacting with others as a members of the society, and for many other functions. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, it is necessary to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and improve their speaking ability, so that they can gain the confidence they need to communicate effectively without feeling affraid for making mistakes, or being ridiculated when using the English language. There should be noted the amount of benefits learners could have when improving their speaking skill, as it facilitates language acquisition, contributes to the academic development, facilitates understandings of speaking processes, develops speaking and communicative competence, and so on.

For that reason, as the authors Renandya & Widodo stated in the previous information, teachers should provide students not only the opportunity to practice the oral language, but also foccus their attention on important linguistic elements and oral communication processes. So that pupils can be successful in the personal, academic, and professional fields, and to communicate effectively in order to pursue higher studies in a foreign country, to interact with people all around the globe, and to get better employment opportunities all over the world, among others. It is also necessary to take into account the different factors that are affecting the teaching of speaking, since they inhibit the use of the English language and affect the learning construction

process. Furthermore, as it was mentioned in the above paragraphs the variable of speaking skill is based on the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. Once the variable of speaking skill has been developed, the indicator communicative language competence is presented in the following segment in order to demonstrate the influence that this aspect has into the knowledge construction process.

2.3.1 Communicative Language Competence

This indicator is an indispensable element for the knowledge construction process; due to, it involves the language knowledge, the motivation, and the skills that are necessary to become an effective speaker. Likewise, it is essential for a quality of life and provides the means to attain personal, educational, vocational, social, and communication goals. In fact, Rickheit & Strohner (2008) affirm that “communicative competence is fundamental for a successful life in our society as it is of great importance for all areas of life” (p. 1). Furthermore, it gives learners the ability to understand and use the language effectively to communicate in the global context, and for a variety of purposes. In fact, the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP states that “for citizens to communicate effectively in the global context and to face the challenges of an interconnected world, they need to possess a number of competences” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 12). Thus, the development of communicative competence in English should be the goal for second language teaching, and the desired outcome of the language learning process should be the capacity to communicate competently instead of the ability to use the language exactly as a native speaker does.

Furthermore, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment (CEFRL) (2018) explains that “the development of language competences is essential for social inclusion, mutual understanding and professional development” (p. 21). In addition to this, when learners develop their communicative competence they can be able to express efficiently what they mean in the target language, and achieve successful communication when facing real life situations. Similarly, Walcott (2007) points out that “communicative competence could be used as a significant basis to helping students produce target language as a central feature of their social interaction” (p. 21). Therefore, it is fundamental to give learners the opportunity to enhance their communicative competence through a relax classroom environment

in which they can feel comfortable and confident to produce more interaction. In the same way, educators should provide students with ample opportunities to speak in situations as closely as possible to real life, so that they can learn to use the target language appropriately. On the other hand, Subhash More (2019) explains that:

Communicative competence refers to the ability to write or say something (ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions, information, notions, etc.) which is linguistically grammatical, correct and accurate, structurally, situationally, functionally and socially appropriate, fluent, semantically intact, sensitive, consummate and formally feasible. It also involves the ability to use linguistic forms to perform communicative functions and tasks. (p. 27,28)

It shows the importance to enhance the communicative language competence into the English classroom by including the three main components that it involves; in this case, linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence; due to, these elements are vital for students to have a strong command of the English language to communicate in authentic social and school environments successfully. Likewise, if learners are encouraged to improve their communicative language competence through the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic components, they can be able not only to use the appropriate and accurate grammar, but also to learn how to use the linguistic forms like words, sentences, and phrases among others in a successful manner. And pupils can achieve this, because of the amount of knowledge and skills these components comprise. As an illustration, CEFRL (2001, as cited in House, et al., 2011) describes that:

Communicative language competence can be considered as comprising several components: linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic. Each of these components is postulated as comprising, in particular, knowledge and skills and know-how. Linguistic competences include lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system. Sociolinguistic competences refer to the sociocultural conditions of the language use. Pragmatic competences are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources, drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. (p. 78)

With this in mind, teachers should develop in students communicative abilities and strategies, so that they can be able to reach the maximum level in communicative competence by the end of their educational process, but it is necessary to encourage pupils to acquire this competence not only in the speaking area, but also in the reading, listening, and writing skills to communicate efficiently and appropriately in the different domains. Hence, Beltrán-Palanques (2012) affirms that “it is paramount to increase learners’ competence in the four language skills” (p. 37). Therefore, academic institutions should consider the different factors that hinder students to enhance their communicative competence; for instance, teachers’ communicative style, curriculum, teaching strategies supporting motivation, environment, pupils themselves, class materials and activities, and so on.

In conclusion, the communicative language competence involves knowledge, motivation and skills. It also provides the opportunity to attain the different personal, educational, vocational and communication goals, and is fundamental for a successful life. Undoubtedly, the communicative language competence is vital for the knowledge construction process, as it enables students to communicate effectively in a variety of global contexts; and for that reason, as it was stated in the previous information, the goal for second language teaching should be the development of the communicative competence. It is important to take into account the a lot of benefits learners can have if they develop this competence, for instance, social inclusion, professional development, produce target language, successful communication, and so on. But to achieve this, teachers should provide a relax classroom environment, so that pupils can feel comfortable and confident to produce more interaction.

On the other hand, as the author Subhash explained, communicative competence involves the ability to use linguistic forms to perform communicative functions and tasks, which shows the necessity to incorporate the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences that are fundamental components of the communicative language competence. It because such components comprise the knowledge and skills that enable learners to acquire a strong command of the language in order to communicate successfully by using the appropriate and accurate grammar. Additionally, teachers should develop communicative abilities and strategies for students to reach the maximum level of communicative competence in the speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills to communicate efficiently in the different domains. Likewise, as it

was mentioned in the above paragraphs, there should be considered the different factors that hinder students to develop their communicative competence; as an example, curriculum, environment, class materials and activities, and pupils themselves among others. Following, the indicator of fluency development is going to be explained in the next segment.

2.3.2 Fluency Development

Fluency in a language means speaking easily, reasonably, quickly, with few grammatical errors, and without having to stop and pause a lot. In fact, Burns & Chuen Meng Goh (2012) defines fluency as “speech where the message is communicated coherently with few pauses and hesitations, thus causing minimal comprehension difficulties for the listeners” (p. 43). Likewise, when it comes to speak English fluently, learners should not be afraid to make mistakes, since fluency refers to how well and clear a learner communicate meaning rather than how many mistakes they make in grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Indeed, Rasinski & Griffith (2011) state that “being fluent means the construction of something meaningful in an effective but always functional way. Fluency is meaning” (p. 17). In other words, fluency prioritizes meaning over form. Additionally, becoming fluent in a language can take many years; however, it can be gradually achieved, if teachers encourage students to think in English, if they provide time to practice fluency in the classroom with speaking games and activities such as discussions and presentations, and if learners are motivated to look for opportunities to test out their spoken English. Thus, Sorrell (2010) stipulates that “fluency does not happen quickly. It develops gradually and requires practice” (p. 6).

On the other hand, “speaking English fluently is one of the abilities a 21st century learner must develop to have access to better life opportunities” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 12). Hence, fluency development is relevant for the knowledge construction process, as it can be incredibly important to lead to more opportunities in life; in this case, pupils can have the opportunity to connect and communicate with people from all over the world, travel for work or study in other countries, for career success, and for doing international business among others. Furthermore, “fluency represents an ability to speak appropriately in a variety of social contexts” (Cummings & Petscher, 2016, p. 2). It means that speaking fluently is important when relaying information and socialising. In this case, fluency development can help learners to socialize outside the classroom with native English speakers

and avoid misunderstandings since they are able to use the language appropriately. Apart from this, the author McShane (2005) points out that “fluency is vital to comprehension” (p. 14). In other words, if learners are dysfluent in their speech, it can be difficult for them and for the listener to engage in a conversation effectively and easily; due to, the message can not be understood. For that reason, it is fundamental to develop and enhance fluency during the English knowledge construction process so that students can be able to get their needs and wants met, and to be able to effectively express their thoughts and ideas. In addition to this, Grabe (2009) states that:

Fluency is one of the keys to second language learning (L2) outside the classroom. Students who have some degree of reading fluency and who are motivated to develop fluency further will most likely be engaged in a continual L2 learning environment. (p. 290)

With this in mind, it can be said that fluency development can benefit students in unimaginable ways not only to be engaged in the English learning environment and to perform well outside the classroom, but to increase their outcomes, to improve their knowledge and understanding, to improve confidence and communications skills, and so on. However, if the educational system wants to make it possible, it is fundamental to help the student to reach the C2 level of spoken fluency, so that the pupil “can express him/herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Pauses only to reflect on precisely the right words to express his/her thoughts or to find an appropriate example or explanation” (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 144). Furthermore, there should be considered the kind of activities teachers apply into the classroom in order to foster the fluency development. In addition to this, Macalister (2011) stipulates that “fluency development activities involve helping the learners make the best use of what they already know” (p. 54). Which means that when planning activities to enhance fluency development during the knowledge construction process, teachers should not involve the learning of any new vocabulary, items or grammatical features; instead, they should make use of texts and topics that are largely familiar to the learners so that they can become very proficient at using what they already know.

In conclusion, fluency focuses on meaning rather than in form, since it is not about speaking with perfect grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary; instead, it is about speaking

easily, reasonably, coherently, and with few pauses and hesitations. For that reason, students should not be afraid for making mistakes when it comes to speak English fluently. Furthermore, learners should be given the opportunity to practice fluency in the classroom, because as it was stipulated by the author Sorrell, fluency does not happen quickly and requires practice. On the other hand, it should be noted the amount of benefits and life opportunities learners can have if they develop fluency during their knowledge construction process; for instance, travel for work or study in other countries, connect and communicate with other people from all over the world, career success, international business, and so on.

Additionally, as the author McShane pointed out, fluency is vital to comprehension which means that if learners are able to develop and improve their fluency, they can acquire the ability to socialize outside the classroom with native English speakers without misunderstandings, engage in conversations effectively and easily, get their needs and express their thoughts and ideas effectively. In addition to this, fluency is one of the keys to second language learning outside the classroom, it can increase the learners outcomes, and increase knowledge and communication skills, and as it was stated in the above information, when planning activities to enhance fluency development during the knowledge construction process, teachers should make use of texts and topics that are familiar to the learners, and they should help students to reach the C2 level of spoken fluency, so that pupils can achieve the indicator that is stated in the CEFRL. Subsequently, the indicator of authentic spoken activities is going to be developed in the following segment.

2.3.3 Authentic Spoken Activities

The authentic spoken activities play a vital role into the English knowledge construction process as they embed real world problems into the classroom and encourage students to think critically and creatively to solve problems. Furthermore, through this kind of activities learners are given the opportunity “to collaborate, to reflect, and to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources” (Bonk & Graham, 2006, p. 505). It means that when learners are involved in authentic spoken activities, they are not only encouraged to work collaboratively to solve the different tasks, but also, they are able to make choices and reflect on their learning both individually and socially. Likewise, to be effective these activities “must have value outside the learning setting and should build skills that can be used beyond the life of

the course” (Conrad & Donaldson, 2011, p. 93). Thus, it can be said that the ultimate goal of using authentic spoken activities into the classroom is to build lifelong learners who can take advantage of opportunities to apply the knowledge and the skills that they have gained in their courses, and identify new knowledge that they need to develop in the future. For that reason, it is important to create spoken activities that are often fun, engaging and achievable within the classroom context, while also focussing on authentic aspects of language use.

According to Kidd & Chen (2008) “learning occurs through interaction with rich learning environments, and results from engaging in authentic activities, and social interaction and negotiation” (p. 303). Likewise, Payne (2009) states that “characteristics of authentic activities include real world relevance” (p. 67). It means that when planning speaking activities, teachers must ensure that they are as authentic as possible to provide the pupils with opportunities to connect directly with a relevant world and attain learning effectively. In this case, teachers should include into their lessons authentic spoken activities such as role plays, discussions, debates, dialogues, and so on. Due to, most of the time, students tend to be engaged through these activities as they allow students to interact, negotiate, attain learning, and create a rich learning environment. Furthermore, Starko (2010) explains that “authentic activities, teaching for understanding, and real-world problem solving all require engaging students with content in flexible and innovative ways” (p. ix). Thus, the authentic spoken activities are indispensable for the learning process as they allow learners to engage with the content of the lesson in a creative, flexible and innovative way, so that they can learn such content well.

On the other hand, Card et al. (2008) emphasise that “training should include examples that link theory to practice, as well as authentic activities that help participants to plan how they will apply the new knowledge and skills on the job” (p. 45). For that reason, the educational system should embrace authentic spoken activities into the curriculum, because through the implementation of these activities during the knowledge construction process teachers can link the theory of the lesson to the real world practice, so that students can be trained to apply the knowledge, and the skills they have learned throughout their educational process to another context or purpose outside the classroom. Additionally, Warren et al. (2009) as cited in Patrick (2012) suggest that “students need to participate actively in the learning procedure through interesting authentic activities, thus leading them to much more than a good grade in an exam”

(p. 262). Taking it into account, it is fundamental to involve students in authentic activities during their classes, in this case, authentic speaking activities, because they not only allow pupils to participate actively during the learning process and to have good grades, but also they are more effective to prepare students for the real world, to enhance creativity, to improve critical thinking, to increase engagement and motivation, to build 21st century skills, to promote collaboration and team work, and to boost retention of information among others.

Altogether, the authentic spoken activities embed real world into the classroom, encourage students to think critically, and provide opportunities to collaborate, to reflect, and to examine the tasks from different perspectives. But to be effective, these activities should build skills that can be used beyond the classroom which means that when it comes to create spoken activities, these must be focused on authentic aspects of language use. Furthermore, as it was stated by the authors Kidd & Chen learning results from engaging in authentic activities and for that reason, teachers should incorporate into their lessons activities like role plays, discussions, debates, and dialogues among others; due to, they are authentic, contribute to create a rich learning environment, engage students with content in flexible and innovative ways, and provide pupils with opportunities to connect with real world, attain learning effectively, interact, and negotiate. Additionally, as it was mentioned in the previous information, the educational system should embrace authentic spoken activities into their curriculum so that teachers can be able to link the content of the lesson to the real world practice, and to train students to apply the knowledge and the skills that they have acquired throughout their educational process, to another purpose outside the school. On the other hand, it is vital to involve pupils in authentic spoken activities during their knowledge construction process, as they enhance creativity, improve critical thinking, increase engagement and motivation, promote collaboration, build 21st century skills, and allow students to have good grades and to participate actively during the learning process. Following, the variable of learning construction process is going to be developed in the next segment.

2.4 Learning Construction Process

It can be said that learning plays a vital role into the English knowledge construction process as it gives learners the means to improve their knowledge and gain the skills that are necessary for the accomplishment of their specific goals. In fact, Mangal & Mangal (2019) state

that “learning process helps the individual realise the goals of his life” (p. 12). For that reason, institutions such as schools and universities need to create learning processes in a way for learners to construct valuable knowledge to achieve their goals in life. Additionally, the learning construction process involves the different methods, activities, and strategies used by teachers in the classroom in order to provide pupils with an enjoyable learning experience, so that in this way they can be able to construct knowledge effectively. Thus, Sankaranarayanan & Sindhu (2012) affirm that “by employing a variety of teaching learning methods or strategies, teachers can make learning a pleasant experience”, p. 78). As a consequence, teachers should take into account that the same type of learning experiences can be boring and reduce the interest and engagement of students in their learning construction process.

Furthermore, there should be noted that most of the time students tend to learn by connecting new knowledge with concepts and ideas that they already know, thereby constructing new meanings. In fact, English (2013) points out that “learning is an active construction process based on recognizing similarities between new and existing ideas” (p. 191). In this case, instructors can open their lessons with content that learners already know, and then, they can gradually introduce new information allowing time for students to make connections and clarify issues, so that they can be able to incorporate this new information into their already existing knowledge or ideas in order to construct new meanings. Apart from this, Handzic (2007) stipulates that “learning is seen as a process in which the student constructs new knowledge, skills, and understandings in response to her/his environment” (p. 253). Thus, it can be said that the interaction with the environment is very essential for the learning construction process, since the more pupils interact with their environment, the more they learn. Therefore, the learning environment should involve functional activities and interactions to provide learners with meaningful experiences, so that they can construct new knowledge and skills. According to Kroll, et al. (2005) knowledge is not constructed alone, they explain that:

Humans beings are social beings. They live and work together. Knowledge construction itself, as an adaptive behavior, is also done in the context of a social milieu. Whether the construction occurs actually in company with others, or in interaction with tools constructed by others, or in interaction with one’s environment, it is never done alone. (p. 59)

It means that all knowledge should be socially constructed, and learning should be a social activity in which students work together by interacting with each other, with the aim to share their experiences and negotiate understandings to construct knowledge together. In fact, Berry (2007) remarks that “the process of knowledge construction is facilitated by social interaction, for example through share experience and discussion” (p. 47). Hence, the importance of classroom interaction during the learning construction process. Additionally, Mangal & Mangal (2019) state that “learning is a universal and a continuous lifelong process” (p. 10). Therefore, it can be said that learning is a universal process because it can happen everywhere, and every living being on the earth has the abilities and the capacities for learning according to their characteristics, their environment, and the available opportunities for learning. Likewise, learning can be seen as a continuous lifelong process as it goes on throughout life and it is a never ending process.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that learners play a dominant role in the learning process as they are viewed “as agents in the construction of knowledge and understanding through decision-making, critical thinking, and problem solving” (Azzarito & Kirk, 2013, p. 180). Viewing pupils in this way challenges traditional opinions that they are too innocent or immature to effectively construct valid meanings about the world and their place in it. On the other hand, there should be noted the different factors that influence the learning construction process and as an illustration Alberts (2012) affirms that “among the factors that influence the teaching and learning processes are institutional conditions, for example, curricula, the school context, locations, available material, and the composition of the group” (p. 69,70). Along with this, there are another important factors affecting students during the learning construction process, specially when it comes to learn the English language; for instance age, personality, teaching strategies, learning environment, and motivation among others. Additionally, it is pretended to carry out the variable of learning construction process based on the indicators Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and tasks. As a consequence, it is fundamental to highlight the importance of these elements into the learning construction process. Regarding to the Action Oriented Approach, it has been adopted in the current English education in order to help students to reinforce their learning construction process through the different tasks and real life scenarios. In fact, the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP states that:

This curriculum adopts the Action-Oriented Approach or the Task-based Approach, 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. (p. 25)

Therefore, by using the Action Oriented Approach pupils can have the opportunity to develop and enhance their ability to speak. Likewise, when teachers incorporate this approach into their practice they recognize the importance of scaffolding the learning to enable students to use the English language confidently and competently to complete real life tasks, providing feedback and creating tasks that are relevant, authentic and appropriate for students. Subsequently, talking about the indicator didactic sequence, Pardo et al. (2013) explains that:

A didactic sequence is a group of learning activities set in a specific order which takes into account the student's progress. Furthermore, the didactic sequence starts with an initial production; it is followed by a series of workshops, and ends up with a final production. (p.32)

Thus, following a didactic sequence can contribute to the development and the improvement of the speaking skill in the English language classroom. Furthermore, the learning construction process can be strengthened through a certain didactic sequence, because as teachers need to follow a specific structure when planning their lessons, they and their students can have a guide and the tools to develop the different stages for an appropriate class development. Following with the indicator tasks, Bachman & Palmer (1996) as cited in Van den Branden (2006) define tasks as “an activity that involves individuals in using language for the purpose of achieving a particular goal or objective in a particular situation” (p. 4). Hence the importance of the implementation of tasks into the knowledge construction process, because as it involves individuals in using the language, learners can be allowed to enhance their speaking ability. In addition to this, tasks contribute to reinforce the English learning process; due to:

Tasks are set in a context that learners would face in everyday life within scenarios and domains. Learners are able to demonstrate what they “can do” in English, as well as what they know about English language structures, vocabulary, functions, psychosocial and Sociocultural aspects. (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 26).

To summarise, learning is essential for the knowledge construction process as it helps students not only to improve their knowledge, but also to acquire the skills that are necessary to accomplish the goals of their lives. That is way, schools and universities need to create learning processes for learners to construct valuable knowledge. Likewise, it is fundamental to employ a variety of teaching learning methods, activities, and strategies into the classroom for allowing pupils to have enjoyable learning experiences to construct knowledge effectively. Moreover, teachers need to consider that most of the time, students tend to learn by connecting new knowledge with concepts and ideas that they already know in order to construct new meanings. And as it was mentioned before, the environment is essential for the learning construction process, and as a consequence, it should involve functional activities and interactions for students to construct new knowledge and skills.

Furthermore, it is necessary to promote classroom interaction during the learning construction process as it enables pupils to share their experiences, negotiate understandings, and construct knowledge together, because as Kroll and the other authors explained, knowledge is not constructed alone. Additionally, as it was stated by the authors Mangal & Mangal, learning is a continuous lifelong process, because it goes on throughout life and never ends. On the one hand, there should be noted the dominant role that learners play into the learning construction process; due to, they are viewed as agents in the construction of knowledge. But on the other hand, there is the need to consider the different factors that influence the learning construction process; for instance, teaching strategies, learning environment, motivation, and some institutional conditions like curricula, available material, the school context, and so on. Furthermore, as it was mentioned in the above information the variable of learning construction process is based on the indicators Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and tasks. Subsequently, in the next segment of this alternative methodological proposal the indicator of Action Oriented Approach is going to be developed in order to highlight its relevance into the knowledge construction process.

2.4.1 Action Oriented Approach

The Action Oriented Approach (AoA) is the conceptual basis of the proposal by the Council of Europe's CEFRL (2001 and 2008). This approach focuses on communication based on real life scenarios where students are not only a social agent, but they are also responsible for

their own learning. In fact, Council of Europe, 2001, as cited in Piccardo & North, (2019) states that “ the AoA views users and learners of a language primarily as “social agents”, i.e. members of society who have tasks to accomplish in a given set of circumstances, in a specific environment and within a particular field of action” (p. 4). Thus, it can be said that this approach plays a significant role in the current English Syllabus as it focuses primary on pupils as active participants during the learning construction process. Additionally, in the AoA the teacher stops being the center of the class and becomes a mere facilitator who helps learners be successful in the accomplishment of the tasks. In fact, the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP (2016) clarifies the teachers’ role as “facilitator, coach, resource person, guide, advisor, helps the learner become autonomous and be successful in the completion of the task, provides effective feedback in the process of learning, shows expert role, but shares this responsibility with the learner (p.31). Therefore, teachers are essential within the AoA and for the knowledge construction process.

Furthermore, for the purposes of the MEP English syllabus, this approach benefits from task-based learning, “more often called task-based language teaching, and, more generally, the first conceptualisation of task as an element capable of providing a meaningful context for the language learning process” (Piccardo & North, 2019, p. 131). This method has been used by the AoA as a way to create a more effective cycle for students to complete small tasks on their own or with other classmates. Along with this, these authors also mention 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). Hence the necessity to change the communicative approach and adopt the AoA in the current English syllabus, because the main goal of this approach is to prepare students for using the language in real life through authentic tasks. Furthermore, the AoA has become to improve in a meaningful way the learning construction process as it takes into account the learners needs, and provides students with opportunities to work in different class arrangements and to develop communicative competence. Thus, Teachers’ Guide for the New English Curriculum, Seventh Grade, from MEP (2017) states the following:

When implementing the action oriented lessons in your English class; remember to: a) Consider learners interests and needs. b) Offer opportunities to work in pairs, in small groups, and as a whole class. c) Create a context for learning and reflecting. d) Provide multiple opportunities to develop communicative competence. e) Use different classroom layouts: the horseshoe, chairs in a circle, traditional rows and nested tables in groups. (p. 24)

Undoubtely, the Action Oriented Approach attaches great importance to formulating the learning goals in terms of competences, and by following this approach learners can be able not only to develop their communicative competence, but also, they can acquire valuable knowledge through the performance of meaningful tasks in a real social environment. Thus, the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP (2016) clarifies that “within this approach to English language learning, students develop communicative competence, gain knowledge of various English cultures, and develop their full potential as national and global citizens (p. 25). It shows the progressive shift from the communicative approach to the AoA or the task-based approach, which has become to be “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” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 25). For that reason, teachers should consider some relevant principles, if they want to develop effective English lessons by using the AoA; as an illustration:

The students are social agents that use the target language to perform specific actions in real life contexts meaningfully, enabling and communicative activities are task-based and real-life, vocabulary, syntax, cohesive forms, and phonology are taught with the purpose of facilitating communication, and so on. (Programa de Estudios de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 25)

Briefly, the AoA is indispensable for the English knowledge construction process, as it focuses not only on pupils as active participants during the learning process, but also on communication based on real life scenarios where students are social agents, and responsible for their own learning. It is important to take into account that in the AoA the teacher stops being the

center of the class, and becomes a mere facilitator who helps learners to complete the different tasks successfully. Likewise, into this approach the teacher has the role as coach, resource person, guide, advisor, and helps the learner become autonomous among others. As it was mentioned before, the AoA benefits from the task-based learning method which has been used as a way to create a more effective cycle for students to complete small tasks on their own or with their classmates.

On the other hand, it should be noted the progressive shift from the communicative approach to the AoA; due to, the AoA equips pupils for real life language by employing authentic tasks, it also takes into account the learners needs, provides multiple opportunities for students to develop communicative competence, and allows learners to acquire valuable knowledge through the performance of tasks in a real social environment. Furthermore, as it was stated by the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, within this approach to English language learning, students develop their full potential as national and global citizens. Undoubtedly, the AoA comes to strengthen the learning construction process in a meaningful way as it places emphasis on learners, and provides meaningful contexts and real life scenarios. Additionally, as it was also stated in the MEP, English Syllabus, if teachers want to develop effective lessons by using the AoA, they need to consider the principles that were mentioned before. Subsequently, the next segment corresponds to the indicator didactic sequence, which is an essential element for the knowledge construction process.

2.4.2 Didactic Sequence

A didactic sequence is a group of activities created in order to reach an objective, and those activities should follow an order and an organization, which means that each activity has its own purpose and all of them work together in order to reach a bigger objective. Likewise, Guerrero-Garcia et al. (2017) state that “didactic sequences are used to support learning and competences in a specific area; therefore it can be defined as a group of activities organized in a particular and strategic order to reach a learning objective” (p. 119). Thus, since a didactic sequence support learning and competences, teachers may take it as an important theoretical methodological instrument for English language teaching and learning. Furthermore, throughout a didactic sequence it is essential the negotiation not only among academic institutions and

teachers, but also with the pupils so that they can be able to propose, argue, accept, or reject options about linguistic issues, and because as the authors Piccardo & North (2019) explain:

Involving learners in the planning/goal-setting process is a form of training towards self-direction and autonomy. When users/learners are informed and involved in this way, ‘teacher and learners operate on three scales of awareness. They know where they are going, as a class or a group (or individually even), they know what the job of today or this hour is, and they know that they are interacting here and now to move towards the goal sets that are in place’. (Piccardo & North, 2019, p. 172).

With this in mind, it can be said that allowing pupils to negotiate throughout a didactic sequence is vital for the knowledge construction process, because when learners know where they are going and the job they have to do, they are interested and their expectations are high during the process of acquiring a second language. On the other hand, Guerrero-Garcia et al. (2017) emphasise that “it is also necessary to structure a work that contains a continuous, complete, and meaningful process, and this is what didactic sequences allow in order to gradually reach a progressive development in the cognitive structures of students (p. 124). It means that if teachers implement a structured work with a continuous and complete process into the English Language classroom, they can also allow students to develop and enhance their speaking ability which is the main goal of this alternative methodological proposal. It is important to mention that the CEFRL has subdivided the speaking skill in two areas which are spoken interaction, and spoken production. The spoken interaction refers to people speaking to one another in different contexts, and it happens when two or more people have a conversation on any topic while the spoken production means being able to produce language in a personal way to communicate ideas to others, and it happens when a person presents in front of others who are listening. Thus, English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP states the following:

Speaking is divided into two areas: spoken interaction and spoken production; both of them describe specific language users’ roles. In the first one, the language user functions as a speaker and as a listener. There is participation of one or more interlocutors. The second one describes the production of an oral text received by an audience of one or more listeners. (p. 45)

Therefore, these two areas of the speaking skill come to be essential for students during their learning process as they allow students to learn through the interaction with their peers, and produce the language to communicate their ideas. Likewise, when it comes to plan a lesson in order to develop the learners' speaking skill, teachers need to follow a specific sequence for the spoken interaction and for the spoken production; as an illustration, "Spoken interaction (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and interacting) and spoken production (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing)" (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 36). Regarding to planning, the CEFRL (2008) states that "planning is concerned with mental preparation before speaking or writing. It can involve thinking consciously about what to say and how to formulate it; it can also involve rehearsal or the preparation of drafts" (p. 78). Hence, through this phase students can establish and define the content and the resources that they are going to use for the presentation of the task. Following with the organizing phase, it allows learners to brainstorm about what they are going to say, how they want to achieve the task, and select the appropriate language to present the task effectively.

Additionally, talking about the rehearsing stage, it is "a preparation session with a view to preparing what to say in a task" (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 348). Thus, in this stage students are allowed to confirm understandings and practice what they are going to say in the presentation of the task. On the other hand, the stages of interacting and producing correspond to the final point of the task, which is where students use what they have carry out through the planning, organizing, and rehearsing stages in order to perform the task either by presenting or by interacting with their classmates. Undoubtedly, it is fundamental to develop a didactic sequence to reinforce the learners' speaking ability as it requires to follow a specific order taking into account the students' progress throughout the different stages. Moreover, teachers need to take into account that "it is not the content of each task what defines the final outcome of the process but the arrangement of the tasks" (Guerrero-Garcia et al., 2017, p. 119). For that reason, there should be a meaningful process to reach the outcome of the didactic sequence; in this case; the improvement of the learners' speaking skill.

To sum up, didactic sequences can be defined as a group of activities organized in a particular and strategic order to reach a learning objective. Likewise, the didactic sequence

supports learning and competencies and as a result, teachers must take it as an important instrument for English language teaching and learning. As it was mentioned before, throughout a didactic sequence learners should be allowed to propose, argue, accept, or reject options about linguistic issues; due to, as it was explained by the authors Piccardo & North, when students are involved in the planning or goal setting process they are addressed to self direction and autonomy. In the same way, as pupils are allowed to know where they are going and what the job is, they are interested and their expectations are high during the process of acquiring a second language. Furthermore, as it was emphasised by Guerrero-Garcia and the other authors, it is necessary to structure a work with a continuous, complete, and meaningful process.

On the other hand, there should be noted that the speaking skill has been broken down into two areas which are spoken interaction and spoken production that come to be essential during the knowledge construction process, because as it was stated in the above information by English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, in the spoken interaction the language user functions as a speaker and as a listener. There is participation of one or more interlocutors, while the spoken production describes the production of an oral text received by an audience of one or more listeners. In the same way, these two areas of speaking follow a specific structure. The spoken interaction has the sequence of planning, organizing, rehearsing, and interacting, while the spoken production embraces the sequence of planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. As it was explained before, the planning stage is concerned with the mental preparation before speaking, in the organizing stage students brainstorm about what they are going to say, in the rehearsing stage students practice what they are going to say, and the interacting and producing stages correspond to the performance of the task either by presenting or by interacting. At the end, as Guerrero-Garcia along with the other authors mentioned, it is not the content of each task what defines the final outcome of the process, but the arrangement of the tasks. Once the indicator of didactic sequence has been developed, there is the intention to highlight the importance of the indicator task into the knowledge construction process in the following segment.

2.4.3 Task

According to Van den Branden (2006) “a task is an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language (p. 4). It means that there is a language form needed to perform a task; however, the language is the means not the end. Language is the vehicle to reach successful communication when having real life communicative situations. Likewise, since a task necessitates the use of language it can be said that through the implementation of tasks learners can develop and enhance their speaking skill. But to achieve this, teachers should provide authentic and meaningful tasks in which pupils are allowed to practice the language they need to communicate effectively and to perform well in real life situations. Furthermore, tasks are essential for the knowledge construction process since it allows learners “to demonstrate what they “can do” in English, as well as what they know about English language structures, vocabulary, functions, psychosocial and sociocultural aspects” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 26). In this case, students can create audio recordings, debates, interviews, role plays, speeches, simulations, presentations, and magazines among others, because in this way they can demonstrate what they know about the English language. In addition to this, Piccardo & North (2019) states that:

The CEFR give tasks a prominent role from an organisational and methodological point of view. The focus is on real-life, action-oriented tasks. Such tasks are seen as having the potential to provide coherence to the entire process of planning, teaching/learning and assessment; they are the backbone of the curriculum. (p. 18)

It shows the significance of tasks as they are considered the backbone of the curriculum, and it is because the learning tasks are structured into different task types which are deliberately sequenced from simple to complex, and the more advanced tasks increase in complexity as the learner demonstrates mastery of them and moves on to the next. In fact, Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) mentions that “a learning task makes it possible to structure learning around moments, actions, and products that are vivid, defined, and concrete” (p. 26). On the other hand, Bourguignon, 2010 as cited in Piccardo & North (2019) affirms that:

The task puts the learner into action; it places the learner in the action. The task must make the learner more autonomous as a user of the language. The task must enable the

learner to line up needs and a goal to be achieved, by selecting relevant knowledge and useful skills. (p. 191)

Therefore, it is indispensable to create flexible tasks in engaging contexts built upon the learners interests and knowledge since it not only encourages students to be active members in the learning process, but also it gives them some control over the learning process so that pupils can develop autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. In accordance with Nunan (1989) as cited in Van den Branden (2006) tasks are focused on meaning rather than in form, he mentions that a task is “a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form” (p. 7). It means that tasks should be based on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language. Such tasks can include visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, or calling customer service for help, and assessment should be primarily based on appropriate completion of real world tasks, rather than on accuracy of prescribed language forms.

To conclude, a task can be defined as an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language which can contribute for the development of the speaking skill by providing authentic and meaningful tasks in which pupils are allowed to practice the language they need to communicate, and to perform well in real life situations. As it was mentioned in the previous information, tasks play a vital role for the knowledge construction process, as it allows pupils to demonstrate what they can do and what they know about the English language through the creation of audio recordings, debates, interviews, role plays, presentations, and so on. Additionally, so important is the indicator of task into the knowledge construction process that the author Piccardo & North consider it as the backbone of the curriculum; due to, tasks are structured into different task types which are sequenced from simple to complex and increase in complexity as learners demonstrate mastery of them to move on to the next.

As it was stated by Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, learning tasks make it possible to structure learning around moments, actions, and products that are vivid, defined, and concrete. And as the authors Piccardo and North affirmed, tasks put the learner into action and must make the learner more autonomous as a user of the

language. For that reason, teachers should create flexible tasks not only to encourage students to be active and autonomous, but also to be responsible of their own learning. It is important to take into account that as the author Van den Branden mentions tasks are focused on meaning rather than in form which means that tasks should be based on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language; for instance, visiting a doctor, conducting an interview, and so on. Subsequently, the chapters' conclusion is presented in the next segment in order to present a review of the theoretical framework.

2.5 Chapters' Conclusion

Altogether, this chapter corresponds to the theoretical framework of the current alternative methodological proposal in which the main goal is to implement critical thinking activities to enhance the learners' speaking skill during the learning construction process. This theoretical framework has been developed not only to give support and clarity to this project, but also to demonstrate through the examination of available and useful resources, how the speaking skill can be reinforced by the usage of critical thinking activities into the English language classroom. As there was mentioned by the author Mackena the theoretical framework gives meaning to all the research activity, and for that reason, there has been analyzed and provided trustworthy information in order to accomplish the purpose of this chapter that is to support the variables with its indicators which have been presented at the beginning of the chapter. Such variables correspond to critical thinking, speaking skill, and learning construction process. Regarding to the variable critical thinking, this chapter has demonstrated its relevance into the knowledge construction process since it comes to increase not only the learners achievement in the classroom, but also their academic performance.

As it was mentioned in this variable teachers need to promote and encourage critical thinking into their lessons by implementing an instructional pedagogy in which a variety of activities and techniques are integrated to give students the opportunity to practice and develop this skill. This variable has showed the amount of benefits learners can have when they develop critical thinking skills as well as the essential role that teachers have when it comes to foster critical thinking in the classroom. In this chapter the variable of critical thinking has been based on three indicators; for instance, collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding. The indicator of collaborative learning has been showed as an effective strategy into

the knowledge construction process as it contributes to the academic success; due to, it allows students to achieve the tasks effectively by working together and supporting each other. Likewise, as it was stated before, this strategy can be beneficial for teachers too, and the educational system needs to be aware about the different factors and limitations when it comes to implement collaborative learning in the classroom. On the other hand, in the indicator of real life scenarios was stated the importance to incorporate in the different scenarios tasks, activities, texts, and all kind of authentic resources related to the learners' real life experiences for acquiring the competences to success in life.

Furthermore, in this indicator was mentioned the necessity to provide learners with the opportunity to practice the micro-skills and the micro-skills as well as the necessity to plan lessons related to the students' life so that they can be engaged and interested in learning. In the same way, in this indicator were mentioned some real life scenarios, real life problems, and authentic learning materials to give learners real and practical experiences for their daily life. And furthermore, there was mentioned the responsibility of teachers for creating environments in which the lessons can be connected to real life scenarios. There was also explained the last indicator of the variable critical thinking which is instructional scaffolding that is described as a procedure in which teachers provide support to students with the goal to enhance learning and assist them in the achievement of the different assignments. Likewise, there was noted the importance to provide instructional scaffolding into the classroom for students to become more responsible in their learning tasks, to participate actively, and to become autonomous. In the same way, there was mentioned the necessity to provide the appropriate support, guidance, and assistance, as well as the necessity to take into account the learners' needs, tasks, strategies, and teaching experiences.

Following with the variable speaking skill, in this chapter has been shown its relevance into the knowledge construction process, and the necessity to develop and enhance this skill for professional courses, for situations outside the classroom, for interacting with others, and so on. There was also stated the necessity to encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and improve their ability to speak to avoid feeling afraid for making mistakes. There was noted the amount of benefits learners can have when improving their speaking skill like language acquisition, academic development, understanding of speaking processes, and for

communicative competence among others. In this chapter the authors Renandya & Widodo mentioned the importance to provide students with the opportunity to practice their oral language and the necessity to focus the attention on important linguistic elements and oral communication processes to be successful in the personal, academic, and professional fields, and to communicate effectively to interact with people all over the world, to pursue higher studies in a foreign country, and so on. In addition to this, there was stated the necessity to take into account the different factors affecting the teaching of speaking.

The variable of speaking skill is based on the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. As it was stated before, the communicative language competence involves knowledge, motivation and skills. It provides the opportunity to attain the different personal, educational, and communication goals, and it is fundamental for a successful life. There was noted the benefits learners can have if they develop this competence, for instance, social inclusion, professional development, successful communication, and so on, as well as the necessity to provide a relax classroom environment for pupils to feel comfortable and confident to produce more interaction. In the same way, there was mentioned the necessity to incorporate the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences that are components of the communicative language competence for learners to acquire a strong command of the language. Likewise, it is necessary to develop communicative abilities and strategies for students to reach the maximum level of communicative competence in the speaking, reading, listening, and writing skills, and there should be taken into account the different factors that hinder students to develop their communicative competence; as an example, curriculum, environment, class materials and activities, and pupils themselves among others.

Following with the indicator fluency development, it focuses on meaning rather than in form; due to, it is not about speaking with perfect grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary; instead, it is about speaking easily, coherently, and with few pauses, and for that reason, students should not be afraid for making mistakes when it comes to speak English fluently. Furthermore, as it was pointed out by the author Sorrell, fluency does not happen quickly and requires practice. On the other hand, there were exposed the amount of benefits and life opportunities learners can have if they develop fluency during their knowledge construction process; for instance, travel for work or study in other countries, communicate with other people

from all over the world, career success, international business, and so on. Additionally, as the author McShane pointed out, fluency is vital to comprehension which means that if learners develop and improve their fluency, they can be able to socialize outside the classroom with native English speakers, engage in conversations effectively, get their needs and express their ideas effectively. Furthermore, when it comes to help students to develop fluency, there should be used topics that are familiar to the learners.

The last indicator of the speaking variable is authentic spoken activities which embed real world into the classroom, encourage students to think critically, and provide opportunities to collaborate, to reflect, and to examine the tasks from different perspectives. As it was stated by the authors Kidd & Chen learning results from engaging in authentic activities and for that reason teachers should incorporate into their lessons activities like role plays, discussions, debates, and dialogues among others; due to, they are authentic, they contribute to create a rich learning environment, and they engage students with content in flexible and innovative ways. Additionally, as it was mentioned in this indicator, the educational system should embrace authentic spoken activities into their curriculum so that teachers can be able to link the content of the lesson to the real world practice. On the other hand, it is vital to involve pupils in authentic spoken activities during their knowledge construction process, as they enhance creativity, improve critical thinking, increase engagement and motivation, and allow students to have good grades and to participate actively during the learning process.

The last variable of this chapter corresponds to the learning construction process which is essential to enable pupils to improve their knowledge, and to acquire the skills that are necessary to accomplish the goals of their lives. As it was stated in this variable it is fundamental to employ a variety of teaching learning methods, activities, and strategies into the classroom, for pupils to have enjoyable learning experiences in order to construct knowledge effectively. Likewise, there should be consider that most of the time, students tend to learn by connecting new knowledge with concepts and ideas that they already know in order to construct new meanings. And as it was mentioned before, the environment is essential for the learning construction process, and as a consequence, it should involve functional activities and interactions for students to construct new knowledge and skills. As Kroll and the other authors explained, knowledge is not constructed alone, and for that reason, it is necessary to promote classroom interaction during the learning

construction process to enable students to share their experiences, negotiate understandings, and construct knowledge together. Furthermore, as it was stated by the authors Mangal & Mangal, learning is a continuous lifelong process, because it goes on throughout life and never ends. On the other hand, there should be noted not only the dominant role that learners play into the learning construction process, but also the different factors that influence this process; for instance, teaching strategies, learning environment, motivation, and some institutional conditions like curricula, available material, the school context, and so on. Furthermore, as it was mentioned in this chapter, the variable of learning construction process is based on the indicators Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and tasks.

The AoA focuses not only on pupils as active participants during the learning process, but also on communication based on real life scenarios where students are social agents, and responsible for their own learning. It is important to take into account that in the AoA the teacher becomes a mere facilitator who helps learners to complete the different tasks successfully. As it was mentioned before, the AoA benefits from the task-based learning and it should be noted the progressive shift from the communicative approach to the AoA. As it was stated by the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, within this approach to English language learning, students develop their full potential as national and global citizens.

On the other hand, into this chapter the didactic sequence was defined as a group of activities organized in a particular and strategic order to reach a learning objective, and as it was mentioned before, throughout a didactic sequence learners should be allowed to propose, argue, accept, or reject options about linguistic issues; due to, as it was explained by the authors Piccardo & North, when students are involved in the planning or goal setting process they are addressed to self direction and autonomy. On the other hand, there should be noted that the speaking skill has been break down into two areas which are spoken interaction and spoken production that come to be essential during the knowledge construction process, because as it was stated in the above information by English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, in the spoken interaction the language user functions as a speaker and as a listener. There is participation of one or more interlocutors, while the spoken production describes the production of an oral text

received by an audience of one or more listeners. In the same way, these two areas of speaking follow a specific structure. The spoken interaction has the sequence of planning, organizing, rehearsing, and interacting, while the spoken production embraces the sequence of planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. As it was explained before, the planning stage is concerned with the mental preparation before speaking, in the organizing stage students brainstorm about what they are going to say, in the rehearsing stage students practice what they are going to say, and the interacting and producing stages correspond to the performance of the task either by presenting or by interacting.

Apart from that, tasks were defined as an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language which can contribute for the development of the speaking skill by providing authentic and meaningful tasks in which pupils are allowed to practice the language they need to communicate, and to perform well in real life situations. As it was stated by MEP, English Syllabus, learning tasks make it possible to structure learning around moments, actions, and products that are vivid, defined, and concrete. And as the author Piccardo and North affirmed, tasks put the learner into action and must make the learner more autonomous as a user of the language. For that reason, teachers should create flexible tasks not only to encourage students to be active and autonomous, but also to be responsible of their own learning. Subsequently, the research method is going to be developed in the first segment of the following chapter.

Chapter III Research Method

3.1 Introduction

The main goal of this chapter is to explain the research design that has been adopted by this alternative methodological proposal as a path to identify, select, process, and analyze information about how the students' speaking skill can be improved by the implementation of critical thinking activities during the learning construction process. It can be said that the research design is the framework of research methods and strategies which have been chosen in order to obtain answers to research questions or problems. In fact, Kumar (2010) describes that "a research design is a procedural plan that is adopted by the researcher to answer questions validly, objectively, accurately and economically" (p. 94). Therefore, the aim of the research design is to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. In addition to this, "for any investigation, the selection of an appropriate research design is crucial in enabling you to arrive at valid findings, comparisons and conclusions" (Kumar 2010, p. 24). For that reason, a strong research design is fundamental for an effective research proposal, and there is the need to select the appropriate design of this project so that it can be developed successfully to arrive at valid findings and conclusions.

It is important to take into account that the current research project is based on an alternative methodological proposal which is called in that way; due to, it is about the implementation of innovative strategies with the aim to help teachers in the development of their lessons. According to Sein-Echaluce et al. (2019) "teachers innovate to improve students' performance and help them achieve their goals" (p. xx). Hence the importance of an alternative methodological proposal since through the implementation of these strategies teachers can be able to innovate their teaching practices so that in this way pupils can be able to improve their performance, especially when it comes to improve their speaking skill. On the other hand, throughout this chapter some elements are going to be analyzed; due to, they are essential for the design of this research. Such elements correspond to the research method, type of approach, data collection tools, and the instruments which are diagnostic test, pre-test, and post-test. Regarding to the research method Walliman (2011) explains that:

Research methods are the techniques you use to do research. They represent the tools of the trade, and provide you with ways to collect, sort and analyze information so that you can come to some conclusions. If you use the right sort of methods for your particular

type of research, then you should be able to convince other people that your conclusions have some validity, and that the new knowledge you have created is soundly based. (p. 7)

Therefore, it is fundamental to choose a research method that fit with the overall design or methodology so that there can be created better understanding of the topic and the researcher can be able to convince people about the validity of the drawn conclusions. In this case, for the development of this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the action research method as it has been widely used and formally applied in the educational environment. According to Tomal (2010) in action research, the researcher is concerned with using a systematic process in solving educational problems and making improvements, he states that “the researcher utilizes appropriate interventions to collect and analyze data and then to implement actions to address educational issues. Action research is suitable for educators as a practical process because it generally does not require elaborate statistical analysis” (p. 14). Thus, the choice of this research method is appropriate for the development of this methodological proposal since it is used for educational purposes and pretends to make improvements in the learners’ speaking skill during their learning construction process.

Additionally, talking about the type of approach this action research pretends to employ a mix type approach which incorporates elements of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. In fact, Leavy (2017) clarifies that “mix methods research involves collecting and integrating quantitative and qualitative data in a single project and therefore may result in a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation” (p. 164). Thus, by using the two forms of data, it can be possible to combine their strengths to develop a stronger understanding of the research problem. On the other hand, the collection of data is an important and necessary step in deciding what action needs to be taken. A data collection tool can be defined “as a device used to gather information that will facilitate the description and measurement of variables; commonly includes items such as surveys, tests, observation guides, checklists, rating scales, and interview protocols” (Richey & Klein, 2014). Thus, this alternative methodological proposal has the intention to use tests as a data collection tool; for instance, the diagnostic test, the pre-test, and the post-test; due to:

Testing is one of the more convenient methods of data collection. Because teachers commonly administer tests, it is convenient for them to analyze these data outside of the

classroom. Testing is often a normal part of the teacher's job, and the use of this data-collection technique can be easily performed as long as it is appropriate for the given action research study. (Tomal 2010, p. 82).

Subsequently, another fundamental element for the design of this project is the instruments which are mainly used to collect reliable data. Likewise, Bell & Waters (2014) emphasise that "the instrument is merely the tool to enable you to gather data, and it is important to select the best tool for the job" (p. 123). As a consequence, this action research pretends to use the diagnostic test, the pre-test, and the post-test as a tools to collect reliable data. The diagnostic test "stands for a type of test administered to a student or group of students for knowing about the nature and extend of learning difficulties, weaknesses or problems faced by them in a particular learning area, subject, topic or concept" (Mangal & Mangal, 2019, p. 110). Therefore, a diagnostic test allows teachers to evaluate students' strengths, weaknesses, knowledge and skills before their instruction. On the other hand, talking about the pre-test and post-test, Tomal (2010) points out that:

A common practice in action research is for a researcher to administer a pretest, implement an action, then administer a posttest. If both the pretest and posttest are similar, the students might have learned enough from the pretest to show improvement on the posttest. (p. 94)

Thus, by using the pre-test the researcher can implement an action to try to solve the weaknesses that were found through the diagnostic test, and then, the post-test comes to show if that action was effective to improve the found weaknesses.

Briefly, as it was mentioned before, the main goal of this chapter is to explain the research design that has been adopted by this alternative methodological proposal as a path to identify, select, process, and analyze information about how the students' speaking skill can be improved by the implementation of critical thinking activities during the learning construction process. As it was described by the author Kumar, for any investigation, the selection of an appropriate research design is crucial to arrive at valid findings and conclusions, and for that reason, a strong research design is required for an effective research proposal. Additionally, as it was stated in the above information, this project is based on an alternative methodological proposal which is called in that way; due to, it has to do with the implementation of innovative

strategies in order to help teachers for the development of their lessons. On the other hand, there were mentioned some essential elements which are going to be analyzed throughout this chapter; for instance, the research method, type of approach, data collection tools, and the instruments which are diagnostic test, pre-test, and post-test.

As the author Walliman explained before, if there are used the right sort of methods it can be possible to convince people that the research conclusions have some validity, and as a consequence, for the development of this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the action research method which is concerned to solve educational problems and make improvements. In addition to this, there is pretended to be used the mix type approach which incorporates elements from the qualitative and quantitative approaches. Furthermore, as it was mentioned previously, this project has the intention to use tests as a data collection tool and the diagnostic test, the pre-test, and the post-test as instruments. Such instruments are going to be analyzed deeper in the instruments section. Subsequently, once the chapters' introduction has been developed, in the following segment is going to be explained the research method that is going to be used for the development of this methodological proposal.

3.2 Research Method

According to Parsons et al. (2013) the point of a research method or plan is to “provide an organized structure for collecting the data you need, and provide those who read your work with insight into what you did to find what you wanted to know” (p. 53). As a consequence, it is required to identify the kind of research method that is going to be used in order to carry out this project. Since this alternative methodological proposal has the goal to provide teachers with innovative strategies to make their instructional practices more effective, there is the need to choose the action research method; due to, this method is often used in the educational field for improving practice. In fact, Pelton (2010) states that “action research, in the school setting, is a systematic approach to improve teaching practices” (p. 3). On the other hand, action research can be defined as:

An inquiry conducted by teachers, administrators, counselors, or others with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their

students learn. More important, action research is characterized as research that is done by teachers for themselves. (Mills, 2011 as cited in Mertler, 2016, p. 37).

Since the action research method has the purpose of gathering information about how schools operate, this method can be effective for teachers and administrators to identify not only educational problems, but also instructional weaknesses so that they can be able to develop practical solutions to address such problems quickly and efficiently in order to improve the learning and teaching process. Furthermore, knowing that action research can be done by teachers for themselves, it can be said that this method allows educators to study their own classrooms; for example their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own assessments with the main goal to improve their practice and foster their professional growth by understanding their students, solving problems, or developing new skills to improve the quality or effectiveness of their lessons. Additionally, the author Mertler (2016) affirms that:

Action research can be used effectively to bridge the gap between theory and practice, to improve educational practice, to empower teachers, to provide professional growth opportunities for teachers, to advocate for social justice, to identify educational problems, to develop and test solutions, and to expand the knowledge base of preservice teachers. (p. 79)

In other words, action research is often used to develop theories that eventually help determine best practices in education, its main focus is the improvement of classroom practice, and when teachers collect their own data to make decisions about their own students and classrooms they become empowered. Likewise, teachers are provided with professional growth because the action research method serves as a mean to improve their problem solving skills and increase their confidence and their professional self-esteem. On the other hand, there are four main types of action research design which are individual research, collaborative research, school-wide research and district-wide research. However, when looking for information about these methods, there was determined to work with the collaborative action research which is:

A system of action research in which multiple researchers from school and university settings work together to study educational problems. Teachers and administrators may collaborate, and so may school personnel and university researchers. The goal of this type

of research is to use the expertise of the collaborators and to foster sustained dialogue among educational stakeholders in different settings. (Hendricks, 2017, pp. 6,7)

Thus, collaborative action research is an effective method in which teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors, and others can work together to become a team in order to address educational problems, achieve a shared common purpose, and to improve the teaching and the learning process more effectively. Furthermore, for the author Burns (2009) collaboration is a much preferred way to do action research, she argues that:

It gives action researchers great support and increases your ability to deepen your insights through dialogue with others. In my personal view and experience, it also gives teachers a very welcome opportunity to get out of the isolation of the classroom and find time to interact with their colleagues on topics of much common interest. If you have opportunities to get together with like-minded colleagues I would certainly encourage you to do action research collaboratively. (p. 45)

It means that this kind of action research is paramount to promote the collaboration among teachers so that they can support each other, interact with their colleagues, provide their advices, and to share their perspectives and critical comments for the quality of the findings and for the success of the project. Additionally, it is necessary to take into account that this alternative methodological proposal is something never done before, and because of that, this is also an exploratory research. In accordance with Kumar (2010) exploratory research “is usually carried out when a researcher wants to explore areas about which s/he has little or no knowledge” (p. 11). In this case, there is pretended to carry out this project in order to explore if the learners’ speaking skill can be strengthened by the implementation of critical thinking activities during the knowledge construction process. Furthermore, one advantage of this exploratory research is that it can assist other researchers to find out possible solutions when it comes to help pupils to enhance their ability to speak the English language.

To sum up, this alternative methodological proposal has the goal to provide teachers with innovative strategies to make their instructional practices more effective, and because of that, the action research method has been chosen to carry out this project; due to, as it was stated by the author Pelton, this method is a systematic approach to improve teaching practices. Likewise, as it was mentioned in the above information, the purpose of the action research method is to gather

information about how the schools operate, how they teach and how their students learn, so that there can be possible to identify educational problems and instructional weaknesses to come with practical solutions in order to improve the teaching and the learning process. Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the action research method can be applied by teachers, administrators, counselors, advisors and others, and when teachers implement action research for themselves they can be able to study their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own assessments to improve the quality and effectiveness of their lessons.

There should be noted the importance of action research into the educational field since as the author Mertler affirmed before, it improves educational practice, empowers teachers, it develops and tests solutions, and so on. On the other hand, as it was stated before, there are four main types of action research, but for the development of this methodological proposal, there is going to be used the collaborative action research which is an effective method for teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors and others, to work collaboratively as a team by supporting each other in order to address educational problems and to achieve a shared common purpose. As it was also mentioned in the above information, this project is an exploratory research too; because it is about an investigation which has been never done before, but it has the advantage to assist other researchers to find out possible solutions to enhance the learners' speaking skill during the learning construction process. Subsequently, in the following segment, there is going to be explained the type of approach that has been determined for this alternative methodological proposal.

3.3 Type of Approach

The approach to be used in a research is a matter that should be carefully considered by every researcher who wants to obtain valid and reliable results, due to, it “has direct influence on the whole process of the research from the theoretical framework, population and sample, data collection, and analysis process to interpretation of findings” (Oflazoglu, 2017, p. 1). Therefore, the choice of the approach has a critical significance to achieve accurate and reliable results, and for that reason, for the development of this research project there is going to be used the action research approach which has been designed to enhance and improve current practice within a specific classroom, school, or district. According to Lodico et al. (2006) action research is “a type of research undertaken by practitioners who have identified problems they wish to solve or

who would simply like to find ways to enhance their own teaching or student learning, or both” (p. 17). In this case, the current action research has been undertaken with the main goal to solve the problems learners are facing when it comes to speak the English language, and to demonstrate that the use of critical thinking activities into the English language classroom is an effective way to enhance the learners’ speaking skill during their knowledge construction process.

Furthermore, this action research has the intention to use the mixed method approach whereby researchers can collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study. Indeed, Creswell (2014) defines mixed methods research as “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. 4). Therefore, it is necessary to explain the quantitative and the qualitative research methods since the mixed method approach results from the combination of these two methods. According to Coghlan & Brydon-Miller (2014) “quantitative research gathers a range of numeric data” (p. 669). It means that quantitative research methods deal with numbers, and are mainly focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data which can be measured and represented by numbers. Furthermore, “quantitative data can be generated from test scores, rubric-scored work (written assignments, performances, artwork, projects), closed-ended self-assessment items, computer-generated reports, school records, checklists, tally sheets, behavioral scales, attitude scales, and closed-ended survey items” (Hendricks, 2016, p. 107).

Undoubtedly, quantitative data can be collected in a variety of ways, and even though, specific data from some of the data gathering tools that were mentioned in the previous reference are not quantitative in nature, it can be analyzed quantitatively. In addition to this, “when a researcher handles large amounts of data, for example a large number of questionnaires, surveys, and tests results, it is often necessary to analyze them using statistical methods and present them in the form of tables and charts” (Koshy, 2005, p. 86). It shows the advantage of using the quantitative research method; due to, it not only gives the researcher the ability to collect and analyze a large amount of data quickly and efficiently, but also, it has the potential to share the results by using tables, charts, and graphics. On the other hand, Merriam & Tisdell (2015) identify four characteristics to identify the nature of the qualitative research method: “the focus is

on process, understanding, and meaning; the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis; the process is inductive; and the product is richly descriptive” (p. 15).

It means that the purpose of qualitative research is to achieve an understanding of how people interpret their experiences, and the meaning they attribute to such experiences. Likewise, the human instrument would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data in this research method in which the process is inductive; due to, the data is gathered to build concepts, hypothesis, or theories rather than deductively testing hypothesis. In addition to this, the product of this qualitative method is richly descriptive because words and pictures rather than numbers are used to convey what has been learned about a phenomenon. Furthermore, in order to support the findings of the study, the qualitative research method presents the data “in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, and participant interviews, excerpts from videotapes, electronic communication, or a combination of these” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p. 18). Thus, this kind of research is generally based on words and texts rather than on numbers.

Now that the quantitative and the qualitative research methods have been explained in the above paragraphs, it is time to explain the mixed method approach which is a procedure “for collecting, analyzing, and “mixing” both quantitative and qualitative methods in a single study or a series of studies to understand a research problem” (Creswell, 2013, p. 7). Thus, by mixing these methods, for the development of this action research project, there can be possible to collect not only numerical data, but also text data at the same time for a better understanding of the problem under investigation. On the other hand, Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) as cited in Ivankova (2015) emphasized three areas where using a mixed methods research approach can be more advantageous than using quantitative or qualitative methods alone:

First, researchers can answer both confirmatory and exploratory research questions within the same study by integrating quantitative and qualitative methods. Second, researchers can generate stronger and more credible inferences or study conclusions by using integrated quantitative and qualitative study results. Third, researchers can explore more divergent viewpoints on the same issue by using quantitative and qualitative methods within a mixed methods approach. (p. 10)

Hence the necessity and the importance to use the mixed method approach as it provides significant benefits not only to compare and contrast results in order to generate stronger

conclusions and to explore different viewpoints on the same issue, but also to provide a greater range of insights and perspectives, to improve an evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of data are balanced by the strengths of another, to improve the overall validity of results, and to make the study of greater use for the purpose to which it is intended to be addressed, among others.

In short, the choice of the approach has a critical significance to achieve accurate and reliable results, and for the development of this research project there is going to be used the mixed method approach whereby researchers can collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study. As it was stated in the previous information, the quantitative research method deals with numbers, and as a consequence, it is mainly focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data. It is important to consider the variety of ways in which quantitative data can be collected; for instance, test scores, school records, checklists, behavioral scales, closed-ended survey items, and so on. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, through the quantitative research method the researcher can collect and analyze a large amount of data, and then share the results by using tables, charts, and graphics.

On the other hand, as it was identified by the authors Merriam & Tisdell, the qualitative research method is focused on process, understanding, and meaning, and the product is richly descriptive which means that this method uses words, texts, and pictures rather than numbers. Likewise, in order to support the findings, the qualitative research method presents the data in form of quotes from documents, field notes, and participant interviews among others. There should be noted the amount of benefits that researchers can have when combining these two methods within the same study; due to, they are allowed to collect numerical and text data at the same time, they can be able to generate stronger and more credible inferences or study conclusions, they can provide a greater range of insights and perspectives, they can balance the limitations of one type of data with the strengths of another, improve the overall validity of results, and so on. Subsequently, in the following segment of this chapter, there is going to be analyzed the importance of the data collection tools as well as some useful tools that can be used when it comes to gather meaningful information for the development of a research work.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

According to Efrat Efron & Ravid (2013) “the selection of data collection tools and strategies derives from the nature of our research questions, rather than from theoretical orientations” (p. 85). Thus, the process of constructing data collection tools begins by contemplating the research questions, deciding what information should be collected to answer those questions, and determining what kind of strategies are most effective in providing this information. In addition to this, the author Lal Das (2008) states that “each tool of data collection is appropriate for collecting a particular type of data which lends itself to a particular type of analysis and interpretation for drawing meaningful conclusions and generalisations” (p. 72). Thus, it can be said that all data collection tools are useful to collect the desired type of data, they have the purpose to answer the research questions of the study, and they become extremely important to analyze and interpret the gathered information so that the researcher can be able to draw meaningful conclusions. On the other hand, there are many vehicles for the collection of data; for instance, journals, surveys, videotapes, photos, portfolios, diaries, field notes, audio tapes, and checklists among many others. However, “when a researcher decides to collect data through primary source he/she has three options, namely, questionnaire, observation, and interview” (Lal Das, 2008, p. 73). According to Efrat Efron & Ravid (2013) the interview is a major data collection strategy in teacher action research; due to:

It allows teacher researchers to ask questions of students, teachers, administrators, parents, and others connected with school. This method of inquiry provides an understanding of the participants’ experiences from their own perspectives because it allows them to voice their ideas, opinions, values, and knowledge on issues related to the investigation. (p. 98)

It means that interviews are used to gather information from individuals, and they provide opportunities for participants to describe the situation in their own terms. Furthermore, since this tool provides an understanding of the participants’ experiences, the researcher can be able to collect qualitative data, because as it was mentioned in the previous segment the qualitative research method focuses on achieving an understanding of how people interpret their experiences. Apart from this, Pulliam Phillips & Stawarski (2008) emphasise that “surveys are used in situations in which only attitudes, beliefs, and opinions are captured; questionnaires are much

more flexible, capturing a wide range of data from attitudes to specific improvement statistics” (p. 1). Thus, surveys are ideal to obtain qualitative data, because they are useful for documenting perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, or knowledge within a clear, predetermined sample of individuals, and the questionnaire is a tool designed for the collection of quantitative data as it captures improvement statistics. On the other hand, Stringer (2013) affirms that:

Observation in action research is more ethnographic, enabling an observer to build a picture of the lifeworld of those being observed and to develop an understanding of the way they ordinarily go about their everyday activities. It enables teachers to see how students go about the tasks that have been assigned them, social workers to observe how mothers interact with their children, marketers to study how customers interact with a business or commercial environment, or consultants to see how people go about the work of an organization. (p. 120)

Therefore, by using the observation tool, researchers can be able to record important details that become the basis for formulating descriptions, and they have opportunities to gain a clearer picture of the research context by observing the everyday settings in which participants undertake activities relevant to the research focus. Furthermore, it is required to mention other essential data collection tools which are the diagnostic test, the pre-test, and the post-test; due to, they are going to be used with the aim to collect meaningful data to achieve the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal. In accordance with Frey (2018) “diagnostic tests in education are measurement methods that aim at identifying specific aspects in the field of teaching and learning” (p. 1227). Thus, by using this tool, it can be possible to assess relevant aspects of teaching and learning in educational systems such as school achievement, student motivation, or learning disabilities. Additionally, Henning et al. (2009) explain that “many schools use pre- and post-tests as a way to gauge improvement between the administration of standardized tests. Like standardized tests, pre- and post-tests also provide a useful approach for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses of classes, individuals, or subgroups” (p. 128). Therefore, these tools are closely related to classroom instruction, and they are useful for identifying problems with learning.

To conclude, it is important to consider that when it comes to select data collection tools, there should be contemplated the research questions, the kind of information that should be

collected to answer those questions, and the most effective strategies to provide such information. As it was mentioned before, the use of data collection tools provides researchers with the opportunity to collect and analyze reliable data, and to draw meaningful conclusions to achieve the purpose of the study. Furthermore, there should be noted the variety of means that can be used to collect valuable data, as an illustration, journals, surveys, videotapes, photos, field notes, interviews, questionnaires, observations, and so on. As it was stated in the above information, interviews are used to gather information from individuals, they provide opportunities for participants to describe the situation in their own terms and allow researchers to collect qualitative data.

Additionally, surveys are useful to capture attitudes, beliefs, and opinions while questionnaires are more flexible and allow researchers to collect quantitative data. On the other hand, observations provide the opportunity to gain a clearer picture of the research context by observing the everyday settings in which participants undertake activities relevant to the research focus. Furthermore, as it was mentioned previously, in order to accomplish the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the diagnostic test, that aims at identifying specific aspects in the field of teaching and learning, as well as the pre-test and the post-test which are closely related to classroom instruction and are useful for identifying problems with learning. Subsequently, the following segment of this chapter pretends to provide meaningful information about the use of instruments within the research process.

3.4.1 Instruments

The research instruments can be defined as those tools or means used by investigators with the main purpose to obtain or collect data to carry out a research work. Indeed, Sesay (2012) points out that “in carrying out any task, one needs certain tools. The tools used in data collection when carrying out a research project are commonly called research instruments” (p. 77). Thus, the research instruments come to be of primary importance for the success of any research project, because they are useful to gather valuable data or information, so that the investigator can be able to support the study and provide relevant and accurate conclusions. Indeed, for Kumar (2010) the construction of a research instrument is an extremely important aspect of any research endeavour, because “it determines the nature and quality of the information. This is the input of your study and the output, the relevance and accuracy of your

conclusions, is entirely dependent upon it” (p. 165). It shows the importance of the research instruments to determine and provide the quality and validity of the study, and consequently, there should be selected the appropriate tools for the development of this alternative methodological proposal, because if there are used inadequate or inappropriate instruments the results obtained can be affected as well as the validity of the research.

On the other hand, Creswell (2013) explains that instruments “are tools for measuring, observing, or documenting quantitative data. Researchers identify these instruments before they collect data, and they may include a test, a questionnaire, a tally sheet, a log, an observational checklist, an inventory, or an assessment instrument” (p. 6). Undoubtedly, a variety of research instruments can be used to collect the required information; nonetheless, in order to support this action research and to provide relevant and accurate conclusions, there is going to be used the instrument of tests which are used in many ways and for different purposes in higher education. In fact, Cohen et al. (2018) identify that “the purposes of a test are several, for example to diagnose a student’s strengths, weaknesses and difficulties, to measure achievement, to measure aptitude and potential, to assess personality attributes or types, to identify readiness for a programme” (p. 570). Therefore, tests play an important role into this methodological proposal because they can assist the researcher to determine the difficulties learners are facing when it comes to use their speaking skill.

Additionally, the tests that are planned to be used in order to gather the desired information for the success of this study correspond to the diagnostic test, the pre-test, and the post-test. “The diagnostic testing is an in-depth test to discover particular strengths, weaknesses and difficulties that a student is experiencing, and is designed to expose causes and specific areas of weakness or strength” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 570). Consequently, the diagnostic test should be focused on a range of very specific difficulties that students might be experiencing during their English knowledge construction process, in order to identify the exact problems that they are having from a range of possible problems. Apart from this, Ariola (2006) points out that “a pre-test is conducted before the treatment or intervention is introduced. After some time, a test is again repeated. Then the results of the pre-test and the post-test are compared to determine the change” (p. 66). It means that the pre-test and the post-test must be the same, because the first one comes to test the participants of the study before doing an intervention to solve the found

weaknesses, after that, the researcher runs the intervention and tests the participants again with the post-test to see if the intervention was effective to improve or to solve such weaknesses.

To sum up, the research instruments are the tools by which investigators collect data to carry out their research work, and these instruments come to be of primary importance since they help the researcher to support the study, and provide relevant and accurate conclusions. There should be recognized the importance to select the appropriate tools for this alternative methodological proposal, because as it was stated in the previous information, if the research instruments are inadequate, the results obtained and the validity of the research can be affected. As it was mentioned before, a variety of instruments can be used to gather the desired information; however, in order to support this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the instrument of tests which have the purpose to diagnose a student's strengths, weaknesses and difficulties, to measure achievement, to measure aptitude and potential, and so on. This instrument can be useful to determine the learners' difficulties, especially when it comes to use their ability to speak the English language. And as it was mentioned previously, the tests that are planned to be used in order to gather the required information for the success of this study, correspond to the diagnostic test which serves the purpose to discover particular strengths, weaknesses and difficulties that students are experiencing, and the pre-test and the post-test which should be the same, so that the researcher can be able to compare the results to determine if there are any changes. Following, the diagnostic test instrument is going to be analyzed in the next segment.

3.4.1.1 Diagnostic Test

A diagnostic test can be defined as “a type of test administered to a student or group of students for knowing about the nature and extend of learning difficulties, weaknesses or problems faced by them in a particular learning area, subject, topic or concept” (Mangal &Mangal, 2019, p. 110). Hence, the main purpose of diagnostic testing is to find out a student's weak learning point and not how much the student scores. Furthermore, by performing a diagnostic test the researcher can be able to determine the nature and the cause of students' learning difficulties in the English subject, especially in the speaking skill area. For the author Frey (2018) a diagnostic test in education “aims to assess criteria in the field of teaching and learning. This can be learning conditions such as knowledge, competences, motivation, self-

regulation, learning disabilities, and learning achievements, or more general, such as intelligence or school qualification” (p. 1228). Thus, a diagnostic test in educational contexts can be used in different situations and with different purposes. In this case, the diagnostic test has the purpose to assess the learners’ speaking skill and use the results obtained to adapt and optimize the teaching and the learning process with innovative strategies based on the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, 2016. On the other hand, Mangal & Mangal (2019) explain that:

Diagnostic testing in a school subject may be defined as a testing or evaluation programme carried out by a subject teacher for diagnosing the nature and extend of the learning behavioural problems of an individual or group of students along with the inherent causes for difficulties chalking out suitable remedial programmes aimed to help them in getting rid of their difficulties and problems. (p. 102)

Hence the necessity to perform diagnostic tests in the educational field as they are essential for improving, correcting and remedying learning weaknesses and problems, as well as for helping researchers to diagnose and identify the specific difficulties each student has when studying the English subject. Furthermore, through the diagnostic test, it can be possible to obtain valuable information to help and guide teachers about how they should proceed to enhance the learner’s speaking skill during the learning construction process. Indeed, CEPNI & KARA (2019) emphasise that “in diagnostic assessments, the information obtained about the students is used to guide the educational process” (p. 170). Additionally, the author Mohan (2016) states that “diagnostic testing should be used not only at the starting of the academic year, but also at regular intervals throughout the year. This helps the teacher to assess whether any change in programme is needed or not” (p. 163). Thus, a diagnostic test can serve the purpose to provide teachers with feedback so that they can be able to modify their teaching curriculum, methods, and strategies. Furthermore, by using diagnostic tests throughout the year, it can be possible to track the enhancement of the students’ learning. Nevertheless, the current action research project has the intention to perform a diagnostic test just once in order to assess the learners’ speaking skill and to determine the validity of the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal to enhance the learners’ speaking skill during the knowledge construction process.

On the other hand, “benefits of diagnostic testing for students include the following: focuses students towards right career choices, enhances teacher pupil interaction to attain learning goals, promotes self-learning, and helps students in setting realistic goals” (Mohan, 2016, p. 166). In addition to these benefits, a diagnostic test can be also useful to indicate pupils’ prior knowledge, to help educators to understand the strengths and needs of each student, to adjust content and techniques for more effective learning, and to demonstrate students that their teachers care about their success as learners. Apart from this, Gullo (2005) stipulates that a diagnostic test is used to “identify the existence of a disability or specific area of academic weakness in a child. Test results are used to suggest possible causes for the disability or academic weakness as well as to suggest potential remediation strategies” (p. 46). With this in mind, it can be said that the diagnostic test is extremely important for the implementation of this methodological proposal, since it comes to identify the learners’ difficulties regarding to their speaking ability, and to remediate such troubles with innovative strategies so that pupils can be allowed to reinforce this skill to achieve a better academic performance during their English language lessons. Subsequently, the instrument of pre-test is developed in the following segment.

3.4.1.2 Pre-test

According to Ferguson (2018) “the instructors use the pre-test to understand the students’ baseline knowledge and then geared their teaching toward helping students learn what they need to know to successfully complete the course” (p. 74). Hence the importance and the necessity to give learners a pre-test at the beginning of the lesson so that teachers can have the ability to quickly see what learners know to direct their instruction, and to make decisions regarding to their teaching curriculum and strategies for setting pupils on the path to success. In addition to this, “the pre-test results can identify strengths and weaknesses of students, thereby giving teachers a chance to adjust their instruction before beginning the unit” (Henning et al., 2009, p. 130). Thus, diagnostic tests can be used as a teacher tool not only to identify the weak students in a class, but also to identify the strongest students, the topics that learners already know, and to identify the topics which students have not learned. Furthermore, once the pre-test has identified the learners’ weaknesses, it is the teachers’ responsibility to provide pupils with remedial instruction by adapting their teaching materials, instruction and strategies. On the other hand, Martella et al. (2013) emphasise that:

The pretest–posttest control-group design is one of the most common designs used in education and psychology to demonstrate a causal relationship between an independent variable and a dependent variable. This design begins with random selection of participants from a population to form a sample. Participants from the sample are then randomly assigned to experimental or control groups. Measurement of the dependent variable is taken prior to the introduction of the independent variable. (p. 138)

Therefore, this design can be used in order to perform the pre-test instrument, since it not only allows the investigator to randomly select the students who are going to participate in the study, but also to assess the level of the learners' speaking skill before the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. Additionally, Mertler (2009) explains that when using pretests to establish group similarity, “a pretest on the variable you are looking to examine is administered prior to the investigation. The groups are then statistically compared on their pretest scores; if they are similar, you can continue with the research” (p. 88). Thus, in order to carry out this research project there is the need to select two different groups of students with a similar level in their speaking skill, and the pre-test instrument comes to be fundamental to ensure that the groups being compared are relatively similar so that the researcher can be able to administer the treatment; in this case, innovative strategies, so that the findings and results can be compared to draw accurate and valid conclusions in a more effective way.

Furthermore, Marczyk et al. (2005) affirm that “the use of a pretest allows the researcher to measure between-group differences before exposure to the intervention” (p. 139). Hence, it can be said that pretests are fundamental, because they provide a measure on some attributes, characteristics, differences, or similarities for participants in an experiment before they receive the treatment. In this case the pre-test instrument comes to serve the purpose to provide the researcher with a measure on the learners' speaking skill before the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. On the other hand, it is important to consider that “pretests have advantages as well as disadvantages. They take time and effort to administer. They can also raise the participants' expectations about the outcome. The pretest may influence the experimental treatment” (Creswell, 2013, p. 323). Since the pre-test may influence the experimental treatment, it should equate the groups that are going to be compared, and its results should be statistically controlled rather than simply compared with the post-test results for

potential influences which might affect the intervention. Subsequently, the instrument of post-test is developed in the following segment

3.4.1.3 Post-test

According to Creswell (2013) “a posttest is a measure on some attribute or characteristic that is assessed for participants in an experiment after a treatment” (p. 323). In this case, the post-test instrument comes to be a measure on the learners’ speaking skill after the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. In addition to this Henning et al. (2009) state that “post-tests data can provide helpful insights into student learning and the effectiveness of teaching strategies. A post-test is a test given after a teaching intervention” (p. 129). Thus, post-test data can be beneficial for teachers too, because it not only allows them to know the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, but also to ensure that students are learning what they need to know in order to meet the course’s learning objectives, and to understand the major gaps students might have in their learning as well as their personalities, abilities and their learning styles. Furthermore, since the post-test is given after the teaching intervention, it can be said that this instrument is essential to determine the effectiveness of this alternative methodological proposal.

Additionally, the authors Marczyk et al. (2005) clarify that “ Whereas pretesting is focused on assessing the level of a variable before application of the experimental intervention (or independent variable), posttesting is conducted to assess the effectiveness of the independent variable” (p. 187). Therefore, the post-test instrument plays an essential role into this action research project since it comes to determine if the exposure to innovative strategies are effective to enhance the learners’ speaking skill. Along with this, the authors also mentioned that “in the nonequivalent groups posttest-only design, one group (the experimental group) receives the intervention while the other group (the control group) does not” (p. 138). It means that in order to gather valuable data for the development of this project, the researcher should select two different groups in which one of them comes to be the experimental group and the other one the control group. The pre-test instrument should be applied in the two groups, but only the experimental group is going to be exposed to the innovative strategies which are going to be proposed in this project, so that in this way the researcher can be able to apply the post-test instrument in both groups with the aim to compare the results to find out if those strategies are effective to solve the problems learners are facing when it comes to speak the English language.

On the other hand, Stawarski & Pullian Phillips (2008) emphasise that “it is common to administer a posttest in order to obtain data to compare with those from the pretest. The posttest can be administered early in the program or as soon as the learning portion is completed” (p. 78). Thus, the real function of a pos-test is to measure its results in comparison to a pre-test, so that it can be possible to determine how much pupils have progressed over a term of instruction. Furthermore, since the post-test can be used as soon as the learning portion is completed, this instrument can be a successful tool for instructors to revise their teaching methods and strategies so that their instruction can be more effective for the next class. Besides that, the post-test can be considered as a “final measurement of outcomes to compare the control and experimental groups and to look at differences from the pre-test results” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 392). Therefore, this instrument is extremely important and necessary to provide the researcher with the opportunity to evaluate and compare the differences attributed to the application of this project, and to draw a final result and conclusions about its effectiveness to solve the problem under investigation.

To conclude, the main purpose of the diagnostic test is to find out the learning difficulties, weaknesses or problems faced by students in a particular learning area, subject, topic or concept. This instrument can be also used to assess criteria in the field of teaching and learning including learning conditions such as knowledge, competences, motivation, self-regulation, learning disabilities, and so on. As it was mentioned before, the main purposes of the diagnostic test instrument into this action research project is to determine the validity of the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal, as well as to assess the learners’ speaking skill and use the results obtained to adapt and optimize the teaching and the learning process with innovative strategies based on the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, 2016. Furthermore, this instrument should be performed in the educational field not only for improving, correcting and remedying learning weaknesses and problems, but also to identify the specific difficulties each student has when studying the English subject, and to help and guide teachers about how they should proceed to enhance the learner’s speaking skill during the learning construction process, so that they can be able to modify their teaching curriculum, methods, and strategies. There should be noted the importance of diagnostic testing for students since it enhances teacher pupil interaction to attain learning goals, promotes self-learning, indicates pupils’ prior knowledge,

and helps educators to understand the strengths and needs of each student to come with potential remediation strategies.

On the other hand, the main purpose of the pre-test instrument is to assess the level of the learners' speaking skill before the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. Likewise, this instrument can be used for teachers in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students, and it is their responsibility to provide pupils with remedial instruction by adapting their teaching materials, instruction and strategies in order to solve such weaknesses. As it was stated in the above information, the pre-test can also be used to identify the strongest students as well as the topics that learners already know, and in order to perform this instrument there can be used the pretest–posttest control-group design since it not only allows the investigator to randomly select the students who are going to participate in the study, but also to assess some attributes, characteristics, differences, or similarities for participants in an experiment before they receive the treatment. Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the pre-test instrument has advantages as well as disadvantages; due to, they take time and effort to administer, they can also raise the participants' expectations about the outcome, and they may influence the experimental treatment.

Subsequently, the post-test instrument comes to be a measure on the learners' speaking skill after the implementation of this project, and its data can provide helpful insights into the students' learning and to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. This instrument can also be useful to understand the major gaps students might have in their learning as well as their personalities, abilities and their learning styles. As it was mentioned before, pretesting is mainly conducted to assess if the exposure to innovative teaching strategies contributes to enhance the learners' speaking skill, and in order to gather valuable data for the development of this project, the researcher should select two different groups in which one of them comes to be the experimental group and the other one the control group. The pre-test instrument should be applied in the two groups, but only the experimental group is going to be exposed to the innovative strategies which are going to be proposed in this project, so that in this way the researcher can be able to apply the post-test instrument in both groups with the aim to compare the results to find out if those strategies are effective to solve the problems learners are facing when it comes to speak the English language.

Additionally, as the authors Stawarski & Pullian Phillips emphasised, the posttest can be administered early in the program or as soon as the learning portion is completed allowing instructors to revise their teaching methods and strategies, so that their instruction can be more effective for the next class. Furthermore, the post-test instrument is extremely important and necessary to provide the researcher with the opportunity to evaluate and compare the differences attributed to the application of this project, and to draw a final result and conclusions about its effectiveness to solve the problem under investigation. Following, the chapters' conclusion is developed in the next segment.

3.5 Chapters' Conclusion

To summarise, the main goal of this chapter is to explain the research design that has been adopted by this alternative methodological proposal as a path to identify, select, process, and analyze information about how the students' speaking skill can be improved by the implementation of critical thinking activities during the learning construction process. As it was stated before in this chapter, this action research project is based on an alternative methodological proposal which is called in that way; due to, it has to do with the implementation of innovative strategies in order to help teachers for the development of their lessons. On the other hand, throughout this chapter, some essential elements were analyzed; for instance, the research method which corresponds to action research that is concerned to solve educational problems and make improvements, the type of approach that is the mixed method which incorporates elements from the qualitative and quantitative approaches, the data collection tools which are tests, and the instruments which correspond to the diagnostic test, pre-test, and post-test.

As it was stated before by the author Pelton, the action research which is the method that has been chosen to carry out this project, is a systematic approach to improve teaching practices. Likewise, the purpose of the action research method is to gather information about how the schools operate, how they teach and how their students learn, so that there can be possible to identify educational problems and instructional weaknesses to come with practical solutions in order to improve the teaching and the learning process. It is important to take into account that the action research method can be applied by teachers, administrators, counselors, advisors and others, and when teachers implement action research for themselves they can be able to study

their own instructional methods, their own students, and their own assessments in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of their lessons. Furthermore, there should be noted the importance of action research into the educational field since as the author Mertler affirmed before, it improves educational practice, empowers teachers, it develops and tests solutions, and so on.

On the other hand, there are four main types of action research; however, as it was mentioned in this chapter, for the development of this methodological proposal, there is going to be used the collaborative action research which is an effective method for teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors and others, to work collaboratively as a team by supporting each other in order to address educational problems and to achieve a shared common purpose. As it was also mentioned before, this project is an exploratory research, because it is about an investigation which has been never done before, but it has the advantage to assist other researchers to find out possible solutions to enhance the learners' speaking skill during the learning construction process. Additionally, for the development of this research project there is going to be used the mixed method approach whereby researchers can collect and analyze both quantitative and qualitative data within the same study. As it was previously mentioned, quantitative research method deals with numbers, and as a consequence, it is mainly focused on collecting and analyzing numerical data.

There should be considered the variety of ways in which quantitative data can be collected; for instance, test scores, school records, checklists, behavioral scales, closed-ended survey items, and so on. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, through the quantitative research method the researcher can collect and analyze a large amount of data, and then share the results by using tables, charts, and graphics. On the other hand, as it was identified by the authors Merriam & Tisdell, the qualitative research method is focused on process, understanding, and meaning, and the product is richly descriptive which means that this method uses words, texts, and pictures rather than numbers. Likewise, in order to support the findings, the qualitative research method presents the data in form of quotes from documents, field notes, and participant interviews among others. There should be noted the amount of benefits that researchers can have when combining these two methods within the same study; due to, they are allowed to collect numerical and text data at the same time, they can be able to generate stronger and more credible

inferences or study conclusions, they can provide a greater range of insights and perspectives, they can balance the limitations of one type of data with the strengths of another, improve the overall validity of results, and so on.

Apart from that, the use of data collection tools are important and necessary to provide researchers with the opportunity to collect and analyze reliable data, and to draw meaningful conclusions to achieve the purpose of the study. Furthermore, there should be noted the variety of means that can be used to collect valuable data, as an illustration, journals, surveys, videotapes, photos, field notes, interviews, questionnaires, observations, and so on. As it was stated in this chapter, interviews are used to gather information from individuals, they provide opportunities for participants to describe the situation in their own terms, and allow researchers to collect qualitative data. Additionally, surveys are useful to capture attitudes, beliefs and opinions while questionnaires are more flexible and allow researchers to collect quantitative data. On the other hand, observations provide the opportunity to gain a clearer picture of the research context by observing the everyday settings in which participants undertake activities relevant to the research focus. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, in order to accomplish the purpose of this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the diagnostic test, that aims at identifying specific aspects in the field of teaching and learning, as well as the pre-test and the post-test which are closely related to classroom instruction and are useful for identifying problems with learning.

On the other hand, the research instruments are the tools by which investigators collect data to carry out their research work, and these instruments come to be of primary importance since they help the researcher to support the study, and provide relevant and accurate conclusions. As it was mentioned before, a variety of instruments can be used to gather the desired information; however, in order to support this alternative methodological proposal, there is going to be used the instrument of tests which have the purpose to diagnose a student's strengths, weaknesses and difficulties, to measure achievement, to measure aptitude and potential, and so on. The instrument of tests can be useful to determine the learners' difficulties, especially when it comes to use their ability to speak the English language. And as it was also mentioned previously, the tests that are planned to be used in order to gather the required information for the success of this study, correspond to the diagnostic test which serves the

purpose to discover particular strengths, weaknesses and difficulties that students are experiencing, and the pre-test and the post-test which should be the same, so that the researcher can be able to compare the results to determine if there are any changes.

The main purpose of the diagnostic test is to find out the learning difficulties, weaknesses or problems faced by students in a particular learning area, subject, topic or concept. This instrument can be also used to assess criteria in the field of teaching and learning including learning conditions such as knowledge, competences, motivation, self-regulation, learning disabilities, and so on. As it was mentioned before, the main purposes of the diagnostic test instrument into this action research project is to determine the validity of the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal, as well as to assess the learners' speaking skill and use the results obtained to adapt and optimize the teaching and the learning process with innovative strategies based on the Programas de Estudio de Inglés Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP, 2016. Furthermore, this instrument should be performed in the educational field not only for improving, correcting and remedying learning weaknesses and problems, but also to identify the specific difficulties each student has when studying the English subject, and to help and guide teachers about how they should proceed to enhance the learner's speaking skill during the learning construction process, so that they can be able to modify their teaching curriculum, methods, and strategies. There should be noted the importance of diagnostic testing for students since it enhances teacher pupil interaction to attain learning goals, promotes self-learning, indicates pupils' prior knowledge, and helps educators to understand the strengths and needs of each student to come with potential remediation strategies.

On the other hand, the main purpose of the pre-test instrument is to assess the level of the learners' speaking skill before the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. Likewise, this instrument can be used for teachers in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of students, and it is their responsibility to provide pupils with remedial instruction by adapting their teaching materials, instruction and strategies in order to solve such weaknesses. As it was stated in the above information, the pre-test can also be used to identify the strongest students as well as the topics that learners already know, and in order to perform this instrument there can be used the pretest–posttest control-group design since it not only allows the investigator to randomly select the students who are going to participate in the study, but also to

assess some attributes, characteristics, differences, or similarities for participants in an experiment before they receive the treatment.

Furthermore, it is important to take into account that the pre-test instrument has advantages as well as disadvantages; due to, they take time and effort to administer, they can also raise the participants' expectations about the outcome, and they may influence the experimental treatment. Subsequently, the post-test instrument comes to be a measure on the learners' speaking skill after the implementation of this project, and its data can provide helpful insights into the students' learning and to determine the effectiveness of the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal. This instrument can also be useful to understand the major gaps students might have in their learning as well as their personalities, abilities and their learning styles. As it was mentioned before, pretesting is mainly conducted to assess if the exposure to innovative teaching strategies contributes to enhance the learners' speaking skill, and in order to gather valuable data for the development of this project, the researcher should select two different groups in which one of them comes to be the experimental group and the other one the control group.

The pre-test instrument should be applied in the two groups, but only the experimental group is going to be exposed to the innovative strategies which are going to be proposed in this project, so that in this way the researcher can be able to apply the post-test instrument in both groups with the aim to compare the results to find out if those strategies are effective to solve the problems learners are facing when it comes to speak the English language. Additionally, as the authors Stawarski & Pullian Phillips emphasised, the posttest can be administered early in the program or as soon as the learning portion is completed allowing instructors to revise their teaching methods and strategies, so that their instruction can be more effective for the next class. Furthermore, the post-test instrument is extremely important and necessary to provide the researcher with the opportunity to evaluate and compare the differences attributed to the application of this project, and to draw a final result and conclusions about its effectiveness to solve the problem under investigation.

Chaper IV Alternative Methodological Proposal

4.1 Introduction

The significance of this chapter relays on the elaboration of an alternative methodological proposal which has the purpose to improve the learners' speaking skill by creating and implementing innovative teaching strategies based on critical thinking activities that can be used by educators during their teaching instruction as a mean to solve the arised problems regarding to the learners' speaking skill. According to Crawford et al. (2005) "students who think critically are typically excited about their learning. They see challenges and opportunities for learning in even the most difficult intellectual tasks. These are the students who make teaching enjoyable and exciting" (p. 4). Therefore, it is a necessity to incorporate in the English language classroom speaking activities based on critical thinking, so that learners can become critical thinkers excited about learning to use their ability to speak even when it seems to be a difficult task for them. On the other hand, "speaking has acquired great importance along the history of English teaching since it is referred as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information" (Napitupulu et al., 2019, p. 507). In addition to this, Laoma (2004), as cited in Suparmi et al. (2020) states that "speaking skills are an important part of the curriculum in language teaching" (p. 11). Knowing the importance that the speaking skill has acquired into the English language teaching, it is fundamental to create a proposal or an action plan to help teachers with practical solutions and innovative alternatives and strategies, so that in this way they can be able to change their teaching practice and provide learners with the opportunity to develop and improve their ability to speak.

In accordance with the authors McNiff & Whitehead (2009) "writing a proposal is a practical exercise that involves planning and designing" (p. 87). Therefore, this alternative methodological proposal is about planning and designing innovative teaching strategies based on critical thinking activities which are elaborated with the main goal to enhance the learners' speaking skill and to strengthen the English knowledge construction process. Furthermore, it can be said that "writing a proposal is a problem-solving activity" (Schneider & Fuller, 2018). Thus, the development of this alternative methodological proposal is crucial since it provides an opportunity for the researcher not only to present a variety of innovative ideas, but also to propose actions in order to solve the problems that learners are facing when it comes to use their speaking skill. Additionally, there are essential elements that are pretended to be analyzed

throughout this chapter; for instance, the title of the proposal, the justification, the importance, the necessity and the scopes to establish an alternative methodological proposal, the implementation of the proposal in which three different strategies are going to be described, its social and educational impact, and the chapters' conclusion critical analysis. Regarding to the title of the proposal it is the most important aspect that needs to be considered before starting to write the action research project. In fact, Sidek et al. (2019) clarify that "the most important part of a research proposal is to have a well-defined and understandable title that reflect the issues to be researched. The title of the research project usually sums up the focus and significance of the research" (p. 9). Therefore, the title of the current proposal corresponds to "The implementation of critical thinking activities to enhance learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process". Thus, this title clearly reflects the central problem or issue being addressed that is the learners' speaking skill.

Subsequently, talking about the justification of the proposal, it can be defined "as the motivation given for the entire study through the formulation of a coherent and logic argument" (du Preez, 2018, p. 126). As a consequence, it is pretended to formulate a logical argument in order to motivate readers and to explain why this action research project has to be implemented by teachers into the English language classroom. Besides that, there is the intention to explain why it is important and necessary to set up an alternative methodological proposal as well as the scopes to implement it. Furthermore, the segment of this chapter that corresponds to the alternative methodological proposal implementation describes the three different strategies that are proposed in this project for the improvement of the learners' speaking skill. It is important to mention that those strategies are going to have a curricular sustained based on the New English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from Ministerio de Educación Pública.

Likewise, for each strategy is sustained a level, a unit, a theme, an assessment strategy, and the didactic sequence of the speaking skill which corresponds to "spoken interaction (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and interacting) and spoken production (planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing)" (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 36). In the same way, each strategy is composed of its name, objective, process, some evidences, and its evaluation according to the assessment strategy. On the other

hand, this chapter pretends to analyze the impact that this project has from the social and educational point of view. It can be said that the designed strategies have a significant impact on society since they provide learners with the opportunity to acquire the skills that are necessary to get a successful job, to communicate well in the English language, and to become a skillful person in the society. In the same way those strategies have a positive impact into the educational system, because they contribute to the improvement of the learners' speaking ability, to overcome the problems that pupils are facing when it comes to use this skill, and to improve their overall performance during the knowledge construction process. Furthermore, this chapter ends up with a conclusion critical analysis in order to present some opinions regarding to the analyzed work, to present the advantages that modern teaching methods have over the traditional ones, and to show how important it is for a teacher to change their mindset about teaching.

To conclude, the significance of this chapter relays on the elaboration of an alternative methodological proposal which has the intention to improve the learners' speaking skill by creating and implementing innovative teaching strategies based on critical thinking activities that can be used by educators during their teaching instruction in order to solve the arised problems regarding to the learners' speaking skill. As it was mentioned before, it is necessity to incorporate in the English language classroom speaking activities based on critical thinking, so that learners can become critical thinkers excited about learning to use their ability to speak even when it seems to be a difficult task for them. In the same way, it is fundamental to create a proposal or an action plan to help teachers with practical solutions and innovative alternatives and strategies, so that they can be able to change their teaching practice and provide learners with the opportunity to develop and improve their ability to speak. Furthermore, as it was stated in the previous information, this alternative methodological proposal is about planning and designing innovative teaching strategies based on critical thinking activities which are elaborated with the main goal to enhance the learners' speaking skill and to strengthen the English knowledge construction process.

It is important to take into account that this chapter pretends to analyze some essential elements, as an illustration the title of the proposal which corresponds to "The implementation of critical thinking activities to enhance learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process", the justification of the proposal which pretends to formulate a logical argument in

order to motivate readers and to explain why this action research project has to be implemented by teachers into the English language classroom, the importance, the necessity and the scopes to establish an alternative methodological proposal, the alternative methodological proposal implementation which describes the three different strategies that are proposed in this project for the improvement of the learners' speaking skill, and that are going to have a curricular sustained based on the New English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from Ministerio de Educación Pública. Likewise, as it was stated in the above information, through this chapter is going to be analyzed the impact that this project has from the social and educational point of view, and the conclusion critical analysis in order to present some opinions regarding to the analyzed work, to present the advantages that modern teaching methods have over the traditional ones, and to show how important it is for a teacher to change their mindset about teaching. Subsequently, the following segment corresponds to the title of the proposal.

4.2 Title of the Proposal

The implementation of critical thinking activities to enhance learners' speaking skill in the learning construction process

4.3 Justification of the Proposal

Nowadays, the speaking skill has become the main source for communicating in many fields, and for that reason, the mastery of this skill should be a priority for most of the learners across the world. It is true that different approaches have been implemented in order to increase the performance of the speaking ability in learners, especially in young learners; however, speaking is still found as a difficult skill to master. In fact, Madya et al. (2019) affirm that "many people often find speaking as a difficult skill to master" (p. 315). As a consequence, this action research project should be implemented by teachers in the English language classroom, because it could open up the chance to improve and to innovate the English speaking teaching activities, and to equip students with strategies that make speaking less difficult to master. On the other hand, "finding from students' interview showed that the monotonous materials and techniques used by the teacher were the reasons for their low skills in speaking and low motivation in studying English" (Madya et al., 2019, p. 315). Hence the necessity to perform this proposal, since it not only comes to change those monotonous techniques, but also it can have many

positive effects on the students speaking performance; due to, through the proposed exciting, interesting, and varied critical thinking activities students can boost their motivation in learning to speak English and they are going to be more enthusiastic in completing their different tasks. Apart from this, there should be taken into consideration that:

It is very hard for the second language learners to speak the foreign language, especially English. There are a lot of reasons why they get difficulties in speaking, such as lack of ideas to tell, lack of vocabulary to express the ideas, lack of the exposure to speak, and lack of the interesting teaching methods or techniques that can motivate them to speak (Napitupulu et al., 2019, p. 505).

With this in mind, it can be said that this alternative methodological proposal is the best option to solve the speaking difficulties mentioned in the previous reference, because it has the goal to provide different innovative strategies that allow pupils to enrich their vocabulary, to have exposure to the language they need to face real life situations, to motivate them to speak, and to improve their confidence when it comes to use their speaking skill. Another benefit to perform this project is that the proposed strategies give learners the opportunity to actively engage in critical thinking activities which contribute to change their attitude toward the English subject; due to such activities are not about memorizing or following a set of procedures, instead, it is about giving learners the tools for life and career success, for better decision making, for improving relationships, for creating independence, and for allowing creativity among others. Indeed, McKendry (2015) mentions the following: “That’s the thing about critical thinking; it isn’t about following a set of procedures or learning something by rote” (p. 4). Taking it into account, the strategies that are going to be designed for the accomplishment of this proposal are based on critical thinking activities; due to, the idea is to change the traditional methods in which pupils are required to memorize notes and texts to perform their tasks making the teaching and learning activities boring, and lowering not only the students’ motivation to study English, but also their skills in speaking.

Furthermore, it is supposed that “critical thinking gives you the best possible solution to the issues and problems that you face in your everyday lives. It makes easier for the student to learn and understand quickly and also do better in exams” (IntroBooks, 2018). It means that besides the improvement of the learners’ speaking skill, with the implementation of this project

it can also be possible for students to get the critical thinking skills that are necessary to face and to solve real life problems as well as to perform better in their tests and assignments. In addition to all of this, it is of paramount importance to mention that “the development of communicative competence in English is an aspiration and a request of the Costa Rican society upon the educational system” (Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 4). However, if the educational system wants to accomplish this aspiration, it is required to innovate the English curriculum by proposing strategies focused on the improvement of the learners communicative competence, and here is where this alternative methodological proposal contributes to make it possible, since it comes to help teachers to change or to improve their teaching practice and the strategies that are used in the English language classroom to reach in this way, the goal for developing the learners’ communicative competence, especially their speaking skill.

Altogether, the mastery of the speaking skill should be a priority for most of the learners across the world, and even though different approaches have been implemented in order to increase the performance of the speaking ability in learners, it is still found as a difficult skill to master. For that reason, the performance of this action research project is vital into the English language classroom, because it has the goal to improve and to innovate the speaking teaching activities with strategies that make speaking less difficult to master. As it was stated before, most of the time the monotonous materials and techniques are the causes of the learners' low skills in speaking and low motivation in studying English. Thus, it is necessary to proposed exciting, interesting, and varied critical thinking activities in order to change those monotonous techniques, and to boost the learners' motivation in learning to speak English. Furthermore, through this alternative methodological proposal it can be possible to solve the different learners' difficulties in speaking, since it provides innovative strategies that allow pupils to enrich their vocabulary, to have exposure to the language they need to face real life situations, to motivate them to speak, and to improve their confidence at the time to use their speaking skill.

There are many other benefits from applying this proposal, because the designed activities not only involve students in critical thinking , but also it can change their attitude towards the English subject and give them the tools for life and career success, for better decision making, for improving relationships, and for creating independence among others. As it

was mentioned by the author McKendry, critical thinking is not about following a set of procedures or learning something by rote which makes the learning activities boring and low the students' motivation and their skills in speaking. Instead, critical thinking makes easier for the students to face their everyday problems, and to do better in exams and assignments. As it was also stated in the above information, if the educational system wants to accomplish the development of the communicative competence in English, it is required to innovate the English curriculum by proposing strategies focused on the improvement of such competence, and it can be possible through the implementation of this action research project. Lastly, the following segment shows the alternative methodological proposal in order to describe briefly the strategies that are going to be proposed for providing educators and pupils with new alternatives to introduce speaking exposure into the classroom.

4.4 Alternative Methodological Proposal

This alternative methodological proposal is about an educational innovation which aims to design and implement relevant, purposeful, and innovative strategies to achieve the improvement of the learners' speaking skill and to strengthen the English knowledge construction process. It is important to mention that "as societies are constantly changing, it is important that a curriculum is responsive to the current and future needs of the children and of society" (Hewitt & Tarrant, 2015). For that reason, the educational system should innovate the English curriculum by using an alternative methodological proposal in which teachers are given the tools that are required to prepare students for a changing society where they must adapt to new forms of knowledge. Furthermore, according to Price & Nelson (2019) "one of the biggest challenges teachers encounter is keeping students involved, interested, and learning" (p. 47). Thus, there is the need to propose an educational innovation to encourage teachers to experiment with new forms of knowledge and strategies, to provide them with different alternatives and possible solutions at the time to plan their lessons, and help them to meet the challenges mentioned in the previous reference.

In addition to this, an alternative methodological proposal is necessary to help and encourage teachers to innovate their practices, to support learning, and to promote active learning in the classroom; due to, as the author Ezhilarasu (2016) emphasises "active learning engages students and increases critical thinking skills. It can have positive benefits to both

student and teacher” (p. 17). Thus, in order to perform this educational innovation three different active learning strategies are going to be elaborated with the aim to challenge students to question, examine, create, solve, interpret, and debate the content of the lessons, which can be an effective solution to engage pupils in the process of learning the English language, and to improve their critical thinking and speaking skills. The first strategy is called “Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios” and it is a thinking strategy which has the intention to help and allow pupils to analyze an idea from different perspectives. It can also be useful to expand students thinking and to demonstrate that an idea should be analyzed from many points of view before forming an opinion. Indeed, Mander et al. (2014) stipulate that “the discipline of examining an issue from many perspectives will provide students with a good model for open-ended receptive thinking and emphasizing with the opinions of others” (p. 61). Thus, this strategy can have a positive effect into the learning construction process since it can provide learners with a safe classroom environment in which they can become comfortable sharing their own viewpoint while listening to and learning from others.

Furthermore, through the use of real life scenarios teachers can encourage students to discuss about different issues related to their daily life that might lead to different viewpoints. In the same way, “if students are provided with authentic situations and scenarios in which decision making involves considering different viewpoints, they will be more responsible and look for evidences in making decisions” (Kurup, 2020, p. 70). Therefore, it is necessary to select specific contexts related to the learners’ daily life where decisions and actions are affecting life style changes, so that in this way they can become more responsible, encouraged to use their ability to speak, and increase their critical thinking skills for better decision making. The second strategy is called “Let’s do a classroom gallery walk” and it is a discussion technique that allows pupils to be actively engaged in the content of the lessons while they walk around the classroom thinking, getting their brains working, talking to their peers, listening to their peers, and learning from each other. In addition to this, the authors Madya et al. (2018) clarify that:

Gallery walk is viewed as an activity that is interesting, engaging, interactive, and can increase critical thinking. Presenters help students understand concepts while at the same time they also practice their public speaking skills where they practice organizing

materials from general to specific. Furthermore, it helps to motivate students to ask questions” (p. 566).

Therefore, by performing this strategy into the English language classroom, learners can be able to practice their critical and speaking skills that are necessary to develop their communicative language competence. Besides that, in order to conduct this strategy teachers can use a variety of visual aids related to the topic of study; due to, “learners at all levels benefit from access to good visuals to support their understanding and enhance learning” (Driver & Pim, 2018, p. 31). Thus, this strategy serves also the purpose to enhance the English knowledge construction process. Subsequently, the third strategy is called “Modeling thinking” and it is an instructional strategy which has the purpose to strengthen the English knowledge construction process by helping learners to become critical thinkers and to be able not only to express their opinions, but also to appreciate and analyze those of others. For the author Tittle (2011) “critical thinkers have more autonomy, independence, or freedom than people who just sort of go with the flow and accept whatever’s given to them” (p. 9). It means that by performing this technique, it can be possible to encourage learners to take a maximum amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it. Furthermore, through this strategy teachers model the desired outcome by using visual instructional techniques while verbalizing their thinking to make visible what goes on their mind as they solve problems, and to demonstrate learners how a person thinks critically. It is important to take into account that “good teaching involves modeling what students should learn. The teacher models the behavior the student is being asked to demonstrate” (Ezhilarasu, 2016, p. 17). Therefore, this strategy can be an effective tool to teach students how to think critically and to promote respect for different opinions at the time to get involved in discussions, debates, and dialogues among others.

4.4.1 Importance

The importance to implement this alternative methodological proposal relays on the improvement of the learners’ speaking skill by using innovative and active learning strategies based on critical thinking. There should be considered that teaching the English language is not an easy job and it has become a real challenge for teachers. Indeed, Ediger et al. (2010) affirm that “English language teaching is a challenge for many teachers every where in the world” (p. 1). And it is because teachers have to look for new and different methods, tools, and strategies or

techniques to involve learners in an active participation for the development of the skills during the English learning process. As a consequence, this methodological proposal is of great importance to foster the knowledge construction process since it provides innovative strategies for teachers to have different options and new ideas at the time to plan their lessons and to support their teaching practice. Besides that, Bradshaw et al. (2019) emphasise that “success is enhanced when administrators and faculty members work side by side to plan strategically and implement changes to improve the educational milieu” (p. 61). Therefore, the development of this proposal is extremely important, because the three designed strategies are helpful to implement a change in the instructional practice, to improve the educational milieu, and to enhance success into the English knowledge construction process and in the learners' speaking skill.

On the other hand, it is necessary to change the negative attitude that some learners have toward the English subject, because it can limit their performance in the classroom, decrease their motivation, and even prevent learning, positive change, and growth. Conforming to Bradshaw et al. (2019) “changes in behavior, and thus learning, take place more readily when the student is fully engaged and can actively participate in the learning process” (p. 41). Hence the importance to apply this alternative methodological proposal since it comes to strengthen the English knowledge construction process by creating and applying strategies that provide learners with the opportunity to have an active participation into the English language classroom, and to be fully engaged in the process of learning to speak English, so that they can be able to change their negative attitude into a positive one creating the opportunity for learning and motivation that can lead them to success regarding to their English performance. Additionally, Hewitt & Tarrant (2015) clarify that “innovation is focused on improvement” (p. 9). For that reason, this proposal is based on an educational innovation that is focused on the improvement of the learners' speaking skill, and its implementation is important to empower educators with new, creative, and effective teaching methods to challenge and engage pupils.

4.4.2 Necessity

According to Comer (2008) the purpose of public school “is to prepare students to be successful in school and in life. Life success requires skills that will enable individuals to be good family and group members, learners and problem solvers, workers, and citizens of their

respective communities” (p. 8). As a consequence, there is the need to carry out this educational innovation into the English lessons to prepare students with a variety of strategies that involve critical thinking, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding for learners to acquire skills like communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and other essential skills that are necessary to thrive in school, work and life, and to become good citizens not only in their communities, but also in the world. Additionally, O'Shea (2014) points out that the challenges of our time “demand an educational system that can help young people to become citizens of the world. We need our students to be smart, critical, and innovative thinkers but also people of character who use their talents to help others” (p. 1). Thus, if learners are required to be innovative thinkers to face the challenges of our time, there is the need to invent or to create innovative strategies. On the other hand, the new English syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from Ministerio de Educación Pública, states 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. (Programa de Estudios de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016, p. 21)

With this in mind, it can be said that there is the need to apply the strategies that are proposed in this action research project in order to change or to update some teaching techniques that instructors are using in the classroom, so that pupils can be allowed to develop their communicative competence to face all the changes and demands of a globalized world, and to develop the knowledge, skills, and values for today and tomorrow's workplace, further education, or training among others. Additionally, it is important to mention that many times learners lack for sufficient opportunities to practice their English skills into the classroom, and as a consequence, they do not have the confidence to communicate effectively in the real world. In fact, Jamshidnejad (2020) remarks that “even advanced language learners can suffer from a lack of sufficient preparation to communicate beyond the classroom. Consequently, they prefer to keep silent whenever they are not sure whether they can manage the communication successfully” (p. 2). Hence the necessity to accomplish this alternative methodological proposal, because it provides learners with the opportunity to have enough exposure to the English

language by using real life scenarios in which they can practice their speaking skill to communicate successfully beyond the classroom.

4.4.3 Scopes

This segment is developed in order to present meaningful information about the different scopes that this alternative methodological proposal looks for through the performance of its strategies into the English language classroom. It is necessary to remark that “ many language learners perceive communicating skills such as speaking the most challenging skills to master” (Jamshidnejad, 2020, p. 1). And because of that, this action research project is focused on the implementation of critical thinking activities to help learners to improve this skill. On the other hand, it is important to highlight the role that the scopes play into this alternative methodological proposal since as it was stipulated by Heldman et al. (2007) “ the scope statement serves as a baseline for the project. The criteria outlined in the scope statement will also be used to determine whether the project was completed successfully” (p. 106). In this case the scopes contribute to determine if the performance of the proposed strategies were effective to improve the learners’ speaking skill and to foster the English knowledge construction process. Additionally, these authors also explained that:

The purpose of the project scope statement is to document the project objectives, deliverables, and requirements so that they can be used to direct the project team’s work and as a basis for future project decisions. The scope statement is an agreement between the project and the project customer that states precisely what the work of the project will produce. Simply put, the scope statement tells everyone concerned with the project exactly what they’re going to get when the work is finished. (Heldman et al., 2007, p. 105)

Therefore, through the scopes of this alternative methodological proposal there is the intention to inform teachers that once this project is finished they are going to be provided with innovative and powerful tools in order to enhance their teaching practice. In the same way, there is the aim to tell students that they are going to be given many opportunities to practice real life language during their English lessons, and that they are going to be able to enhance their speaking skills through successful active learning activities based on critical thinking. Besides

that, it can be said that the scopes come to give answers to the research questions that were created and formulated in order to give a clear focus and purpose of this study. To demonstrate:

- How does collaborative learning help to improve critical thinking skills?

Collaborative learning is an instructional method in which students work in small groups to search for understanding, solutions, and meaning. Furthermore, the collaboration and the active exchange of ideas within the small groups promote critical thinking and encourage students to take responsibility for one another's learning as well as their own. In fact, Alias & Luaran (2017) clarify that "the shared learning gives students an opportunity to engage in discussion, take responsibility for their own learning, and thus become critical thinkers" (p. 334). Thus, the use of collaborative learning strategies come to improve the critical thinking skills.

- How is critical thinking improved by implementing real-life scenarios in the learning construction process?

Real world scenarios are essential to engage learners during the English language lessons since they tend to be meaningful and applicable to students' lives. They also demonstrate learners the complexity of real issues, and as such, can stimulate and promote critical thinking. Indeed, the authors Velliariis & Coleman-George (2016) discuss that "by bringing real-world scenarios into the classroom, students' critical thinking was promoted, contributing to their problem-solving ability" (p. 617). Therefore, it can be possible to improve the learners' critical thinking by implementing real life scenarios during the learning construction process.

- How is critical thinking affected by instructional scaffolding?

According to Evertson & Weinstein (2013):

It is the teacher's job to support and encourage student thinking as they work on projects, and challenge them to go beyond obvious answers. Scaffolds-- a temporary, adjustable support for student learning can be used by teachers to help students think and learn in ways that would not be possible without the scaffold" (p. 603).

Therefore, it is necessary to provide learners with instructional scaffolding to help them improve their critical thinking.

- How does the communicative language competence help to improve learners' speaking skill?

The communicative language competence is the learners' ability to understand and use the language appropriately to communicate in authentic social and school environments. It also involves the development of the English proficiency through interactions embedded in meaningful contexts, and as a consequence "it is of great importance to teach speaking within a communicative competence framework" (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2008, p. 151). Therefore, the communicative language competence contributes to help learners to improve their speaking skill by embedding meaningful context to learn.

- How is the speaking skill affected by learners' fluency development?

Fluency is the ability to process language receptively and productively at a reasonable speed, and according to Nation & Newton (2009) "learners demonstrate fluency when they take part in meaning-focused activity and do it with speed and easy without holding up the flow of talk" (p. 151). Therefore, it is necessary to provide learners with the opportunity to practice fluency in the English language class, so that they can be able to take part in meaningful conversations with the appropriate speed and without holding it.

- How does the implementation of authentic spoken activities help to improve learners' speaking skill?

The authentic spoken activities are tasks given to students in the real world where they can apply what they learned in class and continue to learn more in a setting that is relevant to them. However, there are some teachers who do not apply them frequently into their lessons. Indeed, Brophy (2013) comments that "research on authentic activities indicates that they occur infrequently in classrooms, but when they do, they are associated with a variety of positive outcomes" (p. 32). Therefore, it is important to create and implement authentic spoken activities into the English language lessons to achieve the outcome of the improvement of the learners' speaking skill.

- How does the action-oriented approach help to improve pupils' learning construction process?

The action oriented approach attaches great importance to formulating the learning goals in terms of competences, and it involves learners in meaningful and authentic tasks that

encourage learners to interact and participate in the English lessons. Thus, Lytras, et al. (2010) clarify that “an action-oriented approach engages students in authentic tasks and through active interaction among them” (p. 96). Therefore, the action oriented approach comes to be a powerful tool to strengthen the process of learning English.

- How is the learning construction process improved by using didactic sequence?

The objective of the teaching strategy based on didactic sequences is to make work more practical and meaningful for teachers when preparing the material and also for students when carrying out activities that they can apply in their daily lives. It is important to take into account that “a didactic sequence is a series of instructional sessions around a given genre that seeks to provide students with mental categories and procedures for analyzing how texts work, through explicit and scaffolded instruction” (Kumagai et al., 2015). Therefore, there should be considered the importance of planning and applying a didactic sequence into the English language classroom for the enhancement of teaching practices and to foster the English knowledge construction process.

- How does the implementation of tasks improve the learning construction process?

“Tasks have been widely used as vehicles to elicit language production, interaction, negotiation of meaning, processing of input and focus on form, all of which are believed to foster second language acquisition” (van den Branden, 2006, p. 1). Therefore, it is important to create authentic and purposeful tasks in order to engage and motivate students, so that they can be able to interact, to negotiate, and to foster their English language acquisition and their learning construction process.

In conclusion, this alternative methodological proposal is about an educational innovation which aims to design and implement relevant, purposeful, and innovative strategies to achieve the improvement of the learners’ speaking skill and to strengthen the English knowledge construction process. As it was stated in the above information, there is the need to propose an educational innovation to encourage teachers to experiment with new forms of knowledge and strategies, to provide them with different alternatives and possible solutions at the time to plan their lessons, and help them to meet the challenge of keeping students involved, interested, and learning. Furthermore, through this alternative methodological proposal three different active

learning strategies are going to be elaborated in order to engage pupils in the process of learning the English language, and to improve their critical thinking and speaking skills. The first strategy is called “Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios” and it can be useful to expand students thinking and to demonstrate that an idea should be analyzed from many points of view before forming an opinion.

The second strategy is called “Let’s do a classroom gallery walk” and it is a discussion technique that allows pupils to be actively engaged in the content of the lessons while they walk around the classroom thinking, getting their brains working, talking to their peers, listening to their peers, and learning from each other. Subsequently, the third strategy is called “Modeling thinking” and as it was mentioned before, it is an instructional strategy which has the purpose to strengthen the English knowledge construction process by helping learners to become critical thinkers and to be able not only to express their opinions, but also to appreciate and analyze those of others. On the other hand, this methodological proposal highlights the importance and the necessity to create and implement innovative strategies to improve the learners' speaking skill and to foster the knowledge construction process. Regarding to the importance it was mentioned the necessity to implement this strategies in order to provide teachers with different options and new ideas at the time to plan their lessons and to support their teaching practice. It was also mentioned the importance of this strategies to change the negative attitude that some learners have toward the English subject and to provide them with the opportunity to have an active participation during the learning process.

Furthermore, regarding to the necessity it was stated the need to carry out this educational innovation into the English lessons to prepare students with a variety of strategies that involve critical thinking, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding for learners to acquire skills like communication, critical thinking, teamwork, and other essential skills that are necessary to thrive in school, work and life, and to become good citizens not only in their communities, but also in the world. It was also mentioned the necessity of this proposal to provide learners with the opportunity to have enough exposure to the English language by using real life scenarios in which they can practice their speaking skill to communicate successfully beyond the classroom. On the other hand, the scopes of this proposal serves as a baseline for the project and come to give answers to the formulated research questions which demonstrate the importance to

implement this alternative methodological proposal for the improvement of the speaking skill. The following segment of this project corresponds to the alternative methodological proposal implementation.

4.5 Alternative Methodological Proposal Implementation

This segment has the purpose to present information about the three different strategies that are pretended to be performed through this research project. It is important to mention that these strategies are going to be designed based on the tenth level of the new English syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Diversificada from Ministerio de Educación Pública. Therefore, these strategies are sustained in this program. Additionally, for each strategy is sustained a level, a unit, a theme, an assessment strategy, and the didactic sequence of the speaking skill. In the same way, each strategy is composed of its name, objective, process, some evidences, and its evaluation according to the assessment strategy. For the first strategy there is going to be used the unit number five in which the scenario is “#High Tech High Touch”. Additionally, it is going to use the theme “My future is in my hands”. The indicator considered for this strategy is “real life scenarios” and the selected assessment strategy is “ SP.2. gives explanations and justifications on points of view, briefly”. This first strategy is called “Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios” and it has the intention to involve learners in real life scenarios to promote critical thinking, to enable pupils to relate what they are learning in the classroom with their life experiences, and to provide learners with the opportunity to practice their speaking skill through the exposure of real language. Furthermore, in order to perform this strategy there should be followed the didactic sequence of the speaking skill that correspond in this case planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. Subsequently, the second strategy is based on the unit number five, which uses the scenario “#High Tech High Touch”. Therefore, the theme corresponds to “Tech tools for possitive change”.

The indicator chosen for this strategy is communicative language competence, and the selected assessment strategy is “SP.1. expresses opinions and asks for others’ opinions about the digital world”. Additionally, this strategy requires the speaking skill, and for that reason, there should be followed the following steps: planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. This second strategy is called “Lets’ do a classroom gallery walk” and it has the purpose to embed a

meaningful context in learning for allowing pupils to develop their communicative language competence to communicate appropriately and effectively. On the other hand, the third strategy is based on the unit number four which scenario is “Caution: Fragile World. Handle with Care”. Therefore, the theme is “Products and practices in Costa Rica”. The indicator for this strategy is instructional scaffolding, and the assessment strategy corresponds to “SP.1. express opinions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly, welcoming questions with others’ opinions”. Additionally, in order to apply this strategy in the English language classroom teachers need to follow the didactic sequence of the speaking skill, for instance, planning, organizing, rehearsing, interacting, and describing. This strategy is named “Modeling thinking” and has the intention to build strong relationships between teachers and learners, and to help pupils feel more supported for learning the skills that are required to think critically, and to become more independent. The final point of these alternative methodological proposal is the evaluation of the strategies in which teachers are going to apply a task to determine its success.

In summary, these strategies have a curricular sustained based on the English Syllabus, 2016, from Ministerio de Educación Pública and they have been proposed with the aim to improve the learners' speaking skill during their English knowledge construction process. Furthermore, in order to implement this strategies there have been chosen the unit number four for the strategy "Modeling thinking" and the unit number five for the strategies "Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios" and "Lets' do a classroom gallery walk". The scenarios from these units correspond to "#High Tech High Touch" and "Caution: Fragile World. Handle with Care". Such scenarios provide the themes for the strategies, in this case "My future is in my hands", "Tech tools for positive change", and "Products and practices around Costa Rica". The chosen indicators are real life scenarios, communicative language competence, and instructional scaffolding. Furthermore, as it was mentioned before, for the implementation of these strategies there is the necessity to follow the didactic sequence established for the speaking skill, for instance planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing for the first two strategies, and planning, organizing, rehearsing, interacting, and describing for the last one. On the other hand, the strategy of "Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios" has the intention to provide learners with the opportunity to practice their speaking skill through the exposure of real language. The strategy of "Lets' do a classroom gallery walk" has the purpose to embed a meaningful context in learning for allowing pupils to develop their communicative language

competence. And the last strategy which is "Modeling thinking" has the intention to help pupils feel more supported for learning the skills that are required to think critically, and to become more independent. Subsequently, the following segment correspond to the description of the first teaching strategy.

4.5.1 Description of the first teaching strategy

Name of the strategy:

Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios.

Objective:

To relate real life scenarios with the process of learning a second language through speaking materials by using critical thinking for the purpose of making learners give explanations and justifications on points of view, briefly.

Variable:

Critical thinking

Indicator:

Real life scenarios

Level:

Tenth grade

Unit:

Five

Scenario:

#High Tech High Touch

Theme:

My future is in my hands.

Assessment strategy:

SP.2. gives explanations and justifications on points of view, briefly.

Didactic sequence:

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Producing.

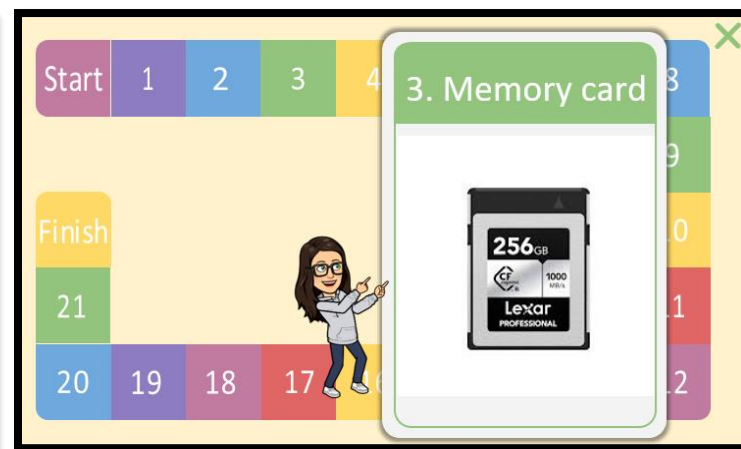
Implementation of the first teaching strategy

“Explaining on points of view from real life scenarios” is the first teaching strategy that comprises this alternative methodological proposal. This strategy shows the importance of utilizing real language into the English knowledge construction process. Likewise, the variable of critical thinking has been considered to create a critical thinking task in which learners can use their speaking skill to give explanations and justifications on points of view by thinking critically. Additionally, the indicator of real-life scenarios comes to demonstrate the necessity to involve and expose learners to situations they will encounter in their daily life, so that they can be able to acquire the tools that are required to success in life. It is fundamental to mention that this strategy is elaborated according to the English Syllabus 2016, from Ministerio de Educación Pública. Consequently, it is based on tenth level, unit five, scenario “#High Tech High Touch”, and the theme “My future is in my hands”. Likewise, the strategy follows the didactic sequence established for the speaking skill which corresponds to planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. Each stage is paramount for the whole development of this strategy. Furthermore, the purpose of this strategy is to provide learners with the opportunity to give explanations and justifications on points of view, through the usage of critical thinking activities to innovate the English language lessons and to improve the pupils’ knowledge construction process.

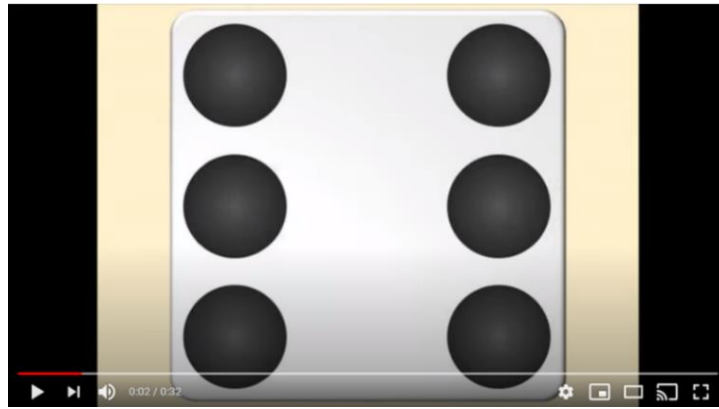
Planning

In this stage, the teacher performs an interactive board game which contains numbers with some tech products pictures hidden behind them. For this game the teacher uses a dice from the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uf1gMqbpT4> and asks for some

volunteers to participate. Each volunteer indicates to the teacher when to stop the dice and according to its number the teacher moves the indicated spaces on the board game to show the picture behind the corresponding number. Subsequently, the student must explain and justify briefly, the benefits that the showed tech product has in people's life by giving his/her point of view. Then, the teacher divides the class into four groups and tells them that they have to create their own tech product to improve the quality of people's life, and that they are going to use the app "Padlet" to show their tech product to the rest of the group, and to give a well-organized presentation in which they have to imagine that they are participating in a technological event where they must promote and sell their tech product to the people who are buying there by explaining and justifying how it contributes to improve the quality of people's life and why it must be bought.



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9uf1gMqbpT4>

Organizing

The teacher provides learners with the following link <https://www.menti.com/ribzcgphos> in order to use the online tool that is called “Mentimeter” in which they must answer to the question “What are some essential aspects that should be taken into account at the time to elaborate a tech product to improve the quality of people's life?”. Once all learners have answered the question, the teacher projects the online tool on the board to show the brainstorming formed with the given answers, and asks students to explain and justify briefly, why they consider that those aspects are fundamental to create a tech product to improve people’s life. After that, the teacher shows a video from the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iKitGJeAZ4> which is about a boy promoting a product to help parents stay connected to what their kids are learning in school, for the purpose of giving learners an example of what they have to do. Afterward, pupils take into account the brainstorming and the video they saw previously to decide what tech product they are going to design and to prepare and organize their presentation.

Mentimeter

What are some essential aspects that should be taken into account at the time to elaborate a tech product to improve the quality of people's life?

Enter a word	25
Enter another word	25
Enter another word	25
Enter another word	25
Enter another word	25
Enter another word	25

Source: <https://www.menti.com/ribzcgphos>



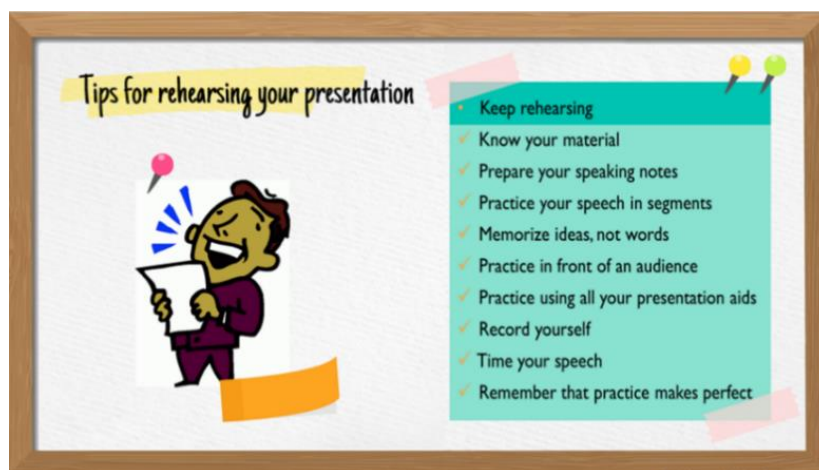
Source: <https://www.mentimeter.com/s/c64fb24be00fa6a8861ab3d54a394f0b/5d987f9073f6>



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iKitGJeAZ4>

Rehearsing

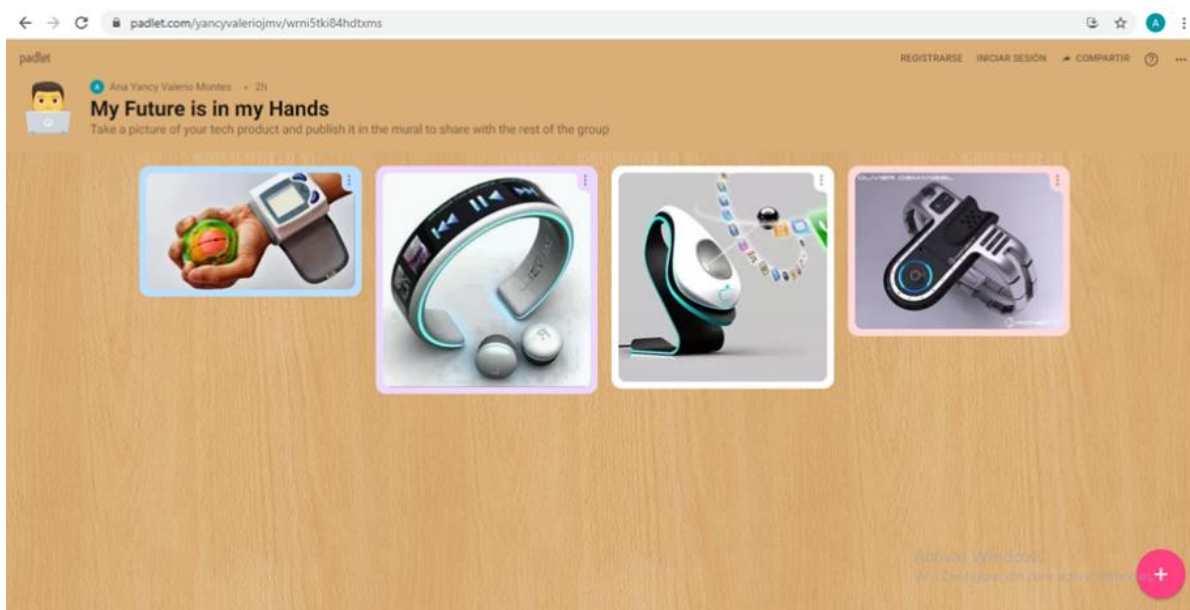
Students are given some time to create their tech product and then, they practice the presentation they prepared before considering different tips that the teacher shows on the board. The teacher helps them by giving feedback correcting mistakes like grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. After that, learners are introduced with the app “Padlet” which can be used as a virtual collaborative board in which pupils can incorporate videos, images, and text files. And then, the teacher tells learners that they have to take a picture of their tech product in order to share it in a mural that he/she creates.



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

Producing

The teacher provides the link <https://padlet.com/yancyvaleriojmv/wrni5tki84hdtxms> and asks learners to publish the picture of their tech product there for sharing it with the rest of the class. Once all pictures have been published, the teacher projects the mural on the board to show the different tech products. Subsequently, the teacher expands picture by picture for learners to perform their presentation in front of the class. At the end of the presentations the teacher asks students for their personal experiences and challenges to create a tech product, and their points of view from this experience.



Source: <https://padlet.com/yancyvaleriojmv/wrni5tki84hdtxms>

Evaluation

Finally, with the purpose of assessing the students' achievement of the assessment strategy, the teacher divides the class into three groups to run a roundtable group discussion in which learners must give explanations and justifications on points of view. Then, the teacher projects a power point slide with the topic of the discussion and some specific questions to avoid misunderstandings or vague answers. Subsequently, based on the given topic and questions each group must discuss and record their discussion to transcribe the major points. After that, learners share the results orally and engage in further discussion. Such task will put into evidence if learners can give explanations and justifications on points of view, briefly regarding to the topic "Technology".



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

4.5.2 Description of the second teaching strategy

Name of the strategy:

Let's do a classroom gallery walk.

Objective:

To relate communicative language competence with the process of learning a second language through speaking materials by using speaking skill for the purpose of expressing opinions and asking for others' opinions about the digital world.

Variable:

Speaking skill

Indicator:

Communicative language competence

Level:

Tenth

Unit:

Five

Scenario:

#High Tech High Touch

Theme:

Tech tools for positive change

Assessment strategy:

SP.1. expresses opinions and asks for others' opinions about the digital world.

Didactic sequence:

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Producing

Implementation of the second teaching strategy

The second teaching strategy that has been proposed for the implementation of this alternative methodological proposal is called “Let’s do a classroom gallery walk” which covers the importance to create safe learning environments in which pupils can practice their speaking skill to express their opinions with confidence. Consequently, the variable of speaking skill has

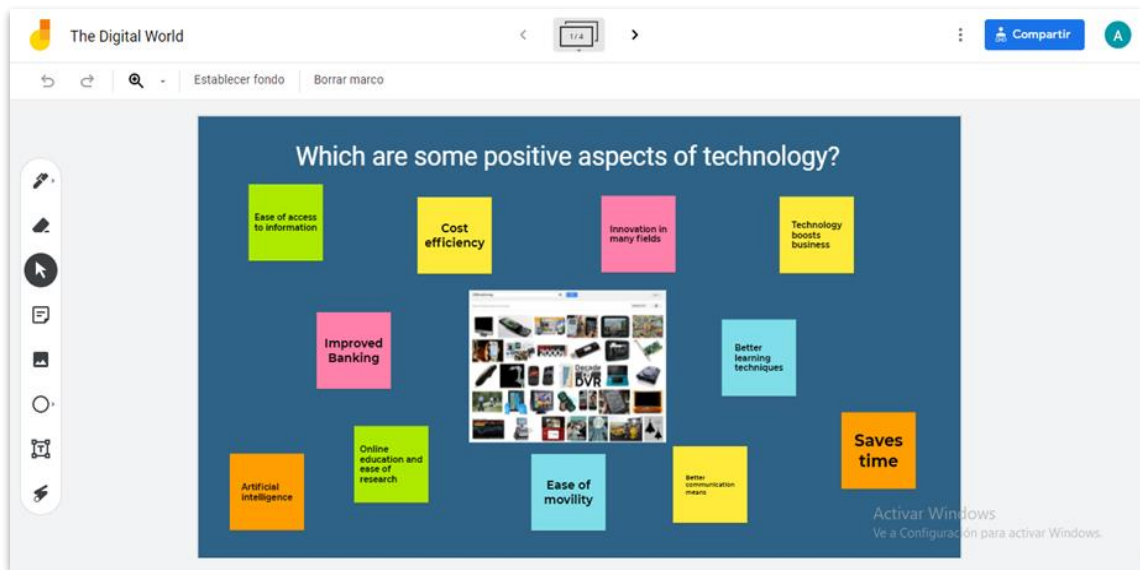
been taken as a reference point to perform a speaking task where learners can use their communicative language competence to express opinions in a more effective way. Likewise, the indicator of communicative language competence comes to demonstrate the necessity to enable students to acquire the knowledge, and the skills that are required to become successful speakers. It is vital to mention that this strategy has been elaborated in accordance with the English syllabus 2016, from Ministerio de Educación Pública established with the purpose of planning the development of the lessons. Therefore, it is based on the unit five, scenario “#High Tech High Touch” and the theme “Tech tools for positive change”. Besides, it follows the didactic sequence defined for the speaking skill which is planning, organizing, rehearsing, and producing. Every step is essential for the overall development of this second teaching strategy which has the purpose to provide learners with the opportunity to express opinions and ask for others’ opinions about the digital world. According to the sequence established in the MEP’s English syllabus, 2016 for tenth grade, the stages of the present strategy are developed as follows:

Planning

For this stage, the teacher provides learners with the following link <https://jamboard.google.com/d/14binO4WC8rIN5IAgGqNviDm7qP0kdFpH2x13pQnzacc/edit?usp=sharing> for the purpose of using the Google’s interactive board called “Jamboard” in which they are going to find four different boards with questions and issues related to the digital world. Subsequently, learners go to the link, answer the questions, and comment on the issues while the teacher projects their answers and their comments on the board to share the results. After that, the teacher divides the class into six groups and shows to them a power point slide with the following discussion topics for learners to choose one.

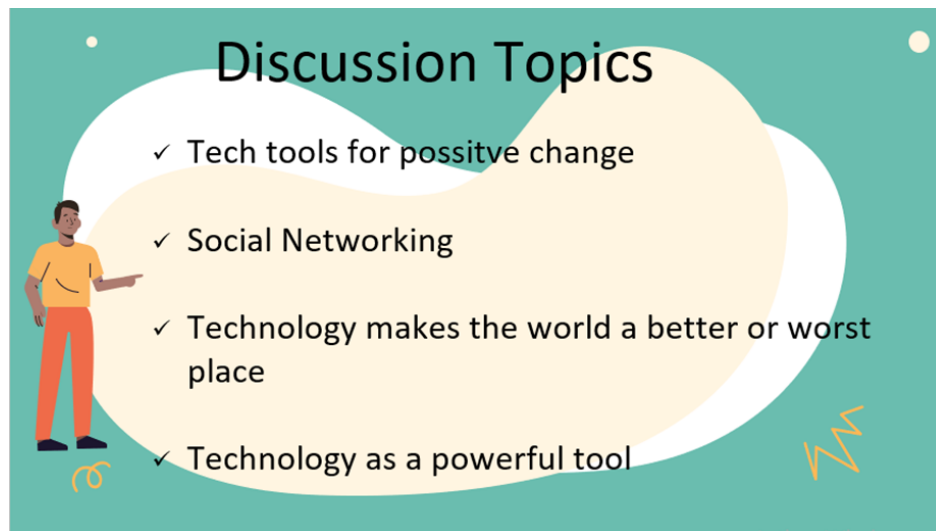
1. Tech tools for positive change
2. Social networking
3. Technology makes the world a better or worst place.
4. Technology as a powerful tool

Once learners have chosen one of the topics the teacher asks them to create a poster by using the app “Canva” for the purpose of presenting their posters in a classroom gallery walk in which they have to express their opinions and ask for others’ opinions about the digital world.



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

<https://jamboard.google.com/d/14binO4WC8rIN5IAgGqNviDm7qP0kdFpH2x13pQnzacc/edit?usp=sharing>



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

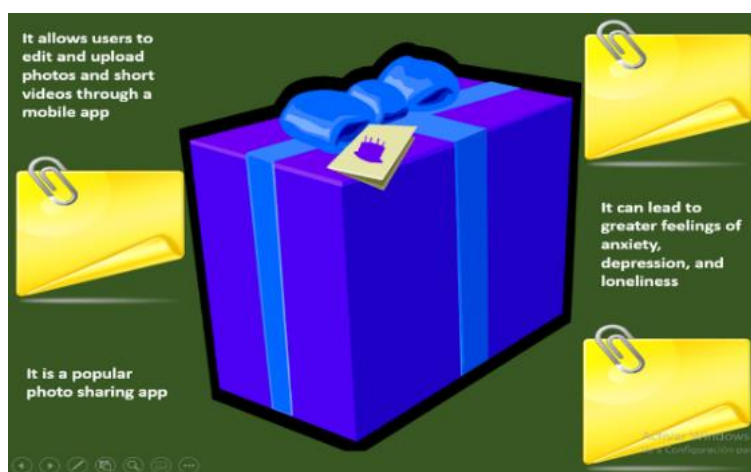
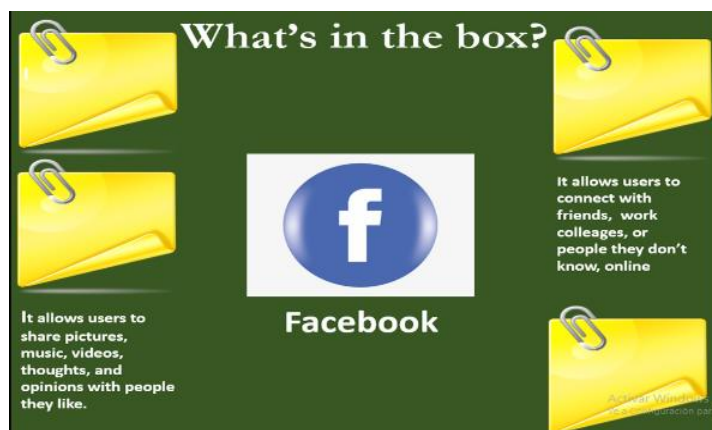
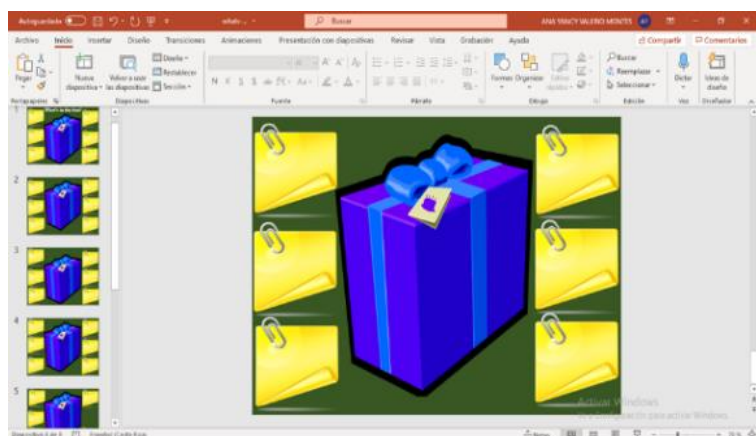
Organizing

In this stage, the teacher performs an interactive game that is called “What’s in the box” which contains some boxes with a picture inside them related to social networking sites as well as different clues for learners to guess the social networking site that is inside the box. After that, the teacher tells to the groups that they are going to use the online voice recorder that is called “Bearrecord” which can be found in the following link <https://voice-recorder-online.com/> in order to create and record a three minute conversation in which they have to express their

opinions and asks for others' opinions about the digital world by taking into account the below questions which are projected by the teacher on the board:

- What do you think about social networking?
- What is your favorite tech tool and why?
- What is the most important piece of technology in your life?
- If you could invent a piece of technology, what would it be and why?

Once all groups have recorded their conversation, they must download and send the recordings to a WhatsApp group that the teacher creates, so that all learners can be able to listen to the different conversations in order to select the information that is related to the topic they chose before for the elaboration of their posters, and to organize their presentations.



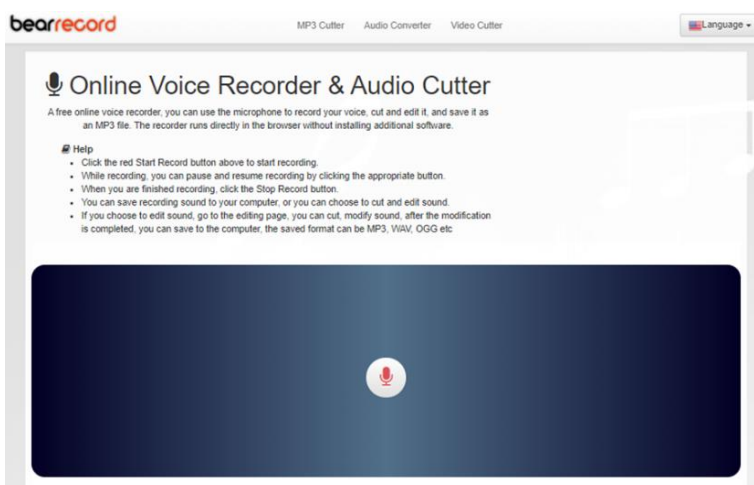
Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

The Digital World

- What do you think about social networking?
- What is your favorite tech tool and why?
- What is the most important piece of technology in your life?
- If you could invent a piece of technology, what would it be and why?



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes



bearrecord MP3 Cutter Audio Converter Video Cutter Language

Online Voice Recorder & Audio Cutter

A free online voice recorder, you can use the microphone to record your voice, cut and edit it, and save it as an MP3 file. The recorder runs directly in the browser without installing additional software.

Help

- Click the red Start Record button above to start recording.
- While recording, you can pause and resume recording by clicking the appropriate button.
- When you are finished recording, click the Stop Record button.
- You can save recording sound to your computer, or you can choose to cut and edit sound.
- If you choose to edit sound, go to the editing page, you can cut, modify sound, after the modification is completed, you can save to the computer, the saved format can be MP3, WAV, OGG etc

Source: <https://voice-recorder-online.com/>



Claro 9:16 p. m. 36%

Tenth grade
Alex, Johan, Tú

Hoy

Los mensajes y las llamadas están cifrados de extremo a extremo. Nadie fuera de este chat, ni siquiera WhatsApp, puede leerlos ni escucharlos. Toca para obtener más información.

Creaste el grupo "Tenth grade"

Hi guys! Send your recordings please 😊
8:29 p. m. ✓✓

Alex
AUD-20210807... 8:51 p. m. 0:29

Johan
AUD-20210807... 9:16 p. m. 0:17

Escribe un mensaje

Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

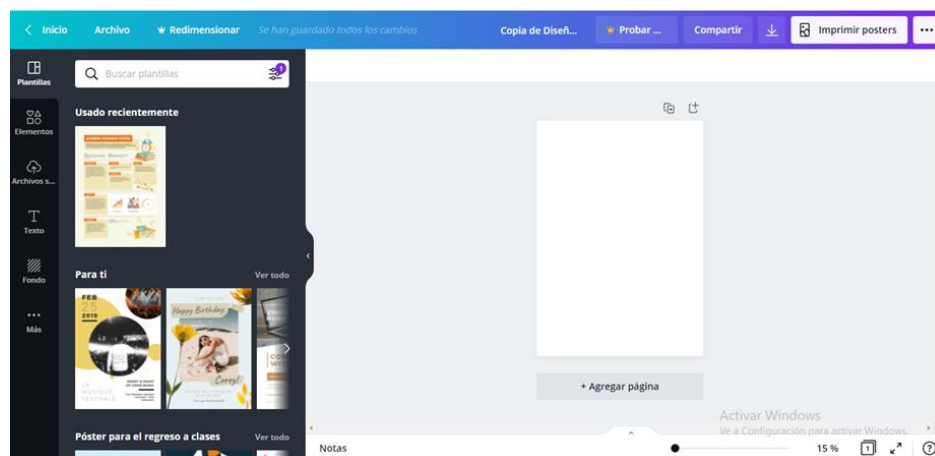
Rehearsing

The teacher shows learners how to use the app “Canva” as well as an example about the poster that they must create. After that, the teacher provides the following link <https://www.canva.com/design/DAEmgbG6KY8/sUgVVIF-U6Ndp0N-0ccoUg/edit> and asks pupils to create their posters by using the information they selected before from the recordings. Lastly, students are given some time to practice their presentation and to put into practice peer feedback to improve any detail from the presentation that they are going to perform in the classroom gallery walk.



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

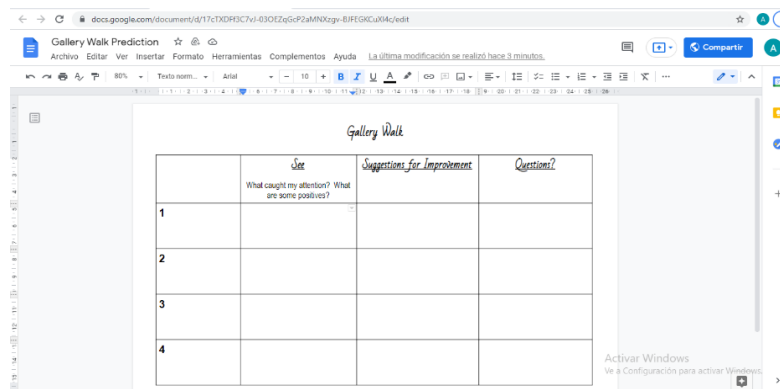
https://www.canva.com/design/DAEhNZ_oRyg/8KtVXZ9sOiYqSf_zmgv2iQ/view?utm_content=DAEhNZ_oRyg&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=sharebutton



Source: <https://www.canva.com/design/DAEmgbG6KY8/sUgVVIF-U6Ndp0N-0ccoUg/edit>

Producing

The teacher tells students that half of the groups are going to present their posters while the other half will be the visitors, and then, they must switch. Furthermore, the teacher provides a graphic organizer from the following link <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17cTXDFf3C7vJ-03O EZqGcP2aMNXzgv-BJFEGKCuXI4c/edit> for allowing pupils to take some notes during the classroom gallery walk. After that, learners are asked to take a screenshot of their posters in order to share them in the WhatsApp group that the teacher manages so that all students can be able to see the different posters while listening to the presentations. Subsequently, the first three groups must stand around the class with a sufficient separation space between them for the purpose of performing a classroom galley walk to present their posters and to express their opinions regarding to the digital world. Once learners finish their presentation, they ask visitors for their opinions about the ideas presented. Following, the visitors must rotate to a different group and so on until they have visited the three different groups. Finally, the visitors and the groups who are presenting switch roles.



The screenshot shows a Google Docs document titled "Gallery Walk". The document contains a table with four columns and four rows. The columns are labeled "See", "Suggestions for Improvement", and "Questions?". The first row has a sub-header "What caught my attention? What are some positives?". The rows are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4.

	See	Suggestions for Improvement	Questions?
1	What caught my attention? What are some positives?		
2			
3			
4			

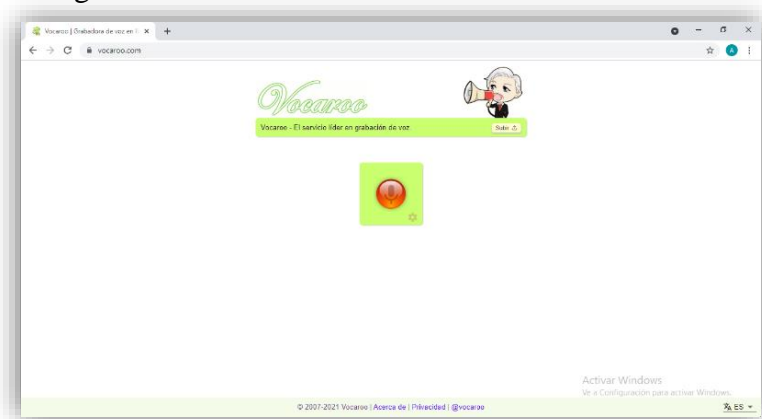
Source: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/17cTXDFf3C7vJ-03O EZqGcP2aMNXzgv-BJFEGKCuXI4c/edit>



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

Evaluation

For assessing the accomplishment of the assessment strategy, the teacher asks learners to work into groups of four in order to create a dialogue in which they must express their opinions and asks for their classmates' opinions about the topic "The digital world". After that, learners are given some time to practice, and then, the teacher asks them to use the online tool that is called "Vocaroo" which is used to record and share audios. It can be found in the following link <https://vocaroo.com/> Subsequently, the teacher shows how to use the online tool and then, learners go to the link by using a phone per group to record and share their dialogues in the WhatsApp group created by the teacher. In that way, the rest of the classmates can listen all the recordings and the teacher can assess if learners are able to express opinions and asks for others' opinions about the digital world.



Source: <https://vocaroo.com/>



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

4.5.3 Description of the third teaching strategy

Name of the strategy:

Modeling thinking

Objective:

To relate instructional scaffolding with the process of learning a second language through speaking materials by using critical thinking for the purpose of expressing opinions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly, welcoming questions with others' opinions.

Variable:

Critical thinking

Indicator:

Instructional scaffolding

Level:

Tenth

Unit:

Four

Scenario:

Caution: Fragile World. Handle with Care

Theme:

Products and practices in Costa Rica

Assessment strategy:

SP.1. express opinions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly, welcoming questions with others' opinions

Didactic sequence:

- Planning
- Organizing
- Rehearsing
- Interacting
- Describing

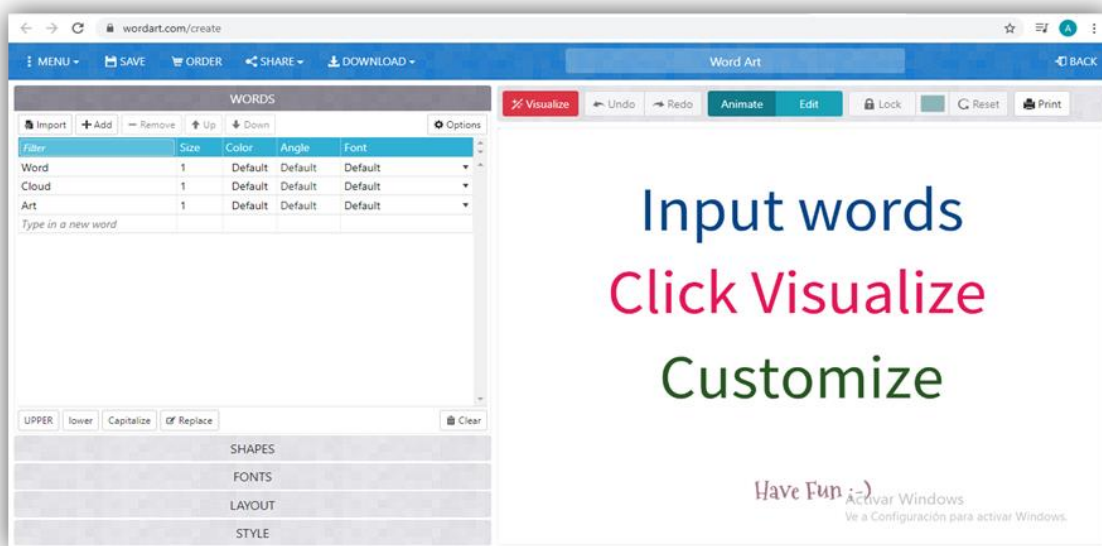
Implementation of the third teaching strategy

“Modeling thinking” is the third teaching strategy proposed into this alternative methodological proposal. This strategy demonstrates the necessity to model learners how to complete an activity or an assignment before they begin, so that they can have the confidence and the guidance needed to achieve this in a more successful way. Additionally, the variable critical thinking has been considered for the purpose of creating a speaking task in which learners should not only express their opinions, but also welcoming questions and others' opinions. Likewise, the indicator of instructional scaffolding shows the importance to support and help pupils to become independent, self-regulating learner, and problem solver. It is essential to mention that this teaching strategy has been created according to the English Syllabus 2016, from Ministerio de Educación Pública. Therefore, it is based on tenth level, unit four, scenario “Caution: Fragile World. Handle with Care”, and the theme “Products and practices in Costa Rica”. Furthermore, the current strategy follows the didactic sequence established for the speaking skill which corresponds to planning, organizing, rehearsing, interacting, and describing. Each stage is vital for the whole development of this strategy. Besides that, the purpose of this strategy is to provide learners with the opportunity to express opinions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly, welcoming questions with others' opinions.

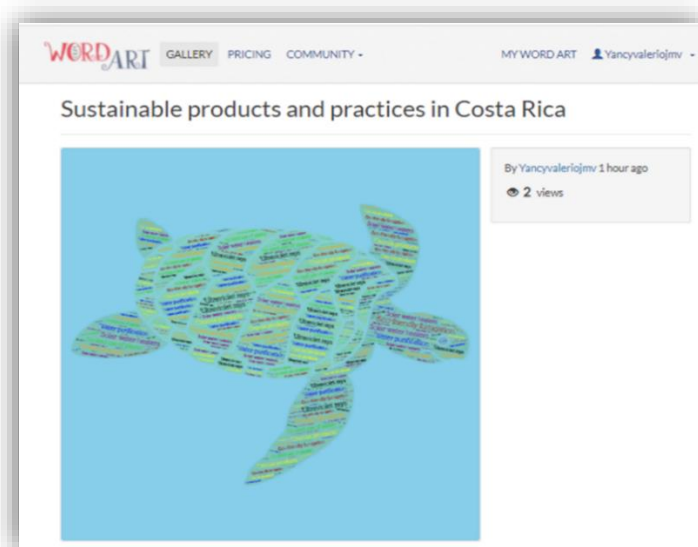
Planning

The teacher divides the class into four groups and provides learners with the following link <https://wordart.com/create> in which they are going to find an online word cloud art creator that is called “WordArt”. Then, the teacher asks the groups to create a word cloud about sustainable products and practices in Costa Rica that they know, and projects the app on the board to create his/her own word cloud for modeling learners how to use it and what they must

do. The teacher creates this by thinking aloud to make his/her thinking visible to learners. Subsequently, all groups go to the link and once they have created their word cloud, they must share its link with the teacher to project the different word clouds on the board, so that all learners can be able to see them. After that, the teacher tells the groups that they are going to use the online voice recorder that is called “Voice Spice Recorder” to create a podcast around ten minutes long in which they must describe at least three sustainable products and practices implemented in Costa Rica, and express their opinions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly, welcoming questions with others’ opinions.



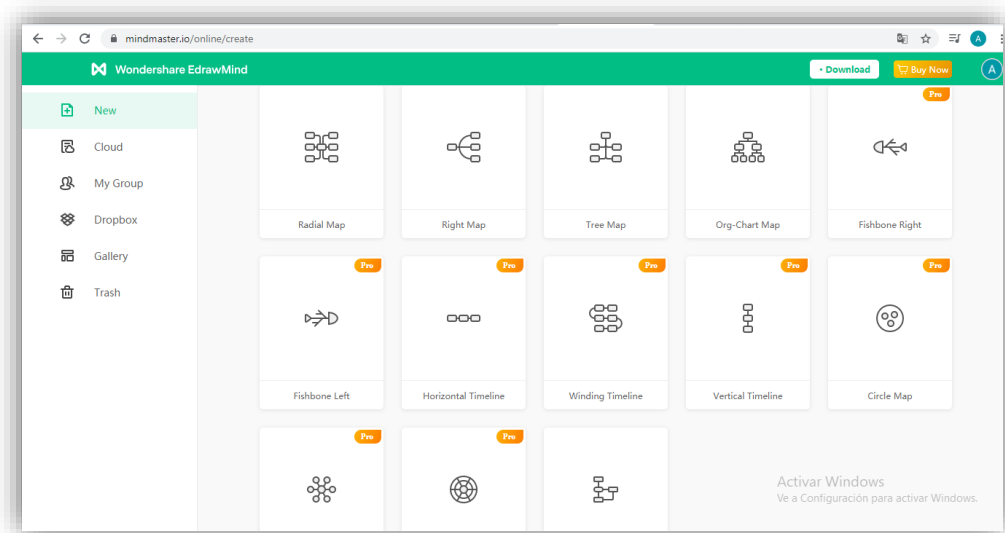
Source: <https://wordart.com/create>



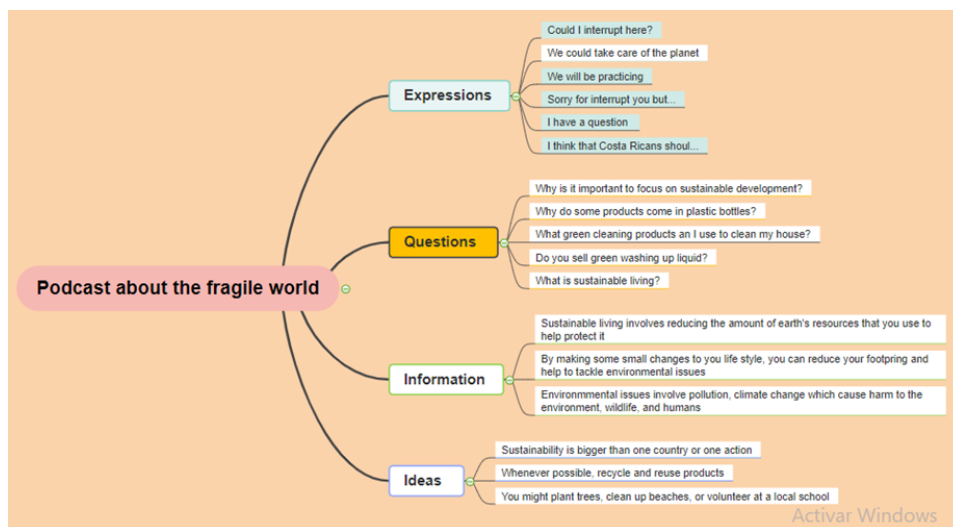
Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes <https://wordart.com/vzwyr5bnl45/word-art%204>

Organizing

The teacher helps learners to organize their podcast by using and projecting on the board the app “MindMaster” from the following link <https://www.mindmaster.io/online/create> for the purpose of creating a collaborative mind mapping in which learners are asked to mention some ideas, expressions, questions, and information related to the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly that can be used to create the podcast. As learners share their ideas, expressions, questions, and information the teacher adds them in the app. After that, each group organize their podcast considering the mind mapping created by the whole class and the vocabulary seen in class.



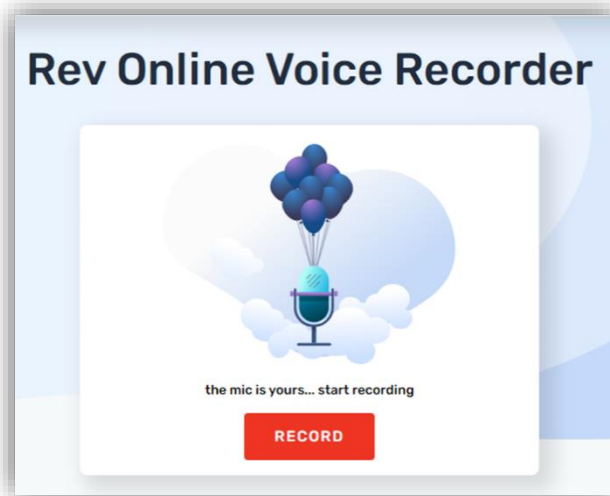
Source: <https://www.mindmaster.io/online/create>



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

Rehearsing

The teacher provides learners with a link <https://www.rev.com/onlinevoicerecorder> in which they are going to find an online voice recorder. Then, the teacher tells learners that they have to record their voice expressing their opinions and asking questions about the fragile world and the way of mitigating effects responsibly by using the information they planned before. After that, the teacher explains how to use the online tool and models learners what they must do by thinking aloud. Subsequently, learners record their voice, and then, they must share their recording with two of their classmates who then must use the same online tool to record and share their response with the person that sent the recording to them. In this way learners can practice what they are going to say in the podcast.

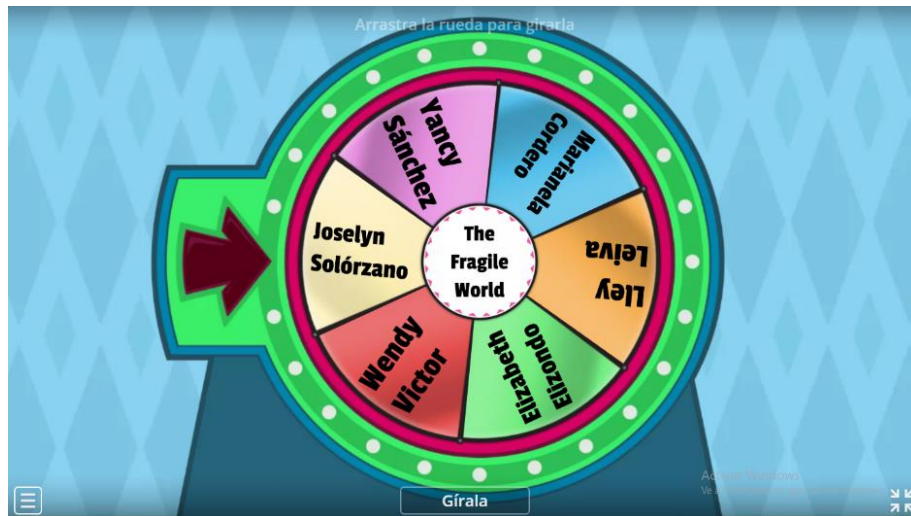


Source: <https://www.rev.com/onlinevoicerecorder>

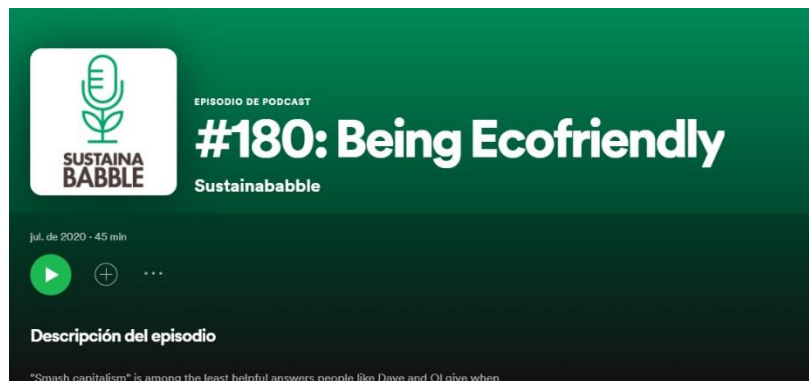
Interacting

The teacher uses a wheel of names to select a student to go to the front of the class and express his/her opinion about the importance of contributing to the health of our fragile world. Then, the teacher selects another student to go to the front and reply on his/her classmate's opinion and so on. The teacher also encourages the other students to ask questions. After that, the teacher models how to use the online voice recorder "Voice Spice Recorder" which can be found in the following link <https://voicespice.com/> and plays a part of a podcast about "Being Ecofriendly" <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5nMMYfnoOKJ8FHacFxD6Vo> in order to model learners the structure of a podcast and what is expected from them. Subsequently, all groups use

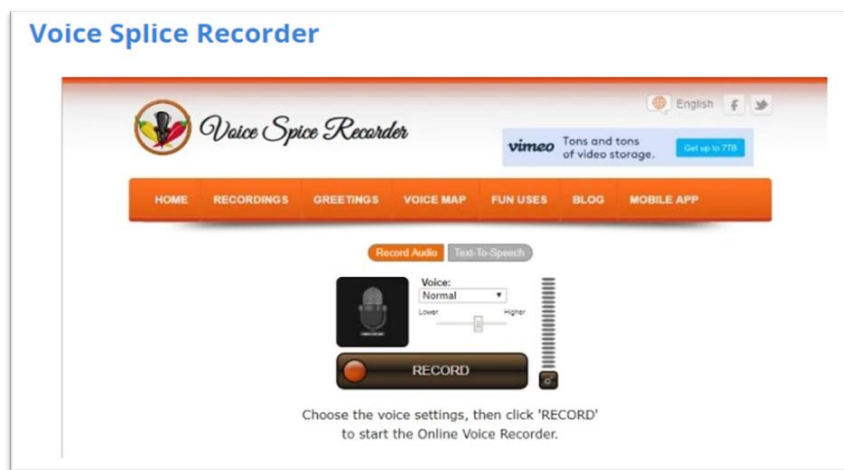
the online tool to make some practice recordings to get familiar with its dynamic and once they are ready, they record their podcast considering its structure.



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes <https://wordwall.net/es/resource/6807046>



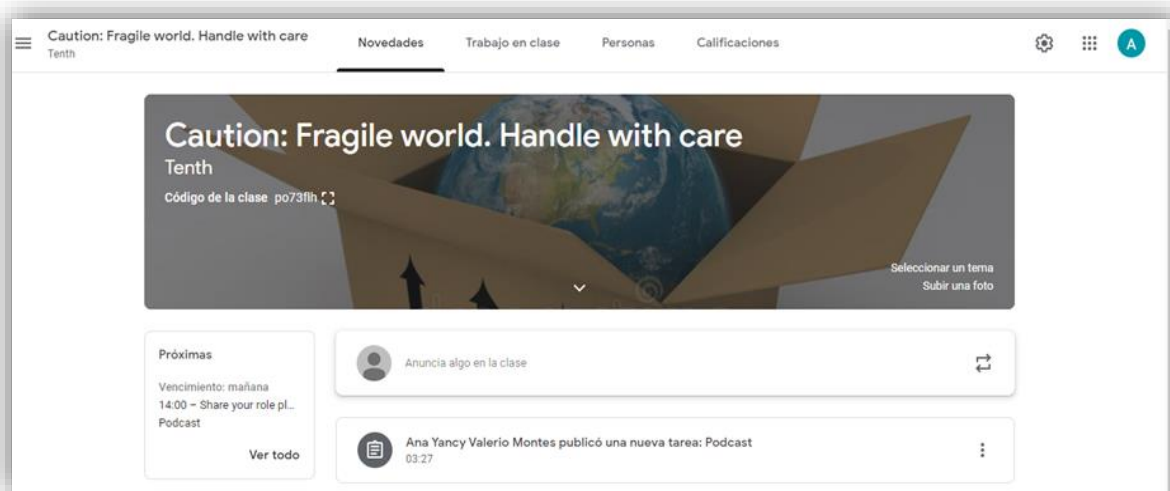
Source: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5nMMYfnoOKJ8FHacFxD6Vo>



Source: <https://voicespice.com/>

Describing

The teacher creates a class in “Google Classroom” and provides learners with the link <https://classroom.google.com/c/MzU3NDg3ODAyMDMz?cjc=po73flh> to enable them to join to the class, and then, asks students to post their recordings there. After that, the teacher projects the Google Classroom on the board, plays the first podcast, and asks the group that created it to go to the front of the class and describe the importance of the sustainable products and practices mentioned in their podcast and how they help the environment. The teacher does the same at the time to play the other podcasts, and at the end he/she involves the whole class in a discussion about the fragile world in which learners express their opinions about it, and welcome questions with others’ opinions.



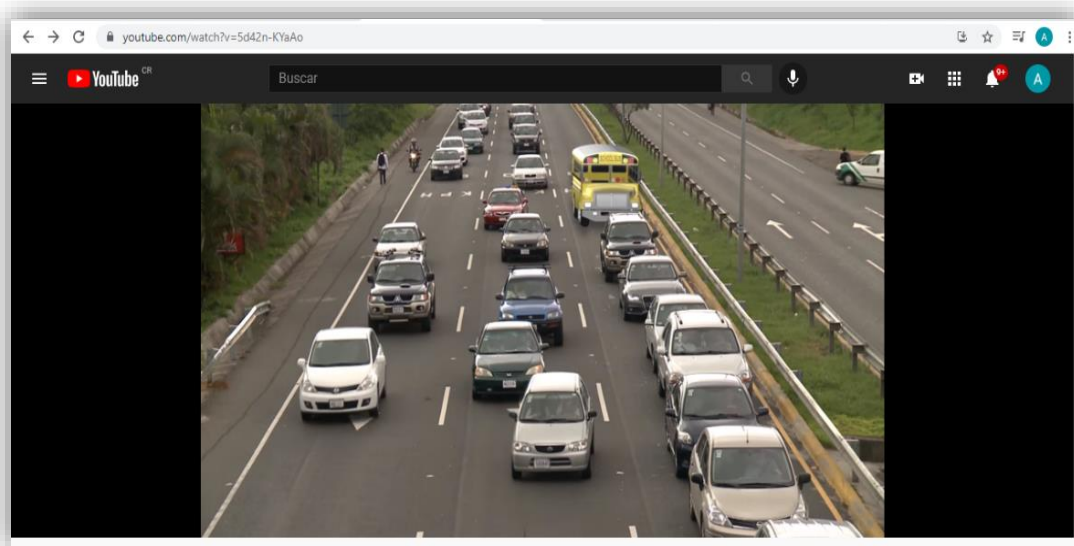
Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

<https://classroom.google.com/c/MzU3NDg3ODAyMDMz?cjc=po73flh>

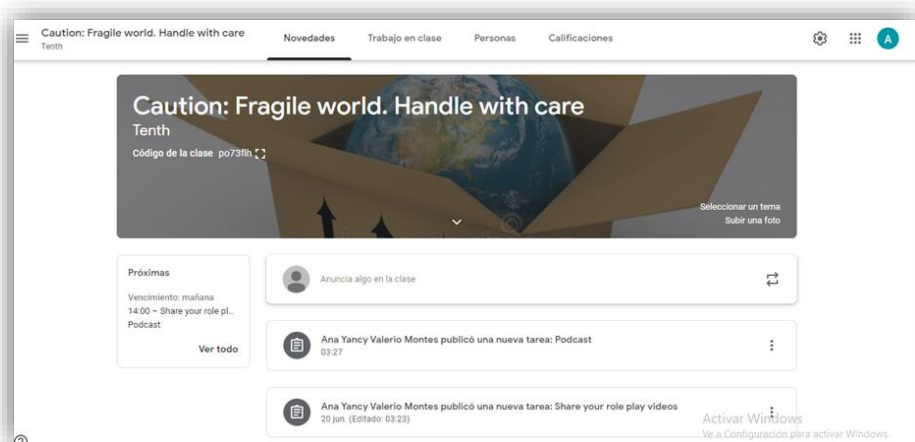
Evaluation

The teacher shows learners a video about “Fragile world handle with care” which can be found in the following link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d42n-KYaAo>. After that, the teacher divides the class into three groups and asks learners to create a situation related to the fragile world to be performed in a role play in which they must interact each other by expressing their opinions and welcoming questions with others’ opinions. Then, the teacher asks learners to take a phone and record a video of their role play. Learners are allowed to do it outside the classroom and once they are ready, they must share the videos in the google classroom created

by the teacher. In this way the teacher can projects on the board the different role plays and assess the accomplishment of the assessment strategy.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5d42n-KYaAo>



Source: Elaborated by Ana Yancy Valerio Montes

<https://classroom.google.com/c/MzU3NDg3ODAyMDMz?cjc=po73flh>

4.6. Educational Impact

Education is the process of achieving knowledge, values, skills, beliefs, and moral habits. It is essential for determining the future of learners, to shape a better society and to help pupils not only to become better citizens, but also to get better paid jobs, and to turn their weaknesses into strengths. In fact, Harland (2020) points out that “education changes lives and is a great determiner of one’s future” (p.43). Therefore, it is vital to implement a change in the English curriculum to make education more effective, to create opportunities, and to support students in

acquiring new knowledge and skills to deal with complex and challenging problems and become better citizens. It is necessary to highlight the importance of the educational impact since it is about how pupils can be affected by the implementation of different tasks and strategies, which means that in order to have a positive educational impact, teachers and schools must be focused on innovation and change to perform relevant and new strategies with a profound effect on the learning environment. As it was stated by Hsiang-Chuan et al. (2015) “utilization of innovative classroom teaching methods can help students to concentrate their attention in classroom, arouse their learning interest and improve efficiency of classroom learning” (p. 891). It shows the importance to pay attention to the innovation of teaching methods so that the educational system can have a beneficial impact for a proper learners’ education; due to, every single aspect that interfere in the knowledge construction process of learners is crucial to cover all the needs that pupils might have. For that reason, this alternative methodological proposal seeks to have a positive educational impact as it has the purpose to offer meaningful ways to foster the knowledge construction process, to enhance the speaking skill, and to train learners to be competent in the English language.

The strategies from this proposal tends to have a positive impact into the knowledge construction process because they keep learners interacting, working in groups, and practicing real language through innovative speaking tasks based on real life scenarios, in which learners are allowed to collaborate and make connections between what they are learning in the classroom to the world around them. The authors Roshelle et al. (2001) as cited in Holt (2012) state that “cognitive research shows that learning improves when students are actively involved in learning, working in groups, frequently interacting and receiving feedback, and seeing the connections to real life” (p. 5). Thus, by embedding these strategies into the English curriculum, it can be possible to strengthen the process of knowledge construction. Additionally, according to Keengwe (2019) when asked to rank descriptors of innovative teaching, students rank the following top five: “1) Engages students and responds to their feedback; 2) Is enthusiastic – conveys a genuine interest and fervor for the subject matter; 3) Encourages students to think outside the box; 4) Makes students excited about learning; 5) Is open minded” (p. 2). It means that the performance of these strategies can have a significant impact into the English knowledge construction process as they have the purpose to innovate the teaching practice so that pupils can feel excited and interested about learning the English language. Similarly, these strategies

involve the use of educational apps; due to, “apps have affordances that are important for learning in many areas, and they are also significant in the sense that children come to school with media habits contingent on extensive use of such tools” (Kucirkova & Falloon, 2016). Therefore, the use of apps for the development of these strategies can boost engagement, motivation, and helps to make the knowledge construction process fun, interacting, and easy for pupils since they like to participate in the activities when they have to use different educational apps and because they are familiar using those tools.

It can be said that before the implementation of these strategies into the knowledge construction process learners can have some weaknesses like an uncooperative spirit, and lack of motivation to participate and use the English language to communicate with their classmates, since some of the traditional methods that teachers are using into their lessons are not encouraging learners to cooperate and to communicate with one another. Indeed, Hsiang-Chuan et al. (2015) emphasise that “in traditional classroom teaching, cultivation about students’ ability to cooperate and communicate is lacked” (p. 890). As well as that, learners can show a lot of weaknesses at the time to use their speaking ability; for instance, lack of confidence, shyness, and fear of making mistakes; due to, they are not given ample opportunities to practice this skill. Furthermore, in accordance with Experts (2020) “the school teaching is supported by textbook and chalk and blackboard in traditional method” (p. 41). And as a consequence, before the application of these strategies, pupils can feel bored and disengaged into the learning process since some teachers are still using that traditional method. However, all those weaknesses can be turned into strengths after the performance of the proposed innovative teaching strategies into the knowledge construction process, because they provide learners with a lot of opportunities to practice the speaking skill through meaningful interaction, safe learning environments, real communication contexts, and different ways of learning in which pupils can take advantage of different Google applications to meet their needs and to develop critical thinking skills. In fact, Pumilia-Gnarini et al. (2012) affirm that “Google applications can be innovatively applied in higher education curricula, by developing an online student-centered cloud learning environment, meeting students’ needs and providing access to learning and higher order thinking skills development” (p. 642). It shows some of the benefits that pupils can have after the utilization of these strategies since they also serve the purpose to give learners the chance to manipulate meaningful Google apps to innovate their knowledge construction process and to

give them valuable learning experiences. Subsequently, the chapters' conclusion critical analysis will be developed in the following segment.

4.7. Chapter's Conclusion Critical Analysis

The current action research project has been developed thinking in the need to provide learners with the opportunity to enhance their speaking skill through innovative teaching strategies based on critical thinking, so that they can have a more effective and successful performance in the school environment and in other areas of their lives. Likewise, there is the desire to make teachers know that keeping up to date with changes and being opened to trying out new teaching methods to innovate their teaching practice, is a requirement in today's education to suit the students' needs and the demands of the changing society. Therefore, this alternative methodological proposal presents three different strategies that can be utilized by educators into their English lessons as a mean to solve the arised problems regarding to the learners' speaking skill, and to keep pupils engaged, motivated, interested in learning, and exposed to real language; due to, they have been designed considering different situations that learners can face in the real life. Furthermore, the proposed strategies demonstrate that teachers should take advantage of the variety of educational apps that can be used in the classroom to make the learning process fun, entertained, and valuable for students. It is crucial to understand that the high quality of education and the learners' performance depends mainly on the methods applied by teachers, and because of that, they should examine, evaluate, and analyze the way in which they are teaching as well as their strengths and weaknesses to be able to grow, to become the best version of themselves, and to improve as educators. It can be said that his proposal is helpful and beneficial to strengthen the English knowledge construction process as well as some weaknesses that pupils have at the time to use the English language.

Additionally, it is important to mention that teaching styles have changed significantly over the years since the traditional way in which education was delivered was trough repetition and memorization techniques, whereas the modern way of teaching is more activity based using questioning, explaining, demonstration, and collaboration techniques. It also focusses on the individual student's needs and involves interactive methods in which learners are encouraged to collaborate, and therefore, be more productive. Furthermore, there are many other advantages that the modern teaching methods have over the traditional ones into the English knowledge

construction process; as an illustration, “they are fun and interactive way of learning, they are learner-centered techniques, and there is more scope for using audio-video teaching aids such as documentaries, YouTube videos, online lectures, MOOCs, educational games, educational mobile applications, etc” (Experts, 2020, p. 43). While the traditional teaching methods are focused “on the teacher as the only source of information in the classroom, they embrace the idea of a teacher-centered method and are focused exclusively on students knowing the content of their textbooks and notes” (Dimitrios et al., 2013, as cited in Verica & Nedelko, 2020, p. 410). The previous references shows the necessity to change the traditional teaching methods that some educators are still using in their lessons; due to, pupils need more than knowing the content of textbooks and notes; instead, they need to be given the opportunity to learn trough modern teaching methods like the audio-video teaching aids that were mentioned before as well as critical teaching, project based learning, class discussion and group work, so that learners can be able to improve and acquire skills such as critical thinking, speaking, problem solving, teamwork, and other competences that are needed to achieve much higher performance in the classroom and in other phases of their life.

On the other hand, changing teachers’ mindsets in a school can be a challenge, because many of them are mediocre and refuse to change their teaching styles, reject new ideas, and are stuck in one’s own practice just because that makes them feel comfortable, which is something alarming since the educational system is forever changing and teachers must be adaptable and flexible to the pupils’ needs and interests of today, they should experiment and be innovative for effective instruction. Indeed, Sabere Ed. Spec (2017) affirms that “during teaching, the teachers need to be innovative and creative when conveying a lesson to the students” (p.1). In addition to this, instructors must be the change they wish to see in the students, and if possible, they should embrace instructional technology and 21st century skills into the classroom to prepare their students for success not only in the learning environment, but also in the future. In fact, Keengwe & Onchwari (2019) emphasise that teachers “need to make sure their learning materials are designed thoughtfully and integrate 21st century skills, technology, and subject-matter content so students can make a transfer of knowledge, skills, and appropriate attitudes and beliefs across learning environments” (p. 89). However, to do so teachers need to change their mindset about teaching and consider the learners’ needs to make the English knowledge construction process relevant to real life. In the same way, educators should take into account that when using their

traditional methods they are doing the pupils an injustice since they are preventing them from meaningful learning experiences, and from developing 21st century skills. For that reason, teachers need to implement innovative strategies and a variety of speaking tasks based on critical thinking so that learners can be able to become more independent and to practice real life skills. Subsequently, the following segment of this alternative methodological proposal corresponds to the reflections which are based on the different research questions that were created and formulated in chapter one.

Chapter V Reflections

5.1. Chapter's Introductory Paragraph

The main goal of this chapter is to present the reflections made by the researcher of this action research project. It is vital to mention that within action research “reflection is systematic, intentional, and designed to improve practice” (Manfra, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that reflections are essential to provide the researcher with the opportunity to explore and examine the collected data in order to reflect on his/her work and share the findings to help teachers to improve their English teaching practice. According to Hansson (2008) “reflection should be seen as a spiral procedure which produces informative useful knowledge for our future decisions and action” (p. 238). As a result, there is the intention to create some reflections based on the different understandings, findings, and knowledge that have been gathered throughout the development of the whole project proposal in order to provide meaningful information to encourage readers to apply this action research work into their future English teaching practice. In addition to this, the reflections that will be provided into this chapter have the main purpose of contemplating the impact that the present alternative methodological proposal will have in the English knowledge construction process and in the learners' speaking skill.

On the other hand, the process of reflections is going to be made by answering the nine research questions that were constructed and formulated in this research work. As it was clarified by Alvesson & Sandberg (2013) “without posing questions it is not possible to develop our knowledge about a particular subject” (p. 1). Therefore, the answers of these questions will contribute to expand people's knowledge and understanding regarding to the topic under investigation. It is vital to mention that the research questions are based on the variables and indicators from this project proposal, and as a consequence, the first three questions emerge from the variable critical thinking and its indicators, which correspond to collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding. Likewise, questions four, five, and six are made considering the variable speaking skill and its indicators; including communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. In addition to this, the last three questions are based on the variable learning construction process and its corresponding indicators; to clarify Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and task. All these variables and indicators contribute to expose meaningful reflections about how the implementation of critical thinking activities can improve the learners' speaking skill during the English knowledge

construction process. Subsequently, the answers of the research questions can be found in the reflections from the following segment.

5.2 Reflections

5.2.1 Critical Thinking

As it was mentioned before, the variable critical thinking embraces the indicators collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding from which the following research questions will be answered.

- **How does collaborative learning help to improve critical thinking skills?**

Collaborative learning fosters the development of critical thinking through discussion, clarification of ideas, and evaluation of others' ideas. It brings many benefits to the English language classroom, because when students learn in groups they are more independent, happier, less lonely, have sense of belonging and thus, enhance their knowledge construction process, encourage personal development, and improve their critical thinking skills. Furthermore, considering that the authors Orvis & Lassiter (2007) stated that “collaborative learning is an unstructured, small group process that cultivates independence, free thinking, and dissent” (p. 32). It can be said that collaborative learning is an essential technique to promote critical thinking skills, because by working in small groups learners are encouraged not only to accomplish their tasks independently, but also to think about their thought processes, to be more responsible for their learning process, and become critical thinkers.

- **How is critical thinking improved by implementing real-life scenarios in the learning construction process?**

The use of real life scenarios is an excellent alternative to improve the learning construction process, because they keep learners at the center, promote knowledge retention, and enable learners to apply skills and knowledge easily and directly in their daily roles and tasks. They also challenge learners to examine a situation from multiple perspectives and encourage them to use their critical thinking skill to make decisions at the time to solve a problem. As it was pointed out by the author Bellanca (2013) “real world scenarios provide students with motivation to develop the skills of making sounds judgments while they read, write, and speak in

mock trials” (p. 128). Therefore, students should be involved in real world, authentic situations to be able to develop and improve critical thinking skills which are essential to make judgments.

- **How is critical thinking affected by instructional scaffolding?**

It is likely that critical thinking can be affected in a positive way through instructional scaffolding since it can be considered as an extremely useful tool for educators to help learners think, work more independently, and move toward new skills. Indeed, scaffolding was described by Gibbons (2014) as:

A special kind of help that assists learners in moving toward new skills, concepts, or levels of understanding. Scaffolding is thus the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone” (p. 16).

Therefore, it can be said that by using instructional scaffolding teachers can help learners know how to think critically so that they can be able to improve this skill.

5.2.2 Speaking Skill

The variable speaking skill involves the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities. As a result, the following research questions will be answered taking into account these important elements.

- **How does the communicative language competence help to improve learners speaking skill?**

The communicative language competence is essential in higher education because of its language functions that enable learners to communicate appropriately and to acquire knowledge and skills in the various disciplines. It was found that the communicative language competence “is the ability to use the language effectively for communication. Gaining such competence involves acquiring both sociolinguistic and linguistic knowledge and skills (or, in other words, developing the ability to use the language fluently, accurately, appropriately and effectively)” (Tomlinson, 2011, p. x). Then, it is paramount to understand the aspects and characteristics of communicative competence to guide learners into speaking atmosphere that make them speak naturally and improve their ability to speak the English language.

- **How is the speaking skill affected by learners fluency development?**

It is expected that learners fluency development can affect the speaking skill in a beneficial manner, because it gives learners the ability to maintain a conversation that can be comprehensible and ongoing in spite of their limitations in communicative competence. Furthermore, considering that Council of Europe (2018) states that when a pupil reach the C2 level of spoken fluency he/she “can express him/herself at length with a natural, effortless, unhesitating flow. Pauses only to reflect on precisely the right words to express his/her thoughts or to find an appropriate example or explanation” (p. 144). It can be argued that fluency development improves learners’ speaking skill since when students become fluent speakers they will know what to say and how to say without hesitations or frequent pauses to think.

- **How does the implementation of authentic spoken activities help to improve learners’ speaking skill?**

The authentic spoken activities is a powerful tool that English teachers should use during their lessons; due to, they expose pupils to authentic use of language and provide significant opportunities to practice the speaking ability through meaningful interaction. Additionally, contemplating that the authors Kidd & Chen (2008) believe that “learning occurs through interaction with rich learning environments, and results from engaging in authentic activities, and social interaction and negotiation” (p. 303). It can be mentioned that by performing appropriate and authentic spoken activities frequently during the knowledge construction process, learners can be encouraged to learn the English language and improve their speaking ability since this kind of activities are helpful to promote interaction, real communication, and rich learning environments.

5.2.3 Learning Construction Process

The variable learning construction process comprices the indicators Action oriented approach, didactic sequence, and task. Therefore, there is the intention to respond the following research questions by making reflections on its components.

- How does the Action oriented approach help to improve pupils’ learning construction process?

The Action oriented approach provides a variety of authentic activities and real world tasks that have been designed not only to motivate and engage students, but also to meet their needs. As it was stated by Piccardo & North (2019) “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). Thus, the implementation of the Action oriented approach into the English lessons can be a successful choice to reinforce the knowledge construction process because when pupils do authentic tasks they are doing something that puts real communicative demands on them, they are been equipped for real language use, and as a consequence, they will be more engaged, excited, motivated, and interested in learning.

- **How is the learning construction process improved by using didactic sequence?**

In a didactic sequence the notion of progress is essential since learners become aware of their capacities and try to overcome their difficulties through the work done in the different sessions. As it was stated by the authors Guerrero-Garcia et al. (2017) “didactic sequences are used to support learning and competences in a specific area; therefore it can be defined as a group of activities organized in a particular and strategic order to reach a learning objective” (p. 119). Thus, it can be argued that the particular order of the activities and the rhythm in which they are presented when following a didactic sequence is crucial to strengthen the learning construction process; due to, the final outcome does not depend on the content of each task, but on how all of them are arranged within the lesson.

- **How does the implementation of tasks improve the learning construction process?**

Tasks play an important role into the learning process since they enable students to develop their knowledge, understandings, and skills in different ways. Likewise, when tasks are authentic, relevant, and meaningful, students are more likely to value what they are learning and make important connections between what they are learning, what they have learned, and how their learning is related to their lives outside school. According to the author Bourguignon, 2010 as cited in Piccardo & North (2019):

The task puts the learner into action; it places the learner in the action. The task must make the learner more autonomous as a user of the language. The task must enable the learner to line up needs and a goal to be achieved, by selecting relevant knowledge and useful skills. (p. 191)

It shows the necessity to perform meaningful and useful tasks into the English lessons since they serve the purpose to provide learners with ample opportunities to engage with the content they are learning, encourage them to be more autonomous, and contribute to foster the knowledge construction process.

Chapter VI Conclusions

6.1 Chapter's Introductory Paragraph

The development of this chapter is indispensable to expose the final conclusions of this action research proposal. There should be considered that “the conclusion is intended to help the reader understand why your research should matter to them after they have finished reading the paper” (Smith, 2016). As a consequence, it can be said that the purpose of conclusions into this alternative methodological proposal is to provide crucial information for readers to get a deeper and clear understanding of the strengths and the impact that this project will have in the improvement of the learners' speaking skill as well as to remind the advantages and the importance to implement this methodological proposal in the Costa Rican English educational system. Additionally, it is necessary to mention that “a conclusion is not merely a summary of the main topics covered or a restatement of your research problem but a synthesis of key points and, if applicable, where you recommend new areas for future research” (Smith, 2016). Hence the importance of conclusions into this project proposal since they can also serve not only as a basis for continuing research in the field of the learners' speaking skill, but to encourage readers to generate new ideas to solve the highlighted issues affecting this vital skill. Furthermore, taking into account that a conclusion is a synthesis of key points, there is the intention to make the process of conclusions based on the indicators from the different variables of this alternative methodological proposal; due to, those indicators are key points that contribute to monitor or to evaluate whether the project is going to make the difference in the learners' speaking skill and in the English knowledge construction process.

In addition to this, those indicators have supported the current project with valuable data for making meaningful interventions like the different strategies that were designed for the enhancement of the speaking skill of tenth-grade learners within the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés de III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada, 2016. It is paramount to mention that the indicators collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding comes from the variable critical thinking; then, the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities correspond to the variable speaking skill, and finally, the indicators Action Oriented Approach, didactic sequence, and task emerge from the variable learning construction process. Therefore, to be more specific the first conclusion is going to be developed considering the indicator collaborative learning, the second conclusion is

based on the indicator real life scenarios, and the third conclusion involves the indicator instructional scaffolding. Subsequently, the fourth conclusion embraces the indicator communicative language competence, the fifth conclusion corresponds to the indicator fluency development, and the sixth conclusion is about the indicator authentic spoken activities. In the same way, the sixth conclusion is developed regarding to the indicator Action oriented approach, the ninth conclusion considers the indicator didactic sequence, and the last conclusion takes into account the indicator tasks. Consequently, by using these indicators, it is possible to make the conclusion section and provide vital information of why this project proposal matters in order to improve the speaking skill.

6.2 Conclusions

The following conclusions are taken from the indicators collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding which respond to the variable critical thinking.

- **Collaborative Learning**

It can be concluded that collaborative learning fosters the development of critical thinking; due to, it encourages learners to accomplish their tasks independently, to be more responsible for their learning process, and become critical thinkers. Likewise, when students learn by working in small groups, they enhance their knowledge construction process and encourage personal development. As it was stated in chapter two “involving learners in collaborative learning activities could positively contribute to extending and deepening their learning experiences, test out new ideas, improve learning outcomes, and increase learner satisfaction” (Daradoumis et al., 2011). Therefore, collaborative learning is an essential technique to provide learners valuable learning experiences, and since it allows the improvement of learning outcomes, it is fundamental to give learners the opportunity to participate frequently in collaborative learning activities so that in this way they can improve successfully their different learning outcomes, especially their ability to speak the English language.

- **Real Life Scenarios**

It can be figured out that learners should be involved in real life scenarios and authentic situations since they keep learners at the center, promote knowledge retention, and enable pupils to apply skills and knowledge easily and directly in their daily roles and tasks. In the same way,

the use of real life scenarios into the classroom encourage learners to use their critical thinking skill to make decisions at the time to solve a problem. As it was emphasised by Negash et al. (2008):

Real life scenarios are an essential learning tool. Throughout a course, taking time to pose real world scenarios as they relate to the course content allows students the opportunity to blend theory with practice and also bring their personal experiences into play. (p. 128)

Consequently, educators should take time to incorporate activities based on real life scenarios during their English lessons, because when pupils are allowed to associate what they are learning in the classroom with their life experiences, they may feel more engaged, excited, and interested during their knowledge construction process; due to, they will find the tasks more relevant to their daily life.

- **Instructional Scaffolding**

From this indicator it can be concluded that the use of instructional scaffolding is fundamental into the English language classroom because it allows teachers to help learners think, work more independently, and move toward new skills or levels of understanding. Furthermore, by using this tool teachers can help learners know how to think critically to improve this vital skill. As pointed out by Bender (2008) “scaffolded instruction emphasizes individual focus on particular students, the students tend to feel more supported when this technique is utilized, and that, in turn, tends to result in enhanced relationships between students and teachers” (p. 73). Hence the importance of instructional scaffolding since it requires teachers to be aware of students’ needs. Besides, when pupils feel supported and have a strong relationship with the teacher, they are given the opportunity to learn through a safe learning environment in which they are enabled to focus on learning the skills needed for a successful education and future.

To continue with the development of this chapter there is the aim to present the acquired conclusions from the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities which correspond to the variable speaking skill.

- **Communicative Language Competence**

Regarding to this indicator, it can be concluded that the language functions involved in the communicative language competence give learners the opportunity to acquire the sociolinguistic and linguistic knowledge and skills to develop the ability to use the language fluently, accurately, appropriately, and effectively to achieve an excellent communication in the target language. As exposed by Rickheit & Strohner (2008) “communicative competence is fundamental for a successful life in our society as it is of great importance for all areas of life” (p. 1). For that reason, it is required to embed meaningful contexts in learning for allowing students to develop their communicative language competence; due to, they promote and enhance learning so that pupils can be able not only to attain their goals in all areas of life, but also to get the means that are necessary for a quality of life.

- **Fluency Development**

From this indicator it can be deduced that fluency development gives learners the ability to maintain a conversation that can be comprehensible and ongoing despite their limitations in communicative competence. Furthermore, it allows the improvement of the speaking skill because when students become fluent speakers, they will know what to say and how to say without hesitations or frequent pauses to think. As it was stated by Cummings & Petscher (2016) “fluency represents an ability to speak appropriately in a variety of social contexts” (p. 2). As a consequence, the teachers’ number one priority should be helping their students become fluent communicators for being able to produce continuous speech without comprehension difficulties for the listener, to maintain their communicative ideas more effectively, and to function competently in English, not only in the classroom and in social contexts, but ultimately out in the big wide world.

- **Authentic Spoken Activities**

Regarding to this indicator it can be inferred that authentic spoken activities should be applied frequently into the English language classroom in order to expose pupils to authentic use of language, and to provide them with significant opportunities to practice the speaking skill through meaningful interaction. Besides, this kind of activities are essential to promote real communication, and rich learning environments. As suggested by Warren et al. (2009) as cited in

Patrick (2012) “students need to participate actively in the learning procedure through interesting authentic activities, thus leading them to much more than a good grade in an exam” (p. 262). Therefore, it is required to keep learners involved in authentic spoken activities, because they encourage active class participation which brings numerous benefits for young individuals including not only the achievement of good grades in exams, but also the development of leadership skills, and the improvement of communication and collaboration skills. In the same way, by using authentic spoken activities in the classroom, it can be possible to get learners engaged with the content of the lesson, to achieve effective learning, and to prepare students for the real world.

Additionally, to culminate with this chapter, the following conclusions are elaborated by considering the indicators Action oriented approach, didactic sequence, and tasks which conform the last variable of this project proposal that corresponds to learning construction process.

- **Action Oriented Approach**

It can be concluded that the variety of authentic activities and real world tasks that are provided into the Action oriented approach have been designed to meet the learners’ needs, and to keep them motivated and engaged during their learning process. Likewise, the action oriented approach is essential to equip learners for real language use, to put real communication demands on them, and to keep pupils engaged, excited, motivated, and interested in learning. As it was clarified in the English Syllabus, Programas de Estudio de Inglés, Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica y Educación Diversificada from MEP (2016) “within this approach to English language learning, students develop communicative competence, gain knowledge of various English cultures, and develop their full potential as national and global citizens” (p. 25). Thus, the Action oriented approach has become a useful methodology to teach the English language, because through the implementation of authentic activities and real world tasks that help learners to develop their communicative competence, it can be possible to enhance the knowledge construction process and make pupils competent in the English language.

- **Didactic Sequence**

From this indicator it can be deduced that through the didactic sequence learners become aware of their capacities and try to overcome their difficulties through the work done in the

different sessions. Besides, the particular order of the activities and the rhythm in which they are presented when following a didactic sequence, is essential to support learning and competences in a specific area, in this case the speaking skill. Furthermore, it is important to consider that the final outcome of the didactic sequence does not depend on the content of each task, but on how all of them are arranged within the lesson. As it was emphasised by Guerrero-Garcia et al. (2017) “it is also necessary to structure a work that contains a continuous, complete, and meaningful process, and this is what didactic sequences allow in order to gradually reach a progressive development in the cognitive structures of students (p. 124). As a result, the use of a didactic sequence is crucial for the development of the English lessons since it helps to guide learners during the process of learning a second language through a variety of speaking tasks which contain a continuous, complete, and meaningful process.

- **Tasks**

Regarding to this indicator, it can be concluded that tasks enable students to develop their knowledge, understandings, and skills in different ways. Similarly, when tasks are authentic, relevant, and meaningful, students are more likely to value what they are learning and make important connections between what they are learning, and how their learning is related to their lives outside school. In addition to this, tasks place the learner in the action, they make learners more autonomous, and contribute to foster the learning construction process by selecting relevant knowledge and useful skills. As it was stated by Tomlinson (2011) “tasks are activities in which the learners are asked to use the target language in order to achieve a particular outcome within a particular context (e.g. solving a problem; planning a meeting; selecting candidates for an interview)” (p. xvi). Therefore, when pupils are given the opportunity to learn through meaningful tasks they are encouraged to use authentic target language which is indispensable to face situations they might encounter in the real world and other project-based assignments, including also visiting the doctor, making a phone call, or gathering information to make a poster or advertisement among others.

Chapter VII Recommendations

7.1. Chapter's Introductory Paragraph

The following chapter has the intention to provide some clear, specific, and purposeful recommendation statements which are addressed specifically to teachers for improving the Costa Rican English educational system. According to Cottrell & McKenzie (2011) in the section of recommendations the student gives readers “(1) recommendations for practice or implementation, (2) recommendations for improving the research, and (3) recommendations for future research” (p. 276). Therefore, the process of recommendations is essential into this alternative methodological proposal since they contribute not only for the improvement of some teaching practices to enhance the learners' speaking skill, but also to improve whether this project proposal or any other action research work made in the field of the speaking skill. Additionally, the authors Putman & Rock (2016) clarify that in action research recommendations “are actions you hope others will take to more broadly address the problem or issue you studied” (p. 183). With this in mind, it can be said that the main purpose of recommendations in this project proposal is to call for actions or measures to be implemented by English teachers who are the individuals in a position to consider and implement those actions for solving the problems that learners are facing when it comes to use their ability to speak the English language.

On the other hand, for the development of this chapter, there is the intention to elaborate the process of recommendations considering the indicators from the variables of this alternative methodological proposal, due to, they are fundamental to take decisions and recommend actions that should be taken not only for the improvement of the learners' critical thinking and speaking skills, but also to foster the English knowledge construction process. As a result, the first three recommendations are based on the indicators collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding which are derived from the variable critical thinking. Subsequently, the following three recommendations have been provided taking into account the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities from the variable speaking skill. And lastly, the indicators Action oriented approach, didactic sequence, and task from the variable learning construction process, have been contemplated to state the three final recommendations of this action research project. Thus, all those indicators play an essential role for making the section of recommendations and to provide English

educators with helpful directions that they should follow to enhance the English educational system and the learners' speaking skill by using this project proposal.

7.2 Recommendations

As it was mentioned before, the following three recommendations are done considering the indicators collaborative learning, real life scenarios, and instructional scaffolding which correspond to the variable critical thinking. These recommendations are addressed to English teachers so that they can take them into account for future implementation.

- It is recommendable for teachers to implement collaborative learning techniques into the English language classroom to promote critical thinking skills, to enhance the knowledge construction process, and to encourage students not only to accomplish their tasks independently, but also to be more responsible for their learning process. Likewise, teachers should involve learners frequently in collaborative learning activities to extend and deep their learning experiences, to improve learning outcomes, and to enhance their speaking skill through meaningful interaction. According to Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) one of the ten principles of social constructivism is that “learners learn better in collaborative environments and exchanges” (p. 19). Therefore, in order to foster the development of critical thinking skills and to solve the arised problems in the learner' speaking ability, teachers must seek and prepare suitable and effective collaborative learning activities like debates, case studies, pair or group discussions, group problem-solving, and others to help pupils learn in a comfortable environment and to enable students work together to solve problems, to get meaningful feedbacks, and to trigger confidence which led to more opportunities not only to practice speaking, but also to overcome their difficulties in pronunciation and vocabulary mastery among others.

- It is suggested for educators to make use of real life scenarios during their teaching instruction to keep learners at the center of the learning process, to promote knowledge retention, and to encourage learners to develop and use critical thinking skills for making decisions to solve real world problems. In the same way, teachers should take time to create and implement activities based on real life scenarios for allowing pupils to link what they are learning in the classroom with life experiences, to make the tasks more relevant to their daily life, and to keep

them more engaged, excited, and interested in learning. Besides, in *Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016)* it is stated that “a scenario is a holistic setting within authentic situations, or domains. It integrates tasks, activities, texts and language data that encourage the combination of different aspects of competence in realistic language use” (p. 38). Thus, to come up with a solution to improve the performance of the speaking skill, learners must be exposed to any possible language they may need for being able to communicate effectively outside the school environment, and it can be possible if teachers incorporate in their lessons authentic and meaningful speaking tasks and activities including planning a trip, phoning for information, preparing a party, holding a meeting, and so on; due to, such activities are based on real life scenarios and they are also functional to encourage pupils to practice the English language, to ask each other, to express themselves, and to produce as much language as possible.

- It is indicated for teachers to provide learners with instructional scaffolding to help them know how to think critically, work more independently, and be able to move toward new skills and levels of understanding. Furthermore, instructors need to take into account this useful technique to fulfill the students’ needs, to build up strong relationships with them, and to make pupils feel more supported for learning the skills that are required for a successful education. Additionally, as it was emphasised in *Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016)* “teachers should ensure learners know how to use strategies through teacher scaffolding and modeling, peer collaboration and individual practice” (p. 36). Consequently, in order to solve one of the problematic areas for language learners which is the development of the speaking skill, instructors should administer scaffolding properly by activating learners’ background knowledge, providing some points, cues, procedures, and helpful strategies. In addition to this, pairing and grouping in classes should be done as it is not only the professor who can give scaffold to the students but their peers as well. Likewise, teachers should provide scaffolding by performing conversations based on question cards to practice the students’ speaking skills ranging from simple to more complex questions which are beneficial to develop critical thinking skills as well.

Subsequently, the following recommendations are done considering the indicators communicative language competence, fluency development, and authentic spoken activities

which are derived from the variable speaking skill. These recommendations are given to teachers so that they can consider them for future implementation.

- It is fundamental for teachers to provide learners with ample opportunities to develop and improve their communicative language competence by embedding meaningful contexts in learning so that pupils can be allowed to practice the different language functions that are involved into this competence for been able to use the language fluently, accurately, appropriately, and effectively to achieve an excellent communication in the target language, and to attain their goals in all areas of life. As explained in Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) “for citizens to communicate effectively in the global context and to face the challenges of an interconnected world, they need to possess a number of competences” (p. 12). Hence, a solution to improve communicative language competence and to overcome the obstacles at the time to use the speaking skill, is to provide learners with appropriate input, encourage collaboration and interaction in the classroom, make use of the English language in authentic ways, and provide ample opportunities for students to use the target language so that they can be able to acquire the competences that are required to achieve a proper and effective conversation, and to meet the challenges of the global world.

- It is advisable for instructors to help pupils become fluent speakers to maintain a conversation that can be comprehensible for the listener and without too much hesitations or frequent pauses to think. Moreover, teachers should implement in the classroom speaking activities designed to promote fluency development for learners to get the ability to communicate appropriately in a variety of social contexts. As it was stipulated in Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) “speaking English fluently is one of the abilities a 21st century learner must develop to have access to better life opportunities” (p. 4). Therefore, to strengthen fluency development and to sort out the difficulties in the learners' speaking skill, teachers should help learners lose their fear of making mistakes or looking foolish, and provide students a low-pressure environment in which they are allowed to practice speaking English by attending language exchanges. Besides, the professor should give learners some time to rehearse and try out their conversation in advance, because when students feel prepared, they will be much more confident about speaking so that in this way pupils can be able to speak

English fluently to travel and study in another country, for international business, and for career success among others.

- It is appropriate for teachers to apply authentic spoken activities frequently into the classroom to expose pupils to authentic use of the English language, and to promote real communication and rich learning environments. Likewise, educators should involve students in this kind of activities to encourage active class participation, to improve communication skills, to engage learners with the content of the lesson, and to prepare them for the real world. As it was found in *Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016)* “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). Thus, an effective solution to foster the speaking skill is to provide rich English-speaking environments where meaningful communication takes place and where learners are allowed to practice English as much as possible through authentic spoken activities, and tasks that promote oral language so that pupils can have enough exposure to real English language use. As well as that, it is essential that language teachers pay considerable attention to teaching speaking, rather than leading the students to pure memorization.

Subsequently, to conclude with the development of this chapter the last three recommendations are going to be exposed by taking into account the indicators Action oriented approach, didactic sequence, and tasks which correspond to the variable learning construction process. Additionally, these recommendations are addressed to English teachers for future implementation to improve their teaching practices.

- Regarding to the indicator Action oriented approach, it is indispensable for educators to apply this approach during their teaching instruction to provide learners with a variety of authentic activities and real world tasks so that they can be engaged, excited, and interested in their learning process as well as equipped for real language use and for real communication demands. Besides, teachers must use this useful methodology for helping learners to develop their communicative competence, to enhance the knowledge construction process, and to make pupils competent in the English language. As it was mentioned in *Programas de Estudio de*

Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) to develop effective English lessons using the Action oriented approach, teachers should consider that:

The students are social agents that use the target language to perform specific actions in real life contexts meaningfully. Enabling and communicative activities are task-based and real-life. Vocabulary, syntax, cohesive forms, and phonology are taught with the purpose of facilitating communication. (p. 25)

Therefore, to improve the quality of the English knowledge construction process gradually, and to solve the problems of learners' speaking skill, it is indispensable to implement the Action oriented approach into the English lessons; due to, it engages pupils in meaningful and authentic language use to communicate for a specific purpose in a real life interaction. Furthermore, teachers should apply this approach to keep learners actively involved in meaningful communication which is essential to develop their speaking skill.

- Considering the indicator didactic sequence, it is recommendable for teachers to follow a specific order at the time to implement the different activities in order to support learning and competences, and for helping students to overcome their difficulties through the work done in the different sessions. In the same way instructors should make use of didactic sequences to guide pupils during their learning process, and to perform the different learning activities through a meaningful process. According to Programas de Estudio de Inglés III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) “the teacher follows a set of integrated sequence procedures to develop the different linguistic competences” (p. 35). Consequently, the possible solution to enhance the knowledge construction process and the learners' speaking ability, is to take into account the didactic sequence established in the English syllabus 2016 for the appropriate development and implementation of the different tasks as well as for the best students' academic performance in the English language classroom.

- It is advisable for teachers to make use of authentic, relevant, and meaningful tasks to enable students to develop their knowledge, understandings, and skills in different ways, and for allowing pupils to relate what they are learning in the classroom with their lives outside school. Furthermore, it is fundamental for the instructor to use a variety of tasks into their lessons to place the learner in the action, to make learners more autonomous, to foster the knowledge

construction process, and to encourage students to use the target language. In accordance with Programas de Estudio de Ingles III Ciclo y Educación Diversificada (2016) “assigning learners meaningful tasks that resemble real language use where reading and writing or listening and speaking are integrated is recommended” (p. 34). Thus, teacher should prioritize the development of relevant and purposeful tasks to strengthen the English knowledge construction process and to solve the learners’ troubles in the speaking area. Furthermore, teachers should prepare and assign tasks based on real life situations to make pupils competent in the English language.

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