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THE EFFECTS OF TASK-BASED LEARNING IN STUDENTS' ORAL PERFORMANCE IN A GROUP OF EFL SENA STUDENTS

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By

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to God, my entire family who has struggle with me throughout this process, specially my parents Diego and Luz Dary, my sister Ana Maria and my grandmother Libia, besides my deepest feeling of love and gratitude to my wife Lina Maria, my amazing daughter Bianca, who has brought me light and hope since she came into our lives, and my lovely pets, to all of them, thanks.

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of the implementation of the task-based learning approach in the oral performance of a group of EFL SENA students. It was a classroom based action research project in which 6 participants were selected from a group of 35 International Business students at the SENA in Buenaventura. The data was collected through audio-recordings, a teacher's log, and a survey. The methodology was divided into four stages, following the classroom based action research cycle: planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The results after the implementation of the task-based learning approach reported that the oral performance of the students improved significantly, since there was a positive response and students were encouraged to interact in the L2, additionally, the results on the survey showed that the approach helped them to reduce the fear of speaking in front of others, and overall to be self-confident when speaking.

Keywords: Task-based learning approach, EFL, SENA, classroom based action research, oral performance, L2

Introduction

"English has established its position as the global *lingua franca* beyond any doubt; […] it has become one of the symbols of our time, together with globalization, networking, economic integration, and the internet. […] It has been welcomed as a vehicle of efficiency in for example business and science, or as a new means of communication for global emergent localities" (Mauranen & Ranta, 2009, p. 1).

Consequently, speaking has become a must for EFL learners (As cited in Hosni, 2004, p.22), additionally, according to Hosni (2004) "it remains the most difficult skill to master of the majority of English Learners" (p.23), since it has been determined as a linguistic barrier, which basically has been fueled by the fear and limited exposure to the language (Zhang, 2009), particularly for beginners who have a poor background in terms of vocabulary and general aspects of the language that is intended to be learnt.

In particular, SENA's students have a low-English performance. One particular cause is due to the fact that most of them belong to low socio-economical strata and come from the public education sector. For that reason, "their academic results are associated to it" (Duarte, Bos & Moreno, 2012. p. 2). However, there is a possibility, that the lack of methodologies and teaching strategies in the process of learning an L2 contribute majorly to this problematic, as these are inadequate (Rabab'ah, 2005, p. 182); consequently, the participants have a very low oral proficiency; difficulties in pronunciation, fear to make mistakes, lack of confidence, among others.

In spite of these difficulties, traditional teaching methods are still implemented over the different programs at SENA, since as it was stated before, there is not a specific established method or approach to be followed by the teachers, and everything depends on the teacher assigned to the group. Specifically, the oral activities are limited to word repetition and correctness of its pronunciation, there is

a teacher-centered instruction that makes them be passive learners (Shaila, M., & Trudell, B. 2010), and this somehow is affecting the development of the oral English performance in the students. Therefore, expressing basic thoughts orally or performing dialogues in the class, has become challenging and in some cases it generates frustration on the students.

According to the difficulties mentioned regarding the oral performance, I consider that the implementation of this research study could favor the students involved in this project, since its purpose is to enhance oral English performance through Task-based learning, which according to Nunan (2004) "provides many advantages in teaching English as a foreign language, due to the fact that it offers language experience in the classroom, and also provides opportunities for learners to experiment through learning activities for meaningful purposes" (p.41).

1. Justification

In order to justify the applicability of this research study, which has the main purpose to explore the effects of Task-based learning on students' oral performance in a group of EFL SENA students, it is important to indicate that a variety of research based on this approach has been developed, regarding the development of the oral competence; however, there is not enough reference about research studies that have been conducted at SENA and mainly related to the development of the oral competence through the task-based learning.

Consequently, the information obtained as a result of this research can be fundamental input for the institution, in order to consider adopting this teaching model for the different training programs offered at the SENA, or at least to those students that according to their professional profile require developing the oral ability at a higher level such as the students in the International business, logistics, and tourist guide programs.

In addition, the results of this study can contribute to different actors of the educational community, similarly, the teaching strategies of the task-based learning approach can be adapted to their teaching experience to work with specific purposes related to the development or strengthening of oral skills in EFL learners.

2. Research problem

2.1 Problem statement

Since the National Learning Service (SENA) has not adopted a specific teaching approach for the English competences within the different programs, every instructor has the autonomy to manage the class as they consider; therefore, it could be observed within this local context, that most of them emphasized their classes over traditional methods, the class was teacher-centered, oral production tasks were few and it did not engage the students at all (memory repetition), pronunciation repetition activities, and so on; despite that every program at SENA in its curriculum contains a variety of outcomes that are designed depending on the different English skills (writing, listening, reading, speaking),

In addition, it was noticed that when it was asked students to perform a task regarding the oral competence, students avoid participation, which seemed like a lack of interest in general. Although some of them tried, they struggled at speaking because of the vocabulary, anxiety, pronunciation, and among others. They had some difficulties as they were not used to do it during the classes.

Consequently, it is relevant to indicate that SENA had already identified that need, due to the fact that local companies have started to require competent users of English, mostly in speaking. Hence, in an attempt to cover the necessity, this institution categorized the most demanded programs as "focal", including the "International Business" program that was prioritized to start the learning process. However, the lack of an appropriate teaching approach has not helped to overcome this matter.

Hence, as stated before, currently students from this program were presenting difficulties when performing oral tasks. For this reason, it is important that

SENA, as well as teachers from this institution, adopt a different scope to work on these oral deficiencies. For instance, the implementation of Task-based approach, in order to develop and strength the oral proficiency, and prepare students for the demands of the market.

2.2 Research question

How does the implementation of task-based activities affect the oral performance of a group of EFL beginner students?

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 General objective

To explore the effects of implementing task-based learning activities to improve students' oral production production at SENA.

- **Specific objective**

  - To evaluate if there is any improvement in students' performance after the implementation of the task-based activities.

  - To describe students´ perspectives on the effects of the task-based on their oral production.

  - To identify the advantages and limitations of implementing task-based activities in a group of EFL beginner students at SENA.

3. Conceptual framework

Throughout this chapter, several concepts that integrate foundations about the notion of Task-based learning, as well as researches related to the oral production will be discussed.

3.1 Speaking

It is one of the most relevant components of the language, since it deals with social contexts and cultures (Schmitt, 2012), which has been defined as the primary source of learning to the extent that minimizing the classroom talk may handicap the learners to share the processing in knowledge (O´keefe, 1995), for that reason, it is accurately engaging learners to work in a cooperative way by promoting this skill, considering that they will learn better in group (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

In addition, Nunan (1999) and Burkart & Sheppard (2004) argue that success in learning a language is measured in terms of the ability to carry out a conversation in the (target) language. Since speaking is considered the most important part of an EFL course" (knight 1992:294). Therefore, developing speaking skills is of vital importance in EFL courses as it is probably a priority for most learners of English (Florez, 1999).

Subsequently, the role of the teacher in the classroom and the speaking instruction given is then also very relevant; as it facilitates students to acquire speaking skills which will allow them to converse naturally. Additionally, the motivation of the students can increase and the classroom can be a dynamic place

if the right speaking activities are presented by the teacher in the classroom (Nunan, 1999 & Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Despite the previously mentioned Pourhosein (2012) affirms that limited pronunciation skills can affect learners' self-confidence by decreasing and restricting social interactions; consequently, affecting in a negative manner the speaker's credibility and the abilities connected with the EFL instruction process. This is why Sanchez (2004) asserts, "when we learn languages other than native one, the social dimension can only be reached through interaction and interpersonal relations with others", which is supported by Vygotsky's social development theory; "interaction belongs to the very nature of language, because is socially based" (p. 42)

To sum up, considering the need for enhancing oral abilities in EFL learners, the learning dynamic should be guided through interactive but, overall meaningful activities that motivate them to participate and work cooperatively. Since, this is the path to engage and facilitate the learning process of the participants, taking into account as the main feature "the exposure to the L2", which can be guaranteed following the stages of the learning approach proposed within this study.

3.1.1 Fluency and accuracy

There may be different concepts regarding what is preferable in the moment of putting into practice in an oral form a foreign language if having a good verbal fluency or accuracy. As indicated above, these options are divided and they can be determined according to the linguistic competence that a speaker of *EFL* develops, as well as style, context and perhaps the background. Based on this, it is important on first hand to define them, in order to have cleared the concepts, which are connected with the oral performance goal in which this research project is oriented.

On one hand, Ellis (2009) holds that "fluency" means "the capacity to use language in real time, to emphasize meanings, possibly drawing on more lexicalized systems", as well as, "to a level of proficiency in communication" (Srivastava, 2014),

which for EFL learners is something progressive, but meaningful, due to the fact that in a language, any outcome during interaction implies a mutual understanding of the L2, regardless the fluency in which the message is given. What it really matters, is to negotiate meaning that ensures communication among the mutual parts.

In the same way, "fluency" is also defined as "the number of words produced in a specified time frame" (As cited in Nosratinia & Razavi, 2016). This time frame in speaking can be seen as the capacity that every learner has to produce a message; therefore, different levels of fluency can be perceived depending on the user; some factors as the linguistic competence or prior knowledge are determinants during the oral performance.

On the other hand, the term "accuracy" implies "the ability of the learner to produce correct sentences, possibly reflecting higher levels of control in the language as well as a conservative orientation, that is, avoidance of challenging structures that might provoke error" (as cited in Shen, 2013, p. 818). This is a very common characteristic in EFL learners, since they do not a have a well develop competence in the L2, and they also do not want to fail or being judged by their peers. Under those circumstances, this is one of the variables found at this stage.

Hence, in relation to the last paragraphs, it is valid to indicate that for a learner of *EFL*, both concepts *fluency* and *accuracy* can be defined as a speaking skill that is sequentially developed since the first learning stage, and is enhanced through the practice; therefore, as the student advances in his learning process, eventually he will develop the skills needed that will make him perform with the fluency and the accuracy needed; in addition, it is significant to remark that both language features are fundamental to learn any language.

3.2 Task

The word "task" is often used to refer to special kind of activities carried out in a classroom. Such activities are characterized according to Sanchez (2004) "by the emphasis put on the meaning and the importance assigned to the process of

doing things (how) vs. the prevailing role given to content (what) in the teaching practice" (p. 41).

In fact, Prabhu (2004) defines a "task" "as an activity that requires learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought and which allows teachers to control and regulate that process" (p. 47). In addition, Lee in Sae-ong (2010) defines it as "a classroom activity or exercise that has an objective obtainable only by interaction among participants" (p. 7). It is a mechanism for structuring and sequencing interaction and a focus on the meaning exchange. Furthermore, Skehan (1996) defines language learning tasks as activities that focus primarily on meaning. The achievement of tasks is evaluated in terms of an outcome and they have real-life language use.

Despite the differences from the above definitions, they all have a bond and end-up pointing out in the same direction. They all are activities emphasized on putting the significance of planned practice through guided instruction, creating meaningful panoramas to achieve positive conditions of communication among the participants involved; that being said, it is a connection of efforts to create the essential conditions that the language needs.

3.2.1 Task-based learning

Nunan (2004) describes that the task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. According to the previous definition, it is valid to argue that the implementation of functional tasks with communicative purposes is needed, creating a need on learners about the importance of being able to get into a communicative situation and being part of it from simple actions as attending a phone call, fill out a form online, confirm a ticket by phone, and among others.

However, it should be noted as it has been expressed, Task-based learning is fundamentally based on developing the speaking competence, as it requires an active participation, which must follow some teaching strategies that are part of the approach itself. Among the strategies to be implemented, it can be denoted in the first part the **Task planning**, which according to Ellis (2009) can have a beneficial impact on the fluency, complexity and accuracy of L2 performance (as cited in Garbati, F. J., Mady, J. C., 2015), given the fact that the student is allowed to plan what he is going to say and to look for the resources needed in order to get a satisfactory performance. Garbati, F. J., Mady, J. C. (2015) states that it can have a positive effect on oral fluency and can lead to the production of more complex language (1766)

Secondly, the implementation of questioning activities, in which according to Garbati, F.J, Mady, J, C. (2015) can improve L2 fluency as learners gain familiarity with the languages through repetitive tasks (1767).

On the other hand, the idea of making questions to the student in English is a positive alternative to invite him to dialogue in a different space, although it is necessary to be precise and implement common vocabulary. So that, the student feels familiar and comfortable, since the idea is to motivate him not to frighten him.

In that order, the achievement of the oral production goal will give the student the opportunity to express himself much better and to be able to make his ideas clearly. It is important to keep in mind when the foreign language student decides to take this step, sometimes a list of vocabulary or useful expressions should be provided to allow him to connect his ideas; then, it is mandatory to start progressively, from short answer questions to more complex ones which require further specific information. All this should be applied step by step following the process.

In the same way, it is significant to precise how "Role-plays" can be defined as an essential task implemented throughout the task-based learning process, which according to Skehan (1998) they serve to introduce a new language that the learners can use while performing the task to mobilize existing linguistic resources, in order

to ease the processing load and to push learners to interpret tasks in more demanding ways (as cited in Ellis, 2006, p. 85). Then, through the practice of some real-life situations, it allows to identify some specific vocabulary depending on the situation and it prepares the learner for what he can actually do or face.

In addition, it is relevant to mention the significance of choosing meaningful tasks for the students, taking into consideration that by doing this, they will find it vital for their personal purposes. Since they will be more interested and due to that their attention and motivation will increase. As a result, the learning process will be enriching and more effective for both parties. In the same way, highlighting the role of the teacher, as a learning piece to guide, facilitate and make students aware of how important it can be for them every activity that is carried out when learning a L2.

4. Literature review

As this research study is interested in presenting the effects generated through the implementation of Task-based learning to develop, improve or enhance oral skills on the learning of a second language (L2), several studies have been found, within local and international context, specifically focused on communicative language use, as well as, educational practices, (Gutierrez, 2005, Albino, 2017, Muhsin, 2015, Ricard, 2013, Buitrago, 2016), which allows to present an overall view of how recently this approach has impacted considerable education scenarios, besides providing reasons of why nowadays communicate orally is a need in order to be engaged in real communication (Sanchez, 2004. p. 40).

First of all, in research all factors can be considered a key part of a study, since they provide a diagnosis and possible implications during the implementation, thus, Buitrago (2016) in her study "Improving 10th Graders' English Communicative Competence Through The Implementation of the Task-Based Learning Approach", indicates that "lack of willingness of some the students to participate in some tasks

and group work" negatively affected the results of some of them, in the same way, she asserted over the relevance of developing properly the tasks within the participants, for instance, students' participation, as fundamental factor. Subsequently, as these aspects were considered as possible implications for future researches, during the implementation of the current study, all tasks were designed to have a student-centered learning dynamic, thus, do not affect the outcomes of the study.

Notwithstanding, after mentioning some of the inconvenient that the research had at the beginning, later on, in her findings she evidenced some improvements in learners' fluency, pronunciation, and accuracy, she argued how asking students for oral opinions was fundamental, allowing them to interact and be able to construct short but well-structured oral sentences. Besides, how the implementation of the TBL approach was determinant to help students in learning vocabulary, a key aspect in the acquisition of a second language (L2).

Secondly, as the intention is to narrow the gap and share some of the elements that were part of these studies, Albino (2017) through his study with 9th graders at PUNIV-Cazenga, shares picture-description tasks and audio recordings, as instruments that allow him to approach through the findings, some learners' improvement in terms of speaking fluency, due to the fact that through the tasks students maximized their speed of speech production, increased grammatical accuracy, and he also reported a development on interactional language. Albino also found that learners felt encouraged to speak and recognized the relevance of the TBL approach, due to the potential to use the target language and increasing of vocabulary.

In addition, Muhsin (2015) conducted a study aimed to find the improvement of the students' speaking accuracy and fluency by using Task-based approach. In this case, the instruments were a speaking test and observation. By means of these instruments, the author finds out an improvement of the students' speaking skill and effectiveness of task-based approach after applying the tests in the different cycles, which in the findings was reported an improvement of the students' speaking skill

due to the use of this approach. The author also mentioned a progress regarded to self-confidence, due to the fact, as the topics given were of their likes that made them feel excited and engaged with the class.

In reference to the last paragraph, Ricard (2013) states in his research that it was fundamental to show the different types of tasks to the participants, so they could select the topics they would really like to work with (as stated in Muhsin, 2015). This was elemental when selecting the topics of the research proposed in order to cover the needs of the participants, regardless they were university students, but mainly the intention was to engage them with the development of the study. Ricard also expressed how the elaboration of the tasks during the planning phase was crucial to the enhancement of their oral skill. For my study, I decided to choose meaningful topics that allow not only gain their attention but the motivation, besides to make them feel aware of how important was it.

Moreover, this research study promoted interaction in the EFL classroom and motivate students to use actively the target language, be more active participants in a more real environment, particularly expressing ideas or asking for something to others. The results according to the author defines Task-based learning as an instrument that facilitates embryonic development of students' oral interaction skills, also this exposure allowed to analyze the enhancement of the oral skill through their conversational routines while performing the tasks in the classroom.

Gutierrez (2005) reported feedback, as a key factor to let their students improve the oral production, she categorized it as a useful element in foreign language learning, as they can assess themselves and enhance their oral production. Also, in her study which aimed to develop oral skills through communicative and interactive tasks with a group of ninth grade, she mentioned that learners were encouraged to communicate in the oral form as much as possible, which is a principle of Task-based learning as an interactive task to make learners carry out activities, likewise the relevance of action research in the daily teaching activity, in order to provide an environment of self-reflection and improvement.

Then, this author concluded that students need to feel motivated to communicate in English, given the fact that by using incorporated task components, it can provide to the teacher an advantage to help learners with the use of the target language outside the classroom.

In addition, previous studies referenced (Gutierrez, 2005; Muhsin, 2015; Ricard, 2013; Buitrago, 2016) conducted classroom based action research as a process to inquiry and filter data to determine the effectiveness of Task-based learning regarding to the enhancement of the oral skill, they all concluded and argued about the relevance of action research, since it permits a reflection over an ongoing process to improve the pedagogical practice, thus to determine the best strategies that will provide them the results expected.

Finally, although a great amount of previous research has been done with children from public schools (Buitrago, 2016, Albino, 2017, Gutierrez 2005) University teenagers or adults (Ricard, 2013) in relation to task-based learning, little research has been done in Colombia specifically with SENA students. SENA students have a specific social background and the institution itself works differently compared to other contexts, for those reasons the impact on the implementation of this approach to enhance the oral skill with this particular setting is a guarantee for future projects that can be carried out over this specific context.

5. Methodological framework

5.1 Context

The research study took place in Buenaventura during the first semester in 2018. In this city one of the most important seaports in Colombia is located. It is a place that daily receives cargo ships and people from different countries, where English is shared as a common language. Therefore, knowing English plays an important role within the city, but mainly in the work sector, and this is reflected through the different courses that are offered at SENA, in which the English competence is included.

Buenaventura is a city with a mainly afro-descendant population who belong to social strata 1, 2, and 3. There is a deficit in education at a local level, which is related to the inconsistencies within this particular field (budget, resources, teaching material, facilities), as well as, some general or individual social difficulties that are present in this setting and could affect some individuals.

In addition, SENA is a public institution that offers technical and technological programs as well as complementary courses for free. Students at this institution are diverse in terms of age, it ranges between 18-26 or higher in some cases, there is not a limit in terms of age to be enrolled in any program that is offered here. According to SENA's curriculum, a student of a technological program lasts 36 months and the technical 18 months. The educational training at SENA is divided into two stages which for the longer program are the following: 24 months of them are basically training and the rest 12 are developed as a practice stage in a company, on the other hand for technical programs the half of time (12 and 6).

During the learning process, students are taught by professional people from different fields, depending on the emphasis of the program. Regarding to English, it is included in every program; each curriculum has English, for the technological programs is 360 hours and technical 180 hours that are distributed along the whole

process with an average of 4 hours per week; at the end of the process the institution requests students to have an English level equivalent to B1 according to the Common European Framework.

English teachers at SENA must hold a professional, technical or technological degree, supported pedagogical experience that goes from 12 up to 36 months, and it is mandatory to have an international English certificate not less equivalent to B2.

5.2 Participants

The group object of study belongs to an "International Business" technological program in which I previously identified some difficulties regarding the oral production, by cause of lack of teaching strategies that promoted oral tasks performance through the learning process.

In summary, the participants were six students with ages from 18 up to 24 (3 males and 3 female). All students came from the public school sector and belong to social strata that go from 1 to 3; none of them except one had the opportunity to attend to a private language institute, but, in general the English proficiency of the participants was low.

For the purpose of the study they were randomly chosen for their low level English oral performance, as part of a convenient sample to be able to describe in more detail students' performance. However, one of them with more English proficiency was intentionally selected, in order to identify likewise the impact of this study in a participant with different characteristics from the whole group.

5.3. Type of research

The approach to be implemented in the research study was classroom based-action research, which according to Burns (2010) is a reflective practice which involves taking a self-reflective, critical and systematic approach to exploring teaching contexts, due to the characteristics of its phases "planning, action, observation and reflection" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). Having said that, the purpose was to help students enhance the oral English skill through teaching strategies based on task-based learning. Hence, as this was a process of inquiry it improved conditions and practices by incorporating change and social action (Carr & Kemmis, 1983, Elliot, 1991; Kemmis & Mc Taggart, 1982, Lewin, 1946).

By following the classroom based-action methodology, it allowed me to identify their English oral performance through a diagnosis test, and to carry out an analysis of the information obtained in order to design suitable task-based activities to assure the fulfillment of the goals presented in this research study.

In addition, taking into account the cycle of the classroom based-action research implemented, it was crucial for the researcher to reflect, analyze and determine the pedagogical practices needed to approach the oral insufficiency.

Additionally, the research methodology of this study was qualitative, since by its experimental nature, it allowed to observe and analyze the beginning and development of the whole teaching process that was oriented by the implementation of the task-based approach through its phases (pre-task, task cycle and language focus) in order to encourage and enhance students' oral performance as part of the difficulty evidenced.

Consequently, as part of the protocol of this research, an approval permission to be able to carry out this study was given by the coordinator in charge of the program, similarly, all participants were previously notified about the research process, including the instruments that were used to collect the data required.

Therefore, the duration of the research study lasted three months, from February to May 2018. A total of three task based units of 8 hours each were taught during this period. The project was divided into 5 stages, during one cycle of classroom based action research.

5.3.1 Stage 1: Planning

- Identification of the problem

For this stage as part of the study, it was fundamental to observe a specific classroom situation related to the purpose of my research. The difficulties that this specific group had was reflected on performing oral English tasks, for instance: lack of linguistic knowledge which leads them to produce unclear ideas, constant code-switching in short sentences, repetition or production of incomplete ideas. Therefore, as it was stated before, this struggle was considered due to lack of pedagogical strategies that promote participation and interaction between the students, in order to raise the awareness and motivation needed to communicate satisfactorily as part of the language learning process in the L2.

Having said that, the urgency of implementing a most suitable approach that enhances the oral performance to make them more competent users was needed.

- **The solution of the problem**

Since students need to enhance the oral English performance, several theories regarding the improvement of the oral skill in foreign language learners were revised, in order to find the most appropriate teaching strategy, taking into account the characteristics of the group. Hence, the implementation of Task-based learning was found as a suitable option to approach the needs of this group, taking into consideration that the task-based according to Ellis (2003) and Willis (1996) "foster a language learning context in which learners can be involved and supported in their efforts to communicate fluently and effectively" (as cited in Kasap, 2005).

Consequently, the group was informed about the research, of which they were part of, as well as, the techniques and procedures that were used as part of the implementation of the research.

5.3.2 Stage 2: Acting

- **Pre-post test**

In order to diagnose and evaluate students' oral performance in English, a pre-test [diagnosis] and post-test [evaluation] were made. The pre-test took place at the beginning of the research, in order to identify oral specific features [difficulties], all the 35 students were part of the diagnosis, notwithstanding its specific purpose allowed me to identify randomly 6 participants with different characteristics on the oral proficiency that were part of the study conducted.

As the post-test, it took place at the end of the research. Its intention was to observe the impact of task-based learning over the specific population and analyze the performance regarding the oral skill of the participants of the research. It is valuable to indicate that the researcher used the same tests with the same content during the pre and post-test (see appendix A) Table 1 displays some info about the tests that were done within the study.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test

	Participants	Duration of the test	Date
Pre-test (diagnosis)	35	10 minutes (average)	February
Post-test (evaluation)	6	10 minutes (average)	May

During the implementation of the pre and post-test, students were asked to talk about some situations displayed in pictures, this instrument was adopted given the fact that according to Harper (2002) picture descriptions "evokes information, feelings, and memories", and thus, by recording them, it provided a background of each participant's speech production before and after the implementation of the task-based approach. The participants had to describe and answer some questions related to the picture given by the researcher. For this particular activity the statements were recorded and then transcribed according to the objective of this instrument, later, by using a rubric the answers were evaluated under specific aspects related to oral proficiency as: communicative achievement, accuracy, fluency, comprehension, and intelligibility. This same rubric was used to diagnose and evaluate the oral performance (see Appendix B) of the participants along the research, including the oral performance on the task-based units.

- **Selection of the participants**

The participants were 6 students of the "international business" program, who were selected from a group of 35 students, according to the results obtained during the diagnosis test. The criteria of selection were: A) students level: all of them with similar oral proficiency levels [low], except for one of them who had more proficiency on the language, and who was also selected for the purpose of this study. B) Students from different high schools, private and public. C) Gender.

Table 2. Participants

Participants	Age	Gender
No. 1	20	M
No. 2	19	F
No. 3	24	M
No. 4	21	F
No. 5	18	M
No. 6	18	F

- **Design and implementation of task-based units**

In order to continue with the purpose of the research study three different task-based units (see Appendix C) were created which represented several real situations as follows: describing a picture or place, asking for and giving directions and describing a person; these contents are considered to be communicative useful situations according to this SENA´s program needs, as a way to encourage students to achieve concrete and reliable communication outcomes that can be useful for their daily practice.

To continue, during the implementation the researcher conducted the class following the phases of the task-based language teaching (pre-task, task cycle and language focus), monitoring the participants and encouraging them to be active participants [students-centered], promoting the speaking practice through the tasks proposed. During the "language focus" phase on the three different tasks, the data obtained from participants´ oral performance was gathered [audio-recorded] for further analysis, as in the diagnosis test; therefore, those results contributed to the analysis of the results that allowed evaluating if there was any improvement in the participants' performance after the implementation of the task-based activities. Table 3 shows the contents of the task-based units.

Table 3. Task-based units.

Task-based unit	Hours	Topic	Language focus	Task
1	8 hours	Describing a picture.	At the top, at the bottom, foreground /background, etc...	To describe orally a picture identifying the elements on it and its characteristics.
2	8 hours	How to ask for and give directions?	Cross the street, traffic light, roundabout, next to, etc…	To indicate orally to others how to get from one place to another using a map.
3	8 hours	Describing a person.	How does he/she look like, wearing, his/her, etc...	To describe physically a person providing general characteristics.

- **Observation: teacher's log**

According to Jacobson, Pruitt-Vhapin, and Rugeley (2009), observation provides direct access to the phenomenon under consideration, which makes the researcher reflect and have an inner process that helps him to clarify the concepts to approach the object of study, therefore this instrument allowed me to observe and keep record on the teacher's log (see appendix D) about the participants´ reactions while they were performing the task-based units.

Additionally, as part of the observation recasts and prompts were applied to provide feedback on their performance (Guchte et al., 2015) in search of the proper development of students' communicative competence.

In consequence, it contributed with fundamental input for the purpose of the research, given the fact that it helped to reconsider and reflect somehow in the development of certain tasks, in order to benefit the results of the study.

5.3.3 Stage 3: Observing

- Analyzing students' perspectives: a survey

For the purpose of the study within this stage, it was implemented a survey, which according to Gay et al. (2009) "it is an instrument to collect data that describes one or more characteristics of a specific population" (as cited in Brewer, 2009), hence, after having finished the implementation of the task-based units and the post-test [evaluation], a survey with the 6 participants of the study was conducted to "learn about their characteristics, opinions, attitudes, or previous experiences" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p.183), as well as, exploring and find out their perceptions on the effects of the task-based on their oral production.

The survey was made up of 15 questions in total (see appendix E), 12 out of 15 questions were closed and they used a Likert scale, given the fact that according to Malave (2007) "it helps to gather numerically the data that is expressed verbally […] as if they were quantitative data in order to analyze them correctly"[1] (p. 4), the other 3 left were open questions that allowed the participants to express personal insights or opinion about individual experiences. Consequently, the results of this survey provided vital data for the analysis, which cooperated to respond to one of the objectives of this research.

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[1] Author's own translation June 18th, 2018

5.3.4 Stage 4: Reflecting

In this last part, the purpose of the final stage was to evaluate and get a result of the whole process that may show a measurable product in terms of qualitative data. Therefore, individual results of each participant from the pre-test [diagnostic], oral performance per task-based unit [3], and the results of the post-test [evaluation], were analyzed through the results obtained by means of the rubric, as a manner of displaying individual and general performance related to the oral proficiency.

Besides, students' perceptions about the task based learning activities as well as their practices in the tasks were analyzed, based on the data gathered in a survey and information gathered with the teachers' log.

6. Findings

The purpose of this research was to identify and critically evaluate the effects of implementing task-based learning approach to enhance oral English performance on a group of participants from a group of "international business" from SENA, located in the city of Buenaventura. To begin with, the analysis of the information gathered will be presented sequentially, in order to identify the accomplishment of the objectives proposed in this research.

Therefore, the first analysis will present information about the results obtained from the pre-test [diagnosis] and the post-test [evaluation], the results on the performance over the three different task-based units that were implemented during the project, all of it, to identify if there was any improvement of the participants on their oral performance after the implementation of the task-based activities along the study, however, some answers from the survey were considered in order to validate the information obtained. Subsequently, the second part will share if the information collected from the survey, as well as, some reactions that were written on the teacher's log contributed with the second objective, which describes the perspectives of the participants on the effects of their oral production after the application of the task-based language teaching.

Finally, in order to identify the advantages and limitations of implementing task-based activities in a group of EFL beginner students, the data collected from the observations through the teacher's log, and some of the answers provided by the participants [students' perceptions] through the survey, will be used for the purpose of this objective. Table 4 displays the categories to analyze the data.

Table 4. Data coding categories

| Category	Evidence
1. **Effects on students' performance.**	Pre-post test / Task-based units / Survey
2. **Students' perspectives on the effects.**	Survey / Teacher's log
3. **Advantages and limitations.**	Survey / Teacher's log

6.1 Findings: The effects on students' performance

How does the implementation of task-based activities affect the oral performance of a group of EFL beginner students?

6.1.1 Pre-test and post-test

Through the analysis of the results obtained from the participants on the pre-test [diagnosis] it was observed that there was an insufficiency regarding to the oral performance, as they were not able to describe or name common objects. There were also long silent periods, perhaps due to lack of vocabulary and grammar structure, besides the use of L1 in most of cases was constant, also some of them tend to code-switch when speaking [lack of vocabulary]. Graph 1 shows the results of the pre-test [diagnostic test].

Graph 1. Pre-test results

Pre-test results
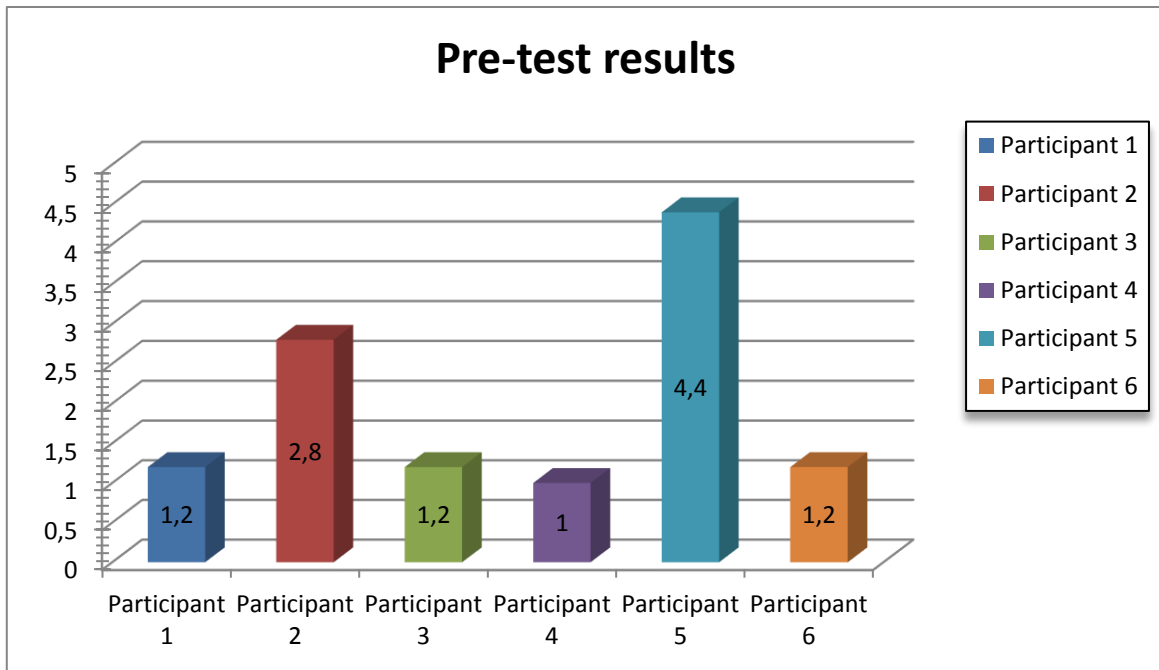
On the previous graph, it can be observed in a scale that goes from 0 to 5, according to the results obtained based on the rubric from the diagnostic test, a poor proficiency related to the oral performance in most of the participants, except for one of them who had 4.4, which it was a good score. It is necessary to highlight that this participant had some foundations in English, and he was chosen as stated before for purposes of this research study.

In addition, the following graph will show the results of the post-test [evaluation], in order to observe if there were positive effects on the students' oral performance. Graph 2 shows the results of the post-test [evaluation test].

Graph 2. Post-test results
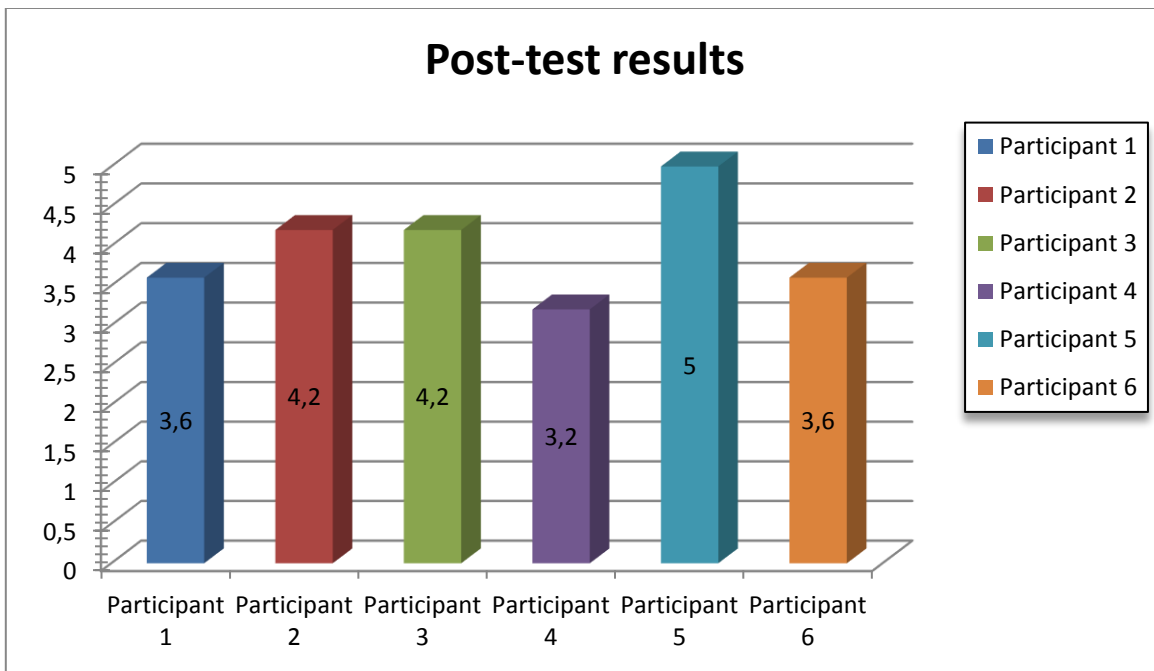
Regarding graph 2, it was found in terms of numbers, that all participants obtained positive results not less equivalent to 3.2, that is to say that from the pre-test to the post-test, English students improved on their oral speaking ability, since these results were higher significant to the previous ones obtained at the beginning of the research, even for the participant who had more English proficiency. In addition, the following table will permit to compare and resume briefly how the difference from one test to another was. Table 5 will show the results from pre-test and post-test, as well as the average corresponding to one and another.

Table 5. Pre-test and post-test results and average

Participant	Pre-test	Post-test	Average increase
1	1,2	3,6	2.4
2	2,8	4,2	1.4
3	1,2	4,2	3.0
4	1,0	3,2	2.2
5	4,4	5,0	0.6
6	1,2	3,6	2.4
Average	1.96	3.96	2.0

Table 5 shows how the participants from the research increased their individual average regarding the oral performance from the pre-test to the post-test, evidencing a significant improvement, which it can be interpreted as a positive response toward the implementation of task-based learning to enhance the oral skill, which is also supported for the participants through one of the answers provided on the survey. Graph 3 presents the answers of the participants.

Graph 3. Answers from the survey
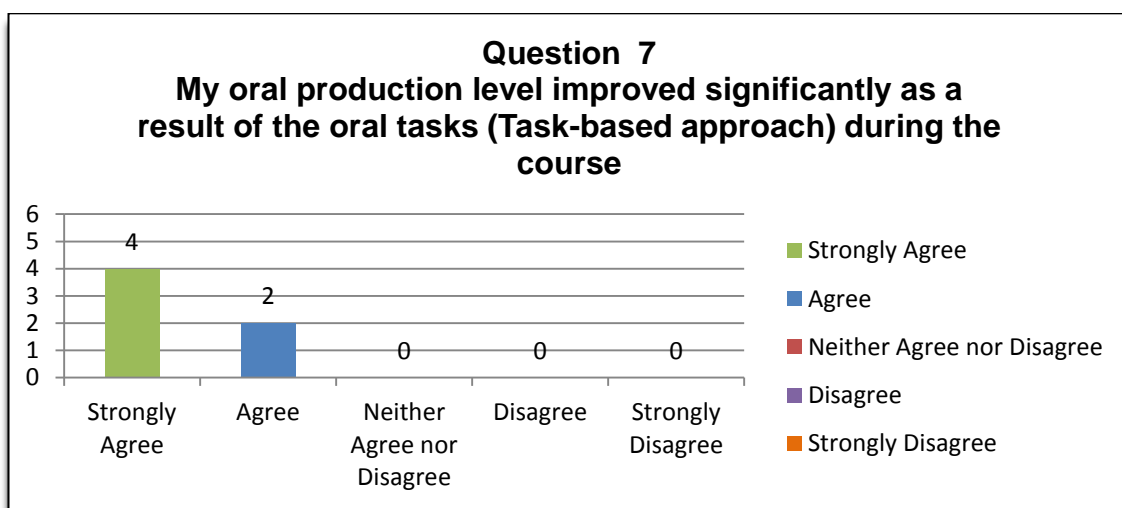
It is important to add up, that the results on the post-test supported the answers given by the participants, according to the improvement of their oral production. Which, is also reaffirmed considering that the general average score of the pre-test was 1.96, while the result for the post-test was 3.96, a difference of 2 points above the previous average on the performance of the oral skill, providing once again a positive impact over the participants' oral improvement.
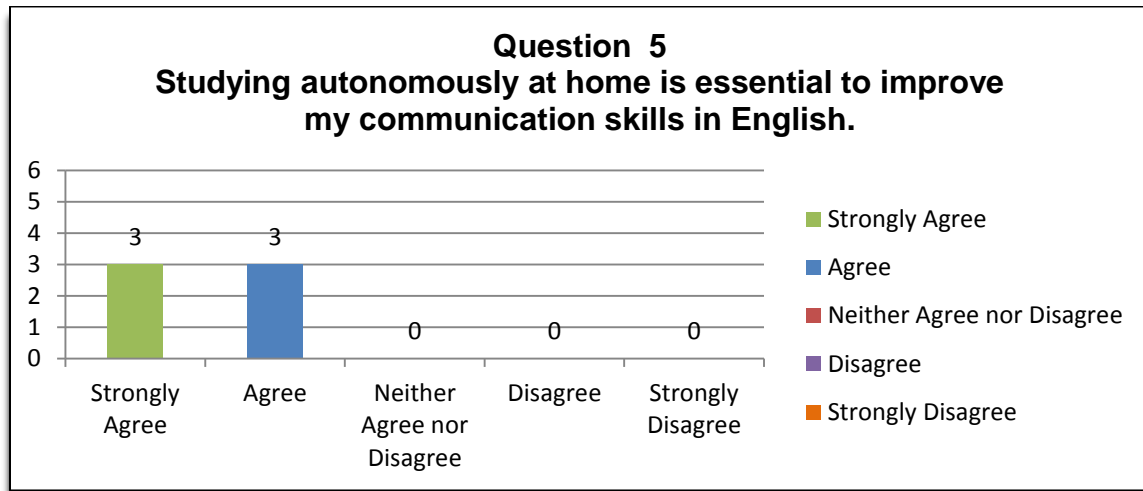
6.1.3 Task-Based units

Through the implementation of the three task-based units, additional data was gained. Along the three different units, the participants showed a noticeable improvement, for some higher for others minimum. For some of the participants, this was the first time that some of the participants were exposed to interact orally in English, so due to that, my role in the classroom was related to constant monitoring, encouraging them to do their best, providing them the time necessary to reflect and elaborate the tasks, and so on.

However, it is valid to mention that I always noticed a positive behavior and there was collaboration among them to prepare the tasks to be carried out. Although the fact of being exposed to perform in English was still seen as a challenge for them, the design of the tasks provided the opportunities for practicing and interacting, which allowed them to be aware of what was needed to be able to enhance their oral skill.

Specifically, these perceptions were evident is some of students' practices in class (Teachers' reading log). Students showed interest in participating in the tasks; they wanted to continue and repeat activities to keep practicing, asking for extra activities to do at home, apps, books, or learning material. Furthermore, it is also supported according to one of the answers given from the participants through the survey. Graph 4 shows the answers provided.
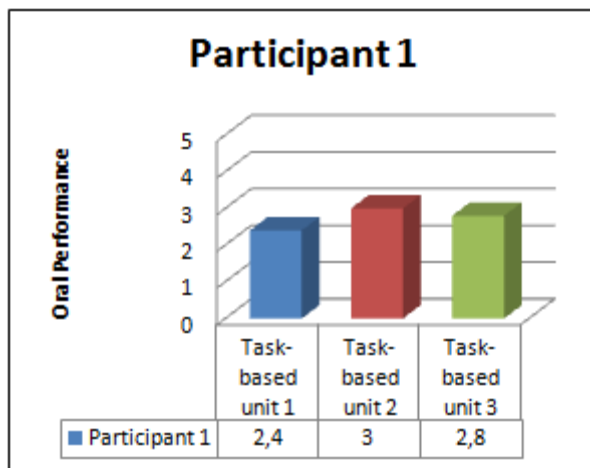
Graph 4. Answer from the survey

Question 5
Studying autonomously at home is essential to improve my communication skills in English.

Legend:
- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Values: Strongly Agree = 3, Agree = 3, Neither Agree nor Disagree = 0, Disagree = 0, Strongly Disagree = 0

According to the last graph, it could be interpreted that all students reported an agreement over the importance of studying autonomously in order to improve their oral skills, which shows how the implementation of the research encouraged the participants to succeed in their language learning.

Furthermore, in order to corroborate the data obtained from English performance through the implementation of the task-based units, the following graphs will show the performance of the participants in the classes. Graph 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 displays task-based units' individual performance.

Graph 5. Oral performance (1)   Graph 6. Oral performance (2)

Participant 1

	Task-based unit 1	Task-based unit 2	Task-based unit 3
Participant 1	2,4	3	2,8

Participant 2

	Task-based unit 1	Task-based unit 2	Task-based unit 3
Participant 2	3,2	3,4	3,4
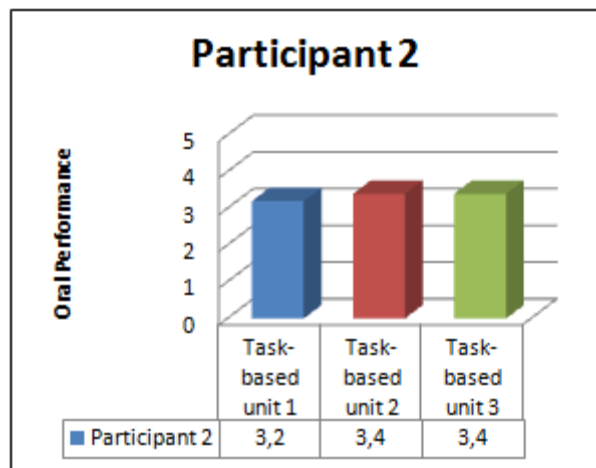
Graph 7. Oral performance (3)
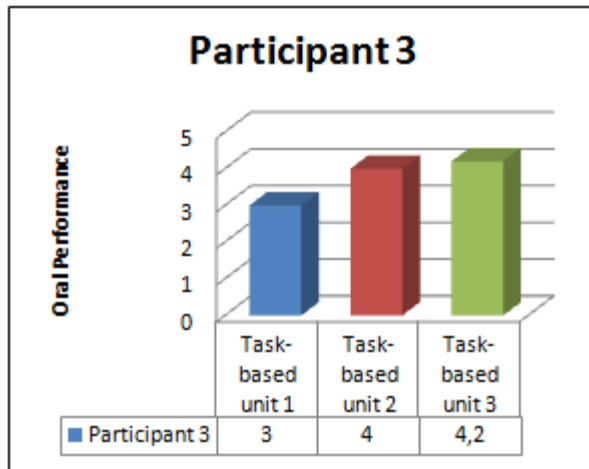
Graph 8. Oral performance (4)
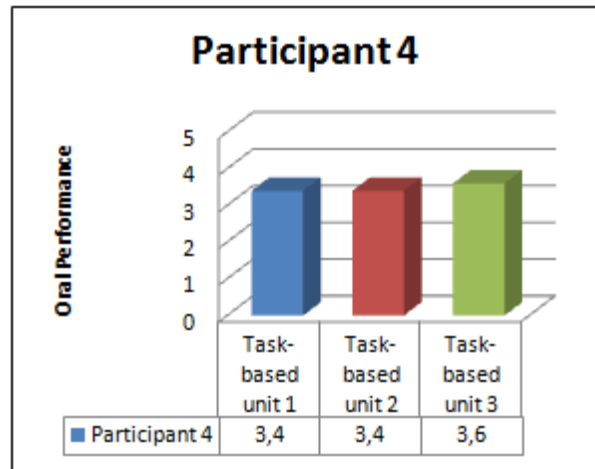
Graph 9. Oral performance (5)
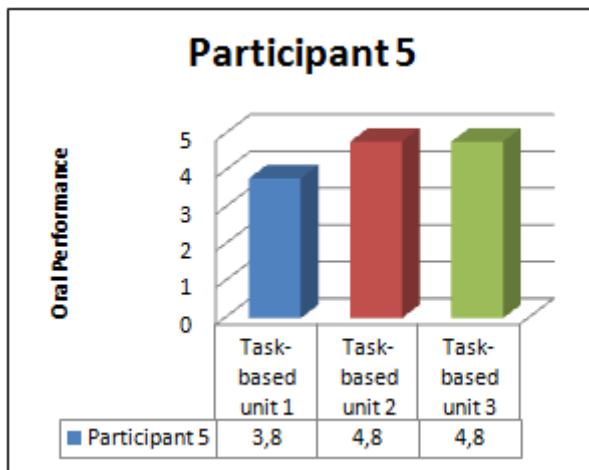
Graph 10. Oral performance (6)
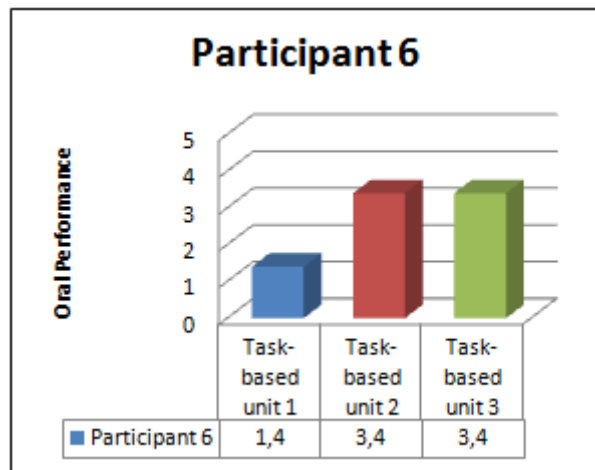
As a result, to validate the findings, the previous graphs displayed the transition of every participant during the performing on the different tasks, it shows a balance. Participants went from lower outcomes to higher, which proved that after every class the participants provided a better performance, although participant 1 did not keep a balance as the rest of the group, their performance was never under the one obtained on the pre-test [1,2], which also evidences an improvement.

To sum up, they clearly proved that there was an oral enhancement after implementing task-based learning, despite the difficulties that these participants from

this particular setting could have previously faced, in terms of time and teaching resources/strategies, before the application of this study research.

Notwithstanding, the following graph will report all participants' performance throughout the research process to sum up in short the data and results that were shown in the preceding analysis. Graph 11 will show a general overview of the participants' oral performance.

Graph 11. Oral performance / General overview
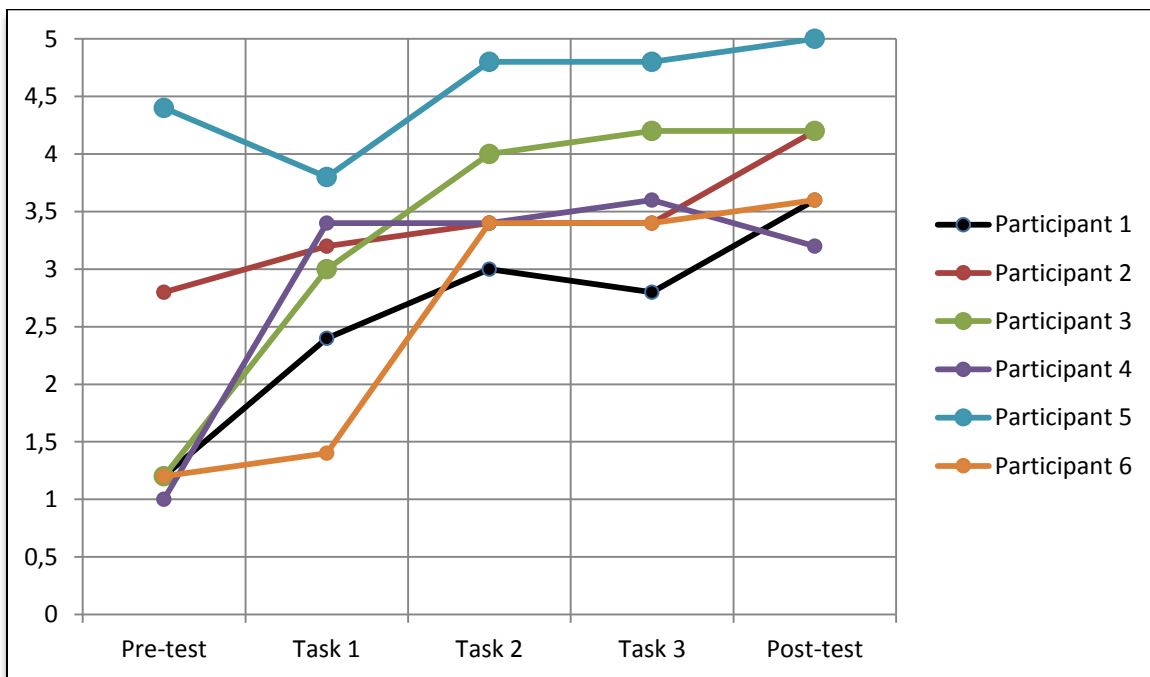
To conclude the first part of the analysis on the effects on students' performance, the results on the graphs displayed a positive tendency all over the research process, similarly as in the ones presented heretofore. Hence, it can be inferred that the task-based activities positively impacted the oral performance of the population participant of this research study. However, this positive impact was achieved majorly, due to the dynamic of the classes. First of all, working in groups or in couples was a key factor, since there was a mutual support, which helped them to success over the activities that facilitated their oral performance practice, and reduce their fear for participating. In particular, the participants of the research

agreed on how the group work activities supported positively their learning process. Graph 12 will show participants' answers on the survey.

Graph 12. Answer from the survey

Question 11
The group work activities positively supported my learning process.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	3	3	0	0	0

Legend:
- ■ Strongly Agree
- ■ Agree
- ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ■ Disagree
- ■ Strongly Disagree
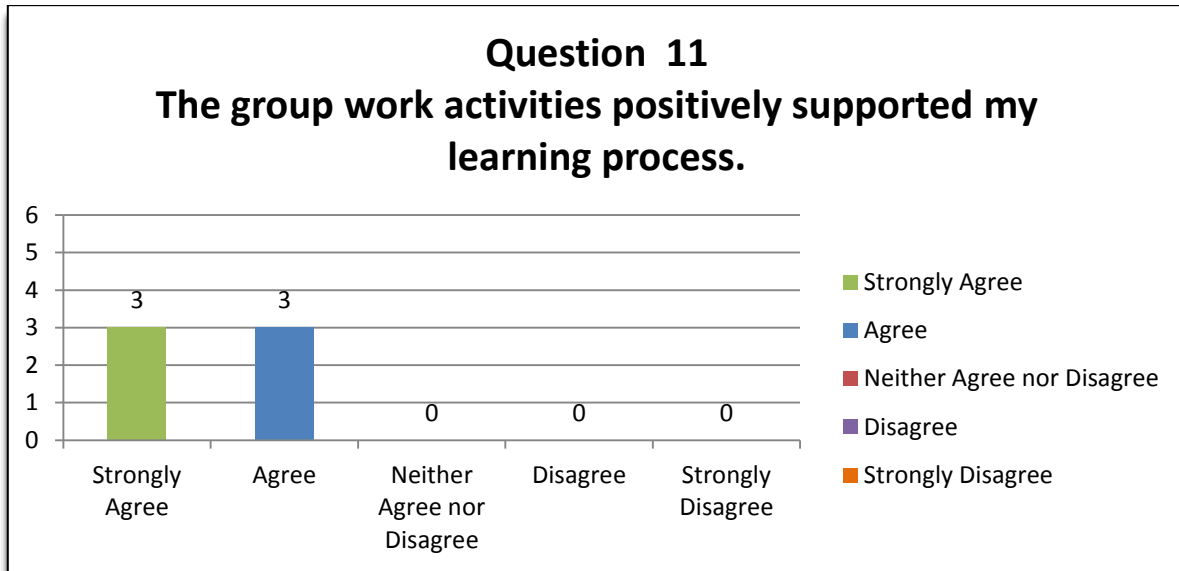
Besides, it is important to indicate that the cooperation of the whole class provided a relaxed atmosphere that encouraged the interaction in the L2.

Secondly, as the topic of the activities proposed were connected to situations that they could face in real life, it made them feel it was useful for them, so it engaged them to prepare correctly the task, to practice among them, in order to perform it orally as it was presented by the teacher during the pre-task (videos). In addition, the constant monitoring of the teacher through the development of the task enhanced the interaction, self-reflection and improved their oral performance.

6.2 Findings: Students' perspectives on the effects

As a strategy to collect direct information from the participants of the research a survey was conducted in order to identify specifically: reactions, difficulties, thoughts and among other things that the participants experimented during the implementation of this research study. Thus, to be able to describe their perspectives

on the effects of the task-based learning, the open questions on the survey were taken into account and subsequently analyzed to present the results, although some other answers from the survey were considered as well, as they provided relevant data. Table 6 presents the questions taken.

Table 6. Open questions from the survey

No.	Question
1	What were the contributions of the oral activities in the development of your oral skill in English?
2	What did call your attention the most about the activities focused on oral skills within the development of research?
3	What contribution/suggestion or comment would you make regarding the process of which you were part? And why?

Therefore, in order to identify how the task-based activities contributed to develop their oral skill as stated in the first question, the participants were asked and, for instance, some of the answers were:

Participant No. 1: *"I could develop skills to be able to pronounce much better the words and, to be able to understand what I heard and say."*

Participant No. 4: *"To be able to express much better some words…"*

Participant No. 5: *"I could improve the pronunciation of the words…"*

Participant No. 6: *"Better pronunciation in the different vocabularies, greater handling of the topic…"*

The participants expressed that the task-based activities help them to improve their pronunciation. It was given to the exploration and practice that every participant had before performing the activity, considering that in the pre-stage they had the opportunity to explore the vocabulary and expressions, clarifying concepts or the pronunciation, while at the same time the teacher monitored that progress, focusing on the oral performance.

Then, during the following stage [task-cycle] they started to construct their own task and the practice was constant. In addition, the feedback given by the teacher and support among themselves helped them to improve the pronunciation. In the same way, one of them stated that their listening comprehension was also enhanced, given the fact that the participant could listen with more clarity and others could understand them much better than before.

Likewise, the participants also remarked that the task-based activities contributed to reducing the fear and insecurity when speaking.

Participant No. 2: *"Losing the fear to the public, to learn more and learn how to address me to the people".*

Participant No. 4: *"It helped me to lose a bit some shyness…"*

Participant No. 6: *"… to speak with more confidence…"*

Most of the participants agreed on the previous statement, indicating that by means of the activities proposed in the class, they reduced the fear they had to talk in front of the public, highlighting that every activity demanded a constant exposure to the language to perform orally the tasks, which is a fundamental aspect when learning a foreign language. In addition, it was also reported having learned how to address properly to the people, which can be due to the practical tasks they developed interacting with the rest of the participants through the group work and activities that required use of formal expressions to start and finish a conversation.

In addition, the activities helped them to gain the confidence needed to be able to talk to others. It can be argued, that it was possible due the transition that was held since the first to the last class, considering that they were supported to participate and ask about anything they did not understand, to make them feel secure and comfortable with the class, also the dynamics implemented (tic-tac toe, guess, presentation, etc.…) encouraged them to participate and have more confidence.

According to the second question, it was possible to identify several aspects that the participants liked the most through the implementation of the research, some of these perceptions were:

> Participant No. 1: *"…the class was dynamic and participative"*
> Participant No. 3: *"…the dynamics, because is a very funny way to speak and learn"*
> Participant No. 5: *"Everything was made in a very dynamic way to facilitate us the learning"*

The dynamic of the activities through the research was an aspect that they found very helpful because as it was stated, it made them learn easier because of the dynamics and the participation that they had in the tasks. In addition, students also found enjoyable the way the oral activities were approached, but more than enjoyable they highlighted the importance of the pedagogy or method implemented.

> Participant No. 4: *"It called my attention the class of how to give indications and describe people, considering that is a very important method"*
> Participant No. 6: *"Mainly the pedagogy used by the instructor, as well as, the way he expressed himself and clarifying everything in the best way"*.

It can be inferred, that the participants found through this particular strategy, a different dynamic to approach the language learning process, since it was indicated how the tasks given engaged the participants. In the same way, the role of the teacher in the classroom was highlighted, considering that there was support and control of the class to assure that the information provided was clearly understood by the participants.

Finally, yet importantly, it seemed that the successful experience of the participants after the implementation of the research on their oral proficiency, allowed them to recognize the effectiveness of this approach. Which, it is supported for one the findings in Ismaili (2013) "students can learn more effectively when their attention is focused on the task; therefore, they are focused more on the language they use than on the grammatical form" (p. 295).

Participant No. 1: *"I will suggest that this will be more applied in the different programs, so the learners can learn to develop a foreign language, which will be helpful for their daily and professional life".*
Participant No. 2: *"Very good implementation and the teaching, to continue with the same methodology"*
Participant No. 3: *"Well, I suggest that these kinds of activities will be done more frequently, because it helped me as student".*

According to these answers, it was possible to identify that the positive effects and participants' own experience on this project were used as strong arguments to validate the adaptation and implementation task based learning over the different programs at SENA, as well as, to continue carrying out activities as this, to strengthen their language learning process. Students also highlighted the benefits that this language learning approach could bring to the community in general, particularly when there is a need for developing and enhancing the oral skill, which is also supported taking into consideration the answers given for the participants on the following question of the survey. Graph 13 shows the answer related to the implementation of task-based approach at SENA.

Graph 13. Answer from the survey

Question 10
English classes should follow the "Task-based approach" to favor the oral production of students.
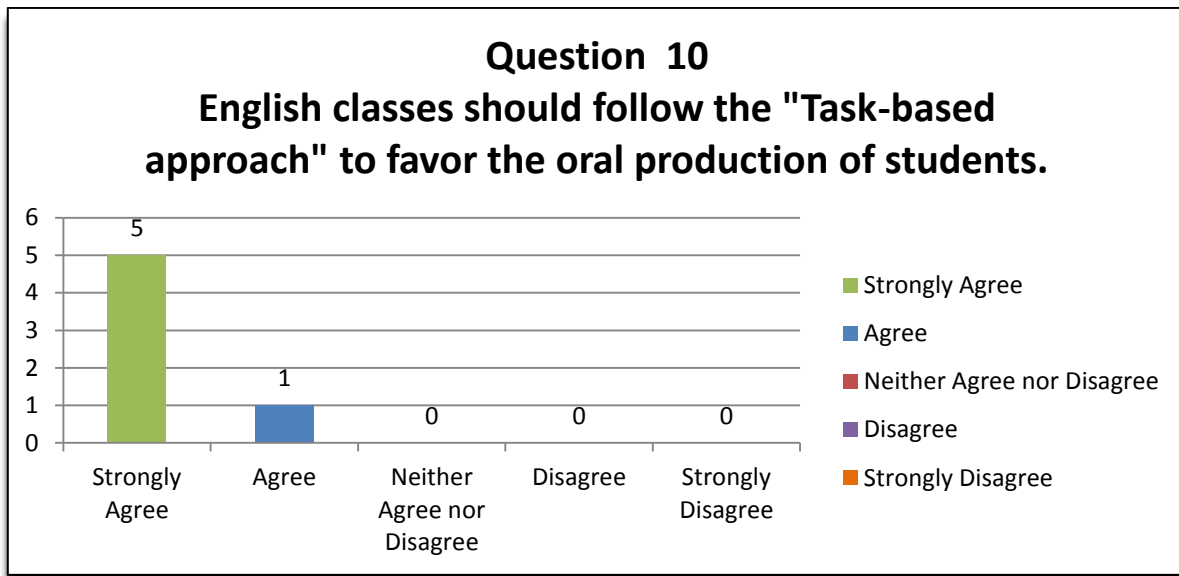
On the other hand, having the opportunity to observe and follow the implementation of this project, was a guarantee to identify all students' needs and perspectives during every class. I could document all aspects that I considered relevant for the class itself and the future tasks as the followings: participants' language difficulties, attitudes, opinions, and some others.

To sum up, along with the implementation of the research study, several opinions and perceptions during the classes were given and heard (teacher's log), showing participants' interest in improving their oral competence, and those insights helped the teacher to corroborate that the applicability of the study was giving the results proposed. First, some of the opinions were related to the use of the task-based learning.

Teacher's log: *"If they had taught me before like this, I had learned English". (Participant 2 during one class)*

Teacher's log: *"It will be good, that the rest of instructors will use this method". (Participant 3 during one class)*

Since the beginning of the project, after the first class participants manifested in several opportunities over the importance of working on the oral skill, highlighting the strategies and dynamics of the activities within the task-based units, which guide them step by step (pre-task, task cycle, and language focus) before performing orally the task given. Secondly, some participants also stated the relevance of working on the oral skill despite its difficulty.

Teacher's log: *"I liked a lot the idea of being working on the speaking; I thought that it was more difficult". (Participant 3 during one class)*

Teacher's log: *"Thanks to the work dynamic, I have improved the speaking in English". (Participant 4 during one class)*

Students indicated that the learning strategy proposed for the research responded positively to the development and improvement of the oral skill; they reported having enhanced that specific ability. In the same way, they also affirmed that the results obtained were due to the dynamic that this approach proposed.

6.3 Findings: advantages and limitations

It is important to recall that many advantages on the implementation of this research project to enhance the oral skill were perceived, given the fact that the participants were actively engaged within the process, and the role of the researcher encouraged them to progress instead of failing through the learning tasks. However, some limitations on the implementation of the task-based activities were also found, mainly because of individual factors on the participants. In that order, participants' results on the survey and researcher's observations (teachers' log) allowed to describe and identify both aspects.

6.3.1 Advantages

One of the advantages of implementing these activities was that it encouraged participants' self-confidence since the tasks themselves required an active participation. They expressed how the task-based activities made them feel they could perform orally in front of others. It can be argued that it was due to the way the tasks were developed through the different stages.

> Participant No. 3: *"…to speak in front of others with more confidence"*.
>
> Participant No. 5: *"…to lose the fear of expressing myself"*.
>
> Participant No. 6: *"…to speak with more confidence"*.

> Teacher's log: *"Since the participants are engaged with the activities, they are enjoying doing the tasks without any fear or shame; it seems they are gaining some confidence that makes them participate"*.

Another advantage was the increase of students' participation, where the resources offered by the task-based activities encouraged students to participate. It is necessary to add that when teaching a foreign language most of EFL beginners

lacked oral participation, thus, the implementation of task-based activities could be identified as a resource to promote participation and help students to overcome frustration and fear, for that reason the participants, despite of being beginners were active actors on the class.

Task-based activities were designed to enhance students' oral proficiency, which triggered some students' practices during the activities: the first one was cooperative learning. Participants' interactions during the tasks helped to strengthen bonds since they supported each other to succeed on their tasks. Thus, the learning environment became friendlier with a cooperative atmosphere, in which students took risks to carry out the activities proposed.

Another advantage was learning new vocabulary, because of the task-based activities. The results showed that participants increase the range of words used in their presentations, which was very different compared to the first class. It should be said that the interactions during the tasks mixed with some exercises to work the memory, had an effect in their performance in terms of vocabulary acquisition since it encouraged students to be more inquirers and being aware of how fundamental was that, in order to improve their oral performance.

Teacher's log: *"After doing some memory exercises during the last two classes, they have gained some new vocabulary, and the pronunciation is much more intelligible than before, despite they enjoy doing the memory exercise, since they challenge themselves to see who can memorize the most number of words".*

6.3.2 Limitations

On the contrary, by means of the survey and the observations registered in the teachers' log, it was also possible to identify a limitation: "difficulty on the pronunciation", which was a common weakness in some of the participants at the beginning of the research.

Participant No. 1: *"The pronunciation of the words and being able to understand what it was said, then I looked for it, so I could understand it clearly"*

Participant No. 4: *"The pronunciation".*

Participant No. 6: *"Sometimes the pronunciation of the different words, as well as writing them on".*

Teacher's log: *"Ss tend to have a lot of difficulties with the pronunciation, it is necessary to practice a lot on it".*

Teacher's log: *"Despite having prepared the task with enough time, some of them still evidence some difficulties with the pronunciation".*

In fact, it provided a straight insight for the purpose of the study, regarding the limitations of implementing task-based oral activities. According to that, it was needed during the implementation of the task-based activities to include pronunciation exercises to address that difficulty, taking into account that most of them were EFL beginners.

After implementing the task-based activities, another limitation that was found was the number of students in the classroom, taking into account that in order to observe students performing the oral tasks, it was needed an amount of time considered to be able to check and provide an adequate feedback.

Additionally, as the group of participants was beginners, every activity required more attention and more time, considering that after presenting the activities it was needed to comment and made some specific corrections, all of that to monitor their progress and guide them to approach the oral objectives.

Therefore, by having this limitation, every activity during the class was timed to be able to accomplish the objectives of the activities proposed.

As a conclusion on the previous findings, there were presented several results that showed some of the effects and participants' perceptions on the oral

performance after the implementation of the task-based activities, as well as and some advantages and limitations of this research study.

First, it could be seen how students improved from the beginning of the research until the end, the results on the pre and post-test, as well as the results on the three different task-based activities, evidenced how the implementation of the research encouraged the participants to enhance and obtain significant results regarding to their oral performance.

Secondly, in general, the perspectives given by the participants on the effects of the task-based activities were enriching, since the participants highlighted how some previous individual factors that affected their oral performance were improved, as a result of to the implementation of the task-based activities. It was also remarked an improvement specifically on the pronunciation and gaining of confidence when participating in oral activities. In addition, it was also indicated a favorable perspective on the use of task-based learning and its activities as a strategy to approach the oral enhancement.

Finally, the advantages and limitations from the perspective of the researcher and participants provided a general overview, which allowed identifying some weaknesses and positive influences that were generated because of the implementation of the task-based oral activities.

7. Analysis and discussion

The development of nowadays society has demanded the incorporation of teaching strategies that respond to different learning styles, taking into consideration individual needs; for this, pedagogical tools are established where the individual has an active or non-active participation.

One of the most applied teaching strategies at the moment is the Student-Centered Learning, which "focuses on the learners' experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capacities, and needs. It creates a learning environment conducive to learning and promotes the highest levels of motivation, learning, and achievement for all learners" (McCombs & Whisler, 1997, p. 9), based on this definition, the task-based learning approach has been incorporated as an active learning instrument within the aforementioned teaching style.

During the previous analysis, the results obtained after the implementation of the research study evidenced the effects of task-based learning in students' oral performance in a group of EFL SENA students, since at this institution it was detected the lack of an adequate strategy to promote this skill.

In addition, the results of this research were gathered from the observation documented in the teacher's log, interpreting students' performance in the task-based activities and tests, and data collected from the survey.

It is relevant to indicate that these results were analyzed in order to evaluate students' oral improvement, to describe perspectives related to the effects of task-based learning and identify advantages and limitations of implementing task-based activities.

- **The results from the pre/post-test, and task-based units revealed that the oral performance had a significant improvement.** It is noticed when observing the results of the oral performance on the general overview (see Graph 11), a positive improvement from the beginning until the end. It is

important to say that at the final stage, the participants were more engaged and more aware of how to improve in the oral skill. They internalized some basic structures that were gained through exposure to the L2, and they gained some confidence to interact and participate.

The results of this study are similar to the ones Ricard (2013) who found that the participants developed their oral skill, due to the exposition for interacting in English in oral tasks, asserting one of his findings "the exposure allowed analyzing the enhancement of the oral skill through their conversational routines while performing the tasks in the classroom".

It is important to identify that learning can be used as a means depending on the need of each student and the learning styles; considering that, currently the type of teaching is no longer focused on the teacher but focused on the student, "Learner-centered teaching style focuses on how students learn instead of how teachers teach" (Weimer, 2002, and Wohlfarth et.al, 2008 as cited in Ahmed, 2013).

Notwithstanding, analyzing the results, it is valid to mention that the oral performance of the task-based units of the participant 1 (see Graph 5) did not increase as much as the rest of participants, which can be associated with one of the findings in Buitrago (2016): "lack of willingness of some students to participate in some tasks and group work negatively affected the results of some of them", given the fact that this particular student had difficulties to work in groups [personal differences], despite his positive individual performance in the post-test (see Graph 9).

However, this somehow supports why some students do not have the same performance as the others in the same class.

- **This research found that the task-based learning helped students to develop skills to improve pronunciation, lose the fear of speaking in front of others and gain confidence to speak easily.** The participants were motivated since the class was dynamic and eased them the process for learning, which is supported by Nunan (2004) since task-based provides opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore spoken the language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language.

> Participant No. 1: *"I could develop skills to be able to pronounce much better the words…]"*.
> Participant No. 2: *"…lose the fear to the public… and learn to address me to the people"*.
> Participant No. 6: *"To speak with more confidence"*.

Additionally, regarding the effects of task-based learning, the participants reported to have enjoyed this particular way of learning, considering that the dynamic encouraged them to the practice, which is a fact supported by Nunan (1999) and Celce-Murcia (2001) "classroom can be a dynamic place if the right speaking activities are presented".

> Participant No. 1: *"The class was dynamic and participative"*.
>
> Participant No. 5: *"Everything was made in a very dynamic way to facilitate us the learning"*

To sum up, there is another aspect to be considered through this discussion, which is related to the positive response of the participants toward task-based learning. These are some findings presented in the literature review, regarding the use of task-based learning: Albino (2017) and Buitrago (2016)

found that "TBL was determinant to help students in learning vocabulary, encourage them to speak and a key aspect in the acquisition of a second language (L2)". In order to corroborate this, participants expressed the following:

> Teacher's log: *"It will be good, that the rest of instructors will use this method". (Participant 5 during one class)*

> Teacher's log: *"Thanks to the work dynamic, I have improved the speaking in English". (Participant 3 during one class)*

- **Finally, through the data analyzed from the survey and insights taken from the teacher's log, there were identified aspects that enclosed several advantages of task-based learning and only a few limitations.**

It was found that through the implementation of task-based activities the learners acquired more vocabulary, which is relevant when performing orally in English, due to that their oral interaction was more fluent and accurate since they had more language tools to be able to act out. According to that, Albino (2017) pointed out that Task-based learning was relevant, due to the potential to use the target language and increasing of vocabulary.

In the same way, another advantage was that students' oral performance improved due to the cooperation among the participants, highlighting how task-based activities encouraged students to work cooperatively, in order to provide interaction that facilitates practices and strengthen relationships within the context, and this is reaffirmed by Celce-Murcia (2001) "it is accurate to engage learners to work cooperatively promoting this skill, since they learn better in group".

To conclude, through the implementation of the research study, the only limitations that were found are related with the number of participants and

the pronunciation. On one hand, taking into consideration that the 6 participants of this research were part of a classroom, it was needed to have sufficient time to let every student of the class and participants of the research to perform their tasks. Additionally, after every intervention it was need some extra time to give some feedback, which was part of the task in order to check their oral performance.

On the other, as stated previously, the difficulty in the pronunciation was also considered as a limitation, since it was necessary to carry out specific activities to approach their pronunciation necessity and, encourage them to be aware of it.

8. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to explore the effects of the implementation of Task-based learning in students' oral performance in a group of EFL SENA students; therefore, in order to achieve this goal the research study proposed the following objectives to accomplish that purpose:

1. To evaluate if there is any improvement in students' performance after the implementation of the task-based activities.

2. To describe students´ perspectives on the effects of the task-based on their oral production.

3. To identify the advantages and limitations of implementing task-based activities in a group of EFL beginner students.

Regarding to the previous objectives, after the implementation of the study, the following conclusions emerged from the results obtained and there will be presented as follows:

- **The task-based learning approach implemented through this research provided relevant information that showed the positive effects of the study.** It indicated that the implementation of task-based learning helped students to improve their oral performance (See Graph 11). First, by narrowing the gap students had regarding the oral skill. When speaking, it was noticed students reduced that anxiety and fear for interacting in L2 they had at the beginning, similar as in Muhsin (2015) who reported a progress regarded to self-confidence. Second, the stages of the task-based activities motivated and encouraged them to interact and participate actively using the language, making them being able to describe people and objects, ask and

get information, all of it from a basic level, which is supported by one of the findings in Albino (2017) who reported a development on interactional language.

- **It was identified the importance of working under a learning strategy that promotes constant participation and made the students the main actors of the class**. Since, students showed themselves to be more participative and engaged in the tasks, it promoted awareness about how learning a foreign language works. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of a student-centered learning strategy must be considered in order to obtain positive effects regarding the oral performance in EFL beginners.

- **Having the opportunity to select and adapt the task-based units to the needs of the participants was fundamental.** It made students become more interested through the development of the tasks since they found it meaningful. So, the motivation to performing the activities increased positively, which was also reported by Muhsin (2015) in their findings, who highlighted the benefit of selecting topics adapted to the participants.

- **The implementation of task-based learning allowed promoting a cooperative work in the classroom, which facilitated the learning process of those students with weaker oral abilities, making the process easier, considering that for EFL learners the oral interaction is challenging**. Then by working among classmates, it increased their self-esteem and confidence, besides it strengthened bonds within the participants of the class. In this case, it is important to mention that this conclusion is related with one reported by Ricard (2013) who noticed how the task-based approach promoted interaction and motivate the students to use the L2.

- It is still needed the participants work in a strategy to increase their vocabulary, improve their pronunciation, but most of all to explore

autonomously learning strategies to strength their English linguistic competence.

- Checking the progress of the students is more than relevant, mainly when it has to do with the oral skill; therefore, providing feedback to the students after an their interventions is a strategy that allowed me to point out individual aspects of students' oral performance, it also helped them to monitor the progress. In addition, it encouraged students to perform better since they identified I was following their oral participation. These same results were shared by Gutierrez (2005), who indicated how feedback was a key factor to improve the oral production of their students.

- The implementation of "action research" in this research project was determinant to observe and consider the elements needed to adapt the tasks to overcome the oral insufficiency of the participants. Its principle of reflection allowed me to take advantage of the difficulties observed, in order to get a better response from the participants and show the positive effects of task-based learning to improve or enhance the oral skill. Which is in the same way supported by Gutierrez (2005), Muhsin (2015), Ricard (2013) & Buitrago (2016) since they conducted their researches based on action research and shared the relevance of action research, highlighting the importance of the reflection to obtain the results expected.

Considering the precedent conclusions, it is necessary to reaffirm how Task-based learning helped in the oral performance. However, it is necessary to add up that besides providing the effects of the oral performance in the students, it also helped the participants to become more aware of what a person needs to be able to learn a foreign language, they could conclude that despite the work was done most of the time cooperatively, every individual is responsible of their own learning.

Finally, it is important to indicate that this research study also opened the bridge to those teachers who want to develop or improve the oral skill of their

students. Through the results on the activities performed and the information directly analyzed from students' perception, several pedagogical assumptions can be created to foster students to develop the oral competence.

9. Recommendations

- Developing the oral skill requires sufficient time to monitor students' progress, and the participation of all of them is fundamental, due to that, planning meaningful teaching strategies with large groups is a need to be able to favor and cover all the participants considering learning levels and styles within the classroom.

- Working on the oral performance with EFL beginners require to develop strategies to promote interaction and participation, therefore adapting the oral activities to a level they feel they are learning but not failing is relevant to develop the oral skill and encourage students to explore autonomously learning strategies to strength their English linguistic competence

- The design of a strategy that allow to keep record of the oral progress that every participant is experiencing to detect "do's and don'ts", is a way to monitor students' oral performance and promote awareness about the particular aspects regarding the learning of the L2.

- Taking into consideration the implementation of an extra cycle as part of the classroom based action research, in order to reflect and address some of the limitations that carry out working with EFL beginners, to overcome the difficulties through the implementation of the study and obtain the results expected.

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11. Appendix

Appendix A: Pre-Post test

IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE ORAL ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN EFL SENA STUDENTS

PICTURES	INSTRUCTIONS
1. Describe a place 	**1st Part: Eliciting information** 1. What is this? 2. Name the elements that you can see in picture 1. (describe them) 3. Tell me where they are. **2nd Part: Getting some input** 1. Can you tell me how your favorite place is? What is in there?
2. Asking for and giving directions 	**1st Part: Eliciting information** 1. What is this? 2. Tell me where is the School? and the bank? 3. How can you ask for a direction? **2nd Part: Getting some input** 1. Can you explain the way to go from the cinema to the bank?
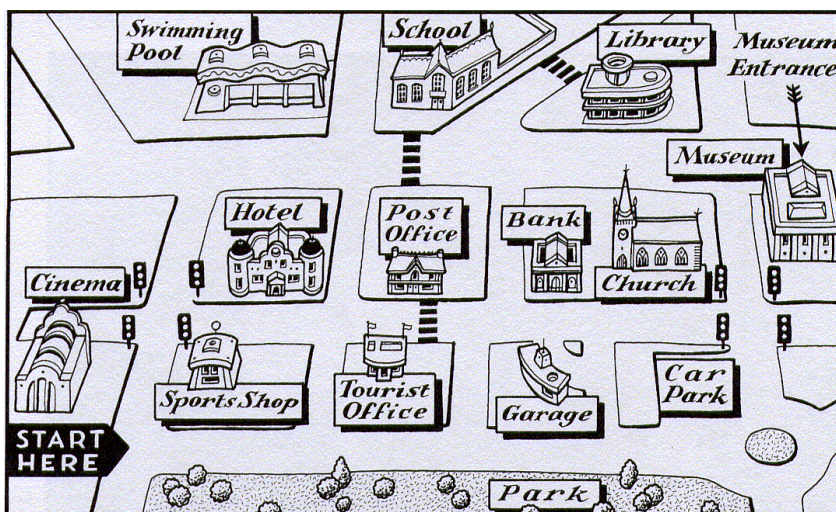
3. <u>**Describe a person**</u>

1st Part: Eliciting information

1. What is this?
2. How many people are there in the picture?
3. Their names, nationality, name some parts of the body displayed in the picture, their clothes (color, style)

2nd Part: Getting some input

1. Describe one character from this picture. (what is he wearing, what does he look like? describe him)

Juan Diego Salamando Aguirre – Universidad ICESI IV Semester

Research Project

Appendix B: Rubric

UNIVERSIDAD ICESI

IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE ORAL ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN EFL SENA STUDENTS.					

Participant:	ORAL ENGLISH PERFORMANCE RUBRIC					
Category	**5**	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**	
Communicative achievement	Discourse is well organized. Uses strategies for communication breakdown naturally.	Discourse is well organized. Uses strategies for communication breakdown with some difficulty.	Discourse is somewhat organized. Uses a limited range of strategies for communication breakdown.	Discourse is somewhat disorganized. Rarely uses strategies for communication breakdown.	Discourse is disorganized. Does not use any strategies for communication breakdown.	
Comprehension	Generally understands main ideas and details easily	Understands most main ideas well. Details sometimes pose a problem	Understands simple ideas easily, more complex ideas pose a challenge	Has trouble understanding simple ideas	Consistent lack of comprehension	
Fluency	Speaks with very little hesitation. Ample vocabulary range allows for a smooth flow	Speaks with occasional hesitation. Common vocabulary generally flows well	Speaks with hesitation. Common vocabulary sometimes flows well	Speaks with frequent hesitation. Common vocabulary often poses a problem	Speaks with severe hesitation. Common vocabulary consistently poses a problem	
Pronunciation	Minor pronunciation issues do not affect communication	Pronunciation issues occur occasionally, but distraction is minimum	Pronunciation issues are more frequent and lead to distraction	Pronunciation issues are quite frequent and communication is affected negatively	Pronunciation issues are prevalent and communication is severely affected	
Accuracy	Uses a variety of structures with few and minor errors	Uses a variety of structures with some distracting errors	Uses limited structures with few and minor errors	Uses limited structures with distracting errors	Uses limited structures with significant errors	
Universidad ICESI – IV SEMESTER – RESEARCH PROJECT					Total	
					Grade	

UNIVERSIDAD ICESI

"IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE ORAL ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN EFL SENA STUDENTS."
Topic: Describing a picture
Length: 8 hours
Aim: Enhance oral performance in students to describe a picture providing clear details.
TASK-BASED UNIT No. 1: *Describe a place*
PRE-TASK / WARM UP

Instructions

How to describe a picture:
1. Ss are asked about the expressions or words that are used to describe a picture (previous knowledge), if some answers are given, they will provide some examples to contextualize the class according to the word or expression given.
2. Ss will watch the following video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihIQ8_-49Fo that contains the vocabulary, as well as expressions that are used to describe a picture.
3. After watching the video Ss will share some of the words that were taken and they should provide some examples using them.
4. In groups of 3 the students will share the concepts and among them will discuss and provide examples, while the teachers verifies the correct use of it.

Find your couple
1. Ss will receive individually a picture and others sentences that give one characteristic of the picture, as there were given randomly they should look for their right couple.

There are several chairs.   At the top of the bed there is a picture.   There is a vase with flowers in the centre.

In the background there is a big mountain.   There is a vehicle at the bottom of the tree.

The rest of the pictures and sentences can be found through this link:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HY37TQB5ciBUWmJveS6ZXtrMm8oMfx8k?usp=sharing

2. As the Ss find their right couple, together they should practice and try to describe the rest of the picture. During 20 minutes they will interchange their pictures with another couple and they will do the same exercising. All the activity will be monitored by the teacher, in order to see the performance and provide feedback.

3. Finally Ss will prepare a short description that summarizes the picture assigned to them, and present it to the class.

Describe it for me
1. The teacher presents several pictures on the TV screen and invite to the students describe the pictures. Additionally some extra vocabulary is given as a hand-out.
2. After providing some extra vocabulary needed to describe pictures, Ss are engaged to describe them implementing the words they already know and include some of the new expressions, for this, they will have 15 minutes to discuss with other classmates.
3. Later Ss will individually describe others pictures in front of the class. The teacher and the Ss will evaluate the performance of the student providing some comments when the student finishes presenting the picture.

Pictures used and extra vocabulary can be found through this link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HY37TQB5ciBUWmJveS6ZXtrMm8oMfx8k?usp=sharing

TASK-CYCLE

Tic-Tac Toe
1. Ss are divided in groups of 4 to participate of the dynamic Tic-Tac Toe.
2. Ss must answer some questions given by the teacher regarding the vocabulary and expressions to describe a picture. Some of the statements were:

- What is the form to indicate "Hay" in singular and plural? Give an example.
- Translate the following sentence into English: "La imagen muestra dos personas en la izquierda y un perro en la parte inferior baja".
- Indicate two expressions to start describing a picture.
- Name five words or expressions that are used to describe pictures.

- Most of the statements were related with translating sentences from Spanish into English, in order to analyze their oral performance (fluency, accuracy and pronunciation) and measure their capacity for responding correctly.

3. The group that first responded correctly three times in a round will have the chance to mark the Tic-tac toe and continue playing against a different group.

Let's practice together

1. In couples Ss will be asked to download a picture from internet or use one from their cell phone. Then, they should record a voice note (cell phone) providing a description of their picture. While the Ss finish this first part, the teacher will verify the information recorded if needed it should be recorded again.
2. After having checked all recordings, Ss will set a circle in the classroom with different stations from different couples. Then each couple must stop by every station and they will play the recording and according to that information, they will make a drawing about that. (3 minutes per station) (all couples must pass over the different stations)
3. Then after finishing, every couple will display on the TV the picture they have chosen and the rest of the groups will corroborate if their picture matches with the real one according to their drawing.

Feedback activity

1. Ss will receive a chart with 20 questions related to describing pictures, they should go around the classroom asking who is going to answer that question, and then Ss write down the name of that person in every box.

    Chart can be found: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HY37TQB5ciBUWmJveS6ZXtrMm8oMfx8k?usp=sharing

LANGUAGE FOCUS (TASK)

Gallery art

1. Ss are asked to prepare a presentation of one famous picture or one taken at SENA. They should bring it to the class and present it orally to the rest of the group, using all the communicative elements and vocabulary seen through the task-based classes.
2. Ss will receive feedback at the end of the presentation relating all communicative aspects that were seen through the presentation.

Vocabulary

- *There is / There are*   *- You can see in the picture…*
- *At the top/bottom*   *-Left / right*
- *Next to / on / in*   *-Foreground / background*
- *That / this / these / those*   *- Also, and, the, with, a-an*
- *The picture shows…*   *- Yellow, white, black, green, etc..*
- *Below / Behind / between*   *- In the middle / in front of*

Appendix D: Teacher's log format

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ICESI

IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE ORAL ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN EFL SENA STUDENTS.		
Teacher's log		
Task-based unit:		**Class #:**
Researcher:		**Date:**
Supervisor name:		
Aspects	**Notes are taken from the class**	**Comments**
Students reaction to Task-based units		
Participation of students during the class		
Communicative features related to English performance		
Development of the class:		
Self-reflection:		

Appendix E: Survey

IMPLEMENTING TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING TO ENHANCE ORAL
ENGLISH PERFORMANCE IN EFL SENA STUDENTS.

AGE_____ GENDER_____ PARTICIPANT # ____

1. **Es importante desarrollar la habilidad oral en inglés, como clave fundamental para mi futuro profesional.**
   Muy de acuerdo
   De acuerdo
   Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
   En desacuerdo
   Muy en desacuerdo

2. **Prefiero trabajar sobre otra habilidad en inglés que no sea la parte oral.**
   Muy de acuerdo
   De acuerdo
   Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
   En desacuerdo
   Muy en desacuerdo

3. **Siento temor cuando debo hablar en inglés en frente de mis compañeros de clase.**
   Siempre
   La mayoría de las veces
   Algunas veces sí, algunas veces no
   La mayoría de las veces
   Nunca

4. **Considero poco relevante que el SENA se incluya el inglés como competencia obligatoria del programa formativo**.
   Siempre
   La mayoría de las veces
   Algunas veces sí, algunas veces no
   La mayoría de las veces
   Nunca

5. **Estudiar de manera autónoma en casa es fundamental para mejorar mis habilidades comunicativas en inglés**
   Muy de acuerdo
   De acuerdo
   Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
   En desacuerdo
   Muy en desacuerdo

6. **Las clases de inglés que recibí durante la secundaría aportaron significativamente al aprendizaje para el desarrollo de mi competencia oral actual.**
   Completamente verdadero
   Verdadero
   Ni falso, ni verdadero
   Falso
   Completamente falso

7. **Mi nivel de producción oral mejoró significativamente como resultado de las tareas orales (*Task-based approach*) durante el curso**
   Muy de acuerdo
   De acuerdo
   Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
   En desacuerdo
   Muy en desacuerdo

8. **La forma como se desarrollaron las tareas orales en el curso me permiten ahora identificar claramente la diferencia entre un método de enseñanza tradicional y el "Task-based approach".**
   Muy de acuerdo
   De acuerdo
   Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
   En desacuerdo

Muy en desacuerdo

9. **Las actividades desarrolladas durante la investigación no me ayudaron a desarrollar aspectos significativos de mi habilidad oral en inglés.**

Muy de acuerdo
De acuerdo
Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
En desacuerdo
Muy en desacuerdo

10. **Las clases de inglés deberían seguir el enfoque de "Task-based approach" para favorecer la producción oral de los estudiantes**

Muy de acuerdo
De acuerdo
Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
En desacuerdo
Muy en desacuerdo

11. **Las actividades grupales apoyaron positivamente en mi proceso de aprendizaje.**

Muy de acuerdo
De acuerdo
Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
En desacuerdo
Muy en desacuerdo

12. **Los videos, flashcards, audios, dinámicas lúdico-pedagógicas y demás estrategias implementadas por el instructor durante las clases fueron idóneas.**

Muy de acuerdo
De acuerdo
Ni de acuerdo ni en desacuerdo
En desacuerdo
Muy en desacuerdo

OPEN QUESTIONS

1. **¿Qué aportaron las actividades orales en el desarrollo de su habilidad oral en inglés?**
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. **¿Qué fue lo que más le llamo la atención de las actividades enfocadas en la habilidad oral en el desarrollo de la investigación?**
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. **¿Qué dificultades tuvo durante las clases basadas en el "Task-based approach"?**
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. **¿Qué aporte/sugerencia o comentario haría respecto al proceso del que hizo parte? Y ¿Por qué?**
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____