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Implementation of Situational Language Teaching to  
Improve Oral Performance in First Graders at Carlos Luis  
Fallas Technical College

Final Work-Research Paper Modality to Qualify for the Baccalaureate Degree  
of English Teaching

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# **CHAPTER I**

## **Research Problem**

## 1.1. Problem Contextualization

Transnational companies have found Costa Rica as a great country to establish. Those companies look for people not only specialized in certain fields, but also knowledgeable in English; however, the lack of personnel that is fluent in English is a present problem for companies looking for individuals with these qualifications. For this reason, some of them decide to stop their operations in Costa Rica.

Since Costa Rica relies heavily on the work provided by multinational companies, as many other countries, it has been implemented English teaching in all educational programs, from elementary schools to the remaining advanced levels. Costa Rica government needs to guarantee a work force that excels in English, so major investments of money are done to convince international companies that this country is the best choice to relocate.

To achieve this aim, it is necessary to teach and perfect the English language in all classrooms. Because of that, the Ministry of Public Education has suggested new learning methods for teaching English as a means of improving the quality of education. Additionally, there are lots of former methods which can be applied by professors in their classrooms to enable student learning, in relation with the characteristics of their students and the nature of the subject matter. In this regard, the following research will be done based on Situational Language Teaching, also known as Oral Approach, which will be implemented in English classes through different strategies of its nature. This method will respond to the necessity of improving the use of English in different contexts to achieve a meaningful learning.

According to Palmer (2015a) “on the psychological basis, in the early stages of language learning, the written word has a tendency to confuse rather than clarify pronunciation” (p. 28) For this reason, the oral approach has a positive impact on learning process; it is not workable just for native American or British teachers, but also for the ones whose native language is not English.

The research will be carried out with first grade students of Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College with ages ranging from 18 to 43 years old, in the province of Alajuela, during the third quarter of 2017.

### **1.1.1. Antecedent of the problem**

#### **1.1.1.1. Transnational companies require employees with higher level of English**

According to Gibson (2017a) “there is a growing demand on people knowledgeable on a second language. It must be satisfied for the country to keep on being competitive in the field”. Even though it was detected an improvement regarding good skills in English during Cinde Job Fair 2017, some companies like Citi Shared Services must invest in programs offered to its collaborators to improve their English proficiency.

On the other hand, Sykes has invested efforts in initiatives focused on improving language skills for more than its 5200 employees; in fact, it has its own language school.

While it is true level of English in Costa Rica is acceptable, transnational corporations have seen the need to reinforce their employees’ English level. It demonstrates that English learning in high schools and universities has not been meaningful enough, students are not well-prepared to the world of work.

### **1.1.2. Description of the problem**

The first graders of Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College do not speak English during classes. Even though their career is focused on customer service in English, they are not able to do it. Classes are magisterial, so the students do not face real situations to put into practice grammar or vocabulary seen before. No books are used, just photocopies that they get lost repeatedly.

### **1.1.3. Justification of the problem**

The root cause of this problem is the teaching technique applied. The students never interact with the subject, they only read the material given by the professor. Sometimes the professor tries to get the students involved in the topic, but these actions do not have the expected effect. Very rarely the students intervene, and when they do it they speak in Spanish without any response from the teacher, so this behavior is allowed in class.

There is no any visual or speaking practice during the class. Therefore, the output is boring students with their cellphones and talking loudly about non-English related topics. Regardless the professor or a student is talking or not, they never pay attention to the class.

As a result, the students do not remember anything regarding the current or previous lessons because there is not any reinforcement or meaningful learning.

For all those reasons, it will be useful to implement oral approach strategies in this class to help students improve their oral skills through constant participation. It will consist on continuous practice of related topics to their specialty (customer service in English).

## **1.2. Formulation of problem**

How to apply Situational Language Teaching to improve oral performance in first graders at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College during third quarter of 2017?

## **1.3. General and specific objectives.**

### **1.3.1. General Objective:**

Implementing situational language teaching to improve oral performance in first graders.

### **1.3.2. Specific Objectives:**

- Identifying how contents are grasped by students by making non-participant observations.
- Analyzing student population's perception of Executive Service Centers specialty by administering a questionnaire.
- Applying a series of situational language teaching strategies to improve students' oral performance.
- Evaluating students' oral performance, before and after applying situational language teaching strategies, through activities using checklists.

## **1.4. Scope and Limitations**

### **1.4.1. Scope**

This research aims to implement situational language teaching to improve oral performance in first graders, who are not confident about using the target language (English) through strategies focused on covering topics that are useful in the context of their specialty. This investigation will take place at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College during third quarter of 2017.

#### **1.4.2. Limitations**

Even though it is evident a strong relationship between SLT strategies applied in class and the improvement of students' oral performance, it was not possible to analyze other variables that could eventually contributed.

Moreover, because of the high degree of absenteeism (an average of 15 students attend to classes daily; it represents 65.22% of attendance rate) it was difficult to keep track of every student's improvement.

Finally, final instrument applied (checklist) could not be used individually as it was at the beginning of the research, since there was not enough time to do it. For this reason, this assessment was applied in pairs.

It is possible to affirm that SLT strategies helped students improve their oral performance; however, if final checklist would have been applied individually, results had been more reliable at the end of this research.

**CHAPTER II**  
**Theoretical Framework**

## 2.1. What is Situational Learning Teaching?

SLT also known as Oral Approach was developed by Harold Palmer, A. S. Hornby and other British linguists since the 1920s, but it was during the 1950s when it became the accepted British approach to English language teaching. According with Richards & Rodgers (2014a) “It involves systematic principles of *selection* (the procedures by which lexical and grammatical content was chosen), *gradation* (principles by which the organization and sequencing of content were determined), and *presentation* (techniques used for presentation and practice of items in a course) (p.46)

First, the professor must consider the ability, available time, the average age of his students to select the ideal material for them, considering that some structures could have more than one meaning depending on the contexts. Then, the teacher should arrange the material in a suitable order, from simple to complex. Third, when giving classes, the professor must consider the appropriate situations to be effective when teaching; otherwise, it will lead to confusion, so learning experience will not be meaningful.

The strategy of oral approach is having the students comfortable with the target language, so that they can improve their oral performance through hand-picked material selected by the teacher, who has defined what and how to teach the required contents previously.

Vocabulary selection was one of the main aspects considered when designing oral approach; there were a lot of investigations focused on foreign language vocabulary. At that time, two influences took place. First, language teaching specialists thought that vocabulary was an essential component of foreign language learning. On the other hand, some other specialists believed that developing readings skills were the clue of learning a new language effectively.

As a result, there were developed some principles for vocabulary selection. Richards & Rodgers (2014b) stated that “a core of 2,000 or so words occurred frequently in written texts and that a knowledge of these words would greatly assist in reading a foreign language” (p. 45). Later, a guide of English vocabulary was produced to teach English as a foreign language, it was called *A General Service List of English Words* and it became so popular

when developing materials. The oral approach requires knowledge of essential vocabulary to express ideas related to a specific topic, so vocabulary selection procedures are followed to achieve this aim.

Raman (2010a) defines Situational Learning Teaching as follows “Situational Teaching are cleaned with the help of objects, pictures, flashcards, action, gestures, board drawings and verbal context” (p 122). Thus, learning will be meaningful when students learn by association through all available resources applied by the professor to make classes interesting. This approach requires not only teachers’ creativity, but also students’ initiative, when facing real-life situations in class. Independently if those situations are created by using pictures, gestures, or drawing in the whiteboard the most important thing to bear in mind is that they all must be closely related to the structure being taught.

An investigation was done to verify what steps must be taken when learning a new language and how professors should apply them to get the best results during the process. Students will be good at writing as long as they master in speaking, as mentioned by Sweet (2016a) “the purely oral exercises of question and answer in the foreign language should precede any attempts at written reproduction of what has been learnt” (p. 208)

One of the main characteristics of oral method approach concurs with Sweet’s posture. Learning process begins with the spoken (target) language; as soon as the students can express themselves in a written way they will do it; otherwise, they should keep on working on it. It means that all material is taught orally before it is presented in written form.

Situational Language Teaching recreates actual situations while learning. As stated by Ulit (1995a) “The theory of language underlying Situational Language Teaching (SLT) can be characterized as a type of British “structuralism” Speech is regarded as the basis of language and structure is viewed as being at the heart of speaking ability” (p.19) It means that the Oral Approach relies primarily in the process, rather than the conditions in which the students learn. Nonetheless, mistakes must be avoided; pronunciation and grammar are crucial. Once that there is an automatic control of sentence patterns and grammar structures, the student will be ready to develop his reading and writing skills, derived from speech. This is also confirmed by Christison and Murray (2014a) “The Oral Approach was based on a set of principles for the selection and organization of content. There was an emphasis on

vocabulary and grammatical structures, particularly as they related to improvements in reading” (p.171).

In general terms, Situational Language Teaching involves recreating of contexts where the students could feel identified, so that the topics might see appealing for them. By using real life situations during the class, it will be possible to create an association of the vocabulary learned with the English language, and it is more feasible for the student this type of learning as indicated by Nagaraj (1996a) “The approach suggests that any language item, whether it be a structure or a word, should not be presented in isolation. It has to be introduced and practiced in a context, situationally” (p. 14). According to Vasquez (2005a) “the adult will have motives, reasons or interest in participating in an educational activity if this activity is useful personally, professionally, socially or if it simply makes him or her happy” (p. 69)

## **2.2. Situational Language Teaching: Main Characteristics**

According to Richards & Rodgers (2014c) the main characteristics of the Oral Approach are the following (p. 47):

- a) Language teaching begins with the spoken language. Material is taught orally before it is presented in written form. Learning process becomes easier when it includes day-to-day life in a normal conversation manner.
- b) The target language is the language of the classroom. When students are asked to speak in English, they start gaining confidence when doing it. Besides that, they will start having more control over their pronunciation and grammar structures. Otherwise, they would never notice eventual mistakes while speaking.
- c) New language points are introduced and practiced situationally. The focus is on learning words in the target language that are useful when talking about known concepts in real life situations.
- d) Vocabulary selection procedures are followed to ensure that an essential general service vocabulary is covered. All vocabulary selected responds to the objective previously defined by the professor, who ensures a direct relation between vocabulary and the context of his classroom.
- e) Items of grammar are graded following the principle that simple forms should be taught before complex ones. Raman (2010b) recommends to “Keep the structures,

which demand *simple activity* by pupils to the lower levels. Where the extent and nature of cooperation is higher, those should be passed to the higher levels

- f) Reading and writing are introduced once a sufficient lexical and grammatical basis is established. After being involved in oral practices, the students will be able to have the necessary knowledge to express what they have learned in a written way. It goes from oral use of patterns to their automatic use in writing and writing. (p. 128).

The main goal of SLT includes accurate use of vocabulary and grammatical rules to achieve superior performance on the four basic skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). Moreover, the students will be able to respond quickly in speech situations with an automatic control of sentence patterns and grammar structures.

### **2.3. Situational Language Teaching: Roles**

#### a) Learners Role

At the beginning students have a passive role; what they should do is to listen carefully and repeat what have been heard. Besides that, the professor would give them some commands or instructions just to make sure they understand the topic. In this stage, it is possible that they might face some problems regarding grammar or pronunciation because they barely participate during the class. After that, more active participation is encouraged. They will be able to express themselves orally and to ask questions to each other.

#### b) Professor role

In the initial stage of learning, Richards & Rodgers (2014d) state that “the teacher serves as a model, setting up situations in which the need for the target structure is created and then modeling the new structure for students to repeat” (p. 51) During this period, the teacher takes an active role to convey the topic to his students, it is a teacher-centered class in which the professor sets the pace.

During the practice, the students can express themselves freely in less controlled situations while their professor is hearing any grammatical or structural mistakes to review them during the subsequent lessons.

According to Pittman (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 2014e) teacher's responsibilities deal with:

- a) Timing
- b) Oral practice (supporting of textbooks structures)
- c) Revision
- d) Adjustment to special needs of individuals
- e) Testing
- f) Developing language activities other than those arising from the textbook (p. 177)

#### **2.4. Situational Language Teaching: Teaching activities**

SLT applies a situational approach to introduce new sentence patterns. It is not allowed to explain or translate specific words to give a meaning; it is highly recommended to use other resources instead:

The form of new words and sentence patterns is demonstrated with examples and not through grammatical explanation or description. The meaning of new words and sentence patterns is not conveyed through translation. It is made clear visually (with objects, pictures, action and mime). Wherever possible model sentences are related and taken from a single situation. (p. 3)

Davies (1975a)

When students are studying any topic based on the Oral Approach, they could do it in pairs or group work. Some of the activities that can be done are drilling, chunks, and any other oral exercises like role-plays; all of them along with powerful and timely feedback.

- a) Drilling

After introducing new vocabulary words or grammar structures, it is very useful to drill them with classmates. It helps students learn and practice pronunciation of each structure given; even though it is not the most fun part of learning process, it is an essential step when learning new material.

Some recommendations are the following:

1. Structures should be practiced orally first.
2. Sufficient drilling of structures can establish the newly learnt structures in the minds of students.
3. Intensive drilling of structures may be of three types – chorus drilling, group drilling, and drilling by individual students.
4. Structures must be drilled in meaningful contexts taking illustrative sentences from the students' own experience and activities.
5. Substitution tables must be used to drill the structures.
6. While drilling structures the teacher must insist on correctness and fluency. (p. 66)

Dash (2007a)

b) Chunks

According to Nation (2001a) chunks are defined as “a group of words that belong together, either because they commonly occur together like *take a chance*, or because the meaning of the group is not obvious from the meaning of the parts, as with *by the way* or *take someone in*” (p. 317). Since it is easier to recall chunks instead of words in isolation, it provides greater fluidity, as soon as the students start memorizing those phrases, which make them feel confident and as a result, sounding as native speakers.

c) Content selection

Herrington, Reeves & Oliver (2009a) pointed out that “learning is a complex process, it depends on the ability of the learner to re-contextualize the knowledge and the skills that they have acquired” (p. 10). Professors should ensure real contexts in which learning process is productive; Herrington, Reeves & Oliver (2009b) recommended some steps to guarantee authentic learning:

- Provide authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life.
- Provide authentic activities.

- Provide access to expert performances and the modelling of processes.
- Provide multiple roles and perspectives.
- Support collaborative construction of knowledge.
- Promote reflection to enable abstractions to be formed.
- Promote articulation to enable tacit knowledge to be made explicit.
- Provide coaching and scaffolding by the teacher at critical times.
- Provide for authentic assessment of learning within the tasks.

(p. 16-17)

#### d) Feedback

Nunan (2007a) claimed that unlike reading or writing, speaking happens in real time you must provide an answer to what is said. Besides, when speaking, the learner does not have the chance to revise and edit as in writing (p. 87).

As sooner students receive feedback, the more effective it is for their learning. Feedback is key to learning. Some recommendations given by McCarthy (2016a) to ensure great returns on formative assessments are the following:

- Start with what's working: to express that their efforts are productive.
- Kindness does not mean avoiding critique: professors should show what kinds of details would help the reader understand better the ideas.
- Relevant feedback makes the most sense: focused on specific details; vague feedback leads to confusion.

Professors should avoid telling only the errors, but also give constructive feedback. If students know what their strengths are, they will reinforce those practices.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodological Framework**

### **3.1. Classification of research**

This research aims to evaluate the implementation of Situational Language Teaching approach to enhance oral performance on first graders at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College.

### **3.2. Nature of the investigation**

#### **3.2.1. Naturalistic**

Given stated (2008a) “Naturalistic inquiry focuses research endeavors on how people behave in natural settings while engaging in life experiences” (p. 547). This research is related to naturalistic paradigm, which takes place through observations done to first graders where some SLT strategies are applied to highlight improvements on English speaking.

### **3.3. Approach**

#### **3.3.1. Mixed Approach**

Hernandez, Fernandez & Baptista (2006a) define mixed approach as “a process which collects, analyzes, and links qualitative and quantitative data in the same study to answer a problem” (p. 755). Not only qualitative method, but also quantitative method will be applied for obtaining the suitable data to be analyzed.

Qualitative research helps the observer identify the students’ feeling and attitudes whereas quantitative research implies graphs to compare the variables assessed.

### **3.4. Purpose**

#### **3.4.1. Applied**

Applied investigation depends on reality and tries to solve punctual situations associated with it. Based on the data collected, the applied investigation raises recommendations and guidelines the problems identified.

### **3.5. Temporal dimension**

#### **3.5.1. Transversal**

Transversal research gathers data for subjects at any one time, to identify and compare behaviors in a specific time frame. This research will be hold from October to November 2017 at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College.

### **3.6. Setting**

#### **3.6.1. Micro level**

The research will take place at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College, specifically on first grade students.

### **3.7. Information Sources**

#### **3.7.1. Primary Sources**

The primary sources are questionnaires, observations, check lists, and class activities implemented at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College to first graders.

#### **3.7.2. Secondary Sources**

- Books
- Internet data

### **3.8. Population**

First grade students at Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College.

### **3.9. Instruments used**

To carry out the research, the following instruments were used to get the required data:

#### **3.9.1. Non-participant observation**

Observing the class without intervening was useful to identify how the professor introduced new topics, and how students apply them after receiving the information. Those observations took place during the first week of the practicum, and it allowed the researcher to work on an action plan to obtain conclusions after applying it.

#### **3.9.2. Questionnaire**

A questionnaire was applied to the students, during the second week of the practicum period, to have a broader knowledge of their opinion regarding their corresponding specialty (executive service centers). The output would help the researcher define what kind of weaknesses the students perceived the learning process had.

### **3.9.3. Checklists**

a) First checklist (assessment of the strategies already being used by the professor)

During third quarter, Executive Service Centers program was focused on using the appropriate linguistic tools to communicate in English with others at the company (company furniture, equipment and tools). As part of students' extra class work, they were asked to give a presentation about how their dreamed office would be by using the target vocabulary (without a minimum).

Due to this, an initial checklist was applied to all students during the third week of the practicum period. The aim of this instrument was to measure students' performance with the strategies used by their teacher. It consisted on looking at everyone's presentation, evaluating the usage of the vocabulary seen in class previously (amount of vocabulary examples, and pronunciation).

b) Second checklist (assessment once situational language teaching was being applied)

Once that students received some new tools (drilling, chunks, meaningful contents) to put into practice the objectives of third quarter 2017, a practice before the final exam was done without notice to make sure how meaningful their learning was. Besides that, it was useful to compare its output to the results obtained from the first checklist applied.

To do this, they worked in pairs on a role-play; they were asked to interact in a conversation related to purchase orders. The objective of this checklist was to measure students' performance (amount of vocabulary examples, chunks, and pronunciation) once that situational language teaching strategies were implemented.

## **3.10. SLT Strategies applied**

### **3.10.1. Drilling**

To make learning process meaningful, the vocabulary seen in class was took up for the students to learn and practice the pronunciation of each word. At least 10-minutes daily were set aside to practice drilling and its diverse methods:

- a) Choral repetition: students were asked to repeat the vocabulary given after the professor. They had to do it loudly, so that it was possible to check the correct pronunciation as a group.
- b) With flashcards: it started by drilling words; later, the images were shown. Since the cards were flipped at different rates, students could practice the corresponding vocabulary in a dynamic way (words and images).
- c) In pairs: students tested their classmates' comprehension. Student A read the definition of a word, and student B guessed the word based on what was heard. It was a perfect opportunity for them to give timely feedback and to learn from their mistakes.
- d) Individually: each student repeated individually in order. After that, the professor selected the students randomly to repeat, so it caught their attention from start to finish.

Some of the words learned by applying drilling technique were the following:

- Paper clip
- Pushpin
- Binder clip
- Rubber band
- Staples
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Whiteboard markers
- Post-it note pad
- File folder
- Drawer
- File cabinet
- Wastebasket

### 3.10.2. Chunks

Students reflected some problems while trying to speak in English. They did not feel confident enough because they did not have enough vocabulary to express themselves, and when they did it, they did not sound natural. Since it is easier to recall chunks instead of words in isolation, chunks were introduced gradually through the following methods:

#### a) Reading

Students started by reading easy materials word by word. As their reading speeded up, slowly increased the difficulty of what they read. This practice let them pay attention to chunks without knowing what they were exactly.

#### b) Reading and listening

Some conversations were played while they were reading their transcripts. They were asked to underline everything that looked like set expressions. By doing this, students started understanding what “chunking” was without any oral explanation.

#### c) Drilling

Drilling selected vocabulary provided students the opportunity to start memorizing key phrases highly used when speaking English. It helped them remind those words when needed, without doing a big effort, so they gained confidence progressively.

#### d) Oral practice

Once that the students worked on the target vocabulary, they were asked to work on oral activities in which they applied the chunks practiced through drilling previously. Those practices were done during the last period of each class (40 minutes approximately).

Some of the chunks learned and practiced during classes are the following:

- I mean
- A couple of
- You know what I mean
- I don't know if

- As a matter of fact
- Do you want (me) (to)
- To be honest with you
- I don't think
- Let's see
- I see what you mean but
- By the way
- As I was saying
- As far as I know
- Take a seat

### **3.10.3. Meaningful contexts**

Real contexts were ensured, in which learning process was productive. As suggested by Herrington, Reeves & Oliver (2009c) authentic contexts that reflected the way the knowledge will be used in real life were provided. The students were asked to simulate real scenarios that they would face in a near future.

As mentioned before, oral practices were hold during the last period of the class (40 minutes). In this section, students applied the vocabulary, and chunks studied during the first lessons of the class. The objective of this kind of activity was not only to memorize the words and phrases given, but also to picture themselves in different customer service scenarios, and find the best ways to handle them. Some of the topics analyzed and represented orally were the following:

- How to tell customers you need some time to resolve their issue.
- How to admit fault & what to do about it.
- Responses for dealing with angry customers.
- How to let a customer know it is their mistake.
- How to respond to a customer asking how your product differs from other products.
- How to request feedback from a customer.
- How to respond to a customer that speaks a language you do not understand.
- What to say when you cannot resolve an issue.

#### **3.10.4. Feedback**

According to Nunan (2007c) “when speaking, the learner does not have the chance to revise and edit as in writing” (p. 87). For this reason, the students received appropriate feedback when needed to improve their oral performance; it did not cover only drilling and chunks practices, but also the role-plays performed by them.

During drilling and chunking, the students received immediate feedback, as soon as they made a pronunciation mistake. On the other hand, when role-playing, feedback was given once the students finished their performances, for not interrupting them while representing each customer service scenarios.

Feedback given consisted on communicating strengths, followed by relevant feedback, focused on specific details. Students were asked to repeat the corrections written down during their performances, to ensure they internalized the feedback received properly.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

## **4.1. First stage – Analysis of current situation**

### **4.1.1. Non-participant observations**

#### *4.1.1.2. Description of the instrument*

A series of observations were done during the first week with the first-grade students. The aim of this instrument was to identify how new topics were given to them since last quarter of the year just started. The researcher never intervened when the classes took place, the objective was to take notes related to everything seen for further analysis.

#### *4.1.1.3. Analysis of the output*

The first remarkable detail was that even though there were 23 enrolled students, an average of 15 students attended to classes daily; it represented 65.22% of attendance rate. One of its negative effects is that it was hard for the professor to give the class smoothly because many of the students had missed a lot of classes. Additionally, books were not required in this institution; students worked with printed material handed by the professor; nonetheless, none of the students carried the photocopies with them.

On the other hand, it was determined that classes were magisterial. Professor introduced new topics in a written way, while the students just heard to what he was teaching. The whole group seemed to be bored since they were constantly using their cellphones to access social media.

Regarding English usage, students had a good English level; however, because they were not asked to speak in English during classes, they spoke in Spanish among them. Just 2 of the 23 students communicated in English when answering questions asked by their professor. Sadly, their professor spent more time speaking in Spanish than in English.

Sometimes students were asked to put into practice the material seen orally, but they did not do it. They worked in small groups, and professor never monitored their conversations. As a result, they were talking about non-related English topics at all time. As a result, mistakes could not be neither detected not pointed out through feedback.

Finally, topics were given in isolation. Classes did not follow a logical order, what made students have certain lack of interest.

## 4.1.2. Questionnaire

### 4.1.2.1. Description of the instrument

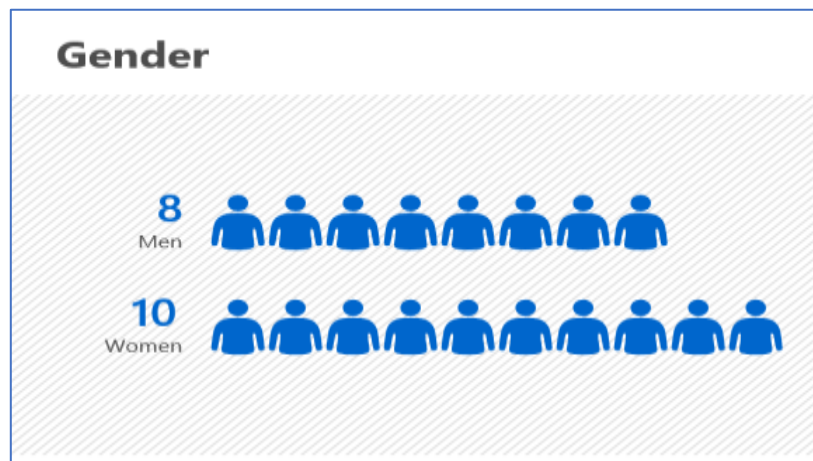
A questionnaire was applied during the second week of the practicum period. It was made up of 8 questions, and a total of 18 students filled it out.

### 4.1.2.2. Analysis of the output

The results are listed below.

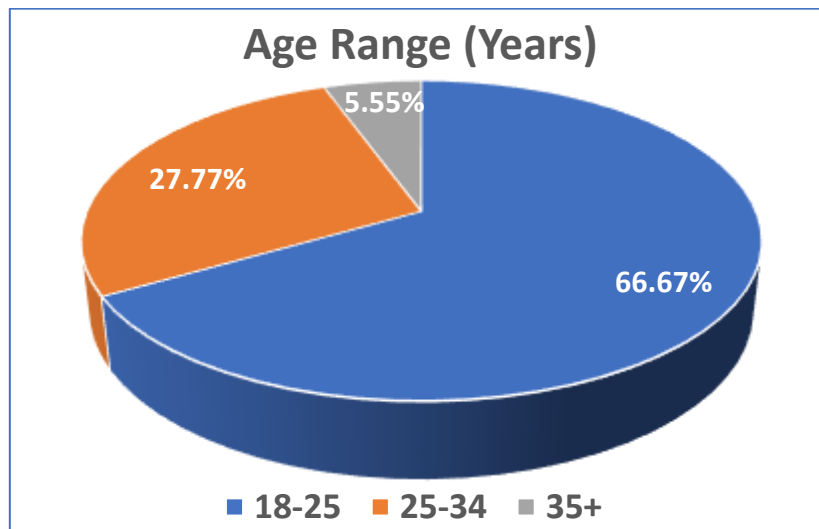
a) Graph 1

*Gender*



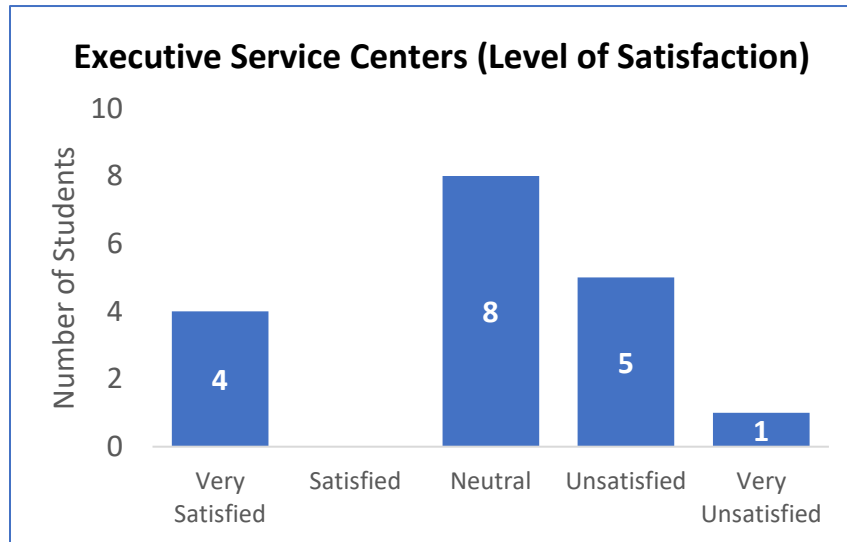
b) Graph 2

*Age range*



## c) Graph 3

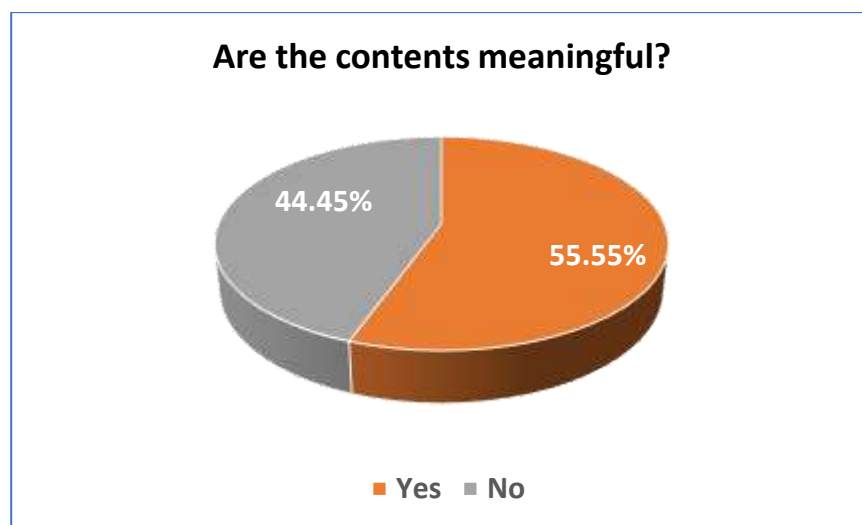
*Level of satisfaction with their specialty*



According to the questionnaire, 67% of unsatisfied and very unsatisfied people are women. On the other hand, 75% of men considered themselves to be very satisfied with the course. It reflected how women are more critical when it comes to receiving classes.

## d) Graph 4

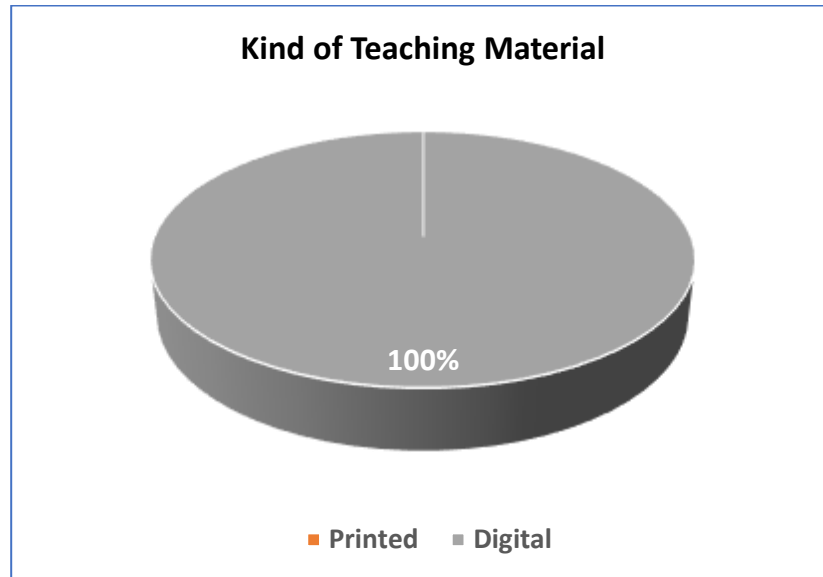
*Are the contents meaningful?*



60% of the students who consider that the contents seen in class are not meaningful are women. It reinforces the conclusion that women seem to be stricter compared to men.

e) Graph 5

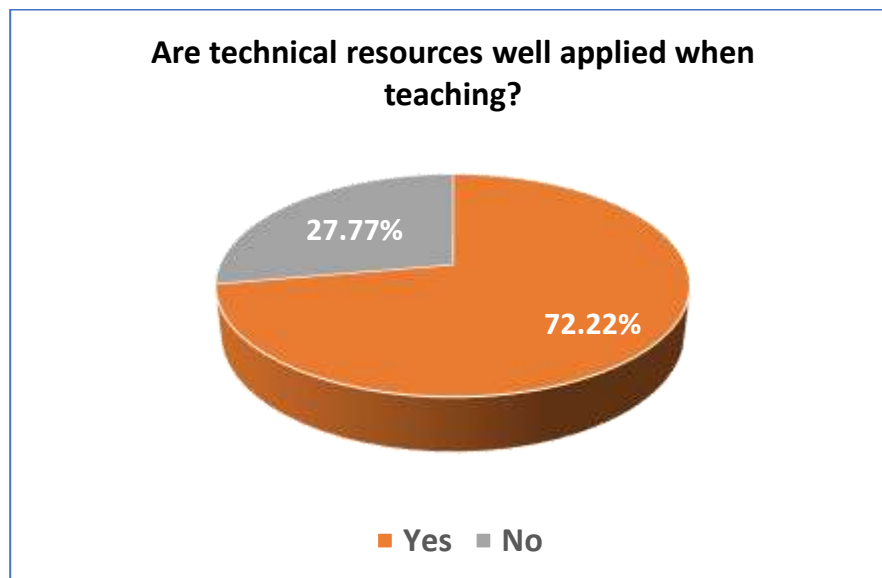
*Do you prefer teaching material to be printed or digital?*



100% of the surveyed students consider it would be valuable if they could have the topics seen in class in digital format.

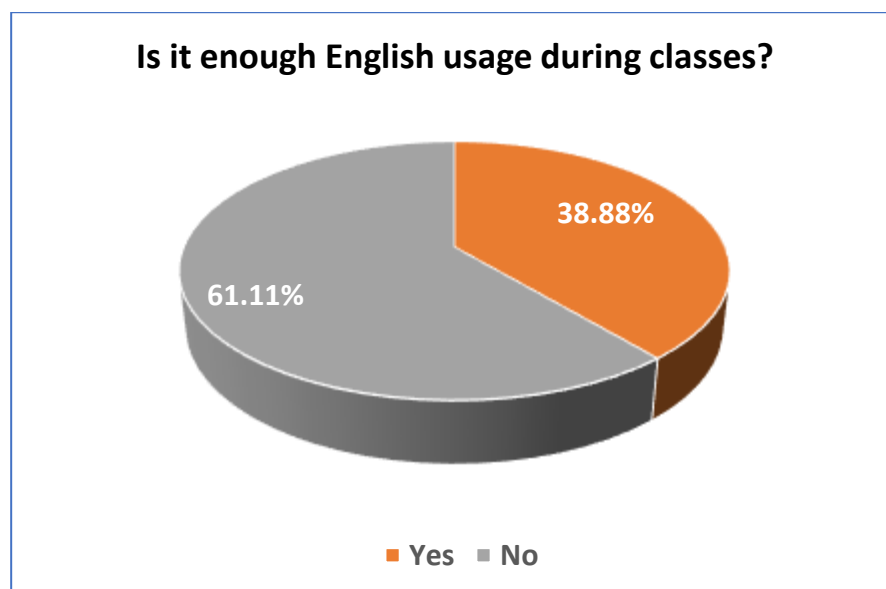
f) Graph 6

*Technical resources*



g) Graph 7

*English usage*



As conclusion, after observing and analyzing the questionnaire output, it was evident that even though students are getting ready to work in service centers in English, they do not speak English in class. Moreover, almost 45% of the population consider the contents seen in class are not meaningful, so they will not help them when facing real situations at work.

#### **4.1.3. Checklist No. 1**

##### *4.1.3.1. Description of the instrument*

During third quarter, Executive Service Centers program was focused on using the appropriate linguistic tools to communicate in English with others at the company (company furniture, equipment and tools).

As part of students' extra class work, they were asked to give a presentation about how their dreamed office would be by using the vocabulary seen in class before (without a minimum). That presentation was assigned by their professor and it would last about 3 minutes.

Content – Office supplies (some examples)

- Paper clip
- Pushpin
- Binder clip
- Rubber band
- Staples
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Whiteboard markers
- Post-it note pad
- File folder
- Drawer
- File cabinet
- Wastebasket

Since it was an individual activity, students did their presentation one by one following the order of the list. The checklist applied evaluated the number of office supplies used correctly. Besides that, it assessed oral performance, focused on pronunciation.

Criteria applied are shown below:

a) Content-examples given

It was graded from the number of office supplies mentioned during their presentation. The objective was to use as many examples as possible.

<b>Examples Given</b>	
<b>Number</b>	<b>Output</b>
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

b) Pronunciation

It was graded from the number of pronunciation mistakes made during their presentation. The objective was to make as few pronunciation errors as possible.

<b>Pronunciation Mistakes</b>	
<b>Number</b>	<b>Output</b>
0	Excellent
From 1 to 2	Very Good
From 3 to 4	Good
From 5 to 6	Needs work
More than 6	Poor

#### 4.1.3.2. Analysis of the output

The assessment was applied to 22 students. The average time of presentations corresponded to 1.30 minutes per students (less time than required). On the other hand, students applied an average of 3 basic office supplies during their presentations (pen, book, eraser, scissors, notebook, pencil, stapler) which demonstrated that they did not learn most of the new vocabulary seen in class.

Finally, even though they had the chance to practice their presentation at home, 91% of the assessed students read the whole presentation (just two of them did it without reading anything)

The group average results were:

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Category</b>
Examples Given	3	Needs Work
Pronunciation Mistakes	4	Good Performance

A summary chart is provided below:

a) Chart 1

*Oral presentation – office supplies*

Office Supplies - Oral Presentation		
Student	Examples Given	Pronunciation Mistakes
Student 1	3	5
Student 2	4	2
Student 3	2	3
Student 4	2	5
Student 5	3	4
Student 6	2	5
Student 7	3	5
Student 8	2	3
Student 9	2	2
Student 10	4	7
Student 11	2	4
Student 12	3	2
Student 13	3	4
Student 14	3	3
Student 15	2	3
Student 16	2	5
Student 17	2	3
Student 18	3	4
Student 19	2	3
Student 20	2	3
Student 21	3	1
Student 22	3	4
<b>Average</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Output</b>	<b>Needs work</b>	<b>Good</b>

Examples Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

Pronunciation Mistakes	
Number	Output
0	Excellent
From 1 to 2	Very Good
From 3 to 4	Good
From 5 to 6	Needs work
More than 6	Poor

Even though group performance ranged from “Needs work” to “Good”, that output was not real since 91% of students read what they had to present. Additionally, they did not step outside the comfort zone because the vocabulary applied was the basic, what made the researcher think that the learning was not meaningful at all. For this reason, situational language teaching strategies will be applied, to highlight an improvement for next oral presentation.

## 4.2. Second stage – SLT strategies

### 4.2.1. Drilling

#### 4.2.1.1. Content:

- Paper clip
- Pushpin
- Binder clip
- Rubber band
- Staples
- Glue stick
- Scissors
- Stapler
- Whiteboard markers
- Post-it note pad
- File folder
- Drawer
- File cabinet
- Wastebasket

#### 4.2.1.2. Activities

##### a) Drilling with choral repetition

With this method students were asked to repeat the vocabulary given after the professor. They had to do it loudly, so that it was possible to check the correct pronunciation as a group. It was essential to ensure the whole group repeat together from the first drill; otherwise, it had been a mess, some students joining in, others not. Monotony was broken up by changing the speed, so the students changed their answers accordingly. The students were alert at all time because they did not know if they were going to be called individually.

#### b) Drilling with flashcards

After drilling with choral repetition, students did it by looking at flashcards. It helped them practice not only by words, but also with images. It started by drilling words; later, the images were shown. Since the cards were flipped at different rates, students could practice the corresponding vocabulary in a dynamic way.

#### c) Drilling in pairs

When becoming more familiar with the target vocabulary, the students worked on a drilling activity in which they had to test their classmates' comprehension in pairs. Student A read the definition of a word, and student B guessed the word based on what was heard. It followed a random order, and words that were not told properly were the ones most asked.

#### d) Drilling individually

Finally, drilling one by one was the highest level based on the students' confidence. Each student repeated individually in order, it means moving in one direction round the class, so they were completely sure when their turn was. After that, the professor selected the students randomly to repeat, so it caught their attention from start to finish.

#### *4.2.1.3. Analysis of the output*

Since the students had never done that method before, they were ashamed, and did not take it seriously at the beginning. As time passed on, they started laughing and learning at the same time. It requires 10 minutes as a maximum, and sometimes choral repetition was needed to continue with the other strategies taken into consideration in the other classes. As a result, they learned all the words and their corresponding meanings, they started using them without any effort during role-plays and other oral activities.

### **4.2.2. Chunks**

#### *4.2.2.1. Content*

- I mean
- A couple of

- You know what I mean
- I don't know if
- As a matter of fact
- Do you want (me) (to)
- To be honest with you
- I don't think
- Let's see
- I see what you mean but
- By the way
- As I was saying
- As far as I know
- Take a seat

#### *4.2.2.2. Activities*

##### a) Reading

When considering how difficult is making sense of what is read when it is done faster, students started by reading word by word. The first stories and articles selected were very easy materials, so that they would not need to translate English words to Spanish because they would understand the whole text without a dictionary. As their reading speeded up, slowly increased the difficulty of what they read.

At this point gaining fluency and avoiding pronunciation mistakes were crucial. This practice let them make sense about what they read and went beyond words, paying attention to chunks without knowing what they were exactly.

##### b) Reading and listening

Some easy conversations were played, so that they could hear and see their print version at the same time. They were asked to underline everything that looked like a set expression in the transcripts. At the end, chunks are the commoner words, not specialized vocabulary. By applying these kind of activities, they started developing that sense of what “chunking” was without any extra effort.

### c) Drilling

Drilling chunks seen before provided students the opportunity to start memorizing them. It helped them remind those words when needed, so they became more confidence progressively.

### d) Oral practice

Once that the students drilled enough, they were asked to work on oral activities in which they applied the chunks practiced through drilling previously. Those practices were done during the last period of each class (40 minutes approximately).

#### *4.2.2.3. Analysis of the output*

Since Situational Language Teaching begins with the spoken language, the content was taught orally before being presented in written form. As a matter of fact, the students were the ones in charge of identifying what the chunks were. A list of chunks that could eventually work on role-plays were taught by drilling (listed above). They were asked to start using at least two of them daily, during and out of classes. As a result, students became competitive and challenged each other to use them during discussions in class. By applying new chunks of vocabulary learned, rather than the same phrases, the students looked more comfortable what created an improvement regarding English fluency.

### **4.2.3. Meaningful Contexts**

#### *4.2.3.1. Content*

- Interviews
- Office experiences
- Asking and giving information
- Customer type
- Conflict resolution

#### *4.2.3.2. Activity*

The students are preparing themselves to work on an office environment. They will have to offer an excellent customer service to all their potential clients. For this reason, two whole lessons per week were set for put into practice some scenarios that they could cope

with in the future. They presented those situations orally, so that they could develop soft skills needed, and improve their English proficiency.

#### *4.2.3.3. Analysis of the output*

At this point, students were comfortable with activities like role-plays. At the beginning, it was completely hard; in fact, it was impossible with some students; however, once that they got new tools (vocabulary and chunks related with their specialty) it was easy for them to show real language in real contexts.

### **4.2.4. Feedback**

#### *4.2.4.1. Content*

- Targeted
- Specific
- Timely

#### *4.2.4.2. Activity*

Since the first class applying SLT strategies, students received targeted, specific and timely feedback. They were congratulated for their strengths publicly; moreover, they received it when they made a mistake regarding pronunciation. The correct pronunciation was given and after that, the students were asked to repeat it loudly until they did it correctly.

#### *4.2.4.3. Analysis of the output*

At the beginning, it was hard for the students to embrace it because they were not used to it. As time passed on, they became adapted to this practice. In general terms, it seemed to be productive; however, sometimes the younger students behaved resistant to change.

### 4.3. Third stage – Analysis of results

#### 4.3.1. Checklist No. 2

##### 4.4.1.1. Description of the instrument

Once that students received some new tools to put into practice the objectives of third quarter 2017, a practice before the exam was done without notice to make sure how meaningful their learning was.

<b>Contents</b>	
<b>Office Supplies</b>	<b>Chunks</b>
Paper clip	I mean
Pushpin	A couple of
Binder clip	You know what I mean
Rubber band	I don't know if
Staples	As a matter of fact
Glue stick	Do you want (me) (to)
Scissors	To be honest with you
Stapler	I don't think
Whiteboard Markers	Let's see
Post-it note pad	I see what you mean but
File folder	By the way
Drawer	As I was saying
File cabinet	As far as I know
Wastebasket	Take a seat

They worked in pairs on a role-play. They were asked to interact in a conversation related to purchase orders. To achieve this, they had five minutes to get a clear idea about role-playing for 3 minutes. They were free to write a script; however, as soon as those minutes passed, they could not have anything on their desk. All the attention must have been on their classmates' presentation.

Since it was a pair activity, students did their presentation group by group following the order of the list. The checklist applied evaluated the number of office supplies and chunks used correctly. Besides that, it assessed oral performance, focused on pronunciation.

Criteria applied are shown below:

a) Content-examples given

It was graded from the number of office supplies mentioned during their presentation. The objective was to use as many examples as possible.

Examples Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

b) Chunks given

It was graded from the number of chunks applied during their presentation. The objective was to use as many chunks as possible.

Examples Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

c) Pronunciation

It was graded from the number of pronunciation mistakes made during their presentation. The objective was to make as few pronunciation errors as possible.

Pronunciation Mistakes	
Number	Output
0	Excellent
From 1 to 2	Very Good
From 3 to 4	Good
From 5 to 6	Needs work
More than 6	Poor

#### 4.4.1.2. Analysis of the output

The checklist was applied to 16 students, 7 students were absent. The following conclusions were reached:

First, the average time of presentations corresponded to 3.5 minutes per pair (they had to spend the available time no matter how). Second, Students applied an average of 8 office supplies during their presentations, which demonstrated that they applied more than 50% of the vocabulary reviewed in class with SLT strategies. Additionally, students took advantage of chunks at least in 5 times.

Finally, since they did not have enough time to prepare a script, most of them decided not to spend this valuable time preparing a script, they just thought of the sequence of the presentation. At the end, just two pairs went to the front with pieces of paper, and they were the ones who ran out of ideas faster. In general terms, just a 25% of the assessed students used some notes as a resource while role-playing.

The group average results were:

Criterion	Quantity	Category
Examples Given	8	Very Good Performance
Chunks Given	5	Good Performance
Pronunciation Mistakes	5	Needs Work

## a) Chart 2

*Role play – Work environment*

Office Supplies - Role Play			
Students	Examples Given	Chunks Given	Pronunciation Mistakes
Pair 1	7	5	5
Pair 2	10	6	7
Pair 3	6	3	4
Pair 4	7	4	3
Pair 5	8	5	5
Pair 6	7	4	3
Pair 7	9	7	6
Pair 8	10	5	3
<b>Average</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Output</b>	<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Work</b>

Examples Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

Chunks Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

Pronunciation Mistakes	
Number	Output
0	Excellent
From 1 to 2	Very Good
From 3 to 4	Good
From 5 to 6	Needs work
More than 6	Poor

There was an improvement regarding the examples given when comparing the first oral presentation against the evaluated role-play (it went from “needs work” to “very good” performance). On the other hand, students tended to make more mistakes in that second opportunity; however, it was considered a normal behavior since 75% of the students performed without any previous rehearsal (91% of students read what they had to present during first assessment). The best output identified was that the students applied the vocabulary and chunks learned in class, so learning process was meaningful for them. In this sense, situational language teaching strategies helped them to improve when

## **CHAPTER V**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

## **5.1. Conclusions**

The purpose of the research was to put into practice a series of strategies related to Situational Language Teaching for improving oral skills. It includes, analyzing the behaviors of the students when implementing those activities, if they embraced the change or not, and if those strategies lead to the expected improvement.

One of the major conclusions after this research is that having had the opportunity to constantly monitor students' feelings was a valuable experience. Students need to feel comfortable with the contents seen, have the opportunity of receiving timely feedback, and know what their improvements are, to reinforce the remaining areas of improvements.

Conclusions are listed below:

### **5.1.1. Identifying the key principles of situational language teaching.**

It can be concluded that after applying a questionnaire and making an initial observation, it was evident the necessity of applying new techniques when teaching, techniques capable of awakening the interest in first grade students.

Language teaching began with the spoken language; material was taught orally before being presented in written form. By doing that, students had the opportunity to identify the contents without any printed document. Additionally, as mentioned by Vasquez (2005) "the adult will have motives, reasons or interest in participating in an educational activity if this activity is useful personally, professionally, socially or if it simply makes him or her happy" (p. 69) students gained confidence because all vocabulary selected and practiced through day-to-day life conversations, ensured a direct relation between it and the context of the classroom, which included office environment situations.

As conclusion, new language points were introduced and practiced situationally. Students learned useful words in the target language for talking about known concepts in real life situations. It confirmed Nagaraj's posture (2014) that states "The approach suggests that any language item, whether it be a structure or a word, should not be presented in isolation. It has to be introduced and practiced in a context, situationally" (p. 14).

### **5.1.2. Applying a series of situational language teaching strategies to improve students' oral performance.**

By using drilling strategies, it was possible to conclude that it helped students' English proficiency. At the beginning, it was hard for them to take it seriously because they had never experienced that before, but as time went on, they started focusing in the different strategies given.

The researcher applied those strategies from simpler to complex. At the end, students did it individually without any inconvenient, considering that they started doing it as a group, what gave them confidence enough to do it by themselves, one by one.

What was observed with this is that drilling could be implemented in diverse ways being useful any way. When changing the dynamic of this activity, the students were more engaged to go to the next level; they felt challenged, so it made them improve their performance.

Additionally, it was detected that the usage of chunks helped students increase their fluency while speaking; recalling chunks were easier than learning words in isolation, so it cooperated with their oral performance as they were implemented in activities held in class.

Finally, it was observed that timely feedback given to the students during the learning process increased learning and improved outcomes. It supported Nunan's statement (2007) who considered that "unlike reading or writing, speaking happens in real time you must provide an answer to what is said. Besides, when speaking, the learner does not have the chance to revise and edit as in writing." (p. 87).

Delivered feedbacks guided the students in their learning process and gave them the direction they needed to reach the goal of each lesson. The most important aspect about it is that feedback sent a message to the students that the professor really cared about their performance. Lastly, it allowed students to become more engaged and involved in the classroom.

### **5.1.3. Analyzing the output once that the strategies have been implemented.**

It can be said that according to the results from the checklists applied, it was evident oral performance improvements in first grader students. They could express themselves freely because they learned that feedback was part of the learning process, so they should not feel ashamed for any mistake.

Moreover, they increased their vocabulary as drilling practices were applied. It helped students notice the appropriate way of pronouncing words or phrases what made them develop language competence. Besides that, it provided an opportunity for learners to get immediate feedback on their accuracy. According to the data analysis related to the second checklist, students improved their vocabulary usage in almost 200%.

Finally, chunks were essential to improve oral performance. As soon as students started using chunks, they gained fluency because the words in memorized chunks fit together well. By implementing chunks, it was possible to confirm that they were easily stored in their memories, so it contributed to recreate the language when doing oral activities.

In conclusion, data from this study supported all the recommendations given by the authors presented at the beginning of this investigation; the results provided enough evidence about the existent relation between the quantity of words used by the students and their oral production. Nonetheless, by analyzing all the output deeply, it seems that students over 25 years were the most benefit people when applying SLT strategies mentioned before.

Since writing & reading skills were not part of this research, it was not confirmed the fact argued by Richards & Rodgers (2014) “After being involved in oral practices, the students will be able to have the necessary knowledge to express what they have learned in a written way” (p. 128).

## 5.2. Recommendations

According to the research done regarding Situational Language Teaching and some of its strategies, the researcher has reached several recommendations.

First, teachers should carefully select and organize appropriate contents based on the students' context (executive service centers specialty). By doing this, the students would have not only the possibility of being knowledgeable about topics related, but also getting technical expertise about them, by dealing with real-life situations they could cope with at work.

Second, it is advisable to teachers to start the learning process with the target language. It means that all material should be presented orally before being taught in a written way; It would help students strive to obtain a deeper analysis when seeking answers by themselves. As a result, learning will be meaningful.

On the other hand, professors should keep on taking advantage of drilling to increase new vocabulary. It is highly recommended to set aside at least 10 minutes daily for drilling, to introduce or reinforce vocabulary. When students get familiar with it, professors should substitute this practice with warm-up activities related at the beginning of each class.

Additionally, chunks should be introduced by drilling. Once that students are aware of them, it is advisable to teachers to ask for them in any oral activity. While it is true that chunks are essential to sound as native speakers, they must be recall as many times as possible.

Finally, feedback is essential. It is highly recommended to give it in a timely manner to keep it effective. When drilling and chunking, it is advisable to professors to do the necessary corrections as soon as possible. When role-playing, professors should keep their feedback until the end of the class, so that the students can express themselves freely in less controlled situations.

### Suggestions for future research

- It would be advisable to verify how SLT strategies improve reading and writing skills. Theory states that after being involved in oral practices, students are capable to express what they have learned in a written way properly; however, it had not been proved.
- Since the strategies applied in classes were more productive in students over 25 years, it would be useful to research about some other techniques that could eventually help younger students to improve their oral performance.

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## Annexes

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### Encuesta

1. Seleccione su género
  - Femenino
  - Masculino
  
2. Seleccione el rango de su edad
  - Menos de 18
  - De 18-25
  - De 25-35
  - 35 o más
  
3. ¿Cuál es su nivel de satisfacción con la especialidad Ejecutivo para Centros de Servicios?
  - Muy satisfecho
  - Satisfecho
  - Neutral
  - Insatisfecho
  - Muy insatisfecho
  
4. ¿Considera usted que los contenidos del curso son significativos?
  - Sí
  - No
  
5. ¿Cuál tipo de material didáctico prefiere?
  - Impreso
  - Digital
  
6. ¿Se aprovecha el recurso tecnológico para impartir lecciones?
  - Sí
  - No
  
7. ¿Considera que la práctica del idioma inglés es suficiente?
  - Sí
  - No

## Speech Feedback Form – Checklist No. 1

Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College – Executive Service Centers X

Student name:

Topic:

Timing:

Criterion	Below Expectations	Approaches Expectations		Meets Expectations	
	Poor	Needs Work	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Examples Given	Vocabulary use is limited, repetitive, and/or mostly incorrect; word knowledge competency for this level is minimal. (1-2)	Vocabulary use is adequate and appropriate for this level; errors do not distract from listener understanding. (3-6)		Vocabulary use and word knowledge exhibits an extensive range with few errors that do not distract from listener understanding. (7 and even more)	
Pronunciation Mistakes	Pronunciation interrupted the flow of the presentation; mostly inaccurate. (7 and even more)	Pronunciation mostly accurate; errors did not distract from understanding. (3-6)		Pronunciation nearly perfect. (0-2)	

*Taken and modified from CCCN*

(see comments on the back)

Examples Given	Pronunciation Mistakes	Observations
Total:	Total:	

Examples Given	
Number	Output
9 and even more	Excellent
From 7 to 8	Very Good
From 5 to 6	Good
From 3 to 4	Needs work
From 1 to 2	Poor

Pronunciation Mistakes	
Number	Output
0	Excellent
From 1 to 2	Very Good
From 3 to 4	Good
From 5 to 6	Needs work
More than 6	Poor

## Speech Feedback Form – Checklist No. 2

Carlos Luis Fallas Technical College – Executive Service Centers X

Students' names:

Topic:

Timing:

Criterion	Below Expectations	Approaches Expectations		Meets Expectations	
	Poor	Needs Work	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Examples Given	Vocabulary use is limited, repetitive, and/or mostly incorrect; word knowledge competency for this level is minimal. (1-2)	Vocabulary use is adequate and appropriate for this level; errors do not distract from listener understanding. (3-6)		Vocabulary use and word knowledge exhibits an extensive range with few errors that do not distract from listener understanding. (7 and even more)	
Chunks Given	Vocabulary use is limited, repetitive, and/or mostly incorrect; word knowledge competency for this level is minimal. (1-2)	Vocabulary use is adequate and appropriate for this level; errors do not distract from listener understanding. (3-6)		Vocabulary use and word knowledge exhibits an extensive range with few errors that do not distract from listener understanding. (7 and even more)	
Pronunciation Mistakes	Pronunciation interrupted the flow of the presentation; mostly inaccurate. (7 and even more)	Pronunciation mostly accurate; errors did not distract from understanding. (3-6)		Pronunciation nearly perfect. (0-2)	

*Taken and modified from CCCN*

(see comments on the back)

