

"Marta Abreu" de Las Villas Central University

Faculty of Secondary Level Teacher Education

Foreign Languages Department



MAJOR PAPER

Title: "THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS IN 8TH GRADE STUDENTS

AT "ROLANDO PEDROSA FERNÁNDEZ" SECONDARY SCHOOL "

Author: Anniel Hernández Manduca

Adviser: MSc. Sirelda García Cabrera

Academic Course: 2016-2017

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

My special thanks to Dr. C. Esperanza Lucía Guelmes Valdés who gave me her invaluable advice and help for the best realization of this paper. She made that doing this research were an easier task, and she gave me the strength to go on working more and more everyday.

I would love to express my gratitude to Ada Cristina Rodríguez Carpio, because without her support I had not been able to work on this paper.

*If I have forgotten to mention anyone within this page, please, be all included in these deep and true **THANKS**.*

DEDICATION

To my father and my brother for being there whenever I need them and especially, to my dear grandmother who always offered me her support and now she is watching me from heaven.

ABSTRACT

This major paper carried out a deep research into the theory of the communicative language teaching of English in the present Cuban Secondary Schools, specifically in the development of the speaking skills in the English language in eighth grade. The students from this level at the end of the grade should communicate by themselves in brief and simple messages about personal life and their preferences according to the Cuban context. The teaching of English in the Secondary School helps the students to develop communicative skills that allow them to be able to understand and assimilate the language, and to communicate among them in a simple way. This research was carried out at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School in Báez, Placetas, where the author works, and for the effects of this research a study group was used, which served for the diagnosis and for the development of the building-up process. To carry out this research different instruments and techniques were administered. The practical implementation of some communicative exercises to develop the speaking skills in eighth grade students was carried out and it showed positive results in the students, attaining the objectives for what they were originally designed. Taking into account the elements previously explained, a complementary manual was designed to gather all the exercises that were created throughout the academic course to help the students to put into practice the contents learned in classes. This work consists of six parts: Introduction, Main Part, Conclusions, Recommendations, Bibliography and Annexes.

El siguiente trabajo investigativo llevó a cabo una investigación profunda en la teoría sobre la enseñanza comunicativa del inglés como lengua extranjera en las escuelas secundarias básicas cubanas actualmente, específicamente en el desarrollo de las habilidades de expresión oral en la lengua inglesa en los estudiantes de 8vo grado. Los estudiantes de este nivel al finalizar el curso deben comunicarse por ellos mismos mediante mensajes cortos y simples acerca de su vida personal y sus preferencias de acuerdo al contexto cubano. La enseñanza del inglés en Secundaria Básica ayuda a los estudiantes a desarrollar habilidades comunicativas que le permitan ser capaces de entender y asimilar el idioma, y comunicarse por ellos mismos de forma sencilla.

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en la escuela secundaria “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” del poblado de Báez, municipio de Placetas. Para los efectos de esta investigación se utilizó un grupo de estudio, en el cual trabaja el autor, que sirvió tanto para el diagnóstico como para el posterior desarrollo del proceso de construcción. Para llevar a cabo esta investigación diferentes instrumentos y técnicas fueron utilizados teniendo en cuenta los diferentes métodos. La implementación práctica de algunos ejercicios comunicativos para desarrollar las habilidades de expresión oral en los estudiantes de 8vo grado fue llevada a cabo y esta mostró resultados positivos, alcanzando los objetivos para los que fueron originalmente diseñados. Teniendo en cuenta los elementos explicados previamente fue creado un manual complementario para recopilar todos esos ejercicios que fueron creados en la práctica a través del curso escolar para ayudar a los estudiantes a poner en práctica los contenidos aprendidos en clases. Este trabajo consiste de seis partes: Introducción, Desarrollo, Conclusiones, Recomendaciones, Bibliografía y Anexos.

QUOTATION

“A lot of knowledge in any kind of an organization is what we call task knowledge. These are things that people who have been there a long time understand as important, but they may not know how to talk about them. It's often called the culture of the organization.”

Howard Gardner

Introduction	1
Main Part	
1. Theoretical-methodological considerations.....	6
1.1 Historical antecedents	6
1.2 The Communicative Language Teaching Approach	8
1.3 The Teaching-Learning Process of English as a Foreign Language	11
1.4 Reasons to learn English in Cuba	13
1.5 The teaching of speaking skills	13
1.6 Objectives for the teaching for the teaching of English in the Secondary School	17
1.6.1 The teaching of speaking skills in 8 th grade	18
2. Needs assessment.....	18
2.1 Methods used to carry out the Needs Assessment	19
2.1.1 Characterization of the study group	20
2.2 Results of the Needs Assessment carried out.....	20
2.3 Regularities	22
3. Building-up process.....	23
3.1 Description of the building-up process	23
3.2 Results of the implementation of the exercises	32
3.3 Foundations of the scientific result	32
3.3.1 Characteristics of the complementary manual proposed as scientific result	34
Conclusions	
Recommendations	
Bibliography	
Annexes	

Learning languages at present has become, more than ever, an important tool to communicate and interact with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. (Enríquez O’Farrill; 2016:1) For that reason the Cuban government has always acknowledged the importance of learning foreign languages. In several occasions the leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, had referred to the importance and need to learn languages. In September 2000, he stated that learning English was one of the goals of the educational and cultural transformations that were taking place in the society. On March 15th, 2001, a year later, in his speech at the graduation Ceremony of the Primary School Teacher Training College he referred to the importance of learning English by the Cuban population and stated that students should begin learning English in elementary school. Consequently, the teaching of English in Cuba starts in third grade in primary school and goes through secondary, high school and higher education.

The goal of language learning and language teaching should emphasize not only on functional proficiency in a variety of situations, but also as a means to enlarge the students' culture, knowledge of school subjects and other curricular or non-curricular contents, and above all as a life skill, which is indispensable in contemporary times.

It is also important to remark that the focus of the teaching of English in Cuba has been on communicative competence, which is a high-level concept that implies according to Font, Sergio (2006) “an individual’s performance in his verbal and non-verbal activity in real communicative situations involving the interaction between two or more people, or between one person and an aural or written text, in correspondence with a given social context.” It means, therefore, to use the foreign language to perform real-life tasks, to share ideas, to get information, to enhance culture and to reinforce the knowledge acquired and the skills developed in other school subjects.

Traditionally, the processes of reading, listening, writing, and speaking were isolated when teaching. It has been difficult to break that tendency. Today the purpose is to create learning environments that demonstrate the interdependence and integration of these four language skills. They also need to develop all of their language abilities through the use of varied modes and technologies. Nevertheless, if you interview people who are interested in learning English, they usually say that what they want is

to speak in the foreign language. It is because speaking is generally thought to be the most important of the four skills. Although this has been a controversial issue in language teaching, something that cannot be denied or refuted is that developing speaking skills is an ultimate goal in foreign language teaching in the elementary levels, as for example secondary education.

In order to improve the teaching and learning process of this communicative skill in Secondary Schools, many research papers have been carried out by the students and the staff of the Foreign Language Department. In 2004 as part of the process of transformation in the educational System the English syllabuses were improved, new workbooks and teaching materials were created.

Nevertheless, there were still some difficulties in the development of speaking skills that the author of this paper had observed empirically. During the exploratory stage of this research it could be verified that the students from Class 8th B at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" Secondary School are not able to speak using the grammatical structures and the vocabulary in a correct way and they have some pronunciation and intonation difficulties that do not allow them to establish a fluent and comprehensible conversation.

This motivated him to carry out his term paper in the fourth year of his studies with the purpose of finding out a possible solution to these problems. The situation identified in practice was explored. A revision of other papers related to the object of study of this paper was carried out and it could be verified that, although many authors have referred to what the speaking skills in English as a foreign language are, their points of view differ or do not correspond exactly with the ones of the author of this paper. As a result of the term paper some exercises were proposed to strengthen the speaking skills in English in the students from Class 8th B at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" and apply some of them.

It is evident that there is a contradiction among the lack of skills that the students from Class 8th B at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" Secondary School have to express by themselves orally in English and the elements presented before. Taking into account the previously explained, the following **scientific problem** comes into question: How to contribute to the development of the speaking skills in the English subject in 8th grade students at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" Secondary School?

Since the **object of study** is the teaching-learning process of English, the **field of action** is defined as: the development of speaking skills in 8th grade.

In correspondence with the scientific problem, the **objective** is to build-up a scientific result to contribute to the development of the speaking skills in 8th grade students at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School.

Scientific questions:

- 1- What theoretical-methodological considerations support the development of the speaking skills in the English language?
- 2- What is the real situation of students’ speaking skills in Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School?
- 3- What changes could be introduced to develop the speaking in the students from Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School?
- 4- What went well and did not go well during the building-up process?
- 5- What were the transformations that occurred in terms of students’ speaking skills in Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School throughout the exercises given?
- 6- What was the scientific result achieved throughout the building-up process?

In order to accomplish the objective of this paper some important **scientific tasks** were carried out:

- 1- Establishment of the theoretical-methodological considerations that support the development of the speaking skills in the English language in 8th grade students at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School.
- 2- Diagnosis of the real situation in terms of students’ speaking skills in Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School.
- 3- Implementation of the changes that were introduced to develop the speaking in the students from Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School.
- 4- Evaluation of what went well and did not go well during the building-up process.
- 5- Evaluation of the transformations that occurred in terms of students’ speaking skills in Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School throughout the exercises given.
- 6- Proposal of the scientific result that emerged from the building-up process.

For the purpose of this study, different scientific methods were applied. Thus, from the **theoretical methods**, the research follows:

Analytic-synthetic: it was used during the study of the problematic situation and the study of different sources containing information about the development of speaking skills in the students and in the selection of the necessary information to understand it.

Historical-logical: it was used to evaluate the antecedents, evolution and tendencies of the problem declared in this study.

Inductive-deductive: It was used to operate with the results of the research at its different stages, so as to make generalizations about the development of speaking skills in English.

From the **empirical methods**, on the other hand, the following methods were used:

Document Analysis: it allowed the researcher to collect the necessary information from the workbook and the syllabus of the English subject in 8th grade.

Survey: it allowed knowing the students' opinion about the development of the speaking skills throughout the exercises in the English lessons.

Observation: it helped to corroborate the weaknesses foreseen by the researcher in the practice.

Pedagogical Test: to assess students' level of development in the speaking skills before and after the implementation of the exercises to help to the validation of the research.

Triangulation: to determine the regularities obtained after the application of the methods explained before.

Methods from the Statistic-Mathematical Level:

Percentage analysis: to process the information obtained from the application of the instruments before and after the implementation of the exercises.

Practical contributions

The significance and innovation of this paper lies on the design of a complementary manual with some communicative exercises aimed at improving students' speaking skills within the teaching-learning process of English in 8th grade. This statement is

based on the fact that students will be encouraged to improve their skills in the target language in a motivating way, and they, as well, will consciously attain communicative competence by going through these tasks following a qualitative paradigm.

Structure of the paper

This paper is structured in six parts: Introduction, Main Part, Conclusions, Recommendations, Bibliography and Annexes.

1. *Theoretical-methodological considerations*

1.1 Historical antecedents

The teaching of a foreign language is a very difficult task that many teachers of Cuban schools try to carry out successfully. Through the Cuban history there have been many attempts to create methods that would help the students to acquire the language more easily. However, many of them were based on sentences patterns repetition and in the reproductive learning until the students were familiarized with the contents.

A big quantity of this kind of practice was necessary to carry out this objective, more than the teacher could provide in the classroom. It was asked to the students to remember conjugations as well as to translate from English to Spanish and the other way around. This implied that the teaching of the language was seen like a mechanical process of formation of habits. While the exercises that students were accomplishing were based on a carefully study of the language structures taught, too little or nothing was taught about it.

When the Cuban Revolution triumphed in 1959 the teaching of English in Cuba inherited the structuralism and the behaviorism present in these methods. Among the methods used in the Secondary Education was the audiovisual one which was introduced in the Cuban teaching in the 60's. Taking into account the poor results that this method provided to the learning and its poor contribution to the students' formation from the educative point of view in correspondence to objectives of our educational system, the textbooks from this method were substituted.

New textbooks and workbooks of English for Secondary Schools with subject matters and situations of our social context were made in Cuba due to the educational development carried out among the years 1975 and 1989. Those books were based on the principles of the Soviet conscious practical method, which emphasized on a receptive learning of language. In unusual occasions it was asked to students to produce oral texts or articles due to the limited time, the students' quantity in the classrooms and the insufficient communicative competitive level that many teachers possessed.

At that time, the teaching of languages in the Cuban Secondary Education contemplated traditionally methods focused more on the development of a concrete ability and on the achievement of linguistic competence as a goal in the learning of language.

Therefore, the teaching of English as a foreign language whose objectives and methodology were focused on the correct use of the language, on teaching grammar, constituted an obstacle for the achievement of the students' communicative competence. A new conception was in need of the teaching of language directed to make an easier learning that implies not only the correct use of structures rather propitiates fundamentally, the ability to use them with communicative and real purposes. The courses of English through the television for students of Secondary Schools began in 2000. These had a communicative methodological conception, although they were presenting difficulties at the time of their application in the educational practice.

Starting from the course 2003-2004, the English video class for Secondary Schools was introduced and its conception exceeded the limitations of the TV lessons taking into account its practical application. The video classes gave the students the possibility to watch interactions between English native speakers and it propitiated to follow an ideal model. They also allowed the teachers to be more efficient, it means, to teach a huge quantity of contents in a little period of time, and in this way to take the students to different places and to the more amazing situations that they could see in their daily life. However, these lessons did not guarantee the leading role of the students as to the learning of English language. In order to achieve that purpose, it was necessary that teachers, consciously, used them in correspondence with their students' specific characteristics, guaranteeing the necessary communicative interaction teacher-student and student-student.

In order to achieve this interaction it was necessary the adaptation of existent exercises and the creation of other ones that guaranteed the active and creative appropriation by the students, not only of the contents, but also of cultural, historical and social experiences, propitiating the development of their constant perfection, their autonomy and self-determination.

1.2 The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach

Communicative Language Teaching is **internationally recognized as the principle approach in language education** because it focuses on language as a medium of communication. It is the methodological conception adopted in Cuba in ELT. (Font, Sergio, 2016:82)

It is generally regarded as an approach to language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). As such, CLT reflects a certain model or research paradigm, or a theory (Celce-Murcia, 2001). Following Bermello Lastra (2002) the communicative approach can be defined as a strategic and methodological conception for language teaching, which stems from considering language an instrument of cognition and communication. From perspective communication is understood as the exchange of ideas, feelings, values and attitudes and ways of behavior in human interaction.

Therefore, the primary goal of language education is that learners develop communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). In other words, its goal is to make use of real-life situations that require communication.

Classroom exercises guided by the communicative approach are characterized by trying to produce meaningful and real communication, at all levels. As a result, there may be more emphasis on skills than on systems, lessons are more learner-centered, and there may be use of authentic materials.

Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1989) stated the major distinctive features of the communicative approach which are shown below:

- ✓ Dialogs if they are used centered on communicative functions and are not normally memorized.
- ✓ Contextualization is a basic premise.
- ✓ Language learning is learning to communicate.
- ✓ Effective communication is sought.
- ✓ Any advice which helps the learners is accepted-varying according to their age, interests, etc.
- ✓ Attempts to communicate may be encouraged from the very beginning.
- ✓ Translation may be used where students need or benefit from it.

- ✓ Communicative competence is the desired goal (i.e. the skill to use the linguistic system effectively and appropriately).
- ✓ Teachers help learners in any way that motivates them to work with the language.
- ✓ Students are expected to interact with other people, either in the flesh, through pair and group work, or in their writings.
- ✓ Intrinsic motivation will spring from an interest in the structure of the language.

The communicative teaching of any foreign language has to work along with the principles of a communicative methodology. Some authors have defined these principles that should characterize the Communicative Language Teaching approach such as: Neil Naiman (1989), Keith Morrow (1982).

The Communicative Language Teaching principles defined by Professor Neil Naiman in his article “Teaching Pronunciation Communicatively” published in **Communication Journal**, INTUR, 1989, are the following:

➤ Meaningful practice beyond the sentence level

This principle instructs us that language operates at levels higher than isolated words or sentences, that language acquires meaning in context; that practice in the classroom should provide for the students to experiment with whatever bits of language they know in order to convey real communicative purposes (orally or in writing); and to process stretches of language as they occur in real life (listening and reading). This principle also has implications in terms of students’ motivation since it implies asking them to communicate and to process real meanings of language.

➤ Student-centered class

This principle claims that if students are expected to develop skills they should be given lots of opportunities to participate in pairs, in groups, and for the whole class. In other words, this principle implies that teachers should be “leaving the stage for the students to act.”

➤ Task orientation of classroom exercises

This principle is related to problem-solving teaching. It states that students should learn by solving close-to-real life tasks and problems. In real life one does not watch the news for the sake of doing it, but rather to follow up on a current issue.

➤ Development of strategies for learning beyond the classroom

This principle acknowledges the need for students to develop skills and modes of learning on their own. In other words, they should not only acquire knowledge and habits but also develop abilities, since it is impossible to teach people everything that they need to know; rather, people should be helped to be able to learn on their own.

➤ Peer correction and group work

It considers that, to help the students to develop accuracy, teachers should use feedback correction techniques. By using these techniques, students develop self-correction and self-monitoring skills. If they are able to correct their own mistakes they will certainly have the skill to correct their partners' mistakes while working in groups or pairs, and even in situations beyond the classroom.

Based on these principles Dr. Alfredo Camacho contextualized them to the Cuban Foreign Language teaching of English. According to Camacho (2003) these principles should be:

- Classes should be active and centered on students' educative needs, interests and experiences.
- Materials, tasks, exercises and resources should be chosen on the basis of educative and linguistic criteria, and should provide for learning and acquisition.
- Practice should be carried out through meaningful tasks, which engage students in thinking and activity.
- Practice should provide for strategy development.
- Students should be engaged in monitoring, self-correction and self-evaluation tasks; they must as well be asked to question and reflect on what they have learned and how they have learned it.
- Opportunities should be given to learn content from other areas of the curriculum through the medium of English.
- Practice should engage students in cross-cultural comparison.

- Classes should foster an atmosphere of co-operation and open communication among students and teacher.

The author of this paper selected the Camacho's principles because they are adapted to Cuban context and they are stated according to the actual situation that exists in the present-day Cuban Secondary Schools.

1.3 The Teaching-Learning Process of English as a Foreign Language.

With respect to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, Richards, Jack C. (2008:9) argues that following Vygotsky's views, EFL learning "...focuses on the gap between what the learner can currently do and the next stage in learning – the level of potential development – and how learning occurs through negotiation between the learner and a more advanced language user during which a process known as scaffolding occurs. To take part in these processes, the learner must develop interactional competence, the ability to manage exchanges despite limited language development. Personality, motivation, and cognitive style may all play a role in influencing the learner's willingness to take risks, his or her openness to social interaction and attitudes towards the target language and the users of the target language".

A learning of quality in foreign language is addressed to the acquisition of a communicative competence of the student as a goal that establishes the teaching-learning process of the foreign language to satisfy the demands of a competent professional nowadays. Such initiative is motivated for the permanent verification that knowing and making use of English with communicative ends is a more and more capability demanded in the competitive present-day world.

Therefore, the learning of a language must be developed in a right motivational context that requires the systematic activity in the practice of the language for part of the student that learns in interaction with others.

"The grammatical rules together with the components of the communicative competence will be acquired when language be used the more naturally possible and the emphasis be in the interchange of information. This means that the students will not think about

the structures only, but also in the act of communication. In this way they will be able to express their own ideas and interests becoming thus the centre of the teaching-learning process.” (Yalden, Yanice 1987:15)

The teacher must become the principal mediator, starting from the educational intention, structuring learning situations in which students are stimulated and they direct step by step the enlargement of the potential development zones and the transit from the external control to the internal one, individually.

Respecting this process of elaboration of new knowledge, errors will be treated as integrated and necessary part in the process of acquisition of a foreign language, the same that occurs in the mother language. The observation of regular and systematic errors that the students commit will go by being object of reflection and guiding element in the process.

This active role of the student in the teaching-learning process of English has sometimes looked stopped for the inefficient use of the correct aids in Secondary Schools. Responsibility belongs to the educators, looking for pedagogic resources that allow inserting new aids within their classrooms, getting the most possibilities that they themselves may offer for the fulfillment of the objectives of the syllabus.

All this supposes a systematic integral focus of teaching with the social and professional reality where it inserts itself, which taken to the teaching of a foreign language means to design and to plan the objectives, contents, methodology of work and evaluation of language in a way that constitutes a reflection of communication in the real world.

Therefore, the teaching of English as a foreign language, as part of the general curriculum of the Secondary School, not only must transmit linguistic knowledge, but it also must invite the students to accomplish evaluations, to express ideas and opinions, to reflect on different themes, to interact with the surrounding environment and to transform it. (Adapted from the syllabus of the English subject for the Secondary School, 2004:95)

For that reason the final purpose of the teaching-learning process of English is to contribute with the students to take possession of the habitual procedures of regulation

of their own learning activity, in such a way that they may progress with autonomy and responsibility in the acquisition of new abilities and knowledge.

1.4 Reasons to learn English in Cuba

To learn English as a foreign language is a *sine quo non* of comprehensive general culture. That is one of the reasons why English is studied in Cuba. To be able to communicate with people of other countries using English, which is the international language and a lingua franca is evidence of being an educated person, something which Cuban citizens have increasingly learned to appreciate. (Enríquez, O'farril, 2016:14)

The teaching of English in Cuba like in other countries is motivated by the increasing need for international communication in a world which is already considered a global village, because of the international interdependence of the economic, political, commercial and financial systems and processes.

Cuba offers professional services in more than 70 countries all over the world, including developed countries like Canada, New Zealand and Australia, where literacy campaigns have been successfully carried out by Cuban professors. These professionals, including doctors, nurses, engineers, sports trainers, and teachers of all subjects, usually need English as a lingua franca or the language of work.

The linguistic, communicative and intercultural skills developed through learning English in Cuba definitely opens possibilities for having access to jobs, which are economically attractive and sometimes very profitable. Besides, mastering a foreign language like English is strength for professionals who participate in international projects or temporary jobs in other countries. Mastering English in contemporary society is a life skill. (Enríquez O'farril, 2016:16)

1.5 The teaching of speaking skills

The communicative constant interaction with other individuals creates the possibility of feedback, process that does not occur adequately in the foreign language if this one does not use itself in authentic situations. The most important issue for people that study a language is to use it in diverse and different communicative situations and besides to

use it to complement the learning of other academic areas and to acquire a general integral culture.

That is why, the four abilities of language are treated in an integrated and interactive manner. The student must be incited to use the little that he/she knows about language to get in touch in couples and small groups, working in a cooperative manner, developing attitudes and moral values that they will show in his manners of performance.

The teaching of the speaking skills includes these bases and it is required that the learner does not have only knowledge on the pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary (linguistic competence), rather also requires himself to know when, why, and whereon to use language (socio-linguistic), as well as using different patterns to connect sentences or enunciates to a kind of discourse (discursive) and surpassing related limitations with these (strategic).

Cameron, (2001:19) stated that the learning of oral abilities is the form whereon the children learn to interact in the foreign language in a familiar context. For the ones that recently start off in the learning, language spoken is the midway that one knows, understand, practice and learn the new language. It is remarkable to say that the oral communication ability is more than a simple aspect of the learning; it is also the content of the learning of the new language as a primary source.

⇒ ***Reasons for teaching of speaking***

Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second-language or foreign-language learners. Learners often evaluate their success in language learning as well as the effectiveness of their English course on the basis of how much they feel they have improved in their spoken language proficiency. Oral skills have hardly been neglected in today's EFL/ESL courses.

⇒ ***What is "speaking"?***

- Speaking is: "the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts" (Chaney, 1998, p. 13).

- According to Camacho, A. (2003), speaking is the ability to use the language in a fluent way for interactive communicative purposes during the oral communication. It is the use of communicative strategies and the language domain system, expressed in students' productive capacity.
- Speaking is one of the four abilities to develop in the students. It is a productive skill that belongs to oral communication. The goal of developing speaking is oral fluency: the ability to express oneself intelligibly; that is, reasonably accurately and without too much hesitation. In the process of oral communication the speaker interacts with a listener where both change their role in the conversation (feed-back). That is to say, the speaker may become a listener and the other way around. In this interaction the speaker shows his/her understanding, he/she selects what and how to speak according to the context and where the listener does not know what the speaker is going to say. (Byrne, Donn, 1989:8)

The author of this paper is in agreement with all those definitions, but he selected Byrne's because it is the most complete concept of what speaking is.

⇒ ***What is "teaching of speaking"?***

Teaching of speaking is to teach our learners to:

- ✓ Produce the English speech sounds and sound patterns.
- ✓ Use word and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language.
- ✓ Select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter.
- ✓ Organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence.
- ✓ Use language as a means of expressing values and judgments.
- ✓ Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which are called as fluency.

To develop speaking skills, learners should be given chances of talking a lot in the classroom and outside of it, trying to find ways that allow them to work in cooperative activities such as group and pair work. The tasks and exercises assigned must be

motivating for them in terms of their learning needs and interests with respect to the learning materials, the topics of speaking and the roles they take.

⇒ ***What do speaking skills involve?***

Speaking a language involves using the components correctly – making the right sounds, choosing the right words and getting constructions grammatically correct. Pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary tasks will focus on the need for practice in language accuracy. At the same time, it is necessary to get a clear message across and this involves choosing appropriate content or ideas to suit a situation, e.g. deciding what is polite or what might appear rude, how to interrupt or how to participate in a conversation. All this involves practice in language fluency. Both types of practice are equally important, although some traditional approaches can concentrate rather too much on accuracy tasks which result in students speaking like a grammar book. (Lavery, Clare. 2001:36).

⇒ ***Stages for the teaching of speaking***

The most common model used in the teaching of speaking is called PPP model which includes presentation, controlled practice and free practice lessons. To attain the goal of developing speaking, teachers have to bring the students from the **presentation stage** (where the students understand, get familiar with or recognize the new content in a meaningful context) to the **practice stage** (where the students may be given ample opportunities to manipulate, practice or reproduce the content presented) and finally to the **production stage** (where the students can use the language freely to express their own ideas. The transition from one of these stages to another should be smooth. (García Cabrera, 2010:74)

When teaching speaking, it should be considered that the final goal is to have students be able to do something with the language they have learned. (E.g. talk about something; describe, give information, etc.). In order to take students to language production, different stages for the teaching of this skill need to take place based on the different levels of assimilation: students should first get familiar, then reproduce, then produce or create.

For the purpose of this research, it is the free practice stage where more emphasis will be given. In this stage, teachers need to make sure students have the minimum language they need to be successful at performing the task; they need to ensure that there is a purpose to the task and that students are aware of it. Teachers have to build up students' confidence "bit by bit" going from more "restricted" tasks to more spontaneous tasks. They should assess the problems produced by the language they need and the difficulties the topic or content might create, and come up with solutions to address them. This strategy should be in line with the qualitative research that is being carried out which promotes taking actions to solve the problems teachers find in the teaching-learning process.

1.6 Objectives of the teaching of English in the Secondary School

- ✓ The students should show a political and ideological formation through a social behavior and a responsible citizenship, in the interchange with their partners in the activities that they do within and out of the school where English is used.
- ✓ The students should communicate by themselves in brief and simple messages about their personal life and their preferences according to the Cuban context.
- ✓ The students should be able to compare the characteristics and qualities of the objects, places and people.
- ✓ The students should read simple texts in English and demonstrate general understanding of them through visual, oral and written tasks.
- ✓ The students should recognize known words in English in new contexts.
- ✓ The students should ask about the meaning of a word if it is necessary in order to keep communication flowing.
- ✓ The students should listen and practice the pronunciation of written words.
- ✓ The students should be able to use graphics to communicate themselves in written way.

The teaching of English in the Secondary School helps the students to develop communicative skills that allow them to be able to understand and assimilate the language, and to communicate by themselves in a simple way.

1.6.1 The teaching of speaking skills in 8th grade

"...the teaching of English should be directed to the development of a basic level of communicative competence...that is why students should be able to produce oral and written messages with interactive purposes and use communication strategies to compensate for the lack of lexical and grammatical gaps..."(Camacho, A. 2003).

The teaching of speaking in 8th grade supports the students' previous knowledge of the language and helps them to improve their communicative skills. Communicative Language Teaching Approach has the necessary tools to get the desired goal of the development of communicative competence.

In order to get a better comprehension of what was being done throughout this research the author considered necessary to treat some topics such as: reasons, features, and examples of the teaching of speaking, so as speaking skills and the different stages for the teaching of speaking, when it is used in real life situations, as well as the students' motivation to acquire the new abilities correctly and to apply their knowledge in a best learning of the English language.

2. Needs assessment

This part describes the analysis of the preliminary and the final results of the instruments and techniques administered during the diagnosis process.

Taking into account the theoretical and methodological considerations that support the teaching of speaking and the problematic situation described in the introduction of the study, three categories are identified by the author as key points to develop any analysis regarding speaking skills. The indicators analyzed to determine the needs assessment were in relation with the categories established. Next they are stated:

Categories:

Indicators:

1. Knowledge

- Students' knowledge on the English language and its application toward the

oral communication.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 2. Motivation | • Students' interests and attitudes toward the English learning and the type of activities that they prefer. |
| 3. Abilities | • Grammatical structures, pronunciation and vocabulary used by the students. |

2.1 Methods used to carry out the needs assessment:

For the purpose of this study, different scientific methods were used. From the **empirical methods**:

Document Analysis: it allowed the researcher to collect the necessary information from the workbook and the syllabus of the English subject in 8th grade. (See Annex #1)

Survey: it allowed knowing the students' opinion about the development of the speaking skills throughout the exercises in the English lessons. (See Annex #3)

Observation: it helped to corroborate the weaknesses foreseen by the researcher in the practice. (See Annex #2)

Pedagogical Test: to assess students' level of development in the speaking skills before and after the implementation of the exercises to help to the validation of the research. (See Annexes #4 and #5)

Triangulation: to determine the regularities obtained after the administration of the methods explained before.

Methods from the Statistic-Mathematical Level:

Percentage analysis: to process the information obtained from the application of the instruments before and after the implementation of the exercises.

2.1.1 Characterization of the study group:

The study group is constituted by 26 students from Class 8th B at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" Secondary School. It includes 16 girls and 10 boys. The students of this

group, in general, show low interest in learning English, they do not consider it so important, taking into account that they live in Cuba and they do not believe that the English language could help them to success in their life.

2.2 Results of the needs assessment carried out:

Document Analysis

- The 8th grade workbook
- The 8th grade syllabus

Categories for the analysis:

- Objectives stated in relation with the speaking skills.
- Methodological guidelines for the development of the speaking skills,
- Types of exercises to work with the speaking skills.

When the author of this research examined the **workbook of exercises** through the documents analysis (see Annex #1) it could be determined that the quantity of exercises per unit oscillates between 10 and 20, as regularity. However, in general, those are exercises for the practice of reading and writing abilities, so that the exercises for the oral practice of language proved to be insufficient because its quantity is between 3 and 5 unit per unit. Some of those exercises can be improved, so students can get to the production level in a more systematic way. Many of the exercises for the development of speaking skills come from the repetitive form, they do not count on with necessary orientations for the students' work, they lack communicative purposes, they are not presented within communicative situations or they have a too high level for the students, then it can be confirmed that it is necessary to create exercises that propitiate the practice of the speaking skills in the English language in the students.

The objectives and methodological guidelines of the **8th grade syllabus** are aimed at the development of the speaking skills. At least in theory, the syllabus suggests the ways to make this happen. The methodological guidelines also suggest how the communicative methodology can help students produce the language. By the way, the author of this research works with the digital version that is more updated than the book that appears at schools. In the digital version there are some changes such as:

- Unit #8 “Preparing for the Olympic Games” from the conventional syllabus was eliminated, and in its place was set Unit #9 “At the hospital” as Unit #8. The same thing happened with Unit #10 “A letter from a friend” from the conventional syllabus was set as Unit #9 in the digital version.
- The Simple Past tense as a grammar point was eliminated, it is used just to be related with the Past Continuous in expressions using “when”. So Unit #5 is now called “What were you doing when I called?” instead of “A visit to a museum”.

Taking into account the categories mentioned above and the corresponding indicators, different instruments and scientific methods were administered during the students’ assessment stage, and with the triangulation the following results were obtained:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Methods</u>	<u>Result obtained</u>
Knowledge	Classroom Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students’ knowledge is limited because of the lack of motivation they have toward the English lessons.
	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students’ knowledge is affected because they do not consider English language so important.
	Initial Pedagogical Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of the students’ knowledge of the English language is low, they are not able to communicate by themselves and they misunderstand the message.
Motivation	Classroom Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students’ interests and motivation toward the English subject is not high.
	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students’ motivation in learning English is affected because of the type of exercises carried out in the English lessons.

	Initial Pedagogical Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students do not show interest or aptitudes in accomplishing the exercises.
Abilities	Classroom Observation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students have some difficulties in pronunciation, their fluency is affected and they have restricted vocabulary when carrying out the tasks.
	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students' abilities are affected taking into account their limited knowledge and motivation about the English lessons.
	Initial Pedagogical Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The students make many grammatical mistakes when speaking, they have insufficient vocabulary, and they have some intonation and pronunciation mistakes.

2.3 Regularities

After having analyzed from several perspectives the information obtained in the needs assessment through the instruments and methods administered, the following regularities can be established:

Strengths

- The syllabus of the English subject has specific objectives intended to develop speaking skills which are in correspondence with the exercises suggested in the students' workbook.
- Although the workbook has some limitations, it is possible to use it for the students' practice of the contents taught, it is just necessary to adapt the orders according to the students' needs and interests.
- In the classroom there are some students that have more interest in learning English than others and it is possible to work with them.

- Even when the students have some difficulties, there are some of them that although they are low level students, they have aptitudes and interest toward the English language.

Weaknesses:

- The 8th grade workbook has enough exercises related to the speaking skills, but many of them do not reach the production level or remain at the sentence level. This means there is not enough free practice or communicative exercises to develop speaking.
- The students' insufficient motivation toward the English lessons.
- There is a need to integrate more exercises to satisfy the students' needs.
- Insufficient material aids and bibliography to work with were detected by the author.
- The students cannot express ideas fluently because of the lack of vocabulary and the great quantity of mistakes in pronunciation they have.
- The quality of the exercises to improve the speaking skills in the English lessons is low.
- The students do not apply their knowledge because of the insufficient motivation they have toward the English learning.

3. Building-up process

After being analyzed the previous information, the author of this paper had the idea to create some exercises that could help to develop the speaking skills in the English language in the students from Class 8th B at “Rolando Pedrosa Fernández” Secondary School.

3.1 Description of the building-up process

The following exercises are regarded to be applied in the Secondary School; they are communicative exercises that could have a great value to develop the students' speaking skills in the teaching of the English language at this level. The exercises are being put into practice, so they might be change according to the students' interest and level. For the effects of this research a **discussion group** was included to the process.

It monitored all the building-up process, evaluated the exercises and gave some important suggestions for the best development of this project of research. These exercises were analyzed and approved by the discussion group.

At the beginning the author applied 4 exercises corresponding to the Units #1-2. The first exercises were applied to go deeper in the students' needs and on this way, to go later from the easiest to the most difficult when the academic course proceeded.

Exercise #1: “Role Play (Pair-work)” was applied to perform the use of the communicative functions introducing yourself and others, giving personal information. The students showed a medium level and they communicated by themselves as much as possible without too much hesitation and with an acceptable pronunciation. They considered this exercise easy due to the information given. They are able to talk about themselves without too many problems. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #2: “Icebreaker: Two Truths and a Lie (Speaking Activity)” was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function describing people and in this case the students were so motivated because of the different information given about them. They showed an acceptable level according to the sentences they wrote, listened and said. They liked this exercise so much. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #3: “Asking Questions (Pair-work)” was designed to reproduce the use of the communicative function talking about likes and dislikes. In this exercise the students had some troubles when with the way in which they formulated the questions taking into account the given answers. The students' knowledge does not allow them to identify the grammatical structure and the type of question they have to do. This exercise must be changed for its future implementation. The discussion group gave some ideas that could help to do a better work with this exercise. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #4: “Free Talk (Pair-work)” was applied to make use of the communicative function talking about likes and dislikes; suggesting places to go and things to do. This

exercise served as a test to check the students' mastery in expressing their preferences and when the exercise was applied the students showed an acceptable level in the use of this communicative function. They were so happy to talk freely and without a model about this topic. On the other hand, some of them had difficulties, of course, that were overcome throughout the practice. This exercise showed that the students had some troubles asking the questions about preferences, but they did not have many difficulties answering the same questions. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

After having applied the first exercises, the result led to the creation of other ones that were put into practice. In the building-up process, the exercises were designed and improved in the same practice.

Exercise #5: "Asking questions (Pair-work)" was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function talking about quantity with food. When the author applied this exercise the students showed a medium level in the way in which they formulated the corresponding questions. Some of them considered it too difficult at the beginning, but when the teacher explained the correct structure on the board again; they understood the exercise and completed the task. At the end of the lesson, the students were so happy because they were succeeding in the language. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

Exercise #6: "Guess What (Pair-work)" was applied to make use of the communicative function expressing existence with food. In this exercise the students were so motivated; they liked it a lot because of the interactive character of this kind of exercise. They showed a high level asking for existence with food using Yes/No questions. They also showed an acceptable pronunciation and the vocabulary was in agreement with their level. This exercise was taken to the discussion group and they considered it too easy, so it could be modified according to the students' interests and level. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

Exercise #7: “Making a recipe (Group-work)” to make use of the communicative function talking about food. When the students did this exercise they enjoyed it a lot, because they had to work with real ingredients and, at the same time, to improve their English learning and to practice the speaking skills when they had to explain their recipe orally. They showed an acceptable pronunciation and vocabulary according to the instructions to make the recipe. They made some grammatical mistakes that were corrected at the end of the lesson. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

When the exercises previously explained were put into practice, the students’ learning in the English language showed to be successfully achieved, especially in their speaking skills. Some transformations were observed by the author of this paper in his empirical experience as teacher of the study group such as:

- The students were shown more motivated toward the English learning.
- Their speaking skills were improved when they completed all the exercises.
- The low level students took a very different attitude toward the English lessons and they were more interested in solving the exercises on their own.
- The students’ knowledge was increased and they were able to communicate by themselves in a simple way.

In the process of discussion and evaluation of the exercises in dialogues with the subjects of research, they considered that the exercises were interesting and facilitated them to develop their speaking skills. They also said that they felt very happy and motivated in accomplishing each task and they suggested gathering all those exercises that were profitable for them in a complementary manual to improve their speaking skills in the English language in 8th grade. They considered those exercises better than the ones that appear in the workbook, and that a complementary manual could help to the best learning of the English language in next courses. The author of this research accepted this suggestion, and later on it was taken to the discussion group to be evaluated.

Exercise #8: “Jazz Chants: Where can I buy a ticket?” was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function asking for and giving directions. This exercise was accepted by the study group because they were practicing not only speaking, but listening and reading too. This exercise was to spread up the students’ vocabulary and to practice their pronunciation in a motivating way. They loved that type of exercise and they suggested doing some other exercises similar to that one. That recommendation was accepted by the teacher and he took it into account for next lessons. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #9: “Jazz Chants: Where can I buy a ticket?” was applied to perform the use of the communicative function asking for and giving directions. The main objective of that exercise was focused on the grammatical points, but the students also practiced their pronunciation and therefore they practiced their speaking skills. The students said that they enjoyed doing that exercise so much because they had read that dialogue before and it helped them to do a better work. They developed their listening skills at the same time they practiced their speaking skills. When the students sang alone, even the low level students showed very happy and did their best effort to improve their language skills. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #10: “Role Play (Pair-work)” was applied, to make use of the communicative function giving directions. This exercise was used as a test to see whether the students were succeeding in the language learning or not. The students showed a medium level in the use of this communicative function. Some of them were in a high level, and they pronounced correctly and used the right vocabulary. They spoke using the grammatical structures correctly. Their pronunciation and vocabulary were in an acceptable level. They considered that exercise very important because it could help them to find out their way back home, and to get to some places they did not know the correct address. They showed interested and motivated in the topic. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #11: “Guessing the right place” was applied to make use the communicative function describing places. That type of exercise was considered motivating by the students because they were interacting among them. The students showed a high level in describing places. They completed the task and they showed an acceptable pronunciation without too much hesitation, their vocabulary was good, and they spoke using the grammatical structures as good as possible taking into account their level and interest. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #12: “Making a story (Pair-work)” was applied to reproduce the use of the communicative function talking about what you and other people were doing at a certain time in the past. That exercise motivated the students’ interest because they were interacting with some pictures and using their imagination to create the best story. The students initially thought the exercise was so hard, but later on they did a really good job. They showed an acceptable vocabulary in correspondence with the pictures they had. Their pronunciation was good and there were some troubles with the grammatical structures, but they were checked while the lesson proceeded. The discussion group approved that exercise because it encouraged the development of the speaking skills in different ways that make the students feel happy and motivated. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #13: “Find the grammatical mistakes” was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function talking about what people were doing. The students considered that exercise very useful because it practiced the grammatical structures in a simple way. They showed a very good pronunciation and vocabulary. They felt so happy to work in pairs and to figure out by themselves the possible mistakes. The students were really succeeding in the language. They showed motivated with the English learning. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #14: “Jazz Chants: I twisted my ankle” was applied to reproduce the use of the communicative function talking about what people were doing. The students enjoyed

that exercise so much and they showed a high level identifying the target grammar. When the students practiced the song, they suggested the teacher why not to create a chorus in the group to participate in some events in other places and schools. It was a great idea because it was an example of the students' interest and motivation in learning English. That suggestion made the teacher so happy because there have been some visible transformations in the students, they were improving their language skills and they were showing anxious to learn more and more everyday. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

Exercise #15: "Let's talk (Pair-work)" was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function talking about habitual actions. The students considered that exercise very easy because it just practiced the contents they had already learnt, but they showed motivated with the exercise. That exercise was used to determine the students' current level. Their pronunciation and vocabulary were good, and they spoke without too much hesitation. They spoke using the grammatical structures without too many troubles, and they communicated by themselves in a fluent way. They liked that exercise so much. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

Exercise #16: "Spy game (Role Play)" was applied to make use of the communicative function talking about where people were and what people were doing. That kind of exercise motivated the students because it was something different of the exercises they usually do in class. They felt as if they were really detectives and the other students were robbers. They enjoyed that exercise a lot. They showed an acceptable pronunciation and vocabulary. They committed some grammatical mistakes, but the most important feature in that exercise was their interaction with the other students and their improvement of the speaking skills. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

Exercise #17: "Planned Activities" (Pair-Work) was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function talking about planned activities. When that exercise was applied the students found it not so hard, they showed a correct pronunciation and vocabulary.

They did not commit too many grammatical mistakes and they acted it out without hesitation. They enjoyed practicing it with their friends, and they told that when there was a model the exercise was easier because they exactly knew what they were going to say. That exercise was taken to the discussion group and they offered some suggestions to improve it for the best learning of the students. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #18: “Role Play” (Pair-Work) was applied to use the communicative function talking about planned activities. That exercise helped the students to use their imagination and their own knowledge to create that dialogue. They showed an acceptable pronunciation and vocabulary, and they spoke using the grammatical structures correctly, without too many difficulties. They considered that they were really improving their language skills, and they were motivated with their performance. There were some students that they were not interested in the English lessons at the beginning, and when the academic course proceeded they were shown more motivated in speaking English and they did a good performance in that exercise. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #19: “Discussion Questions” was applied to perform the use of the communicative function comparing things expressing differences. The students liked that exercise so much because they practiced the four communicative skills; of course they were focused on speaking and listening. They showed a very good pronunciation and vocabulary referring the different degrees of the adjective. They asked the correct questions in a fluent way and they did not commit to many grammatical mistakes, although the aim of that exercise was to practice speaking and listening, so the mistakes were corrected at the end of the lesson, letting the students feel happy and free to talk. (See annexed “Complementary manual”)

Exercise #20: “Advice time” was applied to manipulate the use of the communicative function asking for and giving advice. When that exercise was applied the students were

so motivated because they liked the structure of the exercise and the different ways to practice that communicative function. They showed a good pronunciation and vocabulary referring to giving advice and making suggestions. They spoke freely without too much hesitation, and showed a high level in speaking about health problems. The students were able to communicate themselves in a simple way in the English language. (See annexed "Complementary manual")

The final Pedagogical Test

Categories for the analysis:

- Level of correct use of vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation.
- Level of fluency when speaking: normal speech without too much hesitation.

This pedagogical test was administered at the end of the academic course to the study group where the author of this research works. The main objective was to corroborate the students' development of the speaking skills after the implementation of the exercises. In order to carry out the assessment, the author prepared an exercise that integrates all the contents to know the students' current level.

The following scale shows the categories to evaluate the students' performance regarding speaking skills acquisition by means of the final pedagogical test. (See Annex #4)

1 st High level	2 nd Medium level	3 rd Low level
----------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------

The result of the implementation of this instrument proved that the students had a development of the speaking skills if they are compared with the initial results. There were 4 students in a high level at the beginning, but at the end there were 9 students. There were 8 students in a medium level, but at the end there were 12 students. While there were 14 students in a low level at the beginning, and at the end there were just 5 students in a low level.

By means of the pedagogical test it could be verified that the students encouraged development in the speaking skills. At the end of the academic course they were able to express comprehensible ideas, they were also able to speak using the grammatical

structures in a correct way and their vocabulary was in correspondence with the objectives of the grade. They did not make too many mistakes in pronunciation and they were able to communicate short messages.

3.2 Results of the implementation of the exercises:

It is worthy to mention that during the implementation of the exercises, many students who did not belong to the study group attended the lessons, showing motivation toward the learning of the English language. When the exercises were implemented the students were tested to measure their advance. They were tested before, while and after the implementation of the exercises. In the pre-test the students' presented a low level of knowledge about the topics measured, but in the final test, the students showed a great advance in the language and the objectives completed.

After the exercises were implemented to solve different difficulties the students presented at the beginning, some changes were observed during the academic course:

- ✓ The exercises were aimed at having students to practice and produce the communicative functions they were studying at that moment.
- ✓ The students' knowledge was improved at the same time that they were more motivated in the English lessons.
- ✓ The students' pronunciation and vocabulary was developed when they carried out all tasks.
- ✓ The exercises were interesting and students tended to show more motivated in performing them.
- ✓ The exercises were more in line with the Communicative Language Teaching Approach when they reflected real life tasks and gave students more realistic purposes for speaking.

After all the exercises were put into practice, the suggestion of the subjects of research of creating a complementary manual was taken to the discussion group that went together with the author of this paper during the whole building-up process. They

evaluated the importance and benefits of creating a complementary manual and offered some recommendations to improve some of the exercises for the best development of the speaking skills.

Then the author analyzed the suggestions and made the corresponding modifications. Finally, the discussion group accepted the idea and all the exercises designed in the practice were gathered in a complementary manual, which is precisely the scientific result that emerged from the building-up process.

3.3 Foundations of the scientific result

From the philosophical point of view, the complementary manual is grounded on the dialectic-materialist method of the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, taking into consideration the Teaching-Learning Process of foreign languages and by investigating its field in the objective reality, analyzing its objective upon the theoretical-ideological basis and the dialectic-materialist theory of knowledge.

From the methodological point of view, the exercises analyze the different methods or trends used in the teaching of speaking (their positive and negative aspects); that is why, the author considered the communicative approach is the best to do away with the students' difficulties.

The author bases the exercises on psychological principles also, since he takes into consideration the students' educational needs, age, interests, and preferences.

The exercises are based on the didactic principles since they go from the easy to the difficult, from the least complex to the most complex, and they have a systematic character.

3.3.1 Characteristics of the complementary manual proposed as scientific result

The complementary manual was designed taking into account the regularities resulting from the diagnosis stage, the methodological requirements of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach, the students' psychological characteristics, as well as the result of a building-up process.

This scientific result consists of twenty exercises designed for the first eight units of the course. It includes two or three exercises per unit; one or two exercises for controlled

practice lessons and one or two for free practice lessons. The complementary manual also offers the teachers some methodological suggestions for dealing with the speaking skills and the corresponding instructions for the best application of the exercises. All the exercises have the purpose of contributing to develop the students' speaking skills. The exercises are varied; they include pair work, group work and they also comprise jazz chants, role play, storytelling and games.

As the exercises are motivating, relevant and interesting for the students, they make the acquisition of new knowledge and abilities easier to achieve. With the objective of expanding a little more the vocabulary to some students who have interest and motivation a section of useful vocabulary was added to the complementary manual. So that the students, in an independent way, can continue studying and developing their skills in the English language. The scientific result is presented in a Complementary Annex.

CONCLUSIONS

The achievement of this research allowed the author to state the following conclusions:

1. The theoretical-methodological considerations that support this paper are based on the treatment of speaking skills in the teaching-learning process of English through history. The communicative language teaching principles gave the necessary theory that supports the development of the speaking skills.
2. The diagnosis of the students' real situation in Class 8th B at "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández" Secondary School revealed that the students have difficulties in speaking skills. They are not able to express their ideas clearly, they make grammatical mistakes. Moreover, they have an insufficient vocabulary and they make mistakes in pronunciation and misunderstand the message.
3. The changes introduced were the communicative exercises designed, taking as a starting point the results of the needs assessment, the communicative functions taught at this level, the stage the lesson is intended for and the students' characteristics shown in the diagnosis.
4. Some of the exercises went well because they were interesting and motivating for the students. They were designed according to the students' background knowledge and their needs and interests. For the ones that did not go well some actions were taken.
5. The exercises put into practice contributed to a certain extent to the students' improvement of the speaking skills in a motivating way. The exercises had to do with real situations and the students were more interested in performing them. Their pronunciation and vocabulary was improved at the same time that they completed all the tasks and paid great attention to all lessons. The students' motivation toward the English lessons was increased when the academic course proceeded.
6. A complementary manual with exercises emerged as a result of the building-p process, which can be used by other teachers and students in their future experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ To improve and enrich the exercises carried out in this paper to get a better learning of the English language and in particular of speaking skills.
- ✓ To take into consideration the importance and benefits of the use of the complementary manual in order to enhance the speaking skills in 8th grade students.

1. Bermello Lastra, Gladys et al. La profesionalidad del claustro de la FLEX y los tutores de la escuela con vista al perfeccionamiento de la formación del egresado y a la orientación hacia la municipalización. Resultado de investigación. ISPEJV, La Habana, 2002.
2. Byrne, Donn. Teaching Oral English. La Habana: Ediciones Revolucionarias, 1989.
3. Camacho Delgado, Alfredo A. La enseñanza comunicativa del inglés en las transformaciones de la secundaria básica: Un Modelo Curricular para su perfeccionamiento en el territorio. Tesis de opción al grado de Doctor en Ciencias Pedagógicas, I.S.P. "Félix Varela", 2003.
4. Celce-Murcia, M. Teaching English as a second or foreign language. Heinle and Heinle. University of California, 2001.
5. Colectivo de autores. English Workbook, Eighth Grade. Ciudad de La Habana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2002.
6. Colectivo de autores. Programa de Inglés para 8vo grado. Secundaria Básica. La Habana. Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 2004.
7. Colectivo de autores. Programa de Inglés para Secundaria Básica. 2007. (Digital version)
8. Digitized material. I.S.P. "Felix Varela". Santa Clara, 2007.
9. Enríquez O'farril, Isora J. A Guide to the Teaching of English in the Cuban Context. 2016.
10. Finocchiaro, Mary and Brumfit, Christopher. The functional-notional approach: from theory to practice. Edición Revolucionaria, 1989.
11. Font, Sergio. Metodología para la asignatura Inglés en la secundaria básica desde una concepción problémica del enfoque comunicativo. Tesis doctoral. UCPEJV, La Habana, 2006.
12. Font, Sergio. A Guide to the Teaching of English in the Cuban Context. 2016.
13. García Cabrera, Sirelda. Fundamentals for FL Teaching. Educación Cubana, 2010.
14. Hymes, Dell. On Communicative competence. Sociolinguistics. Harmondsworth, England. Penguin Books, 1972.
15. Lavery, Clare. Language Assistant. The British Council Design Department/K007,

2001.

16. Morrow, Keith. "Principles of a communicative methodology" en Johnson, K. and Morrow, K. (eds.) *Communication in the classroom*. Longman, 1982.
17. Naiman, Neil. Teaching Pronunciation Communicatively. *Communication Journal*, INTUR, 1989.
18. Programa de inglés para 8vo Grado. Secundaria Básica. La Habana. Pueblo y Educación, 2004.
19. Richards, Jack C., & Rodgers, Theodore S. *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
20. Richards, Jack C. "Growing Up with TESOL", en *English Teaching Forum*, Vol. 46, No. 1, 2-11, 2008.
21. Yalden, Janice. *Principles of Course Design for Language Teaching*. USA: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Annex # 1:
Document Analysis

Objective: to collect the necessary information from the workbook and the syllabus.

Aspects to evaluate:

1. The subject syllabus in 8th grade:

- Number of units in the syllabus
- Time devoted to speaking in each unit
- Methodology suggested

2. Students' workbook:

- Number of exercises to practice speaking skills.
- Variety of exercises to practice speaking skills.

Categories for the analysis:

- Objectives stated in relation with the speaking skills.
- Methodological guidelines for the development of the speaking skills.
- Types of exercises to work with the speaking skills.

Annex #2**Observation guide of the English lessons:**

Objective: To check students' knowledge in English lessons and their interest and motivation during the lessons in which the teacher develops speaking skills.

Type: Participant observation.

Observation target: the students

Aspects to be observed: It is very important to analyze some indicators that let the researcher to establish a correct orientation toward the exercises to be applied.

1-The students' motivation in the English lessons

2- The students' participation in the exercises assigned by the teacher.

3- Quality of the different tasks oriented by the teacher according to the students' knowledge.

4- Quantity and quality of the material aids used by the teacher.

5- The development of the speaking skills in the students through the free practice exercises.

Annex #3**Survey to the students**

Aim: To know the students' opinion about the development of their speaking skills through the English lessons.

This survey helps to determine the actual situation about the teaching of English regarding materials, students' motivation and their common mistakes related to pronunciation and their opinion about the most difficult ability for them.

Aspects to evaluate:

- Students' motivation in lessons.
- Students' knowledge in the English language.
- Students' needs and interests.
- Kind of exercises that motivated them.

La presente encuesta forma parte de un proceso investigativo dirigido a desarrollar la expresión oral en el idioma Inglés en los estudiantes de 8^{vo} B del Centro Mixto "Rolando Pedrosa Fernández".

Le rogamos se tome su tiempo y responda el siguiente cuestionario de la manera más sincera posible.

Cuestionario:

1. ¿Consideras importante el aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en nuestro país?

Si ____ No ____

2. ¿Encuentras motivantes las clases de inglés?

Si ____ No ____ A veces ____

3. ¿Consideras suficiente el tiempo dedicado al desarrollo de la expresión oral en inglés en las clases de idioma?

Si ____ No ____

4. ¿Consideras que posees un nivel aceptable en el idioma inglés?

Si ____ No ____

5. ¿Crees que te es posible comunicarte de forma sencilla en el idioma inglés?

Si ____ No ____

6. Las actividades en las clases de inglés te ayudan a practicar:

___ el vocabulario ___ la pronunciación ___ la gramática ___ la entonación

7. ¿Qué tipo de actividades, de las que a continuación se relacionan, consideras más de tu agrado para practicar la expresión oral?

___ Juego de roles

___ Dramatizaciones

___ Reportajes orales sobre temas diversos

___ Descripción de láminas

___ Reportes orales sobre temas diversos

___ Reflexiones individuales para su posterior debate.

___ Conversaciones espontáneas

Annex #4:**Initial Pedagogical test**

Aim: To make use of the communicative function asking for and giving personal information.

Grammar: Simple present: affirmative and negative sentences. WH-questions, Yes/No questions

Vocabulary: words referring to personal information.

Type of exercise: Integrated.

Materials: Cards.

Procedures:

- The teacher organizes the students into pairs.
- He explains the situation:

-It is September 1st and you arrive at school.

Student A: You meet a new classmate; ask him/her as much personal information as you can.

Student B: You are new at school and a classmate wants to talk with you. Answer his/her questions and try to get some information about him/her.

Rating scale for the initial pedagogical test or pre-test.

High: The students are able to communicate by themselves fluently and without too much hesitation.

Medium: The students produce the communicative function with some limitations in terms of fluency, which means that there are some linguistic errors as well as low level of fluency in communication.

Low: The students are not able to produce the communicative function with a minimum of fluency which means they are not able to complete the task.

Annex #5
Final Pedagogical test

Aspects to be evaluated:

- Level of correct use of vocabulary, grammatical structures and pronunciation.
- Level of fluency when speaking: normal speech without too much hesitation.

Aim: to use the communicative functions:

- Asking for and giving personal information.
- Talking about likes and dislikes.
- Inviting people.
- Accepting or refusing an invitation.

Grammar: Simple Present tense; WH-questions; Yes/No questions.

Vocabulary: Words related to personal information, preferences.

Materials: cards

Procedure:

- The teacher puts the students into pairs.
- Then he explains the situation.
- The teacher explains that student A can't see the card of student B; that is the aim of the exercise, to see if they are able to ask questions and answer back their partner's questions without a previous plan.

Card #1

You are walking on the street and you see an old friend.

Student A:

- Greet your friend warmly.
- Ask him/her about his/her family.
- Answer the question about your sister.
- Answer the question about your preferences.
- Answer the question about your favorite sport.
- Ask him/her about his/her favorite sport.
- Invite him/her to go to the stadium with you.

- Accept his/her answer.
- Say good bye.

Card #2

You are walking on the street and you see an old friend that is coming to you.

Student B:

- Greet your friend.
- Answer the question about your family.
- Ask him/her about his/her sister.
- Ask him/her if he likes the sports.
- Ask him/her about his/her favorite sport.
- Answer the question about your favorite sport.
- Accept or refuse an invitation, give reasons.
- Say good bye.

Rating scale for the final Pedagogical Test or post-test.

High: The students are able to communicate by themselves fluently and without too much hesitation.

Medium: The students produce the communicative function with some limitations in terms of fluency, which means that there are some linguistic errors as well as insufficient fluency in communication.

Low: The students are not able to produce the communicative function with a minimum of fluency, which means they are not able to complete the task.