



## UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

### FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA, LETRAS Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

“How to Overcome the Fear of Speaking English in an EFL Classroom  
through the Use of Real Context in the Ninth Level of Basic Education at  
“Ecuador” High School”

**Trabajo Investigativo del Curso de  
Graduación previo a la obtención del  
Título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la  
Educación en la Especialización de  
Lengua y Literatura Inglesa.**

**Tutor:** Lcdo. Gerardo Esteban Heras Urgilés.

**Autor:** Carlos Enrique Peláez Delgado.

Cuenca-Ecuador

2013



## RESUMEN

El objetivo de este proyecto de investigación fue determinar las principales causas de la falta de confianza en los estudiantes, y para comprobar si las estrategias basadas en el uso de contexto real pueden ayudarles a superar el miedo a hablar inglés.

Después de analizar los resultados, fue posible determinar las principales causas por las que los estudiantes no les gusta participar en las actividades orales. En primer lugar, los temas del libro no son de su interés, ya que no son significativos para ellos. En segundo lugar, los recursos didácticas que utiliza el profesor no son atractivas o interesantes. Por último, el maestro no promueve un entorno de compañerismo.

Para comprobar si las estrategias basadas en el uso de contexto real pueden ayudar a superar el miedo a hablar inglés los alumnos, fue necesario diseñar y aplicar cinco clases. La planificación de estas clases siguió los principios del método de enfoque comunicativo, teniendo en cuenta las cuatro etapas recomendadas en el libro TEFL 1 escrito por la profesora Catalina Astudillo.

Los resultados de la aplicación fueron satisfactorios debido al cambio inmediato en el comportamiento de los estudiantes. Estaba claro que su nivel de participación se incrementó gracias a la implementación de las actividades comunicativas basadas en temas significativos.

Palabras clave

Motivación-Contexto-Significativo-Enfoque-Estudiantes-Comunicativo



## **ABSTRACT**

The objective of this investigatory project was to determine the main causes for the lack of confidence in students and to prove if the strategies based on the use of real context can help to overcome their fear of speaking English.

After analyzing the results, it was possible to determine the main causes why the students do not like to participate in speaking activities. First, the topics of the book are not of their interest because they are not meaningful to them. Second, the didactic sources that the teacher uses are not attractive or interesting. Finally, the teacher does not promote a fellowship environment.

To prove whether the strategies based on the use of real context can help to overcome students' fear of speaking English, it was necessary to design and apply five lessons. The planning of these lessons followed the principles of the communicative approach method taking into account the four stages recommended in the TEFL 1 book written by Professor Catalina Astudillo.

The results of the application were pleasant because of the immediate change in the students' behavior. It was clear that their level of participation was increased thanks to the implementation of communicative activities with meaningful topics.

### Key Words

Motivation- Context- Meaningful- Approach- Students- Communicative



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESUMEN .....	2
ABSTRACT .....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	4
DEDICATION.....	8
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	9
INTRODUCTION .....	10
CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM .....	12
1.1 TOPIC.....	12
1.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION.....	12
1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM.....	12
1.3 JUSTIFICATION.....	13
1.4 OBJECTIVES .....	14
1.4.1 General Objective.....	14
1.4.2 Specific Objectives .....	14
CHAPTER II: LITERARY REVIEW .....	15
2.1 Advantages of teaching teenagers .....	15
2.2 Emotional inhibitions.....	16
2.3 Origins of emotional inhibitions.....	17
2.4 Effects and manifestations or symptoms of language anxiety .....	18
2.5 Mistakes are good, not bad .....	19
Carlos Peláez .....	4



2.6 Creating a Positive Climate for Learning .....	21
2.7 Communicative Approach Method.....	23
2.8 Real Context.....	24
2.9 Communicative activities and the Use of Real Context .....	25
2.10 Advantages of using communicative activities.....	26
2.11 Characteristics of communicative activities .....	27
2.12 Examples of communicative activities .....	28
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	30
3.1 Observation .....	30
3.2 Questionnaire .....	30
3.3 Interview .....	31
3.4 Bibliographic Research.....	31
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	34
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	42
5.1 Conclusions .....	42
5.2 Recommendations.....	44
WORKS CITED.....	45
APPENDICES.....	47



## UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Fundada en 1867

Yo, CARLOS ENRIQUE PELAEZ DELGADO, autor de la tesina "How to Overcome the Fear of Speaking English in an EFL Classroom through the Use of Real Context in the Ninth Level of Basic Education at "Ecuador" High School" reconozco y acepto el derecho de la Universidad de Cuenca, en base al Art. 5 literal c) de su Reglamento de Propiedad Intelectual, de publicar este trabajo por cualquier medio conocido o por conocer, al ser este requisito para la obtención de mi título de Licenciado en Ciencias de la Educación en la Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa. El uso que la Universidad de Cuenca hiciera de este trabajo, no implicará afección alguna de mis derechos morales o patrimoniales como autor.

CARLOS ENRIQUE PELAEZ DELGADO

140072273-0



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA  
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFIA, LETRAS  
Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION  
SECRETARIA

*Cuenca Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad. Resolución de la UNESCO del 1 de diciembre de 1999*

Av. 12 de Abril, Ciudadela Universitaria, Teléfono: 405 1000, Ext.: 1311, 1312, 1316

e-mail [cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec) casilla No. 1103

Cuenca - Ecuador



Universidad de Cuenca



## UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA

Fundada en 1867

Yo, CARLOS ENRIQUE PELAEZ DELGADO, certifico que todas las ideas, opiniones y contenidos expuestos en la presente investigación son de exclusiva responsabilidad de su autor.

CARLOS ENRIQUE PELAEZ DELGADO  
140072273-0



UNIVERSIDAD DE CUENCA  
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFIA, LETRAS  
Y CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACION  
SECRETARIA

*Cuenca Patrimonio Cultural de la Humanidad. Resolución de la UNESCO del 1 de diciembre de 1999*

Av. 12 de Abril, Ciudadela Universitaria, Teléfono: 405 1000, Ext.: 1311, 1312, 1316

e-mail [cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec](mailto:cdjbv@ucuenca.edu.ec) casilla No. 1103

Cuenca - Ecuador



## **DEDICATION**

*This work is dedicated firstly to God, who has allowed me to get so far. Second, to my parents, who have given me unconditional support along all my life; especially to my dear father, who is not with me anymore, but I am sure that he would be proud of me so thanks to him I am the man that I am; to my older brother, who gave me the opportunity to study through financial support; and to all my family and friends, who always supported me to move forward and achieve my goals and have shared my triumphs and failures.*

*Carlos Peláez Delgado.*





## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

*First of all, I would like to thank my tutor, Lic. Esteban Heras, whose patience, sympathy, assistance, and guidance allowed me to finish this work satisfactorily.*

*Lastly, I have to say that I am very grateful to all the people who helped me to carry out this project.*

*Carlos Peláez Delgado.*



## INTRODUCTION

Speaking can be considered as the most important skill of the learner. People have many reasons to improve their speaking abilities, among these are, expressing ideas, creating relationships, exchanging information etc. Even though, the development of this skill is not an easy task for anybody, there are many aspects that have to be taken into account in the learning process; the learner must be active and dynamic, practicing and exchanging patterns that are important in the development of this skill. During the process, the learner must be exposed to a natural environment and natural speeches of the target language that enable them to develop their awareness of conversational features and speaking strategies. The task of the teacher is to incorporate real communication in the classroom, promoting interactive activities in order to help students gain confidence and feel motivated. As it is known, many English language teachers continue teaching speaking using only repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. Many of these exercises are not based on real context. This might be one of the reasons why many EFL students in Cuenca face the fact that after having studied English as a foreign language at primary and secondary school, they cannot communicate effectively in this language.

In this research paper, the creation, application, and results of material based on real context to help students of ninth level of basic education in *República del Ecuador* high school overcome their fear of speaking English will be exposed in detail. In addition, the methodology used to collect the necessary data to carry out this project will be explained, as well as the method used during the application of the treatment. The chosen method



was the communicative approach, with activities based on real-life situations that require real communication. Furthermore, an analysis and results of the interview, questionnaire, and observation used in this project will be explained.



## CHAPTER I: THE PROBLEM

### 1.1 TOPIC

The topic of this thesis is How to Overcome the Fear of Speaking English in an EFL Classroom through the Use of Real Context in the Ninth Level of Basic Education in *República del Ecuador* High school.

#### 1.1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent does the use of real context help students of ninth level of basic education in *República del Ecuador* high school overcome their fear of speaking English?

### 1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

According to previous experience during pre-professional practices, it was possible to determine that the students of the ninth level of basic education of the *República del Ecuador* High School have feelings of insecurity when they are asked to participate in speaking activities, because they have the fear of making mistakes and being embarrassed. Sometimes, this fear was even stronger than the fear of getting a bad grade. This problem is really serious for them because they are in a very complicated age in which they are more aware of what people think about them. Obviously they do not want anybody to make fun of them.

Teenagers are the most insecure people in the world and their lives are always under pressures: pressure about dating, drugs, gangs, parents, clothing, sexuality, race, grades, etc. ( Meg Bostrom 8) This situation has to be taken into account when working with them.



### 1.3 JUSTIFICATION

This topic was chosen because it is important to determine the causes for lack of confidence in the students of the ninth level of basic education of the *República del Ecuador* High School and to propose strategies to make them feel more comfortable to express their ideas in English through the use of real context. It is needed for students to understand that nowadays it is important to know English. The way people communicate shows a lot about them, and can influence other's opinions of them. In every profession communication in some way is used and important. Good communication skills, no matter what people plan to do in life, will help them out greatly and improve their chances to get a good job in a harsh job market.

Besides, even though all four skills are important and have to be taught in an equal way, the most important might be the speaking skill, because it would be worthless to know a language if a person is not able to communicate their feelings, ideas, and opinions in a spoken way. So, it is important to find out the strategies that work best, considering the factors related to these students. These factors might be mainly their age (teenagers) and what they are interested in. These strategies have to help students to decrease language anxiety providing the right tools and avoiding problematic situations for them, by removing the factors that can lead to anxiety and fear; promoting cooperation instead of competition; breaking the monotony of learning; making the tasks more interesting; increasing students' involvement; and helping learners to accept the fact that they will make mistakes as part of the learning process.



## **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

### **1.4.1 General Objective**

-To determine the main causes for the lack of confidence in students and the strategies to overcome their fear of speaking English.

### **1.4.2 Specific Objectives**

-To research the main causes for the lack of confidence in students of the ninth level of basic education of the *República del Ecuador* High School.

-To determine the strategies that might help them to overcome their fear of speaking English.

-To apply the strategies, and analyze the results in order to see whether the goal was accomplish.



## CHAPTER II: LITERARY REVIEW

### 2.1 Advantages of teaching teenagers

Age has been often considered a major factor in the foreign language acquisition field, and over years, various hypotheses have been proposed to account for the correlation of age of acquisition and the degree of ultimate mastery of the foreign language. A number of empirical studies have been designed to find out the optimal age to learn a foreign language. From the view of education practice, it is of great importance to understand as far as possible how maturational effects interact with environmental factors in the acquisition of L2 (Paul Robertson 28). Therefore, it can be said that each age group requires a different approach.

Even though, it has been proven that childhood is the best age for acquiring a second language due to the plasticity of a child's brain; teaching teenagers also has certain advantages because of the characteristics that this age has. First, teenagers have cognitive skills and self-discipline, which enable them to utilize a greater efficiency in the acquisition of a larger volume of comprehensible input. Second, they have a bigger L1 vocabulary and, therefore, they do not have to acquire thousands of new concepts. Finally, they have the ability to make conscious grammatical generalization and apply them to suitable examples (Paul Robertson 30).

Furthermore, Piaget theory states that the age of formal operations comprises the age group 12-15, which encompasses the beginning of adolescence. In this stage, thinking becomes more formalized and deals increasingly in abstractions. Adolescents are at a stage in life when they want



to start taking responsibility for their own lives, including forming views about their own education, and the manner in which it is conducted (Paul Robertson 30).

The challenging goal here is to motivate them. In her book, *Brain-Based Teaching with Adolescent Learning in Mind*, Glenda Beamon Crawford says that “understanding what motivates adolescents to learn requires paying attention to the interrelated factors that naturally energize and excite them within the learning environment”(97). She also identifies four factors related to this age that can motivate students: First, success or need for mastery; second, curiosity or need for understanding; third, originality or need for self-expression; and fourth, relationship or need for involvement with others (97).

## **2.2 Emotional inhibitions**

In his book, *EL-Method*, Tony Gaschler defines anxiety in a language learning situation as “the fear caused when the learner is asked to speak in the second or the foreign language in public, with the risk of social embarrassment” (30). As a result, the anxiety caused by emotional inhibitions has negative effects in the language learning process, such as fears, nervousness, insecurity and lack of self-confidence. Although some other authors recognize that anxiety occurs also during test taking, writing and reading, Gaschler focused his study in speaking skill since it is when fears are more evident (30).

The domain of emotions, the affective side of learning, has received much current attention by cognitive psychologists, neuroscientists, and other educators in an attempt to explain the interplay between thinking, feeling, and





acting. Glenda Beamon Crawford says that a display of emotions has been associated with levels of brain maturity, though adolescents' emotions are generally understandable reactions. Emotions can interfere with learning or they can contribute to it. Adolescents are more likely to take the risk involved in letting others know what they are thinking when they feel accepted, valued, respected, and supported individually (98).

### 2.3 Origins of emotional inhibitions

Gaschler categorized some factors that may cause language anxiety, which can be summarized within four categories shown in the following diagram:

Causes of English-speaking fears and language anxiety in our classroom			
1. Psychological	2. Methodological	3. Cognitive	4. Social-affective
-Lack of affective support	a. Motivational	a. Metacognitive	-Friends' and teachers' judgments
-False failure feeling, frustration	-Monotonous classes	-Indifference to the learning process and styles	- Public embarrassment risk
-Stressful Classroom	-Boring topics	b. Cognitive	-The indifference of some peers
-Lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem	- Little students involvement	-Students do not have enough lexis and grammar	-Isolation
-Hostile environment	b. Pedagogical Practices	-Complex structures and	
	-Promote competition		
	-Lack of speaking		



-Teenage implications	practice -Class organization -Evaluations and grades	long sentences -Lack of planning and goal definition	
-----------------------	--	---	--

Fig 1. Causes of English-speaking fears and language anxiety in our classroom (35).

### 2.4 Effects and manifestations or symptoms of language anxiety

In his book, Gaschler includes some effects and manifestations or symptoms of language anxiety in order to be alert to them. He says “we know that language anxiety has a negative effect on learning.”(51) He identifies some physical behaviors such as playing with hair, objects, nervously touching object, hiding behind a partner or looking at the ceiling; and internal symptoms like forgetting what to say, petrified, voiceless, trembling, tears and anger (52). Some of them are very noticeable in some students.

Gaschler affirms that,

Anxiety and nervousness are relevant issues as key factors that reduce motivation and achievement. Anxiety is the result of different situations that students live daily at school; they are accountable for responding to teachers’ questions, completing assignments, taking tests, organizing presentations, etc. Most of the time these performances are monitored, graded and reported to their parents. (42)



Although, these pressures related to low grades might be tolerable under conditions of privacy, they might become a serious threat in classrooms when failure carries the danger of public humiliation.

Gaschler also affirms that lack of confidence is another remarkable factor of anxiety and fears. Students need to have a healthy self-respect and need to believe in themselves as learners.

Self-esteem and self-confidence are like the foundations of a building: if they are not secure enough, even the best technology will be insufficient to build solid walls over them. The teacher can employ the most creative motivational ideas, but if students have basic doubts about themselves they will be unable to 'bloom' as learners. (Gaschler 47)

Moreover, according to Gaschler, students with a low self-esteem and confidence sense do not see the difficult tasks as challenges but as threats, and in this situation they become more concentrated on their personal deficiencies and obstacles rather than on how to perform those tasks effectively. As a result, this kind of student easily gives up on any activity because they lose faith in their capabilities and a feeling of insecurity is always behind them, preventing them from going ahead. Unfortunately these feelings get worse as the time passes (47).

## **2.5 Mistakes are good, not bad**

In her article, "The Fear of Making Mistakes", Catherine Pratt says that "It's not worth wasting your time agonizing over things in the past because you cannot change what happened. You just need to recognize that you simply made a mistake." It is important to understand that mistakes are



usually opportunities to grow; and that they are some of our greatest learning experiences and that is the key thing to remember. It is not important what others think about us, but to understand what you know about yourself. It will make you more comfortable with yourself; it also will help you to move forwards in a more confident way (1).

Besides, Catherine Pratt says that it does not mean you are a failure because you made a mistake. You and the mistake are not the same thing at all. You learned something valuable from it and can now move forwards. It means you can focus on a solution and be far further ahead than if you had never allowed yourself to make the mistake. Lots of times, they are not even mistakes. You just learned a different strategy was needed. Your actions were not getting what you wanted so you needed to think of a different way. That is not a mistake. That is simply exploration and discovery

Once you relax and accept that you really are a good person just trying to do your best and that you make mistakes sometimes, you will discover that people trust and respect you for being comfortable with allowing yourself to make mistakes because that is the way people succeed (Catherine Pratt 1) .

Robby Kurkus in his article “Conquer your Fear of Making Mistakes” affirms that it is okay to make mistakes while speaking English whenever you are able to pass the message and recommends “to start looking at mistakes made during English speech in a similar way you would regard mistakes during a musical performance.” When you sing despite not being a professional artist, it does not really matter that much if you are off tune on a couple of notes, or if your voice is a bit shaky because you are nervous on



stage. Once you are hitting the main notes right and you carry yourself with a head held high, you are 100% fine, and people will still be getting the song's message, they will feel your heart and soul through the song. It means that similar to a signing performance, as far as you are smiling and being friendly and the small mistakes you make are not as big as to create a real communication barrier, it is okay (1).

Finally Kurkus recommends to make the students to start seeing mistakes as an integral part of being a foreign English speaker because it is natural and understandable in them since they are not professional English speaker which means that they are not native English speaker(1).

## **2.6 Creating a Positive Climate for Learning**

In her article Fan Yi states that,

When the learner has a clear communicative need for the target language, he is most likely to learn the language spontaneously. He tends to take active part in all classroom activities and make active responses to the teacher's instructions. So, an EFL class should be student-centered rather than teacher-centered. (1)

The teacher should reduce his talk to minimum and give the students adequate opportunities to practice on the instruction and produce their own ideas. However, because of their inadequate communicative competence, the learners are likely to have difficulty in relating to other people. This often causes the learners to feel anxious, nervous and constrained. As a result, in the learners' minds arises a fear for communication. In this case, the learners tend to avoid personal communication with others, and take language



learning as knowledge studying. So, an effective classroom environment for EFL learning must contribute to a relaxed atmosphere in which the students feel easy and eager to involve themselves into the classroom activities (Fan Yi 1).

The students must be motivated to communicate with their classmates and their teacher in the target language and this motivation comes from communicative needs. It can be achieved by choosing suitable teaching materials, which should be comprehensible and relevant to the learner's interest. It means that the topics have to be meaningful to them (Fan Yi 1).

Also, it has been proven that the student-centered learning class is more effective than the teacher-centered; because it allows students to being active agents in their learning process. Students spend the entire class time constructing their new knowledge in an active way through the given material. In a student-centered classroom teachers do not employ a single teaching method. This approach emphasizes a variety of different types of methods that shifts the role of the instructors from givers of information to facilitating student learning. Besides, teacher provides students with a variety of tools creating a better environment for students to learn, because "when students are given the opportunity to measure their learning, learning becomes an incentive, because it can be seen as a form of personal growth". In this way, students solve problems, answer questions, formulate questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, etc. (Fan Yi 1).

Finally, Fan Yi recommends cooperative learning as another important strategy to create a positive climate for learning. In this strategy students



work in teams on problems and projects and in this way an atmosphere of fellowship is created as well (1).

## **2.7 Communicative Approach Method**

Ann Galloway asserts that the method that best might help students to feel comfortable to speak in the target language is the communicative approach method, because it promotes and requires real communication (1).

Galloway explains that real communication is always informative, unpredictable and unexpected. If the teacher is always informative, interesting and unexpected, then even before the beginning of the lesson students will be disposed for a good lesson. But if the previous lessons are just the same as the next ones, students will be bored with it even before the lesson start (1).

Galloway also establishes that the Communicative method determines purposes of oral conversation spontaneously, without previous preparation. A student has to define purposes of conversation at the very beginning or even in the course of it. Defining of conversational purposes is dictated by need to transmit some information or emotional state. The grammatical aspect has a secondary role if it does not confuse understanding and conveying the purpose of the conversation. Grammatical and phonetic correctness is developed not before the speech, but in its course (1).

The communicative approach is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning. When learners are involved in real communication, their natural strategies for language acquisition will be used, and this will allow them to learn to use the



Language. Classroom activities 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 systems (Ann Galloway 1).

## **2.8 Real Context**

Heather Singmaster relates real context to real language and states that language programs should focus on students communicating ideas in real ways, understanding and communicating meaning and transferring vocabulary and language skills to communicate other ideas (1).

Thematic planning makes instruction more comprehensible because the theme creates a meaningful context. When students are studying a thematic unit, they are using their new language skills in context and not simply learning vocabulary in isolation. Students are engaged in complex thinking and more sophisticated use of language when they are learning thematically (Singmaster 1).

By teaching on a theme, the teacher can avoid isolated exercises with grammar practiced out of context, which fragment language at the word or sentence level and avoid conversation. By teaching in a story form, activities, lessons and units are engaging, meaningful, and memorable and have a clear beginning, middle, and end (Singmaster 1).

As a conclusion it can be said that these key points show us how thematic instruction can help students learn to communicate in real-life situations where they are required to communicate important ideas and collaborate with others to solve problems. These are skills that will result in globally competent students prepared to work in an interconnected world.





## 2.9 Communicative activities and the Use of Real Context

The communicative approach method was developed by teachers and linguists as a response to the shortcomings of the audio-lingual and grammar translation method that is an old method which was originally used to teach dead languages which explains why it focuses more on the written form than on the oral form. One of the distinctive points of communicative language teaching is the focus on communicative activities that promote language learning. These activities use real life situations to trigger communication. They encourage and require a learner to speak with and listen to other learners. Communicative activities have real purposes such as finding and exchanging information, breaking down barriers, talking about oneself, and learning about culture (Kayi Hayriye 1).

Furthermore, Sarah R. Predmore says that in the world of career and technical education, contextual teaching and learning is a much-discussed concept for integrating real-world experience and academics. It is a model that for some reflects what is a commonsense notion: that students learn better when they are taught knowledge within the context of actual experience, rather than abstractly (1).

Predmore also affirms that,

some studies have shown that -contextual teaching and learning- can be highly successful. Many students are more motivated, have higher retention of information and are overall more successful when teachers employ contextual teaching and learning strategies. (1)



In 1998, the University of Georgia (UGA) received funding from the U.S. Department of Education to develop a model of excellence for contextual teaching and learning in preservice teacher education. The resulting model included both new courses and a revamping of existing ones. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Education extended its support of UGA with the goal of learning how new teachers have applied contextual teaching and learning strategies in their classrooms. The research included eight case studies as well as a cross-case analysis and other research methods. The research revealed what many educators have been arguing for years: there are significant benefits to using contextual teaching in the classroom. The most significant, according to researchers, is that students simply learn more when teachers incorporate contextual strategies. Students in the observed classes performed successfully on “authentic” forms of assessment, in which students demonstrate what they have learned within a real-world context, as well as traditional ones. The students also felt that they personally achieved more in the contextual teaching and learning classes. Ninety-four percent of the students said that they learned a lot more in contextual teaching and learning strategy classes than in other traditional courses in that same subject area (Sarah R. Predmore 1).

### **2.10 Advantages of using communicative activities**

In her article, “Teaching Speaking”, Kayi Hayriye includes several advantages that the use of communicative activities in an EFL classroom has. Some of them are listed below.



- Learning is maximized when students are engaged in relevant tasks within a dynamic learning environment instead of traditional teacher-centered classes.
- Real life communication is the target. Learners are trained not only to be linguistically competent but also communicatively and sociolinguistically competent.
- Communicative activities are motivating. Learning is achieved while learners are having fun (1).

### **2.11 Characteristics of communicative activities**

The communicative activities also have certain characteristics that might make them appropriate to be applied to any kind of students. Kayi Hayriye includes the next ones.

- The success of a communicative activity can be determined by the extent to which learners are dependent on the teacher. Tasks should be devised in a manner that learners gain autonomy and independence while learning.
- The role of the teachers is to give clear and to the point instructions and provide the appropriate environment for learners to interact and exchange information.
- Communicative activities are motivating. Learners should be at ease and have fun while doing the communicative tasks.
- Communicative tasks are realistic. Real communication situations should be the focus instead of isolated structures with no real-life reference.
- While in teacher-led classrooms learners were expected to be quiet and listen to the teacher and then, when asked, to respond to the teacher in



unison with the one

correct answer, communicative tasks require learners to take initiatives and provide their responses ( instead of a response) to contribute to the success of learning.

- Communicative activities are meaningful: they are carried out to fulfill specific purposes such as booking a plane, hotel ticket, inviting somebody to a party, answering an invitation letter, shopping, etc.
- Performance in communicative tests reflects an underlying competence that is linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic, etc. Communicative activities should consider this multi-dimensional nature of language (1).

## 2.12 Examples of communicative activities

Kayi Hayriye also includes several communicative activities. Next are some of them with a short explanation:

**Note taking:** Students are involved in a listening activity in which they have to take notes and, for example, write a report.

**Guessing Games:** In this activity the lead student or teacher has an object the others can't see, and students must ask questions to guess what it is (What color is it?; How big is it?; What country is it in?, etc.).

This works well as a group activity.

**Information Gap:** Students work in pairs to create a communicative need.

Each has different information and has to exchange this information.

Anything from opinions on films to parts of a story make this work well.

**Exchanging Personal Information:** This is an extension of the information gap activities. They ask questions and record the partner's information on a



table or a grid. As every student has slightly different experiences, there is a natural information gap.

Example: Find out about your partner's daily routine.

**Find someone who:** Students use a checklist as they walk around the room trying to find a person who has a certain characteristic.

**Sorting and classifying:** In pairs or groups, students sort objects into various categories (which may be determined by you or by the student) and justify their classification (1).



## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Observation

Throughout the five hours of observation required in pre-professional practices, some notes were taken for making a numerical rating scale about the behavior of the students of the Ninth Level of Basic Education in *República del Ecuador* High school. After an analysis of the numerical rating scale it was possible to determine that most of them show serious fear of participating in speaking activities because of the lack of motivation and interest.

### 3.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire was applied on April 08, 2013 to 36 students of the ninth level of basic education in *República del Ecuador* High School at 2:30 pm. (See Appendix 1).

After a deep analysis of the questionnaire results, it was possible to determine the main causes why the students do not like to participate in speaking activities. First, the topics of the book are not of their interest because they are not meaningful for them. Second, the didactic sources that the teacher uses are not attractive or interesting. Finally, the teacher does not promote a fellowship environment; therefore, students do not have a good relationship among them. So, obviously, they do not want to give their classmates any chance to make fun of them if they make a mistake during their participation.



### **3.3 Interview**

An interview was made to Professor Norma Mendez because she is in charge of the students of the ninth level of basic education in the *República del Ecuador* High School and that is the class that the research is addressed to. The interview took place in her workplace on April 08, 2013 at 3:00 pm. The purpose of the interview was to know her experience in working with that group. (See Appendix 2)

The interview unveiled certain important things. First, the problem that represents working with large groups. Second, teachers are restricted to use their creativity to teach because they have to accomplish a program that is already set. Also, the book provided by the ministry of education does not promote the participation of the students through communicative activities, and their topics are not interesting for them. Finally, the teacher recommended not to stop students when they make a mistake while they are talking, but to wait until they finish and then you can correct them in a polite and appropriate way in order not to make them feel embarrassed.

### **3.4 Bibliographic Research.**

In order to determine which methodology would be more effective to motivate students to speak English, it was necessary to make a meticulous bibliographic research. The web sources were the ones used more; although, the only printed source included in this work (TEFL 1 by Catalina Astudillo) was the most important for this project.

### **3.5 Application of Treatment**



After the analysis of all the gathered information about the problem, it was determined that the strategies that best may help the students are the ones recommended by the communicative approach method, and in order to determine whether strategies work as well as promulgate their authors, they were applied along five sessions.

The planning of the lessons followed the structure recommended by Catalina Astudillo in her book TEFL 1 that has four stages which are the warm up, the presentation of the structure, the mechanical and the meaningful practice of the structure, and the production through communicative activities. (See Appendix 3)

In the warm up stage, teacher uses warm up activities. The warm up activities foster motivation and this is an essential component to take into account when planning lessons. Warm up activities are designed to attract students' attention, to help them put aside distracting thoughts, and to get them ready to focus individually and as groups on whatever activities that the teacher has planned for a lesson. They will cause students to stop whatever they are doing or thinking and refocus their attention. We could say that a warming up activity is a motivating starting point that will lead students to become animated to work efficiently in the language class. Teachers must avoid looking at them as isolated activities because warming up activities have to be used as an introduction of the topic of the lesson. The topics that the teacher is going to work with have to be meaningful for the students. It means that the topics have to be of their interest (Astudillo 62).

In the presentation of the structure, a modal is presented into a sentence or structure that the teacher writes on the board. This structure has





to be related to the same topic that was displayed at the warm up stage. After that, the teacher gives a short explanation of the structure and its function. It is very important for the students to learn to relate each modal to a specific function (Astudillo 62).

The mechanical practice of the structure is totally teacher controlled. In this stage, the teacher writes on the board more sentences related to the same topic and ask the students to repeat those sentences after him. In that way, students practice the correct pronunciation and intonation; it allows them to internalize the structure (Astudillo 62).

In the meaningful practice, students are already ready to give their own examples with their own ideas. It means that the students are aware of the meaning of what they are saying. That also allows them to have some control over what they say (Astudillo 62).

Finally, in the production stage, the teacher evaluates the students' achievement through the use of communicative activities. The evaluation must be related to the lesson objectives. In other words, teachers have to evaluate what they taught (Astudillo 62).



## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Since the proposed research question for this project was, “to what extent does the use of real context might help students of ninth level of basic education in *República del Ecuador* high school to overcome their fear of speaking English?”, it was necessary to apply certain techniques for gathering the data that would help to find out the answer for it. The main technique was the observation. This consisted in observing attentively the phenomenon, fact, or case, taking information and registering it for posterior analysis. The observation was performed in a direct way (participative observation), which means that there was direct contact with the reality being investigated, and also intervention in the activities of the group. In this way, it was possible to get more precise data.

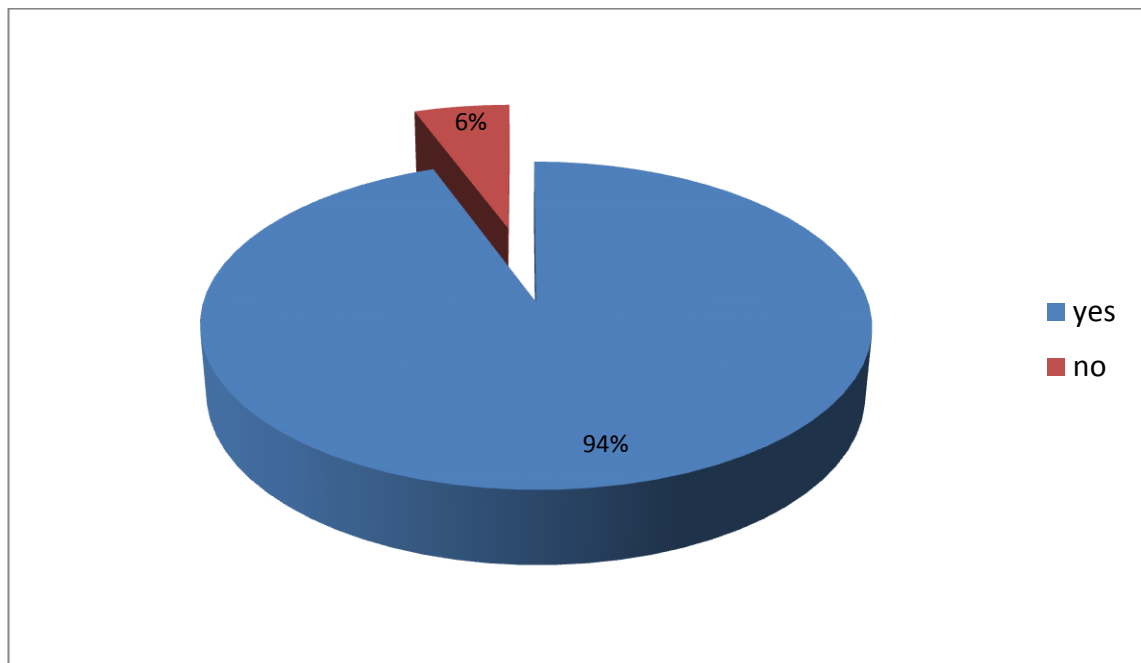
This data was collected by using numerical rating scales which allowed determining whether the students increased their levels of participation in speaking activities. The purpose of these scales was to establish ranks of response and interaction in the students, according to what we observed throughout the execution of the activities prepared for the lesson. These scales helped to compare the levels of students' participation before and after the application of the strategies based on the use of real context. (See Appendix 4 and 5)

After analyzing both scales, it was possible to determine that students showed a significant increase of participation in speaking activities during the lessons where new strategies based on the use of the real context were applied.

Although, contextual teaching may intuitively make sense along the integration of new strategies into their curricula, teachers often need new equipment, new skills, and sometimes even a new attitude towards their job that usually is considered a vocation that born from heart.

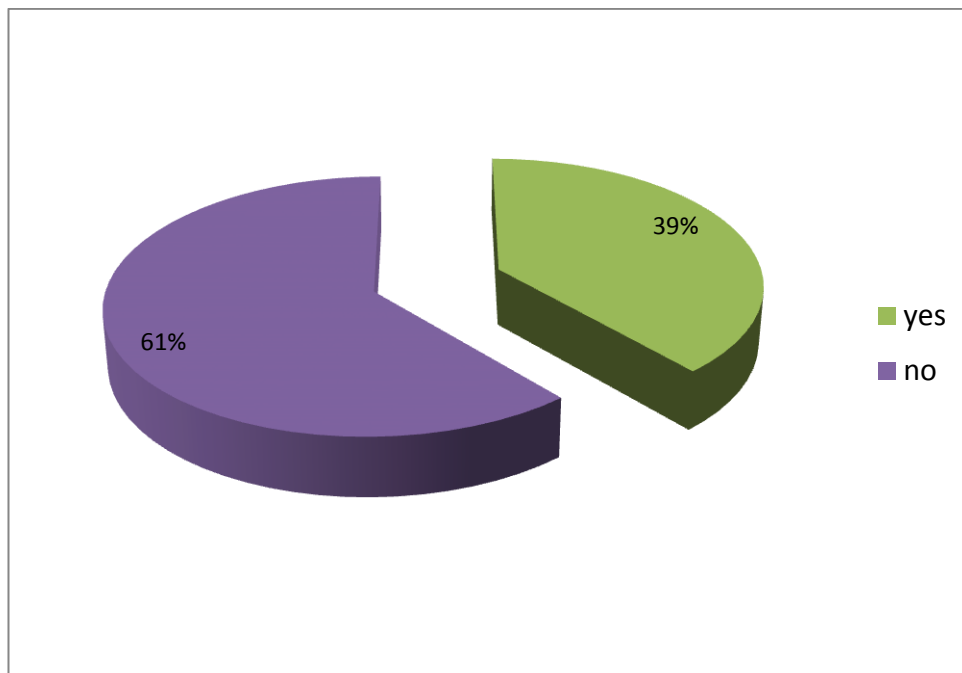
The results, analysis, and interpretation of the questionnaire are shown in the next graphics.

1. Do you think English is important for your future?



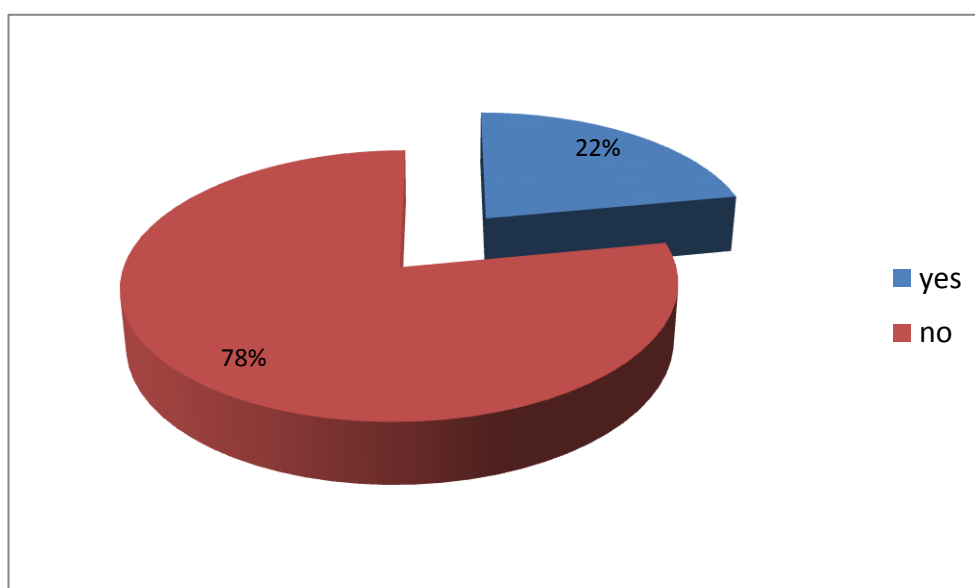
6% (2) of the students think that English language is not important for their future; however, 94% (34) of the students do believe that English language is important for their future. So, they know that English is important for their future, but maybe they do not know the reasons why. Therefore, it is important to tell them the advantages of being bilingual nowadays.

2. Do you like English classes?



39% (14) of the students do like English classes; On the other hand, 61% (22) of the students affirm that they do not like English classes. More ahead we will find the main reasons why they do not like English classes.

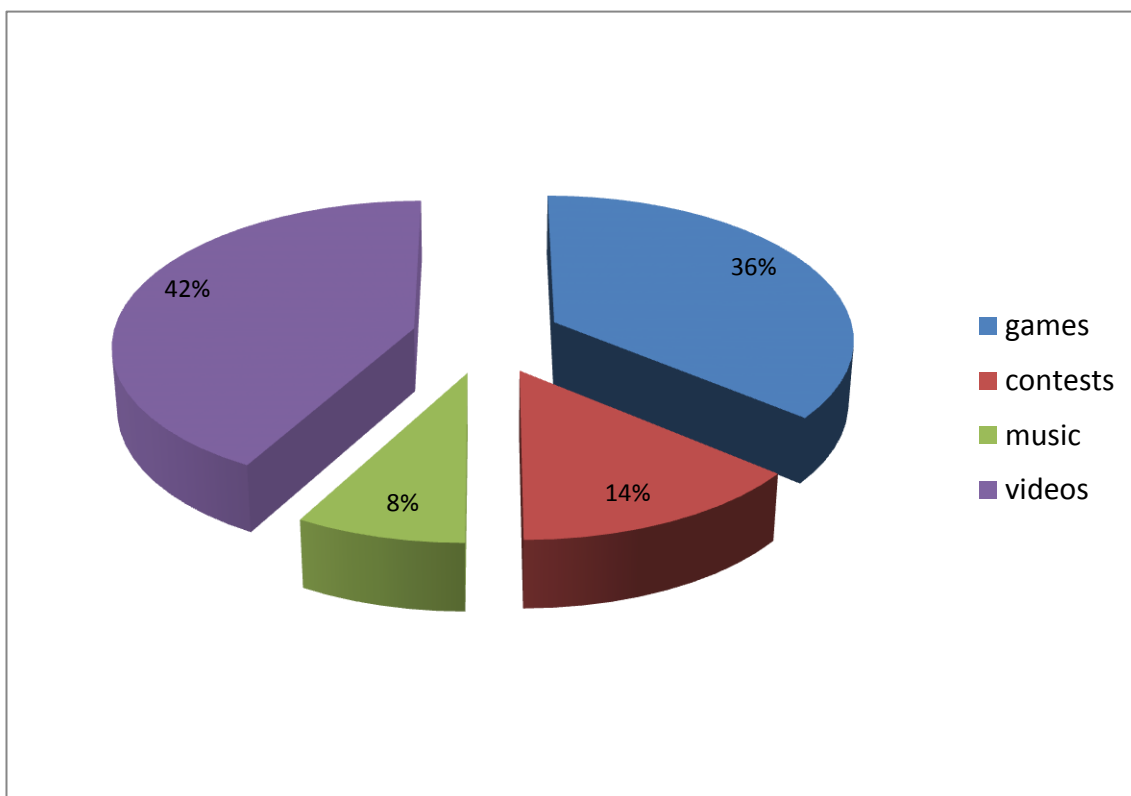
3. Do you like to participate in speaking activities?





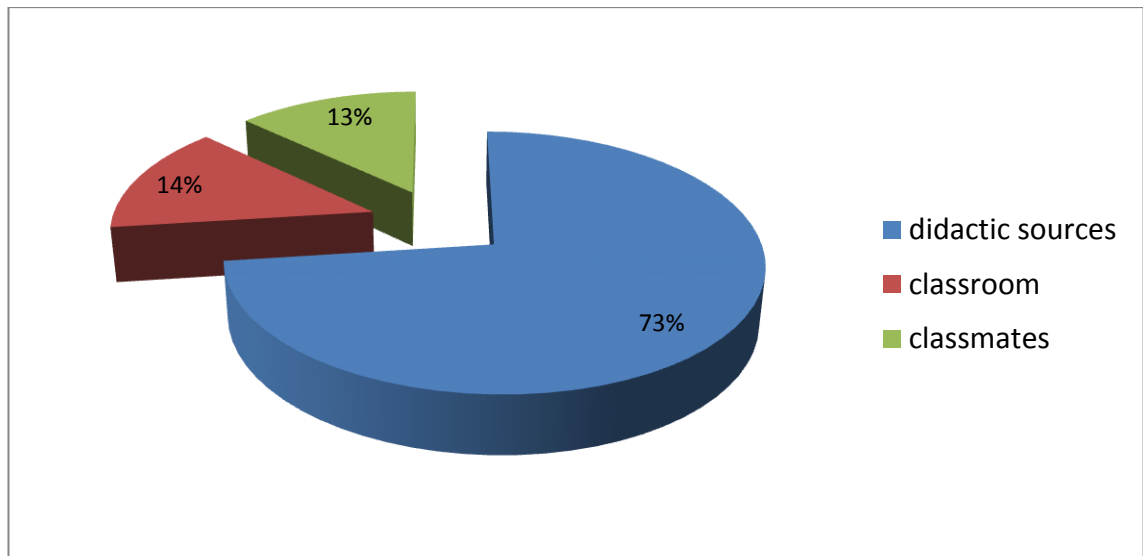
22% (8) of the students like to participate in speaking activities; however, 78% (28) of the students do not like to participate in speaking activities. It is not good at all because the most important skill is the speaking one; it is worthless to know a language if you are not able to talk and to communicate through it.

4. Which of the next activities do you like the most during English classes?



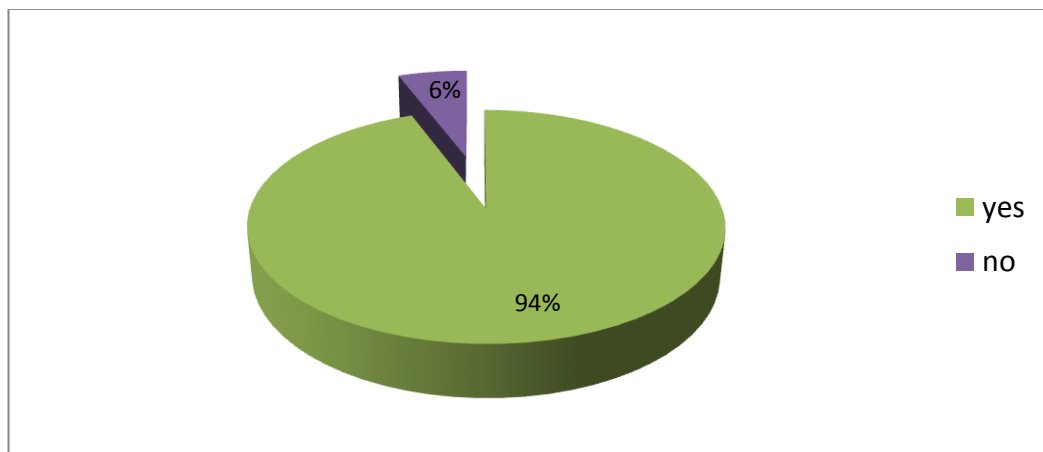
36% (13) of the students like games, 14% (5) like contests, 8% (3) like music, and 42% (15) prefer videos. Therefore, it can be said that most of them prefers to learn through multimedia sources. So the teacher must find the way to teach through these sources.

5. Which of the next items do you think does not contribute to your learning?



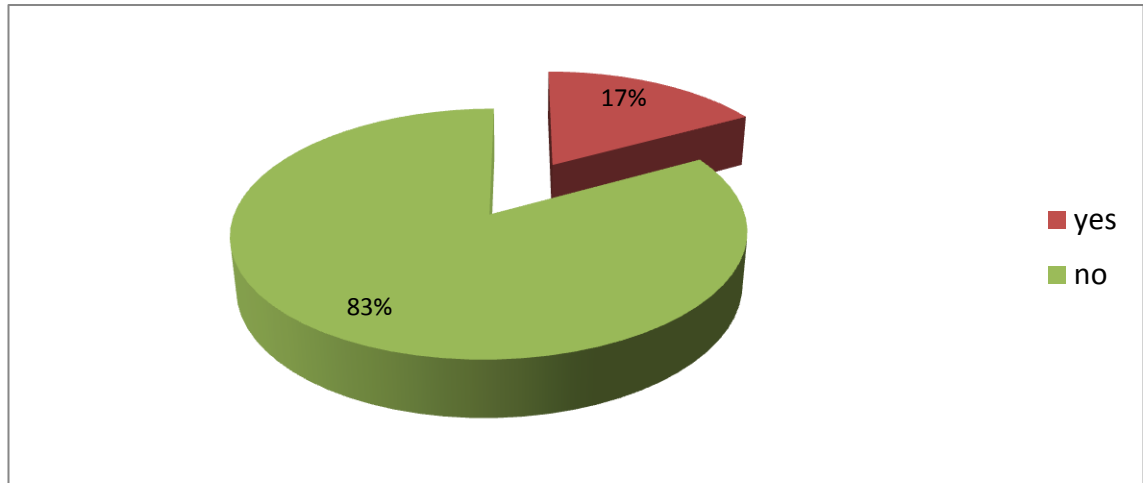
This graphic shows that most of the students (26) think that the didactic sources that the teacher uses are not appropriate or interesting, so they do not contribute to their learning. The teacher must use interesting didactic sources in order to catch their attention.

6. Is your teacher warm, friendly and genuinely interested in your learning progress?



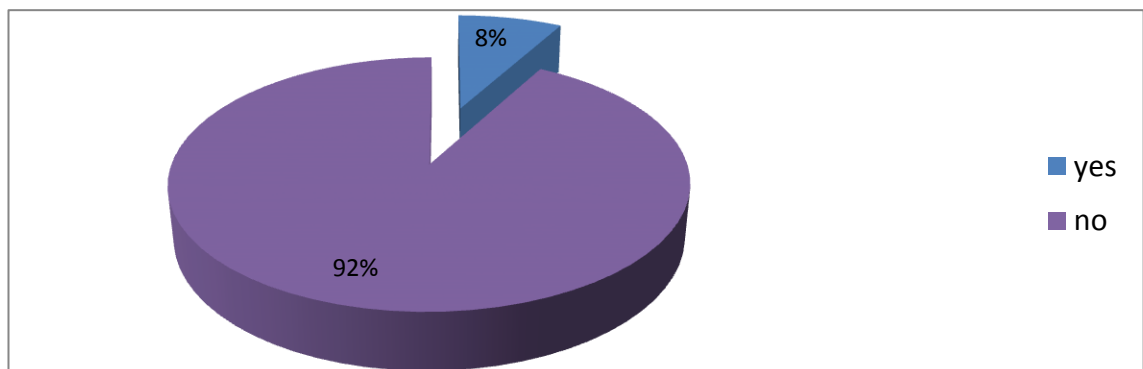
Based on the results, it can be said that the teacher does try to help the students, but maybe she is not using the appropriate strategy because it is not enough to know what to do but how to do. Therefore, the teacher must try new strategies in order to find the one that works better.

7. Does your teacher promote a fellowship environment?



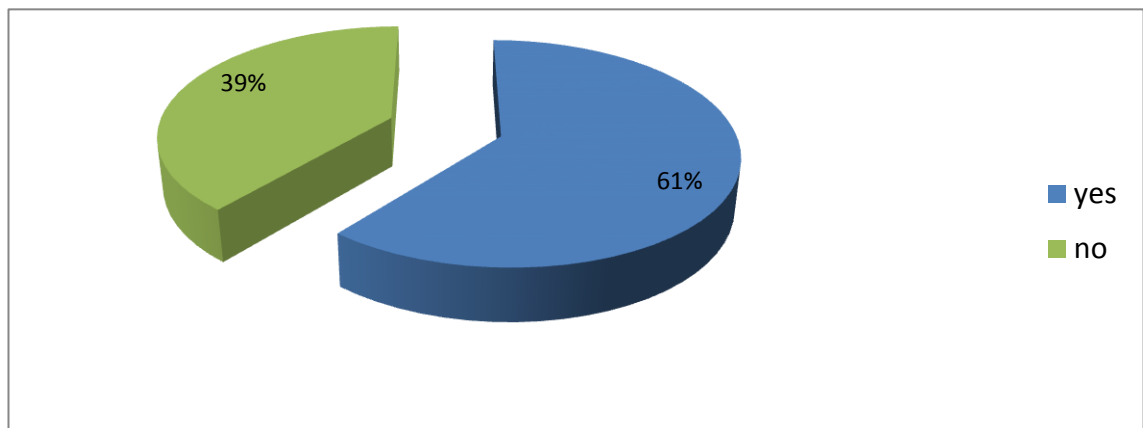
As the graphic shows, most of the students think that the teacher does not promote the class to be united as one. The teacher must invest some time to talk to them about the importance of having good relationships not only in the class but even along the life.

8. Are the topics of the English classes interesting for you?



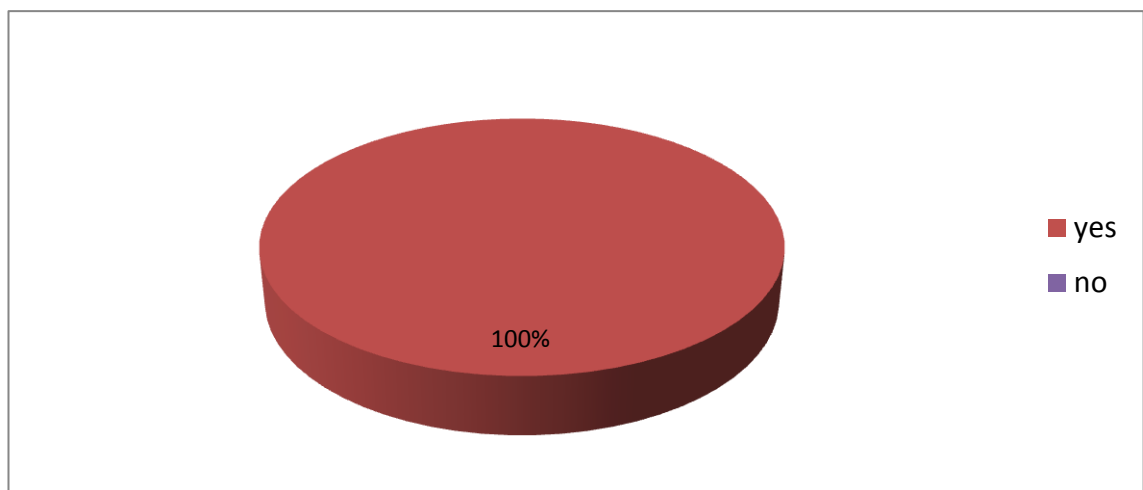
92% (33) of the students think that the topics are not interesting for them. On the other hand, just 8% (3) of them think that the topics are interesting for them. So it is easy to deduce that most of them are bored during classes and for that reason they do not want to participate actively.

9. Is the level of the activities appropriate for your class?



61% (22) of the students do believe that the level of the activities is appropriate for them. On the contrary, 39% (14) of them think that the level of the activities is not appropriate for their class. This difference is given because the level of English in this class goes from good to very bad.

10. Do you think the topics must be addressed to your interests?







100% (36) of the students think that the topics must be addressed to their interests. It means the topics must be related to their daily life in order to make them meaningful and interesting for the students.



## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Conclusions

The research question that motivated this investigatory project was based on the emerged experiences and difficulties during the pre-professional practices that were carried out with this group of students. I really wanted to apply what I learned in the University of Cuenca, especially along the three levels of TEFL. So, the lessons were carried out taking into account the recommendations and the strategies proposed in this subject.

It was pleasant to see the immediate change in the students' behavior when applying the planned classes based on real context, that is to say, based on their interests. It was clear that their level of participation was increased thanks to the implementation of communicative activities with meaningful topics.

The experience of this application was very fruitful for my professional development, because it allowed seeing the strengths and deficiencies that I have as teacher and led me to think of further improvements in the designing of lessons. I do not think that what was done will be enough for keeping their level of participation in speaking activities in English classes because it is necessary a constant motivation and a larger period of exposure to the methodology in order to strengthen their confidence and self-esteem.

As a conclusion, it can be said that the strategies and activities proposed by our teachers of TEFL 1, 2, and 3 are in fact useful and can be applied in our classroom. It is also worth emphasizing that the use of real context can be applied in others fields as well. The challenges that come along with contextual teaching can vary greatly depending on the school or



on the subject. Some subjects in the career and technical fields might allow teachers to use real context easily, but other fields could require teachers to make a little more effort for planning creative lessons.



## 5.2 Recommendations

It is well known that human beings' interests change as they grow; therefore, the recommendation for the ones who are interested in doing any other research on the use of real context for teaching English would be to apply it to other groups of students like children or adults in order to see whether it works as well as it did with the group that this research was focused on (teenagers).

Also, it would be interesting to adapt the use of real context to any other approach and to include more successful studies that corroborate your position about the contextual teaching and learning.



## WORKS CITED

Astudillo, Catalina. *Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL1)*.

University of Cuenca. Ecuador, Cuenca. Press.

Beamon, Glenda. *Brain-Based Teaching with Adolescent Learning in Mind*.

2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Corwin Press. U.S.A, 2007. Web. 22 August. 2013.

Bostrom, Meg. "The 21st Century Teen: Public Perception and Teen Reality."

Frameworks Institute. U.S.A, 2001. Web. 05 September.2013.

Galloway, Ann. "Communicative Language Teaching: An Introduction And

Sample Activities." Cal.org. U.S.A. Web. 20 August. 2013.

Gaschler, Tony. *EL-Method*. Steiner Publishing. U.S.A, 2006. Web. 16

August. 2013.

Hayriye, Kayi. "Teaching Speaking: Activities to Promote Speaking in a

Second Language" University of Nevada. U.S.A, Nevada, 2006.

Web. 22 August. 2013

Kukurs, Robby. "Conquer your Fear of Making Mistakes. "English Harmony,

2010. Web. 23 August. 2013.

Mendez, Norma. Personal interview. 8 April. 2013

Pratt, Catherine. "The Fear of Making Mistakes: They're actually good things,

not bad." Life with Confidence.Web. 28 July. 2013.

Predmore, Sarah R. "Putting it into Context." wflbooces.org. Web. 25 August.

2013.

Robertson, Paul. *English Language learning in the Asian Context*.2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Asian EFL Journal Press. Road Town, Tortola, 2005. Web. 30 July.

2013.



Singmaster, Heather. "Real Context, Real Language." Asia Society. Web. 06 September. 2013.

Yi, Fan. "EFL Classroom Management: Creating a Positive Climate for Learning." Web. 17 August. 2013.



## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1. Questionnaire

1. Do you think English is important for your future?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
2. Do you like English classes?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
3. Do you like to participate in speaking activities?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
4. Which of the next activities do you like the most during English classes?  
A.  Games  
B.  Contests  
C.  Music  
D.  Videos
5. Which of the next items do you think doesn't contribute to your learning?  
A.  Didactic sources  
B.  Classroom  
C.  Classmates
6. Is your teacher warm, friendly and genuinely interested in in your learning progress?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
7. Does your teacher promote a fellowship environment?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
8. Are the topics of the English classes interesting for you?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
9. Is the level of the activities appropriate for your class?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No
10. Do you think the topics must be addressed to your interests?  
A.  Yes  
B.  No



## Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. Do you think that working with teenagers is more difficult than working with children? Why?
2. Which of the four skills do you think is the most important? Why?
3. How do you encourage your students to participate in speaking activities?
4. How do you create confidence in your students?
5. Do you use meaningful context in your speaking activities? How?
6. Do you think that the amount of students in the classroom affects the learning process? Why?
7. Do you think that role plays are good to develop speaking skills? Why?
8. How often do you use them? And what are the topics of the role plays?
9. Do you think that the activities in the student book help to develop their speaking skills? Why?
10. What do you do when a student makes a mistake while he is speaking?





### Appendix 3. Lesson plan model

#### Lesson Plan.

**Subject:** English.

**Teacher:** Carlos Peláez Delgado

**Level:** 9<sup>th</sup> "A"

**Academic Year:** 2012 - 2013

**Aim:** At the end of the lesson, students will be able to give advices to improve someone's look.

**Structure:** You **should/ought to** change your hair style.

**Function:** Giving advices.

**Warm up:** guessing who famous person is.

The class is divided into two groups. Then the teacher shows several pictures of famous people with their faces covered. The group who guess more times will be the winner.

<b>Presentation of the structure and new vocabulary</b>	<b>Mechanical Practice</b>	<b>Meaningful Practice</b>	<b>Production/Evaluation (Communicative activities)</b>
<p>You <b>should/ought to</b> change your hair style.</p> <p>Hair style Pants Shoes T-shirt Shirt Belt Jacket Blouse Dress Shorts Glasses</p>	<p>In this stage, the teacher writes more sentences and read aloud each one. Then the students repeat after him.</p> <p>You should/ought to wear shorts. You should/ought to buy new shoes You should/ought to wear a shirt. You should/ought to change your</p>	<p>In this stage, students are ready to give their own sentences.</p>	<p>Exchanging Personal Information.</p> <p>This is a pair work. Student A has to give student B some advices to improve their look and vice versa.</p>



	hair color.		
--	-------------	--	--

**Sources:** Board, markers, flashcards, pictures.

**Appendix 4. Numerical rating scale before the implementation of the strategies based on the use of real context**

**NUMERICAL RATING SCALE**

**GRADING EQUIVALENCIES:** 5= *Very Much*  
 4= *Much*  
 3= *Some*  
 2= *A Little*  
 1= *Very Little*

	1	2	3	4	5
1.-THE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN CLASS		X			
2.- THE STUDENTS FELT MOTIVATED	X				
3.- THE STUDENTS FELT RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE			X		
4.- THE STUDENTS WERE INTERESTED IN THE CLASS TOPIC	X				
5.- THE STUDENTS FELT ATTRACTED BY THE TEACHER METHODOLOGY	X				
6.- THE STUDENTS WERE EAGER TO SPEAK AT THE END OF THE SESSION	X				
7.- THE STUDENTS LEARNED WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO LEARN (ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE)		X			



**Appendix 5. Numerical rating scale after the implementation of the strategies based on the use of real context**

**NUMERICAL RATING SCALE**

**GRADING EQUIVALENCIES:** 5= *Very Much*  
4= *Much*  
3= *Some*  
2= *A Little*  
1= *Very Little*

	1	2	3	4	5
1.-THE STUDENTS PARTICIPATED ACTIVELY IN CLASS				X	
2.- THE STUDENTS FELT MOTIVATED				X	
3.- THE STUDENTS FELT RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE				X	
4.- THE STUDENTS WERE INTERESTED IN THE CLASS TOPIC					X
5.- THE STUDENTS FELT ATTRACTED BY THE TEACHER METHODOLOGY					X
6.- THE STUDENTS WERE EAGER TO SPEAK AT THE END OF THE SESSION			X		
7.- THE STUDENTS LEARNED WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO LEARN (ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE OBJECTIVE)				X	