UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

"Speaking Activities Used to Cope with Students' Low Oral Proficiency"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter   **Page**

INTRODUCTION

As English Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, the authors of this Action Research have observed that most teachers (including the authors) working in Foreign Language Department (FLD) at the University of El Salvador in charge of the courses aimed at developing the four macro skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (also called Intensive Courses) do not do much to help those students who show a low level of oral proficiency in the target language due to different reasons, such as: overcrowded classrooms, many hours spent dedicated to administrative duties, and the like. The syllabus of the courses mentioned above is usually designed to state the levels that students are going to move on according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) guidelines which are the guidelines currently followed by the teachers in charge of Intensive Courses. Different activities are planned to help take those students to the highest level that has been planned. Different evaluations are designed throughout the course to measure student's progress and, at the end of the semester; a passing grade is assigned to those students who are ready for the next course. The percentages of the evaluation system are distributed in a uneven quantity for each of the four macro skills, given that 70% out of the total 100% is attributed to speaking and the other 30% is distributed among the other three skills (see Annex 3) . Unfortunately, those students with a low level of oral proficiency are the ones that are usually reckoned the worst students to take the course again because they do not reach the level required to be promoted. The question is how much do teachers in charge of the course usually do in order to help those students with proficiency problems?

This present study was carried out at the Foreign Language Department of the University of El Salvador (UES). Being one of the most demanded departments of the UES, the FLD is divided in several areas like linguistics, practice teaching, didactics, and skills development area. Within the skills development area, there are several courses that students take for two years and a half (Intensive Courses). These courses go from Basic Intensive English, Intermediate Intensive English I, Intermediate Intensive English II, Advanced Intensive English I, and Advanced Intensive English II. For the development of the present research, one group of Advanced Intensive English I was chosen as the experimental group.

In order to have a general idea of the structure, content and objectives of the Advanced I program, it is necessary to mention its different components. Advanced Intensive English I is the fourth of five English language courses addressed to *Licenciatura* in English Teaching and Modern Languages *Licenciatura* students. It is aimed at taking students from the upper intermediate level ability in English to the advanced mid level according to he guidelines of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language. According to the program proposed by the professor in charge of the subject, the advanced course is a proficiency oriented course aimed at developing students' ability to use the target language for authentic communication. Students' oral skill would be developed by using authentic materials such as magazines, lyrics, newspapers and videos so that students have the chance to have contact with the real language. Two major rounds of oral evaluations were given through out the term checking students' level of proficiency at the communicative level. Besides, quizzes and oral tasks were included as a way to measure students' capacity to manipulate linguistics forms.

This action research attempts to provide teachers of the FLD of the University of El Salvador with academic ideas in order to be able to help those students with low level of oral proficiency. The authors of this research have divided this work in three main parts. The first part is related to the process followed in order to select those students who complied with the requirements to be eligible for this investigation. They had to fill out an information form and go through an interview with the researchers. Once they were assigned a level, they had to start with the Conversation Club programmed from 12:00-1:00 p.m. form Monday to Thursday. Being this section the actual realization of the action research. The students selected had to follow a special program which is an extension of the Advanced I program. Basically, students are exposed to activities aimed at developing their oral proficiency. The role of the researchers is to monitor the classes and the students' progress through an observation period maintained throughout the course. Finally, the last part of the research is the analysis and the interpretation of the data. In this part, the results of the implementation of the use of the planned strategies in the low proficiency students are compared with the results of those students following the normal Advanced I program. In this part the outcomes of the research are included.

I. JUSTIFICATION

Experience has demonstrated that speaking has been one of the most complicated skills to develop during the language learning process. In El Salvador, learning English as a foreign language is a serious problem because students do not always have the chance of practicing their speaking skill in a real environment. Most of the times, the only opportunity for the students to keep in touch with the target language relies in the classroom environment. The opportunity that each student has to practice the target language in the classroom is reduced due to the over crowdedness of the classrooms. In the Foreign Language Department at the University of El Salvador, where this action research is taking place, the average number of students in each class is 40 and the opportunity for class participation is limited in a one-hour and forty minute class. According to an observation activity developed by the teacher in charge of the Advanced I course, group 02, the average time of oral participation for each student is 3 minutes. Students, therefore, do not have enough opportunities to actively participate in class. Because of teachers' hectic professional schedule, they do not usually have enough time to effectively aid those students who need special attention inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, they are likely to be less successful in becoming proficient speakers of the language because of the limitations to have access to professional assistance. Based on an interview made to *Licda*. Guillermina Varela, professor of Psychopedagogy at the FLD, the consequences from the educational and psychological point of view, make an impact in students' educational and personal life. If students fail a subject they have, for example, to wait for a year in order to take that subject again; therefore, they have to be at the university for one extra year to graduate.

The question up to this point should be: What are teachers of the FLD doing to help the students cope with their low oral proficiency level? Action needs to be taken to remediate this issue. A doctor helps those patients who are weak and sick. It can be said that he does not care that much about those who are enjoying a healthy life; the ones who follow their instructions and eat smart. Although doctors work on check ups and talk to their patients about how to live a healthy life in order to avoid getting sick, their energy should be invested on those patients who are actually sick. The teachers' job should be similar to this. Teachers need to help all the students because it is their responsibility; however, it is also their responsibility to pay special attention to those students who are "sick" and "weak". There are students who, for several reasons, do not accomplish the objectives of the class. They have a lot of difficulties to perform successfully and therefore they do not advance and somehow do not keep up with the rest of the group. Of course, there are several problems that students may have in the classroom related to different areas; however, due to the limitations of this research, the attention will be concentrated on the speaking ability because it is with this skill that students seem to have more problems. The present action research project is aimed at finding out if different speaking activities carried out in an extra curricular plan will help low oral proficiency students cope with the requirement of the Advanced Intensive English course, group 02, semester II-2009 and be promoted to the next level.

II. OBJECTIVES

II.I General Objective:

Improve the level of oral proficiency of the students from the Advanced English I course, group 02, semester II-2009 of the Foreign Language Department who have been classified as not having the oral proficiency level required to be promoted to the following course, Advanced Intensive English II.

II. II Specific Objectives:

1- Identify the speaking activities that can help improve the oral proficiency of students.

2- Help the students through activities implemented in the extracurricular plan reach the objectives of the Advanced English I course.

3- Provide a bank of speaking activities to the staff of the Foreign Language Department to be consulted when encountering this concern.

4- Present evidence to the staff of the Foreign Language Department of the need of extra curricular activities where students have the chance to reinforce their speaking ability.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Foreign Language Department began as a foreign language academy in the year 1956, where the languages that were taught were English and French. In the present, the department offers a B.A. in English Teaching, a B.A. in Modern Languages, a Professorship in English Teaching, and a Master in Translation, and a Master in English Didactics. Approximately six years ago, the different careers that the department offered were not in high demand as they are nowadays making it difficult for the teachers to cope with the large groups that they are assigned each semester. In the past, the methodology applied by the teachers focused on the active participation of all the students which aimed at developing the four macro skills in the learning of English (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) correctly. Nowadays, it is almost impossible to have an active participation of all the students in the classroom since each class has an average of forty five to fifty students making it more difficult to develop the four macro skills properly. While the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL) of the United States, in its guidelines and policies state that in a class where a foreign language is taught, and in which the four macro skills are equally focalized, the number of students must not be higher than twenty per class. It also argues that the ideal number of students per class should be fifteen (Association of Departments of Foreign Languages at http://www.adfl.org/). This ideal number of students in a classroom where English is taught would help to develop the students' proficiency in the language.

In this overwhelming context in which the FLD is immersed, it becomes difficult for the teachers to develop the four macro skills equally due to the large classes they have to attend. The teachers of the department work with an integrated skills approach in which almost the same amount of time is dedicated to work with all the skills.

Developing the students' writing, reading, and listening skills is not a big issue since the three of them can be practiced and carried out outside the classroom to improve their language performance. But this is not the case of speaking in view of the fact that English is not a second language in El Salvador, it is a Foreign Language, and the only opportunity that students have to practice the language is inside the classroom. In intensive language programs, as the Foreign Service Institute, the Defense Language Institute, and the Peace Corps where languages are taught under more nearly ideal conditions than in academic institutions, it has been found that selected, capable, highly motivated learners under the best audio-lingual training conditions devised, and concentrating full time on language study alone, require (depending on the language and the student) from 800 to over 2,000 "contact" hours of training to attain a level of proficiency adequate for a normal use of the language (Blair, 1982). That amount of hours exceed the time available in five semesters of language classes meeting for two hours, four days a week that the students of the FLD are immersed in. Thus, the probabilities for the students of the FLD to become average users of English are low let alone for those students who are already having problems learning the language.

It is clear that the students from the Foreign Language Department do not have enough oral opportunities to practice the language in their English class let alone outside the classroom. This lack of opportunities eventually ends up harming those students that are already performing poorly in their speaking skill, rarely the case for the other three skills. These students that have a low oral performance, compared to the performance of the rest of their classmates, need to be provided with opportunities to cope with the demands of the course's objectives, specifically, concerning speaking, being the case of study. This additional practice of the language where different activities can be applied

would reinforce the students' oral performance and as a consequence improve their performance in the other three skills. By working in a smaller group based on student's needs they would benefit more from the different activities planned by the teacher. Previous findings have shown that learners use considerably more language, and exploit a greater range of language functions when working in small groups (Nunan, 1991). If students are given the opportunity to have additional practice in a smaller group of the tasks that they have to carry out, the final outcomes of these oral tasks would be better than without having this extra practice. Brown *et al* state that repeated practice of a task may enable learners to improve their oral performance (*Brown et al.* 1984: 123). In addition, Nunan argues that speaking performance is enhanced by the rehearsal of a given task under different conditions (Nunan, 1991). These conditions can be seen as the different activities that can be carried out in the smaller group to rehearse the task which later would be presented as the final product. .

The issue of choosing the appropriate activities to improve the oral performance of the students is crucial. Long (1981) found that information gap activities prompted significantly more linguistic/conversational adjustments. Nunan (1991) also states that conversational activities where negotiation of meaning takes place, provide learners with the opportunity to push to the limit their emerging competence, and that they may also force learners to impose syntax on their language.

The activities that teachers plan to use to help the students improve their oral performance in the Conversation Club must also be wisely chosen. Nolasco & Arthur (1987:105,106) propose a list of activities that would result beneficial at the time of providing extra practice to the students:

- Memorizing a list of words

- Doing grammar exercises

- Reading a book or magazine in English

- Arrange yourselves in groups and take a time period of one hour a day for five days a week. (Brown, 1994)

These and the activities provided by other authors mentioned above will take

part in the investigation

If teachers together with students who are willing to improve their language competence work together a program aside from the existing one with the aim of improving their oral, or any other skill's competence, the outcomes would be satisfying for both. It's a matter of looking for the ways to improve in the area that it is needed.

III. I CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

The authors of this project have selected 12 students from the Advanced I course, group 02. The twelve of the students are females. Due to the fact that the general objective of this project is to improve students' oral performance, the students chosen to be part of the "Conversation Club" were the ones who had a low level of oral proficiency. In order to determine the level of the students, the researchers had to ask the teachers from the different groups of Intermediate II to let them have access to the evaluation reports. These reports provided important input in order to determine which students would be appropriate candidates for the research.

Something outstanding about the students' attitude, once they knew about the purpose of the project, was their willingness to succeed and cooperate in order to achieve their goals. This is evident in the following paragraphs.

Once the students were selected, they were asked about their interest in taking an extra course (Conversation Club) in order to help them develop their speaking skills. They were also informed about the researchers' interest in helping them improve their grades in their normal Advanced I course. The students were in fact informed about the program of the Conversation Club (ANNEX 4) in which they could find the information about the course description, the objectives, the course methodology and the evaluation.

Once the students were informed about the Conversation Club, they expressed their interest in taking part of the project and they were all willing and able to attend their normal class from 7-9a.m. and be part of the selected group working from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. The attitude the students had in this moment was crucial for the success of the project. The students in fact showed real interest in being helped because although all of them had a hectic schedule, one hundred percent of them said they would be in class and follow the program proposed.

The students being described not only promised to be in the Conversation Club but they also fulfilled the promised. At the end of the course 91.7 % of the students finished the "ADVANCED INTENSIVE ENGLISH I CONVERSATION CLUB" program. What had been expected from them was accomplished due to the fact that most of them followed the instructions and had an active participation in the different activities developed in the class.

Another important characteristic of the students was their willingness to learn. It is important to mention not only about their work in their Conversation Club but also their work in the Advanced I course. Their progress in their regular Advanced English I course was seen in their interest to participate more in class, hold dicussions in group work, they were observed practicing their English outside the class, their attitude towards learning the language was positive, and what could probably be more important to them, the increase in their scores was evident.

Finally, it is important to mention that the present research was only possible because there was a perfect match between the nature of the research and the characteristics of the students who were involved in this investigation. The research was created in order to help those students in need and the students in need were willing to be helped indeed.

IV. METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH

The present research is categorized as being action research which is defined as a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion. Often, action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday, real problems experienced in classrooms, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather than dealing with the theoretical part, action research allows teachers to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influence and make change. Teachers are responsible for making more and more decisions in their classrooms, and they are being held publicly accountable for student achievement results. The process of action research assists educators in assessing needs, documenting the steps of inquiry, analyzing data, and making informed decisions that can lead to desired outcomes (Watts, 1985).

This action research is being analyzed from a qualitative perspective. Lincoln (2000) claims that a qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Having observed a specific issue or problem in the Advanced I group 02, semester II-2009, it became necessary to design a plan of action which would help carry out the research successfully.

IV.I PLAN OF ACTION:

1. Preliminary investigation: collect information about the grades students got in the previous course regarding speaking.

   a. Identify the students that had low grades in speaking through the academic records of the previous course, Intermediate II, I-09

   b. Identify which of these students will be registered in the advanced group 02, schedule 7:00-9:00.

   c. Identify 11 students from another Advance I group (the control group) who have low oral performance following the same procedure mentioned in 1.a. It was thought of eleven students for the control group since it was the same number of students which make up the experimental group.

   d. Determine the experimental group and the control group.

2. Implement the use of speaking strategies applied in the Conversation Club with the experimental group throughout the term. It is important to highlight that the control group was not implementing the speaking strategies being used in the Conversation Club.

3. Collect and organize results of all the oral evaluations, including the oral tasks, of the experimental group's performance during the implementation of the Conversation Club.

4. Collect and organize results of all the oral evaluations, including the oral tasks, of the control group's performance during the process.

5. Compare and analyze results of the control group as well as the experimental group during the semester

IV.II Students Involved in the Study

The first insight of information which was revised in order to select the students was the academic records of the previous courses, being these the Intermediate Intensive English II courses. It was important to identify in these academic records all the students who had been enrolled in the Advanced I group 02 since they contain the record of the students' grades. This was the first step to choose the students who would be involved in the project. The next step was to identify the students who had obtained the lowest grades paying specific attention to the students' oral grades being this the focus of the study. Once the students with the lowest oral grades were identified it became necessary to verify these grades with the teachers who had worked with all these students in the previous course and confirm that their oral performance for the Advance I level was low. The researchers considered the information provided by the previous teachers valuable, given that sometimes students' scores are low because they do not prepare for the evaluation and not necessarily because their performance is poor. With this information, the researchers found useful to implement an instrument that would give information of what were the specific needs of the students to cope with the requirements of the Advanced English I course. For this purpose it was decided to make use of a practical instrument that measures student's oral proficiency level, the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview) which is based on the standards of the ACTFL guidelines (Annex 7). It is important to mention at this point that the Department of Foreign Languages works with these guidelines as a reference for its programs. The twelve interviews were recorded with the objective of rechecking students' oral performance and their needs.

After completing the selection process of the students to be involved in the study, the researchers concluded that twelve students were going to be part of the research, but at the end

only eleven students could complete the project. The twelve students were females, ages eighteen to twenty-five. One student dropped out due to personal problems.

As pointed out in the Plan of Action, it was necessary to have a control group in order to contrast the results obtained from the experimental group. To have a similar number of students in the control group, eleven students were also chosen to become the group to be analyzed. The students chosen in the control group had to undergo the same procedure for the selection process as the experimental group in order for the comparison to be reliable. The control group was made up of seven females and four males, ages from 17 to 23.

IV.III Other instruments to be used:

1. A student's personal information sheet was designed to have a profile of each of the twelve students. It was necessary to know whether the students had a DVD and a CD player at home because special activities would be carried out with the use of this equipment. It was also important to know the students' schedule to decide the time in which the Conversation Club would take place without overlapping with the students' schedule.

2. Speaking strategies were designed according to students' needs and according to the English advanced I requirements.

3. A special syllabus was designed to carry out the Conversation Club in which the speaking strategies would be developed with those students involved in the experimental group. The Conversation Club took place from Monday through Thursday, from twelve to one o'clock and it lasted 13 weeks.

4. A Conversation Club weekly report was written down to keep track of the activities implemented in the conversation club.

5. Students' improvement was measured through the different oral evaluations carried out in both groups, such as oral tasks, midterm and final oral exams. At the end the data was analyzed, and the final grades were also compared.

V ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION OF DATA AND OUTCOMES

Chart 1.1

Experimental group, Task 1 and 2

Chart 1.1 reflects the average results of the two oral tasks that were administered to the students that participated in the Conversation Club of the Advanced English I course, group 02 (Experimental Group) which was carried out during semester II-09. It is worth mentioning that all the students of the Advanced I courses were assigned the same tasks. The first oral task was assigned to the students on the second week of the semester and it took place on the fourth week of the semester. The first Oral Task was a dramatization in which students had to work in groups of four or five and they had to simulate different situations. They were asked to hand in the script of their dramatizations days before the task took place. The second oral task was a presentation about a research that they had to do and they had to present all the parts of the research, for example, the methodology they implemented, the instruments they used to collect information, and the findings.

In the graph, it can be observed that in the first task the average grade of the eleven students was 8.5. The results were satisfactory, for the students had been rehearsing their lines on the dramatization in the Conversation Club under the tutor's guidance. Better outcomes resulted from Task II since the average grade of the eleven students for this task was 8.7. This task took place almost at the end of the semester, two weeks before the final Exams. The students in the Conversation Club were given guidelines and tips of how to carry out an oral presentation. They also did activities such as impromptus speech, vocabulary practice, discussions and giving opinions about a book they had read, videos they had watched, and so on. There was time for rehearsal of their oral presentations, where the tutor gave feedback concerning grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and content since these aspects were part of the evaluation criteria. A slight but valuable change can be observed in the students' oral performance at the end of the two tasks. It can be inferred that the activities that were carried out during the extra practice the students had in the Conversation Club contributed to the improvement of the students' oral performance.

Chart 1.2

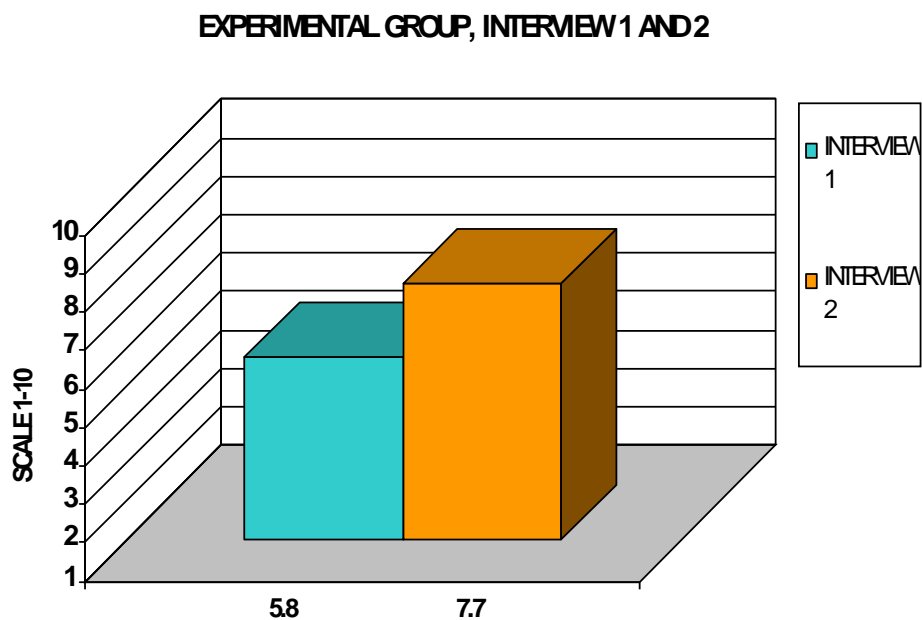## EXPERIMENTAL GROUP, INTERVIEW 1 AND 2

Chart 1.2 shows the results of the two major oral evaluations that are administered in a semester, the midterm oral exam that is done after the first half of the semester, and the final oral exam at the end of the semester.   For the purpose of the research they will be called Interview 1 and Interview 2 respectively. The Average grade of the eleven students in Interview 1 was 5.8 and in Interview 2, 7.7. A big improvement in the students' oral performance can be observed due to their immersion in the Conversation Club where they had the opportunity to practice their speaking through a variety of activities and strategies. Chances are that the students' oral performance would not have improved significantly without the additional practice they had received according to the results shown in chart 1.6 below where a comparison of the experimental group and the control group is made. And in worst cases, there is a possibility that some of the students would have failed the course if they had not been provided the opportunity to improve their performance in speaking.
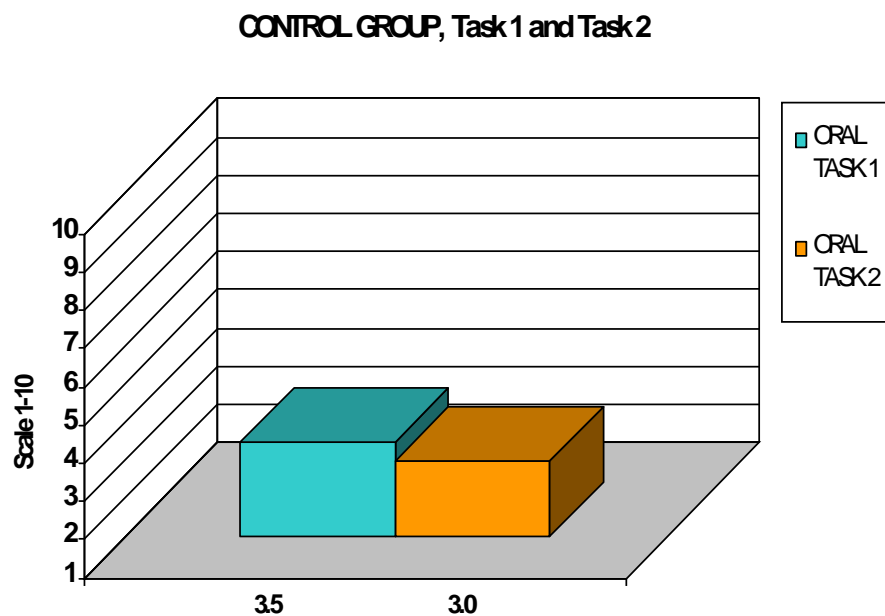
Chart 1.3

CONTROL GROUP, Task 1 and Task 2

Chart 1.3 reflects the average of the grades obtained in the Oral Tasks that administered to the control group. The students in the control group of Advanced English I, group 01, with low oral performances were not receiving any additional practice in speaking rather than the practice received in their regular English Advanced I course. It is important to remind the reader that the same tasks were administered to both, the experimental and the control groups. The average grade obtained in the First Oral Task was 3.5. This means that the students' oral performance was poor and that they were in need of help. It was expected that the performance of the students would increase in the Second Oral Task since their exposure to the language would have increased. But the results were rather disappointing, for the score of the Second Oral Task was 3.0; instead of increasing their general average in their oral performance it had decreased in 0.5 points. It can be inferred that these students need additional help such as the one provided to the experimental group so they can be supported with their speaking.

Chart 1.4

CONTROL GROUP, INTERVIEW 1 AND 2
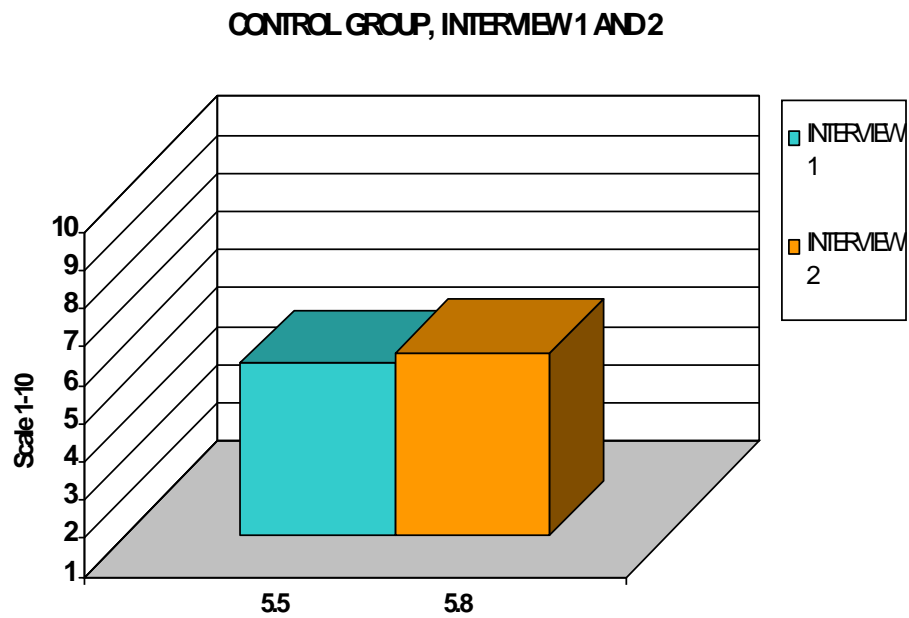
Graph 1.4 illustrates the average results of the two interviews that students of the control group took. It can be observed that the students' oral performance in Interview 1 was very low and that something needed to be done to reinforce this skill in the students. The results of Interview 2 were almost the same as in Interview 1. No significant change was seen in the students' speaking performance. It is obvious that no actions were taken to remedy the students' deficiency in the skill.

Chart 1.5

**COMPARISON: EXPERIMENTAL AND
CONTROL GROUPS**
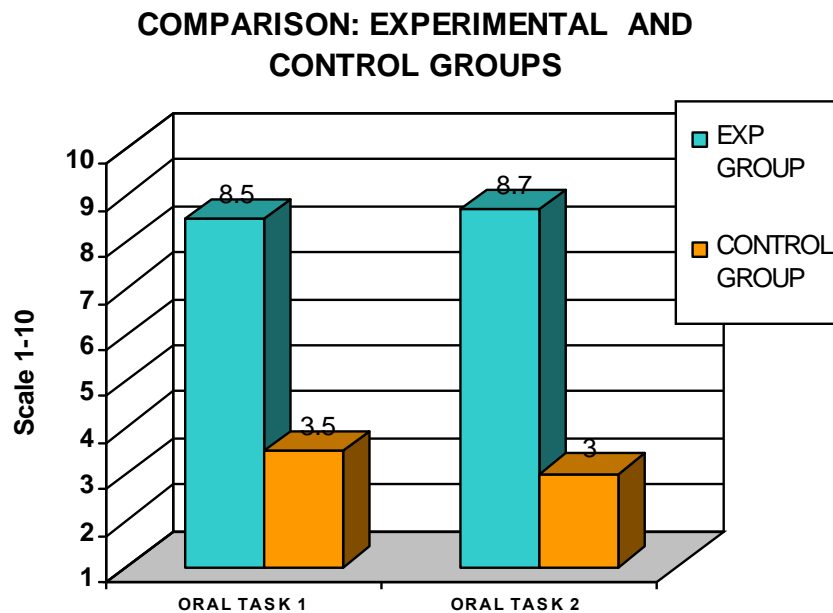
Chart 1.5 shows a comparative chart of the results of the average grades of the oral tasks that were administered to the experimental and the control group. In the First Oral Task, the Control group had an average grade of 3.5 while the Experimental group had 8.5, having a difference of 5.0 points. There is a tremendous difference in the outcomes of this first oral task. It can be assumed that the extra practice in speaking when using different oral activities, strategies and techniques had made the dramatic difference. In Task two, the difference on the average grade of both groups is even more emphatic. There is a difference of 5.7 points, being the highest grades from the experimental group. From these results, it can be demonstrated that when applying different speaking strategies to help students overcome their low oral performance, the outcomes are rewarding.

Chart 1.6

**COMPARISON: EXPERIMENTAL AND
CONTROL GROUPS**
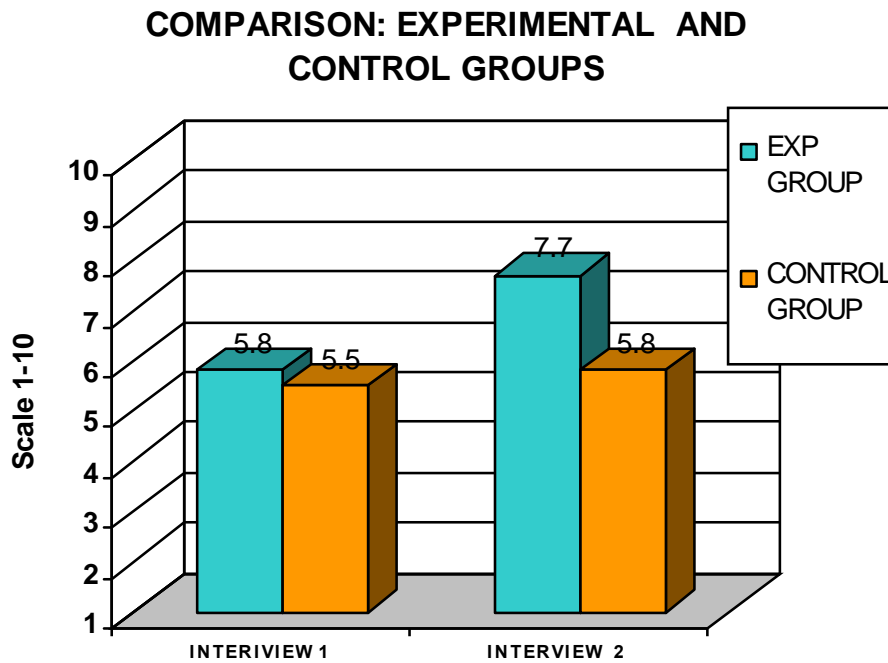
Chart 1.6 demonstrates a comparison between the average grades obtained in Interviews 1 and 2 of the experimental and the control group. It can be shown that in Interview 1 there is a difference of 0.2 points between the two groups. An even greater difference can be seen in Interview 2 among the two groups where the difference is of 1.9 points. It can be assumed that what made the difference between the results of the two interviews was the influence of everything that was taking place in the Conversation Club with the experimental group leaving the control group in disadvantage.

Chart 1.7

COMPARISON OF EXPERIMENTAL AND CONTROL GROUPS
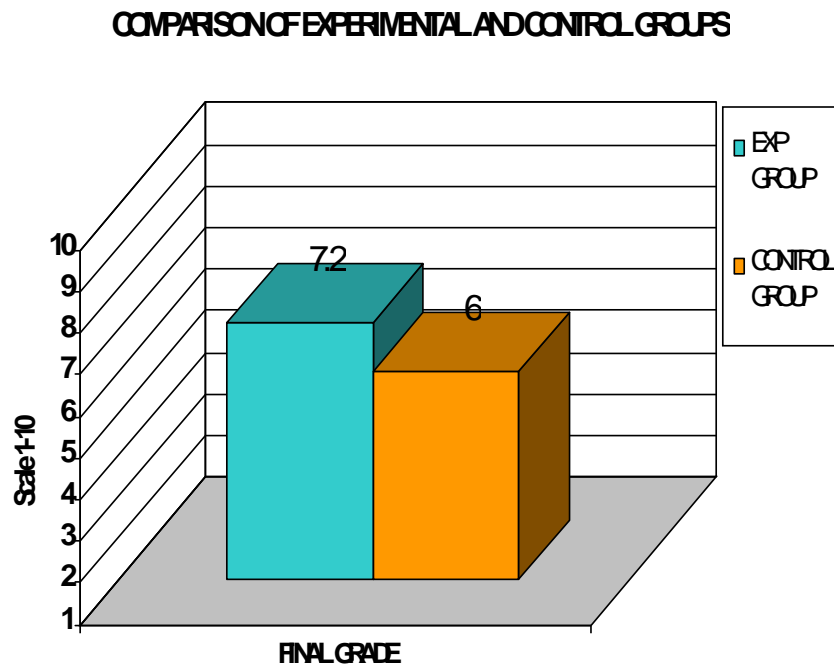
Chart 1.7 demonstrates the impact the Conversation Club had in the final grades of the experimental group compared to the Control group's final outcomes. The average final grade of the eleven students that participated in the experiment was 7.2 while the control group's was 6.0. It is important to mention that chart 1.7 reflects not only the percentage assigned to speaking but it also reflects the percentage assigned to listening, reading and writing. Therefore, the final grade of both groups is a sum of the percentages assigned to each of the four macro skill. According to the evaluation system stated in the syllabus, a total of 50% was assigned to speaking. On the other hand, the other 50% was assigned to the other three macro skills. From the 50% assigned to speaking only 15% is given to the oral tasks while the oral interviews are given a higher percentage of 35%. It can be observed that the final grades do not reflect a big difference among the results of both groups, but this is due to the different percentages assigned to the two types of

oral activities that were evaluated. Nevertheless, there is still a marked difference in the outcomes of the experimental group in relation to the control group due to the opportunity that was provided to the participants of the Conversation Club.

It is also important to notice that if the average grade of speaking evaluations is obtained for both groups, the results add up to the fact that extra support offered to the experimental group was effective as it can be seen in chart 1.8.

Chart 1.8

AVERAGE OF ORAL EVALUATIONS OF CONTROL AND EXPERIMENTAL GROUPS

- EXP GROUP
- CONTROL GROUP

7,7

5

SCALE 1-10

AVERAGE
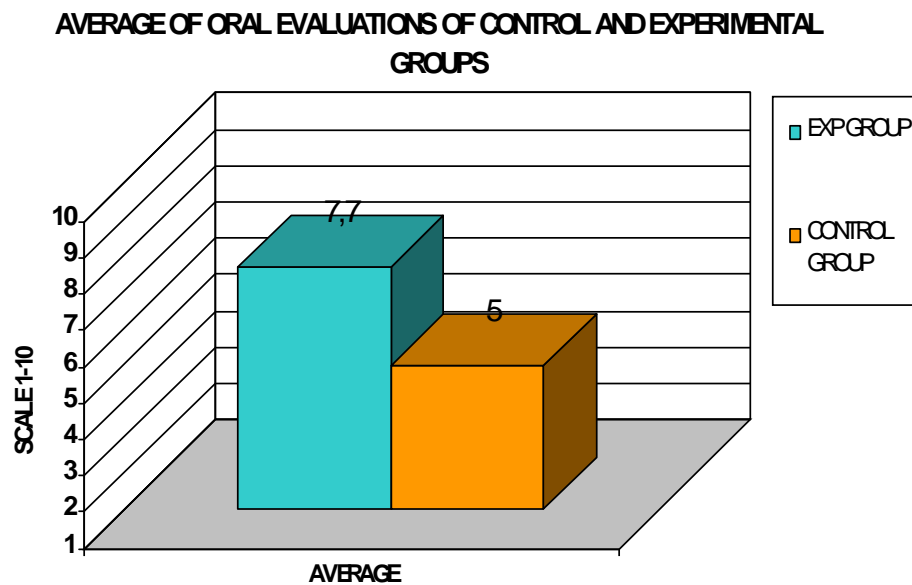
VI. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the outcomes of this research, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Speaking strategies and activities such as: role plays, group discussion, impromptus speech, video presentations, oral presentations, listening to videos and the like were identified to be successful in order to help students improve their oral proficiency.

- Due to the opportunity provided to the students with low oral proficiency they were able to practice their speaking and enhance their oral proficiency.

- Through the implementation of the different activities in the Conversation Club, the students were able to accomplish the objectives stated in the Advanced Intensive English I syllabus and were promoted to the Advanced Intensive English II.

- It was observed that the oral participation of the students involved in the experimental group had increased in their Advanced Intensive English I course as it was pointed out by the teacher in charge of group 02.

- Not all the students from the control group achieved the objectives stated in the Advanced Intensive English I syllabus and for this reason they were not promoted

to the Advanced Intensive English II level. Out of the eleven students involved in the control group, only six students were promoted to the next level and the other five failed.   It can be assumed that if actions, like the ones taken by the experimental group, had been taken, there is a big chance for most if not all students to have been promoted to the Advanced Intensive English II level

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the outcomes of this research, the following recommendations can be drawn:

- Teachers should remember that students have different needs and they are responsible to detect those needs. Some students require to be given additional help in their learning process. Once teachers detect students' needs, they are also responsible of offering a feasible solution to those needs even if it requires extra work from the teachers and students.

- In order to help students with low oral performance, teachers should offer them an extracurricular option in which they are exposed to develop their speaking skills by following a program that matches students' needs. Students should be exposed to different activities which will enable them to fill the gap they have in any of the four macro-skills.

- Extracurricular programs as the Conversation Club should be promoted by the outreach committee of the FLD in order to be carried out by qualified students who are about to do their outreach project.

VIII.   BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1
GRADES AND AVERAGES OF EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

N°	Students' Names	T1	T2	O1	O2	FG
	University of El Salvador					
	School of arts and Sciences					
	Department of Foreign Languages					
N°	Students' Names	T1	T2	O1	O2	FG
1	Álvares Flores, Johanna Claribel	10,0	9,5	7,6	9,5	7,8
2	Amaya R. Claudia Verónica	8,5	8,3	4,1	7,0	6,9
3	Cornejo, Deysi del Carmen	9,6	9,5	6,4	8,7	7,8
4	Fabián Menjivar, Sandra Carolina	8,1	9,1	6,2	7,3	7,2
5	Hernández L. Rocio Abigail	8,1	7,2	4,1	4,7	5,7
6	Henriquez , Karla Esmeralda	9,2	9,1	7,0	8,8	7,6
7	Luna Morán, Ana Ruth	7,6	8,7	5,2	6,5	6,3
8	Orellana Ayala, Tatiana Mireya	7,8	8,3	5,3	7,8	7,1
9	Polanco Fuentes, Claudia Nineth	6,6	9,5	5,3	8,1	7,3
10	Urquilla , Kenia Xiomara	8,2	7,9	6,1	7,1	7,3
11	Zavaleta Cañas, Ada Elisa	9,5	9,1	6,8	9,2	8,2
		8,5	8,7	5,8	7,7	

ANNEX 2
GRADES AND AVERAGES OF CONTROL GROUP

	AVERAGE					
		T1	T2	O1	O2	NF
1	ALVAREZ RODRÍGUEZ LORENA RAQUEL	3,3	3,3	6,0	6,5	6,4
2	BARRERA MENDEZ CARLOS ANDRES	4,3	4,3	5,2	8,5	6,4
3	CISNEROS LOPEZ DEYSI EVANGELINA	3,5	3,5	6,4	7,0	6,6
4	FUENTES GARCIA CARLOS ALFONSO	4,4	4,4	6,5	8,7	6,8
5	HERNANDEZ LOPEZ ERICKA GUADALUPE	3,5	3,5	6,6	7,0	6,3
6	MARTINEZ ABREGO CLAUDIA GUADALUPE	2,9	6,4	5,0	5,8	5,2
7	MIGUEL BERNAL HUGO EDGARDO	0,0	0,0	5,5	0,0	5,6
8	OLMEDO CRUZ CELIA ALCIRA	3,0	3,0	6,0	6,0	5,9
9	PEREZ HERNANDEZ ERNESTO ANTONIO	1,8	1,8	3,3	3,5	4,9
10	RAMIREZ CAMPOS JENNIFER VERALIS	8,5	0,0	4,5	5,0	5,0
11	RODRIGUEZ AQUINO KATHERINE VANESSA	3,0	3,0	5,4	5,9	6,6
		3,5	3,0	5,5	5,8	

ANNEX 3
ADVANCED I SYLLABUS

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

ADVANCED INTENSIVE ENGLISH I

GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject:	ADVANCED INTENSIVE ENGLISH I
Code:	IAI114
Pre-requisite:	Intermediate intensive English II
Credits:	8
Major:	Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés, Opción Enseñanza
Academic Year:	II-2009
Level and Area:	Third academic year, Macro-skills Development area
Academic Unit in Charge:	Foreign Language Department
School:	Sciences and Humanities
Course Length:	16 weeks

No. of working hours/weeks: 16 weeks, 160 hours

Date and C.S.U. agreement of

the curricular program: 70-99-2003 (v-2.8) August 17th, 2001

Schedule: Instructors:

> 01 7:00 – 9:00   Cecilia del Carmen Reyes de Amaya
> 02 7:00 – 9:00   Claudia Marina Vides de
> Guzmán
> 03 9:00 – 11: 00   José Ludwig Cornejo Cabrera

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Advanced Intensive English I is the fourth of five English language courses addressed to Licenciatura in English Teaching and Modern Languages Licenciatura Students. Instruction in this course will take students from the upper intermediate level ability in English to the Advanced mid level as described in the ACTFL (The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) guidelines.

This course will provide language development and practice through tasks and activities that will enable students to reach a solid advanced mid level in each of the four language skills: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. Each of these skills will be addressed discretely (attending to their subcomponents) and globally (attending to their communicative intent) to provide both the analytic and experiential language learning balance required for effective development of the target level of proficiency .

 In addition the grammar and pronunciation sub-skills will be promoted in the classroom to make sure effective communication, at the level previously mentioned, is achieved. This effective communication will be reached by giving students the opportunity to analyze and experience language in use.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES
1. To enable the students to narrate and describe using paragraph length discourse.
2. To understand main ideas and most details of connected discourse on a variety of simple and complex topics.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

Concerning Speaking
1. Handle complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining and apologizing.
2. Communicate facts and talk about topics of current public and personal interest using general interest using general vocabulary.
3. Narrate and describe with some details linking sentences together smoothly.

Concerning Listening
1. Understand main ideas and relevant details of most speech in standard English.
2. Be aware of cohesive devices, but may not be able to use them to follow the sequence of thought in an oral text.

Concerning Reading
1. Read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length.
2. Get main ideas, though missing some details.
3. To narrate simple short stories, new items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, letters, and simple technical material written for the general reader.

Concerning Writing
1. Meet a limited number of cohesive devices.
2. Write social, formal and informal correspondence (memos, resume, personal letters, etc).
3. Write about the concrete aspects of topics relating to particular and general interests.
4. Describe and narrate personal experiences fully.

CONTENTS

ADVANCED INTENSIVE ENGLISH

FUNCTIONS	SKILLS	CONTENT	GRAMMAR
• Able to understand main ideas and most details of connected discourse on a variety of topics beyond the immediacy of the situation. • Can describe and narrate in different time frames or aspects, such as present, nonpast, habitual, or imperfective. • Texts may include interviews, short lectures on familiar topics and news items and reports primarily dealing with factual information.	**Listening**	General topics such as… • Radio interviews, Radio shows, Radio discussion. • Talks between a patient and psychiatrist, parents and daughter. • Anecdotes, a college lecture, a model presentation, personal experiences, etc. • Advertisements, magazine articles, extracts, poems, medical extracts, newspaper articles, internet ads. • Quotes, schedules, book introductions, etc.	• Review of the simple past and present perfect • Review of the passive voice • Adverb clauses of contrast, purpose, and time statement • Modals and phrasal modals • Modals of speculation about the past • Phrasal verbs Midterm exam

• Able to read somewhat longer prose of several paragraphs in length, particularly if presented with a clear underlying structure. The prose is predominantly in familiar sentence patterns. • Reader gets the main ideas and facts and misses some details. Comprehension derives not only from situational and subject matter knowledge but from increasing control of the language. • Texts at this level include descriptions and narrations such as simple short stories, news items, bibliographical information, social notices, personal correspondence, routinized business letters and simple technical material written for the general reader.	**Reading**	Sources and topics such as: • Advertisements, book extracts, magazine articles. • Biographies, auto biographies, medical articles, internet quizzes. • Newspaper articles, schedules, newspaper columns.	• The past perfect • Gerunds and infinitives • Subject relative clauses • Embedded questions • Present and past unreal condition • Reported speech Final exam

• Speakers at the Advanced-Mid level are able to handle with ease and confidence a large number of communicative tasks. They participate actively in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics relating to work, school, home, and leisure activities, as well as to events of current, public, and personal interest or individual relevance. • Advanced-Mid speakers demonstrate the ability to narrate and describe in all major time frames (past, present, and future) by providing a full account, with good control of aspect, as they adapt flexibly to the demands of the conversation. Narration and description tend to be combined and interwoven to relate relevant and supporting facts in connected, paragraph-length discourse. • Advanced-Mid speakers can handle successfully and with relative ease the linguistic challenges presented by a	**Speaking**	Activities such as… • Talking about memory • Describing dreams • Discussing crime • Assessing achievement • Problem solving • Discussing marriage • Discussing music and dance • Talking about childhood • Discussing health • Talking about status • Giving advice • Debating • Talking about and awarding prizes • Discussing time management • Agreeing and disagreeing • Analyzing decisions • Describing routines • Comparing stories • Talking about varieties of English • Comparing spoken and written English • Discussing culture clashes • Talking and debating about immigration • Discussing biculturalism	

	Writing	General topics such as: • Paragraph writing • Short stories, tourism leaflet and advertisements, different kinds of letters • Personal profiles, e-mails, childhood vacations, movie reviews, magazine articles, quiz questions.	
• Able to write routine social correspondence and join sentences in simple discourse of at least several paragraphs in length on familiar topics. • Can write simple social correspondence, take notes, write cohesive summaries and resumes, as well as narratives and descriptions of a factual nature. • Good control of the morphology and the most frequently used syntactic structures, e.g., common word order patterns, coordination, subordination, but makes frequent errors in producing complex sentences. • Can use a limited number of cohesive devices, such as pronouns, accurately.			

COURSE METHODOLOGY

This is a proficiency oriented English course in which materials, in-class and out-class activities, and error correction will aim at helping students to use the target language for authentic communication. Besides the course materials the teacher will make use of authentic materials such as magazines, lyrics, newspapers videos to give students the chance to have contact with real language. In addition, the mastery of grammatical structures will give students the opportunity to make an efficient use of the different language functions that will make the learning of the target language not only meaningful but also rewarding and effective. The teacher will set real-life-like situations to give students the opportunity to use the language to express their own opinions and share their knowledge and experiences.

Activities will range from controlled accuracy-based activities (drills, transformation exercises, fill-in the blanks exercises, scrambled sentences and the like) to fluency-based communicative activities (role plays, problem solving activities, discussions, relaying interaction activities, writing journals, tasks based activities, etc.). Along the same line, errors will be corrected, mainly, during controlled practice activities, where the focus is on accuracy (form), and self-correction or peer-correction techniques should be implemented to encourage students solve their own problems with the new language.

 Teacher correction should be used only when self- correction and peer-correction techniques do not work. In addition, during the communicative activities teachers should concentrate on what students say (message) and use correction techniques only when the error affects the message the students try to convey. Students will also carry out extensive reading which will help them to improve their competence in the language. .

EVALUATION

In order to achieve **the advanced mid level of proficiency** in all four skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing will be evaluated separately; the micro skills will be evaluated through discrete point evaluation checking for accuracy, and the macro-skills will be evaluated through global or holistic types of evaluation, paying attention to fluency. To check the students' level of proficiency at the communicative level, holistic or integrative types of evaluation will be used in two major evaluation rounds.

Students' capacity to manipulate linguistic forms will be evaluated with quizzes and oral presentations; These discrete point quizzes and tasks will address the different skills and sub skills worked on in this course.

3 Quizzes	**15%**
2 tasks	**15%**
Midterm (Oral 50% Written 50%)	**35%**
Final exam (Oral 50% Written 50%)	<u>**35%**</u>
	100%

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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CLASSROOM RULES

1. **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** Students' active participation is required.
2. **IN-CLASS STUDENTS' BEHAVIOR:** At the teacher's discretion, the students who show a disruptive behavior or refuse to participate in the class activities may be asked to leave the classroom.
3. **MISSED EVALUATIONS:** Requests presenting a genuine written justification for missed evaluation should be made within the next three days following it. Quizzes are NOT made up.

4. **COURSE MATERIALS:** It is MANDATORY for all students to have their own required materials for attending classes. Students who fail to do so will be asked to leave the classroom until they get it.

5. **HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES:** Students must turn in their homework assignments on the due dates; excuses are NOT accepted unless they are valid ones – a certified sickness or death of a close relative.

6. **NO GROUP CHANGES ARE ALLOWED.**

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR

SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

ADVANCED INTENSIVE ENGLISH I

CONVERSATION CLUB

GENERAL INFORMATION

Subject: "Conversation Club" (From the ADVANCED
                                       INTENSIVE ENGLISH I group 02)

Major: Licenciatura en Idioma Inglés, Opción Enseñanza

Academic Year: II-2009

Level and Area: Third academic year, Macro-skills Development area

Academic Unit in Charge: Foreign Language Department

School: Sciences and Humanities

Course Length: 16 weeks

No. of working hours/weeks: 16 weeks, 160 hours

Schedule: 11-12   Nancy Margarita Zuniga

Coordinators: Licda. Claudia Marina Vides de Guzmán

                                       Lic.   Ricardo Cabrera Martínez

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The "Conversation Club" is part of an Action Research project aimed at investigating students'
effective learning when implementing extra speaking strategies. This course is addressed to a
total of 12 students chosen from the Advanced Intensive English group 02. Students chosen for
this course are going to be exposed to different speaking strategies such as: working with videos,
role plays, pair and group discussion, oral presentations, prompt speech activities, interviews,
dramas, debates, and book discussions, . These strategies are designed to develop students'

speaking skill. Instruction in this course will complement the objectives proposed in the Advanced course program and it will take as reference the description depicted in the ACTFL (The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) guidelines.

GENERAL OBJECTIVES

3. Help those students with specific speaking problems function in the desired level according to the Advanced I English program by implementing in-class speaking strategies and techniques according to their necessities.

4. By following the instructions of a tutor in charge of the "Conversation Club" in the intensive use of extra curricular activities, students will be able to perform more efficiently in speaking than those students who follow the normal program of the Advance I.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
Concerning Speaking

4. Handle complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining and apologizing.

5. Communicate facts and talk about topics of current public and personal interest using general vocabulary.

6. Narrate and describe with some details linking sentences together smoothly.

COURSE METHODOLOGY

This is a proficiency oriented English course in which materials, in-class and out-class activities, and error correction will aim at helping students to use the target language for authentic communication. Besides the course materials the teacher will make use of authentic materials such as magazines, lyrics, newspapers videos to give students the chance to have contact with real language. The teacher will set real-life-like situations to give students the opportunity to use the language to express their own opinions and share their knowledge and experiences.

Activities will focus basically on the implementation of speaking strategies that will promote the development of the student's speaking skill.

EVALUATION

Students will be assessed daily based on their active participation in the in-class activities as well as on their participation through their extra-curricular activities. For this purpose there will be instruments of control created by the researchers in charge of the project. Besides, students will also be evaluated at the end of the term by means of an oral interview based on the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Stempleski Susan, World Pass Advanced (textbook, workbook, video and CD ROM)
- The American Council of the Teaching of Foreign Languages, Oral Proficiency Interview Tester Training Manual, The Office Ink in Hasting-on-Hudson, New York, 1989.

ANNEX 6
WEEKLY REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR **SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES** **FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT**
CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT
WEEK: <u>01</u> , DATES: <u>August 25th – August 27th 2009</u>   HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u> **MAIN ACTIVITIES** ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Introductory activity. This activity was carried out in order to create a rapport with the Sts of the conversation club. The tutor introduced herself and Sts were free to ask questions, in addition, all of the students had the opportunity to introduce themselves and had the chance to ask questions about their classmates.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Program discussion; in this activity the program of the conversation club was explained to the group, they ask their questions in order to have a clear a perspective on what they will be required to do in this club.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** <u>Video presentation, in this activity Sts were given a video work sheet of unit 2 "Destination Chile" of the World Pass. This was a pair work activity in which Sts discussed the different section on the work sheet; finally, they shared their opinions as a class.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Role play activity, this was a pair work activity in which Sts were given 5 minutes in order to prepare an interview for a program. One of the Sts was the interviewer and the other the interviewee. They used the vocabulary learned in their English Class and the information they got from the video.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** <u>Group discussion, as a complementary activity for their English class, Sts discussed the form of a short Essay or article with the tutor.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** <u>Pair discussion, Sts worked in pairs in order to talk about the touristic place in El Salvador that they will choose in order to write their article.</u> ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY#7:** <u>Oral presentations, Sts were given 5 minutes to organize the ideas they had brainstormed with their partner about their topic for the article. To continue the activity each Sts make an oral presentation of their topic with the structure of a paragraph: topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence.</u> ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** <u>At the end of each session Sts were given feedback related to grammar structure, pronunciation, and fluency, showing great interest and improving most of their mistakes.</u>

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB
WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 02 , DATES: August 31st – September 3rd   2009   HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Pre-listening activity. In the activity Sts were given 4 minutes in order to work with a partner and predict what the listening would be about.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: While- listening, during this time Sts were paying attention to the listening and at the end of each statement Sts had time to discuss the answers, then they presented them to the whole group.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Post-listening, in pairs and based on the information gotten from the listening, Sts discussed which food they used to eat was when they were in high school.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Outdoor activity, in order to give Sts a sense of confidence, they were taken outside the room. They were assigned to work in groups of three to create a short scene about a social issue, after that they present it in front of their classmates and other spectators.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Feedback activity, after each group presented their scene, the rest of the Sts gave feedback about the good things they did in their scene and about the things they could improve. Finally, the tutor added some comments on the pronunciation of some words, intonation, and pauses.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Prompt speech pair work, Sts were given a piece of paper containing two social issues that are common in El Salvador, after that they decided which topic to present and each pair was given 6 minutes to organized their presentation with the following pattern: Problem, Consequences, and Solution. After that they presented their topic to the class.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** At the end of each session Sts received feedback on their pronunciation and grammatical structure. Sts improved most of their problem while speaking some of the grammatical structures were the same in order to check their improvements.

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB
WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: <u>03</u> , DATES: <u>September 7th – September10th 2009</u>   HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u>

MAIN ACTIVITIES

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Group discussion, Sts were given 5 minutes to think about the improvements the classmate next to them has made in their oral ability. After that each St made a short constructive comment on the person they chose.</u>

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Interviews, in groups of 3 Sts were given 6 minutes to make up a short interview related to a social issue that occurs inside the university. One student was the interviewer and the other 2 were the interviewees and one would be against and the other one in favor of the problem. This little interview was presented to the whole class.</u>

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY#3:** <u>Discussion, in this activity Sts had the opportunity to work with a different pair in order to discuss one of the topics that were presented the previous day. After that and as a whole class, each pair shared their points of view to create a group discussion. Giving different solutions to the problems that they presented.</u>

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Prompt speech, each pair chose a topic to present to rest of the class as a manner to show the way they feel about the problem and personally how they would change it or improve the situation by themselves.</u>

✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** <u>At the end of the sessions, Sts were given the chance to have a peer evaluation with regard to their pronunciation, grammar, and fluency. They have improved in many aspects since in each sessions they are required to recall some of the previous and most common mistakes they were making in previous sessions.</u>

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB
WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: <u>04</u> , DATES: <u>September 16th – September 17th   2009</u>   HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u>

<u>MAIN ACTIVITIES</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Drama presentation, Sts had the chance to work with their classmates of their Drama for their English class. Each group had 8 minutes to create a scene related to their original drama in order to improvise and presented to the whole class.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Feedback activity, at the end of each little presentation the Sts that were the audience gave their opinions on the things that they liked and the ones that they could have improved.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** <u>Video discussions, Sts were assigned to work on the video of unit 4 "Boys Vs. Girls. Along with the discussion Sts were sharing their answers for the exercises on the video work sheet.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Follow up activity, in order to contextualize the vocabulary learned in the video Sts shared experiences related to the topic "Boys Vs. Girls"</u>

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** <u>During the two sessions of this week Sts show a great deal of confidence in their participations. They have improved the pronunciation of some words that were recurrent mistakes at the moment of speaking as well as some grammatical structures that used to represent a problem for them.</u>

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB
WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: <u>02</u> , DATES: <u>September 21st – September 23rd   2009</u>   HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u>

MAIN ACTIVITIES

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Book discussion:</u> the group was assigned to read a short novel" Pride and prejudice" and during the activity we discussed chapter number one.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Oral presentation;</u> in groups of 5 and 6 students were given 8 minutes to work on two different topics. The presentation was to show contrast between some situation in the book and the real life situations.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** <u>Book discussion,</u> Sts were asked to present an oral summary of chapter 2. One of the students began the narration and the rest added more and more information on the chapter.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Debate;</u> the group was divided into three groups. One group "against", the other one "for, and the third group was the jury. Using the expression for a debate learned in their English course. The topic was the role of marriage in the society.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** <u>Book discussion,</u> the group discussed chapter number three. First they gave an oral summary of the chapter and they gave their opinions on the chapter.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** <u>Follow up activity,</u> Sts were given a scene from chapter three and the group was divided into groups of four. They have 5 minutes to rehearse the scene and finally they acted it up.

✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Sts have shown interest in the activities by having good and strong opinions about the book they are reading. However some sts are missing the sessions of this week.

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SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
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CONVERSATION CLUB
WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: <u>02</u> , DATES: <u>September 28th - October 1st 2009</u>   HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u>

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Book discussion,</u> Sts presented a summary on chapter number 4 and relate the chapter with previous chapters. To see the development of the story.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Question of the day,</u> What is your favorite dream? In pairs sts discussed the performances of their classmates in their English course. After that they decided which was the best one and why.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** <u>Book discussion,</u> Sts discussed chapter number 5 by giving their opinions on the event of this chapter creating a connection among the other chapters and they made predictions on the rest of the story.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Follow up activity,</u> to continue with chapter number 5 Sts Chose a character from the story. After that they compared this character with a person they know in real life that presents the treats of the character. Comparing and contrasting and giving reasons why<u>.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** <u>Book discussion,</u> this time the groups made prediction on chapter 6 because they did not read it, so the task was to preview the events of the chapter.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** <u>Follow up activity,</u> to continue with the chapter Sts made a presentation about: How relationships among people were seen in the book and nowadays.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Some Sts are more interested on the activities of the club. Most of them are not attending because of homework in their subject. But the ones that have kept attending are showing improvements in their speaking skill

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 07 , DATES: October 5th – October 8th   2009 HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Book discussion; one volunteer gave a short summary of chapter number 7 of the book "Pride and Prejudice". After that short summary the rest of the group post their opinions on the chapter. Creating a good rapport in relation to the opinions posted by their classmates.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Pen Pal; Sts Chose a nickname for themselves but nobody in the group should know it. Each nickname was written in a piece of paper that was put in a box. After that Sts picked on piece of paper with a different nickname in order to write to this person a short opinion about the previous chapters of this book.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Book discussion, Chapter number 8 was discussed in this session. In here some students were not in agreement with some aspects that were described by their classmates so they created a real discussion based on what they read from the chapter.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Pen pal; this activity gave the chance to the group to answer back the comment that was written by one of their classmates through the piece of paper. In this opportunity an to conclude the activity Each student had to guess who was the owner of each nickname depending on the way the opinions were stated.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Grammar review; during this session Sts mentioned some of the problems that they were dealing with in their English class. To continue another tutor was brought so together we could explain to this Sts the situation they did not understand.

✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Follow up activity, after receiving feed back the structure just learned by Sts was put into practice using short conversation. So grammar could be in context

✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Thought some Sts dropped the club out for different reasons; for instance, one of the students interrupted her participation on the conversation club because of her job's schedule, other two students because they had homework to do and the reason was that they cannot deal with both responsibilities. Fortunately, the ones that are still there are doing their best in the activities assigned to them. These students still have problems in their pronunciation and grammar but they are improving.

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
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CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 08 , DATES: October 12th – October 15th 2009 HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Grammar presentation, every student was in charge of presenting one grammar focus. Students wanted to have the experience of being in front of the group to explain a grammatical structure that was chosen by them.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Feedback, the tutor was in charge of correcting the oral mistakes made by the students; besides, the tutor gave more information on the structures explain by the student.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Reading activity, from an article gotten by one of the students related to the topic "bullying". The activity was that each of the students read one paragraph from the article.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Peer evaluation; Students that were listening to their classmates had the task of correcting the mistakes of their classmates while they were reading the article.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Vocabulary presentation; two of the students were in charge of presenting a new word, this time the words were Phrasal verbs. The dynamic followed the structure of Presentation, Practice and Production. Giving the chance to their classmates to use the word in sentences.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Grammar presentation; Two of the students were in charge of developing the topic on Cohesive devices, with the structure of a PPP class. The rest have the opportunity to use the words on their opinions about their classmates mini class.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** This week, students were in charge of taking control of their learning in relation to speaking activities to improve their speaking skill. So far, they have done a good effort but they can still improve. Some of them are still enthusiastic about being in the club; however, the rest of them are attending in a very irregular way most of the time because they have other homework to do in their subjects.

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 09 , DATES: October 19th – October 22nd   2009 HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Oral activity, in order to get ready for their oral midterm exam students were given the following topic "movie review". They worked individually to recalled information about their favorite movie in order to use the vocabulary of unit number 1 of their English textbook.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Follow up activity, to continue with the topic of the movie, Each student presented her information about the favorite movie before the class as an oral presentation and at the end of each participation the tutor gave comments on their performance and the correction of mistakes was carried out at the end of the session.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Oral presentation, the activity was based on talking about an atypical regime of any country of the world. For this topic they brought information since it was assigned in their last session, Some of them presented about Germany during the second world war.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Feedback, the tutor gave comments on the structure students should follow in order to get a more organized presentation.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Conversation, with a classmate students had a conversation on their school days an the type of educative system we have in El Salvador and they made a comparison with the educative system in the EE.UU.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Peer evaluation, since students were working in pairs the way to correct mistakes was among themselves. The tutor was monitoring the activities in order to give an overall comment of the students' performance.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Students were interested on practicing their vocabulary related to the units for the oral presentation. Some other decided to do it on their own that is way they did not attend club. The ones that were attending are showing interest in the activity and on the improvement of their speaking skill. Though, they still have troubles with pronunciation and grammar. They can do better if they continue practicing.

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 10 , DATES: November 3rd – November 5th   2009 HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Conversation, as a whole group students and the tutor discussed about the "bullying" taking into account the parents performance. In this topic students presented their own experiences.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Feedback, as usual the tutor provides feedback in relation to pronunciation and to some techniques that can be use in order to improve the pronunciation of some difficult words.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Debate, Students were divided in two groups. One group was in favor and the second one against the following topic: "a language teacher should be a native speaker of that language".

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Follow up activity, one of the students was the judge, and at the end of the debate the judge gave a verdict selecting one couple as the winner of the debate based on the arguments they presented while debating.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Oral presentation, during this activity student had 7 minutes to think of a person who has done something important in their communities. After that they presented the topic with the structure of introduction, supporting details, and a conclusion and using cohesive devices in their speech.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Feedback, at the end of the presentations the tutor gave general comments on the structure students used while talking. Besides, feedback on grammar, pronunciation and intonation was given.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #7:** Review, the activity was carried out to allow students ask questions in relation to the vocabulary, the structure of a presentation on some techniques about narrowing a topic down in order to present in their oral exam.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Definitely, the students that have decided to stay in the project of the conversation club are very motivated because they are the students that from the very beginning of this project have been very constant because they have attended the club in a 90% of the sessions. Their effort is showing good outcomes because they have had long conversations with me as tutor showing a great interest on learning and improving.

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 11 , DATES: November 9ᵗʰ – November 12ᵗʰ   HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**:. Discussion, this activity was develop by two of the students. They brought a novel whose name is "Rebecca" . The purpose of the activity was to present a summary of the book divided in three parts: Introduction, Supporting details, and conclusion, Students wanted to be in charge of their activity because they were interested on the experience of conducting their own activities.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Feedback, as tutor, I am in charge of giving comments and correcting mistakes with the language but as in some other session the ones that were listening made their comments based on what know about the book because they have read it as well.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** Grammar in context; during this session Sts presented a grammar structure, Prepositions, they wanted to use the structure in conversations but having more background before talking so the student that presented the topic monitored this activity.
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- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Self-evaluation, students were assigned to correct themselves after the conversation they have with their partners in relation to the correct way to use certain types of preposition, the tutor monitored the activity.
- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Play a song, in this activity the task for the group was to listen to the song. After, they received the lyrics of the song and with the tutor they discuss about the messages they got from the song. After that as group they discussed about the different expressions they listened in the song.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** Last week students were eager to practice in the club because they wanted to get better grades on their oral exams some of them passed the exam but the others failed it, for that reason they did not continue attending the club. In contrast, the ones who passed the exam and were still attending were the ones who proposed the activities that have been carried out during this week because they wanted to have a more active participation in the conversation club. As well as two other students that failed the exam but they want to make the effort to get a better grade in their final oral exam. so for some students failing had a negative impact but for some others it encouraged them to continue attending the club.

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: 12 , DATES: November 16th – November 19th 2009 HOUR: 12:00-1:00

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: Oral presentation; this time students themselves were in charge of presented contents related to the following topics: Adverb clauses and Happiness. The purpose was let the Students take a more active role in the conversation club by giving them the opportunity to act as the teacher instead as the pupil.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: Feedback activity; during this time the tutor was in charge on giving feedback to the students that presented the topics. The purpose for this activity was to let Students know about the oral mistakes they presented including mistakes using the tenses, the pronunciation of some words and of course the structure used to present the information.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3**: Long conversation; the task assigned to this student was to try to maintain a conversation for more than thirty minutes. The task was completed successfully.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** Feedback activity; in order to help the student the tutor presented a series of oral mistakes made by the student when having the conversation with the tutor. The mistakes were mostly related to pronunciation and tenses use and the student had the chance to present more doubts.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #5:** Oral Presentation; during the presentation student had the responsibility to present a topic. Asking and answering questions from the audience was part of the dynamic as well.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** Feedback activity; with the help of the audience in this case the rest of the students we presented the different mistakes that the student made while presented the topic so that Students can be aware of the mistakes and how to improve them positively.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #7:** Oral presentation; the 4 students presented their topics. Following the same dynamic of the previous days.

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #8:** Feedback activity; this time the tutor not only gave feedback I relation to the oral performance but some grammatical structures were explain in order to show students the common mistakes in grammar they made while presenting.

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** In spite of the fact that more than the 50% of the students in the conversation club dropped it out for different reasons; there are students that keep doing their best in the activities assigned to them. This week the assignments were oral presentations in which students must apply a structure for presenting a topic. The structure was presented by the tutor and their teacher in their English course.

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SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
FOREIGN LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT

CONVERSATION CLUB WEEKLY REPORT

WEEK: <u>0</u> , DATES: <u>November 23rd – November 25th 2009</u> HOUR: <u>12:00-1:00</u>

MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #1**: <u>Long conversation, in this task the student was assigned to have a long conversation using phrases from the English course. The objective was to check the progress this student is doing in order to have long conversations with the tutor.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #2**: <u>Feedback, after the conversation the tutor was in charge of correcting the oral mistakes of the student, taking in to account grammar, pronunciation, and fluency.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #3:** <u>Oral presentation, in this task the students has to present a topic using the structure of introduction, supporting details, and conclusion to practice for their oral presentation in English. The topic was "How to handle stress".</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #4:** <u>Peer evaluation, in order to see if students pay attention to their classmates they were in charge of making the corrections to their classmates. After that, the tutor gave an overall comment to the group.</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY#5:** <u>Oral presentation, as last time students presented a topic following the same structure of introduction, supporting details, and conclusions. The topic was "Aquatic predators".</u>

- ✓ **SPEAKING ACTIVITY #6:** <u>Peer evaluation, to follow the same dynamic students made the corrections on their classmates. At the end of the session the tutor gave an overall comment on the group's performance.</u>

- ✓ **STUDENTS' EVALUATION:** <u>This week students have been motivated because they wanted to practice for their oral final exam in their English course that is an oral presentation so most of them have been working on their speaking skill and with the help of their classmates they are taking control of their learning.</u>

ACTFL guidelines: Speaking--Novice

General Description

The Novice level is characterized by the ability to communicate minimally with learned material.

Novice-Low

Oral production consists of isolated words and perhaps a few high-frequency phrases. Essentially no functional communicative ability.

Novice-Mid

Oral production continues to consist of isolated words and learned phrases within very predictable areas of need, although quantity is increased. Vocabulary is sufficient only for handling simple, elementary needs and expressing basic courtesies. Utterances rarely consist of more than two or three words and show frequent long pauses and repetition of interlocutor's words. Speaker may have some difficulty producing even the simplest utterances. Some Novice-Mid speakers will be understood only with great difficulty.

Novice-High

Able to satisfy partially the requirements of basic communicative exchanges by relying heavily on learned utterances but occasionally expanding these through simple recombinations of their elements. Can ask questions or make statements involving learned material. Shows signs of spontaneity although this falls short of real autonomy of expression. Speech continues to consist of learned utterances rather than of personalized, situationally adapted ones. Vocabulary centers on areas such as basic objects, places, and most common kinship terms. Pronunciation may still be strongly influenced by first language. Errors are frequent and, in spite of repetition, some Novice-High speakers will have difficulty being understood even by sympathetic interlocutors.

ACTFL guidelines: Speaking—Intermediate

General Description

The Intermediate level is characterized by the speaker's ability to:

- create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements, though primarily in a reactive mode
- initiate, minimally sustain, and close in a simple way basic communicative tasks

- ask and answer questions.

Intermediate-Low

Able to handle successfully a limited number of interactive, task-oriented, and social situations. Can ask and answer questions, initiate and respond to simple statements, and maintain face-to-face conversation, although in a highly restricted manner and with much linguistic inaccuracy. Within these limitations, can perform such tasks as introducing self, ordering a meal, asking directions, and making purchases. Vocabulary is adequate to express only the most elementary needs. Strong interference from native language may occur. Misunderstandings frequently arise, but with repetition, the Intermediate-Low speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

Intermediate-Mid

Able to handle successfully a variety of uncomplicated, basic, and communicative tasks and social situations. Can talk simply about self and family members. Can ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs; e.g., personal history and leisure time activities. Utterance length increases slightly, but speech may continue to be characterized by frequent long pauses, since the smooth incorporation of even basic conversational strategies is often hindered as the speaker struggles to create appropriate language forms. Pronunciation may continue to be strongly influenced by first language and fluency may still be strained. Although misunderstandings still arise, the Intermediate-Mid speaker can generally be understood by sympathetic interlocutors.

Intermediate-High

Able to handle successfully most uncomplicated communicative tasks and social situations. Can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation with a number of strategies appropriate to a range of circumstances and topics, but errors are evident. Limited vocabulary still necessitates hesitation and may bring about slightly unexpected circumlocution. There is emerging evidence of connected discourse, particularly for simple narration and/or description. The Intermediate-High speaker can generally be understood even by interlocutors not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, but repetition may still be required.

ACTFL guidelines: Speaking--Advanced

General Description

The Advanced level is characterized by the speaker's ability to:

- converse in a clearly participatory fashion
- initiate, sustain, and bring to closure a wide variety of communicative tasks, including those that require an increased ability to convey meaning with diverse language strategies due to a complication or an unforeseen turn of events
- satisfy the requirements of school and work situations, and

- narrate and describe with paragraph-length connected discourse.

Advanced

Able to satisfy the requirements of everyday situations and routine school and work requirements. Can handle with confidence but not with facility complicated tasks and social situations, such as elaborating, complaining, and apologizing. Can narrate and describe with some details, linking sentences together smoothly. Can communicate facts and talk casually about topics of current public and personal interest, using general vocabulary. Shortcomings can often be smoothed over by communicative strategies, such as pause fillers, stalling devices, and different rates of speech. Circumlocution which arises from vocabulary or syntactic limitations very often is quite successful, though some groping for words may still be evident. The Advanced-level speaker can be understood without difficulty by native interlocutors.

Advanced Plus

Able to satisfy the requirements of a broad variety of everyday, school, and work situations. Can discuss concrete topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. There is emerging evidence of ability to support opinions, explain in detail, and hypothesize. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows a well-developed ability to compensate for an imperfect grasp of some forms with confident use of communicative strategies, such as paraphrasing and circumlocution. Differentiated vocabulary and intonation are effectively used to communicate fine shades of meaning. The Advanced-Plus speaker often shows remarkable fluency and ease of speech, but under the demands of Superior-level complex tasks, language may break down or prove inadequate.

ACTFL guidelines: Speaking--Superior

Distinguishing characteristics

The Superior level is characterized by the speaker's ability to:

- participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics

- support opinions and hypothesize using native-like discourse strategies.

Description

Able to speak the language with sufficient accuracy to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, professional, and abstract topics. Can discuss special fields of competence and interest with ease. Can support opinions and hypothesize, but may not be able to tailor language to audience or discuss in depth highly abstract or unfamiliar topics. Usually the Superior level speaker is only partially familiar with regional or other dialectical variants. The Superior level speaker commands a wide variety of interactive strategies and shows good awareness of discourse strategies. The latter involves the ability to distinguish main ideas from supporting information through syntactic, lexical, and suprasegmental features (pitch, stress, intonation). Sporadic errors may occur, particularly in low-frequency structures and some complex high-frequency structures more common to formal writing, but no patterns of error are evident. Errors do not disturb the native speaker or interfere with communication.