

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ

Colegio de Posgrados

**Culturally Responsive Strategies for Social Interaction and Collaboration
in an EFL Public School Classroom in Ecuador**

Mecanismo de Titulación: Proyecto de Investigación y Desarrollo

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Trabajo de titulación de posgrado presentado como requisito
para la obtención del título de
Máster en Enseñanza de Inglés como Segunda Lengua

Quito, 31 de agosto 2022

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ
COLEGIO DE POSGRADOS

HOJA DE APROBACIÓN DE TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

**Culturally Responsive Strategies for Social Interaction and Collaboration
in EFL Public School Classroom in Ecuador**

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis work to my whole family. A special feeling of gratitude to my beloved husband, Alex Llerena, who has encouraged me to finish this work. Although my dear mother who passed away during my process in studies this master's program, my father, Julio, and my brothers, Rebeca, Isabel, Ruth, Alonso, Jackeline, and Geovany, my eternal gratitude their moral, spiritual support, time, confidence in me. I also dedicate this project to my son Freddy and my daughter Michelle and my grandchildren Mathews, Eithan, Alex, and Allison whose care and love provide me the strength to continue.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are a number of professional people without whom this project who might not have been written and to whom I am greatly indebted.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the USFQ and its professors: Maria Dolores Lasso PhD for her words before starting this project, and Scott Thomas Gibson PhD as director of this program and my capstone director for his full support, expert guidance, understanding, and encouragement through my study and final Capstone Project development, with his extraordinary recommendations and timely wisdom and counsel during this process.

I would like to say thank Universidad San Francisco de Quito, USFQ, for having me as part of the first cohort in this graduate program and allowing me to learn more in advance about the main knowledge about teaching English as a Second Language and researching on Culturally Responsive Strategies for Social Interaction and Collaboration in EFL Public School Classroom in Ecuador.

I enormously want to thank my whole family for their constant support, encouragement, and unconditional love and understanding during this master`s degree program.

RESUMEN

El propósito de esta investigación es explorar estrategias culturalmente receptivas para la interacción social y la colaboración en el aula de la escuela pública de inglés como lengua extranjera en Ecuador. Siendo relevante para profesores ya que permite a los educadores aplicar estrategias innovadoras que motivan a los estudiantes a una participación productiva entre pares, grupales entre sí y con el docente. Es relevante, conocer la biografía de los estudiantes, ya que facilita al docente utilizar las estrategias pertinentes para alcanzar los logros de aprendizaje como es inglés como idioma extranjero.

Palabras clave: Estrategias, interacción social, colaboración en el aula, lengua extranjera, culturalmente receptivas.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to explore Culturally Responsive Strategies for Meaningful Social Interaction and Collaboration in the Public School Classroom of English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador. It is relevant for teachers since it allows educators to apply innovative strategies that motivate students to productive participation among peers, groups among themselves, and the teacher. It is relevant to know the biography of the students since it makes it easier for the teacher to use the relevant strategies to achieve learning achievements such as English as a foreign language.

Keywords: Strategies, social interaction, classroom collaboration, foreign language, culturally responsive.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As an experienced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher in Ecuador for a long time, I have long believed that interaction was the most important part of teaching and learning English. I always thought that creating an environment of speaking just repetition among students could improve their English proficiency, and that it did not matter if they did not have enough knowledge of grammar and vocabulary related to the topic. I focused on speaking through memorization of short dialogues, questions and answers, and repetitions of words. However, when my students had to respond to different questions in oral or written ways, they could not respond. Those results were evidenced in the summative assessment at the end of each term through written quizzes. My students also felt frustrated about their grades because they did not understand why they were not able to achieve their learning goals.

I am not alone in my frustrations. Many students of English in Ecuadorian schools do not achieve the results that teachers expect, even when teachers are supposed to make students interact and work in groups. Most public schools have many students with different backgrounds and cultures, English levels, and interests in the language. In some cases, some students did not learn English in their schools, especially in the second to seventh grades of the Basic General Education. At the same time, when authorities impose the way of teaching English based on grammar translation, repetition, and even writing the pronunciation of words in response to parents' complaints, it is a significant issue that teachers have to manage in public schools. In my experience, the most challenging part for teachers is helping students learn or acquire the language, despite teachers' school limitations.

It is clear that these challenges are present in public schools across the country. In the international studies of the Education First English Proficiency Index (EPI),

Ecuador consistently ranks among the lowest English proficient countries, placing 90th out of the 112 countries considered in the ranking (EF EPI, 2021). The National English curriculum requires that students finish high school with a B1 based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level, but they are not reaching that level.

Given this background, my research is motivated by several questions that I have had for a long time. I want to know how I can improve my way of teaching English as a foreign language in that my students are able to use the language in real context. For that reason, this project started from my experiences as an EFL teacher in Ecuador's coast and highland regions. I want to know why the resources I have usually applied to my classes did not result in students producing the language. Since 2004, I followed the books and fulfilled the activities, working with music and listening to audio mainly related to the suggested topics. After that, I tried to work in groups of six to ten students due to the large number of students and oral presentation, but again the results were not what I really wanted. Over time, I have reflected on my teaching and realized that students were not the center of the class because they did not participate actively; they were just passive listeners.

Getting students to produce a foreign language is a complex but necessary part of language learning. According to Shin (2008), acquiring a foreign language is not easy because teachers have to master the language with a high level of productive skills (oral and writing) in English to enhance the process in which students will achieve the learning outcomes. Shin (2008) states that the teacher must also create and maintain a constantly supportive learning atmosphere in which learners practice the language in their context. (Shin, 2008, p. 57-65). Although creating the conditions to produce a foreign language is difficult, it can also be transformative. As Lu (2021) asserts, English

can empower teachers to improve their teaching methods to promote interaction within their classrooms and develop students' communicative competence, which is the goal that all teachers aim to achieve. Based on my own experience, I believe that I have to be updated about the methods, strategies, and techniques that teachers should apply in the classes, to know how to work efficiently. Teaching English to students acquire the language is a challenge for me due to the lack of resources inside and outside the schools for improving the language. And to achieve that, those students use the language interacting with others in their context will be extremely awesome. This is a realistic challenge for me because I want to know how interaction could improve the language in the students using the proposal activities during the classes.

To better understand how to improve interaction and overall English proficiency in my classes, my project analyzes three activities that are part of my own teaching practice. The first activity is a collaborative reading activity in which students comment on relevant reading short books related to the students' interest and level. The second activity is a think-pair-share protocol that I use to help students build confidence when speaking in English. The third activity is an extension wheel activity that I used to use to help students develop their vocabulary through interaction. Through document analysis, I examine the construction of these activities to better understand their limitations as well as how they can be improved to promote more interaction and higher proficiency among students.

To conduct this analysis, I apply theories of culturally relevant pedagogy and interactionism in the teaching of English as a Foreign Language. The theoretical background is based on Vygotskian sociointeracionism (Wells, 1999, Pica, 1987, Johnson, 1983, Vygotsky, 1978). I use document analysis (Bowen, 2009, Creswell, 2009) to analyze two conditions: 1) Are the activities culturally relevant? and 2) Do

they generate meaningful students' interaction to help students develop more effective strategies to promote their confidence while speaking English? As its general objective, this project focuses on the impacts caused by social interaction activities in the classroom to promote EFL acquisition and proficiency.

This project includes four parts. First, the literature review presents an overview of interactionist theory, starting with Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and how interactionism works in the English as a Foreign Language classroom. I also discuss the role of interaction in the Ecuadorian national curriculum that follows a communicative approach for teaching English. Then, in the methodology, I explain how the data collection was carried out, including the choice of interactionist activities and strategies from my own teaching, as well as my own positionality as a researcher. Then, I use document analysis to examine the text of the activity protocol to understand how they work as well as their problems and limitations to promote meaningful interaction in my EFL classes. The use of document analysis allows to review or evaluate documents in particular to know how effective the proposed activities are for promoting real interaction among students in order to acquire the language for meaningful communication.

Overall, this project can serve as a model on how to develop and improve practical activities that can be used by teachers within the current situation of teaching English in Ecuadorian public schools to promote culturally relevant and pedagogically meaningful interaction. It highlights the importance of using interactive activities designed and adapted to promote English language production and learning to the success of any dialogue or conversation to understand and be understood (Gass, 2013). It also helps to create effective learning environments that provide students with opportunities to understand the objectives of the lessons and activities and practice them

comfortably and confidently connects to learners' social, cultural, and academic backgrounds (Haynes & Zacarian, 2010). This analysis helps teachers like me become more confident in their teaching using these strategies that promote interaction because they will be able to observe and analyze the students' progress through the student discussion, dialogues, questions, and answers. Also, students will be enthusiastic about learning English as Foreign Language because they will have the opportunities to use the language in a real situation through their own ideas and opinions and expand them with their peers or group interaction about the content.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review seeks to explore the relevance and impact of meaningful interaction among students and teachers for acquiring a new language. Many studies have demonstrated the importance and limitation of interaction for improving the students' production of the language. (Johnson, 1983, p. 56). This research explores four major topics in the literature: 1) Lev Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the Foundations of Interactionism, 2) Interactionism in Second Language Acquisition, 3) Interactionism in the Classroom, and 4) Interactionism and English as a Foreign Language in Ecuador. Overall, this literature review demonstrates that interactionism is essential in language acquisition and provides the framework to analyze the protocol of the activities as written for my classes to evaluate their effectiveness at promoting interaction.

Zone of Proximal Development and the Foundations of Interactionism

When teachers focus on students learning a new topic, they often point out what students do not know. Nevertheless, if educators pay attention to what students know, teachers should focus on their thinking and create what Lev Vygotsky calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky defines the ZPD "as the distance between the actual level of development and the level of potential development supported and guided by the teacher, and the collaboration of their peers" (p. 86) so students can achieve the activity or task for themselves successfully. The Zone of Proximal Development occurs when the students are close to developing a new concept, knowledge, or skill with the support and encouragement of the class members and the

teacher. The documentation of students' work provides them with the chance to evidence their thinking and their growth.

Prior researchers have suggested that interaction moves each other through communication to know and understand the language's message through mediation and negotiation of the meaning that allows them to improve the language. Based on Wells (1999), the ZPD focuses on the interaction between learners and the copartners in a task. Meaningful, effective interaction response depends on the negotiation of meaning through speech between the learner and the interlocutor with high proficiency in learning (Wells, 1999, p. 318). According to Vygotsky (1978), when a person can solve a problem without the help of others, it means that the learner has developed the skills necessary to continue to the next step. In agreement with Vygotsky, Wells states that the interaction among students with higher proficiency help in constructing their knowledge of problem-solving (Wells, G 1999, p. 306). Harmer (2012) states that teachers should guide and support students' learning to do it for themselves. Raba (2017) outlines that knowledge is greatly improved by collaborative social interaction and communication through discussions, feedback, and sharing. More specifically, Muñoz-Restrepo et al. (2020) find that "teachers scaffold instruction when they change the level and amount of support" to fit the cognitive competence of the learner. Additionally, when a learner deals with a particular task, the educator should provide more support and depend less on the students' ZPD when doing the task (Muñoz-Restrepo et al., 2020. p. 179).

Another factor that researchers claim regarding the teachers' role as guides and facilitators are crucial for identifying individual student's ZPD and planning techniques to move on to the next level of proficiency in the language with or without the assistance of others. As Wells (1999) claims, teachers should focus on the ways of the ZPD regarding children, which have to be considered: "working in the individual child's zpd, and in the larger, communal zpd." Undeniably, educators should provide students

opportunities to ask questions or say problems for reviewing previous learnings through opening questions. It allows students to confirm knowledge and expand comprehension based on "previous sessions' learnings, discoveries" (Wells, 1999, p. 300) and determine the next step on that foundation. The author suggests that in group activities, teachers monitor to assist as needed in each learner's zpd guide teachers to decide the direction to proceed as a group.

Furthermore, the ZPD allows teachers to reflect on their teaching and improve or change their practice (Wells, 1999, p.310). Also, Kuusisaari (2014) points out that teachers with highly professional motivation should create and share knowledge to manage their learning. Most teachers have begun to consider “the application of the zone of proximal development in second language acquisition (SLA) classrooms” (Li et al., 2021, p. 575) to promote students' language learning.

In view of using the Zone of Proximal Development in the classroom as a helpful strategy for scaffolding students learning, Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory focuses on how social interaction influences children in the acquisition of their culture, beliefs, and problem-solving through communication with others. According to Vygotsky (1978), the sociocultural theory argues that language and communication interaction plays a vital role in aiding language learners to improve or carry out higher psychological functions such as learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Most researchers question the effectiveness of interaction between teachers and students among learners to determine the improvement or mediation of second language development. According to Aksoy (2018), mediation through communicative interaction facilitates the comprehensible input to push learners to produce modified output with teachers' and peers' assistance depending on the proximal development zone. Based on the sociocultural perspective, Woolfolk et al. (2013) explains that learning is "a situated activity that happens inside and outside school, with knowledge" researchers remind us

that all students need support in their education. Sociocultural learning theory outlines the instructional adaptations that educators should apply to make academic content comprehensible for students within their proximal zone of development (Heikkila et al., 2022, p. 2).

Indeed, Sociocultural Theory (SCT) points to language and communicative interaction as crucial in helping learners improve their learning. (Aksoy, 2018). Van Compernelle (2015) highlights the main parts of the book related to the "interaction and L2 development from a Vygotskian perspective" in which refers to the importance of interaction in order to negotiate the meaning which has not been understood. In particular, the author argues that L2 communicative assignments should be emphasized overall on meanings and the experts' support that L2 receives for successful interaction (p. 102). According to Aksoy (2018), states that Sociocultural theory (SCT), language and communicative interaction play an important role in enabling language learners to develop or mediate higher psychological functions such as learning.

Overall, the research shows that Vygotsky's ZPD helps teachers identify what students know about the content with themselves or without support from others. This strategy allows teachers to monitor students' knowledge through student interaction activities. Furthermore, this theory guides the analysis of this project by helping me examine the main role of thinking and the production of the language in the context of the proposed activities through meaningful social interaction.

Interactionism in Second Language Acquisition

The most crucial part relates to the interactional modification based on comprehension, providing opportunities to interact with each other. Social interaction has played an essential role in language teaching and language learning. Burns &

Richards (2018) state that "most contemporary theories of the second language (L2) learning place considerable emphasis on the role of social interaction, joint activity, or socialization in learning." (p.101). Lu (2021) mentions that using strategies that promote classroom interaction creates more opportunities for students to mediate and negotiate the meaning of language to improve language production (p. 455).

It is thought that through interaction, students strengthen both their cognitive and language production skills. Theorists of second/foreign language acquisition and language educators have included interactionism in second/foreign language instruction and learning. Early research on interaction focuses on the role of input and output and needs based on the learners' age, learning context, and proficiency. Undoubtedly, interaction is an essential part of the second language acquisition (SLA) that emphasizes the fundamental interactional structures of input, meaning negotiation, and output in which learners improve their language through interaction, organize their thinking and reflect on their understanding (Pica et al., 1987). Equally important is creating a positive classroom environment in which students feel excited and comfortable sharing their ideas, asking for clarification, and assuming challenges in their learning to promote interaction.

1. Input

Much research on the second language focuses on studying input comprehension and the role of Native Speakers (NS) or highly proficient speakers in aiding L2 learner comprehension. Pica, for instance, contends that NSs construct helpful linguistic environments by altering and restructuring interaction to better comprehend the process of second language learning and to match with intelligible information (Pica et al., 1987, p.737). The meaningful discussion between Native Speakers and L2 learners raises their understanding and syntax to the next level of skill, enabling them to produce unique work. (Pica et al., 1987).

Other research points out that interaction between students provides opportunities for L2 production through interactional moves, specifically, speech gestures, clarification, confirmation, and comprehension, which lead to the language's meaning for meaningful communication. As Johnson (1983) states, exposure between low proficiency English Language Learners (ELLs) with peers who have a high proficiency in English has a positive impact on the language and the speed at which the language is acquired. Additionally, researchers argue that native speakers modify their speech to make the input more comprehensible for language learners (Johnson, 1983). Notably, when ELLs receive comprehensible input as active listeners, they improve their communicative competence when constantly practicing language interaction. Johnson (1983) claims that the exposition with peers who talk to L2 effectively enhances the language and the speed at which the language is acquired. Receiving meaningful input as an active listener improves their communicative competence due to speaking routine practice in second language acquisition (Johnson, 1983, p. 66).

Additionally, Johnson argues that interaction provides meaningful information between peers who speak L2 efficiently used in their speech gestures; it leads to L2 learners making meaning clear. In contrast, Harmer (2012) claims that being exposed to comprehensible input is not enough because learners should know how the language works consciously to activate their language knowledge (p. 82). The role of the teacher is essential to facilitate meaningful interaction with students and among students. As Pica et al. (1987) claim, interaction has a necessary effect on the comprehension of input through repetitions, confirmation, comprehension check, and clarification. Also, effective interaction between teachers and learners facilitates the students' responsiveness. To elicit spoken interaction among learners to feel confident questioning their teachers and peers about unclear points to make authentic input comprehension. The teachers' role is crucial in verifying that students transfer

information with fluency and understanding (Pica et al., 1987, p. 754). In addition, Pica et al. (1987) state that "Interactional modification" is highlighted in the comprehension of input through interlocutor clarification and nonnative confirmation in which educators encourage spoken interaction among learners with different levels of proficiency (Pica et al., 1987).

2. From Input to Output

In this section, the role of input in which language learning takes place with it. At the same time, it is important to know what learners do with the input they receive to engage students in productive use of the language, which is known as output. Receiving significant input generates confidence in L2 learners in their speaking overall when the activities are selected by themselves with the guidance of their educators (Johnson, 1983). In accordance with the author, teachers can create an environment that provides opportunities to interact with L2 learners with their peers to improve valuable and reliable input such as inside and outside the classroom; and educators can generate more feedback and proficiency in listening comprehension through techniques that promote interaction (Johnson, 1983).

To better understand that language acquisition can be facilitated by modified input in which proficient speakers adapt their language to the level of their partners to make the information understandable through interaction. According to Swain (1995), "output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended, nondeterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production. The output thus would seem to have a potentially significant role in the development of syntax and morphology" (128). As Pica et al. (1996) argue, the interaction between L2 Learners and native speakers through modified input and feedback can lead learners to produce output modification

depending on the quantity of modified information and feedback L2 learners have received. A significant amount of evidence demonstrates that interaction plays a vital role in the learning process. It aligns with the learners' need to elicit input and feedback, which help the learner improve grammar structures and modify their output abilities (Pica et al., 1996). This theory emphasizes that the interaction modification input aids as a tool between Native Speakers (NS) and Nonnative Speakers (NNSs) for comprehension, confirmation, and clarification to facilitate second language comprehension based on the students' needs. Nevertheless, Yule (2010) argues that even at the optimal age for L2 learning, another obstacle may remain. Teens are more self-conscious than younger kids. If there is a substantial degree of refusal or embarrassment, it may outweigh physical and cognitive talents. If this self-consciousness is accompanied by a lack of empathy with the other culture, it may hinder the learning process. This emotional reaction, or "affect," might be triggered by dull texts, uncomfortable classroom environments, or an exhausting study and/or work schedule (p.188-189).

Interactionism in the Classroom

For many L2 learners, interaction with native speakers is not frequently possible due to the lack of native-speaking teachers and native-speaking peers. So, using the L2 language is not enough inside the classroom or outside the class. Indeed, teachers should find different resources that promote student interaction for language learning use indoors and outdoors (Pica et al., 1996). Ellis (1999) argues that the essence of an interactionist approach is that interpersonal and intrapersonal interaction plays a vital role in order to create the environment for language learning. Social interaction may not be essential for L2 acquisition, even though it is almost certainly advantageous (p.30).

In this respect, teachers should encourage students to work cooperatively between partners and groups to improve their critical thinking skills in which learners negotiate for meaning. Despite the lack of opportunities in some public schools to practice the language outside the classroom, teachers should take advantage of exposing students to interact with them.

1. Student-student meaningful interaction

There is evidence that when teachers maximize learners' opportunities to speak in the classroom, the interaction between learner-learner provokes potential benefits that facilitate student-student communication. As Pica et al. (1996) highlight, the point of interaction among students is when students can modify their interaction by negotiation of the meaning. So, when interlocutor and students negotiate the meaning through repetition, clarification, or modification of the message such as the use of synonyms, changing the word or part of the statement even paraphrasing, it helps L2 learners to elicit comprehensible input to produce modified output, and use in context. Also, learners can build and improve their L2 grammar and communication (Pica et al. 1996). Bowles & Adams (2015) state that the "interactionist approach to second language acquisition (SLA) occurs" when the interaction allows "conversational modifications" to improve second language development (p. 198). In addition, Loewen & Sato (2018) explain that students tend to respond to feedback by modifying their initial errors overall during interaction with their L2 peers (p. 294). Molineros et al. (2015) claim that the teacher and peers can provide comprehensible input through different grouping opportunities and highlight that teachers should foster students' interaction by supporting each other and scaffolding their own learning (p. 54).

Researchers indicate that collaborative learning between low and high-level students can boost oral production in L2 to promote and improve speaking skills in L2. Loewen & Sato (2018) claim that most researchers examine the important role of the interaction in acquiring a language through negotiation meaning between native and nonnative speakers (Loewen & Sato, 2018, p. 286). Some researchers pointed out that the effectiveness of interaction between L1 with L2 generates benefits for English learning. Notably, "interaction plays a crucial role in Second Language Acquisition Theory and pedagogy" (Loewen & Sato, 2018, p. 317). Researchers such as Muho & Kurani (2011) argue that interactionists believe social factors prioritize acquiring a language. Teachers should create an environment where learners feel confident with themselves and increase participation in the classroom.

Wells & Haneda (2009) point to the relevance for all learners to improve their "discursive competence to participate in a range of classroom discourse genres across the curriculum. And to do so, they need multiple opportunities to engage actively" (p. 146). Some of the reasons are that as a means of connecting the L2 in use when it comes to second language learning, "dialogic engagement" gives both intelligible information and an opportunity to learn about the numerous academic subjects "so that they may become academically competent participants" (p. 146). The authors also suggest that teachers "may ask open-ended questions, inviting students to offer their own ideas, opinions or conjectures and encouraging them to respond" to each other's input (p. 145). Herrera & Murry (2016) declare that learning a new language should be a natural process similar to acquiring the first one. Considering the previous statement, providing learners opportunities for interaction motivates perspective-taking, collaborative problem solving, and valuing all students as equal classroom community members (Murry et al., 2017, p. 21-22).

2. The Role of the Teacher in Promoting Interaction

Prior research has demonstrated the potential benefits of peer interaction and the essential role of the teacher in building an effective learning environment that allow students to gain confidence in themselves to share information with others. At the same time, the application of innovative activities supports learners based on their emotional and academic needs. According to Ibrahim (2012), the success of a classroom interaction depends on the teachers' professional development due to their appropriate activities engaging students to interact with them and activating their attention in meaningful communication through pair or group activities. Social interaction improves learning overall when the interlocutor with a high proficiency negotiates the meaning with the learner (Ibrahim, 2012, p. 57). Effective technique engages students to interact with others by designing a suitable environment for learning a second language acquisition. The amount of comprehensible input that peers provide them can significantly impact acquiring a target language (Johnson, 1983).

Indeed, teachers play an important part in the communication process when they involve students actively in the teaching and learning process as much as when teachers really know their students' backgrounds. Raba (2017) claims that teachers must engage students in discussions to increase their interaction in which learners improve their oral communication skills. Working in pairs, trios, or small groups promotes confidence in interacting among them and allows students to practice their new learning in an interactive style (Toro et al., 2019, p. 102). Furthermore, Cirocki et al. (2019) highlight the importance of engaging students in formal and informal social interaction through conversations to be competent users of the language (p. 251). According to Cevallos (2017), teachers must consider each student has different learning styles, preferences, and needs. Teachers should adapt their lessons according to the learners' needs to motivate and engage them through interactive activities that promote communicative

competence. Cardenas et al. (2015) define practicing as how the educator provides tasks or activities based on learners' abilities, learning styles, and interests (p. 35).

A deeper understanding of the language acquisition process through communication among teachers-students and student-student facilitates negotiation for meaning in the classroom and provides corrective feedback that allows learners to modify their oral production. As Lu (2021) points out, the importance of interaction through conversation between teacher and students and student-student is beneficial to promote students' language production in meaningful communication. Interaction through discussion among students and between students-teachers has a significant impact on acquiring a language because students have the opportunities to provide and receive comprehensible input to communicate productively (Lu, 2021). In this study, the research analyzes the classroom interaction through conversation using the Initiation Response Feedback (IRF) strategy, which consists of initiation by the instructor, the student's response, and the teacher's feedback (Lu, 2021). In this sense, Naranjo & Naranjo (2017) state that teachers and students must be able to master skills that allow them to interact with each other and understand the message through meaning negotiation of the language; and one of the practical pedagogical teachings related to communicative approach is cooperative learning (CL) (p. 273). Nievecela & Ortega (2019) indicate that motivation and meaningful communication improve when students receive their peers' support and comprehensible input through collaborative learning.

The interactionist perspective on second language learning has focused on interaction and the process in which the language can be learned. The interaction aims for which the students need to understand and express the language and the interaction with the teacher, native-speaker, and other learners.

Interactionism and EFL Teaching in Ecuador

Teaching English as a foreign language in Ecuador has challenged teachers and the Ministry of Education, specifically in public education. Different methods, approaches, and techniques have been applied to achieve those students acquire the language (Naranjo & Naranjo, 2017). These challenges persist, although several meaningful changes have been made in the public education system related to English teaching to emphasize the importance of developing this language from an early age. These changes included Ecuadorian teachers' professional training, reforms, curriculums, designing, production, distributing of physical books and electronic modules, and progressively increasing English hours per week. According to Intriago et al. (2017), the Ministry of Education evaluated 5,000 English teachers through the TOEFL test. The results demonstrated that only 2.4% had reached a B2 Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level. Due to the lack of English teachers in the public system, the government provided opportunities to different professionals to be part of the Ecuadorian educational system. One of the requirements was to have an upper-intermediate English Proficiency B2 according to the CEFR. Also, the government invests in scholarships for training teachers in the United States and the Caribbean to perform the teachers' professional development (Intriago et al., 2017).

In addition to training, the education reforms established teaching methods and outcomes standards. In 2012, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education published the English Learning Standards (ELLS); which aligned this official document to a cognitive and constructive teaching approach that determined the students' expectation to achieve at the end of the proficiency level concerning knowledge and skills acquired throughout the process based on the CEFR. This official document was a referent used in General

Basic Education, focusing on the five domains intertwined with the general Curriculum and the English Language teaching and learning.

The Ministry of Education (2016) states that these reforms included policies specifically meant to improve English levels in the country. One year later, the Ministry of Education and Ecuadorian universities, with the support of the U.S. Embassy, began a process of the new curriculum standardization for teaching English which fosters the accomplishment of the three following objectives: (1) Development in the learners of understanding of the world and the other cultures, the communication of their thoughts through English. (2) The development of the personal, social, and intellectual skills required to assume their potential productive participation in the growth of the world, and finally; (3) the creation of a taste for language learning at an early age through positive learning experiences. This English Language curriculum has been designed for students in General Basic Education (2nd to 10th) and Unified General highschool (BGU) (1st to 3rd), taking into consideration that Ecuador is a multicultural country in which Spanish is not the first language for all learners.

In Ecuador, English is taught as a Foreign Language in public institutions. The Ministry of Education of Ecuador (2016) published the new English as a Foreign Language curriculum based on the communicative language approach, Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), learner-centered approach, thinking skills, and international standards for language acquisition. Likewise, the National Curriculum is based on 21st Century skills that can be developed through learning English; and the general educational goals are focused on justice, innovation, and solidarity. Finally, in terms of planning, the National Curriculum provides coding system in which teachers must use to plan their syllabus and assess their students' English proficiency. However, teachers believe oral repetition improves students' ability even if they are afraid to apply new strategies that promote real interaction among students (Toro et al., 2019).

In fact, in the last five years, the Ministry of education has provided significant resources for public school teachers and students to improve and achieve the English proficiency level for learners in both EGB and BGU according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Thus, in early 2016, skills acquired in English were expected to be developed from the components of communication (a) listening, (b) speaking, (c) reading, and (d) writing, concerning the CEFR. In 2021 the English Modules were finished successfully with funding from the U.S. Embassy and published on the web as resources for students to download and print. Those six English modules per course align with the Ministry of Education's national EFL Curriculum of 2016. The Curriculum describes five curricular threads: (1) Communication and Cultural Awareness, (2) Oral Communication (listening and speaking), (3) Reading, (4) Writing, and (5) Language through the Arts. (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 404). Also, The EFL curriculum claims CLIL as a medium to involve and acquire "English in an authentic, meaningful context." (Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 400).

Effective and professional teachers make a difference in teaching and learning, allowing students to improve the language. Teachers can apply effective strategies that allow students to practice the language and expand their knowledge through interaction with others. Espinosa (2017) mentions that Ecuadorian teachers must be prepared to deal with diversity in the classroom to provide personalized and differentiated instruction. Teachers in Ecuador must be aware of the importance of teacher-student and student-student interaction within the motivational strategies that encourage students to create a friendly-environment classroom and to have a cohesive learner group to promote learner autonomy, encourage positive self-evaluation, and make learning more stimulating (Cirocki et al., 2019). Due to these reasons, teachers must promote this type of interaction in the classroom to help students foster their English skills and confidence to practice this target language. According to Ocaña (2018), the teacher's role is as the

facilitator in constructing the meaning. Teachers oversee creating several contextualized activities and providing texts to promote and facilitate interpersonal interaction inside the classroom to enable learners to exert the target language effectively. In Ecuadorian EFL classrooms, fostering confidence in students to interact in class is not an easy job. Toro et al. (2019) manifest that many students are a constraint that impedes students from interacting efficiently, which causes low language achievements. In the same vein, Cirocki et al. (2019) state that teachers' lack of motivational strategies makes students not feel encouraged to participate in classroom activities.

This chapter has shown some perspectives to obtain a better understanding of the role and impact of interaction for improving and developing the language in the students through different activities that promote interaction through culturally relevant instruction. At the same time, this literature allows teachers to understand the teachers and students' roles. It is important to mention that the MINEDUC has tried to put communication and interaction as a central feature of EFL learning.

Meaningful Interaction and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Gay (2018) defines Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) as a research-based approach to teaching. It connects students' cultures, languages, and life experiences with what they learn in school. These connections help students access rigorous curriculum and develop higher-level academic skills. Culturally responsive teaching happens when using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them (Gay, 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is multifaceted and complex with no set script or prescriptive equation because each classroom is culturally unique and consistently changing and evolving (Gunn, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

There are significant individual differences in every classroom; that is why it can be challenging to adapt instruction to each learner. However, it is not impossible. The first step is to identify those differences (Cevallos, 2017). There are several sources of diversity: religion, race, socio-economic background, family structure, intellectual ability, social status, educational background, learning styles, learning abilities, and many others (Cevallos, 2017). Each learner has different cognitive abilities or skills, such as information processing, reasoning, and problem-solving (Burden, 2010). According to Gardner (1999), human beings have nine different kinds of intelligence: logical-mathematical, linguistic, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, musical, existential, and naturalistic. Each person has an exclusive combination of intelligence, and each type of intelligence involves different ways of learning and communicating (Gardner, 1999). Differentiated instruction can increase students' learning by accessing their learning styles (Cevallos, 2017). Learning preferences are usually formed by the culture and context in which each individual lives (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Each culture has its values, beliefs, attitudes, rules, ways of thinking, and world perceptions. All these factors influence the way students learn. That is why teachers need to make sure that each student from every cultural group succeeds in school (Cevallos, 2017). Consequently, culturally responsive teachers acknowledge and consider the students' cultural diversity during instruction (Gay, 2005).

English teachers must design activities which lead to encourage and support lively interaction in class, students' self-awareness and language abilities, and low affecter –filter class environment to encourage learners' intrinsic motivation (Thamarana, 2015). According to Herrera & Murry (2010) there are two essential facts. First, learners come to the classrooms with biographies-- with experiences, personalities, and knowledge that are the rational instrument kits with which learners make sense of anything that teachers desire to attract their attention or aid them to

develop skills. Second, learners' biographies continue to matter in shaping aspirations, decision-making, and the repertoires that learners draw upon - as they solve problems and negotiate lives along after leaving the classrooms. Herrera & Murry (2016; 2010) stated that the type of activity or strategy selected to start the lesson is vital to rouse each student's developing understanding and skills, as well as their past experiences and existing knowledge. In that sense, the authors provided EFL, and ESL teachers different learning strategies based on Culturally Responsive Teaching and Culturally Responsive Learning.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

To help understand the role of interactionism in my own teaching and my student's learning, I conducted a case study through document analysis to examine the interactionist approach of three of my own teaching activities that I use to promote interaction among students in my English classes. According to Bowen (2009), document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents in particular "to qualitative case studies-intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organization, or program" (p. 29). Creswell (2009) highlights the advantages of using the case study approach to research real-life contemporary context; he states that "a case study develops an in-depth description and analysis of a case of multiple cases" (p. 104). In this project, the case study is about my teaching because I want to know how effective the proposed activities are for promoting meaningful interaction among students to acquire the English as a Second Language. In particular, I analyze the written protocol of three activities that I use in my teaching designed to promote interaction. This analysis helps me identify strengths and weaknesses that will allow me to improve my teaching methods designed to promote student interaction and greater EFL proficiency.

Data Collection

In order to understand how interactionist approach using effective strategies could be fostered in an EFL classroom in the Ecuadorian public educational context, my data using purposeful sampling. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) explain that purposeful sampling is used when the researcher wants to understand the phenomena being studied, without needing to reach a generalization. In this case, I choose samples

of my own teaching activities in the form of the written documents in which I describe the protocols and procedures. The activity protocols are the basis of my analysis.

Data Analysis

In examining the documents that come from my own teaching, this data analysis helps me better understand the role of interaction and how it really works for improving students' meaningful communication. The method for examining these samples is document analysis, which helps me to examine the templates that I provide my students to evidence what they learn through interaction with their partners after they have mediated and negotiated the meaning of the topic which have been written in their templates. According to Bowen (2009), "there has been an increase in the number of research reports and journal articles that mention document analysis as part of the methodology" (p. 27). Bowen (2009) explains how the data analysis process using a document analysis qualitative approach involves several steps in which the researcher reviews the documents through a superficial examination, then decides which documents meet the criteria to perform a more thorough reading and interpretation, to finally conduct content analysis by categorizing the information based on the research question that guides the study.

In order to standardize this qualitative method of data gathering and processing, Wach and Wach (2013) presented a series of processes to examine documents. For the purpose of this investigation, the procedure of analyzing the data will make use of a modified version of Wach & Wach's technique for the examination of the documents that describe the protocols of three interactive activities I use in class. I will focus on the influence that interactionism has on the process of learning a language since that was the aim of my research, which was to investigate the connections between the articles

and my case study. To begin, I picked resources that assist me in describing the activities that I do in my own classrooms in order to determine whether or not the activities encourage genuine interaction among students in order to develop their ability to communicate in English as a foreign language.

Researchers Positionality

My interest in this research topic arose during my graduate studies. Due to my lack of speaking skills, I had always felt insecure about participating in class and struggled to develop a sense of belonging with my peers. It was difficult for me to contribute to the learning process and to share my ideas in class, so I wanted to find ways in which I can foster my students' skills, abilities, and confidence to participate in class; particularly so that they do not feel rejected during group work based on their lack of abilities to participate in class. As EFL learner, I was not given much opportunity to interact with my peers and to learn through collaboration; most of the learning was individual and based on completing written tasks, therefore, my ability to collaborate and to communicate verbally was weakened while learning was entirely focused on reading and writing, during the English learning process I experienced very few opportunities to speak and to listen to other ideas as a way to interact and collaborate in my second language.

This research is a way to confront my insecurities as an English learner and teacher by acquiring tools and skills to collaborate and participate in my second language. As a language learner, I understand my students' struggles, particularly in speaking, collaborating, and being welcome in an English-speaking setting. I want this study to propose specific strategies that will enable language learners to become confident when speaking in English, and to gain strategies that will allow them to

participate and have a voice in their second language. I also want to provide teachers with contextualized strategies to foster meaningful and culturally responsive student classroom participation, interaction, and collaboration so that Ecuadorian EFL learners feel more confident in expressing their thoughts, ideas, and knowledge in English.

Credibility & Trustworthiness

For qualitative studies, it is necessary to establish credibility as a researcher, in contrast to establishing validity when conducting quantitative studies (Creswell, 2013). This study mainly established credibility through the description of procedures to collect, review, and analyze the documents selected as data sources. Frey (2018) explains that to guard against bias when conducting document analysis in qualitative research, triangulation of data obtained from several sources is used to substantiate, disprove, clarify, or explain findings in different data sources. “When qualitative researchers locate evidence to document a code or theme in different data sources, they are triangulating information and providing validity to their findings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Furthermore, Yin (2016) explains that methodically conducting a qualitative research process avoids biases and distortions by constructing a sense of completeness to the research effort to build trustworthiness. Analyzing each document allows me to better understand the potential of each activity to promote interaction between students.

One challenge of this project is that my beliefs and assumptions cause me to argue and defend my position as a teacher. However, based on the research, I also have to reflect on my biases. I have to reflect and consider changing for improving my own teaching. I will gain from this study by creating strategies will enable my students to participate more confidently in my EFL classroom.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

To facilitate the comprehension of the analysis of the document, I have analyzed the role of the student-student interaction, teacher-student interaction, and the opportunities for production into the proposed activities to promote interaction in the classes, taking into account their English levels and establishing realistic expectations. The first activity is a “Commenting on Relevant Reading Materials” strategy to motivate and engage students to read weekly in the classroom to promote interaction, engagement, and desire for reading. After reading each short book, students work on a final project for presenting their comprehension adapt to their own lives. The second activity in the thinking routine is “Think, Pair, Share.” This collaborative learning strategy leads learners to work together to solve a problem or answer a question according to the topic. At the beginning of this strategy, the students think individually regarding the topic or essential question, share their ideas with their classmates, and discuss with a partner to increase and build their oral communication skills. This strategy aims to comprehend the reading materials. It also helps teachers develop and improve students' visible thinking (Richard et al., 2013). The last activity for analysis is the “Extension Wheel Strategy,” which promotes learning through interaction among students about the topic and improves collaborative learning in groups (Johnson & Johnson, 1994). When students work in groups, they can expand their knowledge based on the partner's funds of knowledge and interest (Herrera et al., 2011, p. 115). To know the effectiveness of the activities to promote real interaction to improve meaningful language communication.

Activity 1: Commenting on Relevant Reading Materials (See Appendix A)

The Commenting on Relevant Reading Materials strategy points to motivating and engaging students to read a short book weekly in the classroom to promote interaction, engagement, and desire to participate in the readings. At the end of each book, students will work on a final project for presenting their comprehension of the short text and adapt into their own lives. I have chosen this strategy because I consider this strategy valuable and helpful which tries to provide students with comprehensible input for increasing vocabulary related to the book's topic. I am strongly interested to know how students are involved in this activity to promote interaction among them and the role of the teacher in it.

One reason I use this activity to promote interaction in my classes is because it includes students in the decision-making process. Specifically, this activity attempts to involve students in the text selection process to encourage interaction, but upon analysis, the students are only included in a limited way. First, the teacher chooses the kind of text students will read and the content based on assumptions about students' interests, talents, and learning styles. In addition, students are asked to make choices about which text to read, but the teacher has already decided the number of options and which ones are appropriate, based on her perceptions. The students only become involved after the teacher presents the opportunities to the class, at this point they "vote to select the book" they will read. When students are called to participate by voting, this process does not necessarily require that they debate or discuss the choice of materials in any meaningful way. Voting itself does not promote interaction, as students can simply select an option without considering the criteria for their selection. As the majority will rule, other students may feel left out or pressured to go with the general tendency of the class. Their role is ultimately passive in this decision-making process as Yule (2010) states

that affective factors such as stressed, embarrassed, self-conscious, worried, and unmotivated may impede acquisition. As a result, this procedure, despite trying to include students, is teacher-centered from the beginning, leaving little space for the students to genuinely interact in the decision-making process.

Second, I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes because it facilitates a meaningful negotiation of the language for significant production through clear instructions. This activity also tries to establish a meaningful relationship between comprehensible input and producing meaningful output. In this case, every reading class will start with the teacher reading the book aloud, allowing the students to question for clarification and understanding. Also, the teacher tries to encourage to ask if a student will voluntarily want to read the next class.

Concerning the implementation of this activity, the teacher starts with the reading and tries for the students to connect what they know with what is new through questions, negotiating the language for understanding, and asking volunteers to read for the next class. Teachers know the students' backgrounds to provide the input; the understandable information should be provided for the teacher or the student when working in pairs or groups, depending on the student's level. As Pica (1996) mentions, teachers should encourage learners to collaborate on communication tasks in order to be confident that the interaction with a native speaker or another learner can improve L2 learning (p. 80).

Notably, regarding English as a foreign language, some students are afraid of making mistakes in the language, so they prefer to repeat or be in silence. Despite the role of the teachers as motivators, which is essential for increasing students' confidence in using the language, not all students interact in the activity.

The third reason I use this activity to promote interaction is that it encourages activity reading within the classroom because exposure between low proficiency

English Language Learners with peers with a high level positively impacts language acquisition. In some public schools, the lack of practice outside the school as a teacher is an advantage in giving opportunities to students inside the school. In spite of the Ministry of Education does not facilitate teachers' materials to work with the students; the teacher's predisposition to bring and present the three interesting short books to read based on the teachers' assumptions regarding the students' interests will be a significant resource to apply in the classroom.

Working this activity inside the classroom allows students to practice reading and help them improve their language through interactive activities because the classroom is just the place where they can practice the language. However, getting the books depends on teachers' volunteers because teachers are not obligated to buy extra material for their students to develop the language. But great teachers look for the best way to improve their teaching and try to apply different strategies that work better (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The last reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is that it provides students the opportunities to practice reading at home and increases confidence and enthusiasm to read in front of the class. Due to the activation procedure, the students can carry on the short book to practice the reading at home. Afterward, students can tell the teacher when they are ready to read to their classmates. The students, through readings, enhance interaction with their partners and groups, allowing them to acquire Comprehensible input through interaction through a conversation about the reading (Ibrahim, 2012, p.57). Due to the fact when they interact with others, they provide and gain significant output as the students learn by connecting what they know and what is new to them.

After analysis, I consider that it should involve students more in the activity, such as selecting short books according to their culturally relevant as real interests,

learning styles, and background. Another issue I should consider that is the teachers' desire to improve their teaching by investing meaningful materials to achieve their teaching goals. Therefore, teachers as guides and motivators should adopt strategies and activities according to their real contexts and focus on the student-center in the whole activity to promote class interaction. Students should be immersed in the selection of the books in order to engage them into the activity effectively to develop meaningful interactions.

Activity 2: Think, Pair, and Share (See Appendix B)

Think, Pair, and Share is a collaborative learning strategy that allows learners to work together to solve a problem or answer an essential question according to the topic. I used to work with a similar strategy at the beginning of the class to know what they knew about the topic and reinforce some parts that they needed to practice. However, after reading this strategy, I have learned the procedure of this strategy step by step.

At the beginning of this strategy, students are given time to think individually regarding the topic or essential question, share their own ideas with their classmates, and discuss with a partner to increase and build their oral communication skills. This strategy aims to comprehend the reading materials. I have selected this strategy because I want to know how effectively it improves interaction. To set up, I select a picture to relate to the topic that includes some details for students to observe and think about it, then I read the text or article related to the topic and ask students to think about it. In the “Think” part of the procedure, the teacher asks students to look and listen carefully in order to provide information about it. Then, learners are paired with another student in which student will share his/her opinion with his/her partner and vice versa.

Finally, learners are asked to share their ideas or opinions with their partners. So, students share their opinions with their partners, and vice versa.

One reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is that it is a helpful strategy that supports teachers in obtaining students' full participation and a better understanding of a topic. First, in the activity procedure, the students listen to the article or text to think about it. Then students share their opinion with their peers. This activity tries to involve the entire class in participation through speaking. Despite teachers trying to involve the whole class in the activities to use the language through interaction, some low-proficiency students are shy to speak in front of others. Some students feel uncomfortable with a peer who does not want to speak with them, so they ask the teacher to move on with another student. As Ibrahim (2012) argues that the success of a classroom interaction depends on the teacher's professional development due to the appropriate activities engage students to interact among them.

I also use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes because it gives students time to think, generate unique ideas, and share them with peers and classmates. Second, after students observe and think about the reading, article, problem, or question, this strategy comes up with enough time individually for thinking to share their ideas or solutions with their peers and classmates. This strategy focuses on the time students need to think and develop their ideas about the topic. Some students need extra time to organize their thinking and share with their classmates. It is important to consider that teachers must consider the time when planning a lesson class and the possible unforeseen events with students. For instance, if the student does not have enough vocabulary related to the topic, that student probably will be silent, and teachers should create activities that provide students comprehensible input based on the topic. As Cevallos (2017) argues that teachers must consider each student has different

learning styles, preferences, and needs so teachers should adapt their lessons according to the learners' needs to motivate and engage students into interactive activities.

The third reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is that it allows teachers to monitor students when they share their ideas and provide appropriate responses. Based on the implementation of the activity, the teacher monitor when students are discussing the question, problem, reading, or article to respond to any concern. As Ibrahim (2012) mentions, effective techniques engage learners to interact with others by designing a suitable environment for learning a second language acquisition (p. 57). Furthermore, this strategy suggests that teachers monitor students when discussing the topic to provide an appropriate response. However, the large classrooms in public schools are challenging to monitor when they work in pairs or groups because the teacher needs time to listen when they are talking to check students' understanding.

The last reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is because it fosters students to interact with each other to open authentic conversations through authentic material according to their interests, age, and level of proficiency. Indeed, the activity procedure proposes students' interaction among students through accurate material based on the learners' interests, age, and level of proficiency. The teacher works with the English module provided by the Ministry of Education in which the contents are related to Ecuador and other countries' contexts. On the whole, this strategy supports the interaction in the classroom using authentic material based on the learners' interests, age, and level of proficiency. However, teachers work with the English module offered by the Ministry of Education, but what happens if the students do not reach the level of the module and the contents are not interesting for the entire class? The teachers' role is crucial to engage students with the module's contents and select the module according to their level of proficiency. Toro et

al. (2019) manifest that many students are a constraint that impedes students from interacting efficiently, which causes low language achievements. Additionally, Cirocki et al. (2019) state that teachers' lack of motivational strategies makes students not feel encouraged to participate in classroom activities.

Thus, to summarize, learning occurs in the best way through authentic and meaningful communication and collaboration among students in which teachers should create a learning environment for interaction so that students enjoy experiencing new and entertaining ways of learning. Notably, the Think, Pair, and Share strategy carries benefits and weaknesses that teachers handle daily in the classroom. As a teacher that works in a public school, I have observed and analyzed that I cannot assess individual contributions when they are sharing their opinions or giving an answer due to a large number of students, and this activity involves all students simultaneously. Also, some students are nervous or feel ashamed to speak with others; even speaking can trigger anxiety, which will negatively impact their learning. In fact, it is relevant that teachers should be flexible, giving students time to think, engaging each student in sharing their ideas, and using the strategy alternately to avoid monotony. In this strategy, teachers provide opportunities for learners to share about themselves and learn more in advance about each other in order to build a positive learning environment. While students practice respectful, caring and confident communication and trusting relationship among them.

Activity 3: Extension Wheel (See Appendix C)

This strategy provides students a place to document their learning to share with peers and reinforce their ideas in which all students participate in constructing the knowledge. This activity provides learners opportunities to gain more information about

the lesson through interaction in pairs or small groups; during the whole activity, students work in pairs to support each other and lead them to scaffold their own learning. In this activity, students complete the central ring with their prior knowledge about the topic. Then, in the second ring, the new information they have obtained during the reading; at the end of this activity, students write a summary about the topic (Herrera et al., 2011). I chose this activity because I have observed that most students like to work in pairs and prefer to work on hands-on activities in which I as a teacher empower learners to share their thoughts due to students respond differently to different types of content. So, to provide supporting instruction to them, I considered those factors when planning to work on vocabulary and other topics related to readings. I want to know if this strategy helps increase interaction and engage students in the activities.

One reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is because it focuses on the students' thinking because each student has a different perspective based on their background. Firstly, this strategy allows students to connect their previous knowledge about the topic in which they provide examples. In the development of this strategy, students put the topic on the wheel, new information, and a resume about the topic before interacting with their peers and group. Based on my own teaching, some students do not work in the activity due to the lack of confidence in themselves so the students with a better understanding of the topic and according to Molineros et al. (2015) claim that the teacher and peers can provide Comprehensible input through different grouping opportunities and highlight that educators should foster learners' interaction by supporting each other and scaffolding their own learning (p. 54).

Another reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is because it provides learners more opportunities to gain more information about the lesson through interaction in pairs or small groups. After students work by

themselves, they use cooperative work to facilitate interaction among students in which they share the information with each other and contribute to expanding their knowledge about the topic. Concerning this part, as students must work in pairs but sometimes students are absent, and teacher should prevent this situation. In this case, by making students work in trios to involve all students in the activity. However, some students do not work in the strategy template due to a lack of knowledge, even students with special needs who require that teachers adapt their plans.

I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes because it enhances students' mediation and negotiation as they convey their own points of view to their partners; when students have finished the activity individually, they share their extension wheel with their classmates. They can even expand their knowledge when they share and listen to their partner. It is well known that the role of students learning a language is to negotiate with others. It is evident that interaction occurs when students share with their classmates, in other words, when they finish working on the template. As a result, students work without interaction while students work on their templates: in this stage, the student's role is passive while the teacher's role is active, so this strategy is teacher-centered during the completion of this strategy.

The last reason I use this activity to promote interaction and motivation in my classes is that students choose the ideas they prefer to write. Since teachers should motivate students to believe they can succeed and feel optimistic about their achievements and potential, their confidence increases. According to this activity, teachers allow students to choose the idea they want to discuss in writing. Based on my teaching, when I ask for volunteers to participate in the presentation of their activities, and most of the time, just the same students are the ones who do the oral presentations. It is important to highlight that learner must have a positive feeling about their learning.

After analysis, this strategy looks to improve reading comprehension while students write about what they know about the topic and connect with the new information while reading. Besides, students work alone to complete the Extension Wheel Strategy in order to help students know what is expected and how to make progress through the teacher's clear instructions and useful guidance. Students can interact with the information they have written and expand their ideas with the information they receive from others. Due to my teaching situation in which I work with a large number of students with different levels of English, I try to work with strategies like the Extension Wheel Strategy to support and engage them through hands-on activities that they like to work in the classroom.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

When examining the importance of promoting interaction among students to improve and use English in a real context for meaningful communication, this study focused on my own teaching way and examining the activities I have applied to my classrooms. After conducting the document analysis, the results show that overall, my own teaching practice concerning students' interaction in the English classroom that interaction plays a meaningful role in language learning. Also, to know that comprehension comes first before production and the effectiveness in which the activities are applied when teachers-students and students-students interact, comprehension and production can be developed to promote good interaction in the EFL classroom. Taken together, the studies as mentioned above lend some evidence to this claim. At the same time, this study examines the ineffectiveness evident in the activity document, which explains why students do not interact in the way I wanted. I have learned the importance of researching assumptions in order to uncover or confirm those assumptions that I as a teacher had about learning and teaching English as a Foreign/Second language. I strongly believe that we should create a positive environment of learning based on the students' needs, levels of proficiency, their Zone of Proximal Development, and that responds to their specific cultural backgrounds.

After reflecting on the document analysis, some patterns were connected to researchers' statements about good interaction in the EFL classroom through the activities to improve meaningful communication among students. It is important to mention that the activities I proposed and analyzed should be adapted according to the student's proficiency levels and mix them to move students to the next levels through active participation in the activities. To enhance the learning of English based on authentic materials in which students understand the context to engage them in

acquiring the language. It is also relevant to emphasize the application of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to make academic content comprehensible for students, so based on questions and interaction among students, teachers can identify when students need the support of others to achieve the knowledge (Wells, 1990, p.300).

In accordance with the researchers about interaction as a means of negotiating the meaning of the language, the activities attempt students to promote interaction among them in which the role of the teachers as a guide and motivator to choose strategies that encourage collaboration due to learning occur when students share their own opinion and expand their knowledge about the topic. I consider that Commenting on Relevance Reading, Think, Pair and Share, and Extension Wheel engage students to promote interaction to increase information and produce the language in meaningful classroom communication. However, I am conscious that I should adapt the activities according to my students' levels, interests, needs, and cultures. Furthermore, I have to be more persistent in the application of these strategies due to when I do not have the results that I would like to have in this case, the participation of the whole students in the activity, I immediately change the activity, but now I know that I have to improve the activity step by step.

Engaging students through hands-on activities increase participation in the class; the idea is to involve students in learning the content through physical objects that can be manipulated. Notably, some students feel ashamed to speak with others, and others, due to limited English proficiency, do not interact with their classmates, so Think, Pair, and Share, and Extension Wheel strategies provide students opportunities to write their ideas into the templates about the activities. Furthermore, using these kinds of strategies help the teacher identify what students know and what they need to know about the content and allow them to discuss their artifacts with their peers or groups.

Based on my way of teaching, I have noticed that strategies should be adapted according to the real context. In most public schools, teachers can not monitor every student's intervention when discussing or providing their own opinion due to a large number of students with different English levels. Unfortunately, students can not receive appropriate and personalized feedback timely that help them to enhance their language production. Working in groups engages collaboration; however, due to the time and a large number of students, forming groups of six does not guarantee that all students contribute with their ideas. In contrast, when they are grouped in pairs or trios, they will modify and gain more information (Murry et al., 2017).

Although this personal study helped me uncover the role of interaction in promoting real participation among students to acquire the language for meaningful communication, this study was limited in some ways, such as the application and record of the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of the strategies with my students. Using the quantitative method to observe the process of each activity step by step, the number of participations in which they mediate and negotiate the meaning is a reflecting case study about my teaching practice and examines each strategy based on the researchers' studies. Another limitation is to be critical of ourselves due to our assumptions and beliefs regarding the way of teaching, which we assume to be right. The results of this study cannot be generalized due to the case study being about my teaching to knowing how effective or ineffective the proposed classroom activities are.

Final Thoughts

This study points to the importance of promoting learners' interaction in order to students acquire and use English for meaningful communication in authentic situations.

As a teacher, it is important to value the importance of creating a positive and comfortable environment for learning in which students feel confident in themselves to speak and interact with others. The application of strategies that promote real interaction between teacher-student and student-student help improve communication in English as a Foreign Language. Now, I know that interaction is not mere speaking through repetition instead of a conversation between student-teacher and student-student to mediate and negotiate the meaning that aims to understand the message in an authentic context. It is well known that there are many students per class in public schools and working with these kinds of strategies sounds impossible due to the time and annual plan we have to cover, but I believe that all is possible. And try again and again, step by step probably, we will have small positive changes and results related to learning/acquiring English as a Foreign Language in public schools in Ecuador. Furthermore, as facilitators, I firmly believe that we should provide students with many opportunities through activities to promote meaningful interaction in which those activities focus on students' backgrounds, interests, and needs.

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APPENDIX A: STRATEGY 1

COMMENTING ON RELEVANT READING MATERIAL

PURPOSE

- Motivation and engagement to read in groups and read aloud.
- Adapting literature to their own cultural and social context.
- Having weekly themes focused on discussions on a common topic based on the students' interest.

IMPLEMENTATION

Setting up the learning environment

A positive Learning environment preparation is essential in EFL learning. Teachers should have and communicate clearly all the learning and behavioral expectations for each activity.

1. Establish the accommodation of chairs where students can sit in a circle to listen to the read aloud even with a large group of students.
2. Explain that as soon as the class starts students are expected to be sitting in a circle ready to start the read aloud.
3. Teacher will start the class of reading asking the students to guess what the book is about or what do they think might happen in the reading through a big picture or image related to the topic. After the class the teacher will ask the students to remember what happened during the last read aloud and what do they think will happen next.
4. Teachers should create a safe environment in which students feel free and confidence in themselves to speak in English, to make mistakes, to ask for help and to share our ideas in English the best way we can. It is essential that teacher at the beginning of the school year build positive relationships where respect and

positive behavior foster and promote authentic interaction among them.

Preparing the resources

Based on the teacher's knowledge of his/her student interests, talents, and learning styles teacher will present three interesting short books to read as a class. The book has to be selected according to the whole students' level in which students understand and become more attentive and engaged. The selection of books should include mystery, science fiction, or teenagers' real-life drama. The students vote to select the book.

Preparing the students

The students should be clearly informed about this strategy dynamics. In every class of reading will start by the teacher reading the book aloud to the class, allowing the students to question for clarification and understanding. The aloud reading will only last for exactly 10 min. in every class. Once the students are connected with the reading the teacher may encourage to ask if a student will voluntarily want to read the next class. The student may take the book to practice aloud reading at home before reading in front of the class. Students can tell teacher when they are ready to read to their classmates. After exactly 10 min. have finished the class students will have a group discussion to affirm understanding and begin making connections and inferences about the reading contents. The reading should be timed. After the reading finishes the teacher will ask some essential quick questions to the group to answer.

Strategy duration:

This strategy may last the whole school year by changing to new short, interesting books once the previous book is finished and the final project takes place.

- 20 minutes in every class until the class finishes reading the whole short book.
- 2 hours preparing collaborative learning project (Cartoon or comics Scenes about the book main events adapted to their local context)

- 2 hours oral presentation of their final project with emphasis on what they have learned through the short, interesting book.

Required routine:

10 min - Every class student quietly sitting in circle ready to listen to the person reading

10 min - Daily interaction through essential questions: What happened last time? What do you think will happen next? Have you connected this content with any precious experience of your own?

FINAL PROJECT IDEAS - GROUP COLLABORATION

Option 1:

The class as a whole will select the most relevant moments in the book and draw a comic strip scene about it. In small groups (3-5 students) they will be assigned a scene and then present their book scenes to another group of students trying to convince them to read that book. During the presentation the students are expected to explain how this book is related to their cultural and social context or to their daily life.

Option 2:

In small groups (3-5 students) they will write a short story (400-600 words) with illustrations inspired in the book adapted to their own reality. Each group will read and share their story to the class.

Option 3:

Prepare a short role- play for the whole class in which they present the book in English. Finally, each student should explicitly explain why the book was relevant to them.

APPENDIX B: STRATEGY 2

THINKING ROUTINE: THINK, PAIR, AND SHARE

Topic: sustainable development

4 students per group (10 groups)

DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

Think, pair, and share strategy helps teachers organize students and topics to achieve full participation and lead students in a great understanding of a topic through this technique. Also, this strategy provides students time and structure for thinking and allows them to generate unique ideas and share these ideas with a peer. It is important to consider that when students are discussing their ideas, the teacher can monitor and listen to the conversations and respond appropriately. In this strategy, the problem or question is posed about the assigned reading, so students have time to think about the problem or question individually, and then students work in pairs to solve the problem and share their ideas with the whole class. Using this strategy allows students to develop the ability to consider other points of view.

LESSON OVERVIEW

This lesson plan aims to integrate content through readings that come from the English Pedagogical Module 3 from Eighth Grade EGB that shows Food security, Food Scarcity, Eating Healthy Food, and How much to Buy while the students have the opportunity to think individually about the questions and share the answers with their classmates. This lesson plan involves listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Students will become familiar with vocabulary relative to food groups through the activities. Also, the activities will enhance reading, speaking, and writing skills and promote group work through oral presentations.

OBJECTIVES

Students will understand that communication is essential to express ideas and thoughts about a topic.

Students understand how to recognize the main idea and generate important details about the topic.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

What is Food Security?

Will your community always have enough to eat?

What can the government do to provide sufficient food so that the population can have access to it?

What do you know about famine in Africa?

Is there food scarcity in Latin America?

What do we have to do to make sure there is enough food in Ecuador?

What are examples of healthy foods that you regularly eat?

CONTENT OUTCOMES

Students will be able to identify about how they can improve their own health through the Healthy Eating Plate.

Students will be able to explain what happens in Africa relate to food Scarcity and generate possible solutions to the hunger problem.

LANGUAGE OUTCOMES

From the reading “Food Security”

Students will be able to analyze the history about Food Security.

Students will be able to identify and discuss new vocabulary relate to Food Security and Food scarcity.

MATERIALS

- English Pedagogical Modules # 3
- Papers

- Pens/pencils
- Markers

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS to teachers on how to complete the activity

Decide upon the readings to be read and develop the set of essential questions that target key content concepts.

Describe the purpose of the strategy and provide guidelines for discussions.

Model the procedure to ensure that students understand how to use the strategy.

It is important that students really know how this strategy works and teachers should allow students to explain it. (5 minutes)

Firstly, teachers show the reading on page # 18 and read the topic and the information. (5 minutes).

After that, teachers ask an essential question based on the content, so students have 4-5 minutes to think about the question.

What is Food Security?

Then, students share with their partner their answer, it is important to take into account that if there one student with no partner they can work in trios (5 minutes).

Additionally, teachers have to listen the discussion in the groups. and students share their ideas with the whole classes using paper for their oral presentations. (20 minutes).

Follow the English Pedagogical Module 3 on page# 19

Firstly, teachers show the topic on page # 19 and students read the value of the topic. (5 minutes).

After that, students listen an audio about the Famine in Africa (5 minutes).

Later, teacher ask an essential problem question, so students have 4-5 minutes to think about it. What can the government do to provide sufficient food so that the population can have access to it?

Then, students share with their partner their answer, it is important to take into account that if there one student with no partner they can work in trios (5 minutes).

Additionally, teachers have to listen the discussion in the groups.

Finally, students share their ideas with the whole classes using paper for their oral presentations. (20 minutes).

Students will do the activities 1 to 4 at home.

APPENDIX C: STRATEGY 3

EXTENSION WHEEL STRATEGY

DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY.

This strategy provides students a place to document their learning to share with peers and reinforce their ideas in which all students participate in the construction of the knowledge. It is important to highlight that each student has a different point of view based on their prior knowledge, interest about community and world situations. This activity provides learners opportunities to gain more information about the lesson through interaction in pair or small groups. Additionally, it tool pushes students analysis and synthesis which are part of the Taxonomy of Blooms.

OBJECTIVES

Aids students organized their thoughts relate to the topic.

Understand how ideas can be expanded in multiple ways based on a student' point of view.

Provides students opportunities to mediate and negotiate language as they convey their own points of view to their group integrant.

JUSTIFICATION

- This strategy allows student to express their thinking and expand them through interaction with their peers and groups through the template.

MATERIALS:

- Extension Wheel template, blank sheets of paper, pens/ pencil, and reading information.

STEP-BY-STEP INSTRUCTIONS to teachers on how to complete the activity.

ACTIVATION:

- Have students write the topic or idea in the center circle of the wheel.

- Ask students to think individually about three extensions/effects of the idea in the center circle.
- Encourage students to think through their funds of knowledge as they consider the term.
- Once students are ready with their thought about the ideas, group them in pair or trios to have them do a turn-and-talk to discuss their ideas with each other.
- As students share the rationale behind their extensions with each other, while students are discussing teachers walk around and listening their thought processes.

CONNECTION:

- Once students have finished discussing their initial extension of the central topic, or teachers have covered some of the content of the lesson, have students meet in their pair or trios groups to choose three extensions based on their oral discussions to transfer onto the first ring of the wheel.
- Revoicing could be an important part in which teachers revoice about the terms that students put on their wheels and value their terms.
- After students have finished writing the ideas on the first ring, ask them to expand further on those ideas. This time the groups will write on the second ring, adding two extensions/ideas per one extension from the first ring.
- After that, students have recorder the extended ideas on the second ring, bring the class together and have them share their ideas with the whole group or with another trios group.
- As students share with the class, allow them to add additional notes onto their own extension Wheels, based on the ideas they are hearing.
- Amount of time used for each step.

AFFIRMATION:

- Teachers can have students expand to an additional third ring to know how much students have been learned about the topic. In this case students expand certain ideas from the second ring.
- Go around the classroom and circle on the groups' extension wheels the ideas that teachers want them to extend. Overall, to the desired outcome of the lesson.
- After groups finish recording their ideas, ask students to write a narrative or expository summary of the points identified on the wheel. This task can be completed individually or trios.
- Teachers allow students to choose which of the ideas from the wheel they would like to discuss in their writing.

Name _____ Date _____

Think-Pair-Share

Read the following question or problem:

Think

On your own, write three ideas you have about this question or problem:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Pair

Discuss your ideas with a partner. Put a check by any ideas, above, that your partner also wrote down. Then, write down ideas your partner had that you did not have:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Share

Review all of your ideas and circle the one you think is most important. One of you will share this idea with the whole group.

As you listen to the ideas of the whole group, write down three more ideas you liked:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TEMPLATE: Extension Wheel

Name: _____

Date: _____

