The Impact of the Exposure to Contextualized Input on Interactional Speaking Skills in Participants of a Conversational Club
TABLE OF CONTENT

Abstract........................................................................................................................................ I

Acknowledgements..................................................................................................................... II

1. Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 7

2. Statement of the problem........................................................................................................... 9
   2.1 Research questions.................................................................................................................12

3. Defining interaction.....................................................................................................................13
   3.1 Interaction vs transaction.........................................................................................................15
   3.2 Interaction and metacognition.................................................................................................16
   3.3 Integration of contextualized material in conversation courses ......................................17

5. Literature review.........................................................................................................................19

6. Methodology...............................................................................................................................23
   6.1 Type of study..........................................................................................................................24
   6.2 Type of research......................................................................................................................24
   6.3. Context...................................................................................................................................25
   6.4. Setting....................................................................................................................................26
       6.4.1 Participants....................................................................................................................27
   6.5. Role of the researcher............................................................................................................28

6.6. Introduction to ethical considerations. ..................................................................................28
   6.6.1 Reciprocity and interviewing..............................................................................................29
   6.6.2 Informed Consent...............................................................................................................29
6.6.3 Trustworthiness and consistency____________________________________30
6.6.4 Protection of subject and minimizing intrusion_______________________31
6.6.5 Avoiding deceptions________________________________________________32

7. Data collection methods____________________________________________33
7.1 Interviews________________________________________________________34
7.2 Observations______________________________________________________34

8. Data analysis_______________________________________________________35
8.1 Triangulation_______________________________________________________35

9. Findings. __________________________________________________________36
9.1 Participants’ reactions towards the use of English through activities based on their interests_________________________________________________________37
9.1.1 The effect of using engaging topics and activities on motivation in participants of a conversational club____________________________________________________37

9.2 Willingness to participate as part of the verbal language development_________________________________________________________40
9.2.1 The importance of risk-taking and self-assertion of participants of a conversational club in language development.___________________________41

9.3 Final conclusion___________________________________________________46

10. Limitations______________________________________________________47

11. Research and pedagogical implications._____________________________49
Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of the implementation of a conversational club on students from a language program in a public university in Pereira, Colombia. This project emerged from the necessity of students to have access to an alternative opportunity to practice their communicative competences outside of their academic classes. This study focused on a group of students from different semesters who continuously participated in the activities provided by the facilitators. To proceed with this project, interviews and observations were conducted to perceive the students’ reactions towards the contextualized input provided.

This project revealed two major findings. The first finding suggested that there were positive reactions from participants when they were exposed to input in which they felt emotionally connected as the input was contextualized to their interests and needs. The second finding indicated that when students were provided with contextualized input, they were more willing to experiment with the foreign language by using it as a means to communicate rather than focusing solely on grammatical aspects of the language. Consequently, it was evidenced that the participants’ motivation in relation to the development and practice of their verbal skills increased after multiple sessions of the conversational club.
Acknowledgements

Through the development of this project it was evident the emotional link I had with it, and the impact it had on my life professionally and personally. Since we are becoming language teachers, the project was born and developed for four years in the language program of a university in Pereira with the objective of helping others to use and practice the foreign language, so that all of us strengthen our verbal skills as part of professional growth. During the planning, reflection and execution of the project many people were involved directly and indirectly so that the project and this research project could have been done. In the first place, I would like to thank Maria Doris Salazar and Carlos López, who as parents and teachers supported and advised me when I most needed it. To my sister Valeria, who always cheers me up no matter the situation. Moreover, from the very bottom of my heart I want to say thanks to my love Lindsay, who as my girlfriend was my biggest motivation to work well and hard, thanks to her for inspiring, supporting and helping me with every step of this project.

Additionally, I would like to give special thanks to professor Daniel Murcia, who besides being my professor is also, my mentor, model and friend. He played a very important role, since from the very beginning of this project and the university program he pushed me to grow and exploit my abilities as student and teacher. Moreover, I sincerely thank professor and director of the same program Enrique Arias, who was my thesis advisor and supported me not only as a student but has also supported my ideas, projects or any proposal that I wanted to implement in the
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Daniel López Salazar.
1. Introduction

This Project was constructed with the aim of providing guide-material to teachers who implement oral-interactional activities in any of their English courses. Moreover, any knowledge given to learners when being instructed may be directly coherent to the context and reality of themselves; According to Baker (2009) the most contextualized language is, the most familiarized learners will be. That is why contextualized material, which has been already tested, becomes a great source not only in the sense of learning the language through interaction, but also it may increase metacognition so that learners find that what they are learning is applicable to their common life, thus students will feel comfortable with the usage of language inasmuch as they compare what they perform in class and their real experiences. "The idea that all kind of learning processes in any be accounted for by one limited general set of rules and laws or mechanisms, has been replaced by a view on learning that acknowledges the importance of the content of learning, as well as the nature of the learning situation. Domain specificity and situatedness are now generally recognized as major parameters of any theory of learning. Context has become a hot issue in modern educational science." (Lave & Wagner, 1991/ Kirshner& Whitson, 1997)

In non-native English speaking countries users of the foreign language are equipped with instinct-strategies that allow them either to comprehend what somebody else is trying to say, or what they read in a pop-magazine. These strategies include; interpret body gestures while speaking, or making relations
between words when reading. However, the difficulty in the process of learning a language through interaction, relies on the fact that users of language do not produce the language orally, given the fact that there is a lack of extra spaces to practice the spoken language; In the Licenciatura program of a university located in Pereira there is an amount of 80% of subjects guided in English and a 20% of them guided in Spanish, these subjects require high-developed proficiency in the foreign language since it is academic-oriented, that is why the need of developing oral skills on students is required with urgency.

In the second semester of the year 2012, the project “Let’s Talk conversation club” coordinated by the student Daniel López Salazar was released with the objective of providing students from the Licenciatura program a space to practice the language in a non-academic environment since the idea of the club is to strengthen spoken language through all kind of activities that required oral interaction. These pedagogical interactions promote verbal and non-verbal language, spontaneity, self reflection, group feedback; however the club also encourages students to be autonomous of their own learning process. In this conversational course the activities were contextualized so that students practice the language towards the use of it in real life situations. In addition, all the activities were collected and compiled so that they are useful for future teachers in their conversational courses, who through this material are going to be able to bring to class interactional activities that portrait concrete external situations from Colombian context such: how to react when facing a job interview, dating a girl, self-reflections, what to do when talking with native English speakers, strategies for
keeping conversations in Long term, strategies to make themselves understood, body language, fast thinking and spontaneity activities, how to use specific idioms and in what situations, expressions of politeness, etc; that will impact the perception of students of why to learn the language and how important it is to have some control on it to have better, meaningful and enriching interactions.

2. Statement of the problem

In the field of language acquisition, resemblances regarding the way the mother tongue is acquired in comparison to a language to be learned lead to the research of different strategies regarding the speaking competence so that foreign languages are learnt as natural as possible. Interaction has evolved so much through language education in the last years that it is considered essential when learning a language. According to Long (1996), interaction plays a significant role when face to face encounters contribute to the development of the language, since immediate feedback (the one that occurs when trying to model somebody else’s language) has major effects on metacognition. On the other hand, Ellis (1999) stated that interaction has a close relationship to autonomy because students willingly look for those spaces and topics to interact when language becomes a channel, thus it becomes a need. In this sense, Thornbury (2000) brought to light the idea of “dogme teaching”, in which language was not prepared, but it was an emergent element during the classes. This idea was so attractive to many teachers that they started adopting some aspects of this approach, where language was
linked to the context that students felt familiarized with what was learnt and saw a learning purpose not only for their classes but their lives.

According to the Ministerio de Educación Nacional's program, “Colombia very well”, universities have better results regarding bilingualism in comparison to schools where only 8% of the graduated students reach level B2. This draws the challenge teachers face for the following years. English needs to be well taught so that different fields benefit from it. In regards to interaction, improvements from the policies of IES (Instutuciones de Educación Superior) of the same program, involve the creation of Conversation Clubs as a pedagogical model. Also, students from secondary school as well as students at the university level, will find teachers in capability of guiding courses emphasizing speaking competences so that students get familiarized with the foreign language through oral interactions.

In this sense, it is evidenced how important it is not only to start implementing conversational-interactional strategies for teaching at University level, but also to prepare and give instruction to those who will guide these programs. For this reason, being bilingual is not enough; there are needs in terms of material and sources that need to be fulfilled. Internet is nowadays the biggest tool in terms of searching sources and materials for pedagogical purposes; it is possible to find thousands of websites with valuable information, exercises, presentations, examples, etc. Unfortunately most of them are not from Colombia context but European or North American. That is why we must construct material that can be used widely for bilingual purposes but also that is perfectly adapted to the Colombian context, so that students find it interesting, reliable, familiar, and
useful for the lives outside the classrooms. According to Truscott & Fonseca (Universidad de Los Andes, 2008) in their paper named “Orientacionesparapolíticasbilingües y multilingües en lenguasextranjerases Colombia”, they expose what the profile of teacher for bilingual education is, and what the role of universities are in the same process. This is illustrated how teachers need to become linguistic and cultural “role models”, there is need of empowerment in the classroom, and of course there is a need of social interaction which means that teachers should find ways to interact with their students in meaningful, controlled, and monitored way. However, doing this by one’s own represents a challenge, plus it is difficult to find material already adapted to Colombian context that can be used for interaction purposes. This represents the core of this project, since there is a gap between the interaction while acquiring a language and the material to support the process.

In the year 2012, “Let’s Talk conversation club” was founded in the ELT program of Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira” by the student Daniel López Salazar. The main purpose of this extension project was to create a bilingual environment for the students, where the speaking competence represented the core of learning. Each semester different thematics are presented so that students can experience social interaction through a non-prepared language. In other words, autonomously they start shaping their own language based on others. Also, there is certain exposure to “emergent language” since speaking provides going in/out of the track to explore different topics during a class. In this way, students are always speaking creatively and spontaneously. Even though students of the
different programs of the Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira are invited and welcomed to participate from our activities, the target population are the student of the program of English Language Teaching given the fact that they are being prepared for being teachers which means that speaking is not “optional”, so the club helps in terms of sociolinguistics since they are learning, practicing and improving language, but also they are being part of a community, and also pedagogically in the grounds that they are observing what the process of developing a speaking club is, so that they learn and apply strategies, exercises or activities that they evidence during the sessions and make use of them in any micro-teachings or practicums they have. Moreover, having extra classes environments, not only help students but also enrich the ELT program itself since students become more fluent, overcome fears related to speaking in public, body language and voice projection are practiced, etc. All these features will be reflected in their professional development. On the other hand, all the activities that are done have been collected so that a real Colombian contextualized manual of activities for conversation purposes can be created. This will contain reflections, and examples of it can be adapted to other topics or purposes so that any teacher who wants to explore interactional activities with their students can make use of this material and guide a class meaningfully and effectively.

2.1 Research questions

- How does the exposure to contextualized input affect interactional speaking skills in participants of a conversational club?
Objectives

- To reveal how the exposure to contextualized input affects interaction
- To provide alternative opportunities where teachers in development have the chance to improve the speaking skills.
- To analyze and implement different pedagogical materials to promote oral language development

3. Defining interaction

Interaction has become a hot topic in teaching-learning environments. However, this concept has been discussed by different authors in different scenarios. According to Long (1996) interaction is promoted by face-to-face talks, in which communication is the main purpose. Long states that interaction may vary into two forms: strong and weak interaction, it is understood by strong interaction as the position in which the encounter itself contributes to the development of the language. Different from the strong interaction, the weak one refers to encounters where learners find learning opportunities, whether or not they make productive use of them. In other words, they both differ in terms of the advantage taken by users during encounters, in order to learn, practice or improve their language abilities.

Secondly, similar to the comprehensible input theory (Krashen 1985) which proposes that any user that is in the process of acquiring a new language requires great use of it in natural environments, Long states that acquisition requires
meaningful interaction in the target language, where the speakers are concerned not with form of the utterances but with the message they are conveying and understanding. Moreover, interaction may work as a mean to provide feedback, thus when the speaker says something that the interlocutor does not understand they negotiate the meaning and end up creating a co-constructed comprehension, this kind of feedback for instance was named as Negative Evidence by Long (1996, language proficiency), since he considered that speakers may evidence instantly when the communication itself has some failures in terms of the message and its meaning. In that way speakers may ask for help to their interlocutors to re-create the messages so that they both understand and guide the interaction.

On the other hand, Ellis (1999) stated that the most productive interaction is the one that results when topics are selected autonomously by learners. Nonetheless, this selection involves the capability and willing to guide the conversation with not prepared speech, since it resembles how conversations take place in real life, most of this conversations are non-prepared and spontaneous. On the other hand, teachers have a very important role given the fact that they must encourage interpersonal talks among learners; this interpersonal talk requires learners to develop critical thinking, so that they reflect on what is said in order to get a deeper and further apprehension of language and to recognize the importance of interactions in the sense of acquiring a language style as natural as possible.

To summarize, we can say that interaction performs a really important role in the process of acquiring a language, on the grounds that it allows to understand
several patterns, like: accents, vocabulary, fluency or daily expressions through natural – spontaneous conversational encounters. Moreover, the autonomy from learners to acknowledge their needs and interests increases considerably their motivation to take advantages over any real interaction they experience.

3.1 Interaction vs transaction

As mentioned before, a conversation may take place at any place (restaurants, shopping malls, street, etc) and at any time. Conversations are mainly spontaneous, also real conversations are mostly non prepared (different from the ones that are made up for any specific purpose such: pedagogical or professional) which means, at least, linguistically, that those involved in the conversation have some strategies to either comprehend or produce verbal language. Consequently, there should be a reflection on the kind of conversations teachers expect students to have. To exemplify this, there should be a comparison between a student who was taught to develop conversations where asking and conveying information was the aim intended, and the student who was taught strategies to develop and understand speech no matter the situation. As Stanley (2010) said “conversational courses must aim on interaction rather than transaction practices”, so that students are always equipped to control or guide direction on any conversation they may have.

A transactional encounter is one where you are going through the motions to get the task or the discourse done. Maybe you are texting, talking on the phone to
someone else or just dazed and confused. But the bottom line is that you are not engaged with the other person or the process. Interaction occurs when two people are engaged in a dialogue or actively participating in the process. As an example, an encounter at a local coffee may work as an example between both terms. When somebody orders a hot tea, the barista is friendly, knowledgeable and quickly helps the customer to make his choice of tea, based on a few questions about his preferences. There was authentic interest, assistance and interaction about helping the customer with his selection and purchase. This is just one example of how effective interaction can affect the outcome. In this case, the local coffee shop has a new loyal customer who is telling others about how great they are.

3.2 Interaction and metacognition

To begin with, metacognition, understood as the ability to recognize own strategies to learn, it is evident that providing and receiving feedback plays an important role since it creates consciousness of what is said and how it is said, so that messages can be successfully understood by those involve in the conversation. Moreover, feedback is provided dissimilarly depending the skill, in this sense, reading and writing have a slower process of feedback since the checking is time demanding and often both need re-reading and re-writing. Despite the time and the re-doing, it has advantages to spend some time on them since this re-doing offers a better understanding and a better product in the case of writing. Different from reading and writing, speaking has a faster and instantaneous feedback (when it takes place spontaneously) since errors and mistakes committed
during the interaction are corrected at the moment either through self correction or interlocutor feedback, in both ways the process of apprehension is very quickly since it is internalized thanks to context; this language internalization is achievable in different forms as when learners observe another speaker, they notice patterns at a pronunciation, accent or fluency level, also they may shape their speech when they realize how some words or language expressions are only used in some specific situations or even when they are talking and notice the lack of vocabulary so that they figure out how to convey meanings. All this processes make the learner conscious of their own language. As a result, they will reflect on how to improve it or practice it, or even on how to learn to learn. At this point, metacognition is activated so that students take care of the language towards its enhancement.

3.3 Integration of contextualized material in conversational courses

The work presented in this paper is mainly focused on the importance of contextualized interactional material for EFL (English as a Foreign Language) conversational courses, so that teachers, while guiding students through the speaking skill also take advantage of this space to introduce any relevant content. As a result, that students feel interested and comfortable leaning dynamically, rising at the same time their pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences.

To start with, thanks to internet sources and materials (EFL activities) are easily found by loads making the labor of teachers simpler and easier. However,
according to Kitao (1997) teachers must be selective when picking material; even if the material is speaking-oriented it does not mean that it will fulfill the purpose of the class. On the other hand, most of this material found on internet was made and structured by native people, who perfectly use it in their classes.

Nonetheless, this material was not created for Colombian context and needs; Colombian needs, for example, include from how to talk to tourists, how to deal with fear and nervousness when being in front of an audience, expressing emotions, using body language as non-verbal strategy, different registers of language and language expressions, how to state opinions, arguments, or criticism to dealing with context situations such: going to the cinema, to the doctor, how is coffee made, describing Colombian cities, etc. These activities will impact positively and significantly the motivation of students. In consequence, they will have a better response in terms of attitude and language competence. As Baker, Hope and Karandjeff (2009) said “Contextualized teaching and learning, or the concept of relating subject matter content to meaningful situations that are relevant to students’ lives, offers one promising approach to helping students learn more effectively”. According to Baker, Hope and Karandjeff (2009) students who integrate new knowledge with previous experiences and backgrounds are likely to feel comfortable learning, since they create several relations with what is learnt and their real life, so that they notice the real purposes and their usefulness for future experiences.

Furthermore, the impact of contextualized activities relies on the fact that it will affect not only motivation towards the learning of a foreign language and
learning itself since students may make connections between their background knowledge and personal experiences they have gained through life and the knowledge they are receiving during the classes. According to Baker (2009), they will notice that when learning a foreign language through memoristic vocabulary, tenses and grammar rules will be a useless compilation of words until they display all that stored knowledge as tools they can use to develop a formal or informal interaction.

5. Literature review

Interaction is a broad field, as it can be implemented in many ways. Through interaction many aspects of the spoken language are affected, such as fluency, vocabulary or register. However, aspects such as culture, feelings, and behavior are also involved in the process. In this sense, teachers must be aware of the power of interaction so that they can take great advantage of it. Several studies have been proposed in this field by authors such as: Mackey (1999), Ellis (1999), Thornbury (2000), and Perin (2011), which explored, tested, and analyzed the relation between context and interaction. These studies were held in high school and university students; each study will have a general revision in this section.

Mackey (1999) examined the relationship between different types of conversational interaction and SLA. Long’s (1996) updated version of the interactionist hypothesis claims that implicit negative feedback, which can be obtained through negotiated interaction, facilitates SLA. Similar claims for the benefits of negotiation have been made by Pica (1994) and Gass (1997). Some support for the interaction hypothesis has been provided by studies that have
explored the effects of interaction on production (Gass & Varonis, 1994), on lexical acquisition (Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994), on the short-term outcomes of pushed output (see Swain, 1995), and for specific interactional features such as recasts (Long, Inagaki, & Ortega, 1998; Mackey & Philp, 1998). However, other studies have not found effects for interaction on grammatical development (Loschky, 1994). The central question addressed by the current study was: Can conversational interaction facilitate second language development? The study employed a pretest-posttest design. Adult ESL learners were divided into four experimental groups and one control group. They took part in task-based interaction. Research questions focused on the developmental outcomes of taking part in various types of interaction. Active participation in interaction and the developmental level of the learner were considered. Results of this study support claims concerning a link between interaction and grammatical development and highlight the importance of active participation in the interaction.

Ellis, R (1999) the intention of this paper was to explore the relationship between interpersonal and intrapersonal interactions. The idea was to check language prosecution improvement, through immediate interaction. In other words, that some aspects of language improvement could be observed while interactions were happening and not after it finished. After students completed the exercises (face to face encounters) they were tested through self-questioning method; they were trained to generate questions during or after the exercises so that they monitor and compare language (before/after) in terms of what was improved (Inductive approach). The exercises were applied to students who learnt English
as a foreign language. It was found that, through model processing (mirroring) and instant feedback, students modified their postures in terms of projection, intonation, accent and vocabulary, when being exposed to real encounters. Students tried to portrait the source of language they are listening to, so that they always tent to create as authentic language as possible. This paper is considered relevant for my paper, since interaction plays a very important role when teaching language. Metacognition should be in high levels so that they are always aware of the usefulness and importance of the knowledge they are gaining with each encounter.

According to Thornbury, S (2000), Dogme approach or also known as “teaching unplugged” is more than a approach, it is a philosophy that goes beyond pedagogical methodologies that are commonly used. The thinking behind it is that students learn when they feel involved and interested in the subject. Frequently, teachers follow strictly books where they are told do’s and don’ts in classes, the problem comes when those books avoid going beyond and exploring different fields highly interesting for learners. The solution within Dogme basically consists of removing all irrelevant material to enhance learning. It involves in fact removing all material and instead, teachers and students co-construct the lesson. To achieve this the teacher need to be at the level of students in terms of being updated and modernized with their interests, also teacher may be willing to develop any topic that emerges during classes. It was concluded through observations, reflections and personal interviews that students felt highly motivated since familiar topics that are related to them were involved during classes, so they felt comfortable when exposing their ideas, on the contrary it was
found that unplugged teaching may turn into a very challenging approach since it is needed a huge background from teachers.

Perin, D (2011) This paper explores the nature and effectiveness of contextualization as a way to improve outcomes for academically underprepared college students. Two forms of contextualization have been studied: “contextualized” and “integrated” instruction. There is more descriptive work on the contextualization of basic skills than studies with student outcome data. In addition, many studies with quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of contextualization have methodological flaws that limit conclusions. Further, only a small number of studies are with college students. However, despite these problems, contextualization seems to be a promising direction for accelerating the progress of academically underprepared college students. The method of contextualization is grounded in a conceptual framework relating to the transfer of skill and student motivation; practitioners who use it observe positive results, and the available quantitative evidence indicates that it has the potential to increase achievement.

On the other hand there must be a great balance between the target language wants to aim, and the channel to accomplish it. As it is well explained by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010), it is not enough to know the what the goal are, but also the ways to achieve them. In other words, in the process of developing the language there must be a suitable atmosphere that in a way or another contributes this development; language is not an instant-emergent process, but one that requires patient, comfortably and familiarization. Thus, any emotional barrier that impede the last, must
be adjust by making modifications in terms of the alternatives to expose learners to the input. However, despite the fact that learners need guidance are themselves the ones who have jump the gap and take the initiative to start going ahead in pursuit of any process that benefits their improvement. Additionally, Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) explore the impact of exposing learners to input where their interest, preferences, backgrounds and personal abilities are exploited. These, with the purpose of avoiding these characteristics to interfere with the cognitive process, but to use them as allies to put pieces together.

As it was showed through these studies, interaction and context may work together to ensure an effective and meaningful learning that at the same time will have direct and indirect results from learners. Moreover, this studies support the interaction hypothesis stated by Long (1996) in which outstands the importance of interaction in any Language course since it has a great impact on students metacognition so that they are aware of what they are learning and what it may be useful for.

6. Methodology

This section aims to explain in-depth information related to how the study was conducted, supporting the reasons of why those specific methods were selected with authors who are authorities in the field. In addition, the type of study and type of research are explained, and the setting and context where the research was developed. Furthermore, the role of the researcher and a the ethical
considerations that were taken into account throughout the development of the research.

6.1 Type of study

A qualitative type of study will be conducted throughout the development of this research. According to Hancock, Ockleford, and Windridge (2009) a qualitative study allows revealing certain behavior and perceptions of a specific group of people. In this case, to measure the impact of the implementation of contextualized input in terms of the verbal language development through a conversation club. In addition, this type of study leads to go beyond in terms of behavior, lives of the participants and backgrounds, identifying perceptions of students and how this sessions of conversation influence behavior or help to recognize what the sources for specific behaviors are, Yin (2011).

6.2 Type of research

This project is a case study research project. According to Thomas (2011) case studies are analyses of people, events, decisions, periods or projects that are studied by one or more methods. In this sense, this research project aims to show an alternative way to impact the improvement of the spoken language in students of a licenciatura program through the implementation of input that is relevant and meaningful (contextualized) for the participants. According to Lapan (2004) observations in the classroom provides many temptations to draw the researcher’s
attention from the focus of the study. Stake (2005) believed that the temptation to be drawn away from the topic of study is one of the most serious problems in a case study research. In other words, situations or emergent events during the sessions may not interfere with the focus or objectives of the observation, or they cannot turn into the observation itself, instead they may contribute to enrich those observations. That is why being organized during the data collection methods, and having clear the research questions play a vital role during the whole process in order to get the most reliable information.

6.3. Context

This project is being developed in a university de Pereira in Colombia. This is a state university has around 17.636 students in undergraduate programs and 1.225 more in postgraduate programs. This university is located in Vereda –La Julita, Pereira. In the metropolitan center of the western side of the city. This University was founded by Dr. Jorge RoaMartines on March 4th of 1961. The UTP has nine main faculties that own all the programs the UTP offers. These faculties are: Basic sciences, education sciences, health sciences, ingeneerings and technologies.

In the year 2004, the program of English Language teaching in BellasArtes faculty was released offering the community a new field of study. Nowadays, the program has around 700 students and 32 professors.
6.4. Setting

The project will be conducted through the conversation club Let’s Talk, in the ELT program of Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. Let’s talk conversation club started in the second semester of 2012. The aim the project was to provide students a space where they could interact in the foreign language, so that they learn, practice and improve their communicative competences. In addition, the space wanted to expose students to a scenario out of academic classes, where they could make use of their language spontaneously through different activities that are thought to work on specific and general features of the speaking competence such as fluency, pronunciation, public speaking, interaction with others, self confidence etc. Every session is developed in classrooms of BellasArtes Faculty building, this to make easier the mobility of the students of the same faculty. This classrooms count with a great environment in terms of size, lightness and temperature. Moreover, the classrooms have wide marker boards that can be perfectly used either to write or project on them. Consequently, according to the focus of each session, some material (physical and visual) is prepared. As result, a collection of activities and materials are already made. The purpose of this collection is to compile this material and condense it into a product as a book or manual, which other people either teachers or students can have access to, so that they can have a reference to guide any conversation club.
6.4.1 Participants

The participants that attend the club are 15 who belong to the ELT program. However, there are other students that benefit from the club even though they are not the focus group of the research; these last students also belong to different programs of the same university. The average range of ages of the participants is from 18 to 25 years old. The students that participate in the club are asked to have finished intermediate English, which means that they must be from third semester on, since the idea is to shape their speech. Also, students are exposed to scenarios where they notice the importance of non-verbal language so that they develop different skills related to the communicative and sociolinguist competence. The participant willingly participate, which is essential for this kind of researches, "Quantitative research requires standardization of procedures and random selection of participants to remove the potential influence of external variables and ensure generalizability of results. In contrast, subject selection in qualitative research is purposeful; participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study" Sargeant, J (2012). On the other hand students must be open minded in the sense that they must understand that the club aims to develop mainly their speaking skill, then the success of the club depends on them, since they must be enthusiastic, active and willing to do the activities proposed. In other words, they are expected to have some intrinsic motivation. Thus, they will not expect any other reward than they joy, and professional growth they will gain as a participant of the club, Brown (2007).
6.5 Role of the researchers

However, according to Stake (2005) the researcher must be very careful on how to intervene, since the case study must speak by itself and it must be seen from the subjectivity, which in cases like this, benefits the analysis because the researcher's deep involvement with the topic of research offers her insights others might not have. On the other hand, since this research project involves only one researcher, he will conduct all the data collection methods widely explained in the following sections.

6.6. Introduction to ethical considerations.

As this project is considered to be a qualitative research, it is crucial to address the ethical considerations of the research methods presented. The book, *Qualitative Research: a Guide to Design and Implementation* by Sharan B. Merriam, she highlights the significance of ethical considerations when conducting qualitative research. "When the research is highly collaborative, participatory, or political, ethical issues become prominent" Merriam (2009). For the sake of this project, I will focus on the ethical considerations of two main data collection techniques presented in this book: interviews and observations. In addition, these methods will be working under different aspects related to ethical considerations which will be explained in the following paragraphs.
6.6.1 Reciprocity and interviewing

Interviewing will be very important when collecting data in this study; however, according to Merriam (2009) this research method poses both benefits and risks to the informants. Also, respondents may feel their privacy has been invaded, they may be embarrassed by certain questions, and they may say information they had never intended to reveal. Therefore, it is important to take into consideration the feelings of the participants when creating interview questions as to avoid feelings of discomfort or embarrassment. In addition, it is evident that one must ask for consent to reveal the information acquired in the interview. On the other hand, Merriam (2009) states that interviewing may improve the condition as well as foster self-knowledge of the participant. This is why, reciprocity while conducting interviews becomes valuable. In this case, while conducting interviews, participants must be understood as people, who are willingly contributing to the project, taking extra time and even re-arranging their schedules to serve in the interviews or other methods. According to Lerum (2000) feelings and comfortably must be major issues at the time of planning the settings of an interview to be made.

6.6.2 Informed Consent

Observation is another valuable data collection method which will be used for the purpose of this study and thus, ethical considerations for this technique must be explored in this project. According to Merriam (2009) observations
conducted without the awareness of those being observed raise ethical issues of privacy and informed consent. She goes on to state that the simple act of observation may cause deviation or change in the behavior of the participants. This may create a problem in the validity of the results of the observation. Or, the participants may become so accustomed to the presence of the observer that they may exhibit behavior that they later deem to be embarrassing or do not want revealed to the greater public. That is why, informed consent provides participants with sufficiently detailed information on the study so that they can make an informed, voluntary and rational decision to participate Kowalczyk (2015). This, informed consent may have all kind of information, so that participants know every stage of the process they are going through. For instance, the participants will be aware of the purpose of the study, the expected duration, procedures of the study, benefits of participation and whom to contact in case of having further questions or information.

### 6.6.3 Trustworthiness and consistency

This project is planned and organized so that all information collected is reliable and provides relevant information. To achieve this, the researcher is having a prolonged engagement with the participants, making thick description of every eventuality relevant for the research, taking participants words to support and answer the research questions and finally making triangulation of the data collected so that some conclusions or findings can be spotted. According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985) trustworthiness happens when there is organization and
planning so that the evidence collected is supported with good details. In addition, they state that there is a close relation between trustworthiness and consistency, since it is through consistency when patterns of data become visible in terms of the frequency of some results measured by the same method. Thus, the consistency of results contributes to the validity and trustworthiness of a research. According to Miller (1990) consistency in qualitative researches is used due to the studies often describe situations, researchers rely on honesty, believability, expertise, and integrity to prove the credibility of the study and then, patterned and consistent results support the core of the study.

6.6.4 Protection of subject and minimizing intrusion

The setting where participants will take advantage of the project, and where the research will take place is thought to provide participants safety and comfortably in terms of human risks. Moreover, participants will not be exposed under any circumstance to an environment or activity where their integrity will be affected. On the other hand, according to Levine (1986) the protection of subjects in research goes beyond their integrality as human beings but also as intellectuals. In other words, researchers must guarantee protection and privacy in terms of the origins of information provided by surveys, interviews or any other method. This is why, in this project participants are aware of the usage of their data for research purposes and their names and personal information will be anonymous. On the other hand, researchers will include information that has been communicated and participants know there will be use if it. Furthermore, there is a commitment by
researchers to only use, share and discuss information provided by participants with professional colleagues on the field who contribute with the purpose of the study, Levine (1986).

6.6.5 Avoiding deceptions

During the development of this research, participants are told the purpose of the information that will be collected during the process, for this participants are told verbally but also they will be handled a consent letter with a general over-view of the purposes of the study. In this there is the most relevant information, so that participants decide whether or not to participate in it. Participants will be not omitted information that will affect them, or given false information about the origins and purposes of the study. According to Shuttleworth (2009) the successfulness of a research relies on the willingness participants have on participating, when they know the circumstances and protocols they will be involved in. In other words, when participants know what they will be used for, then there will be freedom by researchers to look for and collect the data required.

It is imperative to address the ethical considerations of all data collection techniques such as interviewing and observation in this qualitative research project. The researcher must take into consideration the privacy of the participants. In addition, the researcher must deeply contemplate all feelings that interview questions may evoke of participants before conducting interviews. Finally, the
validity of observations of participants must be taken into account as students 
exhibit their natural behavior in the presence of a known observer.

7. Data collection methods

In this section the aim is to provide the reader some insights about the 
instruments used to collect the data and how they were used. Thus, being 
consequently with what was mentioned previously, if there is planning and 
implementation there will be methods such interviews and observations which will 
help to check and support the progress of students.

On the other hand according to Yin (2009) speaking allows having a 
continuous and progress assessment, in other words, collecting data may take 
place in a minute-by-minute process, where students are being monitored and 
having immediate feedback, from the teacher and their own partners. Furthermore, 
since this is a speaking club rather than an academic conversational course, 
students are also involved in process of assessing themselves and their partners. Therefore, at the moment of having presentations, students will have criteria to 
evaluate the performance of their partners in terms of verbal and non-verbal 
features. Afterwards, the role of interviews becomes vital, since it will help 
registering information in terms of the perceptions students had in the grounds of 
what they learnt, the meaningfulness, and the relevance of the topics discussed. 
On the other hand, observations will allow the researcher the opportunity to check 
bare-eye the impact of the input provided in terms of behavior and language.
7.1 Interviews

Interviews provide a variety of ways to be used, it may be conducted either to the group, so that commonalities and differences regarding the process of learning, or individual where students themselves will identify weaknesses and strengths of their personal process with the language. In the case of this project, a third party will be conducting the interviews. The teaching assistant Lindsay Hage will be conducting interviews during the different sessions, in this way According to Yin (2009), interviews may take place over an extended period of time, not just a single sitting, so that the participants can be asked about different aspects regarding the focus of the study. Also, interviews are very flexible in terms of the formality that it provides. Interviews can be casual, where students are asked eventually or they can be very well structured in the case that there are certain questions needing immediate and concrete answers.

7.2 Observations

According to Merriam (2009) observations provide descriptive and detailed information based on the performance of students in terms of the use of their language, register, intonations, pronunciation, eye contact, classroom management, spatial control, confidence, accuracy, mastery on the topic and some other variables regarding the environment and the classroom setting. According to Drury (1992) During direct observation it is common for an observer to be present
who sits passively and records as accurately as possible what is going on. Usually it is the behavior of one or more persons that is recorded and an advantage of the technique is that a number of people interacting with each other and the same piece of equipment can be observed. Furthermore, according to Merriam (2009) interviews allows the researcher to obtain information that is difficult to catch during observations, this is the case of feelings or perceptions from students. Thus, interviews will support filling those gaps that through observations cannot be filled.

8. Data analysis

This project will implement two data collection methods: Interviews and observations. The information gathered will be analyzed through QDA (Qualitative Data Analysis), which are all ranges of processes and procedures that emerge from the data that have been collected, so that some explanation and understanding can be shown from people, behaviors, environments, etc. The idea is to examine the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data.

8.1 Triangulation

According to Patton (1999) Triangulation means using more than one method to collect data on the same topic. This is a way of assuring the validity of research through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic, which involves different types of samples as well as methods of data collection.
However, the purpose of triangulation is not necessarily to cross-validate data but rather to capture different dimensions of the same phenomenon.

This triangulation will be of great use since, it allows to make comparisons between different aspects that involve the whole environment and setting of the conversation club. For instance, comparing the different point of views of people or methods used and the response from participants on them. This, will narrow the research since similarities, differences, assumption or conclusions will start to be evident through the analysis of these triangulations.

9. Findings

In this section it will be explained some interpretations found by the researcher, who throughout the interpretation of the data collected could identify some outcomes. These interpretations, were the result of the triangulation of different data collection methods and aspects subject of matter along the development of the project. On the other hand, some evidences such pieces of interviews transcriptions or written information extracted from the observation journals will be presented, so that readers find support and evidence. Additionally, in this section it is aimed to present two main findings. On one hand, one dealing with the reactions and perceptions students showed when they were provided with different activities and tasks; and on the other, we have a finding which deals with personal decisions showed by learners in terms of risk taking and willingness to be actively involved in the activities proposed.
9.1 Participants’ reactions towards the use of English through activities based on their interests.

In this section the first finding will be presented aiming to develop and answer the main research question. This finding will be presented along its two sub-findings, where attitudes and motivation from participants through input given will be discussed. In addition, these reactions were evidenced through the triangulation of different data collection methods such as: a journal, interviews, and observations during the sessions developed in a conversational club. Thus, the following finding will exemplify from evidence collected the different reactions observed throughout the exposure of participants to different sources, from which they made use of their spoken language.

9.1.1 The effect of using engaging topics and activities on motivation in participants of a conversational club.

During the sessions the input, understood as the tasks and activities designed in such a way to approach disputable issues which are intimate related to the interests of students, was provided so that learners could experience and have contact with the spoken language non-academically. Thus, the input given was thought to be attractive, appealing and aligned to benefit participants. Consequently, it was expected to have a positive reaction from participants throughout the sessions. As explained by Ushida (2005) the reactions and attitudes from participants are key aspect on the voluntary process of learning; as he
quotes “willingness and predisposition comes first, learning and comprehension comes next”. Then, due to the importance of registering and analyzing those reactions, the researcher aimed to collect results through some interviews that were conducted on the participants; at the same time an external person observed participants and recorded information related to the quality of interaction students demonstrated after an activity or topic was presented. This observer paid close attention to the reactions of when and how students interacted via verbal language throughout the sessions. The following is an excerpt of the transcription of one interview.

**S01T02**: “El club de conversación nos brinda un espacio donde uno puede hablar con otros compañeros de cosas que no son académicas, una habla de cosas más normales y cotidianas, entonces podemos utilizar el inglés para comunicarnos mejor.”

**S03T03**: “In the class we can talk with no problem because there is not a teacher that is like correcting every time, so we can speak in a relax way, and sometimes when we make a mistake Lindsay or other partners help us, but we do not feel stress or something”

When teaching English there is a temptation to teach academically, which is not bad since roots and the nature of the language must be reviewed. However, it is suggested that there must be a balance that may be achieved by modifying specific elements related to how to teach and how to approach topics so that students feel comfortable with them. As mentioned in the transcription, the student noticed how he was using his language by a non-academic approach to the topic. Where they main purpose was to communicate ideas or opinions. Additionally,
from the perspective of this student, the benefit he receives is perceived as an “space”, which reflects the impact and the importance of acknowledging a very own location, where consciously they understand that boundaries in terms of using spontaneous language do not exist. As mentioned by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) there must be balance between academic content and students' individual needs, so supporting the previous idea, the student mentioned in one of the previous transcripts excels his positive experience by noticing how comfortable speaking is when there is not a direct authority correcting every single piece of grammar. However, he points out the comfortability of making mistakes and receiving feedback or advice by a Lindsay or even one of his partners.

As part of the triangulation, it was also seen how to take into account updated and familiar topics that engage students to debate, generates a impact on participants. Some samples will be displayed as follows:

**S02OB02:** “After students were introduced to the topic *(What are you afraid the most)* they were shown a short scary clip. It is noticeable how the video and topic impacted students to talk about the topic. It is evident students are communicating trough English:

“(...) Darkness?, Silence or sounds are more scary, like when there is an apagónuy I get in shock!; Did you watch Anabelle? (…)”

**S01OB06:** “In this session (Creativity: thinking outside the box) it was evident how curiosity caused students interact about solving some puzzles. Daniel showed them a couple of games where they were supposed to came out with an answer, however some of them could not do it, and Daniel did not tell them the answer. Then, the fact that they did not have the answers motivate to them talk and interact in regards of the solutions.
“(…) Man! I don’t understand, that is impossible. – maybe there is no answer, I have to know how to do it, in my house I’m going to google it. I guess the answer is on internet, do you know?
- No, maybe you are doing it wrong. Daniel, can you repeat the explanation?”

As mentioned by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) “the direct connection between what they know and the comfort of discussing upon common issues becomes a key aspect when exposing students to the straight use the language” show how this balance influences positively the motivation towards the use of the language. Moreover, in the written record, is evident how the student and the topic creates a direct connection involving his feelings and emotion, which resulted in spontaneous responses by students, where beyond mistakes or errors they attempted to give their language the purpose of communicating. Furthermore, it was evident how giving chances becomes an important issue in the sense of letting students think and explore ideas or different alternatives to solve a situation; as presented in the in the sample other students were exposed to situations where they had to find creative solutions, in this case students were so focused on the activity that solving the puzzles and explaining their ideas became the priority, and unconsciously language was set in a secondary level used as a channel or instrument to express and communicate.

9. 2 Willingness to participate as part of the verbal language development.

The process of developing verbal language requires much more than the merely exposure to it, willingness plays a very important role on learning a
language, since it is the predisposition students have to be part of the learning process. Consequently, the speaking club fosters participants to be autonomous on taking the decision and have initiatives to use their second language to either communicate with their partners or to participate from the activities. According to MacIntyre (2007) students become proficient in spoken language right when learners choose to become a L2 speaker. In addition he states “It is suggested that the choice to initiate communication in a L2 is one of the primary facilitators of language use, and as such, may be an important predictor of language survival” Then, this following finding will show registered evidence of how the speaking club served as a means for the students to take the risk of starting communication by their own.

9.2.1 The importance of risk-taking and self-assertion of participants of a conversational club in language development.

During the development of the sessions in the conversation club, willingness and risk-taking from participants have been shown as the activities and even the attendance to the club do not represent any obligation from them. During the development of the sessions the researcher and the observer focused on the process of target students. In this sub finding it will be shown some evidences of how students started being assertive in the sense that they broke their shells and
decided by their own decision to start using their second language to communicate their ideas or opinions.

On the other hand, as Marin (2013) mentions, the speaking skill required autonomy from learners to go beyond and take the risk of using language for real purposes, and consequently with this last idea, the club tries to create debates and talks about topics that ensure the knowledge and context of the students. Additionally, as part of the data collection, the researcher did not only observe and took information of what was observed during the sessions but also took advantage of interviews either in Spanish or English, so that he could analyze a deeper perspective of how participants perceived their performance throughout the sessions. Then, the following are two pieces of information taken from the observation made by a third party:

**S03OB10**: “The session (Stage Fright & public speaking) contains activities that aim to take students out of their comfort zone. Students are proposed some topics and tips to conduct an exercise of public speaking; some students express they are not good at being in front of people, and that they will not perform a good speech.”

“No, pero es que cuando me pare allá, me va a dar la tembladera (…) de pronto salgo es a gaguear, - y entonces como va a hacer, vea pues yo salgo primero y después le toca a ud para que quite ese miedo.”

**S02OB10**: “some students show a reluctant attitude since there is perception of making mistakes when being in front of an audience”

“No, I don’t want to ‘cause I am going to forget everything”
“No me gusta porque es muy azarador que todos lo miren a uno”.

However, after they were given tips, rehearsal time and chance to see other partners doing the exercise, those students who refused to it the first time evidently
changed their minds and started participating and expressing how easy and meaningful the experience was for them. One of the students states his opinion in the following way:

“when you are going to start you feel scared, but then you feel like hot and you just continue, it would be different if you don’t prepare yourself, but if you practice there is no problem”

As showed in the previous samples, it is evident how students at first sight show a very reluctant attitude when it comes to speak into an audience; as mentioned in one of the written pieces of information, one of the students expressed his uncomfortability to participate in a speaking activity; however, when one of his own partners decide to do first it as an exemplification and gives him some relive, he decides that he is capable of achieving the same task. Then, it is understood how there is a need of rehearsal and preparation for students to be ready to overcome their fears. Additionally, as MacIntyre (2007) says, students become proficient only, and just only themselves realize and decide that there is time to go in pursuit of new learning and improvement. In other words, it is not the teacher through the tasks, but through the motivation to influence students to take risks and overcome fears. Also, here we see how interaction with different participants becomes a key issue in terms of the motivation provided to other ones. As mentioned by Ellis (1999) there is a huge need of interacting with people who have not the same level of proficiency we have, this for creating a gap whose objective is to guide and stimulate learners to keep learning and improving to reach higher levels in language proficiency.
On the other hand, there is a different participant who showed a negative attitude at the time of going out of his comfort zone and trying to complete the task; however, when he was given tips, time of preparation he was literally armed with tools to achieve successfully the task. As a result, the student felt confident and broke his metal barrier which allowed him not only to do this task, but opened a path of comfortably and confidence for others to come.

Moreover, one of the intentions with this research was to check the impact each session had on students, in terms of their verbal language development. Then, interviews were frequently done in order to get some post-information. Consequently, several commonalities in terms of willingness and risk-taking were found, since participants outstood the fact of taking the initiative to talk as a key aspect of learning and developing their speaking skill, some abstracts of those interviews are showed as following:

**S03T10**: “(...)Lo bueno es que uno acá tiene la oportunidad de hacer las cosas y pues uno no esta tan pendiente de que van a decir o algo así, entonces uno se anima y hace las actividades como sin presiones.”

**S05T10**: “(...) you feel like there is no pressure, and also the other students help you, and because everybody does it you also want to do it. I feel scared of talking in front of people but here we practice and we do the activities without any fear to make mistakes (…)”

The information previously presented shows how students notice the meaningfulness of taking advantage of an alternative space to practice verbal language. Moreover, it is evident how a conversational club, where students interact with other students non-academically, and where committing mistakes is
acceptable, motivates them to feel free and autonomously take the risk to participate and be part of the activities proposed. Furthermore, the topics presented permit further conversation that could be controlled by participants themselves, since they are presented creatively and there is a strong connection between their needs and their interests.

Furthermore, modeling plays a very important role on risk-taking from participant as the active participation of different students elicits motivation of others; as mentioned by Marin (2013) there is a need of presenting challenging paths for students to walk through, since are those circumstances the ones that create the need of improving and volunteer, inasmuch as it is their own decisions the ones who will lead them to progress. Then Those students who struggle with shyness or stage fright observe their partners performing and because they are provided with an example, they are more confident to leave their comfort zone and complete the tasks at hand. Furthermore, as mention by one of the students in the interviews, they understand the benefit of being involved sessions where English is not a goal, but a means, thus participants understand that language is not about having corrections at every single mistake, but it is their own improvement the one who will led the communicate and understand better. On the other hand, as the second students mentions the comfortability of working out of pressures provides certain confidence that in long term will permit better performances. Moreover, as Kitao (1997) mentions, when students feel that what they are learning is used
widely in context, they understand its real importance and thus learning becomes enjoyable and gratifying.

**9.3. Final conclusions**

During the sessions offered in the speaking club, students have been provided with different tasks and activities where they were required to leave their comfort zone and explore the language autonomously. This, in the grounds that the conversation club should not be seen just as a resource to do activities and discuss fun topics, but also as a space where with language they can explore and go beyond. However, going beyond requires personal decisions to break the ice and have the initiative to tackle and undertake new routes by using their spoken language. As MacIntyre (2007) mentioned, the real and meaningful development of language does not start until the learner decides by himself that is time to go ahead and have the initiative; “willingness represents the psychological preparedness to use the L2 when the opportunity arises”.

On the other hand, according to Segura, R (2011) speaking tends to be more complicated than the acquisition of other skills, since the former are quite difficult to practice when the student does not live in an English speaking country. Then, when students are exposed to a variety of inputs that are attractive and appealing for them, the perspective towards speaking skill changes. Furthermore, as MacIntyre (2007) mentions, “research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)
shows consistently that as motivation increases and language anxiety decreases, performance in the L2 will improve.” Then, we may understand that the quality of the input provided impacts learners’ motivation, perceptions and attitudes towards their motivation to use their foreign language to interact, share and communicate with others.

10. LIMITATIONS

In this section it is intended to show the reader the different limitations presented during the development of the research project and its execution itself. As mentioned in previous sections, the setting of the project took place in a public university as an alternative tool for students, who were students of an English language program, who willingly attend to it with the purpose of exposing themselves to an environment where the foreign language was the main channel of communication. Then, in the following paragraphs it will be shown inevitable aspects that limited the project at certain point and the backup plan taken to cope with them.

To begin with, it must be mention the fact that the project had no direct effect on the scores of the English language program. Then, it represents a challenge the fact that students usually expect a reward for activities other than the academic ones. However, supported by physic and online publicity where there were visual aids in order to motivate students to attend it. Additionally, the conversation club has had a group in a well known social network making easier to keep in touch with participants, fortunately the group allows students to link others
and keep updated about what happened in previous sessions or what topics will be in following sessions, all this information supported by posters, pictures and general information. Fortunately, students have found in the conversation club an alternative tool to practice their communicative skills through the interaction with others, so that they feel motivated to be part of the process.

On the other hand, it was evidenced a negative attitude from students towards the schedule of the club, since it usually interfered with their lunch and break time, then something else must have been done so that students took the decision of taking some of their free time to attend the sessions. As a result, the club ran with the fortune of having a native person during the semester. This added a plus on influencing positively the decision of students, since they saw an opportunity to use their language skills in an English language environment, with a native speaker and in a real context. Additionally, once in a while different guest were invited to the club so that cultural exchange could take place in the sessions, this made the club had certain relevance during the process, since cultural component helped not only in the terms of language development but also in the enrichment of the acquired knowledge.

Finally, as it was expected, at the beginning of the semester students seemed to be reluctant to interact with others either because of the different levels of English, or because they did not know each other at the time. However, as Ellis (1999) said, spoken language is ability where the user takes baby steps to grow, get confidence and finally be independent. Thus, to get over the issue that student had lack of interaction by themselves pedagogical strategies from the teacher were
required. These strategies included discussion in groups, where students had the chance to state their opinions or ideas with a few people before addressing a larger audience, also the teacher used to rotate students so that students who were more introverted had the chance to get to know different people to interact with.

11. RESEARCH AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study allowed the researchers to evidence the impact of the development of a conversation club in a licenciatura program, with students who are becoming active users of the foreign language as English language teachers in Colombia. Additionally, throughout the process it was manifested the participation of students not only during the activities and interviews, but they also played a very important role in the sense that everything they mentioned such, opinions or comments helped in major way to enrich the research process and its results. Moreover, the researchers were actively opened, in terms of being receptive to everything, that during the sessions, generated any reaction from students that at the end would be helpful to guide and answer the research questions; also, for the researchers being part of the process was very enriching and meaningful since they could arise awareness about about the challenges regarding teaching and learning strategies when it comes to be in the ground of the development of the speaking skill.

What the researcher’s intent to show through this research, a project that was applied in a Colombian context on students of a language program in Pereira
who willingly wanted to be part of extracurricular sessions where the spoken language was practiced, which allow readers to insights regarding the implications of working on a conversational club where students where provided with a variety of opportunities to learn, practice and improve the communicative abilities. As long (1996) mentioned, every aspect of the spoken skill that any learner aims to perfect needs undoubtedly to be through the social and face-to-face interaction, since it is through the interaction with others that we stimulate and enrich the capability of social communication.

On The other hand, other issues where identified during the research process as aspects that still need research on in the same terms of this investigation: First, the importance of the implementation of CLT all along the courses students need to go through in the language program in order to stimulate communicative competences during the term of the undergraduate program. Second, the necessity of having contextualized material with conversation purposes that teacher can adapt and use with the purpose of always having an interactive speaking component in their classes being focused on Colombian context, so that session impact their learners in terms of what they can do with the new abilities acquired in the language development.

Similarly, there are several pedagogical implications as a result of this research study. In the first place, the most obvious implication is that due to the success of this study it has been shown that it is possible to conduct conversational clubs, where students by their own will and motivation decide to attend and be involved in all the sessions proposed during an academic semester.
Also, this study has shown the impact an extracurricular activity has on students, in terms of getting rid of aspects such as nervousness, non-participation, stage fright, so that their speaking skill shows some progress. Then, it is opened the possibility to extend this project to similar contexts, or to include somehow, part of its methodology to school curriculums, classroom projects, etc. In this way, teachers will have an alternative tool to approach contests, where they focus the content they want, but integrating communicative competences through creative tasks where students feel comfortable in.

On the other hand, this section pretends to show the reader some other pedagogical implications that emerged during the development of this project: Firstly, the challenging task of having contextualized material to present in classes. As we may know, in twenty first century we may find tons of materials online. However, not all this material suits perfectly with the objectives we want to reach, that is why during the process of this project it was evident how planning is time demanding aspect to consider, yet it was also evident the practical solution of adjusting material either, for the topic we want to cover or activities to a specific topic. In this way, teachers will use time modifying materials already uploaded in the web. Additionally, recycling old ideas, or old activities with new purposes, in this cases it is not matter of adapting but renewing information and making it updated. Since, as Long (1996) stated, key issue that must be always taken into account is that everything that is presented in the class, has connection with what is going on outside of it. In other words, the input provided in the sessions cannot be indifferent to the social, economical or political context of learners, this with the objective of
fostering richest opinions, discussions or debates. Secondly, taking into account that speaking is the core-skill, teachers may be opened to discuss, argument or guide emergent micro talks during the sessions, that is why teachers must be updated and open to all kind of information that have impact in the media. For instance, if something relevant is happening in the country, and this event is having impact on the community, the teacher must expect students to bring those topics up during the session, and the teacher must use them as an alternative tool to bring discussion during the sessions, or to construct a whole class around those trending topics happening at the moment.

12. CONCLUSIONS

The current study aimed to explore challenges, perceptions and results regarding the impact students from different semesters of a foreign language program showed as participants of a conversational club in a public university in Pereira as an answer to the research question stated in previous chapters. This research project, through the data collected and its analysis, allowed the researcher to categorize the results into two sections. On one hand, the reactions students had as a result of being exposed to material from their interest, and on the other, the willingness and participation showed by students in order to strengthen their spoken language. Additionally, the data analysis (including interviews and observations) outstood the positive effects in regards of the outcomes participants presented after the development of a session, and from a different angle, it was evident the professional growth the researchers had in terms of guiding and
accomplishing the goal of providing students with alternative opportunities to learn, practice and perfect their communicative abilities.

Firstly, participants expressed how the conversation club answered to the necessity of counting on an alternative opportunity other than the academic subjects, where they could freely and willingly be part of a group that aimed to practice English through conversations and activities that suit their interests and that where aligned with their contexts, ages and profession. It was evident how at some point students of the program recognized the conversation club as an opened door not only to practice the language, but as the chance to commit mistakes, mispronunciations, correct grammar, improve fluency and the most important, to keep real, coherent and logical conversation around a topic. That is why, most of the students who were interviewed demonstrate positive reaction in the sense that they acknowledge that in this club there was no one judging or excelling mistakes, but there were partners, who regardless their semesters, worked together to learn, guide, teach and have fun through the use of the foreign language.

Additionally, the fact of having heterogeneous group gave an extra bonus, since students were always in a continue process of modeling from others who were more advanced; this motivated them to explore and boos their language competences. As explained by Ushida (2005) the reactions and attitudes from participants are key aspect on the voluntary process of learning; as he quotes “willingness and predisposition comes first, learning and comprehension comes
next”. In other words, before engaging students to be taught or to be enrolled in any education process, first we must engage their feelings and emotions, so that they leave stress and prejudices out and feel free and opened to receive any input from the class or others.

According to the previously mentioned, it is important to create emotional links that motivate students to attend to the meetings so that they can take advantage of the occasion to practice their foreign language, but also there must be concrete contents to work on. As mentioned by Tomlinson and Imbeau (2010) there must be a balance between the academic content that is provided and students’ individual needs, for instance students felt an authority when talking to Mrs. Hage in the sense that they needed to use their language in the best possible way (pronunciation, grammar, etc). However, they expressed no fear when making mistakes since they knew and understood that corrections were part of the process; corrections were a momentary stage, and not the focus of the conversations.

Therefore, students tried to display their language in such a wide way that they were shaping it in a steady progress. Then, it is evident the direct connection between what they know and the comfort of discussing upon common issues becomes a key aspect when exposing students to the straight use the language show how this balance influences positively the motivation towards the use of the language. From a different perspective, the balance previously mentioned, provided made direct connection with students’ feelings so that conversations
become spontaneous talks where students made use of their language with communicative purposes.

Secondly, during this research project it was identifiable the fact that in the development of the verbal language it not enough to expose participants to the foreign language, that is why it was evident the role of willingness and risk taking in terms of being involved in the activities proposed. Throughout the development of the sessions it was seen how students became opened to share, discuss, give opinions and communicate without being asked for, only under their own autonomy and decision. Thus, the researchers reflected that after giving topics related to their context, make an pressure-free environment and avoiding pointing out mistakes, it was of such importance to motivate students to jump the gap and participate so that at some point they become autonomous and independent language users who take the decision of proposing, debating or guiding conversations. Therefore, we could evidence how what was stated by MacIntyre (2007) was applicable in this case in the grounds that students become proficient in the spoken language right when they decide to be real language users of their L2.

According to the last paragraph, it was shown how students expressed and outstood the role of rehearsal and feedback provided in conversation club. Then, it was very relevant for the researcher to take it into consideration at the time of exposing students to an audience. Participants showed more creativity, relaxations and spontaneity when they had the opportunity to rehearse and receive feedback either from the coordinators or their partners. In this way, they received tools to improve, but they could also identify that all their partners where doing the
same so that they feel that all participants had the same opportunities and had the same needs to improve and display flexible and fluent talks. Additionally, as by Ellis (1999) states, there is a need of receiving opinions, tips or feedback from those who have not the same level as us, this with the objective of boosting language development, and having models to perfect the verbal language.

Moreover, researchers were in a constant process of reflecting, editing and updating the material, topics and tasks presented to the students, since there was a need of providing input relevant, updated, contextualized and challenging. Having in mind these principles the researchers found more accurate input to work with. Furthermore as Marin (2013) there is a need of taking students into challenging tasks with challenging people so that they push hard to develop their language among real communicative and unpredictable situations, then those students who struggle at certain point will be guided by those more advance without changing the final goal. In other words, all students started to find their ways to practice, make their language better and leave their comfort zone, in order to achieve the same level as their partners.

Finally, this research project help and guide both participants and researchers to grow professionally in terms of becoming more competent in the field of English language use. On one hand researchers understood the real impact of implementing this kind of clubs, which give alternative opportunities to
participants who desire to practice their language in different scenarios other than their regular academic classes, also the researchers grew professionally as educators, they could experience firsthand what students needed and how they could link the input with participants interests and contexts, so that learners could take advantage of every minute of the session to practice their language. Also, from the side of students, they had the opportunity to be enrolled with other students in a process of personal and professional growth.

Additionally, participants were in a real context developing real situations so that they had the chance to use their language for real communicative situations. As Kitao (1997) mentions, bilingual educations becomes meaningful when it helps learners to use the knowledge acquired into life-like situations, or at least that have any relation with the context students are living. In this sense, the impact of what is being taught becomes real and significant in the grounds that students out of the conversational club could use everything they have learnt in it, or they will have tools, knowledge and competences to cope creatively and spontaneously with situations that required communicative skills. Therefore, researchers and participants gained experience that enriched their abilities as users of English as a foreign language.
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