

Chapter 6

Findings

6.1 Categories of Analysis

At the end of this process the following categories emerged. They were related to the main question. We divided the each category into two subcategories a as shown in the following table.

Table 4. Emerging Categories and Subcategories

RESEARCH QUESTION-SUBQUESTION	CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES
➤ Research Question What do the design and implementation of workshops, based on rural students' needs, reveal about their speaking skill development?	➤ Category 1 Addressing speaking skill at an initial level	➤ Using background knowledge as a way to attain confidence ➤ Meaning Negotiation as a first step to deal with communicative competence
➤ Sub-question What is the role of workshops in the enhancement of the skill of speaking?	➤ Category 2 Workshops as a vehicle to address a culturally responsive pedagogy that fostered initial interaction	➤ Contextualized activities as sources of interaction in speaking ➤ The role of collaboration in speaking tasks

In the next lines, the categories and the subcategories are presented, characterized, and exemplified.

6.2 Addressing the Speaking Skill at an Initial Level

The name of this category is due to the first and initial stage of the speaking skill development. As students were not accustomed to speaking in English, they had to start nourishing the knowledge they gained every day. In this sense, the skill of speaking began to be part of students' language learning. Besides, it is worth highlighting that speaking in a foreign language is not an easy task. From this, eliciting the initial phase of speaking and having positive students' advancement are two essential components of this category.

Considering the aforementioned points, speaking a foreign language is difficult because effective oral communication requires the ability to use the language appropriately in social interactions and in various genuine contexts. The aforementioned aspects were taken into consideration when designing the workshops based on topics that students were going to talk about not only in class, but also outside with their friends, acquaintances, and relatives. Hence, there are many different interactions that involve not only verbal communication, but also paralinguistic elements of speech such as stress, pitch, and intonation. Likewise, not linguistic elements such as gestures, body language, and facial expressions are present when speaking (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

As described above, speaking a foreign language implies to master several linguistic elements, which seem to be, at a glance, the most relevant aspect to attain a communicative exchange in the target language. Nevertheless, the findings in this research study suggest that there are some other factors that help students meet their proposed goals in their language learning process. It means that students hierarchically stated that overcoming factors such as anxiety, tenses, inhibition, risk-taking, among others, was the most relevant achievement to them, rather than improving their language proficiency. The importance of acknowledging the factors influencing second language acquisition relates to the core of this category as discussed by Lightbrown and Spada (2013), and at the same time, connects with the fact of understanding the nature of such factors when dealing with studies related to second language learning (Torres, Fonseca & Cano, 2016).

Equally important, students were involved in a learning environment where interaction is the core in language learning. It is by means of interacting with their classmates and teachers that students clarify doubts and move forward to meet their learning goals. Regarding interaction, the negotiation of meaning is an underpinning element that provides students with comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985), and at the same time, their learning process becomes more meaningful and contextualized.

In this line of thought, the process of overcoming some factors related to second language learning are described and illustrated in the first subcategory, which is presented in the following lines.

6.2.1 Using Background Knowledge as a Way to Attain Confidence

The nature of the name for this first sub-category was based on the information and interpretation from the instruments. We found that the workshops, the activities themselves, favored students' betterment in terms of personal and academic aims. Students tried to overcome aspects related to fear, shyness, anxiety, self-consciousness, and tenseness. In this sense, we integrated those aspects in a general component that is the subcategory itself. This subcategory encompasses in a general way the nature of the aspects mentioned above.

“The English language class became something really useful to me, not only to have progress in English, but also to have trust in myself. I always thought that English should be perfectly spoken and I limited myself not to speak in English. Then, I realized that it is a process and we have to strive ourselves to improve. In my case, I overcome my shyness and fear to public speaking and my language speaking skill was improved”¹ (Survey 2, Q3, Rose).

“My biggest weakness was that I hesitated a lot when I tried to speak in English, I thought that what I said was wrong in terms of grammar and pronunciation. Also, I got very nervous and I forgot almost everything. When I started to talk about

1 Excerpts were translated from Spanish into English by the authors for purposes of this book.

my favorite singers, I was more confident and quiet, which has favored my academic performance in English” (Survey 2, Q5, Ximme).

The lack of confidence could be one of the main obstacles that prevented learners to succeed in the language learning process. At the beginning students did not take the risk to speak English because they feared that their peers made fun of them. The English classes lacked interaction and advancement in terms of learning the language itself. Then, the material used to learn English included activities and themes students were interested in. From this, the content motivated and decreased students’ anxiety to progress in language learning. In this sense, confidence was the first step to move forward into students’ desire to express their ideas, opinions, thoughts, and feelings. That is to say, having a grasp of the referents and language to talk about, students were more confident using the language. Likewise, confidence provided learners with betterment and progress when learning English as a foreign language. Learners felt more confident with themselves and others in the scholastic environment because they had a grasp of the referents and the language they talked about as shown in the following excerpts.

“At the beginning I was afraid of speaking in English and I could not express my ideas in this language, but little by little I learned words, phrases and am now able to say what I feel and think, this thanks to my partners and teacher with whom I could practice a lot” (Survey 2, Q2, Pily).

“It was very meaningful to me. I mean, the experience with the workshops because there were many topics of my interest and this pushed me to continue speaking with my partners in order to express my opinions and knowledge about the topics, Then, I felt English was being learnt day by day and step by step” (Interview 1, Q4, L11-16, Santi).

Through the structured interview, Pily and Santi are revealing that speaking was enhanced little by little. This learning process began from the acquisition of words to the expression of full sentences. The previous excerpts are a clear example of the initial stage of the development of the

speaking skill. It is necessary to highlight that the permanent use and rehearsal in context of each word the students acquired was a key to move forward in the language learning process. In this sense, the workshops fostered students' enthusiasm in order to let the speaking skill be born. Likewise, there were some aspects that influenced students to continue cultivating the skill that was beginning to grow.

Additionally, the fact that students had previous knowledge and experiences related to the topics addressed in class, it helped them enhance their speaking skill.

“Having a better understanding of the topic it helped me to improve my language fluency and at the same time, it gave me confidence because I could comprehend what I was saying as in some previous classes I had to learn by heart conversations or dialogues, but I was not conscious of what I was saying Nowadays, I am able to do more demanding tasks such as interviews, dialogues and oral presentations and it is not that hard as before” (Interview 2, Q4, L24-31, Paulis).

The excerpt above illustrates that the topic for each one of the activities was greatly important to learners. When learners understood what was being taught, their level of confidence increased and this allowed learning success. Confidence was one of the pillars that provoked an initial empathy towards the target language learning. As the previous excerpt shows, students had to do presentations and interviews, which were demanding activities. In this sense, those activities were not only challenging to students, but also greatly connected to Tomlinson's statement about confidence.

Additionally, it was expected that materials helped learners to develop confidence through tasks and activities that challenge students and move them beyond their current language level instead of simplifying the learning process (Tomlinson, 1998). Moreover, there is a premise that emphasizes that relaxed and self-confident learners learn faster (Dulay, Burt & Krashen, 1982; as cited in Tomlinson, 1998). In this sense, a faster learning was the result of self-confidence as the case of Paulis.

Understanding the topic drove the learner to gain confidence, and both, understanding and confidence drove the learner to the learning process and excellent performance in it.

Additionally, theoretical foundations stated by Harmer supported and contributed to what has been said about confidence. Harmer (2012) stated that “the experiences teachers offer to students affect students’ motivation positively or negatively, plus, materials designed by teachers play a key role in providing friendly experiences in the classroom” (p. 135). Furthermore, Ramos and Aguirre (2014) pointed out that “materials conceived by teachers are intended to increase students’ motivation, which also helps to decrease anxiety” (p.139).

“I had never thought that our voices and daily experiences were going to appear in the workshops. It was a great experience to learn English and speak about my life because it is more meaningful than talking about anything we do not have experience or do not know about. As I had background knowledge about the topics, I took risks to express myself and felt motivated and enthusiastic in the English classes” (Survey 2, Q4, Santi).

“In my personal experience I want to highlight the meaningfulness of the workshops because I always wanted to talk about agriculture, festivals and other topics which were close to my life and I was eager to ask and share about each single theme approached in English, Then I started to be secure when speaking because I used to get nervous and forget everything before learning English through these workshops” (Interview 1, Q4, L 42-49, River).

Alongside the whole research experience the material development was carefully thought on students’ preferences and it is evident that students felt and realized that the workshops included their voices and experiences. Hence, students’ investment increased when they were immersed in the learning process using content and activities that were connected to their interests. According to Norton (2011) investment is different from motivation, since a student can be highly motivated to

learn a language, but can also be not invested in the practices in the classroom. Therefore, contextualized topics favored students' language learning exposure because their level of anxiety diminished and their level of curiosity increased. In the same line of thought, foreign language classroom anxiety can freeze learners, leaving them unable to produce or comprehend the foreign language. Besides, high levels of anxiety negatively affect learning and performance (Horwitz, 2001).

Based on Horwitz's (2001) ideas about anxiety, we can say that students overcame difficulties related to anxiety and thus they could leave the static learning world and welcome to the progress in learning a foreign language. Likewise, the success in overcoming this weakness favored not only the individual, but also the entire group. Indeed, as the core of this research study was focused on speaking, students really enhanced such skill. This enhancement was achieved by reducing anxiety, having in mind that the oral production tends to be a particularly anxiety-producing factor. In this way, low levels of anxiety drove the learners to the path of Confidence.

"Currently, my attitude towards the English learning process is different because it is positive and I want to learn this language because I now find it interesting. When I was learning other topics which were not related to my life, I saw English as something very difficult and I felt I was obliged to learn it, even when I did not like it" (Survey 2, Q3, Paulis).

"Students were asked three questions and they seemed to be shy. At the beginning they did not answer, afterwards they were excited when listening to music. They took the risk to sing in English and express their opinions about 'Boyacense' singers and music genre" (Field Note 1).

By reading the statements above, we notice that learning a foreign language stopped to be seen as a punishment or duty, but it was conceived as an interesting subject to talk about their lives. At the beginning of the process, students were anxious and nervous that they avoided all kind of participation. Oxford (1999) stated that anxiety damages language learners' achievement "indirectly through worry and self-doubt and

directly by reducing participation and creating overt avoidance of the language” (p.60). Based on this statement proposed by Oxford and analyzing the excerpt from the Field Note 1, we can conclude that anxiety affected students in both directly and indirectly way. At the first stage of involving students in the English learning process through workshops, the English classes lacked participation and each student feared to speak in English, but over time, they were more willing to partake in the English classes.

“I did not like to share with my partners because I was not secure and sure whether what I was going to say was right or not, so I preferred to be silent. Fortunately, it changed and I began to talk to my partners and I really liked it because I could participate and learn in the class” (Survey 2, Q5, River).

“Students were willing to partake in the activity, interview their peers, and pass in front of the class to share, compare and discuss the answers and opinions from their classmates” (Field Note 2).

The previous fragments illustrate that once students overcome anxiety, they felt comfortable and confident in the classroom; they began to enjoy and take pleasure of learning English in their teamwork (friends and closest classmates). Moreover, this self-confidence was not only increased in small groups, but also in the entire group as they wanted to share their opinions and feelings with their classmates. In every activity they showed some pleasure for learning English in a very comfortable environment. Then, the result of coping and overcoming anxiety was highly positive because there was a huge raise in participation in the English classes.

“Reading and writing were the skills developed in the English class, speaking was not approached at all and I think it is a very important skill to communicate with people, so I have been very interested in developing such skill and I have tried to practice the most to speak with certainty” (Survey 2, Q2, Sara).

“What we say and how we do it could define what we are so I care when speaking in English because sometimes we can be

criticized but by practicing with my partners I have improved speaking and there are fewer chances to be insecure and criticized” (Interview 1, Q6, L 87-91, Pily).

Based on these excerpts, we can say that students’ interest in participating in class increased. In addition, confidence is always needed by learners when speaking in daily transactions (Bygate, 1987). Hence, it seemed that when students were more confident, they did their best effort to successfully accomplish speaking tasks.

“The workshops included topics I already knew something about them. Then, it was easier to talk about it and share with my partners my experiences and opinions” (Survey 2, Q3, Moon).

“Students were excited and motivated when describing what their parents and they did at the countryside. They expressed their ideas, opinions and life experiences with agricultural practices, cattle rising, and trade in livestock and agriculture” (Field Note 3).

Including students’ own experiences and likes was an essential strategy that facilitated students to gain confidence in order to enhance speaking as they liked to share information about their lives. We define experiences as a set of accumulated memories that revive lived past actions and *likes* are the inclinations people have towards objects, actions or people. Thus, the material was contextualized and students could relate it to previous knowledge and experiences they have had, students’ interest emerge in order to acquire the English language. The previous statement is related to the relevance of bearing in mind students’ voices and life experiences when designing contextualized material.

According to Núñez *et al.* (2004), “materials designed by teachers should include prerequisites that are indispensable to promote an adequate atmosphere for learning; a crucial aspect here is the activation of prior knowledge” (p. 130). In this sense, activating prior knowledge helps students recall previous experiences, which is connected with the theory of meaning learning. Ausubel (1968) claimed that “the most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already

knows” (p.7). This activating process favored students’ interaction and facilitated the enhancement of speaking in the English classes as it is illustrated in the following fragments.

“My background knowledge I had about the topics was quite essential to take the risk to speaking in English because it is more likely to make connections with new information and share fluently our experiences with our classmates. Besides, it is easy to describe what do every day, for example, helping my parents to milk the cows, growing potatoes, planting sugar cane, among others” (Survey 2, Q5, Alex).

“I find the workshops very interesting and I like the English class as now I am willing to participate because I feel comfortable talking about music, agriculture, and topics that call my attention, so it is exciting to share my opinions and experiences. I can say I have improved speaking” (Interview 1, Q4, L-62-67 Red).

By reading these responses we can say that including students’ likes in the material helped students to gain interest towards learning English. It is evident that when students feel identified with the material, it is more likely to promote students’ expression as one of the main sources that facilitates learning. Moreover, including experience and pleasure in the learning process is crucial to achieve success (Kolb, 1984).

Learning and pleasure go hand in hand to achieve effective and meaningful learning processes. In this case, pleasure encompasses the empathy that students have with the content of each English class. These two terms coexist together thanks to terrific experiences that allow learners move forward. From this, when students feel they can comprehend and relate the topic to their realities, they achieve some advancement in sharing and expressing their opinions and perceptions about the theme that is being addressed. The excerpts below show some patterns of pleasure and previous knowledge.

“With all these activities about topics that I know and like, my mind captures everything and it allows me improve my English expression” (Survey 2, Q1, Marry).

“A theme of my interest was approached in class. It was when we talked about sports and sport players. Then, when Nairo Quintana, James Rodríguez, and others were mentioned, it was easier to me express ideas on what I knew of them” (Survey 2, Q2, Peter).

“In yesterday’s class, the workshop was about sports. That theme favored my oral expression because I dared to say a few things about my local sports and my favorite sport players” (Survey 2, Q4, Paulis).

In the previous excerpts some essential topics are emphasized once again. For instance, experience, likes, empathy, different preferences and familiarity with the contextualized topics are features that facilitated oral production in English. In this sense, it is essential to highlight the importance of experience in language learning because in many cases, there is no recognition of the role and relevance that experience has in the learning process, and in this particular context, it is vital to empower students to recall their experiences in the rural areas as a way to foster the sense of belonging to the rural community. Likewise, learning occurs everywhere and it is all around us and this community is not the exception to be taken into account in order to promote emancipatory practices in these contexts which sometimes are alienated. Learning requires personal commitment, interaction with others, expression of emotions and feelings. All of these peculiarities are influenced by the context and experiences of each individual regarding learning (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993).

“With our partners we shared opinions, what we thought, what we did not like, and what we liked too. Therefore, I think it encourages one to be able to speak English very well with our peers and make progress in speaking” (Survey 2, Q4, Tom).

From the previous excerpt, we were able to conclude that the content of the workshops provided students with opportunities to talk about their feelings, thinking, likes, and experiences. In this sense, as Tom stated, this kind of topics foster students to share their preferences, experiences and facilitate the enhancement of speaking. Willis (1996) pointed out

that “learners need opportunities to communicate what they want to say and express what they feel or think; using language for real purposes give learners chances to record and use the language they know already” (p.13). From this perspective, activating previous knowledge and sharing preferences are two components that favored students’ progress in language learning, especially, in the betterment of the skill of speaking.

“We all love sports, singers, and agriculture. We all had something very different to share, a very different sport and we could contribute with something in class to gain knowledge. It was a pleasant exchange” (Survey 2, Q5, Lover).

“I felt free and excited to share my life experiences because we learn from each other and past experiences are constitute knowledge per se” (Survey 2, Q4, Bean).

By doing a more careful reading of the results, we suggest that the topics which encompass likes and relevant aspects to each individual’s life elicited information exchange. Likewise, talking about oneself is naturally important because this allows sharing part of our identities and making sense of existence. Everyone has different likes and experiences to let others know. Castrillón (2003) highlights that “it is important to include learners’ life aspects in the process because these increase their interest and desire to participate” (p.63). From this statement, inherent life’s experiences are highly essential components of participation.

“The workshops encompassed issues that were very close to us. At least for me, they were known and very important and could make sense of my actions, behavior, way of thinking, likes, dislikes, so I now better understand who I am. I think that making connections with our own lives and contexts one can really learn English” (Survey, Q3, Juliet).

With regards to the topics that were very close to her, we can state that including themes that the learner has had the opportunity to listen about, allowed sharing perceptions and experiences on the known issue. Furthermore, experiences are part of the environment in which the individual lives in. Monsalve and Correal (2006) pointed out that “if

the teacher uses the environment that surrounds children's lives to be expressed in English, young learners will see the foreign language as a means to express their experiences in their daily life" (p.137). In relation to this fact, every experience in learners' lives is a source of expression that allows perceiving language learning as a necessary communicative process in daily life transactions.

At the same time, Castrillón (2003) arrives to the conclusion that "meaningful situations for students' interaction in English should include their experiences. Authentic situations create suitable conditions to develop oral communicative competences as students understand better things that are relevant to their lives (p. 64). Approaching students' insights and experiences does help to enhance language oral skills. Besides, when students talked about themselves, they felt they were vital in the teaching and learning process and it was more likely they made connections between relevant information and cognitive structures to let meaningful learning happen (Ausubel, Novak & Hanesian, 1978).

The fact of including activities and topics that were of students' interest was a way to overcome some factors that prevented them from expressing their feelings and thoughts in English. At the same time, they started to enhance their speaking skill little by little. Another essential aspect, students found in their learning process, was the role of negotiation of meaning in their English class as a way to communicate in the target language. The role of meaning negotiation and some other elements are better explained and illustrated in the following subcategory.

6.2.2 Meaning Negotiation as a First Step to Deal with Communicative Competence

This is the second sub-category that emerged. Its name is due to the initial stage of negotiating meaning as students showed their abilities and cooperation to negotiate meaning in order to achieve a single and essential aspect, communication. Students took advantage of some communicative strategies such as gestures and movements to express their ideas, feelings, thoughts, and opinions about the target topic.

Negotiation for meaning has been defined as “the process whereby interactions are modified between or among conversational partners to help overcome communication breakdowns” (Long, 1983a, 1983b; Long & Porter, 1985; Porter, 1986).

“Sarah was excited and she asked her partners some questions in order to interact and make sure her language constructions were right. She asked River how old was James and he answer James was twenty two ‘años’. So, Sarah confidentially clarified that ‘años’ was ‘years’. River accepted and he expressed his gratitude for her completion and repeated the complete sentence: James is twenty two years old” (Field Note 2).

“Oye, yo juego soccer with my friends los fines de semana. Teacher, how do you say ‘fin de semana?’ T: It is weekend. P: o sea que la oración quedaría: I play soccer with my friends in the weekend. T: Very good! You can use the preposition ‘on’ when you are referring to weekend. I mean, the sentence is the following: I play soccer with my friends on weekends” [sic], (Field Note 2).

By reading between lines, we can say that the students and the teacher were trying to negotiate meaning and content to effectively exchange messages and acquire language knowledge to communicate. Students shared experiences, opinions, and background knowledge that students had lived or heard about which related to their preferences. This negotiation of meaning was mediated by experiential learning as experiences played an essential role in speaking development (Kolb, 1984). Learning was a continuous process based on grounded experiences framed under the transactions occurring between people and the environment; that is to say, students were involved in an interactive learning process in which sharing, reflecting, re-learning, and reconstructing life experiences were the main components framing experiential learning.

Equally important, Doughty and Pica (1986) asserted that the feature of negotiating meaning or sequences is “the opportunity that is provided to the learner to process utterances in the L2 which become more

comprehensible” (p. 43). From this perspective, negotiating meaning offers the chance to better understand what the other person wants to communicate. At this point, it is imperative to emphasize that the effort and interest in negotiating meaning has a unique purpose, to approach communication. Meaning negotiation plays an important role in learners’ language development as it can promote modified output (Bitchener, 2004).

“Fabian: My favorite finger is Juanes and I like his music.

Amanda: finger? Do you mean your favorite singer is Juanes?

Fabian: yes, sorry I was confused” (Filed Note 3).

“Students asked the teacher for the pronunciation of some words, the teacher replied and students repeated. When they mispronounced some words, the teachers pronounced the words again in order to clarify the appropriate pronunciation” (Field Note 4).

By doing a careful interpretation, we can say that negotiation of meaning has an emphasis on achieving mutual understanding, so students need to repeat something, rephrase ideas in different ways, ask their conversational partners or teacher to repeat or clarify something. It is also based on getting the learners to do lexical repairs and syntactic, clarification requests, confirmation checks, and repetitions (Morris, 2002).

“Working in groups was a good strategy to interact with my partners and teacher because I could ask them for the vocabulary and meaning I did not know” (Survey, Q3, Paulis).

Pair group activities was a strategy that provided students with the opportunity to learn from each other among students, and from the teacher, so it represents an important impact on meaning negotiation and language acquisition (Lightbrown & Spada, 2013). From this, the teacher’s role is very important in terms of providing feedback in order to have progress with respect to vocabulary, syntax, pronunciation, pragmatics, and some other aspects of the grammatical competence. It is worth emphasizing the grammatical competence because this is a sub-competence underlying

the communicative competence. In the next lines, the grammatical competence will be described in the light of Bachman.

Approaching communication as the general goal when learning a language, we account for some components of Bachman's model of Communicative Language Ability. According to Bachman (1990) the model can be described as "consisting of either knowledge, or competence and, the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use" (p.84). In this sense, the acquired language knowledge is used to communicate in contextualized contexts, which relates to pragmatics. This category is not only framed within the first aspect of the communicative language ability model, which is language knowledge, but also it is complemented by the second component which is the capacity to use language knowledge in context as stated in the following excerpts.

"I am now able to speak spontaneously in English and communicate what I think and want to share. I know that I make some mistakes in pronunciation, grammar, word choice, but when I realize my partners and teachers understand what I mean that is very positive because that is the main purpose of learning a language" (Survey 2, Q5, Amanda).

"My previous experiences learning English were meaningless because I had to memorize an endless list of vocabulary which I did not know how to use it in context so I think that learning a language has to be purposefulness and communicative; otherwise, we just learn few isolated words" (Interview 1, Q6, L 94-98, Sarah).

By reading and analyzing the excerpts above, we can notice that Sarah and Amanda were emphatic at stating that learning a language implies an emphasis on communicative purposes and negotiation of meaning. Then, language knowledge used in context is the basis to communicate daily life utterances. The more contextualized vocabulary a learner acquires the more possibilities the learner has to express what wanted. Furthermore, mastering language matter knowledge in context and appropriate pronunciation enables the learner to become a proficient speaker.

“Students were concerned with the pronunciation asking their partners and teacher to make sure they were expressing acceptable language constructions” (Field Note 4).

By reading between lines, we notice that students were concerned with grammatical aspects. Grammar is a very essential aspect of the communicative competence because this is a set of bases students need to construct correct sentences in both written and oral way. Despite communication focuses on transmitting meaning and communicating desired messages, it is essential to approach communicative competence as a whole component. In this sense, communicative competence accounts for some others sub-competences. Therefore, having some advance in the grammatical competence is very essential to approach effective communication. Good language users produce utterances that are grammatically correct and acceptable. Hence, grammatical competence is a very essential component of the communicative competence.

“I learned a lot of vocabulary, pronunciation and word order, so I can express my ideas in English” (Survey 2, Q1, Fabian).

“I have improved the pronunciation of some words that before I mispronounced because I did not know some hints regarding pronunciation and grammar” (Survey 2, Q4, Paulis).

In this cornerstone, Bachman and Palmer (1996) contributed to these responses in regard to Grammatical Competence. They refer to the usage of the language related to grammar. Therefore, grammatical knowledge includes independent areas of knowledge such as knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology, and graphology (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Broadly, these are the areas in which students progressed in relation to English language learning which they interiorized rather than just learning them theoretically. Students took advantage of learning vocabulary in context as they had prior knowledge about the topic. They did not learn a list of isolated words, but they learned and used them in a contextualized way.

“Through workshops I have learned a lot. New words and things that could serve me in my everyday life to exchange information with my partners and friends” (Survey 2, Q4, Diana).

Based on this response, we can point out that workshops were a tool that favored the acquisition of new words and the use of them in daily life situations. From this, every word is very essential to sentence formation because students learned and used them in the most possible contextualized way. In this sense, when teaching and learning a foreign language it is essential to enable students to learn and acquire a lexical basis in order to achieve success in language learning (Lewis, 1993).

Similar to what has been discussed regarding the findings; the following lines describe and explain what the second research question revealed about the contextualized workshops. The research question was related to the role of workshops in the enhancement of the skill of speaking. From this, a second category emerged which is called workshops as vehicle to address a culturally responsive pedagogy. This category basically responds to the role that workshops had alongside the teaching and learning process. In this way, the upcoming lines present the aforementioned category.

6.3 Workshops as a Vehicle to Address a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy that Fostered Initial Interaction

This category was named in this way because the aim of designing the workshops was not only to boost students' speaking skills in two rural schools, but also to include their life experiences, background knowledge, history, and preferences to foster the development of the speaking skill. This with the purpose of including students' voices in the workshops as a way to respect and honor students' experiences and cultural background in accordance with a culturally responsive pedagogy as proposed by Nieto (2013). Through the workshops, students found a way to identify themselves with their daily activities, common topics to talk about, and communicative exchanges they had had or they are likely

to carry out in their rural contexts. These particularities showed that contextualized activities were relevant sources of interaction in speaking tasks. In this respect, and accounting for the nature of the culturally responsive pedagogy, students stimulated their ability to learn from and relate respectfully with their partners of their own and different cultural backgrounds (Rogoff, 2003). This allowed prejudice reduction, knowledge construction, content integration, and relationship-making in order to grow collaboratively in the learning process.

In this sense, the identification and increase in students' interest towards the content of activities are described in the following subcategory as a way to explain one of the roles that workshops had in the learning process of English, especially in the development of the speaking skill.

6.3.1 Contextualized Activities as Sources of Interaction in Speaking

The name of this subcategory is due to the contextualized activities of the workshops, which favored students' interaction in the development of speaking tasks. In this way, in each English class students faced vocabulary and expressions related to their daily activities and experiences. Therefore, students' production and interaction was contextualized because this was as close as possible to their realities and lives. Contextualization is a great aspect that encourages students to partake and share information that was really important to them. According to McIntyre, Kyle, Chen, Kraemer and Parr (2009) contextualization means:

teachers connect the lesson with students' past experiences from home, with peers, or previous lessons in school [...]. Building background is essential for all learners, but it takes the explicit linking of past to present for ELLs because they are learning content simultaneously with language. (p.20)

"The final activity students developed was an interview. The activity was related to their own experience students had had regarding music. The students were very interested in sharing their experiences and asking their partners about music. They asked each other if they have heard Juanes, Maluma, Jorge Veloz, San Miguelito and others" [*sic*] (Field Note 3).

Having in mind the lines above, students speedily engage in classroom's interactions because their experiences and prior knowledge are included. From this, students took advantage of the target content to express their own perception and involvement in any particular situation they have lived. Therefore, contextualized content helps students to remember, modify and assimilate input to interact with each other. Although the theme is as much as possible contextualized, it does not mean that the learner is just exposed to what she/he knows.

Rather than limiting the learner, a contextualized topic provides students with the bases to start the learning process, which requires constant acquisition and production of content. In this sense, Baker, Hope, and Karandjeff (2009) stated that contextualization:

helps students find and create meaning through experience, drawing from prior knowledge in order to build upon existing knowledge. A primary principle of Contextualized Teaching and Learning is that knowledge becomes the students' own when it is learned within the framework of an authentic context. (p.8)

The following excerpt portrays what has been said:

"A student was talking to his partner and he said: 'Ay, qué chévere, me gusta buscar palabras. Yo sé qué es cycling, boxing, baseball, soccer, and, basketball. Oiga, yo juego soccer with my friends los fines de semana. Teacher, how do you say fin de semana?' T: It is weekend. P: o sea que la oración quedaría: I play soccer with my friends in the weekend" [sic], (Field Note 2).

Based on this excerpt, we found a connection with McIntyre, et al. (2009) assertion about the aspects that contextualization implies. They state that experiences must be understood as a whole, it means, everything that has influenced the learner in and outside the classroom. Regarding the student's utterances, he mentioned some activities he lives or has experienced far from the scholastic context. From this, each learner has quite different experiences to share and these differences arouse students' interest to know and hear others' interventions.

“Students read a dialogue between Nairo Quintana and a Journalist. A student read the name Nairo Quintana and said: It is about ciclismo. Profe, ¿cómo se dice soy fan de Nairo? T: I am a fan of Nairo. J: I want to be un ciclista famoso. S: uff, se dice I want to be a famous cyclist” (Field Note 2).

Analyzing this passage, the topic really boots students to enhance speaking through interaction. When students feel the topic is not weird they find it easy and interesting. Moreover, when students find the way to hook the knowledge to something that is relevant to their close environments, they can acquire meaningful learning (McIntyre et al. 2009). Therefore, it is matter of connecting what needs to be learned to the learners’ existing schema about objects’ properties and texture to their context and experience (ibid).

Subsequently, McIntyre *et al.* (2009) highlighted some indicators of contextualization that support this subcategory with regards to the importance of encompassing contextualized input. Beginning with what students already know from home, community, and school is the first feature that the material has to cope with. Likewise, the design of a variety of activities that include students’ preferences, from collective and individual choices is a relevant factor that promotes input in authentic educational contexts. Finally, instructional activities that are meaningful to students in terms of local norm and knowledge are part of another characteristic that allows contextualization happen.

The following responses evidence some of the aforementioned peculiarities in terms of contextualization.

“As the workshop of music approached the music of Eminem, Tito Nieves, and other artists that I did know, I could talk about my favorite singers, as the workshops provided me with information to express and share my ideas with my partners” (Survey 2, Q2, Omar).

“I had experience and knowledge regarding the issues to discuss about music, but at the same time, there was new information to learn and it was not difficult to understand because I could

make connections with my experience and my partners' one"
(Survey 2, Q 3, Amanda).

Regarding the previous responses, students were immersed in a mutual interactive environment in which they made communicative transactions. Thus, the workshops presented new vocabulary, phrases and content to the learners and once students were familiarized with the language pattern, they engaged in interactive exchanges. In this case, contextualization is strongly related to students' experiences and prior knowledge to produce utterances about close and well-known environments. Therefore, workshops were great guides that drove students to relate the content to their realities and thus they advanced in language learning, especially, in terms of speaking by means of interaction.

Working collaboratively was another strategy that helped students to interact and mutually develop oral language skills. It is to say that the role of classmates was essential in providing feedback, suggestions, corrections and completions when discussing on different contextualized topics. Thus, students made progress in vocabulary, pronunciation, syntax, grammar and some other language aspects which are vital to enhance speaking. Thus, the following subcategory explains the way collaboratively developed tasks took place in the enhancement of speaking skills.

6.3.2 The Role of Collaboration in Speaking Tasks

The nature of this subcategory relies on the relevance students found in their learning process when they worked collaboratively to enhance speaking. This relevance is explained with the definition of collaborative learning provided by Dillenbourg (1999) as "a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together" (p.1). In this sense, students were mutually engaged to meet a common goal: enhance the speaking skill. This process of constructing shared meanings not only helped students to work together, but also to integrate their individual particularities in such process. Hence, students could explore

and strengthen their learning strategies, preferred ways of expressing their feelings and thoughts, and own background knowledge as claimed in a culturally responsive pedagogy. The following excerpts illustrate what has been described.

“In all activities I had to interact with my partners by sharing opinions and points of view, so I learnt new meanings of words that facilitated the understanding of the activities and helped me speak English” (Survey 2, Q4, River).

“I can say that through speaking activities I learned vocabulary and pronunciation about familiar topics because I asked my partners for the meaning of the unknown words and they helped me saying what they knew. In the same way, I practiced speaking a lot because I wanted to share my past experiences and my goals in English” (Survey 2, Q6, Peter).

The participants highlight their personal achievements in speaking by means of working together. Students learnt vocabulary and pronunciation through their interactions with the aim to communicate in the target language. That is to say that the workshops enabled students to grasp the information needed to start communicating in English. That is why the workshops as materials development contribute to the process of learning and language teaching (Telléz & Castellanos, 2013, p. 12).

“I think that developing the activities in groups was something essential because we were committed in each task and everybody participated. I liked to share with my partners because I learn by means of listening to others and expressing my experiences” (Survey 2, Q6, Paulis).

By doing a careful reading of the excerpt, we suggest that providing students with opportunities to explore their learning strategies and activities which are relevant and engaging to them is a crucial starting point to promote the development of speaking skills. Accordingly, those specific features in students' language learning make part of the nature of accounting for a culturally responsive pedagogy. Thus, students' voices and particular ways of learning, behaving, thinking, and interacting

become part of the classroom agenda. Likewise, developing speaking tasks is a very purposeful process which needs to be relevant enough to engage students in the learning process. Sometimes, teachers can provide tasks to develop oral language skills but they do not have the expected success as they fail to motivate students to speak (Pachler & Redondo, 2007). From this, we can say that the topics about their context, preferences in learning, collaborations, and teaching methodologies were essential to motivate students to speak in English independently and spontaneously.

“The workshops included activities with open-ended questions to discuss in small groups, so I liked it because my classmates were a great support to learn because I asked them for pronunciation, meaning, vocabulary, and others to express my ideas” (Survey 2, Q5, Elkin).

The excerpt above shows that collaborative learning allowed students gain language knowledge related to meaning, pronunciation, and the acquisition of new vocabulary, which are vital components involved in the development of the speaking skills. It means that students were involved in a learning scaffolding process to make progress in their language proficiency. In accordance with the nature of collaboration, it is worth highlighting that when students are developing collaborative activities, they can elaborate explanations about their own understandings and at the same time, construct and reorganize their language knowledge (Van Boxtel, Van der Linden & Kanselaar, 2000). From this, the learning process becomes purposeful and meaningful for learners.

“When I was developing the activity about agriculture with three partners I really learnt from them. They corrected me when I was wrong and they provided me with possible ways to express my ideas” (Survey 2, Q5, Paulis).

Another evident characteristic of the collaborative learning, as shown in the excerpt, was the importance of providing feedback among students to negotiate meaning, make completions, clarifications, and restatements. This represents students’ willingness to learn from each other by taking advantage of their background knowledge and collaboration to meet

their learning goals. In addition, students practiced their speaking skill when providing feedback, explaining what they had understood, and assimilating new knowledge and understandings. Therefore, as language has a social and communicative purpose, students attained a language use with such purpose and within a collaborative environment.

The findings suggest that the workshops supported students from two rural schools in their language learning process in various ways. In a first place, the workshops were tools that helped students overcome personal goals in relation to the factors influencing second language learning. Then, the role of the workshops was to be a guide to facilitate meaning negotiation in the classroom. In the same way, students were provided with opportunities to make connections with their previous background knowledge and the topics addressed through the workshops in a culturally responsive perspective. Interaction and collaborative work were some other strategies that students adopted in order to enhance speaking. The upcoming lines present the conclusions drawn in this research study.

