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Should an Effective Language Learning Be through the Development of Just One Language Skill?

Victor Daniel Gil Vera VDGV

Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, victor.gilve@amigo.edu.co

Bairon Jaramillo Valencia

Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, bairon.jaramillova@amigo.edu.co

Nancy Biviana Cardona

Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, nancy.cardonamu@amigo.edu.co

María Alejandra Cifuentes

Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, maria.cifuenteslo@amigo.edu.co

Shirley Alejandra Jimenez

Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, shirley.jimenezhe@amigo.edu.co

See next page for additional authors

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Abstract

This paper is intended to identify how teachers' emphasis on writing influence the learning process in an English class, taking into account that the development of the four language skills is essential for learning a second language to gain an effective communication. This study adopts some main concepts related to English teaching and learning, which are: language skills, writing and learning process. Then, in order to recognize this educational case, this study follows a qualitative approach, a hermeneutic paradigm and a case study, using a non-participant observation, a participant observation, a semi-structured interview and some task-based learning (TBL) sessions which were observed critically by the researchers; all these data collection tools were useful to achieve the aim of this research. The aim of this study is to exhibit how the teachers' emphasis on writing over the other language skills affects the English learning process in third grade students, at the "Institución Educativa San Cristóbal." Among the remarkable results, it is visible that the teacher made the students develop aspects on the writing skill, but these were focused on transcription and repetition rather than comprehensible written productions.

Keywords

English, Language Skills, Learning Process, Writing

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Authors

Victor Daniel Gil Vera VDG, Bairon Jaramillo Valencia, Nancy Biviana Cardona, María Alejandra Cifuentes, Shirley Alejandra Jimenez, and Laura Marcela Martínez

Should an Effective Language Learning Be through the Development of Just One Language Skill?

Víctor Daniel Gil Vera, Bairon Jaramillo Valencia, Nancy Biviana Cardona, María Alejandra Cifuentes, Shirley Jiménez Herrera, and Laura Marcela Martínez
Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, Medellín, Colombia

This paper is intended to identify how teachers' emphasis on writing influence the learning process in an English class, taking into account that the development of the four language skills is essential for learning a second language to gain an effective communication. this study adopts some main concepts related to English teaching and learning, which are: language skills, writing and learning process. Then, in order to recognize this educational case, this study follows a qualitative approach, a hermeneutic paradigm and a case study, using a non-participant observation, a participant observation, a semi-structured interview and some task-based learning (TBL) sessions which were observed critically by the researchers; all these data collection tools were useful to achieve the aim of this research. The aim of this study is to exhibit how the teachers' emphasis on writing over the other language skills affects the English learning process in third grade students, at the "Institución Educativa San Cristóbal." Among the remarkable results, it is visible that the teacher made the students develop aspects on the writing skill, but these were focused on transcription and repetition rather than comprehensible written productions. Keywords: English, Language Skills, Learning Process, Writing

Introduction

This study takes place in an educational setting, where English classes are carried out emphasizing on the writing skill, which is reflected on students' performance. This happens because the students are not used to developing the productive skills by themselves since they only repeat what they hear from the teacher; additionally, they just write what they see on the board. This occurs because the teacher tends to project texts through the projector and assign the students a set of tasks for them to write what they see on the board; moreover, he reads aloud, and the students just write what they listen from the teacher's dictation.

Besides, when it comes to receptive skills, the only input that the students from this context receive is transmitted by the teacher, who seems to barely have the proficiency required to develop the four language skills in an English class; insomuch as in Colombian public education, from many decades teachers from other disciplines are normally in charge of teaching English at schools, ignoring that they are not professionals at language or that they did not study an undergraduate degree related to English teaching. Therefore, this research is intended to identify the implications that emerge in an English class when teachers make emphasis on only one of the four language skills.

Conceptual Framework / Research Background

This conceptual framework is intended to explain the main categories investigated in this study, which are language skills, writing, learning process and English; also, some investigations that are related to these ones. Then, the readers will appreciate a conceptual explanation preceded by a research background.

Firstly, this section is going to begin with an explanation about what is known by “Language Skills”; it refers to a set of abilities common in everyday language learning. Then, in order to achieve an effective communication, it is imperative to develop these skills: “there are four main skills emphasised in English language teaching – learning. They are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading are considered as receptive skills and speaking and writing as productive skills” (Lakhera & Biswal, 2017, p. 33). According to that, receptive skills are the means that allow a person to understand and get knowledge; it can be in a spoken or written form. Hence, writing skill consists of producing words to make sense or create meaning of the acquired understanding; therefore, “writing as a skill involves a number of complex rhetorical and linguistic operations which must be taught” (Ghufon, 2016, p. 658). Likewise, the features of a language are formed by intricate and multiple factors; an idea supported by Elamin, Ahmedm & Osman (2018), who establish that “writing is a complex cognitive activity that draws on an individual’s knowledge, basic skill, strategies, and ability to coordinate multiple processes” (p.155). Accordingly, it is imperative to develop the four language skills in order to perform all processes involved during communication: “productive skills would not exist without the support of receptive ones” (Golkovaa & Hubackova, 2014, p. 478).

It is important that there is a connection among the four language skills, inasmuch as learners would find a real practice of them in an authentic context; moreover, they can take advantage of this relation to learn a new language. In words of Usó and Martínez (2006): “language skills are the heart of L2 classes and, whenever possible, they should be integrated as happens in actual language use, if our aim is to develop learners’ communicative competence” (p. 4).

According to research background, there is one international research that was named “ESL Learners’ Writing Skills: Problems, Factors and Suggestions.” This study adopted a qualitative approach to explore what problems Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners had in the writing skill; equally, how to obtain proposals to improve that skill. The research techniques to gather information were a focus group interview applied to teachers and a documentary analysis of descriptive, narrative and argumentative essays done by 30 undergraduate ESL learners from four public and private sector. Findings were analyzed by using thematic content analysis, since thematic analysis identifies the emerging themes and patterns in the qualitative data. After this process, Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) concluded that:

To begin with, reading was suggested in order to develop better writing and to enrich vocabulary. The conscious teaching of vocabulary was also emphasized: “We can do some good reading so that we can get good vocabulary, and improve our writing.” (p. 87)

Therefore, in order to enhance writing –which is a productive skill– it is imperative to take into account the receptive skill of reading; besides, it implies that the teaching of a new language is focused on the structure of the language, since if students realize how the language works, it will be easier that they could produce appropriate ideas through a process that needs to be completely connected.

Similarly, it is presented other research entitled “Home literacy practices and preschool children’s emergent writing skills: An initial investigation.” It explored the amount and types of writing-related home practices that parents engage with their young preschool children, the participants were preschool children and their parents, all of them from 49 public and private preschools as well as day-care centers located in north central Florida and western Pennsylvania. The research showed the following: “results from the current study suggest that parental support can aid in the development of writing skills and that writing activities in the home whether parent-led or child-led represent a valuable opportunity to facilitate emergent writing skills” (Puranika, Phillips, Lonigan, & Gibson, 2018, p. 235). Likewise, the process of learning of how to write not only takes place in educational settings, but also it requires that there is an accompaniment to children outside the classroom.

The next concept to be developed is “Learning Process.” The process of learning can be seen as a fundamental part of the development of every human being, inasmuch as from the first moments of life it is required the most basic abilities to be part of the society. Regarding this, Senge (1995) claims that:

a learning process is a process that occurs over time whereby people’s beliefs, ways of seeing the world, and ultimately their skills and capabilities change. It always occurs over time, and it’s always connected to your domain of taking action, whether it’s about relationships or about your professional work. (p. 23)

Hence, learning is an ongoing process that can take place in different environments. One of the primarily context for learning is the school, the place where this process takes an academic concern to spread the necessary knowledge in the thriving of a society; consequently, it emerges the necessity to include processes to learn a second language, and that dynamic learning could be a guide from the patterns of previous understandings gained by the mother tongue. Thereby, as Coffield (2007) mentioned “the learning process is commonly described as a reflective process incorporating prior explicit knowledge as well as recent experience (and prior implicit knowledge)” (p. 27). Based on what was mentioned before, there are studies that report that while a person is in a process of learning, it is more effective if there is the opportunity to reflect about what was learned previously to construct new meanings.

In accordance with the research background regarding learning process, it was found a study about the efforts on analyzing the attitudes of students in third and fourth grade from a public school in Bogotá, Colombia. The research title was “student’s attitudes through the implementation of different activities enhancing writing and speaking skills in the EFL classroom.” The data collection techniques were field notes from teachers, surveys and semi-structured interviews. After the investigation’ analysis, it was found that students had predisposition at the beginning of lessons by showing feelings as anxiety and discomfort when participating. As a consequence, “the implications for teachers/researchers that the project conveys is the important exploration of different teaching strategies, techniques and mainly activities” (Garzon & Ramirez, 2014, p. 91). Therefore, teachers need to reflect about the kind of activities that they bring to the classes, in order to receive appropriate results and achieve successfully the main goals in the process of learning a new language.

Nowadays, English is considered the main language of communication in the world; thus, there have been attempts to become English the second language of several countries, in order to be part of the globalization movement. According to Freeman and Long (2014) “English, a second language for most of the people of the world, has increasingly become the international language for business and commerce, science and technology, and international

relations and diplomacy” (p. 1). Moreover, English is not only useful for many purposes but also attainable for many people; in words of Algeo and Acevedo (2013), “English has become the most widespread language in the world, used by more people for more purposes than any other language on earth” (p. 1). Regarding this, the role of English has moved from several settings to an educational field, in order to respond to all the requirements that society is expecting from those who are in charge of transform the reality of a community.

Context / Statement of the Problem

The research took place in the “Institucion Educativa San Cristobal.” It is a public school located in the “corregimiento de San Cristobal,” which is part of the sixty communes, and it is outside the city of Medellin, Colombia. Near the school there is a “Unidad de vida articulada” (UVA), a soccer field, a public pool, the church of the town and many different types of stores. The social stratification around the school is # 2; generally, it is a really serene and quiet neighborhood.

The institution is aware of the policies that regulate the educational system in Colombia and it has some elements that respond to those policies, so in the school curriculum it can be seen the language as a response to the needs for students and teachers, in order to confront the different challenges of society and as a possibility to know other cultures. The classes are carried out following a syllabus with a forward design, it means that every teacher handles a pre-existing content which allows them to choose a methodology, even though it can be perceived a grammar translation method, and a lot of activities with drills that take place two hours per week taught by teachers with different disciplines; moreover, the development of the classes has three steps: the explanation, the activity and the grading.

In the institution it can be seen that English classes in third grade are carried out making emphasis on writing without reinforcing the other skills; therefore, this situation could affect the way students learn a second language; students could not achieve the entire factors that accompany the process of language learning. Also, the majority of the time teaching processes are influenced by the way the teacher thinks and this phenomenon will be visible in the findings section, since this person is not precisely a professional in English language and he did not study an undergraduate degree related to English teaching; something quite common in Colombian public education. As a consequence, in this educational context English is normally taught throughout writing drills, then students would not find the real usage of a new language. Finally, the purpose of this research was to identify the causes and consequences of teaching a second language making emphasis on one of the four skills; this will evidence certain situations that could help the educational community to reflect and reform the pedagogical practices.

This article is based on a set of findings from a research entitled *Implications that emerge when the teachers emphasize on writing over the other language skills*. The research team is composed by teachers from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó, Medellín-Colombia, and the project was equally approved and supported by this institution of higher education. The team made the decision of working in the *Institución Educativa San Cristóbal*, because one of the team members previously developed some academic observations there and realized about this fact (teachers’ emphasis on writing over the other language skills) in specific English classes.

In order to perform this study, the research team was assigned 6 hours per week during the year 2018; and after applying data collection techniques and finishing the data analysis process, all researchers started to work on the writing of scientific articles and academic texts as well as sharing the results in educational research events. All with the

intention of creating awareness about the role of Colombian English teachers in public schools.

How does the teachers' emphasis on writing over the other language skills affect the English learning process in third grade students at the "Institución Educativa San Cristobal"?

Methodology

This study used a qualitative approach, since its features aims to recognize social issues in a specific context in order to comprehend, analyze and interpret human behavior as well as discourses and those aspects that have influence over human actions. Thereby, to approach this phenomenon it was necessary to adopt a stance that allowed to investigate a current necessity in a certain context, which had not been handled before: "qualitative inquiry means staying inductively open to the unknown while exploring, seeking to discover or enhancing a deeper understanding of intricate social relationships" (Kaczynski, Salmona, & Smith, 2014, p. 128). For this reason, the research team decided to work in this study by using a qualitative approach, insomuch as it was necessary to deeply characterize how the students (sample) developed the four language skills during the English class.

The purposes of this research sought to get understanding of the particularities from the phenomenon with solid foundations. Hence, the qualitative approach offered the researchers the possibility to describe not only attitudes but also students' learning processes, especially everything that involved the development of the four language skills inside the classroom. According to Cifuentes, Martínez, Jaramillo, Cardona, & Jiménez (2019), the qualitative research is an approach that focuses on studying human experiences in their natural contexts by understanding the phenomenon through a critical and comprehensive way.

On the other hand, the researchers used a hermeneutic paradigm in order to achieve the aim of this study, because it was necessary to describe the students' response while the teacher made emphasis on the writing skill; consequently, interpretation of human relations, conducts and actions is a particularity that hermeneutic studies offer, then it was really useful to work under it: "Hermeneutics, or interpretative philosophy, is essentially a philosophy of understanding, which elucidates how it is that one person comes to understanding the actions or words, or any other meaningful product" (Lavoie, 2005, p. 1). Additionally, the comprehension of students' acts is possible by the means of the individual perceptions of those who take part in a phenomenon, as it is conceived by Bleicher (2017):

A central insight of hermeneutic philosophy asserts that social scientist or interpreter and object are linked by a context of tradition - which implies that he already has a pre-understanding of his subject as he approaches it, thereby being unable to start with a neutral mind. (p. 2)

Finally, this research followed the characteristics of a case study, because the researchers' objective was to identify how the participants were affected in a specific context due to their teacher's particular practices. As Valencia (2015) establishes, the case study is a type of research that lets answer concrete questions in a singular research; when the phenomenon studied is different from a tendency then case study methodology is the most appropriate choice.

Therefore, the case study research permitted the researchers to explore and describe a singular phenomenon within a context, since one of the objectives from this study was to recognize how the students' language skills were affected when the teacher's class was only based on writing. Likewise, in a case study "the aim is to provide an analysis of the context

and processes which illuminate the theoretical issues being studied” (Cassell & Symon, 2004, p. 323). Consequently, it was relevant that the researchers observed and developed a deep exploration of the particular setting, in order to recognize the students’ response while they were taught in a specific way.

The population for this research was third-grade students from the “Institución Educativa San Cristóbal,” but the participants were 10 of them. They must follow this criterion in order to be suitable for the study: To be between 8 and 10 years old, to be officially enrolled in the educational institution and to be studying in that group since the beginning of the year. The research team used a method of simple random sample to select the participants for this inquiry.

In this study, all data collection instruments were approved by the FUNLAM Ethics Committee (Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. Code: FO-MI-030) on August 14th, 2018. Likewise, the corresponding informed consents signed by the participants’ parents/caretakers were checked by this institution in order to ensure all the research process.

When the researchers had the permission to develop the study in the research context, they must have a certificate that supported extra social security and health care in order to work properly in that place; they also had a permission to formally present the project to the school principal and coordinators as well as the participants’ parents/caretakers. Later, parents and caretakers who agreed their children participated in this research signed the informed consents after reading them all. In the informed consent form, it was established the research aim by explaining clearly that the study was just focused on observing and analyzing students’ learning competences through a set of techniques (observations and interviews); consequently, the students would not be exposed to any medical procedure or something similar. On the other hand, participants’ personal information/data was protected under this informed consent, because it was stated that when socializing the research results, codes would be used to classify testimonies or any other outcome.

Data Collection

The data required for this study was collected through several techniques; to start, the researchers applied a non-participant observation in order to know how the teacher performed the English classes and how the development of the language skills was. Besides, this technique allowed the researchers to get the data without manipulating and contaminating the phenomena, because this technique facilitated to observe and register the information located within the context just as it is.

On another hand, the sample participated in some semi-structured interviews, so the research team could get reliable information about how the students responded when the teacher made emphasis on just writing skill during classes. The semi-structured interview was appropriate to obtain useful information from the participants, because the researchers took into consideration that students were very young, and these kinds of interviews brought a flexibility in which the interviewed did not have to follow a specific order. As a consequence, it generated a comfortable environment for them to understand the questions and give accurate answers.

To conclude, the last technique selected to achieve the final objective was a Task Based Learning (TBL) activity, an *ad-hoc* resource in which the researchers could observe how students developed the four language skills by performing a set of tasks. Actually, this technique was suitable since it brought the possibility to implement activities that immersed the students into a learning environment, so they could develop the four language skills efficiently. The implementation of the TBL activity allowed the research team to have a contrast between the students’ performance while the teacher made emphasis on writing and

when he instead implemented a methodological proposal focused on the development of four skills (the TBL activity).

Data Analysis, Validity and Reliability

After finishing with the process of tools design, the research instruments were checked through two different validity procedures. First, the researchers developed a content validity with the intention of being sure about the instruments' accuracy; as a consequence, a research panel composed by 4 experts evaluated all sections and items from both tools (the non-participant observation and the semi-structured interview). Thus, five components from the observation chart/table were modified and three subdivision in the interview as well. Regarding the content validity process, Ding (2019) states, "content validity is the first step in constructing a reliable and valid instrument. This step is crucial because the subsequent analyses are all hinged on this initial item" (p. 7).

After that, the second validity process was performed (criteria validity) through the reference of other 2 interview formats already validated; hence, the semi-structured interview for this study was compared with those ones in order to know the level of criteria measurement in the inquiry: "In other words, criterion validity is about how performance on the assessment accurately predicts future performance or estimate present performance on some other valued measure" (Kadir, Zaim, & Refnaldi, 2019, p. 99). After the semi-structured interview was compared, some elements were modified in it in order to improve its quality; for example, sociodemographic information and lexical factors. Moreover, when the research team finished all the above-mentioned processes, the research instruments were ready to be implemented to the participants selected.

After the researchers applied the instruments, information from the interview was collected into transcription matrixes; similarly, observations sessions were classified in observation charts, so a general categorical matrix permitted to encode and systematize each testimony and observational fact from the students, insomuch as it was needed to contrasts all information from dissimilar categories (1st triangulation process); accordingly, all those results were confronted by the theory/literature that experts and scholars in the literacy discipline presents (2nd triangulation process).

Results and Discussion

In this section, the first outcome to be presented is a fragment of the most meaningful elements from the non-participant observation chart. This form was filled based on a set of observations that the research team developed during English classes:

Table 1. File-fragment of non-participant observation.

Activities	The lack of this indicator was observed	It was observed only once	It was observed a few times	It was observed sometimes	It was observed frequently
The teacher makes emphasis on just one of the four language skills during English classes.					
The students are taught trough audios, videos, storytelling,					

and others to develop the listening skill.					
The students learn through oral presentations, debates, dialogues to develop the speaking skill.					
The students are exposed to books, comics, stories, and others to develop the reading skill.					
The students perform written productions through dictations, worksheets, quizzes and others.					

Note. Source: Personal design. Meaningful selection of the students’ response during the English classes.

Thanks to this non-participant observation, it could be appreciated the coherence between the students’ testimonies while participating in the interviews and their learning processes in class. Therefore, many affirmations reinforced what was observed by the researchers.

Based on the previous evidence, when the students were taking part in the semi-structured interviews, they declared affirmations like the followings: “We listen to songs and repeat them. The teacher checks if we pronounce well and we sing the songs many times; finally, sometimes we don’t understand what we sing but we like it” (Interviewed student 8, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Similarly, other student asserted that “we also practice listening when the teacher speaks in English, but most of the class is in Spanish so understanding when he speaks in English is very difficult” (Interviewed student 2, personal communication, October 1, 2018).

After checking the observations and testimonies from the interviews, the research team concluded that the English teacher must pay attention to the way students develop specific skills, and that has to do with solid pedagogical knowledge; for instance, the development of the listening skill is not a matter of just making students listen to songs and listening tracks for them to repeat orally what they listen. Listening comprehension is not always tested through these kinds of practices, because what the students do is pronouncing aloud. Equally, in an inquiry about learning strategies on English language acquisition, Bahanshal (2015) pointed out that “the participants proved that they never knew that listening to English songs is an effective strategy that will help them to develop their English vocabulary, however, they listened to songs for fun and enjoyment” (p. 53). In addition, if the teacher wanted to promote the usage of English language inside the classroom, he would rather speak in English in a high percentage than use Spanish to teach his students. In Colombian educational environments –referring to English classes– the mother tongue must be a tool or a resource to explain complex content; on the contrary, if Spanish language –in

this case— is overused during sessions, the students are likely to focus on the messages spoken in their first language (L1):

For many years it has been reproduced the same discourse about the negative aspects of the use of L1 but as mentioned in the paragraphs above L1 must be seen as a tool during the EFL class, not only negative, when students are lost during the class it is better to explain it in L1. (Velasco & Díaz, 2016, p. 14)

Additionally, in the listening component observed during the non-participant observations, the teacher used to implement educational videos to teach other competences rather than the second language (L2) understanding; for instance, he made the children imitate the video characters' attitudes and behaviors. Likewise, the students had to repeat what the characters said without bearing in mind the message in L2; one more time, the researchers could notice that the teaching process was emphasized on pronouncing and repeating aloud, and this was also supported with what the students answered during the interviews: "Watching videos in English classes is funny because we dance and sing, it doesn't matter if we don't understand but I like these kinds of activities because it is different from others" (Interviewed student 5, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Furthermore, other participant added: "We all enjoy the most when the teacher makes us play and dance as we watch videos; we also perform role plays" (Interviewed student 7, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Regarding the use of educational videos in English classes, Zhao (2017) asserts that

This requires teachers to collect, compare and filter appropriate teaching videos extensively on the premise that they fully understand the teaching objectives and students' needs. In fact, this is a process for preparing the teaching video (lesson preparation). In the later stage, teachers need to adjust or reorganize these video clips in accordance with the teaching needs. (p. 667)

As a result, it is really important to have a proper pedagogical knowledge when teaching any discipline. In Colombian public education, English must not be the subject that any teacher can teach, because it entails many elements such as knowing about English teaching methods and approaches, learning styles, students' needs and so on; moreover, it is imperative that the teacher has the proper English level to communicate and teach. In consequence, students in Colombian high schools and even in colleges or universities show many difficulties when trying to respond to tasks that involve using the English language, since they did not have the chance to have an appropriate English learning process during the first levels:

Pedagogical Knowledge is a deep knowledge about the processes and practices or methods of teaching and learning. This is a generic form of knowledge that is involved in all issues of student learning, classroom management, lesson plan development and implementation, and student evaluation. It includes knowledge about techniques or methods to be used in the classroom. (Enyekit, Ubulom, & Enyekit, 2018, p. 112)

Regarding the speaking skill, in the observation form it was evident that the teacher did not make emphasis on developing this ability, insomuch as oral presentations by students were not present during English sessions. Besides, the teacher did not encourage the learners to answer and ask questions nor talk among themselves by using L2; a fact that was predictable in this scenario due to the teacher's capacity, since for him making the students repeat aloud what they read or listened was a synonym of "speaking": "Sometimes, the teacher brings

worksheets then we paint and do the activities. Later, we read the words and phrases aloud and the teacher checks pronunciation” (Interviewed student 9, personal communication, October 1, 2018). Furthermore, some students did something similar, but they preferred to read silently, so they did not even pronounce for the teacher to check pronunciation: “After writing during English classes, I like to read to myself what I wrote. The teacher makes us pronounce aloud but I don’t like to; the only words that I speak in English are ‘hello,’ ‘good morning’ and ‘see you’” (Interviewed student 8, personal communication, October 1, 2018). There is a big difference between reading aloud and speaking itself, because pronunciation is such a mechanical process of the speaking skill; it is just a component in a whole process compound by my many other elements, like cognitive, linguistic and social aspects. Speaking is more a connatural behavior of the subject and it must be produced naturally by the influence of the context:

Speaking is not reading aloud (pronunciation), either reading the answer to a grammar question (accuracy). Speaking is neither reading the answer to a reading/listening question (comprehension). In each of these cases the aims are not speaking-related. It could be a speaking activity designed to give practice of language just learned or reviewed. (Tiarawati, 2015, p. 10)

Similarly, when the research team asked the participants again –during the semi-structured interviews– about speaking activities apart from reading tasks, they replied the following: “When we don’t read, we speak in English just to greet and to pronounce the things we listen to; for example, when we watch videos or sing songs” (Interviewed student 8, personal communication, October 9, 2018). Likewise, other student responded: “We speak by using English when we play matching games, either when the teacher uses the projector or when he gives us worksheets; when we check the activities we speak in English” (Interviewed student 5, personal communication, October 9, 2018). Once again, what is obvious in this kind of practice is that the aim of the class activity was focused on pronouncing rather than speaking; repeating what is heard from other sources is neither a way of speaking nor of communicating.

Many of the situations above occur in Colombian public education because of the lack of knowledge about English teaching; the process of teaching a foreign language to specific populations requires more than an English level certificate, since communicating in a language does not guarantee that teaching and learning processes are developed properly. Thus, it is imperative that English teachers are trained with pedagogical basis, in order to provide an adequate education to students, especially to children: “To teach effectively, teachers must have sufficient knowledge of the subject they are teaching. They must also know how to translate this knowledge into meaningful teaching and how to assess whether or not children actually learn” (Bold et al., 2016, p. 10). Moreover, in the English teaching field the intention of using didactic materials should be emphasized on the communicative competence; educational videos, songs, worksheets and so on are more than motivational aids for class time: “Communicative competence is the goal, so speaking skill must be practiced constantly and the teacher must take a part in the development of students’ speaking skill” (Rondonuwu, 2018, p. 60).

Lastly, according to reading and writing skills, the methodology used by the teacher during English classes did not reflect a proper development of them; inasmuch as along the observations sessions, the researchers could notice that materials such as tales, books, comics and so on were not a fundamental part in the learning process; on the other hand, dictations, worksheets and quizzes were constantly used to “work” on these communicative skills. Thus, responses from the participants supported these perceptions: “we work with worksheets with

words in English and then we write them and listen to them” (Interviewed student 1, personal communication, October 9, 2018). Likewise, other students added the following: “we write in groups or alone and then the teacher gives us papers in English to paint them” (Interviewed student 6, personal communication, October 9, 2018). In a similar way, mechanic dynamics were also visible:

The teacher writes on the board and then we write; after that, he pronounces what he wrote and we listen to him. Finally, we all pronounce at a time. (Interviewed student 10, personal communication, October 9, 2018)

When it comes to reading comprehension, students must be surrounded by text materials that focus on their ages; the use of worksheets might be a good resource to reinforce concepts but there are more suitable options to motivate students to learn and understand written messages; since pronouncing well and aloud is not the same as understanding ideas from a text: “Reading comprehension is not just reading with a loud voice but reading to establish and understand the meaning of words, sentences, and paragraph sense relationship among the ideas” (Sujarwo, Imran, & Sukmawati, 2018, p. 3). Hence, reading materials are fundamental in that process of developing reading skill as a comprehensive process; in order to go beyond the conception of just pronouncing well as the aim of reading:

Tales are useful because learners can understand the new vocabulary without resorting to translations into their mother tongue as the new words are introduced and used in context. (Hassan & Mamat, 2017, p. 21)

On the other hand, based on the non-participant observations it is true that writing was mainly the objective of the teacher’s classes, because most of the time students were performing writing activities; nevertheless, these tasks were emphasized on traditional practices such as dictations and transcriptions:

We write a lot when the teacher writes on the board; he makes us write in our notebooks in the same way he does it. Also, we solve word search and crossword puzzles. (Interviewed student 4, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

Similarly, other participant answered this:

I write what the teacher tells us to write; what he dictates and what is on the board. It is good because I speed up my handwriting. (Interviewed student 9, personal communication, October 1, 2018)

Thus, it is evident that the students performed decoding processes instead of original written productions, and that is not their fault. Sometimes writing production may be misunderstood by some teachers when they just focus on aspects like handwriting, grammar and the correct use of punctuation marks. Obviously, these elements are meaningful to develop this skill, but having a real written product done by the learner means to show in the text what has been thought previously, from the most basic to the most complex ideas and text structures. According to Lehman, Martin, & Rogers (2019):

Writing is more than the answer to a factual question or a measurement; writing is a heuristic approach to learning. Writing begins with an empty page

or blank screen and is fully generated by the internal workings of a writer. Writing involves risk taking, making one feel vulnerable and exposed. (p. 6)

In other observations done by the researchers, they could appreciate that the teacher had few variety of vocabulary in his speech, because he repeated the same expressions several times from the beginning until the end of the class; furthermore, he immediately translated into Spanish for the students to understand what he said and wrote along the sessions. He also used translation of short sentences, and this activity did not promote the production of written language, which demonstrated once again that the classes were not designed and adapted to the students' needs, getting them away of achieving the communicative competence: "The Grammar-Translation method is the approach most typically employed by Latin teachers to educate their students, primarily as a result of tradition. This is the method by which most Latin teachers were taught, and we teach what we know" (Nielson, 2018, p. 10).

Finally, these students seem to be comfortable with the methodology used by the teacher because they might not know another one; and taking into consideration that they are in third grade, they may not have a wide background about how writing and English learning must be developed: "for me is not that difficult, but I feel better when I write than when I listen to, it is easy because what I have to write is on the board" (Interviewed student 7, personal communication, October 1, 2018); in addition, other student replied: "writing is not difficult because everything is on the board" (Interviewed student 10, personal communication, October 1, 2018). This evidences the ease of transcribing over producing real texts: "The most difficult is to write alone, because we don't usually do that" (Interviewed student 9, personal communication, October 1, 2018). In words of Ali (2016):

Personal writing is writing for oneself, and includes various kinds of aide, memories, as well as diaries and journals. These writing activities would normally be carried out in the first language but there may be good motivational reasons for using them in the foreign language classroom. (p. 13)

When teachers make emphasis on personal writing in their classes, it becomes a challenge and a motivational activity to students, insomuch as they can feel identified with their own production and they can also learn properly how to do it in numerous situations.

To conclude, a TBL activity was carried out in this research, in order to recognize how the students' language skills were affected while the teacher's class was done in a dynamic way; for this reason, the students had the possibility of being immersed in a four hours English class that integrated the four language skills through the development of a final task, which consisted in making a poster; later, the students had to read it and socialize it in an oral presentation too.

After this activity was done, some findings showed that the moments when the students were very noisy and distracted, the researchers and the teacher had to implement some strategies to catch their attention, but these moments became opportunities to implement games and exercises (integrating the 4 language skills) that the students did not use to do. These activities had great acceptance as well, and they even said that they wanted to develop more activities like those ones. Moreover, it was evidenced that the students' previous knowledge was not taken into account and reinforced in their usual English classes, because they experienced some difficulties when they had to relate basic thematic –that they were supposed to study in previous English levels– with the new topic presented to develop the TBL lessons.

Also, in the final task when the students were going to present their posters to demonstrate their speaking skill performance, some of them claimed that they were afraid to

speak in English because they did not usually do it. Despite that, all the participants achieved the level expected in the task, by scoring from 4.0 to 4.9 in a scale of 1.0 to 5.0; revealing that it is possible and effective to develop an English learning process through the integration of the four language skills.

Conclusions (Pedagogical Implications)

To conclude, a situation that is important to note is that students who participated in this research were not aware of language skills, because they were always immersed in a scenario where classes were carried out teaching the language as a system, through the translation of some words or short sentences, which led the students to be unaware of the different ways in which a language could be learned through the four language skills.

Furthermore, there are noticeable facts about how the English class was developed in this specific scenario, which leads to an inappropriate process of learning the language. Considering that, not all the language skills were being fostered in order to achieve the communicative competence; for instance, the skill of speaking was fostered only through repetition of the few words the teacher was able to say, pronounce or erroneously verbalize. Therefore, to foster the listening skill, the only tool used was again what the teacher was able to speak to the students. Additionally, in every class the writing skill was present to learn the language, but it was mostly transcription of sentences instead of actually producing the language; finally, the reading skill was not even taken into consideration in the learning process English language.

Moreover, it was found that the writing skill was the one mostly used to learn the language; however, the activities developed with this skill were neither enough to properly develop the ability of writing itself nor to acquire a new language.

On the other hand, the instruction is an important aspect that is necessary for the appropriate development of every activity or educational process; but in this case, the students did not understand the instruction or the teacher's instruction was confusing, as the students were always asking her what they had to do. This is a very common situation in a Colombian educational scenario, so it is imperative to be transparent when giving the instruction in order to engage students in the act of learning the L2.

Based on what has been exposed in this article, it is necessary to recognize that in an appropriate learning process, the English teacher must be the agent who provides the proper instruction for the students, according to their needs and singularities in order to lead them to achieve the communicative competence, which requires the articulation of the students' previous knowledge to open the door to new knowledge. Hence, the students can achieve a remarkable progress in their performance that allows a gradual evolution of their learning process.

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Author Note

Víctor Daniel Gil Vera holds a master's in Systems Engineering from Universidad Nacional de Colombia, systems engineer of the same University. Victor is a teacher and researcher at Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. Correspondence regarding this article can be addressed directly to: victor.gilve@amigo.edu.co.

Bairon Jaramillo Valencia holds a master's in Teaching English from Universidad Católica Luis Amigo. Bairon is a teacher and researcher at the same University. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: bairon.jaramillova@amigo.edu.co.

Nancy Biviana Cardona holds a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Universidad Católica Luis Amigó. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: nancy.cardonamu@amigo.edu.co.

Maria Alejandra Cifuentes holds a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Universidad Cat́lica Luis Amiǵ. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: maria.cifuenteslo@amigo.edu.co.

Shirley Alejandra Jimenez holds a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Universidad Cat́lica Luis Amiǵ. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: shirley.jimenezhe@amigo.edu.co.

Laura Marcela Martinez holds a bachelor's degree in Teaching English as a Foreign Language from Universidad Cat́lica Luis Amiǵ. Correspondence regarding this article can also be addressed directly to: laura.martinezue@amigo.edu.co.

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