SPEAKING BY LEARNING TO LEARN

ACTION RESEARCH PAPER

Prof. Albertina Seillant

2015
Index

Contents
Key words: ......................................................................................................................... 3
Abstract: ............................................................................................................................... 3
CHAPTER 1: Introduction: ..................................................................................................... 4
  Rationale: ............................................................................................................................ 4
  Problem: .............................................................................................................................. 5
  Hypothesis .......................................................................................................................... 5
  Objectives: ......................................................................................................................... 5
    General ............................................................................................................................... 6
    Specific: ............................................................................................................................ 6
  Thesis and support ............................................................................................................. 6
  Methodology ...................................................................................................................... 6
  Context and subjects of study, a diagnosis: ...................................................................... 7
  Data collection instruments: ............................................................................................. 7
CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework .................................................................................. 8
  2.1 The input hypothesis: ................................................................................................. 8
  2.2 Comprehensible output hypothesis by Merrill Swain .................................................. 9
  2.3 Declarative /procedural model on second language acquisition: ................................. 9
  2.4 Learning strategies: ................................................................................................... 10
    2.4.1 Direct strategies: .................................................................................................... 10
    2.4.2 Indirect strategies: ............................................................................................... 14
  2.5 Whole Brain Teaching: key concepts: ...................................................................... 18
    2.5.2 WBT Effects on memory retention and its connection with learning strategies: 21
CHAPTER 3: Discussion. Analysis and interpretation of the data........................................ 24
  3.1 Survey ......................................................................................................................... 24
  3.2 Synthesis: Student’s improvement on learning strategies implementation. Journal entries from April to July 2015................................................................. 31
    Journal entry Nº 1: April, 2015.................................................................................... 31
    Journal entry Nº 2 Inquiring about metacognitive strategies: goals and objectives..... 32
Journal entry Nº 3. Video recording. How they applied the memory strategies taught in class.................................................................................................................................................. 32
Journal entry Nº 4: metacognitive strategy to arrange and plan learning.................. 33
Journal entry Nº 5: making positive statements............................................................. 34
Report on group work: cognitive strategies at work ...................................................... 34

CHAPTER 4: Analysis of the classroom methodology before and after intervention with WBT procedures. ................................................................................................................................................ 38

4.1 Data collection instruments: speaking class observation before intervention. ........ 38
4.2 Observation after intervention Nº2. June, 2015 ........................................................ 38
4.3 Observation Nº3 by the thesis tutor after intervention: WBT and cognitive learning strategies integrated.................................................................................................................................................. 39
4.4 Discussions. The analysis of learning strategy training on students’ performance. 39
   Memory strategies applied by the learners: ................................................................. 39
   Metacognitive strategies used:..................................................................................... 40
   Cognitive strategies...................................................................................................... 41
   Affective strategies and a connection with Whole Brain teaching:............................ 41
   Social strategies: ......................................................................................................... 42
   Conclusions: ................................................................................................................. 43
   Learning strategies: the survey and the journal........................................................ 43

Bibliography:.................................................................................................................. 45

Appendix ......................................................................................................................... 47
Key words:
oral production, output, learning strategies, Whole Brain Teaching.

Abstract:
The aim of this action research paper is to show the ways in which oral production can be enhanced in a group of 40 students of a secondary school in Argentina with three hours of class allotment. Besides, these learners were trained the use of direct and indirect learning strategies and Whole Brain Teaching techniques were implemented. The initial data collection was made by means of a survey and a class observation. Later, the students’ journal entries were analyzed so as to see a change in their perceptions. In this way students showed less resort to memory retention and were better able to talk in English in both planned and unplanned speech, as was reflected in their class performance.
CHAPTER 1: Introduction:

It is always said that in order for a foreign language to be learned it is necessary either to use it authentically in a country where it is spoken or be exposed to it from early childhood. However, most of our students at secondary school are not immersed in any of these situations, so they end up believing that it is almost impossible for them to communicate fluently in English. This research work intends to show that speaking fluently is not impossible, and that even though learners do not “acquire” English but “learn” it at school, it is possible for them to be able to communicate and express themselves by using the means at their disposal. The premise advocated in this research paper is that learners will make use of their oral skills provided they have the opportunities to do it and the tools to carry out this task, that is to say strategies that enable them to study and prepare themselves to speak.

Rationale:

Being a teacher of a second year of 13-year-old students at secondary school in Instituto María Auxiliadora in the city of Curuzú Cuatiá, I noticed that my students were affected negatively whenever they tried to speak in English in class, either during practice production or in oral tests. They resorted to rote learning and repetition as a means to pass the tests. In an attempt to help their development in speaking skills, I proposed that they should record their oral production in videos using their cellphones. After this activity, it was evident that the affective variable was reduced. Nevertheless, there were still many instances of memorization in which they could not communicate. Some of my learners seemed to be more successful than others and I wondered why. So I asked myself these questions:

Which are the current learning strategies which aid students in their development of oral fluency?

Which teaching action/s could help them to improve their speaking skills?

After taking the course of “Metodología de la Investigación” at Fasta University, I could think scientifically and identify which was the problem my students and I were undergoing. Therefore I decided to conduct an action research study so as to find the reasons and solutions.
Then, after suggestions on the use of learning strategies during a class observation, the following year, in 2015, a survey on learning strategies was implemented in order to gain better insights regarding the learners study habits. Consequently, it was evident that the techniques used in class had to be changed, so Whole Brain Teaching was implemented as a way to promote more speaking instances in class from the presentation stage.

Therefore, the hypothesis of this action research: was that the development of speaking fluency in L2 students is fostered through opportunities for oral production provided by the teacher and appropriate learning strategies applied by learners. Hence, the role of output instances in class and the teaching of learning strategies are essential in order to provide support to interlanguage development through declarative memory use.

**Problem:**

As mentioned in the rationale, the students made use of memorization as their only means to get a message across orally in the FL either in practice opportunities or during oral tests. Consequently, as their teacher I asked myself “which were the strategies that they tended to use most frequently while studying for an oral exchange, presentation, video or test? How could I help to develop better speaking skills through new teaching techniques? Then I concluded that the implementation of the current teaching techniques and learning strategies used to practice oral skills were not successful in the group of 13 year-old learners at Instituto Maria Auxiliadora due to the fact that rote learned emissions of English as a foreign language were the outcomes seen as a result of this teaching and learning situation.

**Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this action research was that the development of speaking fluency in FL students is fostered through opportunities for oral production provided by the teacher and appropriate learning strategies applied by learners. Hence, the role of output instances in class and the teaching of learning strategies are essential in order to provide support to interlanguage development though declarative memory use.

**Objectives:**

Considering the hypothesis mentioned the research objectives were formulated in order to provide a guide for research
General

- To identify and describe current learning strategies which aid students in their development of oral fluency.
- To implement action research to attempt to change the current situation.
- To find out the presence or absence of change in students’ strategies after intervention in the teaching and learning process.

Specific:

1. To describe the current learning strategies in use during oral work.
2. To implement new teaching techniques related to oral work to aid student fluency.
3. To analyze collected data (surveys, journals...) to find out the presence or absence of changes in students' performance.

Thesis and support

Considering the learning context analyzed and the objectives proposed to conduct research, it can be stated that learner’s oral skills are supported though opportunities to practice speaking in non-threatening situations by means of learning strategies use and implementation, therefore fostering the declarative memory they have at their disposal and the automatization process. Moreover, the strategies already mentioned are enhanced by means of a new teaching technique which promotes cooperation, interaction, and self-improvement by involving all the areas of the brain possible to be put at work. This technique is called Whole Brain Teaching (later WBT) which was also implemented in support of the learning strategies employed.

Methodology

According to Yuni and Urbano (2005:139-140) action research involves the study and participation not only of the teacher, but of the subjects of the study:

“Action research supposes a way of content production based on the subjects of study’s own reflection. It is investigated “with” the actors and not to” the social actors.” (The translation is mine) (Yuni, J, Urbano, C. 2005: 139)

Following the same author, it can be said that it intends to produce “holistic” and “contextual” content that integrates knowledge which comes from reflection on the
subjects’ “own reality” and that can serve that context as it should respond to the “demands and interests” of the people involved.

As a result, the present **action research** paper involves a **quantitative and qualitative** research methodology. It makes use of quantitatively measured instruments in a survey report, that show percentages to measure the extent to which learners make use of the strategies and the ones they use, as well as qualitative ones as in the class observation and students’ journals analysis. Therefore, it focuses on teaching and learning practices and their intervention to enhance them.

**Context and subjects of study, a diagnosis:**

This action research takes place in a second year of secondary school in Instituto María Auxiliadora in the city of Curuzú Cuatiá. The students are mostly 13 years old and are of 43 in number. They constitute the **subjects of study** and each of them is a unit of analysis as well. Out of the total number of students, almost half of the class (43%) does not receive extra English instruction in an institute.

During 2014 the learners were involved in a typical classroom situation, following their coursebook with many instances of oral practice especially through videos recorded by them in their cellphones and posted on Facebook to be assessed by the teacher and oral tests. Then, in 2015 WBT was implemented thus changing the techniques typically used in this class. This intervention was also accompanied by a training in learning strategies use which was implemented in oral assessments though videos and in class.

**Data collection instruments:**

The data collection instruments are composed of the following:

1) A survey which was completed before intervention, so as to see the learners’ current state.
2) Class observations which were conducted by the research tutor and the school principal.
3) Students’ journals in which students answered a question connected to the class situation analyzed. Later, their answers were categorized to see the influence of the intervention on students learning processes.
CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework

In this section key concepts that support correct understanding of the topic, research and theoretical framework of this paper will be defined. Hence, terms like oral production, output, learning strategies and Whole Brain Teaching will be explained so as to provide the reader with the necessary information beforehand.

According to Hymes (1972) oral production is the ability to get a message across in a “speech community” that needs to achieve their “purposes”. Then, Brown and Yule (1983) state that “oral production is an interactive process where you can construct a meaning that you can produce in every situation, at least at the moment, taking account those aspect which are participants, context, experiences and the propose of the communication”. As a result, it can be said that oral production involves the use of the language at our disposal and the interpretation of messages which lead to the production of that speech act.

2.1 The input hypothesis:

It is sensible to begin this section with a definition of input. According to Lightbown and Spada (1993:122 in Morgavi: 2012) input is “the language which the learner is exposed to in the environment”, however, not all the language that we hear and read promotes learning as it is necessary that it becomes intake for acquisition to take place. From this point of view it is useful for this research to consider intake as “input that is understood and attended to, and therefore processed”.

According to Stephen Krashen, as cited in Brown, D. (2000:277-281) there seem to be two processes that take place in the mind when we internalize a second language: acquisition and learning. The first is said to be unconscious and take place when we pay attention to meaning rather than form and is responsible for fluency in the L2. The latter corresponds to a conscious process in which attention is focused on form and rules therefore it is related to accuracy. Krashen also points out that each process inhibits the other. Following Krashen in order for acquisition to take place, there must be a sufficient amount of comprehensible input that is “a bit beyond” student’s level, in other words, it should be i+1 so
that students understand the language they are exposed to but are challenged at the same time.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the fifth Krashen’s hypothesis, the affective filter, which states that acquisition will take place in low anxiety contexts.

This linguistic input becomes “comprehensible” by means of language simplification and with the aid of “contextual and extra linguistic clues”. Then, according to this view, speaking is said to result from acquisition as learners’ performance is not considered a contribution to acquisition.

2.2 Comprehensible output hypothesis by Merrill Swain

Output can be defined as the external manifestation of a learner’s interlanguage (Morgavi, 2012: 51) it is characterized by variability, which is the use of two or more linguistic forms interchangeably to convey the same meaning. (Morgavi, 2012: 51)

According to Rod Ellis (1997) as he cites Merrill Swain’s work, it is essential to provide learners with opportunities to use their linguistic resources as it is a way to achieve full “grammatical competence”. This is achieved by responding to the need perceived when a communication failure occurs as learners are “pushed” to adjust their output thus making it more precise. Merrill Swain also points out the movement from top down semantic processing to bottom up syntactic processing that occurs when students are obliged to use the linguistic resources they have at their disposal to satisfy a communicative need. Nevertheless the importance of feedback is seen as paramount, as it provides learners with “metalinguistic information”. Morr, in Ellis, citing Merrill Swain states that learners learn from their output because it has a “consciousness raising function” as learners notice their “gaps in their interlanguage” (1997: 49), when they notice the need to express themselves better, or when they “test their hypotheses” by taking risks while producing language. Therefore, as Rod Ellis points out, output exchanges provide the opportunity not only to produce language but also to hear it, thus providing another instance of modified input.

2.3 Declarative /procedural model on second language acquisition:

This research focuses on the distinction between declarative and procedural memory systems which are said to be used in different functions in language processing. The declarative memory system is involved when processing factual and episodic knowledge, and is believed to be accessed through conscious awareness (Ullman: 2005, 143).
Conversely, the procedural memory is responsible for “motor and cognitive skills and habits” as speaking fluently (147), but these abilities are not available to conscious awareness, for that reason it is also called implicit memory system. Both systems can learn the same piece of knowledge therefore complementing each other, or can compete, as when one system is not working properly the other is enhanced. This is the case of high estrogen levels, which decreases procedural memory work.

Research on these memory systems aims to show that grammar rules are processed by the procedural memory system, while the lexicon is learned through the declarative one, that’s why it seems easier to learn vocabulary than grammar after puberty. Nevertheless adolescents and adults can make use of the declarative memory systems for processing grammar, which make the process slower and less native like, but possible. Moreover, research also shows that with sufficient amount of practice adult grammar learning skills can be led from the declarative to the procedural memory system as production becomes more automatic.

2.4 Learning strategies:

They can be defined as ways to access the learning process with clear objectives in mind in order to achieve the intended outcomes, in Rebecca Oxford’s words they are “…specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferrable to new situations.” (1989:8)

2.4.1 Direct strategies:

These strategies are the ones in which the target language use is implied, so they involve “mental processing of the language” in question. (1989:37)

2.4.1.1 Memory strategies

They are the most frequently used in the language class, they can be said to aid the passage from the working memory to the skill level where data is “easier to be retrieved” (Oxford, 1989: 39-40). Here is a summary of the memory strategies:

Creating mental linkages: they are the ones that provide the basis for the rest of the strategies. As in Oxford, 1989:40-43

1) Grouping: “classifying” the pieces of language into “meaningful units” in order to internalize them. E.g. “topic, linguistic function, opposition, etc.”
2) **Associating/elaborating**: is the practice of linking the new information with already learned material or “concepts”. However, in order to work, this relationship should be a sound one to have an impact on the student’s mind and they can be represented in “networks” as in a “semantic map”. (1989:41)

3) **Placing new words into a context**: is done by giving a context to the new word as in a piece of text or “sentence”, so it is closely related with the previous strategy.

**Applying images and sounds:**

1) **Using imagery**: is the link of a word or piece of information to an actual image represented in a picture either in the mind or in paper.

2) **Semantic mapping**: is relating words through lines around or under a key concept. It involves making associations, grouping and even imagery as it “visually shows how certain groups of words relate to each other”.

3) **Representing sounds in memory**: is similar to the previous one but simpler as it involves any technique which creates an association between words on the basis of their sound no matter if they are words of the same language.

4) **Using keywords**: involves linking a word in the target language to words in the mother tongue which are familiar and meaningful to the learner in order to create a link. Then an image that relates to both words should be created so as to add the visual element to the auditory one.

**Reviewing well** is the practice of going over the same piece of information over and over again in order to send it to the long term memory.

1) **Structured reviewing**: is revising the content to be learned in “carefully spaced intervals” which is called “spiraling as the learner goes back to the previously learned content and adds the new information. The aim of this strategy is “automatizing” the content so as to make it available to be used.

**Employing action**: they involve using the body to aid the internalization of new content.
1) **Using physical response or sensation:** is making a movement which is related to a “new expression” or “meaningfully relating a new expression to a physical feeling or sensation”. (Oxford, 1989: 43).

2) **Using mechanical techniques:** this strategy supposes using “tangible techniques” as moving concrete objects from a place to another so as to differentiate the different types of information, as with cards.

### 2.4.1.2 Cognitive strategies:

Concerning cognitive strategies, it can be said that they are used to aid the learners in their “manipulation or transformation of the target language” (Oxford, R.: 1989, 43)

There are 4 kinds of cognitive strategies outlined as follows: practicing; receiving and sending messages; analyzing and reasoning; and creating structure for input and output. According to Oxford, practicing strategies are essential in order to gain mastery of an L2 but learners do not always know how important practice is, so they tend to let the good learners who are eager to practice do it, and they miss the chance to use the language. Moreover, even when practice opportunities are provided in class, speaking in an L2 need more hours of practice that’s the reason why students should be equipped with the means to aid their practice with practice strategies

**Practicing:**

1. **Repeating:** to reiterate pieces of language repeatedly, by listening or imitation.
2. **Formally practicing with sound:** using pronunciation or intonation devices in different ways.
3. **Recognizing and using formulas and patterns:** being able to identify and produce routines or formulaic chunks often without analyzing them.
4. **Recombining:** using known language items in a novel fashion.
5. **Practicing naturally:** seeking opportunities to use language in real contexts as in oral exchanges.

**Receiving and sending messages:**

1. **Getting the idea quickly:** especially used when listening before speaking by resorting to skimming to get the gist and scanning to focus on details.
2. **Using resources for receiving and sending messages**: use the means they have at their disposal either in written or spoken ways to interpret and create messages in the L2.

**Analyzing and reasoning:**
1. **Reasoning deductively**: applying rules to understand and create with language.
2. **Analyzing expressions**: trying to get the meaning of a new language chunk by analyzing its items.
3. **Analyzing contrastively**: comparing and contrasting the L1 and the L2.
4. **Translating**: transferring language items from the L1 to the L2 and vice versa.
5. **Transferring**: applying previous knowledge, often from the mother tongue to comprehend or create new pieces of language in the L2.

**Creating structure for input and output:**
1. **Taking notes**: to select information by writing key ideas or points in different formats.
2. **Summarizing**: making a summary.
3. **Highlighting**: focusing on key information by making it outstanding.

**2.4.1.3 Compensation strategies:**
Compensation strategies enable the learners to communicate effectively by overcoming their gaps in target language knowledge. They tend to compensate for unknown grammar or vocabulary items. Rebecca Oxford grouped these strategies in two sets: guessing intelligently in listening and reading and overcoming limitations is speaking and writing.

**Guessing intelligently**: involve not only inferring meaning by resorting to previous knowledge but also trying to get clues from novel pieces of information to understand them.

1. **Using linguistic clues**: guessing the meaning of what is listened or read by using previous knowledge or existing resources.
2. **Using other clues**: using nonlinguistic resources as the situation, images, context, in order to understand a message.

**Overcoming limitations in speaking**: helping students be more fluent by restructuring messages to convey their ideas in spoken form

1) **Switching to mother tongue**: using L1 resources to compensate for lack of knowledge in the target language, like coining words.
2) **Getting help**: by making the need for help explicit through a question or a hesitation.
3) **Using mime or gesture**: when there is a need to use an unknown word.
4) **Avoiding communication partially or totally**: it means not talking about certain topics, stop talking or not speaking.
5) **Selecting the topic**: trying to guide the conversation to topics the speaker knows about and can communicate in the target language.
6) **Adjusting or approximating the message**: creating a message which is simpler but can communicate the same idea.
7) **Coining words**: creating words to communicate a message.
8) **Using a circumlocution or synonym**: using a synonym or describing the term that is to be used if the word for that object is not in the speaker's vocabulary.

**2.4.2 Indirect strategies:**

According to Rebecca Oxford (1989:135) the indirect strategies are the ones in which the target language may not be present but guide the way in the learning process. They are classified as follows:

**2.4.2.1 Metacognitive strategies:**

Rebecca Oxford defines metacognitive with these words “metacognitive means beyond, beside, or with the cognitive” (1989:136) that is why they provide the learners with the means to organize and enhance their learning process. Faced with novelty, target language students can feel lost by the differences between their mother tongue and the new language. Therefore metacognitive strategies play an essential role by focusing the learner on the process and making him/her aware that they can use previous knowledge
as well. They also help the learner to “plan their language learning in an efficient way” (1988:136). Besides they provide them with means to evaluate their process without being afraid of making mistakes.

Here is the classification of metacognitive strategies

**Centering your learning:** These strategies allow learners to direct their attention to learning.

1. **Overviewing and linking with already known material:** it is the practice of linking new language material with previous knowledge. However, in order for this process to be successful, it is necessary to follow these steps: informing learners about the purpose of the activity, getting provided of the useful vocabulary to do so and associating. (Oxford 1989:138)

2. **Paying attention:** it involves not only directing attention to the task but also selecting the “specific aspects of the language or situational details” to be attentive. (1989:138)

3. **Delaying speech production to focus on listening:** it is the choice for a “silent period” that can be fostered in the foreign language class in order to receive input in the target language.

**Arranging and planning your learning** focus on the organization the learner should have in order to succeed in language learning.

1. **Finding out about language learning:** involves reading or talking about the best ways to enhance the learning of a foreign language.

2. **Organizing:** creating the best conditions for language learning such as the “schedule”, the place where learning takes place, the “notebook”, etc.

3. **Setting goals and objectives:** being aware and planning the long and short term “goals”.

4. **Identifying the purpose of a language task:** deciding what is sought in each activity by discovering which the aim of the activity is.

5. **Planning for a language task:** deciding the linguistic items and “functions” necessary for the “task” in question.
6) **Seeking practice opportunities:** planning ways to use the language naturalistically.

**Evaluating your learning:** concerns the practice of being aware and learning from mistakes and evaluating the overall progress. (1989:140)

1) **Self-monitoring:** involves recognizing the mistakes made, looking for the cause and improving the work to avoid making them again.

2) **Self-evaluating:** assessing one’s progress in the target language by comparing the current performance with previous ones.

### 2.4.2.2 Affective strategies

As Oxford mentions in her book “Language Learning Strategies”, they aim to get better “control” as to what is felt during learning which “is probably one of the biggest influences on language learning success or failure”. (Oxford 1989:140) Here is the classification of the affective strategies:

**Lowering tour anxiety:** They involve not only the mind but also the body as anxiety is overtly manifested through it. (Oxford: 1989:143)

1) **Using progressive relaxation, deep breathing or meditation:** by tensing and relaxing the “major muscle groups in the body”. Another technique that can complement this one is “breathing deeply” by using the “diaphragm” or by having a mental or sound image in mind.

2) **Using music:** as was stated previously, relaxing music is useful before stressing situations.

3) **Using laughter:** by relying on films, written material or jokes.

**Encouraging yourself:** according to Oxford (1989:143) learners often expect praise from other people and do not realize that they can do it for themselves and that can be even stronger than the encouragement others can provide.

1) **Encouraging yourself:** in speech and writing by using encouraging statements related to the task in question.
2) **Taking risks wisely**: by making oneself participate in a learning situation even though one is not sure they are saying things all right.

3) **Rewarding yourself**: it is based on the idea that learners should praise themselves with something they like after having performed well.

**Taking your emotional temperature**: this group of strategies enable learners to “…asses their feelings, motivations, and attitudes and, in many cases, to relate them to language tasks”. This allows students to gain some control over their emotions especially if they are negative and impede skillful development of the language learning capacities. (Oxford, 989: 144).

1) **Listening to your body**: by being aware of both the negative or positive “signals” and what they reflect.

2) **Using a checklist**: in order to survey students feelings as regards “language learning” and the tasks provided.

3) **Writing a language learning diary**: to write down what was done and how that impacted on the learners and their processes.

4) **Discussing your feelings with someone else**: it is simply talking about the learning process and the feelings involved in it with another person.

### 2.4.2.3 Social strategies:

As language need to be developed to be used with other people, interaction and cooperation are crucial. Therefore, the social strategies must be considered in the language learning situation. The basic one is interviewing partners as a language learning task that provides students with further “input” and “feedback “about the student’s communicative skills. (Oxford 1989:145).

However, not only is interaction important, but cooperation as well, as it enables learners either to learn form a more proficient partner or to help the ones in need, which “encourages mutual support” and thus improves the learning process. (1989:146)

**Asking questions:**
They are devised in order to communicate, to seek for help, “correction” or for “clarification.”
1. **Asking for clarification or verification:** in order to make sure a message has been understood correctly or to ask to provide the necessary explanations.

2. **Asking for correction:** is based on the practice of asking the teacher, a fellow classmate or other person if the student’s current performance is the desired one.

**Cooperating with others:**

It involves working with others in order to boost language learning or performance. It also fosters empathy and self-esteem.

1) **Cooperating with peers:** this means working with fellow students, either a partner or as a group constantly or temporarily in order to enhance performance or the process of language learning.

2) **Cooperating with proficient users of the new language:** working with someone who is one step ahead in language learning or with a native speaker, this can be done either inside or outside the class as most language learning classes are mixed ability ones. However, to make the most of this activity, this strategy requires awarding conversational roles which should be adequate to each learner’s proficiency level.

**Empathizing with others:**

1) **Developing cultural understanding:** trying to accept foreigners or speakers of the target language by getting to know about that culture.

2) **Becoming aware of other’s thoughts and feelings:** paying attention to the reactions and behavior of other partners and asking about them as a reflection of their way of thinking and emotions. (1989:147)

**2.5 Whole Brain Teaching: key concepts:**

Whole Brain teaching can be described as “one of the fastest growing education reform movements in the United States” (Biffle: 2015). Developed by Chris Biffle, this teaching technique seeks to empower students as learners. WBT stands for Whole Brain Teaching (WBT), thus it can be defined as teaching procedures which intend to involve all the areas
of the brain that can be put at work in class. WBT is based on the premise that “the longer we talk, the more students we lose” therefore it focuses on getting students’ attention instead of lecturing.

As regards feelings, in the central part of our brain between both hemispheres there is a region called the limbic system that is the “centre of our emotions” and can exercise a great influence in our reasoning part of the brain; consequently we can see the importance of the emotional impact we create in our learners. In addition, the complete maturation of the prefrontal cortex is reached during the twenties. That is why we should understand why adolescents are better influenced by their emotional states. The way we conduct a class to promote laughter, support and cooperation greatly influences the chances our learners learn what we expect them to do.

Following the same author, it can be said that “the brain is composed of 100 billion neurons, information processing nerve fibers” (2013:19) which have dendrites. These components have the capacity to “grow” when you learn a language, as Biffle states “repetition equals dendrite growth equals learning” (2013:19) which is the same as saying that in learning we grow our dendrites. This statement is crucial in this methodology and research paper as its key component is communication through meaningful repetition, i.e. repetition with a purpose to aid memory.

Concerning memory, which is of vital importance in learning a foreign language especially in speaking, this author highlights that in the brain there is not “a single area dedicated to memory.” (2013:20). Therefore the more areas of the brain which are made to work, the easier it will be to store and recall information. Following the author’s work on memory, there is a widely known distinction between short term and long term memory. The former is said to store up to seven items for a short period of time, while the long term one is “unlimited” but the only way to access it is through repetition and reviewing.

Whole Brain Teaching works by means of seven strategies labeled according to their function. They are presented as follows adapted from “Whole Brain teaching for challenging kids and for the rest of your class too” (2013:22-25). However, for the purposes of this research paper only the ones connected with the methodology implemented will be developed.

1) **Class-Yes:** is the attention-getter, which involves the prefrontal cortex, responsible for decision making and directing the attention. It involves calling
out your students as a group by saying “Class”, so they have to answer “Yes” in the same way you call them and by making a funny gesture they have to copy from you. Therefore it involves the mirror neurons, which aid imitation in and fosters class organization.

2) **Teach –Okay** it is widely known that teaching aids learning so this technique focuses on the idea that students have to teach to their neighbour what is previously said by the teacher. However, in order to be effective, it should be accompanied by “gesturing”, so that students have to copy what the teacher has said and done in order to transmit the same message to their partners, who in turn have to make gestures that show understanding and involvement. This technique promotes the work of five areas of the brain: the visual cortex, present when they watch the mimics, which in turn rely on the motor cortex. The Broccia and Wernicke’s areas, which are at work while they speak to their partners and listen to the explanations. Finally the limbic system is also at work, when they feel the lesson is different and they even can happen.

3) **The Five Classroom Rules**

4) The scoreboard

5) **Hands and Eyes** whenever the instructor wants to explain something important, especially related to content, students should fold their hands and look at him/her. This activates the prefrontal cortex which directs the visual and auditory ones to the teacher’s point thus deciding to pay attention.

6) **Switch** it is based on the existence of speakers and listeners who are in turn “Brocaians” and “Wemikities” as Biffle calls them, as they use a different part of the brain in each activity. Therefore the instructor has the capacity to state who are the ones to speak and listen by switching their roles during the teach / okay phase.

7) **Mirror** It consists on the teacher saying “mirror” and the students saying the same word. Then they have to say and do whatever the teacher does and says. The link between mirroring gestures and repeating words is considered in Biffle’s words “a powerful learning bond” as “the visual and motor cortex engage each other” therefore creating two ways of internalizing content.
8) **The Super Improvers Team**: is based on the idea that kids need to be praised for the positive behavior they show as regards both the lesson content and attitudes. It is designed to support each student self-improvement, that is why the idea in the author’s words is for students to “keep beating” themselves therefore awarding each student “an equal chance for success” (2013:99). As learning as well as attitudinal behavior should be praised, it is a powerful tool to enhance weak student’s self-esteem, which makes this procedure complementary to the teaching of affective strategies.

9) **Error correction**: one of the most powerful ways to hinder students’ improvement is their fear of making mistakes. Whole Brain Teaching provides a suggestion to praise students’ attempts to participate in class no matter whether they provide the correct answer or not. In the same way students are not allowed to say “I can’t” but “I can’t yet” therefore teaching them to think positively about their progress. In this way risk taking is also supported, which is one of the key learning strategies mentioned in the previous section. (2013:90-93)

2.5.2 **WBT Effects on memory retention and its connection with learning strategies**:

Martinez (2010) quoted in Biffle (2013 :183) points out that being exposed to information in chunks is beneficial since it enhances learning and recalling as the short term memory works more efficiently. He goes on to explain that memory retention comes from “images, experiences and language” (Martinez in Biffle 2013:183). Therefore micro lecturing, miming and transferring the information to a partner provide these three elements in chunks and through cooperation.

Following Biffle (2013:184) citing Pang (2010) this methodology of learning based on an activity improves metacognitive skills since students’ are asked to share what they have listened from the instructor among themselves. This also has an effect on self-efficacy therefore contributing to the affective strategies, since students have to pay attention to “model behavior” and feel they can achieve success through it, so they are provided with a basis to reach the class objectives. In addition, through the scoreboard and the super improver’s team, they feel they can improve their attitudes and learning behavior on the basis of reward.
Concerning cognitive strategies, WBT is a powerful source of practice opportunities, as it is based on repetition of small chunks of information to be learned, in this case foreign language pieces of language though instructions and knowledge about the language through explanations. Therefore, practice is seen as the main aim, since they are not formally evaluated without many instances of practice from the very first explanation. (2013: 186)

Following the same author, this methodology promotes “higher level thinking” since it has a “cyclical structure” which involves gestures, transferring the gesture to another partner while explaining a concept or rubric and summarizing the concept while it is repeated again for each practice stage. Therefore, concerning speaking, it promotes the use of the target language oral skills from the very beginning, so it becomes naturalized and aids oral development.
CHAPTER 3: Discussion. Analysis and interpretation of the data.

3.1 Survey

The analysis of the current survey responds to the first specific objective of this paper “To describe the current learning strategies in use and the extent to which learners apply them while studying and during oral work in class”. It was conducted in March 2015.

According to the results from the survey applied in April, 83.72% of the subjects of study claim to pay attention in class while the teacher is explaining a topic. However, almost half of these students appear to do so “always” as the other half tends to concentrate sometimes. This is a strategy called selective attention, and shows their capacity of focusing on the important parts of the class. It is also a metacognitive strategy that aids students in “centering their learning”; however, it is not known whether they select the most important parts to be paid attention or if they get distracted and do so at random.
On the other hand, when students’ previous knowledge about the topic developed is analyzed, it can be seen that 74.40% of the class refer mentally to their previous experiences concerning the theme in which the vocabulary and grammar is contextualized.

The percentage mentioned above can be related to the amount of concentration that students show in class by inferring that the more familiar the topic is, the more involved and thus concentrated the learners are. This is another metacognitive strategy which involves knowing the purpose of a language task, the vocabulary needed and then linking the new content with the previously learned one.

As a first approach to the graph analyzed, it has to be said that 74.41% of students involved in this research paper make use of the bilingual dictionary due to their current age.
and level of English. Nevertheless, this strategy is not continuously used as most of them point out that they sometimes resort to it. It can be a compensation strategy students apply to find the English equivalents of the words they need. It is also a cognitive strategy of translating either to understand or to produce a draft for the oral exposition or dialogue to be done.

If we consider the application of grammar rules in the written plan of the oral expositions and dialogues developed in class, we can see that 95.34 of the subjects of study apply them. This may be so due to the fact that the oral production comes after the development of a certain grammar point. This is also reflected in the qualitative analysis; as half of the students who answered the survey state that they always use them of the other half say that they sometimes do it. This is another cognitive strategy students have already developed which involves “reasoning deductively” by making use of the grammar rules in order to use them in other situations, not just in exercises.
Considering help solicitation 97% of the learners surveyed are said to ask for help and more than a half consider that they always do so. On the other hand, only 76.74% of the learners are said to ask for peer support, therefore, it can be inferred that the majority see the teacher as the main provider of that help. Moreover, as the qualitative analysis reveal, 46.51% of the learners that seek for help sometimes do it. These numbers show that the subjects of the study appear to be introverted learners in most of the cases and they do not tend to cooperate. By looking at the results it can be inferred that these learners need to improve their social strategies of cooperation (Oxford: 1989, 146-147) which the WBT methodology aim to promote as students take turns to explain either content or rubrics to each other.
According to the survey, 95% of the learners surveyed are said to repeat the content to be studied and 59% of them do so most of the time, therefore repetition seems to be the preferred or the most widely known strategy for these students to prepare themselves for an oral test. Next, in order of frequency of use is listening, (84%), therefore, showing that memorization is aided by listening. However, while memorization by repetition is always used in a high number of learners (55.81%), listening is sometimes used by 66%; as a consequence, it seems to be used only at certain times, may be when they tend to cooperate, which was an underdeveloped strategy as explained above.

On the other hand, 67.44% of the students state that they revise before an oral exposition or dialogue; however, almost half of them (25.58%) are said to do so consistently whereas the other half (27.90%) appear to do it in some of the cases. Moreover, revision can be related to the use of translation as a strategy to study for a test, as the same percentage of learners involved that claim to use revision use translation (67.44%) with a similar percentage of learners applying it always and sometimes, 41% and 45% respectively. Finally, only 44% of the learners in question rely on mental representation to aid the internalization of the content to be studied and 59% of the students apply this strategy only sometimes. These percentages reveal that these learners need to learn other memory strategies as they not only concern repetition, translation and review, but also promote the use of semantic mapping, keywords, grouping, TPR among others which can add variation to the study habits of these learners. (Oxford: 1989, 40-43)
Concerning peer evaluation, 95% of the students rely on their peers as evaluators before a test. Besides 24% of them do it consistently. Thus if we think about the use of listening as a strategy and the reliance on peer evaluation it can be said that students listen (84%) to each other before an exam to help one another test their knowledge of content, even though they do not cooperate as much while planning their productions as seen in the preceding graphs of cooperation strategies.

Only 44.18% of the learners surveyed rely on self-evaluation, this is surprising due to the fact that they have opportunities to do so, as most of the oral tests were video recordings to be presented to the teacher by using a Facebook group. Moreover, only 20.93% are said to sometimes do, while only a 16.27% always do it, thus revealing that this strategy is not constantly used and needs to be improved. This reveals that they are not aware of the possibility of assessing their own learning, tracing their errors and eliminating them by being aware of them. This is done by means of the strategy of self-monitoring and self-evaluating which makes them realize whether they are improving or not. (Oxford: 1989, 140)
As regards the affective strategies, they do not seem to be very much developed, as 69.76% of the subjects claim to feel nervous before an oral presentation or dialogue. This percentage is closely linked to the one concerning self-reward, as 62.70% of the students are said to do so. However, the most outstanding differences appear on the frequency report, as the same amount of learners 30.23% seem to always feel nervous while 40% of the learners sometimes reward themselves, so this last strategy is not consistently used.

Taking these numbers into consideration, it can be said that these learners need to be trained in the use of strategies that enable them to identify how they feel and why they feel that way, so writing down their feelings in a journal and discussing them may be of great use to identify anxiety. Moreover, they need to be trained in “progressive relaxation” by using “music” and “laughter” as is suggested by Rebecca Oxford in order to learn to manage their negative feelings. Moreover, by learning to “encourage themselves “they learn how to trust themselves to perform better during a test. (Oxford: 1989, 141-144)

By analyzing the data concerning the students’ journal entries the third specific objective is addressed, which states “to analyze collected data (surveys, journals) to find out the presence or absence of changes in students’ performance”. Therefore, in this chapter, students’ views on the learning process change will be taken into account.

During April and May students were asked to react to six journal entries which focused on the use of learning strategies which were taught in class. This data collection instrument intended to follow students’ self-perceptions on the use of these self-study resources, that’s why the replies were written in the learners’ mother tongue and the report is based on the amount of learners that decided to write the journal entries, They are 42 students, but not all of them replied to all the entries and only 31 handed in their journals.

Journal entry Nº 1: April, 2015

The first question to be answered was how they studied for an oral exam in English at school. 5 of the learners suggested they used the dictionary to study for a speaking test, however, an even greater number, 18 students acknowledged they repeated the text to be said. This confirmed the results of the survey, the strongest learning strategy among these learners consisted on memorization. Yet, the use of the bilingual dictionary also evidences the progress towards comprehension as they want to know what they are saying. Moreover, the same amount of learners also seemed to be worried about pronunciation as they manifested their seek for help in order to say the text with the correct pronunciation. There are also 5 students that reckoned having read comprehensively for an oral exposition. Here are some quotations from students’ journals:

Julieta “Voy leyendo por párrafos y busco las palabras que no entiendo en el diccionario inglés español”

Valentina: “yo estudio mirándome en el espejo y repito tres veces lo que tengo que estudiar y si no resulta me hago notitas y me las aprendo fácilmente”

Celeste: “Mis estrategias son saber cómo se pronuncia y tratar de acordarme todo. Yo estudio acordándome por orden pero cuando tengo que decir la lección me olvido y empiezo con la de abajo…”
Journal entry Nº 2 Inquiring about metacognitive strategies: goals and objectives
Concerning journal entry number two, carried out on April, 16th, the learners were questioned about their goals and objectives (Oxford 1989,157 and 178-179) in the English class at school, 9 learners had problems in identifying what was a goal and an objective. 20 students showed interest in speaking and in self-improvement, especially in comprehension and pronunciation. Here are some their reactions. The first one is from a student who differentiated both aims in the language class:

Emilia: “A largo plazo quiero mejorar la pronunciación en inglés, hablar un poco más rápido. En estas semanas quiero entender mejor el tema que estamos dando”.

Tiago “Mis metas a largo plazo son: poder hablar en inglés fluido, corregir los errores que tengo y llegar a ser un tutor y mis objetivos son pasar de rango la próxima semana.”

Tiago, as well as Agustina, Eugenia, Ana Inés, Catalina y Mariangeles also manifested having taken into consideration a whole brain teaching classroom strategy in which they were given the opportunity to win imaginary coins in their names flashcards and to level up to a following class level, as a way to promote self-improvement.

Agustina “mis metas son poder aprender más. Objetives poder tener más moneditas en mi cartel.”

Journal entry Nº 3. Video recording. How they applied the memory strategies taught in class.
Journal entry Nº 3 focused on how they studied to perform in a video task and also questioned if they had a strategy to do it, so 19 of the students suggested they repeated the information until they memorize it. But 13 of them said they worked cooperatively with a partner. Then, 1 student mentioned she watched the video in order to correct the mistakes she made and 4 of them said they draw or make small flashcards to remember what they had to say
Mariangeles: “Lo que hago es leer más de tres veces y decir lo que me acuerde. Luego leo hasta que me quede por completo”

Florencia: “estudié con Agus M., ella me ayudó a estudiar, me repetía yo escuchaba me ayudó con la pronunciación y así estudié, luego hice el video.”

Emilia: “Leo muchas veces y trato de comprender lo que dice. Estudio correctamente la pronunciación, a veces también hago dibujos para recordar mejor cada oración”

Journal entry Nº 4: metacognitive strategy to arrange and plan learning.

Later, on May 7th before an oral presentation in which learners had to talk about their holidays, students were taught new memory strategies and they had to complete an agenda by writing what they would do each day, so as to plan their learning. (Oxford: 1989, 175-176)

In general 14 learners studied by structured reviewing or spiraling as they manifested they do so by reading part of the sentences on the first day they, then the next day the following sentences after reviewing the previously studied sentences and the third day the last ones in the same way. In addition, 10 students acknowledged they combined this strategy with visual imagery by means of cards that showed pictures of what they had to say. Here is an example:

Constanza: “El jueves 14 tengo una oral en la clase de inglés y Pienso que…Hoy voy a volver a leer mi texto y comprenderlo bien. El viernes 8 voy a ver las tres primeras oraciones y en un papel ilustrarlas, representando cada oración en una o varias imágenes.

El lunes 11 voy a terminar de ilustrar las tres que me quedan

El martes 12 voy a estudiar la mitad, repetir varias veces y mirar las imágenes para guiarme y que no me falte nada.
El miércoles 13 voy a estudiar las últimas que me faltan, ordenar todos los papeles y decir una oración tras otra.

Y espero que me vaya bien porque me dedique mucho y cada día trataba de repasar para estar segura. Esta técnica de estudio me sirvió mucho aunque lleve su tiempo”

Florencia A.:“El jueves 14 tengo una oral en la clase de inglés y…

Pienso que…tengo mucho tiempo para estudiar y con las herramientas que nos enseñó la profesora ahora va a ser mucho más fácil.

Hoy voy a….estudiar 2 oraciones

El viernes 8 voy a… repasar las oraciones anteriores y estudiar otras 2.

El lunes 11 voy a…repasar las oraciones anteriores y estudiar 2 más

El martes 12 voy a…repasar y estudiar las demás oraciones que me faltan.

Y espero que…esta estrategia me haya funcionado y espero sacarme buena nota.”

Journal entry Nº 5: making positive statements.

On May 14th, the day of the test, students were asked to use a phrase from board or to write one of their own to calm down and to ask themselves why they had chosen it. This strategy focused on the affective strategy “making positive statements” from Rebecca Oxford (1989:143 and 186). The phrases were translated to the students L1 and 21 learners answered that they chose these phrases: “está bien si cometo errores, me permite aprender”; “no tengo que saberlo todo, hare lo que pueda pero daré lo mejor de mí” or “todo el mundo comete errores, puedo aprender de los míos” and students manifested they felt more secure and that they had to give their best as is seen here:

Gonzalo: “…porque me hace sentir que me voy a esforzar más y aunque no sepa bien las lección daré todo lo mejor de mí”

Ana Inés: “…porque me hace sentir que no soy la única que se equivoca y que de mis errores voy aprendiendo.”

Report on group work: cognitive strategies at work

During July students were taught cognitive strategies by resorting to WBT procedures, so as to give them tools to study for the oral test which consisted on a picture description, an
information gap dialogue and an oral exchange about the cinema with the teacher. They aimed to test unplanned speech situation development of the subjects of study. Therefore, in order for them to practice the use of cognitive strategies while studying, they were made to work in groups of four or five students and to put them into practice. Later, they were asked to complete a report on the use of the cognitive strategies and as well as this, pictures of them were taken while they were working.

This is the report students had to complete after having worked with the cognitive strategies.

En nuestro grupo se utilizaron las siguientes estrategias cognitivas.

Para el estudio de la descripción de la fotografía se utilizo______________________________

Para practicar la exposición acerca de las vacaciones se utilizo______________________________

Para estudiar el diálogo espontáneo acerca del cine se utilizo______________________________

Para estar preparados para las preguntas personales se utilizo______________________________

Therefore, the class turned into a studying lab where students had to apply the cognitive strategies. The results are seen as follows:

**Picture description:**

To describe the pictures the groups say they would use the following strategies: Translating (7), Highlighting (2), Analyzing (1), Reasoning (1), Recognizing and using formulas and patterns (1), Repeating (1). The numbers in brackets correspond to the number of groups that chose the strategies. So, if we consider the fact that the groups were composed of four to five students, we could say that almost 28 students would rely on translation to learn the phrases to describe a picture.

**Information gap dialogue:**
As regards this task, learners say they preferred the following strategies: Analyzing (7), Recombining (2), Reasoning (1), Taking notes (1) Practicing naturally (1). Again, by taking into account that they are groups, almost 28 pupils could rely on the analysis of the expressions to invite, accept and refuse an invitation to the cinema.

**Oral Exchange**

Regarding the oral interaction with the teacher, the most cited strategies are the following ones: Repeating (3), Practicing naturally (3), Analyzing (2), Reasoning (1), Recognizing and using formulas (1), Getting the idea (1). Here we can see that students would repeat the questions and answers given by the teacher, and practice them in order to learn them. So, as they are groups each of the two mostly chosen strategies could be used by 12 to 15 learners each.
CHAPTER 4: Analysis of the classroom methodology before and after intervention with WBT procedures.

In order to compare and document the class techniques used before and after intervention, three class observations were conducted.

4.1 Data collection instruments: speaking class observation before intervention.

From what could be analyzed in the observation grid (see appendix), even though the teacher promoted interaction and cooperation, she was the main responsible for explanation and the provider of practice opportunities. Perhaps due to the age and the current level of English, pupils seemed to be dependent on the instructor. However, what remained to be done is to provide opportunities for all the learners to practice, not just for those who are more extroverted and willing to do it. In addition, in order to foster independence, they had to be provided with the tools to manage their own learning. This is the reason why Whole Brain Teaching was implemented as a means to provide practice opportunities for all the students based on a model given by the teacher. Then it was supplemented by the teaching of learning strategies in order to empower learners with the means to be more autonomous.

4.2 Observation after intervention Nº2. June, 2015

As the observation grid is in Spanish, its content will be commented so as to see what was looked at during the observation (see appendix). Firstly, the class objectives, content and activities were commented on. Later, the teacher’s actions while explaining the topic was observed together with group management and finally, the evaluation of content was considered.

In general terms, the observer wrote that the teacher exploited visual and aural resources to explain the content. Then, as regards the rubrics, it was pointed out that they were given in the L2. After that, while the students were performing the oral task, it was observed that they talked among themselves in the target language by asking and answering questions, therefore promoting oral work before individual written work.
4.3 Observation Nº3 by the thesis tutor after intervention: WBT and cognitive learning strategies integrated.

As the thesis tutor pointed out in her observation (see appendix) of the new classroom procedures implemented, it can be stated that the students were used to working with the new methodology, therefore this was evidence which confirmed the teacher appliance of the WBT methodology. The learners were involved and followed the instructions provided by the teacher. Then, the strategy training phase was showed and students had to recall all the learning strategies that were applied and presented in previous classes before the presentation of the new cognitive strategies to be applied to language material reviewed in oral tasks. In this way evidence of WBT and strategy training work was provided as well as the learners’ response to them, which was a positive one.

4.4 Discussions. The analysis of learning strategy training on students’ performance.

Memory strategies applied by the learners:

Structured reviewing: in the present paper, students were taught the memory strategies in class and had to choose the ones they liked to study a new piece of material to give a simple speech about their holidays, which had been previously studied. Most of them chose structured reviewing and imagery to internalize the material, as was revealed by their “learning plans” in their journal entries number three.

Using imagery: 40 % of the students said they used drawings to represent the content to be said, to study and recall it. In this case, most of the students showed signs of having worked at home to make the cards. Besides 25% of them wrote in their journals they employed this strategy as well as revision. This may have been influenced because of the demands of the task and as the most proficient learners came to the front with these cards, (which are the ones who reported in their journals to have done so), some others seem to have imitated them, as they saw it was an efficient way to give a good speech and get a good mark.

Using physical response or sensation was present while applying whole brain teaching techniques in the presentation and revision of grammar rules and vocabulary units as they mirrored the teacher when she was explaining the contents and when the learners recalled the concepts by explaining them to their neighboring partners in the same way by talking
and evoking the same movements. About half of the learners (45%) employed action to study and recall the content of the oral exposition. From what was seen in their journals, they developed this strategy while they were waiting to come to give their speech, as they 35% of them wrote they used revision as a strategy at home, but in class they revealed they used TPR as well. This may have been influenced either by the task requirements in which they had to give evidence of a new strategy used or by the WBT procedures, which consisted of gestures and words. (See Photos in Annex)

**Metacognitive strategies used:**

**Setting goals and objectives:** In the present research paper, students were asked to write down their goals and objectives in their journals and even though some of the learners could not differentiate them, the ones who did had goals which were consistent to the class focus that is communicative competence, fluency and self-improvement. The use of this strategy was revealed by the analysis of the journal entry N° 2.

**Identifying the purpose of a language task:** While conducting the present research, learners were given an information gap activity and they had to analyze which was the purpose of the language task. They were given the instructions and were explained the terms that appeared in the rubrics, in order for them to understand the situation they had to imagine and perform the task. Later, videos were recorded so as to see if they correctly understood the rubrics and in most of the cases it was well done. However, in some cases in which they lost the focus of the activity or where they forgot to include some part of the information required, a comment was made next to the video so as for them to later review their mistakes and perform a second version of the dialogue.

**Planning for a language task:** Before the oral exam these learners had the opportunity to plan how they were going to study using the cognitive strategies taught as was revealed by the group report. Then the day of the test, as the pupils had to perform an unplanned dialogue or picture description, they had some minutes before the task to see the situation that it involved.

**Seeking practice opportunities:** were seen in the journal entry N° 4 (see page 37) about how they studied for an oral exposition day by day, in this way they had to find out ways to practice for the test and write them down. Concerning the videos recorded and uploaded to a Facebook group, students had the opportunity to practice as many times as they wanted to give the best versions they could of the video.
Self-evaluating: as was mentioned above; video recording was beneficial to foster self-evaluation. Learners had to look at their performances and see the corrections made by the teacher so as to improve their oral skills for the following oral test.

Cognitive strategies
Concerning these strategies, they were approached differently as students had to plan their study agenda for an unplanned speaking test by saying which strategy would be the most convenient for each task, therefore testing the analysis of the task material to be studied in order to assess the strategies to be used.

The strategies which were mostly chosen for each task were translating for the picture description, analyzing for the information gap dialogue, repeating and practicing naturally for the oral interview. These results reveal that these learners could discover the demands of each activity as in for example an information gap they need to look at the information to be used and think in order to produce questions and answers, but in an oral exchange they need to practice as it is based on personal information.

Affective strategies and a connection with Whole Brain teaching:
As regards anxiety, students at first were asked to record themselves speaking in order not to face the teacher directly so as to lower their anxiety and to have practice opportunities. Then, before the first oral test, learners were exposed to relaxing music and were provided with supporting phrases to reflect on them and to write down their feelings or reflections in their journals to promote thinking. Later they were called to sit for the exam and to record themselves after the test doing the same task to see their improvement and the impact of affective variables had on their performance.

Encouraging yourself: In the fifth journal entry carried out as a data collection instrument for this paper, students had to choose an encouraging statement to think about and write about in their journals before an oral test. The statements could be one of the list given by the teacher or could be chosen by the student from a different source. Most of the learners involved suggested that the phrases which most suited the situation were the ones that suggested mistakes were learning opportunities, so this reveals their need to free themselves of the fear of making mistakes, which may be the source of the tension before an oral exam.
Taking risks wisely: This opportunity was provided by using a whole brain teaching technique that congratulates the learner on having participated by means of oral praise and by an improving chart called super improvers’ team where learners were moving forward to a higher rank when they gained ten points or “coins” as were called in this case. This WBT strategy is related to the following one.

Rewarding yourself: The rewards came from the coins they earned by participating in class, helping other students, taking risks, completing the class tasks and journal entries. Another source of reward was the scoreboard in which all the class earned points to get a price e.g. no homework or some minutes of free time or music by following the instructions and working hard through WBT procedures. This strategy fostered the seek for self-reward as the learners asked for their points when they felt they had improved.

Taking your emotional temperature: In order to do so the subjects of the present study had to write how they felt before and after an oral testing their journals therefore making themselves aware of their emotions at that very moment. Even though they were not very explicit, it was a first step to raise their awareness. Moreover, the teacher had to write an answer to those comments in which she could interact with them.

Writing a language learning diary: As was said before, in this research work students worked with a journal from April to August in order to “keep track” of their metacognitive, affective and social side of their process. This was done by creating journal entries for the learners to write and which were commented by the teacher. These journals were also data collection instruments for the present study as there were many points of coincidence among learners. This practice is closely linked to the following strategy as it also involves it.

Discussing your feelings with someone else was made through the journal entries and the reactions students and the teacher expressed which constituted feedback for the learning process.

Social strategies:

Asking for clarification or verification: By using a WBT strategy, students had to mime the rubrics or explanations with the teacher and they had to communicate them to their neighboring partners so as to make sure everyone got the idea.
Cooperating with peers: was achieved through the use of the teach okay WBT strategy, as learners explained the tasks to each other. Moreover, during dialogue interaction planning and performance, learners fostered their cooperating skills as both were responsible for the success of the task.

Cooperating with proficient users of the new language: As was stated above WBT teach ok and switch are means to promote cooperation in this mixed ability class as 40% of the students study English outside school and the other 60% do not as revealed by a survey conducted in October, 2014.

Conclusions:

Learning strategies: the survey and the journal.
Concerning the changes in the learning strategies that were aimed at in this action research, it can be said that by looking at the results of the survey, learners expressed their resort to memorization and translation by using the dictionary as the only means they had at their disposal to study for an oral test in English. Besides, cooperation, self-evaluation and affective management were seen as underdeveloped strategies. From what can be seen in the journal entries written by the subjects of study, the learners manifested a change in the ways they studied and learned as they reflected on the changes in their English classes and in the tools they could use to manage their learning process by means of learning strategy training. What can be highlighted is that they started using novel ways to learn together with the ones they already knew and that mixture proved effective as they improved their oral performances by using physical movement, or visual imagery together with structured, spiraled reviewing. As regards cognitive strategies, which were not mentioned as used in the survey, most of these pupils could recognize which could be used to study different types of content in order to carry out a conversation, as when they had to study for a picture description, they used translation in most of the cases, and while preparing themselves for a conversation, they chose analysis or naturalistic practice. Even though they still mentioned repetition and translation as strategies, they also mentioned the novel ones, so they again had more ways to access content and task demands.

Concerning cooperation, which was seen in the survey as a neglected strategy, the interaction fostered by WBT procedures and the pair work promoted in communication strategies, aided learners in the improvement of their social skills, so their journals
revealed that more learners started relying on their partners as contributors to their learning process. Moreover, if we think about affective variables, learners got more used to working in pairs or groups so anxiety was reduced.

Regarding self-evaluation, which was another strategy which was seen in the survey as poorly developed, it was improved after the use of the journal as a tool for looking at their self-development in class and as well as this after recording videos and paying attention to their mistakes to revert them. Most of the learners manifested in their journals their will to improve and their capacity to see their weak points, therefore showing the development of this strategy. As a result, it can be said that the current learning strategies applied for oral work were described; besides, the changes in classroom procedures to implement action research were seen, as revealed by the class observations. Finally changes in the student’s strategies after intervention were traced by analyzing the journal entries, therefore complying with the research objectives and confirming the hypothesis which stated that provided students were trained in ways to enhance their learning process and were given practice opportunities, improvement in oral skills was seen.
Bibliography:


In the appendix:

Lesson observation prompt sheet adapted from www.essexprimaryheads.co.uk
Appendix