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The importance of teaching listening and speaking skills

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to show the importance of listening and speaking skills in the classroom in order to get a perfect acquisition of the second language.

Although these skills have been explained separately, they are really connected and it is really important to put into practice together and integrate them with the rest of skills.

After my experience as a teacher, I have noticed that these skills are a very important part in relation to the acquisition of English and I have also asked my students in order to know their thoughts in relation to my hypothesis and they assure that these skills need to be developed because students, during all the courses, study English but based on the development of reading and writing skills and sometimes, the teacher suggests doing some listening because the majority of the student´s books include the typical listening (such as conversations) with the corresponding exercises which are very useful to check the listening comprehension but, they think they need to know how to be a good listener or speaker because if they travel abroad, they are going to communicate through listening and speaking and not reading or writing.

Specially, for Spanish speakers, listening and speaking tend to be more complicated than the acquisition of other skills, such as reading or writing, since the former are quite difficult to practice when the student does not live in an English speaking country. For this reason, this paper deals with some activities to develop with the students in order to develop these skills and show why it is important to develop and the difficulties the learners have.

KEY WORDS: Listening, speaking, importance, development, difficulties, activities, teaching and learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

English has spread widely all over the world, first because of the influence of the British Empire and, second due to the pre-eminence of North American influence in the world. In Europe, English has advanced as an international language especially after World War II, leaving behind other preeminent languages such as French.

English is now used by millions of speakers for a number of communicative functions across Europe. It has become the preferred language in a number of ambits like international business or EU institutions. Time and again it is also the language chosen for academic discussion as most scholars face the need to read and publish in English for international diffusion.

English is also directly influencing other European languages at different levels but it is especially obvious in the field of technical terms – lexical borrowings are often introduced in many languages without the slightest adaptation. English seems to have been adopted as the language of globalization these days as the language of global culture and international economy (Graddol, D. 1997: 4).

Proficiency in English is seen as a desirable goal for youngsters and elderly people in all EU countries and in many parts of the world, to the point of equating inability in the use of English to disability. A better knowledge of European modern languages will facilitate communication and interaction among Europeans and will promote mobility and mutual understanding.

The EU has already taken some action regarding the second/foreign language teaching and learning within the member states, and in a White Paper published in 1995 (Teaching and learning: towards the learning society) it is stated as a general objective that everyone, irrespective of his/her academic training should gain proficiency in two languages apart from their mother tongue so that they can communicate in those languages. It supports that "Proficiency in languages helps to build up the feeling of being European with all its cultural wealth and diversity and of understanding between the citizens of Europe" (White paper 1995: 47).

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages is a document that provides a practical tool for establishing certain standards at successive stages of learning and evaluating language knowledge. It aims at providing the basis for setting common

standards within the EU at an international level and supplies the basis for the mutual recognition of language qualifications within the EU. The Framework describes: a) The competences necessary for communication;

b) The related knowledge and skills and

c) The situations and domains of communication.

The Framework paves the way for a comprehensive definition of teaching and learning objectives and methods and is, therefore, of special interest to the academic community as a whole.

We have to bear in mind that nowadays university education has changed, and the Spanish universities have been integrated in the European Space, so students will need a second language (B1 in CEF) to finish their careers. As an English certificate is needed the Spanish Ministry of Education brought out the RD 1892/2008, which establishes a new PAU exam. Future students will need to finish with a real A2 level to fulfil a B1 in future university studies. It means that the exam is not only going to   measure reading and writing but listening and speaking, that is why a new EFL course design is needed in order to students practise and reinforce these skills.

In spite of the fact that Spanish students spend a lot of years studying English, from school to University, it has been always said that English is not well spoken in Spain and some of the learners can assure that they are not capable of speaking and expressing fluently in English.

Spanish people are not generally considered good at learning English, specially, when we refer to listening and speaking skills. Although most Spanish people start to study English when they are children, in some cases when they are in Preschool Education and they usually go to language schools since they are three or four years old and they also study at school but in spite of it, English is an unsolved matter in our country.

The Euro-barometer survey of 2006 about the language skills of European citizens shows that, whereas half of the Europeans speak at least one other different language from their mother tongue, only 27 per cent of Spanish people can express themselves.

In most of the European countries, the situation is different. For example, 86 per cent of Danish, 89 per cent of Dutch, 32 per cent of Portuguese or 48 per cent of Greek can speak English but according to the statistics presented in the last euro-barometer survey,

the countries with the lowest percentage of English speakers in Europe are Andorra, Spain, Italy and France.

Only Hungarian, Czech and Bulgarian are worse speaking English than Spanish people (European and their languages. Euro-barometer: 2006).

If we pay attention to the results, we realize that it is important to try to solve the problem, not only teaching English in Primary Education through games, songs and other similar activities but also in Secondary Education, when learners study English in order to continue doing it in the future, in a superior education.

English lessons have become a master class where students listen to the teacher and repeat grammatical constructions or practice activities from the coursebook or workbook. Furthermore, in most of the cases, the English language is not used during the English lesson but also Spanish is used.

One of the problems that Spanish students suffer and other countries do not is that when students finish their English lessons, they forget the language. They are not in contact with the language because all the things that surround them are in Spanish: television, films, TV series...

A good option for the students to acquire and learn English is to study at a bilingual school because they allow children to get immersed in it naturally. These schools are usually very expensive because a great majority of them are private although la Comunidad de Madrid has carried out the bilingual project, which is increasing as it is working hard to initiate children earlier in the acquisition and learning of English.

The students who belong to a bilingual program at schools, when they pass from Primary to Secondary education, they are able to use oral and written English in daily life situations.

This picture shows the number of bilingual public schools in La Comunidad de Madrid:

206 colegios públicos bilingües en el curso 2009-2010
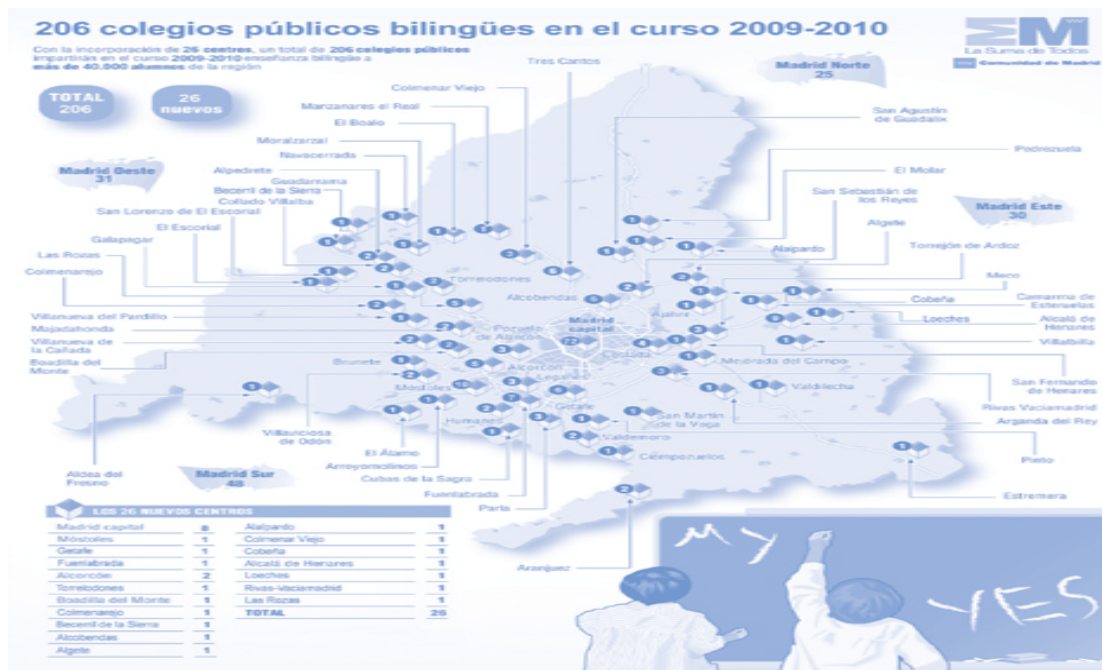
These graphics shows how the number of bilingual school has increased in La Comunidad de Madrid during the last years, from 200-2005 until 2009-2010.
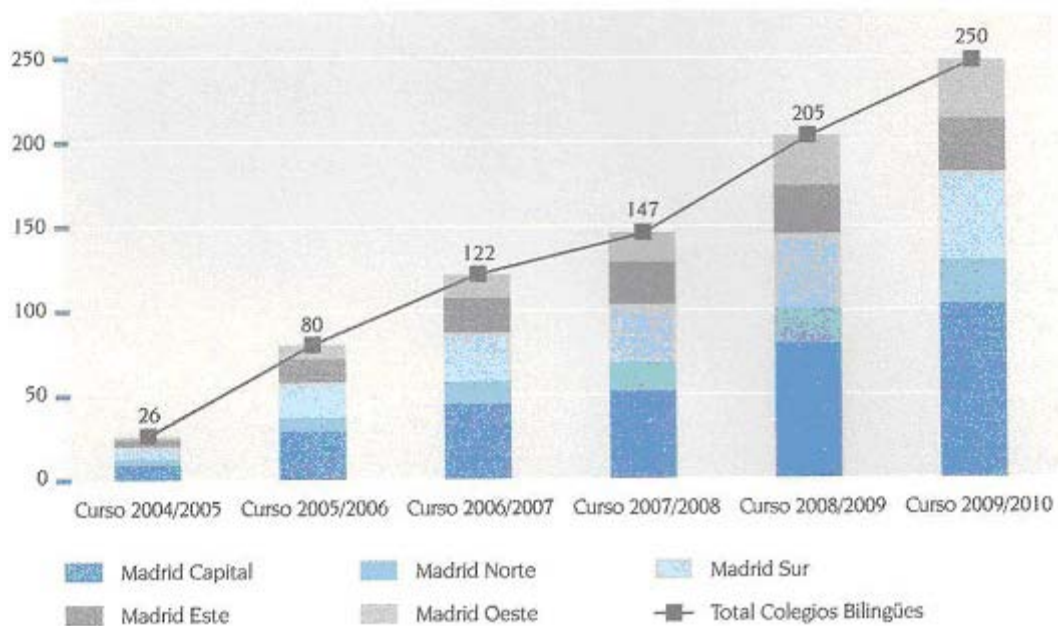
Evolución del número de centros adscritos al Programa de Colegios Bilingües en la Comunidad de Madrid
por Titularidad del centro y Direcciones de Área Territorial. Cursos 2004/2005 a 2009/2010

		Curso 2004/2005	Curso 2005/2006	Curso 2006/2007	Curso 2007/2008	Curso 2008/2009	Curso 2009/2010
Colegios Públicos Bilingües	Madrid Capital	9	29	45	52	64	72
	Madrid Norte	3	8	13	17	20	25
	Madrid Sur	8	21	29	35	43	48
	Madrid Este	4	14	21	25	27	30
	Madrid Oeste	2	8	14	18	26	31
	Total Colegios Públicos	**26**	**80**	**122**	**147**	**180**	**206**
Colegios Concertados Bilingües	Madrid Capital	—	—	—	—	16	32
	Madrid Norte	—	—	—	—	1	1
	Madrid Sur	—	—	—	—	2	5
	Madrid Este	—	—	—	—	2	2
	Madrid Oeste	—	—	—	—	4	4
	Total Colegios Concertados	—	—	—	—	**25**	**44**

Fuente: Elaboración propia

According to a Eurostar survey (2008), 98% of students of Primary Education in Spain are studying a foreign language. This data places Spain as a country with one of the highest numbers of students studying a foreign language in Primary Education.

The Secondary Education in Spain is also situated above all the European average of students that are learning a foreign language. English is the favourite language chosen by all students of Primary and Secondary education whereas French is usually the second foreign language chosen. According to the English language acquisition and level, 46.6% of the Spanish people between 25 and 64 years old, confirm that they do not have any knowledge of the English language, versus 14.2% of them that recognize they know it. Where is the problem?

As we have mentioned before, Education and teachers have a fundamental role in this progress. Students have traditionally a negative attitude towards the English language and, since they do not need English in daily life, they do not speak or hear English outside the classroom. There are some students that finish Bachillerato without getting a good mark in English but are not able to maintain a basic conversation. This fact proves that Spanish education might have a problem.

According to the Spanish curriculum, there are three compulsory hours of English per week, which proves to be insufficient to develop communicative skills properly. The lack of time, the exorbitant teacher/student ratio per class and the different levels of English in each class make teachers´ work really difficult.

This study explores how to integrate and exploit listening and speaking skills as a complement inside grammar and as a way of improving the English level of our students through a series of motivating activities and techniques suggested.

The current research is organised in four main sections. After the introduction, section 2 analyses the theoretical background on listening and speaking and their importance for effective teaching.

In order to do so, the section is divided into several sections related to the above mentioned skills that deal with the listening process, the importance and difficulties of listening skills in a foreign language and the assessment.

The next subsection about speaking skills will be structured in the same way. Here, the study explains the speaking process as well as the importance and difficulties of speaking skills in a foreign language class and the last subsection, is about the different ways of assessing speaking.

Section 3 presents the methodology based on a three-stage-research used for the analysis carried out in a group of 150 students who are enrolled in 1º, 2º, 3º, 4º of ESO and 1º and 2º of Bachillerato.

Section 4 analyses the results obtained through the three-stage-research related to the listening and speaking skills through which the students and their teacher express their ideas and opinions about the importance of learning listening and speaking in a foreign language acquisition. In this section, we include a subsection, which contains suggested listening and speaking activities to develop listening and speaking skills in the classroom.

Finally, the conclusion deals with the new challenges that, the teaching of English in Spanish Education must take to adapt to new techniques, new tendencies in this teaching world.

2. INITIAL HYPOTHESIS AND THEORECTICAL BACKGROUND

The aim of this study is to analyse the importance of listening and speaking skills in a foreign language acquisition in the Secondary Education classrooms in Spain. This research also proposes possible activities to be used by new generations of English teachers in order to facilitate a linguistic and cultural inmersion essential for the acquisition of the English language.

The main objective of this section is to explain the difference between listening and speaking skills and to justify their importance in a foreign language acquisition process. To do this, the section has been divided into different subsections to have a general overview about the listening/speaking processes, the way of teaching English through them and their assesments.

Comprehending and understanding a language is necessary when students are learning a new language due to the fact that people always need to communicate and interact with others in different moments or situations in their life.

This paper will focus on listening and speaking skills, but always combined with grammar, as a way of helping learners to understand the language system and to develop their ability by using it to communicate successfully inside and outside the classroom.

Communication skills comprise receptive skills and productive skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. Receptive skills are these in which students receive and process the information but do not need to produce a language to do this, while productive skills require the production, for instance, a speech (Harmer, 2007: 246).

First of all, this paper mentions the most significant differences between listening and speaking skills and later, it offers an approach to how it is possible to integrate them.

2.1 LISTENING

Listening, as we know, is the skill of understanding spoken language. Listening is an essential skill, present in most of the activities we carry out throughout our lives, as Lindsay and Knight shows:

We listen to a wide variety of things, for example; what someone says during a conversation, face to face or on the telephone; announcements giving information, for example, at an airport or railway station; the weather forecast on the radio; a play on the radio; music; someone else's conversation (eavesdropping); a lecture; professional advice, for example, at the doctor's, in the bank; instructions, for example, on how to use a photocopier or other machinery; directions; a taped dialogue in class (2006: 45)

Besides, Listening is a complex process due to its double psychological and social nature:

Listening is a psychological phenomenon, which takes place on a cognitive level inside people's heads, and a social phenomenon, which develops interactively between people and the environment surrounding them. It considers listening as a complex process, which needs to be understood in order to teach it, and subsequently, evaluate it before integrating it with phonological aspects and with the skill of speaking. (Bueno, Madrid and McLaren, 2006:282).

The aim of teaching listening comprehension is (or should be) to help learner of English cope with listening in real life, but there is a large variety of different types of listening in real life:

(1) Listening to announcements in stations, airports, etc

(2) Listening to the radio,

(3) Participating in a conversation face-to-face,

(4) Watch TV,

(5) Participating in a meeting, seminar or discussion,

(6) Taking part in a lesson,

(7) Participating in a telephone conversation, among others.

2.1.1 THE LISTENING PROCESS: IMPORTANCE AND DIFFICULTIES OF LISTENING IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

It has taken many years to give the listening skill the importance it deserves in second and foreign language learning among the teaching profession.
Rivers (1966: 196) claimed, "Speaking does not of itself constitute communication unless what is said is comprehended by another person. Teaching the comprehension of spoken speech is therefore a primary importance of the communication aim is to be reached".

However, Morley (1972: 7) notes, "perhaps an assumption that listening is a reflex, a little like breathing - listening seldom receives overt teaching attention in one´s native language – has marked the importance and complexity of listening with understanding in a non-native language".

Contrary to what everybody thinks about foreign language learning, listening competence is wider than speaking competence. This is the reason why; recently, the language teaching profession has brought into focus on listening comprehension.

According to Nunan, (2001: 23) Listening is a six-staged process, consisting of Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding.
These stages occur in sequence and rapid succession.

The first one is *Hearing* and has to do with the response caused by sound waves stimulating the sensory receptors of the ear; hearing is the perception of sound, not necessarily paying attention, you must hear to listen, but you need not listen to hear.

For this, we have *Attention*. It refers to a selection that our brain focuses on. The brain screens stimuli and permits only a select few to come into focus.

The third stage is *Understanding*, which consists of analyzing the meaning of what we have heard and understanding symbols we have seen and heard. We must analyze the stimuli we have perceived. Symbolic stimuli are not only words, they can be sounds like applause or even sights, like a blue uniform that have symbolic meanings as well. To do this, we have to stay in the right context and understand the intended meaning. The meaning attached to these symbols is a function of our past associations and of the context in which the symbols occur for successful interpersonal communication: the listener must understand the intended meaning and the context assumed by the sender.

After following with the next stage, it is necessary to make a remark: as it has mentioned previously, the background knowledge is important and people have to take into account several points: general factual information, local factual information, socio-cultural knowledge and knowledge of context. With these factors, the information will be correctly received.

The next step, *Remembering*, is an important Listening process because it means that an individual, in addition to receiving and interpreting the message, has also added it to the mind's storage bank, which means that the information will be remembered in our mind.
But just as our attention is selective, so too is our memory, what is remembered may be quite different from what was originally heard or seen.

In the penultimate stage, *Evaluating*, the listener evaluates the message that has been received. It is at this point when active listeners weigh evidence, sort fact from opinion and determine the presence or absence of bias or prejudice in a message. The effective listener makes sure that he or she does not begin this activity too soon, as beginning this stage of the process before a message is completed results in no longer hearing and attending to the incoming message and, as a result, the Listening process ceases.

Finally, we have *Responding*, a stage in which, according to the response, the speaker checks if the message has been received correctly. This stage requires that the receiver complete the process through verbal or non verbal feedback, because the speaker has no other way to determine if a message has been received. Therefore, it is sometimes complicated as we do not have the opportunity to go back and check comprehension (Nunan: 2001, 23).

This table shows the basic stages of the Listening process and their functions proposed by Nunan.

Table: Basic stages of listening process and their functions. (Nunan, 2001: 24)

When dealing with the listening process, it must be mentioned that there are two possible ways of performing this task: 1) the Top-down listening process and 2) the Bottom up listening process. The former consists of understanding the general meaning of a listening selection without paying attention to specific structures, words and so on. It is like a general overview where the listener gets a general view of the listening passage while still understanding the general idea. On the other hand, experts talk about the opposite process: Bottom up listening process. In this case, Bueno, Madrid and Mclaren stand out its linguistic quality:

Bottom up processing is essentially a linguistic process in which we try to make sense of acoustic signals by using knowledge of language. According to this model, sound is assumed to be decored by accretiation and in a linear fashion- from phonemes, to words, to phrases, to utterances, to complete meaningful texts- whereby "meaning itself is derived as the last step in the process. (2006: 286)

The difference between them is the following: For the Top-down process, students take into account the context and do not need to pay attention on specific details while in Bottom up listening process, students have to pay attention because here, specific details are very important to understand the whole meaning of the conversation or another kind of listening activity. The listener focuses on individual words and phrases, and achieves understanding by stringing these detailed elements together to build up a whole. Understanding the exact word is more important. As this study will mention later, in the last part of the analysis, students usually combine both processes. In real life listening,

students use a combination of the two processes, giving more emphasis to one or the other depending on their reason for listening.

According to Lindsay and Knight, people have four different purposes when they listen:

> We listen for a purpose, but this purpose can be very different depending on the situation: listening for specific details, listening for general meaning, listening for the general idea or gist. There is also a difference between listening: for information; for enjoyment or social reasons; to learn new language (2006: 46).

However, from the point of view of Anderson & Lynch, the purpose when we are listening can be either: transactional, where "the main purpose is to achieve a successful transfer or exchange of information", or it can be interactional, "the use of language for establishing and maintaining social contact" (1988:15).

When we are working listening in the classroom the best option is to think about how we listen in real life. Teachers should give students the opportunity to listen actively providing different accents, useful and different topics, as well as situations that students can use in their real world. A good teaching method would try to combine both purposes and it is taking this aim into account that this study proposes some activities in the proposed suggested approach.

When teachers are teaching listening, apart from the purpose, it is very important to follow a pattern. Bueno, Madrid and McLaren establish the following pattern:

1) Pre-listening would be the first stage, where the context is established. The teacher creates motivation and students do some activities with the purpose of preparing them for what they will hear.

2) The following stage is listening, where learners do the mentioned tasks or find answers. There are two kinds of material and procedure. On the one hand, extensive reading helps students to acquire vocabulary and grammar and it usually takes place outside the classroom. They do it for pleasure, so that their knowledge of the language improves and it makes students better readers.

On the other hand, intensive listening is what students usually learn in the classroom, through audio CDs and activities such as answering questions, following a route on a map, making notes, etc.

3) The last stage is post-listening, the part where students have the opportunity to check their answers about they have been listening to, to give feedback and consolidate what they have learnt. It is useful for teachers because it helps to analyze particular difficulties the students could have with the listening activity.

2.1.2 ASSESSING LISTENING

The evaluation of listening is carried out using more than one method and takes place on more than one occasion so as to back up less than perfect examination system.

A common method of assessment is based on *The Common European Framework*. With this type of evaluation, teachers can know students' level according to this criteria:

	Overall Listening Comprehension (CEF)
C2	Has no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, delivered at fast native speed.
C1	Can understand enough to follow extended speech on abstract and complex topics beyond his/her own field, though he/she may need to confirm occasional details, especially if the accent is unfamiliar. Can recognise a wide range of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms, appreciating register shifts. Can follow extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly.
B2	Can understand standard spoken language, live or broadcast, on both familiar and unfamiliar topics normally encountered in personal, social and academic or vocational life. Only extreme background noise, inadequate discourse structure and/or idiomatic usage influence the ability to understand.
	Can understand the main ideas of propositionally and linguistically complex speech on both concrete and abstract topics delivered in a standard dialect, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can follow extended speech and complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar, and the direction of the talk is sign-posted by explicit markers.

Table 7.2.: *CEF: Levels for evaluating listening proficiency (Cont.)*

	Overall Listening Comprehension (CEF)
B1	Can understand straightforward factual information about common everyday or job related topics, identifying both general messages and specific details, provided speech is clearly articulated in a generally familiar accent. Can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc., including short narratives.
A2	Can understand enough to be able to meet needs of a concrete type provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated. Can understand phrases and expressions related to areas of most immediate priority (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment) provided speech is clearly and slowly articulated.
A1	Can follow speech which is very slow and carefully articulated, with long pauses for him/her to assimilate meaning."

Teachers commonly use another suitable method by giving tests at the end of each unit on the students' textbook or even listening comprehension tasks and class exams or example exercises which not only involve understanding but also memory and retention.
In the activity proposed below, students need to remember a considerable number of data to solve the task:

Fig. 7.2.: *Listening comprehension activity*

Listen and write about the weather and the *average* temperatures in Europe	Weather	Temp.
February 15th	GB:	....
	F.:	....
	G.:	....
	H.:	....
	B.:	....
	S.:	....
	I.:	....
	GR.:	....
	P.:	....

Te students hear:
Britain: cool and windy. Average temperature 12 degrees.
France: warm and sunny. Average temperature 18 degrees
Germany: it's raining and cold. Average temperature 6 degrees
Holland: it's windy and cloudy; average temperature 10 degrees
Belgium is very similar: it's rainy and cool and the average temperature is 11 degrees
But in Spain it's hot and sunny. The average temperature is 22 degrees
Ireland: very wet, but warm: temperature 17 degrees
Greece: very hot and sunny, like Spain: temperature 25 degrees
Portugal: wet and cool: temperature 14 degrees.

(McLaren and Madrid 1996, Making Progress 2: Workbook, p.45)

Probably, the most reliable tests are those in the Teacher´s Book.

For listening comprehension, it is usually carried out with the help of a recording on audio CD and for tests with the whole class, filling in tables is a common procedure.

Here is an example:

Listen and tick:

Yes = ✓   No = x

	CLIVE		AMY	
DRINKS	coke		lemonade	
	orange juice		water	
	tea		milk	
FOOD	sandwiches		chocolate	
	crisps		cakes	
	sweets		peanuts	

The students hear:
- CLIVE, is there any coke for my party?
- Yes, there is.
- And is there any orange juice?
- Oh, no! There isn't.
- And tea?
- Oh, yes! There is!
- And are there any sandwiches?
- Sorry there aren't.
- What about crisps and sweets, Clive?
- Yes there are!

- AMY, is there any lemonade?
- Sorry, there isn't.
- And water?
- Of course, there is!
- What about milk, Amy?
- Oh, yes! Of course!
- And chocolate? Is there any chocolate?
- Oh, yeah!
- What about cakes and peanuts?
- Sorry, there aren't any!

(Madrid and McLaren 1995:44)

However, one of the best ways of assessment is students´ self-assessment and the Common European Framework establishes six levels to do it:

- A1. I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.
- A2. I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.
- B1. I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
- B2. I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.
- C1. I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.
- C2. I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.

2.2 SPEAKING

The second basic skill this paper deals with is speaking, undoubtedly important in a second language acquisition process:

Speaking is one of the most difficult skills language learners have to face. In spite of this, it has traditionally been forced into the background while we, teachers of English, have spent all our classroom time trying to teach our students how to write, to read and sometimes even to listen in a L2 because grammar has a long written tradition (Bueno, Madrid and Mclaren, 2006: 321).

Speaking is generally thought to be the most important of the four skills. Indeed, one frustration commonly voiced by learners is that they have spent years studying English, but still they cannot speak it.

There are some language policies, which provide a way to specify what learners are able to do at certain levels with regard to The Common European Framework of Reference for languages, the Portfolio or inside the Curriculum. Teachers should follow them as a way of providing a guideline for their lessons. The CEF describes in detail the different levels that a student can obtain in speaking activities and strategies (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2), these levels refer to things that students can do.

This table shows these levels in Spoken Interaction and Spoken Production.

S P E A K I N G	**Spoken Interaction**	• I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. • I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	• I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. • I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	• I can deal with most situations likely to arise while traveling in an area where the language is spoken. • I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken Production	• I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	• I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	• I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. • I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. • I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.

(CEF: 2001)

According to our Spanish curriculum, one of the objectives explains that learner should be able to: "Understand and produce correctly complex texts and messages both orally and in writing in daily life situations, using linguistic and non-linguistic resources in order to get a satisfactory and fluent communication" (LOE: 2007). There are some basic competences considered essential that should be developed in all subjects of the curriculum. So, when teachers are preparing a speaking activity, it is suitable to integrate one or more competences at the same time.

The following table shows the basic competences in Spanish curriculum:

	Competence	Description
	Competence in linguistic communication	The use of language as a tool for oral and written communication.
	Mathematical competence	The ability to use numbers, perform basic operations, and understand the symbols and forms of mathematical reasoning.
	Knowledge and interaction with the physical world	The ability to interact with the physical world, and apply the scientific method to explain its phenomena.
	Processing information and digital competence	The ability to find, obtain, process and transmit information using traditional and modern technologies.
	Social competence and citizenship	The ability to understand the social reality in which we live and the desire to contribute to its development.
	Cultural and artistic competence	The appreciation of cultural and artistic manifestations through the ages and in different cultures.
	Competence in 'learning to learn'	The ability to plan courses of action and set oneself goals in order to develop efficiency and autonomy during the lifelong learning process.
	Autonomy and personal initiative	The ability to imagine, develop and evaluate individual or collective projects creatively, self-confidently and critically.

However, within the Spanish education programme, teachers usually do not have enough time to teach this skill as it is required because they only have three hours per week taking into account the typical setbacks in the classroom and the great majority of the time is used to go into grammar because it is the base of the language.

Furthermore, the student is in a social, cultural and linguistic context where the English language is not often present and he or she does not need it to interact and survive in his or her life. In short, these are not the most suitable conditions to develop the desired or required level. For this reason, this study will try to explore the characteristics of the speaking skills and propose some ways of practicing speaking and giving feedback.

For most people, the ability to speak a language is synonymous with knowing that language. Nevertheless, "speaking in a second or foreign language has often been viewed as the most demanding of the four skills" (Bailey and Savage 1994: 7). What specifically makes speaking in a second or foreign language difficult?

Brown (1994) labels speaking as the most challenging skill for students because of the set of features that characterize oral discourse:
- Contractions, vowel reductions and elision;
- The use of slang and idioms:
- Stress, rhythm and intonation;
- The need to interact with at least one other speaker.

The most difficult aspect of spoken English is that it is always accomplished via interaction with al least one other speaker and this is one reason why many of us were shocked and disappointed when we used our second or foreign language for the first time in real interaction: We had not been prepared for spontaneous communication and could not cope with all of its simultaneous demands.

Speaking is an "activity requiring the integration of many subsystems…all these factors combine to make speaking a second or foreign language a formidable task for language learners…yet for many people, speaking is seen as the central skill" (Bailey and Savage 1994: 6-7).

There are numerous daily life situations where people need speaking, such as talking to someone face to face, communicating through the phone, answering questions, asking for directions, in shops, meetings or chatting with their friends, to name a few. People spend great deal of their time interacting with more people and, each of these situations requires a different register according to the formality of the moment.

> We speak for many reasons- to be sociable, because we want something, because we want other people to do something, to do something for someone else, to respond to someone else, to express our feelings or opinion about something, to exchange information, to refer to an action or event in the past, present, or future, the possibility of something happening, and so on (Lindsay and Knight, 2006: 58).

However, human communication is a complex process. People need communication when they want to say something, transmit information or need to speak. Speakers use communication when they want to express or inform someone about something. They use language according to their purpose and it is necessary for there to be a listener and a speaker for effective communication. (Harmer, 2007: 46).

Harmer. J. also explains that:

> When speaking, we construct words and phrases with individual sounds, and we also use pitch change, intonation, and stress to convey different meanings (2007: 29).

This skill is the most complicated due to the fact that speakers have to interpret not only the message that other speakers try to express, but also take into account other possibilities explained in the following quotation:

> Speakers have a great range of expressive possibilities at their command. Apart from the actual words they use they can vary their intonation and stress which helps them to show which part of what they are saying is most important. By varying the pitch and intonation in their voice they can clearly convey their attitude to what they are saying, too; they can indicate interest or lack of it, for example, and they can show whether they wish to be taken seriously. At any point in a speech event speakers can rephrase what they are saying; they can speed up or slow down. This will often be done in response to the feedback they are getting from their listeners who will show through a variety of gestures, expressions and interruptions that they do not understand.
> And in a face to face interaction the speaker can use a whole range of facial expressions, gestures and general body language to help to convey the message (Harmer, 2007: 53).

Apart from the formerly mentioned expressive possibilities, L1 speakers use some mechanisms to facilitate their speech. These mechanisms are not too easy for L2 speakers and consist of simplifying the language making simple structures: they usually omit parts of a sentence and use idiomatic expressions to facilitate the oral fluency and fillers and hesitation devices are also frequent. In order to compensate their difficulties, L1 speakers can correct themselves, reformulate or rephrase sentences, a frequent kind of

alteration accepted by the community of speakers (Bueno, Madrid and McLaren (2006:325).

Spoken English cannot usually be planned or organized, unless is preparing a speech or a presentation, there is not much time for reflection so, it is frequently full of repetitions, pauses, incomplete sentences, hesitations or fillers. It needs the response of another speaker or listener, it usually comes into the form of turns and when speakers are talking, they must also pay attention to gestures, intonation, stress or even pauses that other speakers are doing because are clues to understanding the meaning of what they are trying to say.

In relation to the activities in order to develop the speaking skill, there are many ways to promote oral skills in the classroom. Discussions, speeches and role-play, among others, are the most typical speaking activities.

Discussions are probably the most commonly activity in the oral skills class. A selected topic is given to the students through a reading, a listening passage or a videotape and are then, in pairs or groups, they discuss the chosen topic in order to come up with a solution.
Students will be more involved with and motivated to participate in discussions if they choose the topics in relation to their likes and dislikes.

Books such as *The Non-Stop Discussion Workbook* and *Let´s Start Talking* (Rooks 1988, 1994) contain many excellent ideas for interesting discussions that can be used and modified depending on the level of the students. A well-known example is the "Desert Island" discussion activity, where students are presented with the task of choosing five survivors out of a group of ten possible candidates to start a new civilization after a nuclear war. Once groups reach a consensus, they must present their choices to the other groups and argue for them if the groups disagree.

Another common activity in the oral skills class is the prepared speech. Topics for speeches will be different depending on the level of the students and the focus of the class. For example, asking students to "tell us about an unforgettable experience you had" allows them to talk about something that is personally meaningful while at the same time encourages narration and description.

Speeches can be considered frightening for the speaker and, after a while, boring for the listeners, so it is a good idea to assign the listeners some responsibilities during the speeches.

Generally, one or two students can be assigned beforehand the responsibility for evaluating a certain speech, using guidelines created by the teacher or by the learners themselves.

At the speech´s conclusion, the evaluators can be asked to summarize its content, note strengths or weaknesses or relate the speech topic to a personal experience.

A third major speaking activity type is the role play, which is particularly suitable for practicing the sociocultural variations in speech acts, such as complimenting, complaining… Depending on the level of the students, role plays can be performed from prepared scripts, created from a set of prompts and expressions or written using and consolidating knowledge gained from instruction or discussion of the speech act and its variations prior to the role plays themselves.

Many English teachers claim that the best way to acquire speaking skills is by interacting. This aim is fulfilled by means of communicative language teaching and collaborative learning. Communicative language teaching is based on real-life situations that require communication. Following this method in ESL classes, there will be opportunities for the students to communicate with their partners in the target language.

It is teachers´ task to create situations in class where students have real-life communication, activities related to their daily life and meaningful tasks that give them the chance to practice oral language.

As it has been previously said, speaking is usually the most problematic skill to teach because, apart from its difficulty, teachers do not have much time to concentrate on this skill.

2.2.1 ASSESMENT CRITERIA FOR ORAL PRODUCTION

Speaking skills are an important part of the curriculum in language teaching, and this makes them an important object of assessment as well.

As we have seen with Listening, Speaking has its own way of assessment; according to the *Common European Framework* the levels to describe students' level are the same as in Listening classification.

Proficient	**C2**	• Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. • Can summarize information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. • Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	• Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognize implicit meaning. • Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. • Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. • Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organizational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent	**B2**	• Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization. • Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. • Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	• Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. • Can deal with most situations likely to arise while travelling in an area where the language is spoken. • Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. • Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic	**A2**	• Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). • Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. • Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	• Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. • Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. • Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

(CEF: 2001)

For some authors, such as Ur (1996), the difficulties involved in oral testing and assessment are so many that the real question is whether to test or not to test. The arguments in favour and against are numerous as pointed out by Ur (1996: 134):

FOR	AGAINST
In principle, a language test should include all language skills.	It is difficult to get students to improvise speech at test time.
Speaking is not just any skill; for many, it is the most important.	Individual testing and keeping records of oral texts is time-consuming and

	expensive for any institutions.
A final oral proficiency test has a backwash effect during the course.	Criteria for assessment are not easy to establish.
Students who speak well are discriminated against if the test is based on written language.	Even if criteria exist, testers may vary in their application: some may be very strict and some very lenient.

Even though difficulties in oral assessment may be admitted, it turns out to be a requirement for any language course. By assessing students (Lázaro, 1996:12), we check their progress at different stages of the course; we reinforce the students 'learning by giving them regular feedback and we evaluate the teaching/learning process as well as the approach, aims, materials and assessment itself.

Following Harris and McCann´s (1994) threefold categorization, we will examine informal, formal and self-assessment of speaking activities.

Informal assessment of speaking activities is very important since there are considerable difficulties in organizing formal oral tests in certain teaching contexts.
In a good number of cases, it is the only way to assess speaking. Most informal assessment simply takes the form of student observation and monitoring of activities as they happen in the classroom. The information the teacher gets by observing and monitoring students needs to be recorded and, in that sense, it seems advisable to use a band scale, which provides some sort of standardization of perceptions so performance. A band scale provides some sort of standardization of perception so that teachers reach an agreement on what and how to assess.

The following table is a sample band scale provided by Harris and McCann (1994:10):

5	Speaks fluently	Almost no errors
4	Speaks quite fluently	Some errors
3	Some difficulty in speaking	Many errors
2	Difficulty with speaking	Almost incomprehensible
1	Unable to use language	Incomprehensible

Formal assessment takes the format of texts as it involves a more structured planning, design and administration than simply observing or monitoring students. Test formats are as varied as the type of tasks that form the basis for the text. Harris and McCann (1994:37) offer a good classification of tests as well as a summary of their advantages and disadvantages.

TEST FORMAT	PROS	CONS
Free interviews (students chat in groups or as individuals).	Realistic and reduce stress for students.	Very difficult to rate performance (personality factor). Need to maintain conversation at same time as rating.
Picture description (using photo or drawing).	Give tester time to listen and students something concrete.	Artificial task and there is no interaction.
Information transfer (information gap through notes or pictures).	Realistic – need for communication. Tests key interactive strategies.	Can be problems when one student is a lot weaker than the other, if in pairs.
Role – play: students assume roles with or without cued information.	Excellent for testing interaction and commonly used task in most materials.	Can test the ability to act.
Oral presentations: students prepare and give short talks.	Realistic and gives the tester time to assess performance.	No interaction and can be highly stressful – not suitable for younger students.

Self-assessment of one´s own performance in speaking activities is a difficult area to implement. For that same reason, there are certain steps that should be followed:

(i)   Establish a set of criteria so that everyone knows beforehand what he/she is going to reflect on;

(ii) It is better to ask students to reflect on their achievements and the inadequacies they perceive rather than asking them to give themselves marks;

(iii) Self-assessment should take place immediately after completion of the task, although audio and video recording may prove a real help;

(iv) It is important to complement self-assessment results with the teacher´s information from observations and tests feedback.

Teachers should monitor each activity carefully and give specific feedback if learners have done well or if they have any errors. According to Lindsay and Knight:

> Learners need encouragement and they need to know when they are making mistakes that might cause other people not to understand or misunderstand them.
>
> Teachers should also use the opportunity to praise learners for getting something right, doing something well, trying hard, and showing a positive attitude towards learning. This could be when they produce an accurate sentence, do an amusing role-play, make an interesting contribution to a discussion, or show that they can use a new item of vocabulary. It is more difficult to decide when to correct. Teachers can choose to correct as soon as the mistake is made or at the end of the activity or class. The advantage of immediate correction is that the learner can correct the error and use the corrected language for the rest of the activity. The disadvantage is that it can break the flow of communication and possibly demotivate or embarrass the learner. (2006: 68)

There are three stages to check the student's progress: At the beginning of the course, throughout the course and at the end. This way of assessment is the most important because teacher can check the students` progress.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study has looked at the level of speaking and listening of 150 students who are enrolled in different courses: 1º ESO, 2º ESO, 3º ESO, 4º ESO and first and second year of Bachillerato. Among the participants, 55 of them are males and 95 are females.

All of the students have studied English since they joined school but, in general, their level is low, with some exceptions.

The main aim of this study is to analyze the students 'attitudes and opinions towards listening and speaking. The followed methodology has been accomplished through a-three-stage investigation.

The first stage consisted of the observation of the development of the English lesson in order to check to what extent listening and speaking skills are carried out in the classroom.

During the observation, it was discovered that a great part of the time of each lesson was devoted to the study of the grammatical structures followed by the corresponding exercises to practice what they had learnt. Consequently, listening and speaking skills are hardly practiced due to there is not enough time left.

Besides, there are other factors, which prevent from developing these two skills such as the big amount of students in each class or the impossibility of assessing all the students individually during a lesson.

As a second stage, the teacher is interviewed with the purpose of knowing how she confronts both skills, the way she organizes and structures the lessons and the solutions she proposes to put them into practice successfully.

It is considered that it is important to take into account the opinion and ideas of the participants' teacher of this research because she is the person who plans and designs the activities in every English lesson.

The sort of listening activities that students usually do depend on their level, that is, students from 1º or 2º of ESO have a lower level than students from 1º or 2º of Bachillerato.

The most typical exercises carried out in class are: fill in the gaps, True or False, comprehension questions, complete information in the chart or matching exercises.

Furthermore, songs are funny listening activities for the students and the teacher used them as an excuse to revise grammar or vocabulary and sometimes, they are used as the base for writing too.

Obviously, in spite of the kind of exercises chosen by the teacher, students are given some clues about what they are going to listen and are also encouraged to read the questions or the instructions before starting listening.

Another remarkable thing when we talk about students is that, apart from the English language they use in class, they seldom listen to it very often. Only some students in Bachillerato assure that they are very keen on TV series in English and they watch them with subtitles.

The main problems observed by the teacher when students are listening to English are lack of concentration and lack of practice. They do not usually train their ear and they do not know how to improve this skill because they need to get used to listen to English to develop their capacities.
The more practice they do, the better results they will obtain.

Having mentioned the types of activities students do during their English lessons and also the problems and obstacles they have when they have to listen to English, what is the best solution to help them?

It is necessary to anticipate them what the listening will be about by paying attention to questions, pictures… and also to introduce them any difficult vocabulary.

Moreover, as a new tool, the teacher is trying to send students some listening activities as homework due to almost all textbooks are accompanied by the corresponding CD and it is a way to practice this skill if teachers have not got enough time to do it in class.

The teacher generally encourages students to watch TV with subtitles even if they do not understand, only with the purpose of training and developing their ear.

Up to now, it has been discussed what happens with listening in the classroom but, how about speaking?
The major problems the teacher finds when students try to speak in English are: on the one hand, as they do not listen a lot of English, their amount of grammar and vocabulary

is not wide enough. On the other hand, they feel embarrassed and they find it really difficult.

In general, they do not pay much attention to pronunciation and most of them feel frustrated when they know they are making mistakes all the time.

It is true that all problems have a solution and the teacher thinks that the best one is to encourage students to speak English as much as possible.

They have opportunities to speak it when they meet foreigners (via Internet or travelling abroad), in class or with their friends.

Sometimes, the teacher tries to create situations where English is needed and also gives them some fixed sentences that students can say, so that they feel more comfortable and improve little by little.

The last stage comprises two sections: a survey (appendix 1: 70) which consisted of a series of questions that students had to answer expressing their opinion and some listening and speaking activities which were carried out in the classroom to prove their effectiveness in helping students to improve their abilities in relation to these skills.

On the one hand, the survey is formed by ten questions, which deal with the students' management of the English language referring to listening and speaking skills.

On the other hand, the listening and speaking activities proposed intend to help students to develop and improve their abilities and capacities and to give them facilities in order to students feel confident when they are using English language in class.

4. ANALYSIS

Taking into account the results obtained through the study, it can be said that listening and speaking are two important skills, which must be taught thoroughly in order to students confront them as they do with other skills such as they do with grammar.

The first stage of the research demonstrates that it is very difficult to develop these two skills because it is necessary to devote more time to them to do a suitable practice with all the students.

The second stage offers the teacher's overview regarding listening and speaking skills. It is proved that they are important as she tries to include them in her syllabus design day by day even though it is difficult due to many factors. The most important one is the lack of time, which prevents to develop interesting activities, to teach many useful expressions and to assess them in a proper way to confirm if they have been suitably learnt.

The third stage consists of an interview to compile students' opinions about the use and the comprehension of English in class and in their daily life. Analyzing them, it is demonstrated that most of the students are aware of the importance of acquiring these skills but they show their lack of confidence when exposing themselves to the language.

So, through several questions contained in the survey (appendix 1: 70), students reflected their thoughts in relation to these skills that allowed us to study their problems and difficulties in learning listening and speaking skills.

The following information shows the general characteristics of the participants of the survey:

Population: Spanish people
Age: 14 – 18 years old
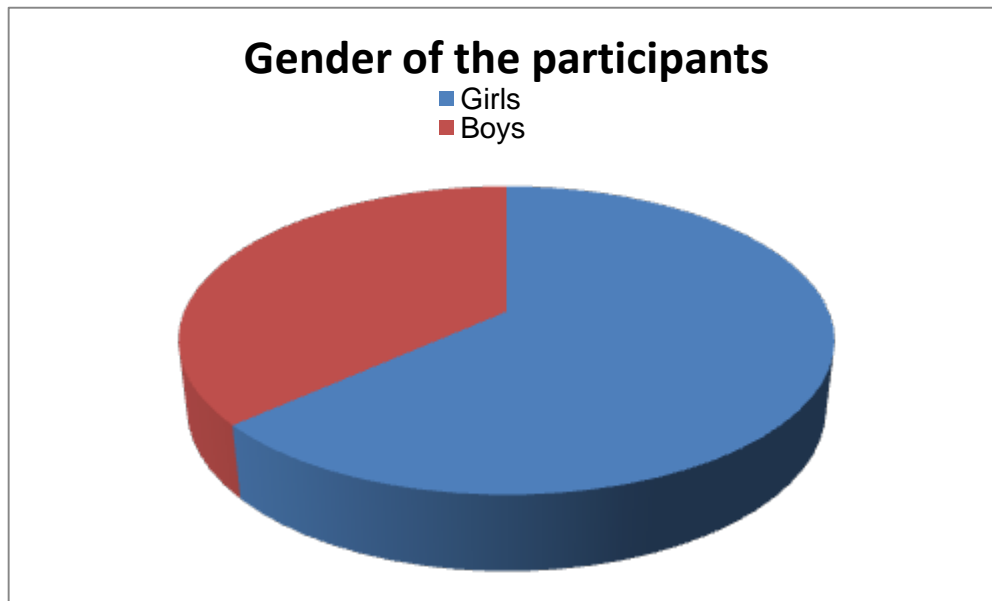Courses: 1º ESO, 2º ESO, 3ºESO, 4º ESO, 1º Bach. And 2º Bach
Number of respondents: 150

Table 1a: Gender of the participants

Number of respondents	
Boys	55
Girls	95

Table 1b: Gender of the participants

Gender of the participants
- Girls
- Boys

The graph shows that the number of boys and girls who answered the survey. It is important to take into account that there is a great difference between the amount of girls and boys but this doesn´t affect our study.

Respondent´s answers to answers 1, 2, 3 and 4

Table 2a: Communication

	Yes	No
Speak English in class	30%	70%
Communicate in English	73%	27%
Understand a native speaker	52%	48%
Watch original version films (English)	36%	64%
Listen and understand a song (English)	21%	79%

Table 2b: Communication
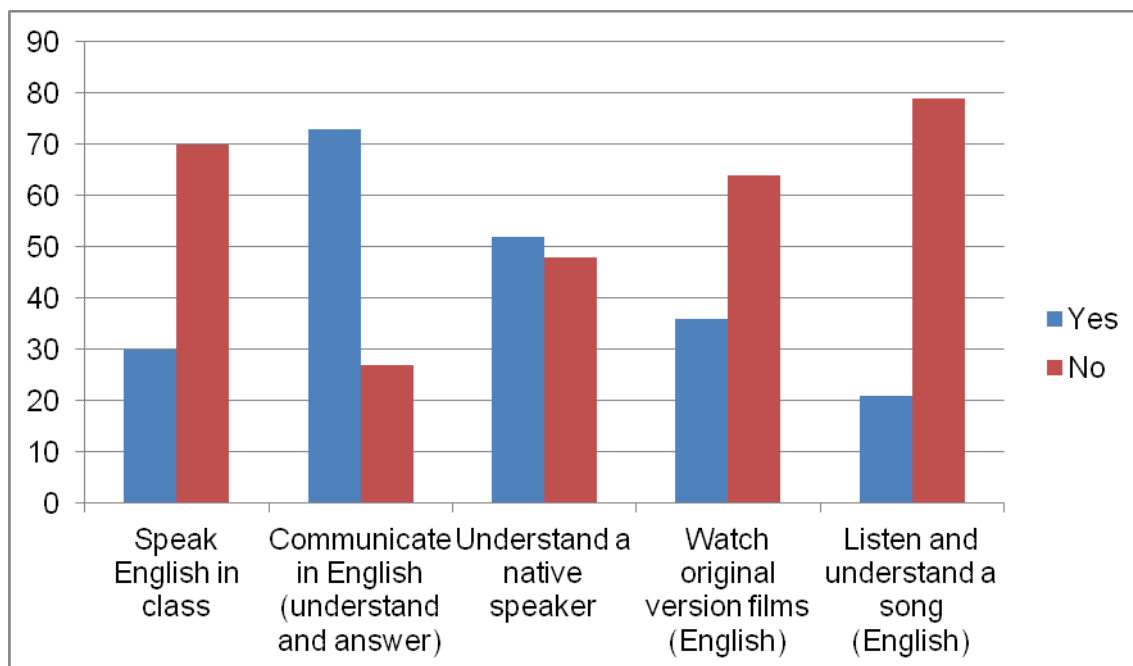
Most of the respondents (70%) assure that English is not spoken during their English lessons. They say that the teacher speaks Spanish except for some explanations or some comments.

Only a 27 per cent of the respondents feel incapable of communicating in English with other person (teacher, classmates…) whereas a 73 per cent is able to speak English, with some difficulties, but can maintain a conversation in English.

In relation to the possibility of understanding a native speaker, the results are very varied. A half of the students (52%) think that they would understand a native speaker but a 48 per cent consider that it results very difficult or almost impossible.
They admit that they usually listen to their teacher and, in some cases; they listen to the CD player. A possibility to solve this problem would be to invite native speakers to come to their English lesson.

A few of the participants (36%) declare that they can watch original version films and understand what the film is about or what the characters are saying whereas a 64% of the participants of the survey sometimes watch original version films.
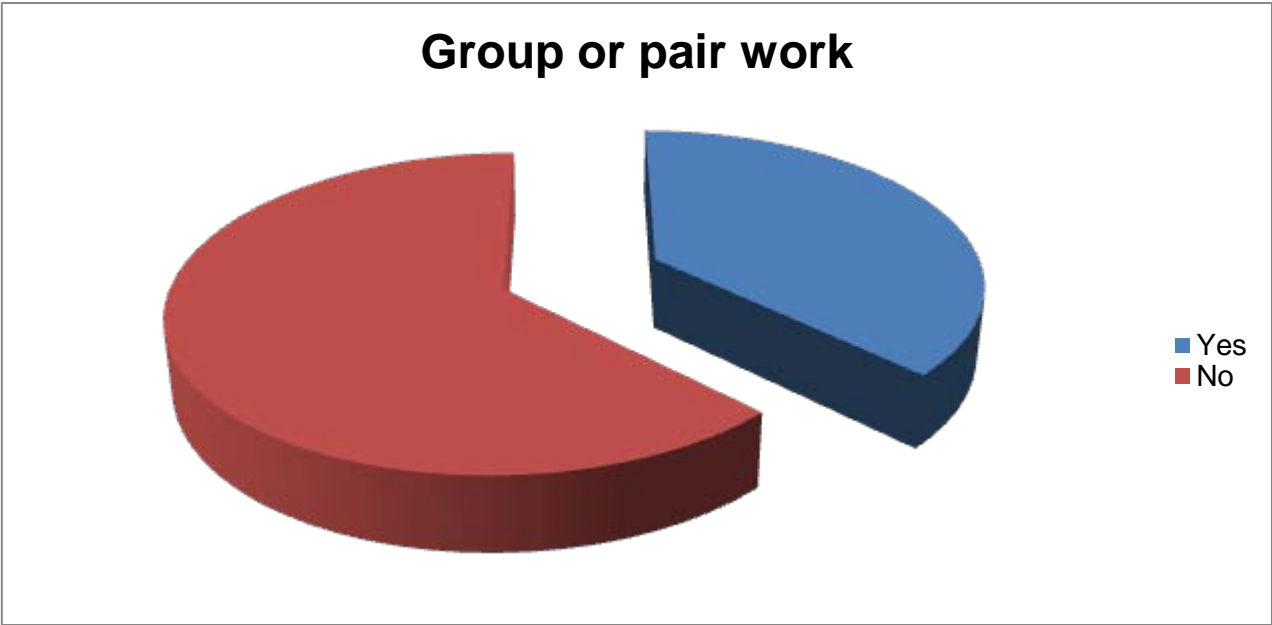
Finally, only 21% of the respondents listen to songs in English understanding what it is about whereas a 79 per cent states that they can learn by heart the song but they don´t know what it is saying or how to spell the words of the lyrics.

Respondent´s answers to question 6

Table 3a: Group or pair group

Yes	No
56	94

Table 3b: Group or pair group

The graph 3 demonstrates if the students do group or pair works during their English lessons which are very useful and allow students to interact with their classmates or with the teacher.

In spite of the importance of this kind of activities, a great number of the students (94) assure that they seldom do these activities in class because they practice more grammar or reading and the lesson only lasts 50 minutes and there is no usually time to devote to these interaction activities.
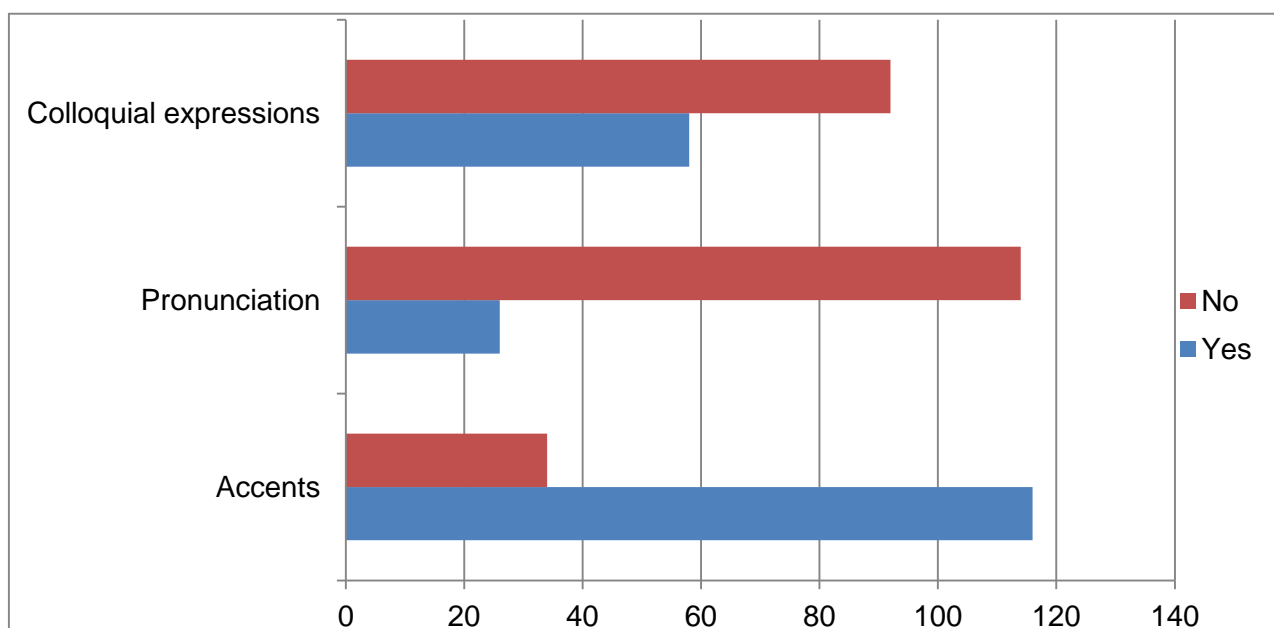
They assure that they work individually.

Respondent´s answers to question 7, 8 and 9

Table 4a: Accents, pronunciation and colloquial expressions

	Yes	No
Accent	116	34
Pronunciation	26	114
Colloquial expressions	58	92

Table 4b: Accents, pronunciation and colloquial expressions

Analyzing the results obtained related to the understanding of different accents, if they consider that their pronunciation is good and if they understand colloquial expressions, the respondents of the questionnaire can understand the different accents of English (116).

However, they consider that their pronunciation is horrible and due to this fact, they don´t feel comfortable when they talk in English, which implies that their participation in class is null.
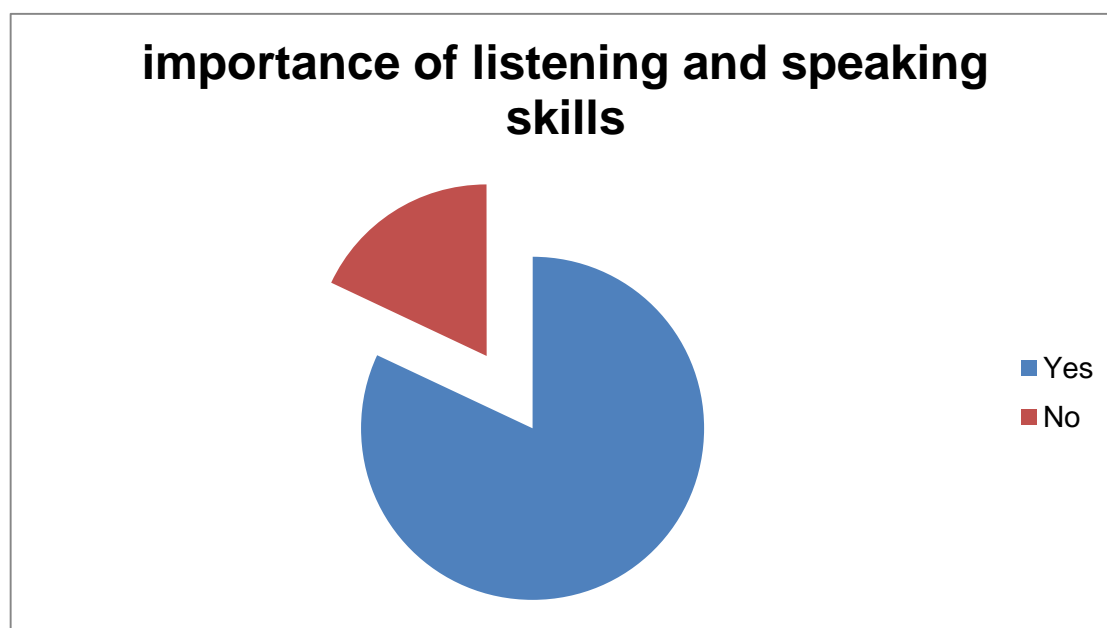
As regards the use of colloquial expressions, a great majority of the students can understand them but only 58 participants consider that if they haven´t studied before, they don´t know their meaning.

Respondent´s answer to question 10

Table 5a: Importance of listening and speaking skills

Yes	No
123	27

Table 5b: Importance of listening and speaking skills

Finally, the last graph shows the opinion of the students of the importance of listening and speaking skills.

A large number of the respondents state the great importance of the practice of listening and speaking skills during their English lessons. They consider it very important in order to travel abroad and to communicative with foreign people, to get a job in their future because they confess that nowadays, it is especially important to know more than one language different from their mother tongue and more reasons.

The table 5 demonstrates that 123 students are in favour of the importance of listening and speaking skills because they define them as obligatory and necessary when a person learns a new language.

After analyzing the results obtained with the questionnaire given to the students, we realize that it is important to find a solution to the situation.

As a solution, we propose different listening and speaking activities to develop during the English lessons.

4.1 SUGGESTED APPROACH

In this section, we will consider the most favorable activities according to which aspect in particular each teacher wants to improve as well as to the characteristics of his or her classroom, treating different suitable activities according to each aim. Listening aims can be varied: sometimes, the main one is to obtain the main idea of a recording and, at times, the opposite happens, when students listen for specific details.

Students can also improve their listening skill through activities in which they have to listen, and following a description, they have to complete a task. For example: drawing an object, identifying some pictures or following directions on a map, completing application forms or correcting a written text with some mistakes. The range of options is wide but the most important thing is listening for fun.

As teachers, we have to keep in mind that our students will always be tense when we announce that a listening is going to be carried out. We have to explain them that getting the right answer is not always the most important thing because if the do the exercise correctly, it is a clear prompt that they had no difficulty with the task.
It is also important to tell the students that they do not need to listen to everything to understand the information needed to do the exercise.

We propose the following activities for improving listening and speaking activities in class:

4.1.1 LISTENING ACTIVITIES

As this research shows, there are different activities depending on the purpose but what is essential is to make students enjoy each activity and develop interest.
The activities proposed below are only an example to motivate students to listen to English in the classroom.

This section will try to show many different ways of exploiting listening but we, as teachers, cannot forget that its success requires clear instructions and explanations in each activity in order to students get a perfect understanding.
It is also convenient to introduce new vocabulary before the listening activity in order to avoid possible doubts and even explain any grammatical issue they might have difficulties with.

Finally, to make these activities more effective, they demand feedback.

The study has tried to do as many activities as possible in groups and pairs because they are a good method of listening and speaking English and motivating students. It is basically monitoring the activity carefully and giving specific feedback on each group all the time, and taking care when students that have a good level are with students with a lower level, because it is not beneficial for student with a lower level.

Students can feel inferior and demotivated and we want to do the opposite, to make them gain confidence. It is advisable to not always put the same people in each group, if teachers rearrange groups and pairs, the class will feel new. In this case, this group will have some difficulties relating with each other due to their different cultural backgrounds, so this is a good method to interchange ideas and express feelings with different partners.

Furthermore, it is suitable to create a confident atmosphere in order to improve their English language, for this reason, most activities elicit students to share ideas, opinions and experiences with each other.

After doing these activities with the students interviewed, the response obtained was satisfactory due to the students 'participation. Undoubtedly, the best way to organize learners was in small groups, with a maximum of five students, with the intention of communicating and all of them can have the same opportunities and not just answering the questions.

Doing that way, all the students can practice English and develop and put into practice listening and speaking skills.

Activity 1: Interviewing a stranger (live listening)
>   Skills: predicting, listening for specific information, listening for detailed
>   information

Teachers can bring strangers into the class to talk to the students or be interviewed by them.

The teacher comments the visitor the student´s language level, remembering him that he must take into account the level of English he is going to use with the students but he has to talk in a natural way.

The teacher takes the visitor into the classroom without telling the students who the visitor is. In pairs or in groups, they are going to try to guess as much as they can about the visitor. Based on their guesses, students write questions that they want to ask the stranger.

The visitor is interviewed with the questions the students have written and during the interview; the teacher encourages them and clarifies things, which are said that they do not understand. The teacher will also prompt the students to ask "follow-up" questions, so that if a student asks "where are you from?" and the visitor says "I am from England" and then she/he is asked "Where is England?" or "What is England like?" and so on.

While the interview is taking place, the students are taking notes and these notes are going to be the basis for a written follow-up. The students can write a short essay about the person with the notes they have taken. The more information they have written, the more complete will be their essays.

The students can also discuss the interview with the teacher, asking for help with any points they are still unclear or they can also role-play similar interviews amongst the students.

With this activity, the students can put into practice listening because they are listening to a foreign person who visits the school; speaking, because the students have to ask some questions to the visitor and they can also role-play similar interviews in pairs or in groups and also writing because with the notes taken by the students during the interview, they are going to write an essay about the person who has come to the class and has answered all the questions made by the students.
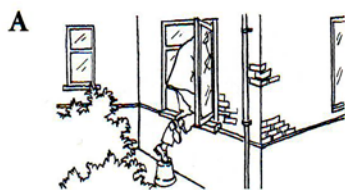
Activity 2: Sorry I am late (getting events in the correct order)
           Skills: predicting and listening for gist

A popular technique for having students understand the gist of a story involves the students in listening so that they can put pictures in order in which they hear them.
In the following example, students look at the following pictures:

In pairs or groups, the students have to think what is happening in each picture. Then, the teacher will confirm or deny their predictions.

Students are told that they are going to listen to a tape/CD and that they should put the pictures in the correct chronological order (which is not the same as the order of what they hear). This is what is on the tape/CD:

Anna:	Good morning Stuart. What time do you call this?
Stuart:	Oh dear. Yes, sorry I'm late.
Anna:	Well? What happened to you?
Stuart:	I woke up late, I'm afraid. I didn't hear the alarm.
Anna:	Were you out late last night?
Stuart:	Yes. I'm afraid I was.
Anna:	So what happened?
Stuart:	Well, when I saw the time I jumped out of bed, had a quick shower, and ran out of the house. But then, when I got to the car I realised I'd forgotten my keys.
Anna:	Oh really!
Stuart:	But the door to my house was shut.
Anna:	What did you do?
Stuart:	I ran round to the garden at the back and climbed in through the window.
Anna:	And?
Stuart:	Well someone saw me and called the police.
Anna:	What happened then?
Stuart:	Well, I told them it was my house and at first they wouldn't believe me. It took a long time!
Anna:	I can imagine.
Stuart:	And you see that's why I'm late!

The students check their answers with their partners and if it is necessary, they can listen again to ensure that they have the correct sequence (B, A, D, C).

The teacher can get students to listen it again in order to take notes of phrases of interest such as those that Stuart uses to express regret or apology (sorry, I am late; I woke up late; I am afraid…). Once the listening has finished, the class can role-play similar scenes to that they have listened.

Activity 3: Telephone messages (taking messages)

   Skills: predicting and listening for specific information

Apart from the typical tapes/CDs, which accompany the textbooks, the teacher can create his/her own material. In this case, the teacher is going to record a tape with the help of some friends.

First, the teacher asks the students the kind of short messages people might leave for members of their family when they take phone calls while they are out. The messages can be quite simple, for example:
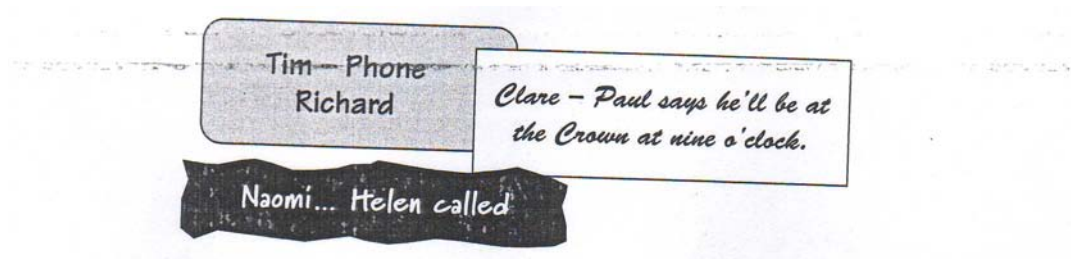
Students are going to listen three phone conversations in which the callers leave messages for people who are not in. they are told that Mrs. Galloway has three daughters: Lyn (19), Eryn (17) and Kate (13). They are all out at the cinema, but three of their friends ring up and leave messages. The students have to write the messages which Mrs. Galloway leaves for her daughters.
This is what students hear:

Mrs. Galloway: Hello
Adam: Hello. Is Lyn there?
Mrs. Galloway: No, she is out at the moment. Who is that?
Adam: This is Adam. Do you know when she will be back?
Mrs. Galloway: About ten, I think. Can I give her a message?
Adam: No..Yes. Can you tell her Adam rang?
Mrs. Galloway: Sure, Adam.
Adam: Thanks. Bye.

Mrs. Galloway: Hello

Ruth: Can I speak to Eryn?

Mrs. Galloway: Is that Ruth?

Ruth: Yes. Hello Mrs. Galloway. Is Eryn there?

Mrs. Galloway: No, Ruth, sorry. She is at the cinema with her sisters.

Ruth: Oh. Well, could you ask her to bring my copy of "Romeo and Juliet" to college tomorrow?

Mrs. Galloway: Your copy?

Ruth: Yes, she borrowed it

Mrs. Galloway: So, you want her to take it tomorrow? To college?

Ruth: Yes. That is. Thanks. Bye

Mrs. Galloway: Oh…Bye.

Mrs. Galloway: Hello

Jane Metcalfe: Can I speak to Kate?

Mrs. Galloway: I am afraid she is not here. Can I take a message?

Jane Metcalfe: Yes, please. This is Jane Metcalfe, the drama teacher. Can you tell Kate that the next rehearsal is at three-thirty on Friday?

Mrs. Galloway: The next rehearsal?

Jane Metcalfe: Yes, for the school play

Mrs. Galloway: Kate is in a play?

Jane Metcalfe: Yes. Didn´t she tell you?

Mrs. Galloway: No… I mean yes, of course she did

Jane Metcalfe: Ok, then. We´ll see her on Friday afternoon

Mrs. Galloway: Er…yes.

When they have the messages written, they can compare them to their partners to see if they have written the same thing. They listen to the tape again and this way, they can solve any problems or doubts.

With this activity, they can discover the language used in the phone calls and typical phrases like "I am afraid she is not "or "Can I take a message?" and then, they can work in pairs to role-play calls.

Activity 4: UFO (jigsaw listening)

Skills: listening for detailed information

The class is divided in two groups: Group A and Group B. The first group is going to hear Extract A and the second, the Extract B.

Students have to fill in a form but this activity contains a jigsaw element because students who has listened the extract A have to share information with students who have listened extract B.

The effect of having to gather and share detailed information to complete the forms is that the students in different groups end up with a good general understanding of the whole text.

The students have been working on a unit in their textbook called "Anyone out there?" about space and they are given the following "UFO report form":

UFO REPORT FORM
1. Name and address:
2. Place: Date: Time:
3. Other witnesses (name and addresses):
4. Weather conditions:
5. Description of sighting (where seen and for how long):
6. Appearance (indicate size, shape, colour, distinguishing features- draw a sketch):
7. Sound and movement:
8. Description of any aliens (appearance, manner, behavior, speech, purpose of being here):
9. Conclusions:

(Bell, J. and Gower, R. from Upper Intermediate Matters)

Group A listen to the following taped extract and fill in all the information they can on the form:

Extract A: <u>Whitley Strieber and the aliens</u>

And then there was the story of home-loving dad who claims he was experimented on by space alien scientists. Human guinea pig Whitley Strieber suffered a terrifying brain examination as he lay naked inside the hi-tech surgery of the cruel creatures' spacecraft.

The writer of the best-selling book *Communication* wants the world to know extraterrestrials are out there – and they´re not friendly. Whitley trembled as he recalled his operation millions of light years from Earth.

"I had been captured like a wild animal and it was like they were trying to tame me" said the 41-year-old.

"They performed bizarre medical procedures on me and inserted a thin metal instrument into my brain". Whitley claims his outer space tormentors were like giant-sized insects.

They were bald, with massive liquid-like narrow eyes, yellowish-brown skin that felt like leather, two holes for nostrils and bog, floppy lips.

And to prove his chilling time with the beings actually took place, he agreed to take a lie detector test- and passed!

The New Yorker says his nightmare began when an army of aliens invaded his home while he slept.

He was unable to move as they ripped off his pyjamas, poked him with their wrinkles hands, and then took him off to their waiting craft.

"They told me they were going to do an operation…"

The other group (Group B) fills in as much of the form as they can listen to:

Extract B: <u>Mrs.Coe and the aliens</u>

Yes, the aliens have landed. Only yesterday they stepped out of their spaceship and went for a walk in the park. Three giant creatures twelve feet tall with tiny heads and wearing bluish metallic clothing chose Russia for a very close encounter with the human race.

Their arrival was heralded by a shining ball seen hovering over the local park by residents of Voronezh, 300miles east of Moscow.

The UFO landed and out came the giants, similar to humans and accompanied by a small robot.

"They went for a walk near their spaceship", said the official news agency Tass. "Then they disappeared back inside. Onlookers were overwhelmed with fear and lasted several days ".

The landing was authenticated by staff from the Voronezh Geophysical Laboratory, whose head, Genrikh Silanov, is a respected scientist.

Tass said: "Scientists confirmed that a UFO landed in the park. They also identified the landing site and found traces of aliens".

Silanov´s men discovered a twenty-yard depression in the park with four deep dents and two pieces of rock.

"They looked like deep red sandstone. But analysis showed that the substance cannot be found on earth".

There was speculation among UFO experts in Britain that the aliens could have been those that Mrs. Coe said landed in her garden last month in a spacecraft which was surrounded by bubbles of light. According to her amazing story the aliens grabbed her by the arms and lifted her up a beam of light into a kind of room. Mrs. Coe was reported as saying she felt they meant her no harm and that when she came round she was in her garden and not hurt in any way.

When both groups have listened to their corresponding extracts, students from group A interview students from group B (and vice versa) using the form to make notes about their partner´s story.

When all students have both UFO stories (A and B), they discuss which one they found the most believable and say why they think this.

Activity 5: We had a nice time (analyzing conversations)

Skills: predicting, listening for detailed information and listening for text construction.

To carry out this activity, the students are working on a unit from their textbook called "Regrets". The teacher starts the lesson leading a discussion about the different kind of things that can go wrong on holiday and the teacher gives in advance some sentences like "You might be ill", "Perhaps you will miss your flight", etc. Moreover, if any of the students have a holiday "horror story", they can tell it to their partner, their group or to the whole class.

The students are going to listen to three people talking about things going wrong on holiday but they also look at three photographs given and try to predict what the problem is likely to be in each case. They can discuss it in pairs or groups.

Then, they listen to the CD to check if they were right (appendix 2: 71).

Later, when the students have listened to the CD twice, they fill in the following chart:

	1	2	3
Problem Cause Result (s) Whose fault? Why?			

Students listen to the extracts again but this time they are listening out for exactly how the speakers construct their discourse, as the following exercise shows:
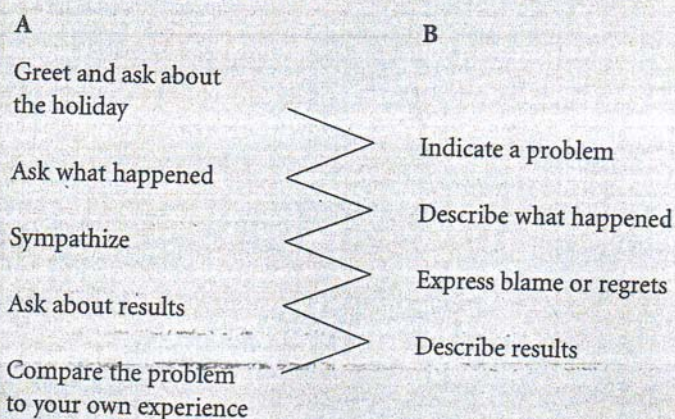
Talking about a holiday

a Listen to the conversations again. How do people
- ask about holidays?
- indicate that there was a problem?
- ask what happened?
- show sympathy?
- relate the story back to their own experience?

b Look at tapescript 13.3 and check your answers.

Finally, when they have finish the exercise, in pairs or in groups they check through the language with the teacher before moving on to use the results of their enquiries in a "making conversations" activity which encourages them to try out the language for themselves:

Make more conversations about holiday disasters.

a   Work with a partner and make conversations about the situations below, following the diagram.

A   B

Greet and ask about
the holiday

                                         Indicate a problem

Ask what happened

                                         Describe what happened

Sympathize

                                         Express blame or regrets

Ask about results

                                         Describe results

Compare the problem
to your own experience

1   lose passports/leave bag on beach/have to get new ones at the embassy/wife's fault/didn't leave passports at hotel
2   injured/walk into glass door/go to hospital/hotel's fault/couldn't see door
3   get lost/car runs out of petrol/spend night in car/own fault/didn't check the petrol gauge
4   holiday cancelled/tour company goes bust/have to go home/husband's fault/choose cheap holiday
5   house burgled while away/door not locked/TV and video stolen/neighbour's fault/came in to feed pets and forgot to lock door
6   arrested/smuggling money out of the country/taken to police station/own fault/didn't declare it on immigration form

b   Think of a similar experience that might have happened to you. Make more conversations with your partner.

(Lifelines intermediate by T. Hutchinson (Oxford University Press)

This sequence shows how listening extracts can be used for a variety of different purposes –for training in (and practice of) language skills, to language analysis and as a stimulus for language production.

Activity 6: Understanding song lyrics (Justin Bieber: "Baby")

               Skills: listening and reading for general and detailed information

Music is a powerful stimulus for students' engagement because it speaks directly to our emotions.

Song activities can amuse and entertain and it can make a satisfactory connection between the world of leisure and the world of learning.

One of the most useful kinds of text for students to work with is sing lyrics, especially when the students know the chosen song.

Students are going to listen to a song (Justin Bieber: "Baby") two times and they have to fill in the worksheet that the teacher has given them (appendix 3: 72). The worksheet consists of the letter of the song with several gaps. Students have to listen to the song and guess which the words are missing.

The third time, they are going to see the videoclip on the slide projector and the letter of the song is going to appear on the screen. That way, they can sing the song and check if they have written the right words.

Once they have completed the hand-out, the teacher can explain some phrases the students did not understand, asking them questions to check their comprehension of several words and expressions. Although this kind of text study is somewhat cumbersome, if the students are interested in them, will really help some of them to remember some of the expressions, especially when they are combined with catchy music. They feel entertained and motivated with this type of activity.

4.1.2 SPEAKING ACTIVITIES

According to the classroom context, teachers will try to choose the most adequate activities to be put into practice, and which Lindsay and Knight offer a huge variety:

> Speaking activities that concentrate on getting learners to produce sounds,
> phrases or grammatical structures range from activities, which are controlled
> by the teacher to activities where the learners have more freedom to choose
> the language, they use. Controlled activities generally focus on the learners
> producing language accurately, while less controlled activities focus on
> developing the learner´s fluency.
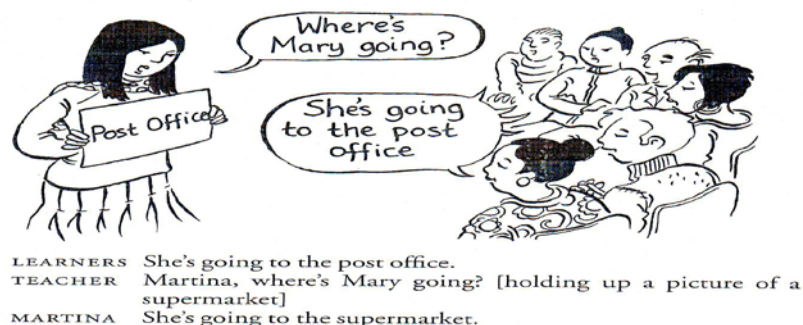
Drills
They are suitable to learn grammar structures and vocabulary because they are repetitive exercises easier than typical grammar exercises where students practice and repeat the same thing several times.

Using drills, the teacher has a lot of control over what the learners say - they must respond to the teacher or each other- the learners must answer correctly and according to a precise pattern.

There are three types of drill:

-Substitution drills: they are used when the teacher wants to practice a particular vocabulary area (for example; places in a town: supermarket, post-office, swimming pool…). These drills are good to improve vocabulary because learners have to substitute one word for another. We can use substitution drills to practice structures as well as vocabulary.

-Transformation drills: the teacher invites students to transform sentences, for example, an affirmative sentence into a negative sentence or an affirmative sentence into a question.

Example: TEACHER: John likes beer
         LEARNER: Does John like beer?

         TEACHER: Martin plays the piano
         LEARNER: Does Martin play the piano?

-Functional-situational drills: the teacher practices the language of a function such as giving an advice.

Example: TEACHER: I´ve got a headache

LEARNER: You should take an aspirin

TEACHER: It´s raining

LEARNER: You should take an umbrella

One problem with drills is that learners can produce correct sentences without understanding what they say. We can add a meaning element to drills by varying the prompt, for example:

TEACHER: Pen

LEARNER: There is a pen on the table.

TEACHER: Book

LEARNER: There is a book on the table.

TEACHER: Floor…

Another problem with drill is that are limited in terms of keeping learner´s motivation because they are very repetitive. We can make drills more interesting by using simple stories.

The pictures below show a number of situations, which happened to a character called Albert when he took his girlfriend out for dinner.
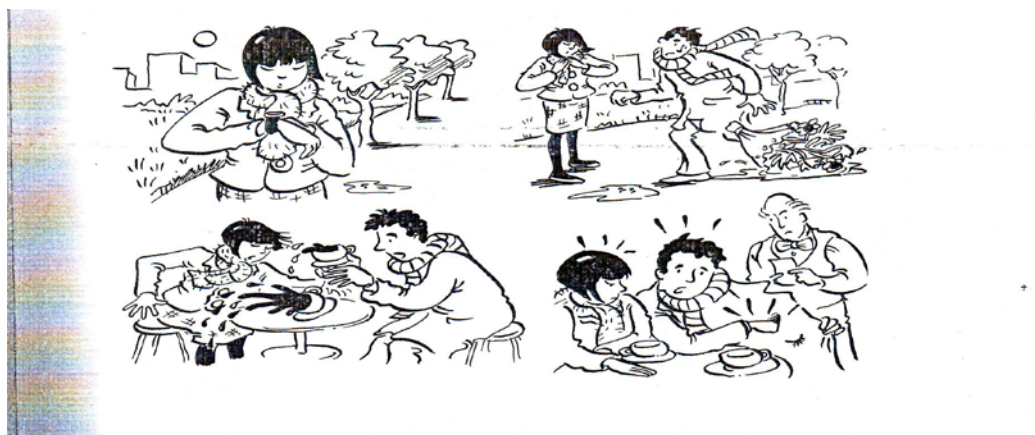
Using the pictures, it is possible to practice one way of expressing regret, for example:

Picture 1: He wished he hadn´t been late.

Picture 2: He wished he hadn´t dropped his flowers.

As well as getting practice in producing sounds and phrases accurately, learners need to be able to interact with each other.

There are also different activities with which students can interact with their classmates:

-Information gap activities: In this activity, students are supposed to be working in pairs. One student will have the information that the other partner does not have and the partners will share the information.

This kind of activity serves many purposes. Each partner plays an important role because the task cannot be completed if the partners do not provide the information the others need.
These activities are effective because everybody has the opportunity to talk.

There are different types of information gap activities such as:

  - Describe and draw: one student has a picture and has to describe it to a partner who tries to draw what he or she is describing.

  - Describe and arrange: students have to arrange objects according to instructions from a partner.

  - Describe and identify: students have to identify which picture their partner is describing.

  - Find the differences: is a funny activity where students have to find some differences describing a picture.

There are also two kinds of activities very useful for everyday life, they are "asking for information" and "asking for and giving directions".

- Asking for information: one learner has the information and the other needs to go from X to Y and asks the partner for the necessary information.

Student A	Departs	Arrives
Oxford → Heathrow Airport (bus)	08:30	10:15
London Heathrow → Tokyo Narita	13:00	06:30 (next day)
Student B	Departs	Arrives
Oxford → Heathrow Airport (bus)	_____	_____
London Heathrow → Tokyo Narita	_____	_____

- Asking and giving directions: one learner has certain places marked on a map and the other has different places marked.

Discussion activities

This kind of activities gives learners the opportunity to speak more freely and express themselves. It is helpful to structure a discussion activity by giving learners enough information about what they will be talking about and giving them enough time to think about what they want to say. Some examples could be:

-Surveys: Learners carry out a survey of their class on a topic they like. Learners can then talk about the results of the surveys in the class and discuss them. They are the best way to know likes and dislikes among classmates.

-Ranking activities: They consist of creating a list of items about any topic.

-Planning: They consist of planning activities for a special event or for a place and it is an enjoyable activity for students. An example would be for instance, planning a programme for a day out.

-Discussing and solving problems: The learners can talk about a topic (chosen by the teacher or by themselves) and then, they express possible solutions.

-Debates: Learners can be given a statement and they have to decide whether they agree or disagree and why.

<u>Role-plays</u>

Each learner acquires a personality or interprets a character and receives a card with some information about their role and the situation. In these activities, the teacher gives the information to the learners (cards) such as who they are and what they think or feel. With other learners or in a group, they then have to act out a situation as if they were people on their card. Here is an example:

CUSTOMER: You bought a shirt yesterday. When you got home, you noticed that there was a mark on the sleeve. You take it back to the shop. You do not want to buy another shirt; you want your money back.

MANAGER: You are the manager of the shop. Your policy is that you can only exchange clothes; you cannot give customers their money back. You always try to be polite to customers but you cannot change store policy without writing to head office.

SHOP ASSISTANT: You work in a shop. Yesterday a customer bought a shirt. You noticed that it had a mark on the sleeve so you told him/her and gave her/him

<u>Games</u>

Games are often useful to liven up a lesson. A typical example of speaking practice game is which is called: "I spy". This game consists of the teacher chooses something from the classroom, for example, the blackboard and says to the learners: "I spy with my little eye something beginning with "b", giving them only the first letter. The learners have to guess what it is.

Another game is "yes/no questions". The teacher thinks of a famous person and learners have to ask yes/no question to find out who the famous person is, for example, "Is he a man?" – Yes. "Can he dance?"- No.
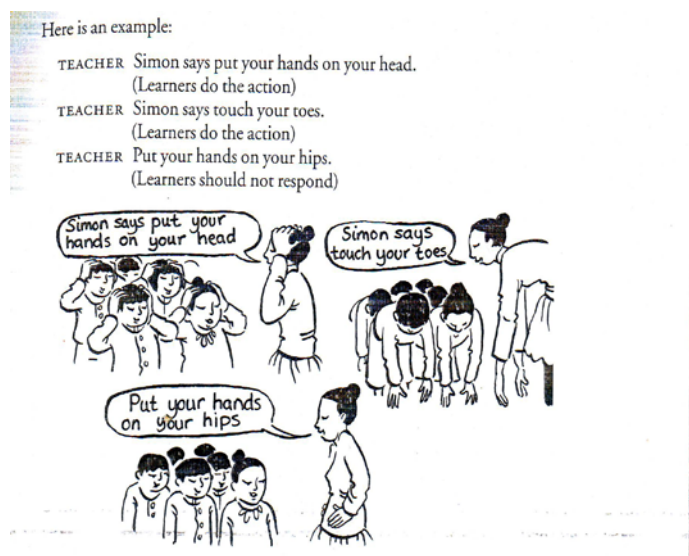
These plays can also be carried out in groups.

An useful and funny example is the game known as "Simon says". This game helps learners practice careful listening, vocabulary or just an energizer in the middle of the lesson. Keeping lessons lively and entertaining can be very motivating for learners.

In this game, learners must only respond to the command given if it is preceded by "Simon says". If the word "Simon says" is left out, then learners should not obey the

command and anyone who does is out of the game. The learners must respond quickly and correctly.

 The following example explains how to play this game:

Here is an example:

TEACHER Simon says put your hands on your head.
(Learners do the action)
TEACHER Simon says touch your toes.
(Learners do the action)
TEACHER Put your hands on your hips.
(Learners should not respond)

Speaking is a complex process that involves constructing a message in order to other people can understand and deliver the message using the correct pronunciation, stress and intonation. It also involves interaction and to do this, learners must be able to respond what other people say. At the same time, they need to be accurate and fluent enough for the other person to understand.

To be able to do all of this mentioned, students need lots of practice, encouragement and correction.

In order to exploit speaking, there are a lot of different activities to practice and reinforce it with students but the following ones shown below are examples, which allowed us to practice speaking during the English lessons and to carry out the study related to the students' attitudes and problems through speaking:

Activity 1: Experts (communication game)
Focus: controlled language processing

The class chooses four or five students to be a panel of "experts". They come and sit in a row facing the class. The class chooses a subject that the students are going to have to be experts on.

In pairs or groups, the class writes down some questions they want to ask the experts about the subject chosen. Te teacher can go round the class checking the questions and finally, one the questions have been prepared and written, they are put to the experts.

What makes this activity amusing is that each expert only says one word at a time so the sentence is gradually built up. There are some cases in which the experts do not know how to continue it and it can ramble on in ever more extreme contortions until someone is lucky enough or clever to be in a position to finish it (with just one word). The following example shows how it might begin:

Question: How do fish breathe?

Expert 1: The

Expert 2: answer

Expert 3: to

Expert 4: this

Expert 5: question

Expert 1: is

Expert 2: an

Expert 3: answer

Expert 4: that…

Etc.

"Experts" encouraged even reluctant speakers to speak, even if they only have to produce one word at a time. It keeps both experts and questioners engaged in the construction of utterances in a controlled environment.

Activity 2: Films (questionnaire)

Focus: lexis and grammar, interacting with others

Previously, the class has been working with the uses of present perfect and past simple tenses.

The teacher talks to the students about some of the most popular films that are currently on show. They are going to find out which film is the most popular in the class.

The teacher distributes the following questionnaire to the students and they have to fill in. In the left-hand column, they have to write the names of the films chosen:

Name of the film	Tick if seen	Good (++), satisfactory

		(+), bad (-) or very bad (- -)

When they have finished to fill in the questionnaire, the class can discuss the kind of questions they can use; for example, Have you seen X?, What did you think of it?.

Then, in pairs, students interview each other asking if they have seen the films and what they thought of them. They complete the charts with the partner´s answers.

Later, the results of the questionnaire are put on the blackboard. The teacher asks the students "How many people have seen X?" and "how many people thought that X was very good?" and they hand up their hand and express their opinions.

Activity 3: Whose line is it anyway (improvisation game)
    Focus: language processing and interacting with others

"Whose line is it anyway?" is a game taken from British Channel television and it is a challenging exercise for students. Two students sit at the front of the class and the teacher asks the rest of the class to say who each of the students is (e.g. a policeman, a nurse, a teacher, a president…). The pair of students, who are at the front of the classroom, might represent a policeman and a carpenter, for example, or any other combination of occupations.

The teacher, then, asks the students where a conversation between these two is taking place; they must suggest in a café, the street, a cinema or a beach.

Finally, the teacher asks the students what they are talking about. It could be about the speeding, a film, the childcare, football…
The two students playing the game have to improvise a conversation spontaneously. They win points based on how well they manage.

The game can be practiced in pairs before coming up to the front. Everything depends on the teacher-student relationship.

Activity 4: Rooms in a house (discussion)
          Focus: interacting with others

Students are shown the following information about a family who are going to move into a house:
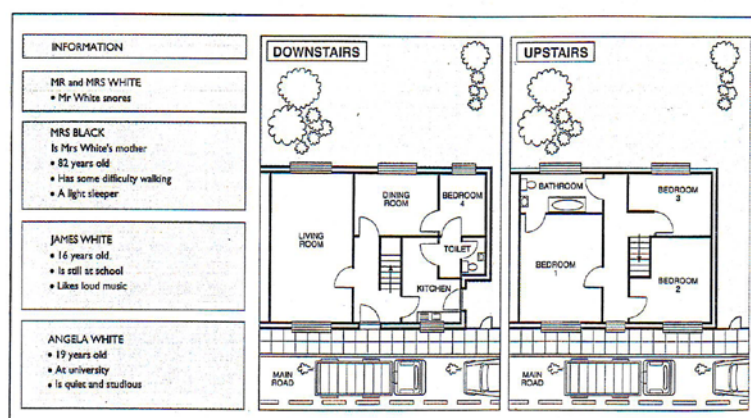
(New First Certificate Masterclass by S. Haines and B. Stewart (Oxford University Press)

Then, they have to decide which bedroom is the most suitable for each member of the family and they can also say how they might decorate and furnish their rooms.
This activity can be done in pairs, in groups or the whole class.

Activity 5: Travel agent (Role-play)
          Focus: interacting with others and information processing

In the previous classes, the students have been working in the area of tourism. In pairs, they are going to act out a scene in a travel agency, where one student will be the customer and the other, will be the travel agent.

The teacher gives the student A the following information:

A Customer

You want:
- a double room
- to go to a hotel in Miami for 7 nights (You can spend up to $1400 on a hotel.)
- to be as near as possible to the city centre
- to go to a hotel with a good discotheque
- a children's swimming pool for your small son
- someone to be available to look after your son at the hotel
- the hotel to serve good food
- a comfortable room (with a good view)

Student B is given the following hotel information and he/she has to explain it to the student A:

B Travel agent

Study the following information carefully so that you can answer A (the customer).

	Sun Inn	Regency Park	Paradiso	Oasis
Cost (double) per night	$180	$175	$210	$130
View	☺	☺☺	☺☺☺	☺☺
Distance from centre	10 miles	12 miles	20 miles	3 miles
Disco	☺	☺☺	☺☺☺	—
Restaurant	☺☺	☺☺☺	☺☺☺	
Adults' swimming pool	☺☺☺	☺	☺☺	☺
Children's swimming pool	☺	☺☺	☺☺☺	—
Childcare facilities	—	☺☺	☺	—

Note: Various features (e.g. view, discos, restaurants, etc.) have been given different 'smile' ratings to indicate quality.
☺☺☺ = excellent, ☺☺ = very good, and ☺ = good
As an example we can say that you get a better view if you're staying at the Paradiso than you do if you are staying at the Regency Park.

While students are acting out the scene in pairs, the teacher goes round listening or prompting if it is necessary.

Speaking is the easiest skill to integrate with the other skills. Almost every lesson starts with a speaking task as a way of introducing new vocabulary, eliciting what the students already know about the subject, getting their attention or making them think about the new topic.

Speaking also serves as an excellent follow-up activity. It may be a discussion after reading a text or doing a listening or as supplementary activity for a grammar exercise.

The examples mentioned above regarding to listening and speaking are only some examples of activities to practice and develop these skills, but it is important to highlight that there is a great amount of activities to carry out with the students and they are as useful as these.

4.1.3 INTEGRATING LISTENING AND SPEAKING

Due to the lack of time English teachers have per week for their subject, the best way to practice listening and speaking is integrating them. According to Bueno, Madrid and McLaren: " Listening is important for speaking because it establishes the good basis for successful communicative exchanges" (2006:344).

There are several activities that integrate listening-comprehension with speaking:
- Integrated skills work (jigsaw-listening, for example)
- Using video
- Using the language laboratory
- Using computers and CD-ROMs
- During games
- Using pop songs (probably the most popular listening activity with secondary students)
- Listening as homework

These activities integrate speaking because the songs, videos or listening text-topic is the springboard for a discussion, drill or pronunciation practice. Integrated activities also provide opportunities for much needed pupil behavioral-interaction described by Lynch (1997) earlier. Dictations integrate listening and speaking. Although they have not been very fashionable dictations are at the moment once again seen as relevant. Dictations may also be used as a means to evaluate pupil´s listening comprehension, as long as the scoring is carefully done.

Activities for integrating Listening with Speaking

Jigsaw Listening	This involves the pupils working together to share heard

	information. First two to four groups of pupils separately listen to different recording on the same subjects, i.e. the same journey with some differences in each version. A choice of various activities may follow, but for example one may be a tape script with spaces that the pupils have to fill in. They then tell it individually to a pupil from the other group (s) and try to find the differences. Of course, the paper is not used, as it is now the speaking skill that is highlighted for integration with the initial listening – comprehension and post-reading practice-.
Video Clips	Video clips may be watched and enjoyed and then be followed by a discussion on understanding the cultural information inherent in them. This may be highlighted and discussed.
Language laboratories	These offer not only an opportunity for the customary oral drills but also phonological recognition and discrimination, extensive listening and aural vocabulary recognition.
Using computers and CD-ROMs	Computers offer the possibility of being used at home as further-practice incorporating listening to English. CD-ROMs also have the audio facilities for listening-activity integration and so do some web pages.
Using pop songs	These are extremely popular at Secondary level, probably the most popular activity if the teacher knows how to select up-to-date songs that are also clearly pronounced, as well as being useful in some way didactically. Therefore what appears to be a gift to teaching English really has to be chosen with care. But when songs are chosen carefully, many skills can be integrated with them: sound to spelling recognition (via gap filling activities), aural practice, topics for discussion and debates, etc
Games	These work well because they are very much liked by secondary school pupils. What is more, as well as speaking, they integrate and revise vocabulary, topics, listening or parts of language, etc. teach set phrases needed like: "it´s my turn", "Can you repeat?", "I don´t understand". With this age group board games are especially popular, and are a

	fairly peaceful activity for the teacher to supervise.
Listening as homework	This is not so much about integrating speaking skills as further opportunity for listening-practie. Some schools have copies of cassettes, videos or films available for loan from their library. A special pupil-tape for extra practice accompanies some coursebooks.

(Bueno and McClaren, 2005: 318)

In the same way that a good writer is a good reader, a good speaker is also a good listener. This rule is generally applicable to L2 learners and it has to do with the correlation between productive (writing and speaking) and receptive (reading and listening) skills (Bueno, Madrid and Mclaren, 2005:344).

Second language learners, as implied in a special type of exchange, have to be provided with the appropriate input and output so that they have the opportunities to practice both skills at the same time. In this sense, a wide range of communicative exercises should be proposed in the classroom and these should be as varied as possible: between students, a student and the teacher, the students and the CD/computer, etc. in this sense, Brown et al. claim:

> It seems clear that pupils generally feel more at ease talking to each other than talking to a teacher or to some other adult (…) The advantage of talking to another individual who shares the same daily experiences which you have and sees them from a very similar point of view, is that you can take so much background knowledge for granted" (1984:36).

This quotation should make us reflect a little further on the conditions of stress our students will be under when practicing these skills. The teacher will aware of them, and will try to minimize the possibilities of making them feel uncomfortable with the situation. One way to reduce stress is to provide the students with visual cues:

Fig. 8.3.: *Listening and answering questions about pictures (McLaren and Madrid 1996:20)*

. What's in each picture? Listen and answer the questions.

1. HAVING LUNCH

(McLaren and Madrid 1996:20)

There are listening activities called "live listening". In these kind of activities, the teachers or visitors talk face to face with the students, which is a way of interaction to practice listening and learning about different accents, intonation, paralinguistic features…For example, if the teacher is reading aloud, this activity allows students to hear how English sounds clearly. Telling a story is a suitable material that provides listening material, students can predict what will happen or they can describe the characters in a story, it is a good way of improving vocabulary.

In pairs, they can also do an interview or a conversation. It is a good method because aside from listening, they are integrating speaking and it is a motivating activity when they think of their own questions or the subject is funny and interesting.

There are also activities with films, for example, where students can analyze some trailers or describe characters of their favourite scenes.

All of them are ideas of live listening, which are very useful for students and teachers in Secondary Education.

5. CONCLUSION

According to the results obtained, we can notice that listening and speaking competences are complex skills that need to be developed consciously. They can best be developed with practice in classroom through activities, which promote interaction between students.

This study has tried to show that it is easier to obtain students 'participation and motivation when the suggested materials are entertaining, original and surprising. The key is to motivate and change their negative attitude towards English giving students a chance to speak about interesting topics, which can result easy for them and for their level. How can teachers get that?

First of all, teachers should use the English language from Primary Education so, if pupils are accustomed to this language since an early age, it will be easier to communicate and understand English better and their fears will disappear.
Nowadays, there are few schools where teachers do this, and the results are very good although recently, the situation has improved due to the creation of bilingual schools and extra classes in English but it is still necessary do more for the future, if Spain wants to obtain similar levels of English as many other countries.

Day by day school life is when students really learn the mentioned skills previously. Sometimes, it is only when a child spontaneously uses vocabulary or expresses his own opinion related to a previous listening or reading aloud carried out in the classroom.

An idea would be giving pupils opportunities to use their speaking and listening skills in real life situations, giving them the sense of what they are learning in situations that they do not have in the classroom. For example, doing more activities outside school, participating in events or inviting people from an English speaking country as a way of comprehending its practical use.
Another way would be using new technologies, which are very useful and motivate the students because they consider them something different and funny.

It is desirable to say that teachers must support students in their education and encourage them to use English, and at the same time, teachers need to be in constant contact with new techniques and materials in this changeable teaching world.

Finally, teaching listening and speaking skills can be very different depending on the methodology followed by each teacher but what it is really important is to develop during the English lessons to get students learn the second language entirely.

Due to this, some suggestions have been offered, which can be put into practice during the lesson in order to motivate students to participate in class and to do interaction activities to develop listening and speaking skills.

These activities allow students to feel more comfortable and sure when they have to hold a conversation in English and they make the skills more effective in order to get a perfect acquisition of the second language, covering all the skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

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 200&pagename=PortalEducacion%2FCM_Actuaciones_FA
  %2FEDUC_Actuaciones

7. APPENDIXES:

Appendix 1

Questionnaire used for interviewing the students

Name:	School:	
Age:	Course/level:	
	YES	NO
1. Do you speak English with your teacher and classmates during your English lessons?		
2. Can you communicate in English?		
3. Can you understand a native speaker?		
4. Can you watch original version films (English) understanding the whole plot?		
5. Can you listen to a song in English and understand it?		
6. Do you work in pairs or groups to do interaction activities?		
7. Are you able to understand whatever accent of English? (American, British..)		
8. Do you think your pronunciation in English is good?		
9. Is it difficult for you to understand some colloquial expressions?		
10. Do you consider that the practice of listening and speaking skills are useful?		
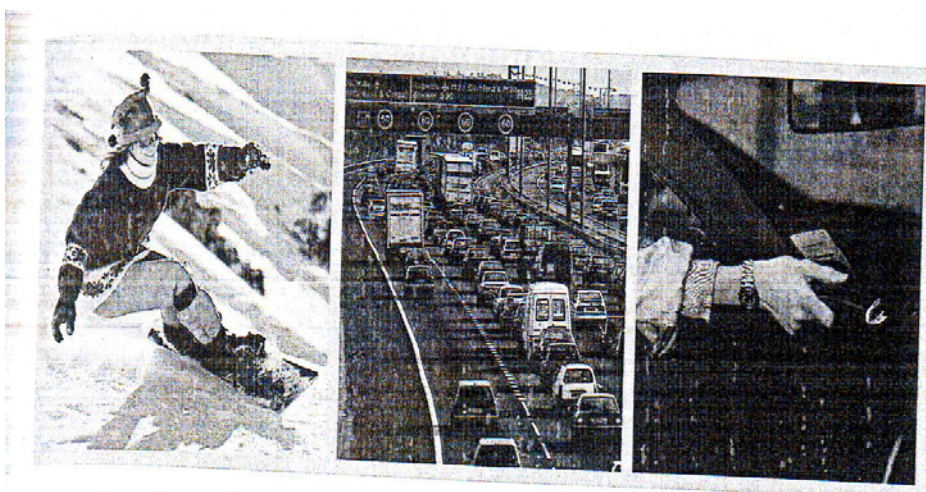
From *Lifelines Intermediate* by T Hutchinson (Oxford University Press)

They now listen to the tape to see if they were right. This is what they hear:

1 A Hello. Did you have a good holiday?
 B Well, yes and no.
 A Why? What was the problem?
 B My wallet was stolen.
 A No! That's a bit rough. How did that happen?
 B Oh, we stopped at this market and I was just sitting in the car when some people – a man and a woman, it was – came up. I thought they were selling things. Well, like a fool, I'd put my wallet on the dashboard. Anyway, these people came up to the car, and while I was talking to the man, the woman put her hand in and grabbed the wallet.
 A Goodness me! What did you do?
 B There wasn't much I could do. I was stunned. They just ran off into the crowd. Well, I reported it to the police, but they weren't much help.
 A Was there much money in it?
 B Yes, quite a bit, and my credit cards. But it was my own fault. I shouldn't have put it on the dashboard where people could see it. If I'd left it in my pocket, as I usually do, it wouldn't have happened.
 A Well, I hope it didn't spoil your holiday too much. Actually it reminds me of when we were on holiday a couple of years ago and …

2 A Hello, I haven't seen you around for a while. Have you been away?
 B Yes, we've been skiing in the States.
 A Oh yes, I remember you telling me you were going. Was it good?
 B Well, it was until the last few days.
 A Why? What happened?
 B Well, Tina decided that she wanted to have a go at snowboarding. You know this thing where you stand on, like a board.
 A Yes, I know.
 B Well, I thought it was a bit dodgy, but she wanted to do it. You know what kids are like. So she did. Well, anyway, she fell off and broke her arm.
 A Oh no. Poor Tina. Was she all right?
 B Yes, she was OK. The ambulance took her to the

hospital and they dealt with it. But then when I came to pay, I found that our insurance didn't cover us for snowboarding – only for skiing.
 A Blimey! So what did you do?
 B Well, what could I do? I had to pay for everything myself. It cost me an arm and a leg! You know what medical costs are like in the States.
 A I hear they're rather expensive.
 B You're telling me! Well, I suppose I should have checked the insurance policy before she went snowboarding, but I blame the insurance company. I mean lots of people go snowboarding these days.
 A Well, funnily enough, something similar happened to a friend of mine. His son wanted to go snowboarding and …

3 A Hi. Welcome back. Have you had a good time?
 B Well, we did when we finally got there.
 A What do you mean?
 B Well, we only missed the flight, didn't we?
 A No! How did you manage that?
 B We got stuck in a traffic jam on the way to the airport and by the time we got there the flight had already left.
 A Oh dear.
 B It was all John's fault. We should have set off earlier. But you know what he's like – everything at the last minute. I mean, it would have been all right if the road had been clear, but it wasn't, so …
 A So what happened?
 B Well, the tour company got us on another flight later in the day. So we had to wait for 12 hours at the airport and then when we arrived it was too late to get to our hotel, so we had to book into another hotel at the airport for the night.
 A But you got there in the end?
 B Yes, but I was not in too good a mood by then, I can tell you.
 A I'm not surprised. We missed a flight once, but it wasn't because of the traffic. We …

Appendix 3

<u>BABY" – JUSTIN BIEBER</u>

(Ohh wooaahhh) x3

You know you _____ me
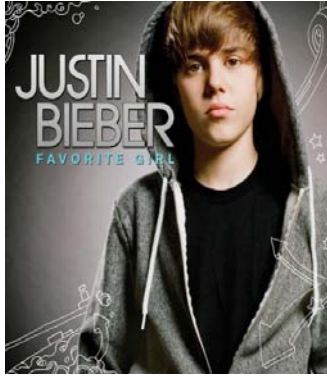
I know you care

Just shout whenever,

And I'll be there

_____ want my love

You want my _____

And we would _____, ever, ever be apart

_____ we an item?

Girl quit _____

We're just _____,

What are you _____?

Said there's another as you look right in my eyes

My _____ love, broke my heart for the first _____

And I was like

Baby, baby, baby ooh

Like

Baby, baby, baby noo

Like

Baby, _____, baby ohh

I thought you'd always be mine (mine)

Baby, baby, baby ohh

Like

Baby, baby, baby noo

Like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

I thought you'd _____ be mine (mine)

Oh oh For you, I would have done whatever

And I just can't believe we ain't together

And I wanna _____ it cool

But I'm _____ you

I'll buy you anything

I'll buy you any _____

Cause I'm in pieces

Baby fix me

And just shake me till you wake me from this bad dream

I'm _____ down, down, down, down

And I just can't believe my first love won't be around

And I'm like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

Like

Baby, baby, baby noo

Like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

I thought you'd always be mine (mine)

Baby, baby, baby ohh

Like

Baby, baby, baby noo

Like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

I thought you'd always be mine (mine)

(Luda)

When I was _____, I had my first love

_____ was nobody compared to my baby

And nobody came between us, no one could ever come above

She had me _____ crazy, oh I was star-struck,

She woke me up daily, don't need no Starbucks(Woo!)

She made my heart pound, I skip a beat when I see her in the _____

And at _____ on the playground but I really wanna see her on the weekend

She knows she got me dazing cuz she was so _____

And now my heart is breaking but I just keep on _____...

Baby, baby, baby ohh

Like

Baby, baby, baby noo

Like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

I thought you'd _____ be mine (mine)

Baby, baby, baby ohhh

Like

Baby, baby, baby, noo

Like

Baby, baby, baby ohh

I thought _____'d always be mine (mine)

I'm gone

Yeahh, yeah, yeah

Yeahh, yeahhh

_____ I'm all gone

Yeahh, yeah, yeah

Yeahh, yeahhh

Now I'm all _____

Yeahh, yeah, yeah

Yeahh, yeahhh

Now I'm all gone, gone, gone, gone

I'm gone