




## Article Original


### A System of Exercises for the Development of Oral Expression in Eleventh Graders at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo

Sistema de ejercicios para el desarrollo de la expresión oral en el onceno grado en el Preuniversitario Julio Antonio Mella de Manzanillo

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#### Abstract

This article is the result of a research that contributes to the necessity of improving oral expression in eleventh graders at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo. It suggests a system of exercises that contributes to the solution of the scientific problem by means of its application in the English lessons. The research is important because it helps to improve the teaching learning process of English at this level, that is, it permits to develop students' oral expression in a practical way. The novelty consists on the implementation of the system of exercises to guarantee the process of communication in the foreign language.

**Keywords:** oral expression; eleventh grade; system of exercises; practical.

#### Resumen

La investigación contribuye a la necesidad de mejorar la expresión oral en los estudiantes del onceno grado en el IPU: Julio Antonio Mella de Manzanillo. La misma sugiere un sistema de ejercicios que contribuye a la solución del problema científico a través de su aplicación en las clases de inglés. Es importante porque ayuda a perfeccionar el proceso de enseñanza-

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aprendizaje del inglés en ese nivel, o sea, permite el desarrollo de la expresión oral de los estudiantes de forma práctica. La novedad consiste en la implementación del sistema de ejercicios, el cual garantiza el proceso de comunicación en la lengua extranjera.

**Palabras claves:** expresión oral; onceno grado; sistema de ejercicios; práctico.

### **Introduction**

The National System of Education in Cuba includes the teaching of English as a foreign language for the integral formation of the future generations. The continuous interaction with different sources of information, the use of the new technologies, the contact with the environment and the insertion in a globalized world, demand the mastery of this foreign language either orally or written. The first one is precisely the field on which this work is centered.

At the end of 1990, the teaching of English increases in importance; a series of experiments are made and applied in different educational contexts for a better teaching. As the results are successful, it is decided to begin the teaching of this language using the communicative approach.

So, teachers from Senior High Schools have to prepare themselves linguistically and methodologically in order to be competent professionals in their task. For this reason, it is necessary to consider that the teaching of foreign languages, as well as the Marxist-Leninist approach of education, needs the formation offered by Psychology as a result of the application of the scientific methods necessary to analyse the psychic activity developed in the process of acquiring a language.

Psychologists from socialist countries use the theory of verbal activity. This theory, based on the general theory formulated by Vigotsky, Leontiev and their followers, constitutes the point of departure for the Marxist Psychology. The verbal activity is composed by four aspects: Listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In the teaching learning process of English at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo, the four aspects of verbal activity are taught, but the authoress of this investigation considers that there must be an emphasis in developing oral expression in students to achieve the establishment of the listening and speaking mechanisms. This priority means that the oral

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language is first introduced and the written one is taught taking into consideration what students have learned orally.

One of the most fundamental principles of the teaching of English as a foreign language at this level is the communicative orientation and its combination with the conscious character of learning, taking into consideration the formation of values in each lesson and the development of exercises with a communicative approach.

Nevertheless, there is not a well-designed program for the teaching of this language; the exercises need more precision to contribute to the development of the four aspects of verbal activity and reproductive exercises prevailed, so the students just develop short conversations already practiced in class and they sometimes are not motivated to study the language.

The analysis of this situation permits the authoress to consider the following limitations in the teaching learning process of English at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School:

- The students have not developed the necessary abilities to communicate in English spontaneously.
- They are afraid of speaking in front of the class.
- There is a lack of coherence, intonation and fluency when expressing orally.

Taking this as a point of departure, the objective of this article is to highlight the importance of using practical exercises to develop oral expression in eleventh graders at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo.

### **Population and Sample**

For the development of the investigation it is taken a population of 120 students from eleventh grade and the two English teachers from Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo. The sample is taken intentionally; it constitutes 29 students from group #2, it represents the 34.8 % of the population. The two teachers are also part of the sample.

### **Analysis of the results**

In order to give a solution to the limitations above mentioned, a varied bibliography is studied. The following authors are consulted: Rogova (1986), Canale, and Swain (1980), Finocchiaro, and Brumfit (1983), Antich de León (1986), Giovannini (1996), Byrne (1989), Leontiev (1975), Vigotsky (1978), among others.

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It was corroborated that oral expression is related to the individual sounds, utterances and specific patterns of speech, melody, referred to as intonation, and patterns of recurrence of stress, referred to as the rhythm of the language. Oral expression is one of the predominant ways that people use to transmit an amount of information in a short period of time in a precise way, well structured, and organized in a coherent way. Oral expression is also one of the ways of the verbal act by means of which oral communication is developed.

“Verbal activity is considered as a linguistic sign which turns in object of study, and a means of communication; the process of reception and transmission of information which constitutes not only the object of study, but also objectives in term of results in teaching foreign languages; and communicative situation, which is part of the content, it is at the same time, the condition for teaching not only the linguistic system but the communication process in itself” Leontiev (1975).

From the methodological point of view, it is of great importance the results of the verbal activity in the teaching of oral expression; it may be defined as an action of giving answering question to the speaker. Being this action an internal expression or not; whether it would be carried out in an immediate way or not. This result is manifested in the reaction of the speaker which is materialized in the interaction with other people.

Antich de León (1988) states that the exercises guided to develop oral expression can be classified, selected and elaborated according to given abilities present in the exercises for the development of linguistic skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). In this research it is assumed the definition of speaking exercises provided by González (2009).

“They are the ones aimed at developing communicative skills in the students and they must be frequently used in the English lessons” (González, 2009, p. 251).

After the analysis of this situation, the authoress of this work decides to carry out the research giving an answer to the following question: How to develop oral expression in eleventh graders at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo?

For this reason, the teaching learning process of English oral skills in eleventh grade at this school is where the research is developed. The objective is to design a set of exercises for the development of oral expression in eleventh graders at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo.

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In this grade, the methodological treatment of the contents are made upon the basis of the presentation of the communicative functions in a situational - communicative context, that reflects on the meaning and use of those functions, as well as the linguistic structures through which they are expressed.

The English subject in eleventh grade should propitiate the development of communicative skills in English and to express about their social, family, and school life using the basic structures of the different tenses studied in the previous grades. The syllabus actually reveals the importance of the teaching of English for a communicative purpose, therefore it suggests the development of the skills integrally and at the same time it gives importance to the development of the speaking skill.

In an interview to the English teachers, who have enough experience in both, working at the intermediate level (8 years) and teaching in eleventh grade (4 courses). They knew very well the abilities of the language they were supposed to teach in this grade. They also pointed out that the four abilities are quite important, but oral expression is the outstanding one. Finally, they affirmed that writing and speaking are the most difficult ones, but they insisted that speaking is still more polemic to master because it is the one learners are more demanded to cope with.

The 100% of the teachers said that students did not speak English very well; it means that their oral abilities were not strengthened. They also answered that the materials designed for the grade do not contain exercises that guarantee the development of oral expression and it is very difficult for them to correct all the mistakes to the students because the most important thing is to communicate in the foreign language.

Observation to seven lessons:

No	Indicators	Quantity of lessons	%
1	The students expressed spontaneously	0	0
2	They pronounced correctly	1	14,3

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3	There were afraid of speaking	6	85,7
4	An appropriate vocabulary is used by students	4	57,1
5	There was creativeness and independence	1	14,3
6	The teacher corrected students' pronunciation and grammatical mistakes	2	28,6
7	The teacher used language games or any other dynamic activity	1	14,3
8	The teacher used motivating teaching aids	1	14,3
9	Exercises to develop the speaking skill were used	3	42,9

It was also applied a survey to know students' opinion about the development of skills in the English lessons. Nine students (31, 0%), stated they did not like the English lessons because they did not understand the language and it was very difficult for them to speak. Nineteen students (65, 5%), stated their teachers rarely corrected their mistakes when speaking. Seven students (24, 1%), were afraid of speaking in front of the class because the rest made fun of them when they mispronounced words or expressions.

On the other hand, eleven students (37, 9%), stated they preferred exercises to develop oral expression, meanwhile nine (31, 0 %), preferred the ones that develop reading, Seven (24, 1%), preferred listening exercises and two of them (6,9 %), preferred written exercises.

The system of exercises is supported by the theory of communication, in which language is used as a means of communication, that is, the exercises permit the development of oral expression in a communicative way. The students speak each other and develop habits and oral skills that contribute to the learning process, thus, to the formation of their personality.

For the development of the exercises the authoress used productive methods, all of them were prepared taking into consideration contexts that contribute to the development of the logical

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thinking and of course, to students’ oral expression. The authoress suggests its use for the drilling lessons although the exercises can be used and adapted to any other contexts.

The system was composed by 10 exercises from the three levels of assimilation: recognition, reproductive and application. All of them were prepared taking into consideration communicative contexts in which the students work either in pairs or team work. All of these contributed to the development of the logical thinking, and of course, to students’ oral expression.

Examples of exercises that can be used

Exercise # 1

Objective: To identify the sound in final position according to its pronunciation.

Skill: Listening and speaking.

Communicative function:

- Talk about the past.

Duration time: 10 minutes.

Procedure: The teacher reads some regular verbs in past, and the students listen carefully. They have to identify the sounds and place the verbs in the correct column. Finally, they practice the verbs in the model dialogue.

Instruction of the exercise:

- a) Listen to the following verbs and say to what column they belong according to their final pronunciation. Be ready to practice them in a conversation.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
/d/	/t/	/ld/

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List: Ordered, loved, watched, liked, needed, trained, played, practiced, studied, exploited, explored, and washed, among others.

b) Listen and repeat the following conversation.

A: Hi, what did you do last night?

B: I practiced football in the morning, studied History in the afternoon and watched T.V at night. What about you?

A: I just visited my girlfriend.

Suggestions: Write first the three sounds on the board. Have the students identify them placing the verbs in the correct column. Then, copy the dialogue on the board, read it several times and have the students practice.

Form of evaluation: Oral

Exercise # 4

Objective: To substitute the verbal forms in present by their past forms in the communicative context the actions take place.

Skill: Speaking and writing.

Communicative functions:

- Talk about the past.

Duration time: 15 minutes.

Procedure: The teacher orients to copy the exercise and tells the students to be ready to complete the spaces in blank in order to play roles later.

Instruction of the exercise: Complete the following conversation using the correct form of the verb in past. Then, act it out with a classmate.

A: Hello, What \_\_\_\_\_(do) you do yesterday?

B: I \_\_\_\_\_ (play) football with my father in the afternoon and we \_\_\_\_\_ (prepare) a delicious diner at night. What about you?

A: I \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) home and \_\_\_\_\_ (study) all day.

B: Did you practice the song for the concert?



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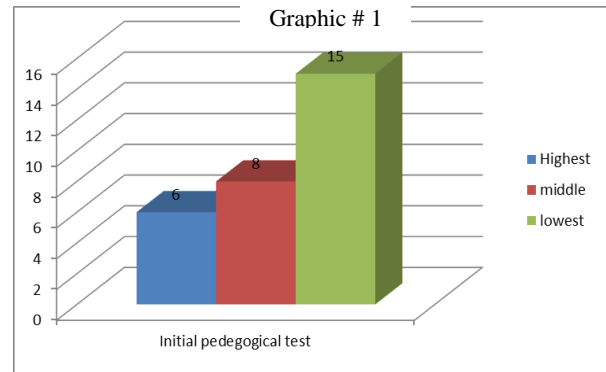
A: Yes. I \_\_\_\_\_ (practice) it several times.

Suggestions: Have the students copy, give some time to develop the exercise, check the mistakes in writing and pronunciation.

Form of evaluation: Orally and written.

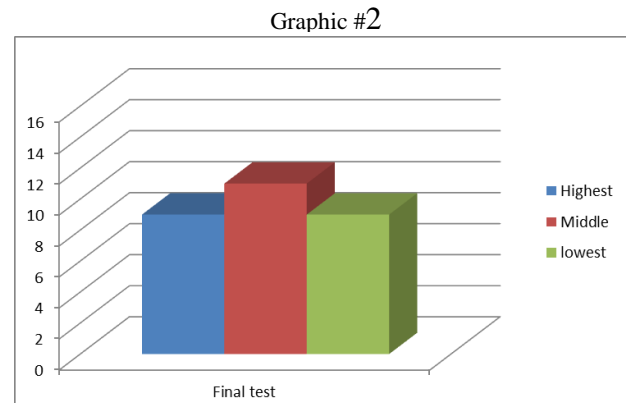
In the rest of the exercises the students continue practicing developing more complex exercises.

With the application of the system of exercises the students of the sample suffered significant changes taking into account the criteria used to evaluate the indicators previously stated. It was applied a pre-test (graphic # 1) to confirm the initial situation about the development of oral expression in the sample. The post-test was also applied after the application of the exercises to corroborate their effectiveness by mean of the comparison of the two tests.

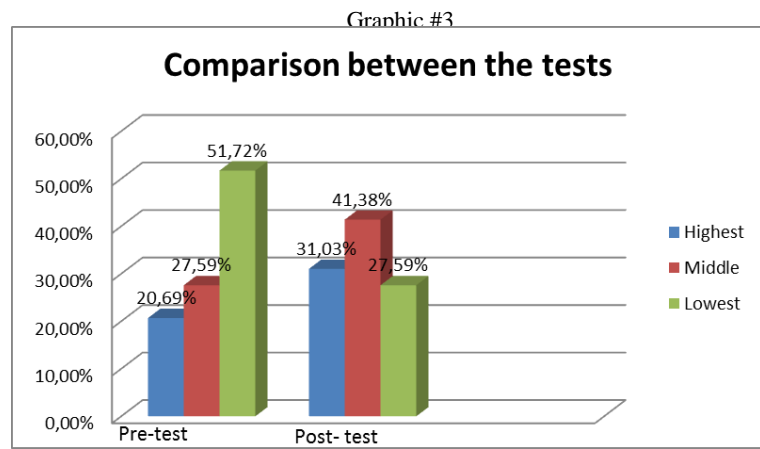


In the post-test: (graphic #2)

- In the first question, items a and b were answered correctly by the 100% of the students, in the case of item c, the whole answered correctly the yes-no question, and the majority justified with the required elements.
- In the third question just the 24, 1 % did not create their own dialogues, but the results applying the grammar and vocabulary studied were better. Although they communicated using an incorrect intonation and coherence, they were not afraid of speaking.



These results corroborate the effectiveness of the set of exercises because at the time of making a



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comparison between the two tests, it can be stated that it has been favoured the development of oral expression in the students of the sample; they also are significant. *Graphic # 3*

Generally speaking, most of the exercises applied got a high level of acceptance because during their application there was an active participation, all the students exchanged information either orally or written and they used the language in different contexts. In addition, it guaranteed dynamism in the lessons and favoured the fixation of the new linguistic material, so the development of oral expression in the foreign language took place in an active and practical way.

### Conclusions

1. Oral expression is one of the ways of the verbal act by means of which oral communication is developed. It is a relevant skill to interact with people of different countries, therefore, its teaching must be improved in the different levels of education in Cuba.
2. The limitations corroborated in the diagnosis applied to the students at Julio Antonio Mella Senior High School in Manzanillo were solved by means of the system of exercises elaborated in this research. The results of the proposal confirm its effectiveness.

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