

## **Interviews as an Activity to Improve the English in the B.A. in English Program**

### **Las Entrevistas como Actividad de Clase para Mejorar la Habilidad Oral en Inglés.**

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#### **Abstract**

This reflection paper has as the purpose to propose the interview as an activity in the subject of Public Speaking at the program B.A. in English from La Gran Colombia University, because this can encourage the verbal skills in the students in the process of teacher training. To do this, the professor who led the Public Speaking course in the first semester in 2015 was interviewed, with the purpose of analyzing his strategies and how he applies them in the class. As well, an analysis was conducted through interviews with students of the B.A. in English who gained experience in programs and led in 2013 (Culture & Language) 2014 (Culture and English) by State University Missouri and the Faculty of Education.

The data collected showed that students who participated in the programs needed to practice more English language. Likewise the analysis determined that around the downtown branch of La Gran Colombia University immersion processes can be generated with tourists visiting the historical center of the Colombian capital. Furthermore, the effectiveness is shown there to interview foreigners whose mother tongue is English as a classroom activity to improve verbal English proficiency. Thus, students are immersed in an English-speaking context and they lose the fear of speaking overcoming the weaknesses that exist to learn this skill.

**Key Words:** *Bogota, class activity, interview, Missouri, verbal skills.*

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## **Resumen**

Este artículo de reflexión tiene por objetivo proponer la entrevista como actividad en la asignatura *Public Speaking* en el programa de licenciatura en inglés de la Universidad La Gran Colombia, debido a que puede llegar a fomentar en los estudiantes en proceso de formación pedagógica la habilidad oral en inglés. Para ello, se entrevistó al docente el cual dirigió la asignatura *Public Speaking* en el primer semestre del año 2014, como objetivo de analizar las estrategias e implementación de ellas en las actividades de la clase. Se realizó un análisis a través de entrevistas a los estudiantes de la licenciatura en inglés a partir de la experiencia vivida en los programas liderados en el año 2013 (Culture & Language) y 2014 (Culture and English) por la Universidad Estatal de Missouri y la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación.

Mediante la recolección de datos se evidenció que los estudiantes que participaron en los programas necesitaban practicar más el idioma inglés. De igual manera se determinó en el análisis que alrededor de la sede centro de la Universidad la Gran Colombia se puede generar procesos de inmersión con los turistas que llegan al centro histórico de la capital colombiana. Además, se muestra la efectividad que existe al entrevistar a los extranjeros cuya lengua materna es inglés como actividad de clase para el mejoramiento de la habilidad oral en el inglés. Así, los estudiantes se sumergen en un contexto de habla inglesa y pierden el miedo al hablar superando las debilidades que existen al aprender esta habilidad.

**Palabras Clave:** *Actividad de clase, Bogotá, habilidad oral, Missouri.*

## **Introduction**

Nowadays in Colombia the English teachers must be trained to educate people to master the English language correctly. To achieve this, the teachers are obligated to have English proficiency and they have to be competent communicatively in English as a foreign language. The effective communication comes as a result of frequent training. The world is globalized, in addition the teachers have to fulfil all those challenges that this phenomenon makes. This calls for a reflection about the academic processes in the B.A. in English students from La Gran Colombia University, since they are training to be English teachers.

In this context the National Bilingual Colombian Program 2015 – 2025 (Colombia Very Well), seeks to improve the English level in the Colombian population innovating the development of the competences in the foreign languages. This is the task that the future English teachers have. Therefore, the college of education from La Gran Colombia University educates those future teachers to achieve those objectives. These students in teaching training, must have high abilities in the foreign language. For this reason, this research focuses on the verbal skills.

In the immersion courses named English & Culture 2013 and Language & Culture 2014, conducted by the English Language Institute (ELI) from Missouri State University in Springfield, Missouri in the United States of North America, it was detected that in the different activities given by the institute there was one that was most relevant to this research, practicing the verbal skills through interviews with people whose their mother tongue is English. This allowed to the students to understand the culture and overcome their current fears to express their ideas in English.

Finally, it is concluded that the effectivity of the interview as an activity for the improvement of the verbal skills taking into account the testimonies and the evidences taken by the students that participated in the immersion program in the years 2013 and 2014 who state that the activity helped them to improve their spoken language, additionally, they say what they did previously, during and after the activity.

## **General Objective**

- To propose the interview as a class activity in the Public Speaking subject of the B.A. in English program from La Gran Colombia University because this can foster verbal skills in English with students in teaching training.

## **Specific Objectives**

- To identify the activities of the subjects that were made in the immersion course at Missouri State University which promotes the verbal skills in English with the students that participated in the programs English & Culture 2013 and Language & Culture 2014.
- To select one subject from the B.A. in English program related with the subject Speaking & Pronunciation from the course English & Culture 2013 and Language & Culture 2014.
- To analyse the relationship between the subject Speaking & Pronunciation B from Missouri State University and the subject selected in the B.A. in English program from La Gran Colombia University.

## **Problem Statement**

A report of the Centro Virtual de Noticias –CVN (2006) from the Education Ministry of Colombia argued that in Colombia people do not speak in English. This report poses facts such as in Colombia only 450,000 (1%) of the Colombian people have an intermediate English level of a total of 48,320,000 people. This statistic poses a problematic situation in Colombia, while the Education Ministry shows in the “Guia 22” a project to improve the English level in Colombia by 2019, but according to the statistics the current level has not been improved since the report of CVN in 2006.

To this need, the Education Ministry of Colombia modified the “Guia 22” with the law number 1651 established by the congress of Colombia in 2013 which states “The development of conversational skills, reading and writing at least in one foreign language” (Page1). From this law

the national government started to make strategies to support and fulfil this law that regulates bilingualism in Colombia. The document is named as “Colombia Very Well” issued by the Education Ministry of Colombia (MEN, 2013). It shows that studying English is important. The personal development is mentioned and it is understood as the cognitive development, leading to better job opportunities and studies abroad. In addition, the social development is reflected in the cultural exchange and accesses the language worked from the equity and the inclusion in all the socio-economic levels, finally the language proficiency makes the economic growth in which promotes business development in the country due to its easy access.

The students in teaching training in foreign language from La Gran Colombia University have daily opportunities available to improve their English level. One of the problems observed in disciplinary classes in the B.A. in English program is the poor participation of the students which is a problem that is witnessed in the B.A. in English students, a fact that get to the fear of public speaking. These circumstances may stem from two facts:

- Not being taken into account by the teacher.
- The speaking skills are not great enough for students to feel fluent.

According to Esposito (2000) “We are afraid that we cannot control what people see about us when we are on display in front of an audience.” (p. 118). The fear of speaking is a factor of being inhibited, and as this is a usual problem in the second language learning process. For this reason the B.A. in English program from La Gran Colombia University has the task of making new techniques and activities in the classroom in order to solve it. Therefore, the elective course Public Speaking is taken as reference in this research. This can provide support to improve verbal skills in students when the interview is used as a class activity.

So, the research question that follows is posed to place emphasis on the searching of the solution of the problem; the inhibition at the moment of speaking the foreign language and to strengthen the verbal skills in the students in teaching training in English from La Gran Colombia University.

*How to use the interview as a classroom activity to improve oral proficiency in the English language students in teaching training course from La Gran Colombia University?*

## Theoretical Framework

Law 1651 from the Education Ministry of Colombia (MEN), which puts forward the bilingualism in Colombia, should be taken as a reference when setting the basic framework of competences in foreign language acquisition. This acts as a guide to promote the plan for bilingualism with the purpose of giving a fundamental tool to Colombian society in a globalized world. The document announces the general structure of proficiency levels of the language that the Colombian population is supposed to have and this is determined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, called in its acronym (CEFR) and relating them to the given names in Colombia. The education level aspired to be developed in the language and finally a comparison of the goals obtained in 2013 and those that are proposed for 2025. (Figure 1).

Proficiency level taken from the CEFR	Common name in Colombia	Educational level that is expected to be developed in the language	Goals proposed in 2015
A1	Beginner	Grades 1 to 3	
A2	Basic	Grades 4 to 7	
B1	Pre Intermediate	Grades 8 to 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum level of 100% of the graduated people from high school.</li> </ul>
B2	Intermediate	University and colleges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum level of graduated people from colleges or universities of any career.</li> </ul>

C1	Pre Advanced	University and colleges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum level of graduated people from B.A. in languages programs.</li> </ul>
C2	Advanced	University and colleges.	

**Figure 1.** Common European Framework, modified by the author.

This research takes as a reference the Pre Advanced Level, i.e. the C1 level from the CEFR which is the minimum required proficiency level for language teachers and at the same time for La Gran Colombia University's B.A. in English program, which it has recently added in its curriculum.

It is relevant to know the characteristics that the CEFR has about the C1 level which is named Effective Operational Proficiency. The C1 level shows the appropriate competence level to practice the language in a fluent way. Also, in the global scale it is characterized because the student is able to understand long texts with a high level of difficulty and the student also verbally expresses himself fluently without demonstrating when having a conversation with someone. This is the goal that newly graduated English teachers from the B.A. program have to fulfill in the National Bilingual Colombian Program of the Ministry of Education of Colombia for becoming communicatively competent.

## **Verbal Skills**

Since the beginning of the prehistory, humans tried to build languages starting from different semantic fields. Communicating among phonemes is necessary to transmit messages and ideas to the society, Verderber (2000) says that: “Public speaking is a way of training, because the proficiency of the skills in speech allow to communicate even complex information” (p. 2), in this way verbal skills gives the person access to influence the activities and behaviors of others; Furthermore, the author talks about a perspective in which the speaking skill is identified as a skill,

being the speaking as the ideas transmitter because “ the speaker is the source or creator of the message in the communication, the speech and the language of the speaker depend on his/her experiences, feelings and nature.” (p. 3). In other words, the author identifies that the speaker is the transmitter of the message depending on a series of psychopedagogical factors that help to transmit ideas and concepts to the receptor.

Thereby, the communication is effective when there is persuasion and interest for knowing what is being told, throughout the verbal and nonverbal communication it is possible to perceive the attitude of the speaker and their persuasion. Moreover, Verderber (2000) defines the motivation as the force that pushes the person to start a behavior, so speaking in a foreign language is a challenge not only because the person has to learn how to speak but must also learn how to use it adequately. Martin Bygate (2003) says that this task is more difficult when using a foreign language, and it is necessary to have a certain level of vocabulary and grammar. The learner must have semantic, pragmatic and grammatical theoretical knowledge, but this knowledge is not enough if the learner wants to use the spoken language.

Speaking is an action that starts beyond the theory because verbal skills have with meaningful bases to this can be practiced, for instance learning English as a foreign language has been considered difficult, but the students have to look for tools such as conversation groups or methods with music to improve verbal skills in the foreign language, although those tools may be used with immersion programs.

Although the natural approach is designed to develop basic skills, it was unfortunately not developed to teach academic learning skills (Krashen, 1995). In the immersion process the approach is defined by the input because it states that when the student is surrounded in an English spoken context his language learning process is more feasible. However, Krashen (1995) established some goals to the approach giving to showing common topics that are used in the colloquial language like the school, the hotel, giving personal information, food, plans, obligations, tourism, shopping experiences, etc. Those topics and activities could be used for conversation with people whose mother tongue is English.

## **Sociolinguistic**



The socio-linguistic aspect in foreign language learning and in the use of spoken language pretends to give a practical idea in the function of language:

Those studies have an interdisciplinary appeal and they pretend to give into account the communicative behavior, explaining how cultural systems are part of, how they work in each context and how they are related with the other types of social conduct (Moreno, 1994, p. 112)

In the Magazine called “Aportes de la Sociolingüística en la Enseñanza de las Lenguas”, Moreno (1994) gives a contribution about the ethnography of the communication as a feedback process in the practice of the language which is made by means of the observation of communicative facts. From this point, cultural aspects are shown which are taken from the origin country of each interviewer, and the social aspects are used in the use of the language.

According to the Common European Framework (2001), the socio-linguistics are focused on the social expressions used in the language, its expression depend on the culture of the society too. For instance; greeting, farewell, formal and non-formal language “Sociolinguistic competence is concerned with the knowledge and skills required to deal with the social dimension of language use” (p 118).

### **The Interview as a Conversation Method**

According to the above information, a technique that could be proposed for the improvement of verbal skills in English is the interview. This technique fulfills the parameters established by the natural approach that Krashen (1985) proposes. At the moment that a person is listening to the speaking of another language, totally different of the learner’s first language, immediately the brain starts to turn to the foreign language and this can understand and provide an answer to the message. Moreover the natural approach has a deep implication with the input hypothesis which Krashen (1985) states that not only the speaking skill is the only way to handle a language, listening and reading are important too, the way the student listens is the same way they can produce a message.

In this section, the research method “the interview” could be analyzed which could be get beyond of a data collection like Nunan (1992) defines it. The interview is a conversational method which is quite important and helpful for overcoming inhibitions because it helps starting a conversation in English by asking about any topic of the interviewer’s and interviewee’s interest.

From the moment that the interview is being developed there will not be enough time to structurally organize a sentence or try to translate literally what the other person said, therefore the interview get that he or she tries to be understood even if some mistakes are presented then these can be corrected in a natural way.

Taking surveys gives your students practice in the following areas of acquisition and use of content area vocabulary, preparation of a survey, interaction and negotiation of meaning with English-speaking peers, construction of oral questions, construction of a chart synthesizing information, record information accurately. (Haynes, 2004. p. 1).

At the moment that the students are in the interview, a process of assimilation starts in the context and in the environment, this is designated as the sociolinguistic process.

The students and teachers are not only interested in speaking and listening to how others speak, but also in exploring the intentions and the reference frameworks, as well as the relation of the other participants in the dialogue (Kramsch, 1993. p. 28).

In the bellow picture it is shown a student who took the immersion program in 2014 taking the interview as the activity to improve the Verbal skills to an English speaker (Image 1).



**Image 1.** Student doing the interview  
Taken by Nielsen J (2014)

Kramersch (1993) starts from the moment in which the students begin the identification of the language process, this identification part allows to get to the analytic point and then to the assimilation which the students who learn a foreign language identify with the context and they start to create their own expressions taken from the environment in which they are immersed because “the language students can start using not only as imperfect native speakers, but as speaker of their own way” (Kramersch 1993. p 28).

### **Class Activity**

The teacher’s role and the student’s role is reflected in the practicum between the teaching and learning. To achieve this it is proposed to generate class activities which must be reflected in the topics given in the lesson plan “any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language class for realizing lesson objectives” (Brown 2000. p. 16). However, the activity compares the student’s action with the knowledge acquired. Thus, the learning study of the foreign language, the class activities have to be created thinking in the four skills in English.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Focus**

The intention of this research is to identify the issues which are involved in the process of the verbal skills in the English language learning, as; fear of speaking, mispronunciations, and not being fluent. These factors are showed commonly in the language learning process that is why the information can be extracted deeply.

At the same time, this research intends to give solutions to improve the verbal skills in the learning process of English as a foreign language in the *Public Speaking* subject, which is offered in the English degree program of La Gran Colombia University. It can be helpful to implement the interview as an activity in the syllabus. For that reason, a qualitative focus is utilized as the supporting base for the research development. Observation of classes and interviews done to the students who participated in the immersion trip in 2013 and 2014, are the collection techniques that will be implemented in this research process. In this research process, the implemented collection techniques are class observation, and interviews with the students who participated in the immersion trip in 2013 and 2014.

## **Method**

The integrated simple case study is used for the research implementation which it counts with the specific conditions in the same context (Nielsen, 2015). This research starts in a group of Colombian students who are in an American context as Missouri State University is. The immersion courses were developed in 2013 and 2014 and both time frames had the objective to learn English as a foreign language through the students who traveled to Missouri in 2013 and 2014 testify the effectiveness of this activity, they are the resource of this study's evidence. Likewise, the interview which disputes the strategies and the activities performed by the teacher in the public speaking subject which subsequently these two opinions are related to reach an internal validity. The matching in the students' needs with the contributions of the teaching class concur with the aim of the interview as an activity in the class.

## **Sampling in the investigation**

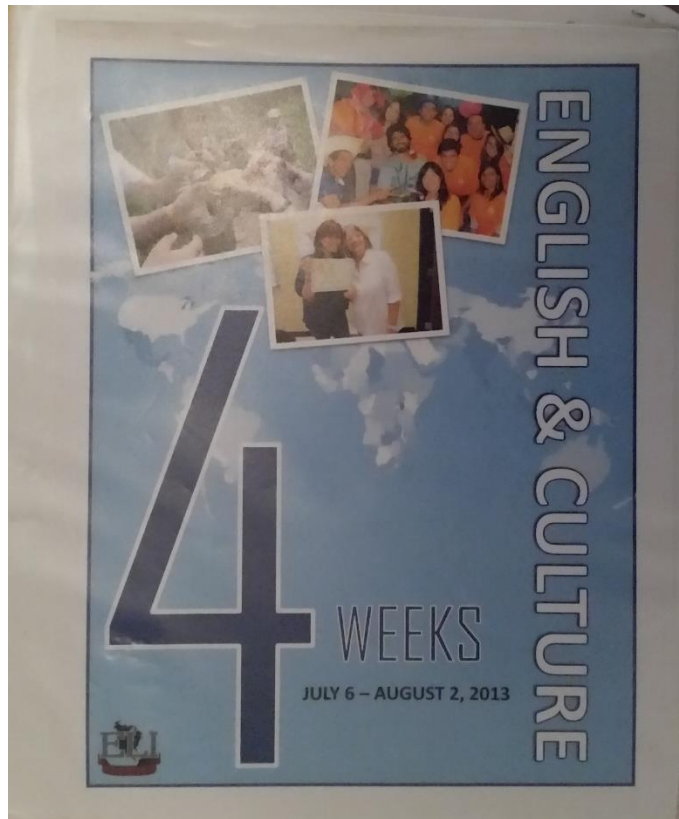
Contextualizing the research, I will say that it is performed in Bogotá, Colombia. It is an immersion context where the citizens speak Spanish as a first language and English as a second language, which is considered as a foreign language. Besides, this research starts as an inductive process which is characterized by the context in which it is performed, in this case La Gran Colombia University.

To get to this sort of data collection there are two kinds of samples, the most successful for this research are: expert samples and homogeneous samples. In the first place, there is an interview with an expert, in this case the director and teacher of the subject Public Speaking. This person, who is responsible for directing the subject process, provides data such as: area aims, the objectives of the course, strategies and methodologies, as well as how the performance was of each student at the end of the course. Additionally, this study utilizes the interviews and the observation. Eight English language degree students of La Gran Colombia University participated in the immersion program in 2013 and 2014.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

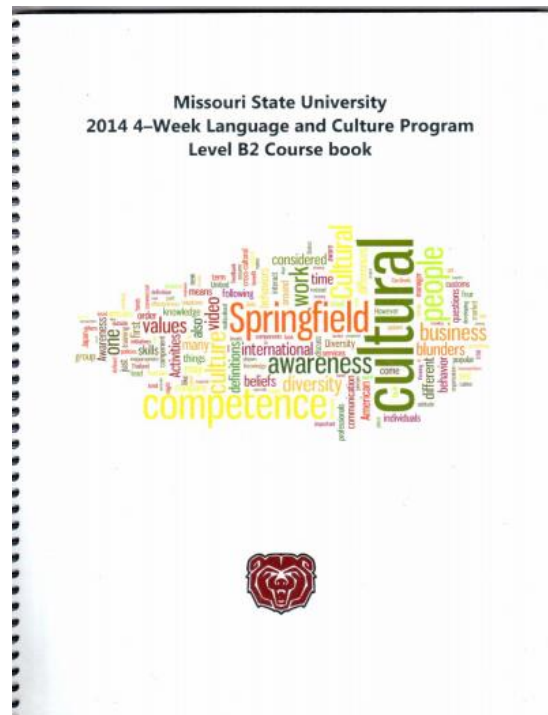
The data collection is analyzed by taking into account the students perspective, the ones who traveled to Springfield, Missouri. Likewise, techniques and tools were utilized in order to analyze the information, keeping in mind each opinion, belief and thought of the interviewed people.

The analysis of the material submitted to the participants in the immersion program in 2013 and 2014 is shown next. It is evident that in 2013 the students received a portfolio which contained the units of the course, as well as in 2014 the students received a book which also contained the units of the course (see image 1 and 2). In the same way, an analysis of the information that is inside of each material set through a comparative table of both established programs (see figure 2).



**Image 2.** Folder of the program English & Culture-2013.

Taken by the author (2015)



**Image 3.** Book of the program Language and Culture-2014.

Taken by Nielsen J (2015)

PROGRAM 2013	PROGRAM 2014
It was divided in four weeks, each week had its own name	It was divided in three weeks, each week had its own name
The material was organized in weeks, i.e. each week had its own content consisting of the three subjects.	The material was organized by subject, i.e. each course had the topics of the three weeks.
Although they had different names, each one had the same purpose and this was related with the name of the week.	

In the introduction from each week, some starting questions were given about the topic of each week.	
The name of the subjects was the same (Reading & Writing, Listening & Culture and Speaking & Pronunciation) throughout the program.	
The activity of the interviews was taken with cultural topics in mind with people who lived in Springfield, Missouri.	
The activities of the interviews were taken in the subject Speaking & Pronunciation.	The activities of the interviews were taken in the subject Listening & Culture and Speaking & Pronunciation.
The question is up to the students, but with the condition that it was related with the central topic of the week.	The student gets some help with a chart, and additionally, another chart is given to these questions are up to the students if only they were related with the central topic.

**Figure 2.** Program comparison English & Culture 2013 y Language & Culture 2014.

### **Interview Analysis**

In this process, the interview analysis is established as the data collection method. These interviews show the opinion of the students who participated in the programs at Missouri State University and the teacher who lead the subject Public Speaking in the first semester of 2015 from La Gran Colombia University. The idea is to identify details in which the topic is in order to draw inferences, therefore the interviews are opened, there are not any specific to research. The interview was developed intuitively, the general questions were argued, which gave a global statement about foreign language learning and each of the students and the interviewed

According to the B.A. in English program's coordinator from La Gran Colombia University, the requirement to apply for the course Public Speaking is to have attained the level

Upper intermediate level which is related to the level B2 according to the CEFRL. According to the speaking interaction the CEFRL states that “I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible” (CEFRL, 2001 p. 27). Taking into account the previous information the analysis of the teacher’s interview is given below.

1-Which features do you highlight in your group?

In the first question it is attempted to ask the teacher to make a general diagnosis of the course. The teacher highlights the motivation in the teaching and in the learning, he discloses what he perceives from the students who attend to the class on Saturdays morning, despite they are interested in the subject, the schedule is a factor that makes the students get tired in the subject because it requires more attention and motivation by the students.

There are two kinds of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The extrinsic motivation is “the behaviors of the extrinsic motivation on one hand, are taken in anticipation from outside and further of itself. The most common rewards are money and perks” (Brown, 1988, p 164) therefore, the education is seen as a mandatory external need, for the language the students tend to learn a foreign language perhaps because their job requires it. On the other hand exists an intrinsic motivation “people seem to participate in the activities for their benefit and not for an extrinsic reward” (Brown, 1988 p. 164) being the intrinsic motivation the stimulus of the self-determination, because all the actions are which lead you to do the things well done for the student’s own benefit.

Likewise, the teacher’s role is important in the motivation (Babu, 2013). The most important roles for a teacher are: to be an active person, promoter of change, a positive trainer, promotes answers, and makes corrections in the right way.

2- What teaching strategies do you implement for the students who take the course? How do you apply them?

In the first part of the second question it was attempted to ask the teacher about learning strategies used in the classroom for the strengthening of verbal skills in students. The strategy utilized by the teacher is related to previous information activities “this is a strategy which allows the students to activate, meditate and share previous knowledge about a specific topic” (Diaz



Barriga & Hernandez Rojas, 2010. p. 124) the topics of the syllabus are selected by the teacher, he distributes them to the students in order to be showed up by the students and the feedback that is given is taken as the core or the central topic.

Also, in the second part of the question the teacher was questioned about the two books used in the course. Both books are the supporting foundation for preparing the public speaking. They both provide verbal techniques and fundamental theories for improving public speaking.

3- What is the level of the students, in general terms?

In the third question it is wanted to know the general level of the students who sign up for the course. Although, the real level of the students according to the teacher is pre-intermediate, meaning A2 as featured in “Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters.” (Council of Europe, 2001 p. 33). It is important to emphasize that the level of a student who takes part in this class should be B1. This approach is key to prove that the students need a deeper interaction and more proficiency in the foreign language.

4. What kind of interaction outside the classroom do your students implement to reinforce their verbal skills?

The fourth question, attempts to identify the interactions that the group practices outside the classroom. The teacher reports that the students develop a kind of natural environment in the language, exactly the interaction between students into the university, with the intention to reinforce that kind of interaction in the syllabus for the next semester. This interaction can be called as a part-time immersion inside the University. Lenker & Rodes (2007) explain this as “programs in which approximately 50% of instruction is provided in the target language initial literacy instruction may be provided in either the target language of English or in both languages simultaneously. Programs may continue in middle school and highschool with classes taught in the target language” (p. 1).

Next, the answers given from the students interviewed are shown. Also, each useful detail to the oncoming of the information gotten by the teacher. (Figure 3)

Question	Response details
1-Which features do you highlight in your group?	... in both groups find highly motivated students to develop the skill of speaking...  ...both are important and both note that they want to study in class.
2- What teaching strategies do you implement for the students who take the course? How do you apply them?	I take it as a way to be more practical than a theoretical seminar... my strategy rather than the presentation of theory is that they begin to interact with the subject of public speaking.
3- What is the level of the students in general terms?	... we are talking in language level would be speaking in a pre-intermediate, there are still many gaps in vocabulary, pronunciation problems, but they convey the message have many problems in terms of that eloquence in the message.
4- What kind of interaction outside the classroom do your students implement to reinforce their verbal skills?	there are some students trying to establish talks within the university building... and they try to establish it in their language ...

**Figure 4** Teacher's answers in the interview.

In order to corroborate the effectivity of the information some questions were made in an interview to eight students of the B.A. in English program. Four of them participated in the 2013 course and the other participated in 2014. Following are the details of the first question. (figure 4.)

1. Do you remember the activity in which interviews were made to people living in Springfield Missouri?	
Student	Details
Student 1	Yes, this was an activity which took place during the first weeks in which they had to make a series of questions about Springfield, Missouri; in terms of history, Route 66 and some tourist sites that Springfield has.
Student 2	It was an enriching experience.
Student 3	Of course, this activity was about some cultural question and we did this weekly with three different people.
Student 4	Yes, it was an activity that was done during the four weeks.
Student 5	Yes of course, the interviews that were made in the speaking class.
Student 6	Yes, I remember the activity.
Student 7	Sure, I remember the activity of the interviews we made in Springfield very well, it seemed very appropriate.
Student 8	Yes, the activity was to do interviews on the streets of Springfield, related to the topics seen in class

**Figure 4** Details of the answer number 1 students' interview

As in the previous students' answers that attended for the program during the years 2013 and 2014, all of them remembered the activity and most of them highlighted its methodologic description showing the topics proposed to that interview and the frequency, which was once a week. Concluding:

Interviews provide your English language learners with a real reason to communicate with everyone in their mainstream class. They learn how to ask questions and acquire new content area vocabulary. Classmates become involved in your newcomers' second language acquisition. English verbal skills and social skills are further developed when ELLs report their results to their cooperative group. (Haynes, 2004. p. 1).

Regarding the general objective of the subject Public Speaking UGC (2014), in the end of the course the students must be able to communicate effectively in communication interchanges and to understand its meaning. Here this activity would help to give and to achieve this objective because the activity is taken not as a technique of data collection, but to generate a space where the communication is effective and it creates a motivational impact to the students who are studying English.

In the next figure, the aspects of the use of the English language are shown and how this activity helps them to improve their verbal skills taking into account the activities and exercises completed in the immersion program (Figure 5.)

2. How has this activity worked in the production process and the improvement of verbal skills?	
Student	Details
Student1	I was able to improve the English level, I was also able to learn new expressions; idioms that they use beyond the US especially in Springfield, Missouri, and thus

	<p>also the fluidity with which we speak because we were confronted with the context and we applied English in an all-American environment.</p>
Student 2	<p>Well, actually it was a very fruitful venture because it supported such activities and it was such that you interacted with a person when you're interacting... that helps you develop the oral level because you have to talk and try to talk because they are bored when you talk too slow; then you have to learn to speak faster and to understand everything behind what is said to establish a conversation.</p>
Student 3	<p>I had to prepare my specific questions because I say that a process of consultation, what grammatical form can approach this person what I can do to get their attention and then he or she answer me... It was a process that actually helped me a lot.</p>
Student 4	<p>I consider that verbal skills improve a lot when we interact with people not only from the academic environment, but also the environment of a region, environment that helps to supplement the theoretical part in the field of action...</p>
Student 5	<p>it helps a lot... because you're talking, you hear and you have to learn how to answer quickly, i.e. the development of that ability</p>

	at the moment to generate a conversation or have a conversation with one person there.
Student 6	This activity gave me confidence, because when you are learning a second language, there is a barrier, a fear of speaking, this activity gave me confidence, it gave me security... I could improve my speaking and my confidence when I spoke.
Student 7	...The interaction is a very important factor... it is very interesting to increase our level in the learning of a second language.
Student 8	The interview gave me confidence in the way that I could interact directly with the natives, listening to my own voice and I had the opportunity to correct errors in pronunciation with the interviewee.

**Figure 5** Details of the answer number 2 students' interview

The interviewed students confirmed that they improved verbal skills through this activity because they learned to organize their ideas and make assimilations of the accents and the use of language that they received in the moment that they did the activity. Finally they expressed the feedback process after the activity, this took them to manifest the overcoming of the inhibition in the moment to speak in public. According to Haynes (2004), the preparation of an interview, the acquisition and the use of vocabulary, and the regular interaction are factors that the students can practice when being a participant in this activity. The more the students apply the language in the activities in which they develop their oral expression, the more their oral expression is possible, now, having a person as interviewee whose first language is English makes it possible for the

student to have even more opportunities to interact, and to have more lexical and pragmatical concepts.

The next figure shows the answer specifics of the students that state how it is possible to apply the interview in their university environment. (Figure 6.)

3. How would you apply this activity in our university environment?	
Student	Details
Student 1	...at least here we have the INTERNATIONAL HOUSE in which we can generate surveys in English which then can be applied further and foreign people like or downtown Bogota found much abroad where we can ask in English and improve our English level with the activities...
Student 2	I know of the case where you do the same thing we did in Missouri but with people of Japan.
Student 3	Knowing that La Gran Colombia University is surrounded by many tourists and is a popular tourist site, we could apply this to our English learners we can say that improve or would like to improve our speaking skills as we could do the same, but in a way like asking people who are on the street...
Student 4	This could be applied in the university environment in the same way... we have to

	take advantage of the environment of the Candelaria to interact with foreigners in many parts who come to know our culture.
Student 5	...we are located in the downtown of Bogotá, reaches far abroad and a lot of people with whom we can have a communication and we can interact and can develop those skills
Student 6	Look for a suitable place where we can interact with hopefully native speakers...
Student 7	...we know that there are many foreign people in the city center in La Candelaria every day, many tourists are staying there, they live there, pass through some of the streets or visit some of the tourist sites or places where we normally find foreigners... I think that if you could create these moments of extra outside classes to go and interact with these people.
Student 8	...the interview is very useful method to learn another language when you take into account the number of foreigners arriving in the area of La Candelaria.

**Figure 6** Details of the answer number 3 students' interview

The students' answers according to the opportunity of finding foreign people whose mother tongue is English. They stress that there are foreigners in the La Candelaria Neighborhood, the area where La Gran Colombia University is located. In the same way they expressed the opportunity to



get closer to those tourists and do the activity with them. In short, in conclusion doing this type of interviews was seen as an activity in which the students improved their verbal skills in English.

We predict that tourists coming to a host community from the most typologically distinct linguistic backgrounds will generally receive the most extreme versions of a tourist language, unless translators are an additional part of the interactional context. (Lew, Hall, Williams, & Hall-Lew, 2014. p. 337).

Seeing tourism as a supportive element to the development of the activity and gives more forcefulness to the interaction for the student practices the spoken interaction and overcome the fears of speaking English, thus in the fields of globalization it is possible to open the doors of the language in culture, business and communication aspects; many of these foreigners come to the most important tourist destinations of a city and language students have the opportunity to take advantage of these areas to do these kind of activities in order for them to improve their fluency and verbal production.

## **Conclusions**

To use common topic in the interview as a classroom activity is a way to support and improve the verbal skills in the student who learns a foreign language, therefore it is important to use a technique or activity in the classroom which involves the student and a foreigner whose first language is English. When the student desires to learn empirically how to speak, i.e. practicing the language by making use of the verbal skill set, it shows that to learn the language and to use it in the classroom is not enough by itself. As the problem statement established that despite Colombia is not being surrounded in a context where English has to be spoken, the faculty of Education from La Gran Colombia University is located in a geographic point where many foreigners and many speakers of other languages that are different from Spanish come to this place because of its significance as one of the Colombian historical centers because of the several touristic locations to visit.

Considering the example of the interviews as a function for the improvement of language, the following aspects are accurate to achieve the objective; the reinforcement in the communication in the foreign language with students. The first aspect is vocabulary this is accurate because it is located in a position of the production of the language and the manifestation of complex or

academic words which besides the student's fluency would determine a high level of English. As a second step, preparation for the interview is fundamental because it is one of the criteria recommended. In order to achieve the preparation it is important to answer the below questions; whom will I address? How can I persuade the interviewee? What will I talk about? What information will I highlight? The interaction with the English speaker it is determined in the process and development in the moment of the interview which the fluency and the verbal contact of the interviewee warrant the effective language production. When it comes to the construction of some questions, they must be made with flexibility, with the information collected it is possible to do a feedback. Here it is possible to find linguistic and phonetic mistakes (only when the interview was recorded).

According to the above information, it was identified that one of the most important activities in the immersion programs of *English and Culture 2013* and *Language and Culture 2014* were the interviews with the people who lived in Missouri and those who had sufficient English proficiency.

This activity was established in the periods 2013 and 2014. Additionally, eight students from La Gran Colombia University gave their testimony about the experiences they had using this activity and these were able to identify that the interviews helped to improve verbal skills in English because these allowed to make an effective communication which could be a support to increase the verbal skills. Even helped to bring down inhibitions that existed at the moment of speaking a foreign language because this activity gives confidence to the student so he can practice the language in a neutral way. In addition, it is a tool for the acquisition and comprehension of vocabulary in the language.

As a result, this activity could help the Public Speaking course from La Gran Colombia University with the objective of improving verbal skills in the students who are training to be teachers. Thus, the relation between the courses at Missouri State University and La Gran Colombia University gets to the same objectives which is to foster the learning and the practice of verbal skills in English with the students.

The interview as class activity allows to improve the verbal skills in the foreign language, but it is necessary first of all, to look at the context that is the receptor, this could be tourism,

business, academy, etc. This is to know what topic will be the point of attraction of the conversation. In the second step, it must give feedback of what the interviewer said. If the interview is recorded either in audio or video, it is important to catch the grammar mistakes or constantly repeated words, the last one could be given in an autonomous way with the teacher's support.

Answering the problem statement of this research, the questions in the interview were up to the students because the objective of this activity is not to collect information for a possible investigation, but it is about creating a conversational space where a topic is stated about a cultural aspect which has an interest and an exchange of ideas or opinions.

In the same way, the author of this paper made the attempt of conducting the interviews with foreigners who were visiting Bogotá, producing a sample and demonstrating in the process. Some people were from France. They had lived for many years in England, and they were in the downtown area a few stone throws away from La Gran Colombia University, the interviewed was recorded and as the interviewer as the English speakers felt comfortable talking about their country, their customs and their expectations about Bogota as a touristic place, it means that there were a lot of topics which they could talk about, the more topics there were, the more students can take advantage of the foreign language.

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## Appendix

<b>GUIDE OF INTERVIEW TO THE STUDENTS</b>	
Date and time	June 14th, 2015. 8:00 pm
Place	Bogotá, Universidad La Gran Colombia, Brunch L room 208
Interviewer	Oscar Alejandro Soto Bermeo
Interviewee	8 students from Universidad La Gran Colombia who participated in the immersion programs in the years 2013 and 2014.
Introduction	Description about the interviews as activity done in the immersion program at Missouri State University
Features of the interview	Less that 15 minutes
Questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Do you remember the activity in which interviews were made to people living in Springfiel Missouri?</li><li>2. How has this activity worked in the production process and improving oral ability?</li><li>3. How would you apply this activity in our university environment?</li></ol>