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**PEDRO ROBSOM DOS REIS OLIVEIRA**

**EXPERIENCE REPORT: DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING PRE-  
INTERMEDIATE SPEAKING ACTIVITIES AT AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
COURSE IN FORTALEZA/CE**

**FORTALEZA**

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Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado ao Curso de Licenciatura em Letras-Inglês, da Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC), como requisito parcial para a obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras-Inglês.

Orientador: Prof. Dr. Diego Napoleão Viana Azevedo

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Aprovada em:

BANCA EXAMINADORA

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Prof. Dr. Diego Napoleão Viana Azevedo (Orientador)  
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

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Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Pamela Freitas Pereira Toassi  
Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)

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Prof<sup>a</sup>. Dr<sup>a</sup>. Andreia Turolo da Silva  
Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UFC)

Aos meus pais, Rubenita e José Maria.

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## ABSTRACT

Speaking activities play a crucial role in the development of communicative competence. For this, it is imperative for teachers to create a supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing themselves and engaging with the language structures. In today's context, many individuals have a basic understanding of the English language, even with a limited vocabulary. Leveraging their existing knowledge during lessons can significantly boost students' self-esteem and foster authentic responses to the activities. Without a nurturing environment that encourages expression, learning a foreign language becomes a daunting task. Based on these considerations, I have undertaken an analysis of my own experiences in managing speaking activities within a language learning course in Fortaleza, CE. In this study, I will outline the approaches employed to optimize students' communicative skills and discuss the challenges they encountered in the process.

**Keywords:** Speaking activities; Creative speaking; Reproductive speaking; Communicative competence.

## RESUMO

As atividades de fala desempenham um papel crucial no desenvolvimento da competência comunicativa. Para isso, é imperativo que os professores criem um ambiente de apoio onde os alunos se sintam confortáveis para se expressar e se engajar com as estruturas da língua. No contexto atual, muitas pessoas possuem um entendimento básico do idioma inglês, mesmo com um vocabulário limitado. Aproveitar o conhecimento existente durante as aulas pode aumentar significativamente a autoestima dos alunos e promover respostas autênticas nas atividades. Sem um ambiente acolhedor que incentive a expressão, aprender um idioma estrangeiro torna-se uma tarefa assustadora. Com base nessas considerações, realizei uma análise das minhas próprias experiências na gestão de atividades de fala em um curso de aprendizagem de línguas em Fortaleza, CE. Neste estudo, descreverei as abordagens empregadas para otimizar as habilidades comunicativas dos alunos e discutirei os desafios que eles encontraram no processo.

**Palavras-chave:** Atividades de fala; Fala criativa; Fala reprodutiva; Competência comunicativa.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Language teaching and learning is multilayered, especially when considering the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for young adults. This report describes my personal experience in designing and carrying out speaking activities at an EFL course during the first semester of 2023 in Fortaleza, Ceará.

The activities were designed so as to help students develop their proficiency in giving advice about healthy lifestyles by using creative and reproductive methodologies. In Brazil, where the use of English in everyday life is minimal compared with countries like Nigeria, the process of teaching a foreign language is somewhat different. The very distinction between second language acquisition and learning a foreign language brings out the special context in which these students operate, affecting their possibilities of experiencing authentic use of language themselves. The high motivation levels range from practical needs, such as traveling, up to professional aspirations framing the concrete learning experience.

This report evaluates the effectiveness of "reproductive" and "creative" activities aimed at improving speaking in the development of communicative competence. While the topic under discussion is limited to speaking, it is realized that language development is, in fact, inseparable from the development of other skills, namely writing, reading, and listening. By analyzing students' responses to the activities involved, a deeper understanding of their learning processes can be gained, as well as ways to further hone future teaching practices in ways that optimally benefit them.

The rationale for implementing creative and reproductive pedagogical methodologies is that they have been proven to engender student engagement and facilitate language learning. The creative approaches, such as role-plays and discussions, call for the students to use their linguistic knowledge in context, while reproductive techniques, like controlled practice, clarify the core structure of the language. Grammatical accuracy shall thus be achieved on one hand and communicative fluency on the other; the individual student will become proficient in the language and confident.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The speaking skill in the EFL class is an indispensable element of language acquisition in building the learners' communicative competence. Speaking does not simply mean uttering words; rather, speaking is a complex process of composing meaning, negotiating messages, and interacting with others meaningfully. While learners strive to achieve fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness in spoken English, teachers have to implement strategies that promote speaking practice and support learners on the way to communicative proficiency and cultural awareness.

This paper dwells on the significance of speaking skills development in EFL contexts and, therefore, of creating supportive environments that help students in their fluency. It further looks into some of the strategies and pedagogical methods underpinning the development of speaking capability and distinguishes between reproductive and creative speaking activities. The reproductive ones are drills and controlled dialogues which are focused on accuracy and basic language practice. Creative role-plays and discussions are directed at fluency and realistic situations.

The discussion will also point to some of the essential methodologies and practical techniques for teaching speaking, which have been supported by famous scholars such as Nunan, Lightbown and Spada, and Harmer. This integration of views provides this paper with a holistic approach in the teaching of speaking that balances between accuracy and fluency and leads learners into effective communication and cultural competence.

### **2.1 Teaching Speaking in EFL Classes**

The speaking skills development in the EFL class is considered a very significant component of language acquisition, which plays an important role in the development of learners to develop efficient and confident communicative ability. Speaking is not just the production of words; rather, it's an intricate process in constructing meaning, negotiating messages, and interacting with others.

This paper discusses speaking fluency in EFL contexts and how learners should develop the knack of speaking English with fluency, accuracy, and appropriateness in various contexts. This discussion examines strategies and pedagogical methods that enhance speaking practice in an effort to show how teachers can provide ways to help learners achieve communicative competence and cultural awareness by means of spoken language.

Skill acquisition in a foreign language is basically acquiring the four basic language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Though these skills are intertwined in the communicative process, the discussion here focuses on speaking as the thrust of the paper is on how speaking activities are handled in an EFL class.

Speaking can be identified, following Florez (1999, p. 1), as "an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information". In other words, to speak means to be able to take part in oral communication with clarity and efficiency of expression of thoughts and opinions. Fluency, accuracy, and adaptive skills to different situations form the set of speaking ability.

Speaking skill for foreign language learners is very important to achieve fluency and communicative competence. Mastery in speaking will enable learners to interact with native speakers, establish relationships, negotiate meaning, and convey appropriate messages effectively. Fluency provides the learner with the capability to connect with native speakers and hold conversations and communicate their thoughts and ideas with confidence.

Speaking skill will be developed if students pay more attention to several aspects: firstly, students need to work on fluency because only then will they be confident and coherent. Besides, pronunciation and intonation need to be refined, and proper use according to contexts should be developed. Speaking will widely open opportunities for practicing vocabulary and grammar rules. By actively participating in the process of conversation, learners fix their knowledge, develop new vocabulary, and internalize grammatical structures that may help them in communicating effectively.

Furthermore, speaking skills development prompts the confidence of learners. With a obtained level of proficiency and meaningful conversations, their self-assurance grows, which leads to more participation, a willingness to take risks, and overall improved language proficiency. Finally, speaking skills enable interaction with the culture of the target language. Through direct contact with native speakers, a learner develops some notion of cultural norms, customs, and social conventions that enhance their intercultural competence.

Teaching speaking requires strategic approaches on the part of a teacher. A teacher should establish a situation that will promote and support speaking practice, thus giving students ample opportunities to be engaged in meaningful conversations. It is also very essential for the teacher to guide them and provide constructive feedback that would help students hone their speaking skills.

## 2.2 Reproductive vs. Creative Speaking Activities in EFL Classes

Nunan (1989) distinguishes between "reproductive" and "creative" speaking activities as effective means in language teaching. According to him, a reproductive activity "emphasizes the precision and accuracy of the language produced," whereas a creative activity "places more emphasis on fluency and communicative competence."

Reproductive activities, such as drills, repetition exercises, and controlled dialogues, provide an opportunity for learners to practice forms and patterns of language, allowing time to consolidate those forms and patterns. These activities are very helpful for beginners and those who have a weak foundation in basic elements. In focusing on accuracy, reproductive activities help the learner to establish a sound linguistic foundation and give them confidence in speaking.

On the contrary, role-plays, discussions, debates, and presentations are example activities in creative language development whereby learners create their own language, express personal ideas, and communicate meaningfully. Such activities enhance critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and the ability of opinion expression and negotiation of meaning in an authentic context. This situation also develops learners' fluency and overall communicative proficiency once language abilities are applied to the real-life situation (NUNAN, 1989).

Lightbown and Spada (2013) provide a far-reaching review of both the theory and practice, including aspects of speaking skills. Their work agrees with that by Nunan in that they try to show how the different types of activities affect language learning. The authors point out how input, interaction, and output contribute to the development of speaking skills, and how reproductive and creative activities contribute to language acquisition. In this way, their perspectives support a combination of various teaching techniques for the attainment of communicative competence.

Harmer (2015), is supportive of Nunan's ideas and Lightbown and Spada theories with practical ways in which reproductive and creative activities can be carried out effectively. In the opinion of Harmer, different teaching methodologies, including communicative language teaching, task-based learning, and the lexical approach, are all beneficial in providing better insights into teaching language. Teaching speaking activities suggested in his book cover the distinctions Nunan has made between reproductive and creative activities.

Harmer (2015) elaborates on a number of key methodologies that are particularly crucial in the reproduction and creativity of speaking activities, such as communicative language teaching and task-based learning. In fact, these are some of the most helpful approaches or frameworks for balancing accuracy and fluency and catering to different learners' needs.

He further elaborates on how to teach speaking effectively through the use of role-plays and simulations that form part of Nunan's creative activities. A simulation is where a real-life situation is mimicked, and students develop communication through interaction. Discussion activities and pronunciation practice also join in the sentiments echoed by Harmer (2015) in support of both reproductive and creative approaches, building accuracy and fluency.

Harmer (2015) addresses relevant classroom management issues affecting speaking activities, such as the establishment of a supportive atmosphere and handling student interaction. Comments by Harmer (2015) on task design support the creation of tasks that are engaging yet pedagogically appropriate and can balance fluency and accuracy, a different end compared to Nunan's approach for a balance of reproductive and creative activities.

Assessment techniques which will be effective and feedback strategies discussed by Harmer (2015) become crucial to support student development in both reproductive and creative speaking activities. Constructive feedback refines the learning process, motivating learners for improvement.

Consequently, Nunan's ideas on reproductive and creative speaking activities with the inclusion of the practical methodologies of Harmer (2015) and the theoretical insights by Lightbown and Spada (2013) provide a well-rounded way of teaching English as a foreign language. Such a combination of theoretical insight into practical strategies allows educators to devise speaking lessons in a non-awful but constructive way so as to prompt communicative competence and cultural awareness.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The following role-play activity, designed to enhance students' understanding and proficiency in the advice of healthy lifestyles in the first semester of 2023 has been a dynamic multiple-dimensional approach to language learning. Both creative and reproductive strategies have been combined in this approach to comprehensive speaking skills development. The activity of preparation, distribution of roles and performance is structured to serve as effective natural inclusion of gerunds into your conversations. A creative role-play blended with reproductive practice makes the learners apply grammatical structures accurately in meaningful and interactive communication. In this sense, students are nudged toward fluency, accuracy, and confidence in the development of their critical thinking and collaborative skills simultaneously. This activity therefore represents an innovative way of balancing language accuracy with pragmatic communication; it follows that it should provide the best learning experience to support students in their achievement of communicative competence and cultural awareness.

#### 3.1 Designing the activity

This activity engaged students in developing their knowledge and competence in advising about healthy lifestyles through an enjoyable and interactive role-play activity. The paper describes the procedure followed while implementing the activity and reflects on its outcome.

The activity was initiated by preparing index cards with different scenarios that needed the usage of gerunds – for example, advising on health, planning vacation time, and discussing hobbies. Students were given these index cards, with roles assigned, in pairs or in small groups. For a specific period of time, they acted out their given roles by including gerunds in a natural manner within their conversation. Performances in groups concluded the activity, where the students showed creativity in their delivery and received feedback on the language usage. This format allowed for both accuracy and fluency in the use of gerunds, while encouraging interactive communication.

#### **Materials Needed:**

- Index cards with scenarios;
- Timer or stopwatch.

**Instructions:**

1. Preparation: Create index cards with different scenarios requiring the use of gerunds, such as advising on healthy lifestyles or discussing hobbies;
2. Role Assignment: Distribute the cards and allow students to familiarize themselves with their roles;
3. Role Play: Divide the class into pairs or group, and instruct them to perform role plays, incorporating gerunds naturally. Set a 5-minute time limit for each group;
4. Performance: Each group presents their role play to the class, using gestures and expressions to enhance communication;
5. Reflection and Feedback: After each performance, encourage the class to provide feedback, focusing on the correct use of gerunds and overall language accuracy.

## 4 EXPERIENTIAL REPORT

As an English teacher, I implemented this role-play activity to enhance language learning by combining creative and reproductive approaches. The goal was to provide students with a well-rounded experience that targeted grammar, fluency and communication skills.

The integration of creative and reproductive activities proved highly beneficial. Students demonstrated critical thinking, collaboration and interactive communication. For instance, Trio 1 exhibited fluency in discussing video games as a hobby, while Trio 2 creatively role-played a visit to Rome. Trio 3 engaged in a collaborative discussion on reading, and Trio 4 provided well-thought-out advice on healthy living, emphasizing exercise and a balanced diet.

By using both creative and reproductive strategies, the students were able to solidify their understanding of grammar and vocabulary while managing discourse and engaging in interactive communication. The activity supported learners in maintaining coherent conversations, accurately using language structures and confidently interacting with peers.

### 4.1 Student Responses to Scenarios

- Trio 1: Planned a dream vacation and discussed video games, particularly RPGs. They effectively built on each other's ideas, showcasing fluency and a deep understanding of vocabulary related to gaming;
- Trio 2: Crafted a role-play about visiting Rome, highlighting Italian cuisine and history. Their creative approach vividly captured the essence of the experience;
- Trio 3: Engaged in a collaborative discussion on reading, despite facing some speaking challenges. They brainstormed ideas like joining book clubs and writing blogs;
- Trio 4: Provided well-rounded advice on healthy lifestyles, emphasizing the importance of exercise, balanced nutrition, and avoiding harmful habits.

### 4.2 Analysis of Student Performance

1. Grammar and Vocabulary: Each group displayed varying levels of proficiency. Trio 1 and Trio 2 used appropriate verb tenses and specific vocabulary related to their topics. Trio 3,

though less fluent, effectively utilized basic sentence structures, while Trio 4 demonstrated strong command of health-related terminology.

2. Discourse Management: Trio 1 maintained a coherent conversation flow, building on each other's ideas. Trio 2 effectively managed their role-play with clear narrative development. Trio 3, despite some coherence issues, took turns contributing to the discussion. Trio 4 presented their points logically and smoothly transitioned between different topics.

3. Interactive Communication: All groups showcased strong interaction. Trio 1, 3, and 4 engaged in meaningful exchanges, responding to each other's thoughts and ideas. Trio 2's role-play allowed them to interact within their fictional scenario, demonstrating improvisational communication skills.

### **4.3 Key Reflections**

The activity reinforced grammar and vocabulary comprehension in a practical context. Students applied language rules while discussing real-life scenarios, such as travel or health, making their learning more relevant and engaging. Furthermore, through collaborative discussions and role-play, students enhanced their discourse management skills, learning to navigate conversations and sustain meaningful dialogue.

### **4.4 Impact of Experiential Learning:**

The hands-on nature of this activity fostered higher student engagement. By integrating creative elements, students were motivated to participate actively, drawing from personal experiences and interests. This approach promoted autonomy and a sense of ownership in their learning, improving both language skills and critical thinking.

In itself, this was a valuable addition to the process of language learning that added to the students' confidence, communicative skills and proficiency in English. At the same time, it hinted at the possible benefits of integrating creative and reproductive strategies into language teaching.

## 5. FINAL REMARKS

It was highly effective and helpful for the students in enhancing their language skills, as the use of creative activities during the teaching of the language came out to be of great use. For example, their activities include planning a dream vacation, discussing hobbies and interests, and offering advice on keeping a healthy lifestyle, which allowed them to apply and reinforce their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in meaningful contexts.

While carrying out these activities, students learnt not only about using appropriate language but also how to manage effective discourses and interactive communications. It included various activities, such as role-plays, discussions in groups, and presentations, through which students were able to reveal their particular strengths and develop critical thinking and cooperation further. On the contrary, sometimes they reported themselves "scared" to talk while participating actively in turns, response to peers' ideas and simple discussion. This helped not only to develop their fluency but also their self-confidence in expression. Being an English teacher, the fact that I could witness the positive fruits of these activities was really encouraging with regard to career development. This, again, affirmed my belief in experiential learning and further showed the effectiveness of adding creativity and interaction into language teaching. The fact that the students were very much engaged and enthusiastic underlined the value of a holistic language learning experience.

In the future, I would like to continue building my teaching methodology on creative activities by exploring opportunities for integrating technology, real-life contexts, and authentic materials. By developing critical thinking, teamwork and effective communication, I would like my students to feel confident and proficient English speakers.

In sum, creative activities included in the language learning process not only improved students' grammar and vocabulary but also their discourse management and skills of interactive communication. Such activities provided an all-round language learning experience and positively impacted my career as an English teacher and the language skill of the students.

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