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**“The TEFL at high schools and its effects on
the CEI placement test”**

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LICENCIADO EN LENGUA INGLESA**

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INTRODUCTION

When I was at high school I had the interest to learn English. I was really excited with the idea of learning a new language. However, I felt terribly disappointed when I realized that there was so much I wanted to learn but I could not because in my classes we usually do activities about translation and I felt I was not learning too much. I felt bored sometimes and I only did the activities because I have to.

Then, when I wanted to apply to the University of Quintana Roo, I had to face a very difficult problem: I wanted to study in the Teaching English as a Foreign Language Program, but I believed that my knowledge of English was just a little. What I learned at high school was very basic. Furthermore, everything was different at the UQROO. I had never seen a placement test like the one used at the UQROO. Besides, I had neither ever taken an oral exam; in fact I rarely spoke in English at high school.

When I received the results of the placement test, I found out that I had been placed in the introductory level at the Teaching Languages Center (CEI henceforth because it stands for Centro de Enseñanza de Idiomas in Spanish) at the UQROO. This center is the one in charge to place students at the different English levels according to their performance in the Placement Test. I was really disappointed and sad because I thought I could be placed at least in a basic level because I did well in the written exam. I had spent six years of my life “studying” English and at the end the truth was that I was not even able to introduce myself in English.

In Mexico, it is not rare to see this phenomenon. More specifically, in Chetumal this happens a lot. Most of the people who take the placement test at the University of Quintana Roo are placed at the introductory level. It seems as if the six years they have spent at high school learning English were a waste of time.

One of the reasons for this is that there might be a big gap between the English taught at public high schools and the English evaluated on the CEI placement test. Consequently, it would be necessary to do an analysis and evaluation of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) in public high schools in Chetumal and compare it with the evaluation used at the CEI-UQROO.

Even though it is a real problem, there is no research done about this issue as far as I know, and it would be very useful to find out the reasons of the situation. The findings

could be the basis of many other studies that will be helpful to define what institutions are missing, what the incongruity is, if there is one, between the high school level teaching and the language requirements reflected on the placement test at the CEI. By knowing the causes of this problem, we could try to find a solution, but with a clearer idea of what is happening.

With the findings of this research, some important measures could be taken to improve the educational system focused on the TEFL at high schools, or at least to let the responsible people of the CEI placement test know that there are some aspects they could improve to have better results when evaluating high school students entering the University.

The most important benefit is to start researching about this problem. It is important to create an interest in an issue that is actually affecting students from public high schools in Chetumal.

OBJECTIVES

The aim of this research is to analyze the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language at some groups from high schools and contrast it with the method and objective behind the CEI English placement test at the UQROO. For this the teaching of English in public high schools in Chetumal will be analyzed considering aspects such as the method or approach of instruction, the language used, the linguistic skills taught, the exercises and the evaluation used in the classes. On the other hand, the placement test at CEI will be analyzed as well in order to compare it and contrast it with the teaching used at high school.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As a test in the school system is the manifestation of a given method of teaching, the questions that guide this research are the following: is the language used to teach/evaluate students at high schools the same to the one used in the CEI placement test? Are the activities used in public high schools similar to the ones included in the CEI placement test? Are the skills taught in high schools the same that the ones included in the CEI placement test? Is the evaluation in high schools similar or different to the one instrumented in the CEI placement test? Are the teaching methods used in

public high schools the same to the one reflected in the CEI placement test at the UQROO?

Through a complete analysis of all this information, differences and similarities between the high school English teaching and the CEI placement test will be found. The results will be useful, if not to change the method used in high schools or at the CEI, at least to let people be aware of this existing problem.

1. METHOD

The present work is based on a documentary research for which books, tests and syllabi of three different high schools were principally taken into account; we complemented and supported this information with interviews and observations which helped us to have a clearer idea of three specific English courses on three different high schools.

The research was based on an inductive process which implies the use of exploration and description. It took into account particular characteristics of the teaching of English at three classes from high schools, which were identified through the analysis of documents such as syllabi, tests, and books supported by observations and interviews. These characteristics were then contrasted with the data obtained through the CEI placement test. The instruments used for the collection of data were not standardized because the purpose was not about finding quantitative information but document the English teaching in three particular high school groups.

1.1 SUBJECTS

In Chetumal, Quintana Roo, Mexico there are eight public high schools, two COBACH, (Colegio de Bachilleres), two CBTis, (Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico Industrial y de Servicios) one CONALEP (Colegio Nacional de Educación Profesional), one CETMAR (Centro de Estudios Tecnológicos del Mar), one CBTA (Centro de Bachillerato Tecnológico Agropecuario) and, one CECYTE (Centro de Estudios Científicos y Tecnológicos).

The subjects for this study were three classes in the last year of school. One will be from the CBTis 253, an English IV class; one from the CONALEP, an English VI class; and one from the COBACH 2, which is also an English IV class. The CONALEP was the only institution that has students taking a sixth level of English at the time the research was being carried out. However, it is important to mention that students from the CBTis and the COBACH only need one more level of English since they take this subject until the fifth semester.

Since students taking the CEI placement test are not required to write their schools of origin in the test, the CEI does not have record about the schools of origin of high school students entering the UQROO. However, according to their curricular objective,

students from CBTis, COBACH and CONALEP are more likely to apply to UQROO. The CETMAR and the CEBTA are focused on marine biology and the agricultural and livestock sector respectively, which are more specific areas in which students would want to develop. CECYTE is specialized in technical studies offered to give people the necessary tools to integrate themselves to the work class immediately after finishing their studies.

The first group, from CBTis 253, is formed by 48 teenagers in the fourth semester of high school. Their preparation is focused on computer science. They take three hours of English per week, a class of two hours and a class of an hour (a total of 48 hours).

The second group, from CONALEP, has 32 English students. They are in the sixth semester and their field of specialization is Tourism. The classes are conducted three times a week, two classes of two hours and a class of one hour (a total of 72 hours).

The last group from COBACH 1 is made up of by 35 students from fourth semester. They are specialized on computer science and the course covers three hours a week, a two-hour class and one-hour class (a total of 48 hours)

1.2 MATERIALS/INSTRUMENTS

The first instrument needed was an interview protocol to the responsible of the CEI placement test since she is in charge to coordinate a group of teachers and all together design the placement test. This was very helpful to have an idea of what the CEI placement test is about. As she is in charge of the test, she has the knowledge of the system they follow. The interview was semi- structured¹. For a better analysis of the answers and extra information, a recorder was used.

The teachers of the classes chosen were also interviewed. An interview was conducted with each high school teacher, which lasted two hours approximately in each case (the interviews just serve as complement for the documentary research). The interview was semi-structured² since this type of interview allows the addition of questions if something relevant is said during the session.

¹ See in appendix.

² See in appendix

The classes were observed only twice (because of external reasons) and they were helpful as a complement to the analysis of the other instruments and materials (mainly documents). For the observations, an observation guide was used considering aspects such as language, method, skills (activities), evaluation, environment, materials, among others.

Finally, syllabi, books and tests used in the three public high schools were analyzed along with the CEI placement test or EXUBIC (which is the test's official name). This test is divided into six levels: Introductory, Elemental, Basic, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate and Post-Intermediate. In the same way, each level is divided into sections which evaluate five areas of the English language: Listening, Reading, Writing, Speaking and Use of Language. The analysis was done considering factors such as the language, the skills, type of activities, evaluation, and materials.

1.3 PROCEDURES

First of all, the coordinator was interviewed in order to gather information about the CEI placement test. Then the placement test was analyzed to identify methods, content and ways of evaluation. Regarding the class observations, these were done without previous notice (the reason for this was not to interfere in the way the teachers prepare their classes). The groups were observed twice with the help of the observation guide.

After that the three English teachers, the ones teaching at CBTis 253, COBACH 2, and CONALEP, were interviewed to know the way they teach (what techniques they use, what kind of activities are common in their classes, evaluation, etc.) and what they think about teaching English. They were asked about their experiences with the groups participating in the research. Even though the observations were meant to complement the information, they were done first in order not to interfere with the answers of the interviews with the three teachers.

The books (content table, kind of activities, approach), syllabi and tests they use were analyzed to better understand the methods preferred by these high school teachers. All this information was analyzed taking into account: the language used, the skills taught and the evaluation. We did not use any software to make our analysis; this was done considering the criteria of language, skills, activities, evaluation, contents, and

materials, which are the main factors that distinguish one teaching method from others. Thus all the analysis was based on documents, interview answers and observations; and their description and interpretation.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

At first the research was designed to follow a qualitative descriptive method. However, there were situations that were unmanageable. There was a health contingency in the country, which provoked that the classes in all the different educational levels finished before the official dates. All the schedules on the high schools under study were changed to avoid students' health problems. Consequently, we had to re-schedule the dates of interviews and observations and we had to limit the observations to only two. It was not possible to observe the classes more times since teachers and students were hurried trying to finish up the course the best possible.

Another limitation was the limited access to official documents that could provide us with a better contextualization of the English courses at high schools. We know that this thesis could be improved, but for a question of time we could not expand it or go deeper; our intention is to set the basis for further research and we hope that this research will be useful for other people.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Even though the problem taken in this research is of great importance, there are not many studies about it in Mexico. Recently, in 2004 R. González and J. Vivaldo from the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana conducted a study titled *Competencia Lingüística en Inglés de Estudiantes de Primer Ingreso a Instituciones de Educación Superior del Área Metropolitana de la Ciudad de México*. (English Linguistic Competence of First Year Students in Higher Education in the Metropolitan Area of Mexico City). The kind of study was a differentiated diagnosis of the English linguistic competence profiles of students who are just entering institutions of higher education. Their main objectives were to elaborate a complete diagnosis of the first-year students' English linguistic competence in colleges of the metropolitan area in Mexico City and to get socio-demographic and previous education indicators in order to establish the different profiles of new college students based on their English competence.

The authors took into account the kind of previous education students had and the high schools they came from. González and Vivaldo used two instruments, a modified version of the Nelson English Language Test (Elementary, Intermediate, Advanced) designed by W. S. Fowler y Norman Coe (1979) to test the students' Linguistic Competence and, a questionnaire for evaluating the background of foreign languages formation. The questionnaire was integrated by 32 structured questions which evaluated a) personal information, b) academic information, c) previous experience and formation in foreign languages, d) opinions about the level of mastery of Spanish and foreign languages, and e) opinions about the quality of English teaching taken before entering the university.

The sample for this study was made up of the freshmen students in nine different universities from Mexico City. (El Colegio de México, la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, el Instituto Politécnico Nacional, el Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, el Instituto Tecnológico de Tlanepantla, la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, la Universidad del Valle de México, la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México y la Universidad Pedagógica Nacional).

The findings show that students under research could be classified into two groups, the ones from the Colegio de Mexico and Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de Mexico, which were the only two universities receiving students with an intermediate level of

English linguistic competence. The other group was formed with students from the other seven universities, just 10.6 % of them succeeded in the English Linguistic Competence Test. The failing percentage grows up as the level of difficulty did the same. Gonzalez and Vivaldo also found out that 23.9 % of the subjects were placed at the basic level, 8.6% at intermediate, and only the 6.5 % at the advanced level. The authors suggested that this kind of research and findings should be known and discussed in all the institutions of high and major education.

Regarding the evaluation of the curriculum in language teaching, Ali Jahangard (2007), through his study “The Evaluation of the EFL Materials Taught at Iranian Public High Schools” evaluated four EFL textbooks which are prescribed for use in Iranian high schools by the Ministry of Education. The merits and demerits of the textbooks are discussed in detail with reference to 13 common features extracted from different material evaluation checklists.

In order to evaluate the books, the researcher browsed ten checklist proposed by different authors, he also selected thirteen features which were common in these checklists. He consulted ten different EFL/ESL textbook evaluation schemes to evaluate the four books under study.

After a close examination of the checklists, he found out that these criteria were the most common to all the schemes proposed by the above mentioned materials:

1. Are objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material?
2. Good vocabulary explanation and practice.
3. Approaches educationally and socially acceptable to target community.
4. Periodic review and test sections.
5. Appropriate visual materials available.
6. Interesting topics and tasks.
7. Clear instructions.
8. Clear attractive layout, print easy to read.
9. Content clearly organized and graded.
10. Plenty of authentic language.
11. Good grammar presentation and practice.
12. Fluency practice in all four skills.
13. Encourages learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning.

The findings were that none of the four books has the thirteen marks of the checklist. But in all of them, there are at least five characteristics included. The author suggests that the evaluation of the EFL materials currently taught at public high schools requires a deeper and more exhaustive analysis and scrutiny by a group of experienced teachers and that the viewpoints and the ideas of a single researcher might not be adequately

reliable because, however hard one tries, it is almost impossible to be unbiased and impartial in one's judgments.

Roberto Rabbini in Warabi (n.d.) examined the current syllabi and highlighted the issues relevant to teachers considering creating their own curriculum with specific reference to those based in Japan. In order to achieve his objective, he did some research about the different syllabi in different approaches. As the study was descriptive, he just gathered all the information about the syllabi and explained the pros and cons about them. He suggested that teachers and syllabus designers should take into account all factors when creating them.

With this information we can notice that the problem of the low level of learners' English competence does not seem to be an isolated phenomenon. It happens in different countries and Mexico is not the exception. In the research carried out in our country (the one more relevant for us) we can notice that the research was more general than the one we are doing. However, it showed the same problem we think is happening in Chetumal, Quintana Roo. With our research we could specify a little bit more about the reasons of the supposed poor performance of our subjects in English. The important point is to go beyond them and search for more specific causes of the problem

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Since the research's topic is about English teaching, in this chapter it will be covered information about FL (Foreign Language) teaching approaches and methods, the principles of the Communicative Language Teaching, assessment in language teaching, testing in the communicative approach, general information about syllabus and finally the communicative syllabus. All these elements will provide us with the necessary tools to support the research in reliable data.

Let us begin with an overview of the most common methods used in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) or TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) which will provide us with an understanding of the language skills included and evaluation used, which are of our particular interest. Celce-Murcia (1991) summarizes in a very good way the methods she considered are, or were in a time, the most influential. She includes the grammar translation method, direct method, audiolingual method, and the communicative approach. As part of the Communicative Language Teaching, the task based instruction will be added. Each method/approach will be explained in terms of the method/approach itself, its contents, and evaluation.

3.1 POPULAR APPROACHES AND METHODS

Grammar Translation Method

Method: it is a lot about the language; however it does not have to do with the ability to speak the language. Students typically use a dictionary. Teacher's role is very traditional/ authoritarian, he/she just explains rules, provides correction immediately, he/she is the source of all materials, all information, and all answers. The teacher gives instructions and students have to perform (usually individually). As far as students are concerned, they do what they are asked to do; they have to learn the patterns and vocabulary. A pattern is given, students repeat – learn by rote, and in a deductive environment, memorize verbs paradigms and vocabulary, there is little interaction with the teacher. Reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar are emphasized while the other skills are completely forgotten. Drills are very common in this method. Attention to students' feelings is not considered. Nothing is done to lower student affective boundaries. The students' native language is the vehicle for foreign language instruction and learning and is used in the classroom for all purposes.

Content: Students are taught structures, rules of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence formation. Language is learned through literature. The culture of language is not really addressed. Culture is present, but due to the use of literature rather than through instruction by the teacher. Lives, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors of the target culture are not taught and would only be learned by the students incidentally through the interaction provided as grammar instruction.

Lesson Sequence: Oral and/or written translation of literary passages (students translate from L2 (Second Language) to L1 (First Language) and from L1 to L2); reading comprehension questions (worksheet with information, inference and experience questions). Antonyms/synonyms and cognates (from passage), deductive application of grammar rules is required, rules are presented and students have to apply them. They perform exercises: fill-in-the-blank exercises (worksheet), memorization (words, phrases, and verb paradigms), use words in sentences and compositions (written work).

Evaluation: Students are tested through translation from L1 to L2 and L2 to L1. Students have to apply grammar rules to solve the tasks.

Direct method

Method: Early forms of direct method were intended to be structural, discouraging translation techniques. Teachers would act out, draw pictures, or point to make him/herself understood. Later forms of it leave structural design and translation decisions to the preferences of teachers. The ultimate goal within this method is to communicate and think in the target language. Direct methods are factual and descriptive of culture which should be part of language learning. A major focus is on communication and understanding of the language rather than grammar. Errors are corrected by encouraging self correction or by asking the correct answer from other students in the classroom. There is a kind of reinforcement that depends on the individual teacher. Grammar rules are learned inductively. The teacher directs class activities; she/he and the students are teaching and learning together. Vocabulary and oral communication are emphasized. Pronunciation is also emphasized from the beginning. Reading and writing are based on oral practice. The students' native language is not used in the classroom. Common activities are: Fill-in-the-blank exercises, dictation, listening comprehension, and paragraph writing.

Content: the content is taught in the target language; a big part of it is formed by a great amount of new words (vocabulary). Activities and tasks are designed to master speaking and pronunciation; it also incorporates visual and auditory demonstration. It requires oral response from students which came from the text and had to be in complete sentences. Teachers use realia, pictures, and pantomime to convey meaning. Language study includes everyday speech. Culture includes history, geography, and daily life.

Lesson Sequence: Reading aloud (dialogues, passages, play with realia or pictures). Questions and answers (teacher asks questions based on read aloud, students can ask questions). Conversation practice (teacher asks students questions about themselves). Fill-in-the-blank exercises (worksheet). Dictation (teacher reads three times, listen, write, check). Listening comprehension (teacher tells students what to do); and paragraph writing.

Evaluation: No systematic form of evaluation is used. Evaluation is done by asking questions to students during the lesson. There is a close match between evaluation and what the student has learned. Students are tested through actual use, such as interviews and written work, such as paragraphs, diaries, letters, and short stories.

Audiolingual method (AL):

Method: The AL method correlates to a behaviorist model of learning employing the stimulus, response, and reinforcement pattern. This method holds that a student should never see anything written before he has mastered oral/aural content. The teacher role is to be an actor, a modeler, and reinforcement provider. The teacher also determines the context for the oral presentation. In AL, accuracy is important; errors should be stamped out because if they are left unattended, they may lead to poor language habits and perhaps fossilized errors. The short term focus and goals are good pronunciation. Its long term goal is to have the students achieve native-like speech. The audiolingual method has students to learn structures. Planned parrothood and memorization are often utilized. Language labs became popular when this method was in vogue. Students are very often drilled on the target language's grammar. Accuracy is valued; indeed. Students' native language is not used. Teachers predict trouble spots and tightly control what they teach students to say. Structures are important; listening-speaking-reading-writing are emphasized. As Celce-Murcia restates (1991), language is habit formation, then L1 habits interfere with L2, as a consequence there is a tendency to avoid L1.

Content: Language structures are emphasized as much as vocabulary in dialogues. Everyday speech that has to do with culture is very important. Vocabulary and structures are presented in dialogues, learning through imitation and repetition.

Lesson Sequence: Dialogue (conversation between two or more students), acting out the dialogue, pattern drills (repetition, substitution, transformation), written practice (worksheet).

Evaluation: Discrete-point tests. Johnson and Johnson (1999) mention that this kind of testing assumes that language knowledge can be divided into a number of independent facts: elements of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation, pronunciation, intonation and stress. These can be tested by pure items (usually multiple-choice recognition tasks). There is no a necessary integration in the skills that are evaluated. In fact, the evaluation is measured by proficiency on drills.

Communicative approach or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Approach: Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. The teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audiolingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a class exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day. Students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics.

The main goal of CLT is to become communicatively competent, use appropriate language for social context, and negotiate meaning. Function is emphasized over form and students work at discourse level focusing on negotiating meaning. Errors are natural. Students with incomplete knowledge can still succeed. Teacher is a facilitator and manager of learning activities. He promotes communication among students. Activities include information gap, choice, feedback, role plays. The students' native language does not play a role. There is no error correction unless errors interfere with communication. Discourse and sociolinguistic competence in the all four skills (listening, writing, reading, and speaking) are promoted. This method includes

interviews, information gap, games, language exchanges, surveys and pair work as main activities. Role Play is very used to create real situations and give students the opportunity to be prepared for the real world.

Content: Activities are communicative through the use of authentic materials. Speakers choose what to say and how to say it, usually working in small groups. Culture is part of daily communication. The teacher manages activities and sets up communicative situations (not scripted).

Lesson Sequence: dialogues, oral practice, questions and answers (oral, based on dialogue, restate, extend and predict), basic communicative expressions, generalizations (language/grammar), oral recognition/interpretative activities (pictures/questions).

Also, written homework is very common.

Evaluation: informal evaluation is part of communication. Formal evaluation includes integrative tests, (evaluates skills as a whole) which include communicative functions that are used to grade fluency and accuracy.

Task Based Instruction (TBT)

Method/approach: This method is part of the communicative approach; its principles are based on the same idea that follows the CL: language is acquired through communication (Howart, 1984). Its point of departure is not an ordered list of linguistic items, but a collection of tasks to teach and learn (Nunan, 1999). Task based language learning was defined by Bree (1987) as “any structured language learning endeavour which has a particular objective, appropriate content, a specified working procedure, and a range of outcomes for those who undertake the task”. As tasks are the base of this method, a definition of it will be helpful for a better understanding. Nunan (1989: 10) offers the following definition : “the communicative task [is] a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.”

These activities have a communicative purpose and are connected to the problems of the real world. Task-based Instruction is focused on preparing students and making them able to solve a problem of the daily life by creating situations in which they have to practice a speech that is common in the target culture.

Content: TBI places the task centrally, as the unit of syllabus design (Long and Crookes 1992) with language use during tasks as the driving force for the language development (Long 1989). Students are provided with opportunities to experience how language is used in communication. They are trained for listing, ordering and sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences and performing creative tasks. The tasks should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right (Nunan, 1989). Students must function primarily as language users.

Lesson sequence: complete and structured performance of different kind of tasks whose main goal is to develop the students' ability to solve a given situation.

Evaluation: students are evaluated according to the ability they have to communicate with others. It is important to say that an effective communication involves the use and integration of skills since each of it is a complement for the others. Learners have to use the language to achieve the aim. At the end, the real purpose of a task is to use language in ways that promote language learning.

As we can notice, this overview of the teaching methods and approaches provides ideas of how teaching English has changed over the years. Considering the Placement Test used in the Centro de Idiomas at Universidad de Quintana Roo, according to the data obtained, this is based on the Communicative Language Teaching. Since the present research is aimed at comparing the teaching and evaluation used at high schools to the one reflected at the CEI Placement Test, it is important to deeply explain about the Communicative Language Teaching.

3.2 COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

As this study is based on the comparison of the teaching at high schools to the one reflected in the CEI Placement Test at UQROO, it is necessary to know the principles and the way the communicative approach functions (this method is supposed to be used in the CEI placement test), in this way it will be easier to notice the characteristics of a communicative teaching and check if they are in any way included in the teaching at high schools.

According to Littlewood (1981) the main goal of CLT is to reach communicative ability in the target language. A communicative approach opens up a wider perspective on

language. It considers language not only in terms of its structure (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions that it performs. The focus is not only on language forms but on what people do with these forms. For example, the form 'Why don't you close the door?' might be used for a number of communicative purposes (asking a question, making a suggestion or issuing an order). The sentence's structure is stable and straightforward; however, its communicative function is variable and depends on specific situational and social factors.

This newer functional view of language can be combined with the traditional structural view to achieve a more communicative perspective. Littlewood (1981) mentions that for the CLT it is not enough to teach learners how to manipulate the structures of the foreign language but also to develop strategies for relating these structures to their communicative functions in real situations and real time. Learners should be provided with opportunities to use the language themselves for communicative purposes, in this way they will develop the ability to take part in the process of communicating through language, rather than with their perfect mastery of individual structures. They will be efficient communicators if they are skilled at processing a complete situation involving himself and his hearer, taking into account what knowledge is already shared between them, and selecting items which will communicate his message effectively.

Besides the functional factor, there is another one within this approach with the same importance: the social factor. Language carries not only functional meaning, it also carries social meaning. For example, a student might say 'Shut the door, will you?' to a flat-mate, but to a stranger on a train it would be more appropriate to say, 'Excuse me, would you mind closing the door?' The wrong use of any of these phrases in any of these situations would be equally likely to cause offence. Therefore, as learners advance in competence, an important direction of progress is towards greater understanding and mastery of the social significance of alternative language forms. In the earlier stages, however, the emphasis is likely to be on achieving productive mastery of forms from a middle level formality, which will be acceptable both with friends and with strangers.

In CLT, learners should practice not only with activities where the response is expected to be immediate (as in most drills and question-and-answer practice), but also those where the learner has more time to reflect on the operations he is performing. It is also

remarkable the use of the ‘creative language which involves de recombination of familiar elements (words, structures and prefabricated patterns) in new ways to produce utterances that have never been produced before by a particular individual’ (Nunan, 1999).

Teachers can modify a very structural practice and transform it into a more communicative one. Here, for example, learners must produce the correct form of the simple past. Stimulus=S; Response=R

| |
|-------------------------------------|
| S: John has written the letter. |
| R: He wrote it yesterday. |
| S: John has seen the film. |
| R: He saw it yesterday. (and so on) |

Performing the activity in this way will have as consequence that many learners will focus only on the structural changes that they have to make. It will be different, however, if the teacher relates the structure to a communicative function. An adaptation with the same structural facts but in a language which sounds more communicatively authentic is called a pre –communicative activity where the learner’s main purpose is not to communicate meanings but to produce certain language forms in an acceptable way. Teachers design those activities to provide an opportunity for learners to produce language that they had recently learned. The teacher’s overall purpose is to prepare learners for later communicative activities by providing them with the necessary linguistic forms and the necessary links between forms and meanings. A pre-communicative activity will look like the following one.

| |
|--|
| S: By the way, has John written that letter yet? |
| R: Yes, he wrote it yesterday. |
| S: Has he seen the film yet? |
| R: Yes, he saw it yesterday |

In this case the response is not only a past declarative but also a reply. Now, it is possible to recognize the communicative function as well as the structure of the

linguistic forms. Teachers must ask learners to practice responses which would be realistic ways of performing useful communicative acts in situations they might expect to encounter at some time. This is another example:

Your friend makes a lot of suggestions, but you feel too tired to do anything.

S: Shall we go to the cinema?

R: Oh no, I don't feel like going to the cinema.

S: Shall we have a swim? (Or what about a swim, then?)

R: Oh no, I don't feel like having a swim.

Structurally, learners are here practicing the use of the gerund. Functionally, they are learning ways of making and rejecting suggestions. Having a clear idea of what a pre-communicative activity is about; let us turn to the characteristics of a communicative activity.

Within activities that are communicative in nature, the learner uses his/her linguistic repertoire in order to communicate specific meanings for specific purposes. Littlewood (1981) claims that these activities have four main purposes:

- They provide 'whole task practice': in foreign language learning, the means for providing learners with whole-task practice in the classroom is through various kinds of communicative activity, structured in order to suit the learner's level of ability.
- They improve motivation: the learners' ultimate objective is to take part in communication with others. They are more motivated if they can see how their classroom learning is related to this objective and helps them to achieve it with increasing success.
- They allow natural learning: language learning occurs inside the learner, and many aspects of it are beyond teachers' pedagogical control. It can take place only through natural processes, which operate when a person is involved in using the language for communication.
- They can create a context which supports learning: communicative activity creates positive relationships that can help to humanize the classroom and to create an environment that supports the individual in his effort to learn.

Types of communicative activities

Functional communication activities: are activities done in the classroom which emphasize the functional aspect of communication. Their main purpose is that learners should use the language they know in order to get meanings as affectively as possible. Success is measured primarily according to whether they cope with the communicative demands of the immediate situation.

These activities can be divided into the following groups:

1. Sharing information with restricted cooperation
 - Identifying pictures, discovering identical pairs, discovering sequences or locations, discovering missing information, discovering missing features, discovering secrets.
2. Sharing information with unrestricted cooperation
 - Communicating patterns and pictures, communicating models, discovering differences, following directions
3. Sharing and processing information
 - Reconstructing story-sequences, pooling information to solve a problem
4. Processing information
 - Discussion and evaluation of facts to solve a problem or reach a decision.

Other types of activities are the following:

Social interaction activities: activities in which the competent speaker chooses language which is not only functionally effective, but is also appropriate to the social situation he/she is in. Learners must still aim to convey meaning effectively, but must also pay greater attention to the social context in which the interaction takes place. The limitations of the classroom can be diminished by the use of techniques such as simulation and role-playing. Success is measured not only in terms of the functional effectiveness of the language, but also in terms of the acceptability of the forms that are used. It is important to mention that in the early stages of learning acceptability means little more than a reasonable degree of accuracy in pronunciation and grammar.

Sometimes, the classroom is limited and do not count with all the necessary tools to do the communicative activities. However, Nunan (1999: 55) offers four approaches that definitely help to minimize the limitations. They are:

1. Using the foreign language for classroom management. It is important to provide learners as soon as possible with the language needed for routine classroom affairs, in order to establish the foreign language as the medium for organizing learning activities. If teachers do not do that, learners will see the foreign language as allocated to communicatively non-essential domains such as drills or dialogue practice, while the mother tongue remains the appropriate medium for discussing matters of immediate importance.
2. Using the foreign language as a teaching medium. What learners want to the most is to develop communicative ability and they are more motivated when they feel they are learning something interesting. When teachers teach any subject through the foreign language, teaching gets a dual role: to provide learners with useful knowledge, and to engage them in purposeful communication in the target language.
3. Conversation or discussion sessions. They are very helpful because they open a rich stimulus for communicative interaction (learners' experiences, interests and opinions). Besides, learners can practice the skills required for managing longer sessions of social interaction, such as introducing a new topic, turn taking or sustaining the conversation through difficult periods.
4. Basing dialogues and role-plays on school experience. The aim of this approach is to help young learners to understand their environment and cope with its problems by exteriorize them through the foreign language.

Classroom organization

Classroom organization is an important aspect that can help to minimize the limitations of the classroom; within a communicative classroom, the chairs are not organized in the traditional way, the teacher-fronted one with learners sitting in rows facing him/her. According to Nunan (1999: 83), this kind of organization does not allow students to work in groups in an easy way because they must be strictly ordered and stay in their places, it also creates an image of the teacher as the maximum authority in the

classroom, whose knowledge is unquestionable. It is better to create an environment of confidence in which everyone feel free to ask questions and participate in all kind of tasks.

As it was said before, the communicative teaching includes and integrates the four skills. For that reason, it will make a revision of each one of those skills.

Listening in the communicative approach

Many people think that listening is a passive skill; however, since it demands active involvement of the hearer it could be called an active skill. The active nature of listening means that, no less than in speaking, the learner must be motivated by a communicative purpose which determines to a large extent what meanings he/she must listen for and which parts are most important to him/her. The nature of listening comprehension means that the learner should be encouraged to engage in an active process of listening for meanings, using not only the linguistic cues but also his non-linguistic knowledge.

In order to accustom the learners gradually to an increasing range of speech, Littlewood (1983) suggest that communicative listening activities should include some of the varied factors in the spoken text. These include:

- Linguistic factors such as complexity and degree of formality.
- Performance factors such as accent, speed, fluency and clarity.
- Situational factors such as background noise and acoustic conditions.
- The type of text, e.g. dialogues, reports, descriptions, instructions.

It is also important to give a purpose to the listening task. The most familiar technique for providing a purpose for listening is, by means of questions which prompt learners to listen for specific facts or to make inferences from what they hear. According to the kind of response that learners must produce, listening activities are grouped as follows:

1. Performing physical tasks: identification and selection, sequencing, locating, drawing and constructing.
2. Transferring information: completing tables, charts, or diagrams.

3. Reformulating and evaluating information: writing notes of summaries using learners' own words.

Reading in the communicative approach

There are six characteristics that can help us to identify and create good communicative reading tasks. They are provided by Davies (1995: 144), and are the following:

1. Typically makes use of authentic and challenging texts.
2. Provides students with a rhetorical or topical framework for processing and analyzing the texts.
3. Frequently involves an oral reading of the text by the teacher or a student followed by silent reading and rereading of the text.
4. Involves the students interacting with the text and with each other.
5. Involves the students in direct analysis of the text instead of indirect questions answering.
6. Frequently involves the transfer of information from text to visual or diagrammatic representation.

Speaking in the communicative approach

Littlewood (2004) claims that teachers of foreign languages who want to promote communication and more varied forms of interaction in the classroom could use simulation for their purposes and, within that field, especially role-playing.

Role-plays are very useful in the communicative classroom. There are different types of role-plays but all of them are based in the same idea:

- Learners have to imagine themselves in a situation which could occur outside the classroom. It could be something as simple as meeting a friend in the street or something more complex such as a series of business negotiations.
- Then, they have to adopt a specific role in that situation; in some cases they just have to act as themselves, in others they will have to adopt a simulated identity.
- Learners have to behave as if the situation really existed, in accordance with their roles.

Some types of role-plays are:

Role-playing controlled through cued dialogues, role-playing controlled through cues and information, role-playing controlled through situation and goals, role-playing in the form of debate or discussion, large- scale simulation activities, and improvisation.

The last example is the least controlled and implies more communication. Within these activities students' goal is to use the knowledge they have in order to communicate effectively in a natural way. The focus is not on the practice of language but on real communication.

Writing in the communicative approach

Sometimes writing is forgotten because it requires more time to be taught than the other skills. However, in a communicative approach it is important to develop the four skills, which means that writing must be included. Madsen (1983) suggests some techniques that can be used in the beginning levels of English.

1. Sentence combining: could be by adding a connective or by putting one sentence inside the other. With the first type students can demonstrate their understanding of what various connective mean. For example:

He likes ice cream _____ **but** _____ he won't eat any.

The second type of sentence combining requires considerable proficiency on the part of students. Often the subordinators and conjunctions are provided as in this example:

I am surprised. Nobody likes her. (It _____ that)

(Answer: It surprises me that nobody likes her.)

2. Sentence expansion: this can involve simply adding words such as adjectives and adverbs. Or it can require adding phrases and clauses.

His decision () surprised everyone ().

(Answer: his decision **to quit his job** surprised everyone **that knew him**)

Those are just some simple examples for beginners, with more advanced learners, teachers give learners the opportunity to select a topic and provide some guidelines for the writing task. It is important to test what has been taught. A communicative writing task evaluates the effectiveness of the total composition (sentence –level accuracy, larger rhetorical matters such as unity, coherence and organization, as well as

effectiveness in conveying ideas to the intended audience). It is important for teachers, when preparing a writing activity, to be careful to match the assignment to the students' level of training.

Grammar and vocabulary in the communicative approach

Littlewood (2004) suggests that in our everyday language use, we normally focus our attention primarily on the meaning of what we say or hear, rather than on its linguistic form. Then, the most important part of communication is the message not the structure. However, to learn the structure of a language is very important in language learning since it provides the basis for understandable communication. The point that this author makes is that when teaching grammar, teachers should include aspects of communication and social interaction, not just the application of grammar rules. The following example will show a grammar-based question.

1. Laura _____ high School in San Francisco.
a) attends b) attend c) attending

In this example students need to know the rules of the third person singular. That is a grammar structure. Let us take up again our next example to show a more communicative exercise.

2. Your friend makes a lot of suggestions, but you feel too tired to do anything.
S: Shall we go to the cinema?
R: Oh no, I don't feel like going to the cinema.
S: Shall we have a swim? (Or what about a swim, then?)
R: Oh no, I don't feel like having a swim.

In contrast to the first question, question number two not only checks grammar but the ability to interact in a conversation using appropriate language. In this way students are not only aware of grammar rules but also they have a purpose and need to communicate.

Vocabulary is included in the communicative approach. Its relevance arises in the moment to communicate. That is because the goal of the communicative approach is precisely to communicate effectively, then we need to express ourselves and to express we need to know words but not separately like single units but as part of our speech.

It is important to learn new words in context and understand the meaning according to the word surrounding. Littlewood (2004) suggests the use of realia, mimic, pictures as some tools to use before translating a word. However, in the first stages, if there is no option the translation technique is not restricted.

Communicative content: what to teach

According to Littlewood (1981), the communicative view of language can help teachers to make the linguistic content of a course more relevant to learners' needs at the same time that provide them (teachers) with alternative ways of organizing this content into teaching units. However, a communicative content course not involves abandoning the use of structural criteria for selection and sequencing, but it means to go beyond structures and take into account other aspects of communication. For example:

- When deciding which linguistic forms should be emphasized, the teacher can give priority to those that offer the greatest value in widening the learners' communicative repertoire. For example, 'can + infinitive' enables them to express a number of important communicative functions and the teacher must spend most time teaching it. In contrast, it is less urgent that learners should distinguish between 'I will' and 'I shall'.
- When introducing and practicing structures, the teacher can do it through language that reflects as closely as possible the topics that the learners want to talk about. For example, they will never need to say 'grandmother's ear trumpet has been struck by lightning'. However, they might need to say that 'John's car has been towed away by the police' or some similar utterance using the passive construction.
- In devising more creative activities, the teacher can take into account learners' probable needs. For example, in discussion and problem solving activities, he/she can include topics that reflect the learners' interests. In role-playing, he /she can include situations which the learners might expect to encounter outside the classroom.

Teacher and learner's roles

As the last part of this topic, the role of the teacher and the learners in a communicative classroom will be explained. The development of the communicative ability occurs through processes inside the learner. The teacher can offer the kinds of stimulus and experience that these processes seem to require, but has no direct control over them.

However, this does not mean that teachers are not necessary; Nunan (1989:132) explains that they become 'facilitators of learning' who take the following roles:

1. As general overseers of their students' learning, they must aim to coordinate the activities so that they form a coherent progression, leading towards greater communicative ability.
2. As classroom managers, they are responsible for grouping activities into lessons and for ensuring that these are satisfactorily organized in the practical level. This includes deciding on their own role in the activity.
3. In many activities, they may perform the familiar role of language instructors: they will present new language, exercise direct control over the learners' performance, evaluate and correct it, and so on.
4. While independent activities are in progress, they may act as consultants or advisers, helping where necessary. They will monitor the strengths and weaknesses of the learners, as a basis for planning future learning activities.
5. They will sometimes wish to participate in an activity as co-communicators with the learner. In this role, they can stimulate and present new language, without taking the main initiative for learning away from the learners themselves.

As far as learners are concerned, Nunan (1999:75) claims that they are users of language; they can participate in their process of learning. They are collaborators and mediators in order to find solutions and solve a given task.

Now that is clear what the CLT is about, it is time to explain a very important topic for the research, which is assessment. People concerned with English teaching know that assessment is important for learners and teachers. As an introduction, in the following section some general information about it will be provided, and some types of assessment. Later on, as our research goes around the communicative teaching, assessment within this approach will be described as a way to know how evaluation should be in there.

3.3 ASSESSMENT

Assessment in language teaching

As one objective of this study is to compare the evaluation done through the CEI placement test and the teaching at high schools in order to identify differences or

similarities, I it is important to have clear some basics about assessment in language teaching in general, and assessment in the communicative approach, in particular as this is the approach claimed to be used at the CEI placement test.

Why asses language ability?

According to Cohen (1994), the language learning classroom marks a context in which progress can, and sometimes must, be evaluated in a systematic way. He mentions some benefits of testing for learners and teachers.

The benefits for learners:

- To promote meaningful involvement of students with material that is central to the teaching objectives of a given course.
- When the teacher prepares students for a test, the test can serve as an inducement for them to review the material covered in the course.
- It can provide learners with feedback about their language performance at various stages in the developmental process. Depending on the quality of the feedback and the attention the students give it, they may learn something about their areas of strengths and also about the areas in which they are weak, prompting further learning or review.

The benefits for teachers:

- The design and construction of a test acts as an incentive to determine the goals of instruction in a course.
- Through the results, the teacher knows how well the students are learning or if they have mastered the material, and also how well the item was written. With this feedback he/she can suggest areas for instruction, for review, or for improving future assessment.
- It creates an opportunity for teachers to sit with the students and go over a test individually in order to gain more precise insights into the student's strengths and weaknesses.

According to Bachman (1991), testing should be authentic. In order to achieve this goal, he mentions that teachers must stipulate by definition that the language tests are

measuring language ability directly. Also, they have to consider language tests to be assessing language use similar to that in real life. And finally, to consider language tests as authentic on the basis of face validity or face appeal. This is a type of validation which is not based in empirical evidences; in fact it is concerned with popularity or common acceptance rather than scientific truth.

Next, some general aspects of testing will be described following Heaton principles (1991). Then, as the research's main purpose is related to teaching, especially to the one reflected in the CEI English Placement Test, it will be included a topic about testing in the communicative approach.

Two basic principles of testing

According to Heaton (1991), every test should be reliable; it means that a test should measure precisely whatever it is supposed to measure. If students take the same test twice, the results must be the same (if nothing happens in the meanwhile). The other principle is that the test should also be valid. It should measure whatever is supposed to measure and nothing else. For example, a composition test which requires students to write about modern methods of transport may not be valid since it will measure not only an ability to write in English but knowledge about modern transport.

Depending on the purpose of testing, tests have been classified into different types:

Progress test: its most important objective is to find out how well the students have mastered the language areas and skills which have been just taught. Class progress tests are usually the most important kinds of tests for teachers. Although teachers should try to give progress tests regularly, they should avoid over-testing. A classroom test can help to show students the progress which they are undoubtedly making.

Diagnostic test: it helps teachers to check their students' progress for specific weaknesses and problems they may have encountered. In order to find out what these weaknesses are, teachers must be systematic when designing the test to select specific areas where students are likely to have problems or weaknesses.

Achievement test: it is like a progress test but it is usually designed to cover a longer period of learning than a progress test. Achievement tests should attempt to cover as much of the syllabus as possible. They are formal examinations, given at the end of the

school year or at the end of the course. Also, they measure a student's mastery of what should have been taught but not necessarily what has actually been taught.

Selection tests: it is used to select certain candidates for a job or for a place in a course. It is necessary when there are far more candidates than the number of jobs or places which are available. The purpose of the test is to compare the performances of all the candidates and select only the best. Here, it is not as important how well a person can use English as how better the other candidates do.

Proficiency test: it is used to measure how suitable candidates will be for performing a certain task or following a specific course. Most proficiency tests concentrate on assessing candidates' ability to use English for a special purpose. The main purpose of this kind of test is to find out the degree of success someone may have in doing something.

Placement test: its main objective is to sort students into groups according to their language ability at the beginning of a course. Such a test should be as general as possible and should concentrate on testing a wide and representative range of ability in English. It should thus avoid concentrating in narrow areas of language and specific skills. Consequently, questions measuring general language ability can form a useful part of a placement test. These questions often consist of blank-filling items and tests of dictation.

Such questions, however, should make up only one part of a placement test. The most important part of the test should consist of questions directly concerned with the specific language skills which students will require on their course. Consequently, it is important to write questions which concentrate on those skills and areas of language on which the early part of the future course concentrates. For example, it scarcely matters how well a student performs on a test of reading stories in English if the course concentrates solely in the listening and speaking skills. Nor does it matter how well a student can write informal letters to friends if the course is concerned with the use of English for study purposes.

It is thus essential to examine the syllabus very carefully and to bear it in mind constantly while writing a placement test. In this way, a placement test looks forward to the language demands which will be made on students during their course. Thus, for

example, if students are going to learn about ways of using the past perfect tense to talk about past events, we should include items on the past simple tense (and possibly in the present perfect tense) in our test as mastery of these areas will clearly be important before the past perfect tense is taught. Similarly, if students are going to be taught how to describe processes in making things, we should include questions on the passive voice in our tests.

Finally, a placement test should try to spread out the students' scores as much as possible. This way, it is possible to divide students into several groups according to their various ability levels. After revising the classification of tests according to their purpose, we have to mention that those tests can also be classified according to the kind of items (short test questions) they include into objective and subjective tests.

An objective item can be marked very quickly and without chance to make a mistake because it has only a one correct answer or a limited number of correct answers. They can be marked by a machine or by an inexperienced person. For example:

1. David: Are there any good _____ on television tonight?
- a. Showings b. Programmes c. Screens d. Performances

Subjective questions, on the other hand, are: compositions, reports, letters, answers to comprehension questions using students' own words, conversations, discussions, talks, etc. They offer better ways of testing language skills and certain areas of language than objective questions. They can only be marked by a competent marker or teacher. There is no answer which is 100 per cent right or 100 per cent wrong. Markers have to use their own judgments when they award marks. The following example shows a possible question in an oral interview, Wilkinson (1980).

What's your favorite pastime?

A's answer: Swimming.

B's answer: I am liking always the swimming.

C's answer: I like swimming a lot but I'm not very good at it.

D's answer: Swimming is my favorite game.

E's answer: I enjoy to swim.

F's answer: Swim.

Teachers must have some guidelines before they can set about marking reliably.

Testing in the communicative approach

The data already obtained with the instruments tells us that the communicative approach is used to test students at the CEI. For that reason a topic about testing within this approach is included in the next section.

The communicative approach is based on the premise that language is first and foremost a tool for communication. From this perspective, tests can be adapted to include items which possibly measure the students' communicative ability in all levels of language.

Brown, (1987) claims that a communicative test has to meet some rather stringent criteria; it has to test for grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and illocutionary competence as well as strategic competence. It has to be pragmatic in that it requires the learner to use language naturally for genuine communication and to relate to thoughts and feelings; in short, to put authentic language to use within a context. Furthermore it should test the learner in a variety of language functions.

In testing communicative performance, test items should measure how well students are able to engage in meaningful, purposeful, and authentic communicative tasks (Heaton, 1991). Students must have a good performance linguistically and communicatively. That is, they must have a good command of the components involved in communication. Communicative tests need to measure more than isolated language skills, to comprehensively indicate how well a person can function in another language.

Gronlund (1985) explains that in communicative testing authenticity is a key element in the designing of materials and test items. It means, assessing language behavior by observing it in real, or at least realistic, language-use situations which should be as authentic as possible.

Tests should therefore assess the learner's communicative behavior and not be based on linguistic items alone. In taking communicative tests, student's performance should be measured not only in terms of formal correctness, but also primarily in terms of interaction, for the concern is not how much the students know, but how well they can perform.

The following section includes information and examples about testing in the communicative approach, following mainly a research carried out in Japan by Kathleen and Kenji Kitao in 1999.

What Communicative Language Tests Measure

Kathleen and Kenji Kitao (1999) claim that communicative language tests try to be a measure of how the testees are able to use language in real life situations. In testing productive skills (writing and speaking), emphasis is placed on appropriateness rather than on ability to form grammatically correct sentences. In testing receptive skills (reading and listening), emphasis is placed on understanding the communicative intent of the speaker or writer rather than on picking out specific details.

In real life, the different skills are not often used entirely in isolation. All of them are related one to the other. For example, in real life while using the mother tongue, people do not just listen in a conversation but also participate by answering or giving opinions. In the classroom, when taking part in a group discussion, learners need to use both listening and speaking skills. Even reading a book for pleasure may be followed by recommending it to a friend and telling the friend why you liked it.

There are some tests that are more communicative than others. For example, a test in which students listen to an utterance on a tape and then choose from among three choices the most appropriate response is more communicative than one in which the testees answer a question about the meaning of the utterance. However, it is less communicative than one in which the students are face- to-face with the interlocutor (rather than listening to a tape) and are required to produce an appropriate response.

To talk about communicative tests implies to talk about tasks. It is essential that the tasks included in a communicative test were actually communicative. In previous pages it has been explained what a task is; now let us focus on the communicative ones.

Tasks

The tasks used in a given tests will depend on the purpose of the test itself. In a communicative approach tests are often very context-specific. A test for learners who are going to enter a British university would be very different from one for testees who

are going to their company's branch office in the United States. As much as possible, a communicative language test should be based on a description of the language that the testees need to use. Also, the test should reflect the communicative situation in which they are likely to find themselves. Because of this, the tasks included in the test will be influenced by the communicative situation. A communicative test of listening, then, would test not whether the learner could understand what the utterance, "Would you mind putting the groceries away before you leave" means, but placing it in a context and see if they can respond appropriately to it.

Tests intended to test communicative language are judged on the extent to which they simulate real life communicative situations rather than on how reliable the results are. In fact, there is an almost inevitable loss of reliability as a result of the loss of control in a communicative testing situation. If, for example, a test is intended to test the ability to participate in a group discussion for students who are going to a British university, it is impossible to control what the other participants in the discussion will say, so not every testee will be observed in the same situation, which would be ideal for test reliability. However, according to the basic assumptions of communicative language testing, this is compensated for by the realism of the situation.

Another important aspect of communicative tests is the evaluation. To evaluate learners with a communicative test is not the same to do it with other types, such as grammatical tests, which must of the time are of very specific answers. Evaluation within this approach is very specific.

There is necessarily a subjective element to the evaluation of communicative tests. Real life situations don't always have objectively right or wrong answers, and so band scales need to be developed to evaluate the results. Each band has a description of the quality (and sometimes quantity) of the receptive or productive performance of the testee.

Examples of Communicative Test Tasks and Grading in the different skills

Within this section it will be included some examples of communicative tasks. Furthermore, since grading is supposed to reflect a specific method, and it should be done according to the principles of that method, it will be necessary for our purposes to know some important points about it.

Testing Speaking and Listening

Information gap: An information gap activity is one in which two or more people work together, each person is given certain information but also lacks some necessary information. The task requires the testees to ask for and give information. It should provide a context in which it is logical for the testees to be sharing information. The following is an example of an information gap activity.

Student A

You are planning to buy a tape recorder. You don't want to spend more than about 80 pounds, but you think that a tape recorder that costs less than 50 pounds is probably not of good quality. You definitely want a tape recorder with auto reverse, and one with a radio built in would be nice. You have investigated three models of tape recorder and your friend has investigated three models. Get the information from him/her and share your information. You should start the conversation and make the final decision, but you must get his/her opinion, too.

(Information about three kinds of tape recorders)

Student B

Your friend is planning to buy a tape recorder, and each of you investigated three types of tape recorders. You think it is best to get a small, light tape recorder. Share your information with your friend, and find out about the three tape recorders that your friend investigated. Let him/her begin the conversation and make the final decision, but don't hesitate to express your opinion.

(Information about three kinds of tape recorders)

This kind of task could emphasize the evaluation of testee's ability to give and receive information, express and elicit opinions, etc. at the same time it would pay less attention in pronunciation, grammatical correctness, etc., except to the extent that these might interfere with communication. The examiner should be an observer and not take part in the activity, since it is difficult to both take part in the activity and evaluate it. Also, the activity should be tape recorded, if possible, so that it could be evaluated later and it does not have to be evaluated in real time.

Role Play: In a role play, the testee is given a situation to play out with another person. He/she is given in advance information about what his/her role is, what specific functions he/she needs to carry out, etc. A role play task would be similar to the above information gap activity, except that it would not involve an information gap. Usually,

the examiner takes one part of the role play. The following is an example of a role play activity.

Student

You missed class yesterday. Go to the teacher's office and apologize for having missed the class. Ask for the handout from the class. Find out what the homework was.

Examiner

You are a teacher. A student who missed your class yesterday comes to your office. Accept her/his apology, but emphasize the importance of attending classes. You do not have any extra handouts from the class, so suggest that she/he copy one from a friend. Tell her/him what the homework was.

Here, the testee would be assessed on his/her ability to carry out the functions (apologizing, requesting, asking for information, responding to a suggestion, etc.) required by the role.

Testing Reading and Writing

Some tests combine reading and writing in communicative situations. Testees can be given a task in which they are presented with instructions to write a letter, memo, summary, etc., answering certain questions, based on information that they are given, Wilkinson (1980). The next examples offer a better understanding of some kind of reading and writing activities.

Summarizing: Testees might be given a long passage--for example, 400 words--and be asked to summarize the main points in less than 100 words. They should be given realistic reasons for doing such a task. For example, the longer text might be an article that their boss would like to have summarized so that he/she can incorporate the main points into a talk. The summary would be evaluated based on the inclusion of the main points of the longer text.

Letter writing: In many situations, testees might have to write business letters, letters asking for information, apologizing, complaining, etc. The following is an example of such a task.

Your boss has received a letter from a customer complaining about problems with a coffee maker that he bought six months ago. Your boss has instructed you to check the company policy on returns and repairs and reply to the letter. Read the letter from the customer and the statement of the company policy about returns and repairs below and write a formal business letter to the customer.

(The customer's complaint letter; the company policy)

The letter would evaluate the formal letter writing layout, the content of the letter, inclusion of correct and relevant information, etc.

Testing Listening and Writing / Note Taking

Listening and writing may also be tested in combination. In this case, testees are given a listening text and they are instructed to write down certain information from the text. Again, although this is not interactive, it should somehow simulate a situation where information would be written down from a spoken text. For example:

You and two friends would like to see a movie. You call the local multiplex theater. Listen to their recording and fill in the missing information in the chart so that you can discuss it with your friends later.

| Theater Number | Movie | Starting Times |
|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1 | Air Head | |
| 2 | | 4:00, 6:00, 8:00 |
| 3 | | 4:35, 6:45, 8:55 |
| 4 | Off Track | |

Grading

For this section, only speaking and writing skills will be considered. The reason for this is the way the skills are graded. On one hand, listening and reading are checked, most of the time, with answer keys; which makes this work easier. On the other hand, speaking and writing are harder to grade than listening and reading in the communicative approach, because there is a lot of aspects that can be evaluated. There are different assessment criteria; in order to assess speaking tasks, Weir (1993, p. 43) mentions that it is very important to follow different criteria of assessment. Here is an example of a marking scheme provided by the University of Reading:

Criteria of assessment

Appropriateness

- 0 Unable to function in the spoken language.
- 1 Able to operate only in a very limited capacity; responses characterized by sociocultural inappropriateness.
- 2 Sign of developing attempts at response to role, setting, etc., but misunderstandings may occasionally arise through inappropriateness, particularly of sociocultural convention.
- 3 Almost no errors in the sociocultural conventions of language; errors not significant enough to be likely to cause social misunderstandings.

Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose

- 0 Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.
- 1 Vocabulary limited to that necessary to express simple elementary needs; inadequacy of vocabulary restricts topics of interaction to the most basic; perhaps frequent lexical inaccuracies and/or excessive repetition.
- 2 Some misunderstandings may arise through lexical inadequacy or inaccuracy; hesitation and circumlocution are frequent, though there are signs of a developing active vocabulary.
- 3 Almost no inadequacies or inaccuracies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare circumlocution.

Grammatical accuracy

- 0 Unable to spoken in the spoken language; almost all grammatical patters inaccurate, except for a few stock phrases.
- 1 Syntax is fragmented and there are frequent grammatical inaccuracies; some patters may be mastered but speech may be characterized by a telegraphic style and/or confusion of structural elements.
- 2 Some grammatical inaccuracies; developing a control of major patters, but sometimes unable to sustain coherence in longer utterances.
- 3 Almost no grammatical inaccuracies; occasional imperfect control of a few patterns.

Intelligibility

- 0 Severe and constant rhythm, intonation and pronunciation problems cause almost complete unintelligibility.
- 1 Strong interference from L1 in rhythm, intonation and pronunciation; understanding is difficult, and achieved often only after frequent repetition.
- 2 Rhythm, intonation and pronunciation require concentrate listening, but only occasional misunderstanding is caused or repetition required.
- 3 Articulation is reasonably comprehensible to native speakers; there may be a marked foreign accent but almost no misunderstanding is caused and repetition required only infrequently.

Fluency

- 0 Utterances halting, fragmentary and incoherent.
- 1 Utterances hesitant and often incomplete except in a few stocks remarks and responses. Sentences are, for the most part, disjointed and restricted in length.
- 2 Signs of developing attempts at using cohesive devices, especially conjunctions. Utterances may be still hesitant, but are gaining in coherence, speed and length.
- 3 Utterances, whilst occasionally hesitant, are characterized by an evenness and flow hindered, very occasionally, by groping, rephrasing and circumlocutions. Inter-sentential connectors are used effectively as fillers.

| Relevance and adequacy of content | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| 0 | Response irrelevant to the task set; totally inadequate response. |
| 1 | Response of limited relevance to the task set; possibly major gaps and/or pointless repetition. |
| 2 | Response for the most part relevant to the task set, though there may be some gaps or redundancy. |
| 3 | Relevant and adequate response to the task set. |

Source: TEEP, CALS, University of Reading

In some tests, people are tested through interviews. This is the case of the CEI English Placement Test. Weir (1993, p.44) mentions that one option is to use a global impression marking scheme. He suggests the following:

| Band | |
|------|---|
| 9 | Expert speaker. Speaks with authority on a variety of topics. Can initiate, expand and develop a theme |
| 8 | Very good non-native speaker. Maintains effectively his own part in a discussion. Initiates, maintains and elaborates as necessary. Reveals humor where needed and responds to attitudinal tones. |
| 7 | Good speaker. Presents case clearly and logically and can develop the dialogue coherently and constructively. Rather less flexible and fluent than Band 8 performer but can respond to main changes of tone or topic. Some hesitation and repetition due to a measure of language restriction but interacts effectively. |
| 6 | Competent speaker. Is able to maintain theme of dialogue, to follow topic switches and to use and appreciate main attitude markers. Stumbles and hesitates at times but is reasonably fluent otherwise. Some errors and inappropriate language but these will not impede exchange of views. Shows some independence in discussion with ability to initiate. |
| 5 | Modest speaker. Although gist of dialogue is relevant and can be basically understood, there are noticeable deficiencies in mastery of language patterns and style. Needs to ask for repetition or clarification and similarly to be asked for them. Lacks flexibility and initiative. The interviewer often has to speak rather deliberately. Copes but not with great style or interest. |
| 4 | Marginal speaker. Can maintain dialogue but in a rather passive manner, rarely taking initiative or guiding the discussion. Has difficulty in following English at normal speed; lacks fluency and probably accuracy in speaking. The dialogue is therefore neither easy nor flowing. Nevertheless, gives the impression that he is in touch with the gist of the dialogue even if not wholly master of it. Marked L1 accent. |
| 3 | Extremely limited speaker. Dialogue is a drawn-out affair punctuated with hesitations and misunderstandings. Only catches part of normal speech and unable to produce continuous and accurate discourse. Basic merit is just hanging on to discussion gist, without making major contribution to it. |
| 2 | Intermittent speaker. No working facility; occasional, sporadic communication. |
| 1/0 | Non-speaker. Not able to understand and/or speak. |

Source: B.J. Carroll, 1980, Testing Communicative Performance cited by Weir (1993)

In writing, as in speaking skills, it is essential to have something to help us to assess learners, in this way their performance will be evaluated in a clearly objective manner.

At the same time, teachers could have a global assessment scale in order to place students in one of the scales given and specified. It is Weir again (1994, p. 160) who gives us the following two bands.

Relevance and adequacy of content

- 0 The answer bears almost no relation to the task set. Totally inadequate answer.
- 1 Answer of limited relevance to the task set. Possibly major gaps in treatment of topic and/or pointless repetition.
- 2 For the most part answers the task set, though there may be some gaps or redundant information.
- 3 Relevant and adequate answer to the task set.

Compositional organization

- 0 No apparent organization of content.
- 1 Very little organization of content. Underlying structure not sufficiently apparent.
- 2 Some organizational skills in evidence, but not adequately controlled.
- 3 Overall shape and internal pattern clear. Organizational skills adequately controlled.

Cohesion

- 0 Cohesion almost totally absent. Writing so fragmentary that comprehension of the intended communication is virtually impossible.
- 1 Unsatisfactory cohesion may cause difficulty in comprehension of most of the intended communication.
- 2 For the most part satisfactory cohesion though occasional deficiencies may mean that certain parts of the communication are not always effective.
- 3 Satisfactory use of cohesion resulting in effective communication.

Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose

- 0 Vocabulary inadequate even for the most basic parts of the intended communication.
- 1 Frequent inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps frequent lexical inappropriacies and/or repetition.
- 2 Some inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Perhaps some lexical inappropriacies and/or circumlocution.
- 3 Almost no inadequacies in vocabulary for the task. Only rare inappropriacies and/or circumlocution.

Grammar

- 0 Almost all grammatical patterns inaccurate.
- 1 Frequent grammatical inaccuracies.
- 2 Some grammatical inaccuracies.
- 3 Almost no grammatical inaccuracies.

Mechanical accuracy I (punctuation)

- 0 Ignorance of conventions of punctuation.
- 1 Low standard of accuracy in punctuation.
- 2 Some inaccuracies in punctuation.
- 3 Almost no inaccuracies in punctuation.

Mechanical accuracy II (spelling)

- 0 Almost all spelling inaccurate
- 1 Low standard of accuracy in spelling.
- 2 Some inaccuracies in spelling.
- 3 Almost no inaccuracies in spelling.

Source: B.J. Carroll, 1980, Testing Communicative Performance cited by Weir (1993)

The next table gives an example of how to grade students according to a set of characteristics which will be the factors taken into account to give the grade.

Grade 1

A text which significantly fails to achieve the task in terms of content and organization. It may be quite short. High incidence of errors in grammar, vocabulary and spelling. Frequently incomprehensible. Argument falls into incoherencies. Expression not appropriate to the situation or context. May lack control over syntax. Overall impression is of somebody using the language with considerable difficulty.

Grade 2-

The text may either be under-developed or contain irrelevant information. Organization is flawed or lacking in control. Student may be over-cautious about exposing weaknesses. May be occasionally incomprehensible. Expression largely or consistently unidiomatic. Occasional gross inadequacy of grammatical usage. Cohesion barely adequate, unsatisfactory use or absence of connectors. Confusion of tense evident. Overall impression is of someone using the language with difficulty.

Grade 2+

Content may be relevant and given some degree of development but is probably rather simplistic. Likely to show at least a modicum of skill in organization. Occasionally more ambitious use of vocabulary. Unidiomatic expression evident, though simpler uses may be accurate. Relatively satisfactory use of connectors. Simple sentences without much variety of structure. Some lapses in coherence, but errors do not seriously interfere with comprehension. Overall impression is of someone able to communicate at a superficial level with limited accuracy.

Grade 3

Content is relevant, adequately-developed and organized. Communicates meaning without undue demands on the reader. Expression is occasionally unidiomatic, though lapses from standard English are not gross. Mostly coherent and cohesive. Appropriate to the context in terms of expression. Largely accurate in the use of relative structures, where appropriate. Overall impression is of

someone who operates competently within a limited range of language and has some command over style and expression.

Grade 4

Content is relevant and well-developed. Shows clear competence in organization. Very few if any errors of grammar, vocabulary or spelling. Language is largely idiomatic, though there may be occasional minor lapses. Points are interesting, appropriately-expressed and coherently-organized at both paragraph and essay level. Fluent command over style and expression.

Grade 5

Content is relevant, fully developed and comprehensive. May be imaginative in its approach. Organization is excellent. Virtually indistinguishable from the English of a well-educated native speaker. Literate, coherent, interesting and of some length. High degree of fluent command over style and expression.

Source: Weir C. (1993). *Understanding and Developing Language Tests*. Prentice Hall

Madsen (1983) proposes another method to grade writing. This is the analytical method, which attempts to evaluate separately the various components of a piece of writing. One analytical approach is the points-off method. Students begins with 100 points or an A grade. Then they lose points or fractions of a grade for errors that occur in their piece or writing, in this way teacher gets the learner’s grade.

Another analytical approach reverses the procedure described above. In this case, points are given for acceptable work in each of several areas. For example:

| | |
|-------------------|-----|
| Vocabulary choice | 20% |
| Grammar and usage | 30% |
| Organization | 30% |
| Mechanics | 20% |

Madsen (1983) believes that a major problem with analytical approaches is that one never knows how to weight each error or even each area being analyzed, without specific elements to decide which grade should be given to each student, the method will be not objective enough.

Finally, we discuss a last method that focuses more on communication, a holistic method of grading. Here, teachers are aware of grammar and mechanics, but they ask themselves, “How well does this paper communicate?” Minor mechanical errors that interfere very little require very little penalty. The grade will be reduced on the basis of scattering those errors. Madsen (1983) affirms that this method does not make teachers feel as secure as they are when grading a spelling or grammar quiz. However, for him, it is one of the best ways to evaluate the complex communicative act of writing.

Whatever the way of grading tests are, the important point here is that communicative language tests are those which make an effort to test language in a way that reflects the way that language is used in real communication; it is, of course, not always possible to make language tests communicative, (classroom conditions, number of students, material, etc.) but it may often be possible to give them communicative elements.

Up to here, it has been revised about the teaching methods and the way of evaluation in the communicative approach. However, in order to complement our analysis about English teaching, it is also important to write about the contents taught at high schools. This will be done through the study of the syllabus; since this is the way it can be appreciate the language and method used, the bibliography and the skills included in a specific course.

3.4 SYLLABUS

This section discusses some general aspects of syllabus design. It will also describe different types of them, and we will go through the communicative syllabus, which is of our concern. This is a relevant topic within this research because the official syllabi (provided by high schools teachers) include all the content students are supposed to be taught during the English course; and by having the characteristics of the different types of them, it will be easier to identify to which type they belong.

First of all, according to Nunan (1999), a syllabus consists of lists of content to be taught through a course of study. Key tasks for the syllabus designer are the selection of the items and their sequencing and interpretation. In traditional language teaching, syllabus design issues (what students learn) and methodology (how they learn) were decided with reference to the classroom but to the learners' real communicative needs in actual situations of the real world; with grammar translation and audio-lingual drills is not enough to achieve real learning.

There are different types of syllabi. Tarey (1988) proposes the following classification, presented beginning with the syllabus based most on structure, and ending with the one based most on language use.

1. A structural (formal) syllabus. The content of language teaching is a collection of the forms and structures, usually grammatical, of the language being taught. Examples include nouns, verbs, adjectives, statements, questions, subordinate clauses, and so on.

2. A notional/functional syllabus. The content of the language teaching is a collection of the functions that are performed when language is used, or of the notions that language is used to express. Examples of functions include: informing, agreeing, apologizing, requesting; examples of notions include size, age, color, comparison, time, and so on.

3. A situational syllabus. The content of language teaching is a collection of real or imaginary situations in which language occurs or is used. A situation usually involves several participants who are engaged in some activity in a specific setting. The language occurring in the situation involves a number of functions, combined into a plausible segment of discourse. The primary purpose of a situational language teaching syllabus is to teach the language that occurs in the situations. Examples of situations include: seeing the dentist, complaining to the landlord, buying a book at the book store, meeting a new student, and so on.

4. A skill-based syllabus. The content of the language teaching is a collection of specific abilities that may play a part in using language. Skills are things that people must be able to do to be competent in a language, relatively independently of the situation or setting in which the language use can occur. While situational syllabi group functions together into specific settings of language use, skill-based syllabi group linguistic competencies (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and discourse) together into generalized types of behavior, such as listening to spoken language for the main idea, writing well-formed paragraphs, giving effective oral presentations, and so on. The primary purpose of skill-based instruction is to learn the specific language skill. A possible secondary purpose is to develop more general competence in the language, learning only incidentally any information that may be available while applying the language skills.

5. A task-based syllabus. The content of the teaching is a series of complex and purposeful tasks that the students want or need to perform with the language they are learning. The tasks are defined as activities with a purpose other than language learning, but, as in a content-based syllabus, the performance of the tasks is approached in a way

that is intended to develop second language ability. Language learning is subordinate to task performance, and language teaching occurs only as the need arises during the performance of a given task. Tasks integrate language (and other) skills in specific settings of language use. Task-based teaching differs from situation-based teaching in that while situational teaching has the goal of teaching the specific language content that occurs in the situation (a predefined product), task-based teaching has the goal of teaching students to draw on resources to complete some piece of work (a process). The students draw on a variety of language forms, functions, and skills, often in an individual and unpredictable way, in completing the tasks. Tasks that can be used for language learning are, generally, tasks that the learners actually have to perform in any case. Examples include: applying for a job, talking with a social worker, getting housing information over the telephone, and so on.

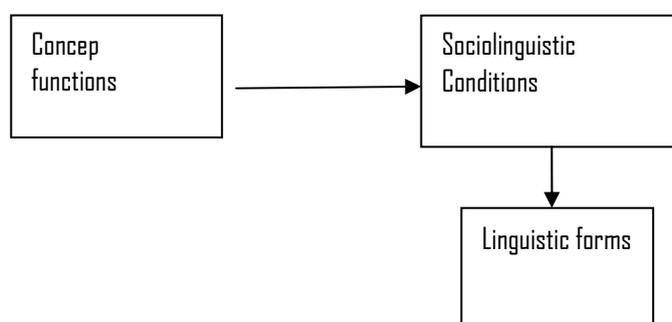
6. A content-based-syllabus. The primary purpose of instruction is to teach some content or information using the language that the students are also learning. The students are simultaneously language students and students of whatever content is being taught. The subject matter is primary, and language learning occurs incidentally to the content learning. The content teaching is not organized around the language teaching, but vice-versa. Content-based language teaching is concerned with information, while task-based language teaching is concerned with communicative and cognitive processes. An example of content-based language teaching is a science class taught in the language the students need or want to learn, possibly with linguistic adjustment to make the science more comprehensible.

Different to the structural, or grammatical syllabus, in which the different parts of language are taught separately and step-by-step, and where learning is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up (Wilkins, 1976), the functional-notional syllabus, which is under the communicative approach, desires communicative capacity; it does not ask how speakers of the language express themselves, but what it is they communicate through language. It is organized in terms of content rather than the form of the language.

According to Melrose (1995), in a functional-notional syllabus speakers need to express three kind of meanings: semantic-grammatical categories (perception of events, processes, states and abstractions); modality (speaker attitude); and categories of

communicative function (speech acts). The first one consists of time, quantity, space and relational meaning. The second one includes scale of certainty (impersonalized and personalized) and scale of commitment (intention and obligation). Finally, the third one includes judgment and evaluation (e.g. assess, excuse, approve, blame, disapprove); persuasion (e.g. advise, order, warn, threaten, permit); argument (e.g. inform, request, refuse, agree, disagree); rational enquire and exposition (e.g. conclude, compare, define explain); personal emotions (e.g. pleasure, displeasure); and emotional relations (e.g. greetings, sympathy, gratitude).

The design of a functional-notional syllabus will first take into account the types of meanings to be learned, and then the designer will decide by what linguistic forms these meanings are to be expressed.



Furthermore it is important for any syllabus designer to have data about the needs of a specific learner or group of learners, in this way s/he will know the identity and language of them. Having this, the designer can select the skills to be included in the syllabus. It is also important to include communicative abilities of interpretation, expression and negotiation.

On the review of syllabi types there are some characteristics in some of them of a communicative approach. For example, the functional-notional syllabus uses functions which are common in real language use. However, a communicative syllabus is more than just functions. It could include some aspects of other syllabi types because it will be designed according to specific needs and goals. For that reason, we follow with a more specific explanation about the communicative syllabus.

The communicative syllabus

Within a communicative syllabus, language learning may be seen as a process which grows out of the interaction between learners, teachers, texts and activities. The learner

communicative abilities will develop in an environment of co-operative negotiation, joint interpretation, and the sharing of expression, and will be activated by a range of different text types in different media (authentic texts) which the learners can make use of to develop their competence through a variety of activities and tasks. (Breen and Candlin, 1980)

A communicative curriculum places content within methodology and provides it with the role of servant to the teaching-learning process. Content is selected by learners and teachers so that the learner can use the content of the curriculum as the carrier of his process competence. Content will focus on knowledge, both cognitive and affective, which is significant to the learner; it will be organized not as a simple sequence but cyclically; and it will be subdivided in terms of whole frameworks, so that the emphasis is not on units of content but on units of activity that generate communication. (Breen and Candlin, 1980:102-3).

Then, the communicative syllabus is oriented to the learner; its function is to facilitate the exploration precisely by that learner of his or her own values and way of understanding the world. It is a dynamic and negotiated concept rather than one which is static and imposed. (Candlin, 1984).

Now that we have the basis of the research, let us turn to the following chapter in which the analysis will be done.

4. ANALYSIS

The purpose of this analysis is that with the information about the TEFL in public high schools (analysis of interviews, observation guides, tests, books, and syllabi) and the analysis of the method reflected in the CEI Placement Test, a comparison between the way students of public high schools are taught and evaluated and the way they are evaluated with the CEI placement test will be done. In this way, any mismatch or gap between those two methods can be identified.

The analysis of the TFL in high-schools in Chetumal is divided into three sections, one for each high school. After that, the Placement Test used at the Centro de Enseñanza de Idiomas is also described to ensure if it is really a communicative test. Finally, methods used at high schools and the one reflected on the CEI Placement Test will be compared and contrasted. The main information about the teaching was provided by English teachers, and the observations were just a way to corroborate what they said; also they were useful to get an overview of how the classes took place. For this reason, observations and interviews will be analyzed together.

4.1 CBTis 253

The interview

In this section, the teaching method or ways of teaching English are described, according to the data gathered through the interview. First of all, let us see the information provided by teacher 1 (henceforth T1) from the CBTis 253. The interview focused on eliciting information about the following factors: the method(s) used and the bibliography, the language used, the description of a common class, skills, and evaluation. The same was done with the other two high school teachers.

To begin with the method, T1 said she teaches using the Grammar Translation Method, this is a decision taken among all the English teachers, even though they are flexible and are allowed to use any technique or strategy that improves teaching and learning. For example, T1 said that she tries to make her teaching more communicative by emphasizing speaking. The same freedom English teachers have to choose their preferred method; they also have it to select the book they will use on that semester. In

this case they chose *Be a Star 4* (the book will be analyzed later on the analysis section) for the English IV course.

Now, in terms of language used, T1 pointed out that she preferred students to speak Spanish because it is in the only language they can be understandable. She said that students have a lot of problems with the target language before she started teaching them and, that it is almost impossible to make them change. She said: “They do not know anything, they are very behind with their English studies, and I cannot change that in a single semester”. She mentioned that students are like beginners and even though she tries to make them speak in English, she does not get good results. For that same reason, T1 usually speaks in Spanish. Sometimes she tries to speak in English using the ‘sandwich technique’, as she called it, (it is about putting Spanish words between English words); however, she pointed out that it does not work because students are not interested in the English language and they are unable to speak in the target language

Regarding the description of a common class, T1 said that in a common class she is always hurried. It takes too much time to get students attention; students are in their own business. Usually the class starts late; the first thing she does is to check who did the homework, students who did it get a signature by the teacher. Then, T1, along with the students (who have to exchange their books and check a classmate’s assignment) check the answers and they give a number to their classmates according to the number of correct answers. T1 said that sometimes it takes a lot of time doing it but it is the only way to check students’ homework, she could not do it by herself (they are 48 students).

After the homework revision, students work with the book; T1 usually explains the topic, gives some examples and then asks students to work with their books. According to T1 speaking activities are the most emphasized during the class and are carried out in English. The next activity is to check the exercises done to finally tell students what the homework is.

Having described a common English class at CBTis 253, the focus will be turned to the description of the way of teaching each skill or sub skill covered by T1 teaching. Reading is taught through the readings of the book; in the classes we observed she did not bring other texts to the classroom (authentic texts) because the time she has is not much. Not all readings are done; sometimes she skips some readings or other activities because of time. She said that besides the exercises of the book, students sometimes

have to translate a paragraph or a whole reading when it is not too long; this kind of activities counts as homework but they are not assigned a grade.

Regarding listening, T1 does not teach it because of time. The first classes T1 tried to include listening activities in the classroom but students did not understand anything. She thought that they were not prepared for the level of the listening activities included on the book. Students did not get the ideas of the recordings. T1 explained that she stopped doing the listening activities because it was a waste of time. She thought it was not useful to spend time on something that must be learned in previous semesters.

Furthermore, T1 mentioned that there are also video-exercises that help students to improve listening. However, at CBTis, the language laboratory is in bad conditions for the number of students. There are about 25 computers but only 14 work. The few times she took students there, it was very difficult to work because students had to do it in teams of three people, and there were even groups of four. The space was small and students distracted themselves easily, therefore T1 cancelled sessions at the Language Lab.

Concerning speaking, as T1 said, this skill is emphasized in the classroom. It is taught through repetitions of sentences or words. Also, T1 explained that the common speaking activity is to learn a dialogue or conversation (written in the book) and then perform it in front of the class. Those conversations are not graded, nor the repetitions. However, T1 sometimes gives some extra point to students who participate more. T1 explains that students work in groups because working in groups helps communication. Other speaking activities involve reading aloud and pronunciation exercises. According to T1, this is useful because she can correct students at the moment they are reading, so they do not forget which their error was.

Writing is taught in the following way, in words of T1: "I give them (students) a text in Spanish and they have to translate it into English, I try to find interesting topics, for example about the flu which is very popular now." T1 said that those kind of activities count as homework. However, she does not grade the writings. She just checks who did the homework, records on a list, reads some of them and then decides which the best ones are. The best writings are given extra points and are pasted on the wall. The other writings are returned to their authors (without corrections). T1 mentioned that she

cannot give feedback to her students because they are many and she is only one. She is not able to read and correct all the papers.

Grammar is taught and explained by T1 in Spanish. She said: “Sometimes students are the ones who present the rules, but I always finish the explanation because they (students) never understand.” T1 uses the grammar explanations of the book to teach it. She usually copies the grammar box on the board and then explains it. She tries to give as many examples as possible and sometimes asks students to think and give their own example.

T1 uses for her explanation the equivalent rule, structure or phrase in Spanish, in this way students understand better the English rule, structure or phrase. Most of the time she asks students to think of Spanish examples and then asks them what would be the equivalent in English. According to her, this is the technique that better works with her students when teaching grammar. For example, in unit 2, T1 taught about the passive voice. She said that she introduced the topic and explained in Spanish the structure they have to follow to form it. As students seemed not to understand, she told them that in Spanish a phrase in passive voice will be: *La casa fue hecha por mi papá* or *El idioma español es hablado en México*. Then she asked them what the meaning in Spanish of the examples written in English would be; that time was easier for students. She also asked them to think of examples on Spanish and then translate them into English. During the first classes she discovered that was a good technique to help students understand grammar and she still uses it in her classes.

Finally, T1 pointed out that vocabulary is taught throughout the book. In the readings there are always words highlighted which are written on the board. Those words have to be used to complete the activities which are in the same book. Students sometimes do not understand; that is why she asks students what the word means. If someone knows, she writes the meaning in Spanish next to the word in English. If no one knows, she says it and writes it down on the board. As sometimes they do not do the reading activities, T1 asks students to search the meaning in Spanish of a list of words in English in order to learn them. They must learn them because sometimes she asks the meaning of words in class and it counts as participation. Besides, some of those words are included in the tests.

Having finished the description of skills, we will focus now on evaluation. It is important to mention that the way of evaluating students in the classroom is already stated on the description of skills and ways to evaluate them. Therefore in this section it will be only included what T1 sums up to get students' grade. She mentions that she only evaluates (with a written test) grammar and vocabulary; 40 % of the grade is for that. Speaking, reading and writing activities together with participation in class have a 30% of the students' grade. T1 has a record of how many class/assignments students have to have. If they have all of them, they get the 30%, as the number of class/assignment decreases; it happens the same to the percentage. It is important to mention that T1 signature is the proof of a valid assignment. The 30% left is for attendance. Listening is not taught, so it is not evaluated. Students take three tests, one each second month. The third one is the final test and includes what they were taught the whole course.

By analyzing T1 answers, we found out that the language used in the classroom is Spanish. Even though the practicing of conversations, the readings, and the answering of grammar exercises are in English, the language that students and the teacher use most of the time is Spanish. Explanations, questions, doubts or any important issue that takes place in class is solved in the students' mother tongue. In terms of skills, it could be said that there is no integration of them, each one is taught separately, and in fact listening is not included. According to Littlewood (1981), in a communicative approach, teaching all skills is very important to improve communication.

Furthermore, not all the reading activities are done, and when they are, the activities are focused on the learning of vocabulary. T1 does not bring to the classroom authentic materials (for example from magazines or newspapers in English). If we take into account that Nunan (2004) points out that it is important to show students authentic written language to let them know how the real world is, we could say that students from CBTis will never know how an authentic text looks like. In addition, if we consider that for T1 a translation work is seen as a reading activity, we could assume that neither she nor her students have idea of what a reading activity is. Finally, T1 does not prepare extra reading activities in which students have to understand the main ideas of a text or where they have to look for specific information, it means where they could see the communicative function of language. In those terms, the limitation of reading activities is evident.

For T1 a speaking activity consists of repetitions and pronunciation correction. She said that reading aloud was a speaking activity. It seems to be a misconception about speaking; the skill is not only about reading or practicing pronunciation, but about communication. The activities she mentioned do not seem to have communicative purposes which, according to Littlewood (1981), encourage communication. She uses those activities just to correct students' errors on pronunciation, or to give them an extra point if they read well.

If we take into account the communicative approach, writing seems also neglected as the writing activities consist only of translation works that are not even checked or evaluated. Students do not get feedback and, therefore, they do not realize about their mistakes in order to improve their writing skill. No grade is given for students' writing, which means that it is not given importance and therefore there is no encouragement or motivation to write.

Grammar is taught deductively, which, according to Nunan (2004), does not encourage students to infer the grammar rules or make them participants of the learning process. Usually, T1 is the provider of knowledge and the few times students are asked to explain the grammar structures or rules T1 minimizes their efforts and prefers to do the work herself. Furthermore, grammar is taught in Spanish and translation is a common technique. It could be assumed then that the teaching of grammar is based on the Grammar Translation Method.

Vocabulary is taught through translation; students have to learn the English word and its equivalent in Spanish. It seems that what students are improving with these activities is their memory but the ability to use words in different contexts, to learn that meanings can change because of that same factor, or to know which word is more appropriate for a given situation is completely abandoned. What this means is that students are not learning the communicative functions of words or phrases and therefore they are not improving communication or even practicing communicative activities.

According to T1, evaluation is just for Grammar and Vocabulary. Reading, speaking, and writing activities only count as class/homework or as participation. Those activities do not have a grade, which means that if students have all the activities, they will get the percentage given to this section. There is no coherence on this because T1 and students spend much time on checking activities and give them a number (the number of good

answers) which at the end it does not serve for anything. Other important aspect of evaluation is that students are evaluated every two months; there are no quizzes which means that in two long months they do not have idea of their accomplishments, they do not know if they are doing it well or not which is crucial for students in a communicative approach.

To sum up, according to the interview, the language used is Spanish; there is no integration of skills, the misconception of T1 of what each skill is, and the testing of only grammar and vocabulary lead to conclude that the method preferred by T1 is the Grammar Translation Method. Now, to corroborate what she explained in the interview, it is necessary to move to the next section which is about the observations.

The observations

In this section I will describe the two classes we observed in the way they were developed. The observation guides described on the instrument section were used for this purpose. Besides the aspects about language, skills and evaluation included, a description of the environment in the classroom at the moment is included. It is important to mention that the observations were limited to two because of the health contingency; the flu provoke that classes at high schools ended before the date planned. However, they were very useful to discover some important aspects of T1 teaching.

Let us start with the classroom environment. The first class last two hours and there were 48 students. The sitting arrangement was traditional: the teacher in front of the whole class in her desk gave her the characteristic of the main authority. Students talking and jumping around made the classroom look like a market. It was very noisy; students seemed to be impatient and full of energy. It was until the T1 raised her voice that they seemed to calm down a little bit.

She greeted students in Spanish, then she asked them to put their homework (book activity,) on their tables and she went around and signed them. Afterwards she rolled the list and asked students to exchange their books in order to check the homework. While T1 was doing this, students were laughing and chatting among themselves in Spanish. T1 started asking randomly the answer of question number one. The students did not know the answer and she asked if anybody knew it; a girl gave the correct answer. They were doing the same with some students' interruptions about which the

answer was because they were not paying attention. When students did not know the answer, T1 told them. When they finished, T1 asked students to count the number of good answer and write it down on the bottom of the page. Then, students were told to return their books. Except for the answers reading, all this process was carried out in the mother tongue (Spanish).

When they finished with the revision of the homework, T1 asked students to open their books *Be a Star* on page 53. There was a big picture on it about a neighbourhood and some people walking around and others were chatting. There were many stores and too much traffic on the picture. She asked students in Spanish what was happening there. No one answered and she called on some students. They said in Spanish what they saw. Then T1 explained in Spanish some cultural aspect of English people. Some students were not paying attention. Sometimes she asked questions in English, but no one answered. However, when she did it in Spanish the volunteers increased. T1 also asked vocabulary questions: *¿Qué es un traffic light? Or ¿Qué es un parking rate?* Some students helped with the picture gave the meanings which T1 wrote down on the board.

After this pre-activity, students went on the reading task. Some of them were called on to read. While reading, T1 interrupted to correct pronunciation and when students hesitated on the way to read a word, she told them how to do it. At the end of the reading, students were asked some vocabulary questions. Again the questions were in Spanish and students had to translate the word. Then students were asked to complete the reading activity in which they had to answer Yes/No questions that had to do with the new vocabulary.

Without checking or commenting about that previous exercise, T1 asked students to move to the Grammar section. She wrote on the board the same box the books included where the grammar structures and uses of the relative clauses are given. She explained it in Spanish. Some students asked some questions in Spanish and they were also answered in that language. T1 gave some English examples and asked students to translate them into Spanish and vice versa. She asked if the explanation was clear; students did not answer and they were asked to solve two grammar exercises.

When they finished, they checked answers in the same way they do it with the homework, but this time they do not exchange books. Immediately afterwards, T1 gave some extra information about the grammar point just taught and told students again

what they should not forget about it. Once again students were asked to answer the next page which was about grammar activities. They did not finish because the class ended but they were asked to complete it at home and bring it the next class to check it there.

The second class was almost the same. It began by rolling the list and the revision of homework, in Spanish again. The difference was that this last time there was a so-called speaking activity. In the activity, students had to work in pairs, T1 let students decide who they wanted to work with. The instructions were read in English and then T1 asked students if they understood what the activity was about. As they did not answer, T1 explained it in Spanish. They just had to practice a dialogue and then learn the first five questions and answers and role-play it in front of the class. Before starting the activity, T1 asked students the meaning of some words included in the dialogue. While doing the speaking activity, T1 was at her desk, in case any student has a question or doubt. Only two girls went to ask her about pronunciation. The rest of the students did not have any questions; most students were speaking in Spanish. T1 did not monitor the activity; after a few minutes she asked who wanted to participate and the same two girls raised their hands. After them, she called on three more groups and recorded their participation on the list. In that way they finished the speaking activity. There was not an evaluation or feedback of that activity, except for the correction of some pronunciation errors (correct pronunciation of every word students could not read) while doing it.

The class continued with a grammar issue, explanation, examples, and translation as in the first class. This time they had time to check three grammar exercises following the same process previously described. The class ended with the assignment of homework (to complete grammar exercises) which would be checked the next class.

As we could notice with these observations, the classroom environment did not seem to be the most adequate for an English class. Students were too noisy, even when the teacher was in the classroom. The position of T1's desk and the sitting arrangement which, according to Nunan (1989) is very characteristic of the GTM and does not promote communication because does not give students the opportunity to face each other (as when we talk with a friend, for example), remind us of the authoritarian role given to a teacher in a grammar translation method.

The language used for instruction was Spanish. It was the main language among students and teacher. Sometimes she tried to speak in English but, as students did not

make any effort to understand or speak in English, she gave up. All the important issues are done in the mother tongue; even when the exercises and activities are read in English, they are followed most of the time by an explanation in Spanish. With this attitude students do not make any effort to understand the first time in English, they do not worry about it because they know they will be given an explanation on their mother tongue. In effect, the only material T1 uses to teach is the book *Be a Star 4*. There is no extra material to improve any skill; at least the classes we observed were book-based.

Regarding skills, reading is only taught to learn vocabulary and improve pronunciation. Students do not do any task that has to do with the understanding of the reading. In fact, they do not do all the reading exercises. It seems that T1 does not have a clear idea of what a good reading exercise is developed in a communicative approach. T1 extracts new words and writes them on the blackboard, students must write them on their notebooks and learn them. As Davies (1995) points out, a good reading task is challenging and encourages analysis. But what CBTis students do with reading activities is just to learn vocabulary and new structures. He points out that it is important that students interact with the text and with each other; this did not happen with our first group of students. The reading tasks are not challenging and do not promote communication because there is no interaction.

It is interesting to note that listening activities of the book are not taught, that means that not all skills are included as should be done in a communicative approach. This skill is not practiced, not even when giving directions or reading questions/answers because there is no students need to listen to the target language, they know that at the end they will get the equivalent in Spanish.

Furthermore, students do not practice speaking as a real skill, as for T1 a speaking activity means to memorize a dialogue and role-play it. There is no creative language which, according to Nunan (1990), is crucial for communication. More than speaking, students actually read the book and practice pronunciation with other classmates. If we remember that pronunciation is not given importance in the GTM (because for it speaking is not a priority) it is clear that these activities do not fit with the method preferred. In fact the pronunciation practice is very characteristic of the Audiolingual method.

Additionally, when students speak, they do it in Spanish. There is no encouragement on behalf of the teacher to make the students speak in English. In fact, there is a clear overcorrection to students. Every time they speak (which is just a few times), she interrupted them to make a correction (mostly in pronunciation). When doing speaking activities, it seems like T1 and students are not interested, they just do it because they have to. Speaking activities are always the ones included in the book, students do them in the way the book says, and there is no variation on them. Most of these activities are in pairs or in groups but students work with whom they want and usually they spend their time doing whatever but working in the activity. As there is no monitoring, students are not worried to complete the task until T1 says that the time is over. The lack of interest in the speaking activities seems to come from both ways: teacher and students.

We did not see the performance of any writing activity, (which according to T1 is mainly practiced through translation); however, we could read a paper about the flu which was pasted on the wall. There were many mistakes but no correction at all. The paper was carefully done, in terms of presentation, but the language was not well used; there were at least eight grammar mistakes and some problems on the text organization. However, no one seemed to notice it.

Concerning grammar, there is no attempt to make students discover the grammar rules. It was evident the teacher's authority at the time of providing knowledge. She is the one who knows more and provides knowledge. Teacher always lets clear what the correct answers are for any grammar activity. Vocabulary had an important role in the classroom; most of the time, when a new word appeared, T1 said the meaning in Spanish. This reaction does not give students the opportunity to think and infer the meaning of words. In other cases, she asks students directly what the meaning of the new word in Spanish is; she does not try to make students say the definition of the new word in English. Students do not make any effort to learn and for the teacher this seems fine.

Now, in terms of evaluation, it was noticeable the importance for checking grammar exercises and provide the correct answer, and to check the understanding of new words (vocabulary). The other skills are not paid too much attention because they only count as class/home work or participation. If we take into account also that the written text is

only about grammar, vocabulary and translation, we could say that the evaluation is done under the grammatical method.

In conclusion, as Celce-Murcia (1991) restates, a Grammar Translation Method course is carried out in the mother tongue and is based on the teaching of structures and forms helped with translation and the grammar of the mother tongue. It was very evident the way the classes at CBTis were. What students actually do is not to communicate but memorize information and express it. In general, the whole teaching is based on exercises of the book that are performed individually, with few exceptions of speaking and reading activities which are not given enough importance. There is no extra materials, no integration of skills (even listening is not taught), and as a consequence, there is no communication. Now let us see the other face of teaching: evaluation.

The tests

T1 included the following exercises on the test she used with her students in the time this research was carried out. We would not include the name of the author of all the examples provided here and the other schools since they are the name of the teachers we are working with. All of them were used in 2009 in the courses we researched. The next exercise is only a sample since, the original one consisted of ten sentences.

Translate these sentences

- La leche fue guardada en el refrigerador por mí. _____
- La puerta fue abierta ayer. _____
- El pastel es cocinado por mi hermana. _____
- La fiesta fue organizada por la escuela. _____
- El alemán es hablado en Alemania. _____

As we can see in this exercise, students have to translate the sentences using the same structure for all of them. This means they should have learned the uses of the passive voice. The following example is a common fill-in- the blanks exercise:

| |
|--|
| <p>Fill the blanks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-A type of ice-cream _____ (invent) by the Chinese.-The U.S. Constitution _____ (write) in 1789.-A sales tax _____ (base) on a percentage of the cost of something.-What children learn at school _____ (decide) by the state.-When you register to vote, your name _____ (add) to a list of voters. |
|--|

In this case they just need to know the structure of the passive voice and the participle form of the given verb. Now, in order to show how important vocabulary is in the test, let us check the following example. The original exercise is formed by ten verbs, here just five are included.

Complete the verbs

| Spanish | Present tense | Past tense | Participle |
|--------------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| Ver | | | |
| Comer | | | |
| Firmar | | | |
| Requerir | | | |
| Conducir (un auto) | | | |

Students first must know by heart the words in English for the given verbs and then to have learned the different conjugation for these tenses. One last example requires students to know some vocabulary and also translate in both ways.

1. Write in English and Spanish.
 - FBI _____
 - EPA _____
 - Declaración de Derechos _____

As it is evident, the way T1 evaluated students is very similar to the one carried out in the Grammar Translation Method. Evaluation in the GTM, according to Celce-Murcia (1991), is carried out through the translation of texts from L1 to L2 (as in exercise 1) and vice versa (as in exercise 4) and the application of grammar rules through the use of drills (as in exercise 2). There is also important for this method the learning and evaluation of vocabulary; which is clearly used in exercise 3.

After all these examples, we can conclude that in terms of assessment there is no doubt that the only skills in which students are evaluated are in grammar structures, vocabulary and translation. The use of drills to teach grammar is a characteristic of the Audiolingual method. Therefore, the method preferred for testing seems to be a combination of the Grammar Translation Method with some characteristics of the Audiolingual method.

The book

The book selected by the academy of English teachers at CBTis is *Be a Star 4* by Linda Lee (2008), from Mc Graw Hill. First, the organization of the content table (first unit) will be described, and then the first unit of the book itself in order to show the contents, skills included, the language used, and the kind of activities.

The content table is divided into five parts; a pre-unit and four units. At the same time, each unit is divided into five sections: functions, reading and writing, critical thinking, vocabulary and grammar.

| Unit | Functions | Reading and Writing | Critical Thinking | Vocabulary | Grammar |
|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| 1 Consumer News and Views | -Talk about shopping and comparison shopping -Listen to conversations between customers and salespeople -Discuss food shopping tips -Talk about finding housing -Express doubt | -Evaluate -Choose the best alternative -Preview Read tips for consumers and means of credit -Write definitions from context -Write a shopping list and compare ads -Read tips for food shopping -Read housing ads | -Use content clues -Compare -Evaluate | -Shopping terms -Food shopping tips -Housing ads | -Present unreal conditional (2 nd conditional) -Tag questions |

Source: Lee, Linda (2008). *Be a star 4*. Mc Graw Hill.

This sample of the table content shows us that the four skills and the two sub skills are considered in the book. Also, we can see the integration of functions which are characteristic of the notional/functional syllabus. According to Tarey (1988), this kind of syllabus expresses functions that are performed when language is used; this means that those functions are actions such as informing, agreeing or apologizing. However, in the table, the functions are like speaking or listening activities, in fact are written like: *Talk about... and Listen to....* Then, there are some incongruities with regard to what a function really is. In the next sections we see the division of language in specific skills: Reading and Writing, Critical thinking, Vocabulary and Grammar. This last part (Grammar) gives the table a structural view of language because transforms language

teaching in a collection of specific forms and structures. But, going back to the other sections, the table is also a kind of skill-based syllabus because it groups linguistic competencies of language as *Language* for example.

Furthermore, it is evident that some skills are given more weight: reading and writing; and sub skills: grammar and vocabulary over the other ones. The skills emphasized are the ones that are also emphasized within the Grammar Translation Method. In summary, in terms of the content table, we can conclude that it is a mixed content table of grammatical, functional and skill based characteristics.

In order to complete the analysis of the book, an analysis of the first unit, *Consumer news and views*, will be provided. All units are divided into seven lessons. The first one covers two pages with a big picture and some points to discuss using it. The activities in this section are designed to speak with other classmates. So, we can say that the first lesson is for speaking activities. Check the following example:

1. **Work with a partner. Take turns asking the questions below. Write your partner's answers.**

What was the last thing you bought...
with cash? _____
with a credit card? _____
with a personal check? _____
on layaway? _____

In this exercise students' purpose is to find out her/his partner's answers. There is no specification about how the answers should be written. This kind of exercise was found through the whole book.

The next lesson of two pages is based mainly on reading. In this section students' objective is to know and understand new words through reading. In fact, in the whole reading the new vocabulary is in bold letters. Activities within this section have to do with the understanding and use of new terms to complete the tasks. It has to be mentioned that all the examples included are common in all units; that was our reason to have them chosen. The following is just a small part of a reading:

Tips for consumers

| | |
|---|----|
| Plan your purchases before you go shopping. Don't be an impulse buyer . Impulse buyers usually buy things they do not need and end up spending more money than they need to. | |
| Are you an impulse buyer? | |
| Yes | No |

There are eight more boxes like this with similar Yes/No questions. With this sample it is shown that the objective of reading is to learn vocabulary. In the book, there is not an exercise related to this activity that asks students to do other tasks than learning and checking the understanding of new words in context. Let us make it clearer through the next example:

Read the tips for consumers and use the content clues to guess the meaning of the highlighted words. Make a chart like the one below and write your answers there. Then compare ideas with your classmates.

| Word or phrase | Your definition |
|----------------|-----------------|
| purchases | |
| impulse buyer | |
| end up | |

Here, students are asked to give definition to the new vocabulary. What we saw is that students are asked to understand words and express their meanings in a written way. On lesson three, (two pages, also) students deal with listening activities. It begins with a warm-up; then the first listening activity is about identifying different conversation according to context of some given pictures. The next activity is the same recording but this time students' objective is to listen for specific information. We have to remember that this skill is not taught by T1; she has excluded it from the course for reasons of time. However, for the analysis purpose it will be included the next example:

Listen and match

Listen to 5 conversations. Match each conversation to a picture. Write the number of the conversation in the circle next to the picture.



Here, students must be able to recognize the context and situation of a given conversation. It does not matter if they understand every single word, the point is that they should get the message and take into account the social context to make their selection. That means that they not need to know all the words they listen to and

As this is the first exercise after the grammar box, students do not have to write; they must form complete coherent sentences with structures that are already given. There is another activity more complex that it is after the second grammar box in the second page. The explanation is about where the *if clauses* can be placed.

Rewrite each sentence by moving the *if clause*.

1. If I had email, I would to my family every day.

2. I would feel embarrassed if my boss criticized me in front of my coworkers.

3. If a coworker gave me an expensive gift, I'd feel uncomfortable.

What students have to do is just change positions and copy them through the use of drills. What they are learning with this activity is that the *if clause* can be placed at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. Those kinds of activities together with another of sentences completion are the most common in the whole book.

Lesson six, formed by two pages, extends the topic a little bit more and goes deeply into a specific type of advertising; it has a reading and a small writing activity. As we already exemplified the reading activities, the following example will be about writing.

Write a classified ad for your own house or apartment. Check the examples on page 14.

Writing....

WEST SIDE Large 1 BR,
new paint/carpet, pets ok,
parking, a/c, ht & hw
included \$850/ mo. 555-0878.

Students have many as this example on page 14. They only need to add the characteristic they want for their ad. Most writing exercises are short and have some clues that students use to organize them. The last two-page lesson is a review of the whole unit; however it is mainly based on vocabulary. At the end of each unit there is an extra section for tips and strategies to improve reading and writing skills, which are, as we can see, not as emphasized as we could have predicted after the revision of the content table.

English is used throughout the book: all activities, exercises and reading are in the target language; besides there are not translation exercises. As in the communicative approach, all the skills are included, however there is no integration of them and there are some that are more emphasized, as grammar and vocabulary. It is evident the importance that the book gives to the grammar section. Just by the amount of pages and exercises dedicated to this sub-skill, we can notice the weight it has in the book.

The activities designed for each skill do not seem to be challenging, as we could see with the examples; speaking does not involve real communication. There is a lack of interaction in most of the speaking activities. Also, there is not a communicative purpose on them; this could result in boring activities in which students will not be interested. Regarding reading, it seems that the only purpose of these activities is the teaching of vocabulary, at least which is shown in the examples above. Furthermore, in writing activities we did not see any challenging activity. Even when the content table seemed to emphasize the writing skill, in the book this does not seem to be the case. Writing activities are short and limited to previously given structures.

The grammar exercises are drills which are characteristic of the Audiolingual method; there is nothing that implies their own initiative or the use of their own ideas; however as there are many repetitions (drills), it may occur students learn the structures by doing them once and once again. As Weir (1993), mentioned, it is important that the activities have some significance for learners in order to motivate them to do them, but the activities in the book do not give students this opportunity. In general, the way of teaching grammar, according to the examples, seemed to be deductive. Now, in terms of vocabulary, it is also emphasized through the reading activities, in fact in the review section students are asked to complete vocabulary exercises and mark the words they learned in that unit.

In summary, through the book we can notice that the language used is English and that the four skills are included, as in the communicative approach; however, there are some skills highlighted. Even though there is a section for each skill, the amount of exercises given for grammar is much larger; also there is no integration of skills. Most activities are focused on the practicing of grammar structures and the use of new vocabulary. Taking into account all these factors, we can conclude that even when the book has

some communicative elements, it is designed to emphasize grammar and vocabulary and in this way it works in favor of the audiolingual or Grammar translation method.

In this way we finish with the description and analysis of the book. Now, we follow with the last part to finish the teaching at CBTis, the syllabus.

The syllabus

The final part to describe is the syllabus provided by T1. This syllabus is not designed for the CBTis English teachers; the institution provides teachers with it. This syllabus is designed for the Dirección General de Educación Técnica Industrial (DGETI) and it is used in all the existing CBTis. It is based on the development of competences according to the Canadian Language Benchmark. Those competences are divided into four skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing. In the following table we will mention some of the competences included in each skill designed for English IV.

| | |
|--|--|
| Speaking | |
| The student is competent at | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing two people • Participating in conversations about what he needs or has done • Giving some simple addresses • Talking on the phone (simple conversations) • Having enough vocabulary for a daily conversation • Being understandable using a basic vocabulary. | |
| Reading | |
| The student is competent at | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following simple instructions • Reading a text and understand new words, sometimes using a dictionary. • Understanding a text, if s/he reads silently or orally | |
| Listening | |
| The student is competent at | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding a conversation when s/he is slowly talked about a familiar topic • Understanding a short phone message • Understanding simple questions | |
| Writing | |
| The student is competent at | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a paragraph of a personal experience • Writing a note, letter coherently | |

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copying information from dictionaries and manuals. • Writing words well spelled |
|--|

Source: Dirección General de Educación Técnica Industrial. Coordinación de Educación Media Superior.

As the table shows, the four skills are included in the official syllabus, and are supposed to be included in the course. According to the syllabus designed by the DGETI, the general purpose of the English subject at CBTis is to get enough knowledge in order to develop the reading, listening, writing and speaking skills as a tool for students' personal, academic and cultural development, which will make them able to join a major and stand out in a professional area. This is what students entering the university aim. Now, for our group under research, which is from English IV, the specific objective is to analyze, evaluate, propose and participate on solutions for current social problems.

English IV is organized in the following way.

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| English IV | |
| Language functions suggested | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask and give information about important information • Ask and give information about the production and consistency of different products. • Known and describe important events of their (students) town • Ask and give information about historical events. |
| Grammatical notions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive voice in present tense • Tag questions (affirmative and negative) • Passive voice in past tense • Second conditional • Past perfect • Third conditional • Relative clauses • Past participle with regular and irregular verbs • All the grammatical structures learned in previous semesters |
| Vocabulary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past participle of regular and irregular verbs • Prepositions: of, by • Materials: wood, plastic, iron, etc. • Environmental elements: river, mountain, ocean, etc. • Benefits of work, education, politics, research, economy, etc. |

It is clear the institution's interest in grammar and vocabulary. Almost the whole course is based on the teaching/learning of grammatical structures and new words. Here, it is opportune to mention that the designers of this syllabus are not very strict about the way teachers decides to teach; what they are interested in is that they (teachers) cover the content that is mainly grammatical. If the word *mainly* is used is because in the *Functions* section the designers do not specify if the functions will be carried out orally or written; then it could be said that speaking or/and writing are also emphasized.

The approach used at CBTis 253 is clear enough; it is mainly based on Grammar Translation Method mixed with some characteristics of the audiolingual method. Let us finish with some examples of a teaching sequence included in the syllabus which will serve to confirm our assumptions. The following question is used as part of a warm-up questionnaire.

- What is the past of have? _____

It is clear that students do not need communication to solve this question; what they need is knowledge about the past of a given verb, which is all.

This is another example.

1. Translate the sentences and write what is the tense of each one.

- My mother has eaten pizza

Translation _____

Tense _____

This example does not need explanation. Let us finish with a reading question example.

2. Change the sentences written in present perfect of the reading in past perfect.

- Manned space programs have turned their attention to solving problems.

A: Manned space programs had turned their attention to solving problems, when they arrived moon.

The question is: where is the interaction reading-student-activity? The only problem students have is to know the present and the past perfect. Again, there is no analysis, no interaction nor real language use. There are many incongruities on the syllabus; we saw that they include all the skills, but then when they exemplify how to teach them, only grammar is included. It is also stated that the teaching should promote communication but the examples provided in the same syllabus are merely translation and grammar

based. Furthermore, if it is noticeable the lack of an evaluation section as well as a reference one, which leads the door open for the use of any book and ways of evaluation. In summary, the syllabus shows inconsistencies as it is defined as a communicative syllabus, but its characteristics do not seem to fit with that definition.

Overall analysis of CBTis teaching of EFL

Until here we have discovered some aspects of the teaching at CBTis; however that is not enough to understand it. For that reason in this section, all the data obtained through all the factors taken into account will be analyzed to have a general view of T1 teaching.

We could corroborate that the bibliography used when teaching was the one T1 mentioned in the interview; however, the title of the book was not included in the syllabus, because English teachers at CBTis make the book selection. *Be a Star* was the tool used for T1 for teaching.

We found out that even though the book and the syllabus showed that the target language was supposed to be used for teaching, the interview and the observation showed that Spanish is actually the language used as the means of instruction and communication within the class; that means that the book selected by the teachers is not exploited enough and that the syllabus recommendation is not followed. As far as for the tests, they were written in English with some translation exercises which imply the use of Spanish. Then, it can be concluded that in terms of language used for instruction there are incongruities, mainly with the book, which encourage the use of English, the reality is that the mother tongue (Spanish in this case) is the language used for teaching, as happens in the Grammar Translation Method.

Concerning skills, even though in the book and the syllabus all the skills and sub skills are included, grammar and vocabulary are emphasized, It was not completely the same with the interview and the observations that showed that listening is not taught, and that even the other skills are included, they are not given the enough importance. Besides that, T1 has some misconceptions about what each skill means but her teaching coincides with the other elements on the emphasis given to Grammar and vocabulary and the use of drills (particularity of the audiolingual method). The tests was the element that less fitted because students were only evaluated on grammar, translation and vocabulary; the other skills did not get any countable grade

As we can see, there is no congruity between the syllabus and the book with the tests, interviews and observations about the skills included but in the emphasis of Grammar and Vocabulary mainly through drills, translations, and memorization. The only point in which all elements coincide is in the teaching of skills, which is a skill-based approach where skills are taught separately, it means without integration of them.

The kind of exercises explained in the interview and the ones observed to teach each skill or sub skill do not match 100% with the ones included in the book. On *Be a Star* there are no translation exercises which are usually used by T1. However, the grammatical ones do fit among them (mainly drills that belong to the Audiolingual method). In the same way, the exercises included on the test do not coincide with the ones in the book but it does with the examples found in the syllabus (grammar and translation exercises). To sum up, it could be said that the only exercises that fit are the ones about grammar; the others are not even included in the classes or the tests. This leads to the limitation of students' knowledge based only on their grammar skills.

Now, in terms of evaluation we found some inconsistencies as well. For example, through the interview, observations and tests, it becomes evident that the skills evaluated are only grammar and vocabulary. The other skills are minimized (or even not included, as listening) and they are not assigned a grade. However, through the book and the syllabus we supposed that all skills would be evaluated since all of them are included; it would be a waste of time to teach a skill if it is not going to be evaluated, but it was not the case. In general, given the situations, the evaluation, as it really occurs in the classroom, is more compatible with a Grammar Translation Method.

In conclusion, the big picture of the teaching in our first group from CBTis 253 is of a class based on the mastering of grammatical rules and structures, mainly through the use of drills and translations; and its application on the solution of exercises. It seems that communication does not have a place on teaching. English is only used to solve tasks; the language used for instruction, and any other aspect on the class is the mother tongue which is Spanish. To finish with the triangulation of all the elements, we can conclude that having analyzed all the elements the teaching method preferred for T1 at CBTis is the Grammar Translation Method mixed with some characteristics of the Audiolingual method.

4.2 CONALEP

Now, it is the turn to explain the teaching at CONALEP. The teacher at this school will be named T2 henceforth. The analysis of this school will follow the same procedure of the CBTis.

The interviews

The interview done with T2 will be described according to the following factors: the method(s) used and the bibliography, the language used, the description of a common class, skills, and evaluation.

The interview showed the following information: T2 explained that she uses a mixed method to teach, 50% grammatical and 50% communicative. She has the ability to choose what method to use to teach students. T2, together with other English teachers, decide what books are the best for the course. In this occasion, they selected the book *My World 6*, which is designed for McGraw-Hill editorial especially to CONALEP students. Besides that bibliography, she also gets some exercises from the book *Essential Grammar in Use*.

In terms of the language used, T2 mentioned that she prefers students to use Spanish in the classroom. She said that the activities, presentations, and participations are carried out in English but other important aspects like asking for comprehension, giving explanations, clarifying doubts or when explaining grammar structures the language used is Spanish. T2 explained that she knows that learning a new language (in this case English) is difficult. She said: “there are some teachers that since the first time they enter the classroom they start speaking in English and try to show that they are the teachers. However, I think that what this attitude only gets is to demotivate students, besides, sometimes students are not well prepared and they are not able to understand what the teacher says, less if s/he speaks fast”. For that reason T2 uses Spanish and English in the class.

As to the description of a common class, in this occasion the description will be extended to three classes since this is the way T2 explained to us because she said that it is the way she plans them. According to her, a common class is conducted as follows: she enters the classroom and greets students in English. Then, as a warm up she asks them some questions about themselves or things they have done, nothing specific. It

could be, for example, something about they did on the weekend or whether they know that there is a new flu case in Chetumal. T2 mentioned that this is a good way to make students speak; it does not matter if it is in English or in Spanish. However, she makes sometimes students do it in English; it does not always works but, at least, she gives them the chance to try.

Next, T2 presents a grammar point. She mentioned that she does not follow the book order; they always start the unit with the grammar explanations, which are deductive, because this sets the standard for the class. Usually she explains the grammar; however, sometimes students are the ones in charge of doing it. But they do not just have to use the explanations and the examples of the book, they must research a little bit more and find more examples, as the teacher always does. Either T2 or students explain the grammar; it is done in Spanish, although the examples are in English. The introduction of a grammar structure, its explanation, exercises and the checking of answers almost take the two hours of the class. In the time left, students do other activities of the book. T2 always tries to do the ones about speaking because it helps her to correct pronunciation. To finish the class, T2 generally asks students to review at home what they learned and practice it; this is because in the next section of two hours T2 always brings activities to the classroom about what they saw the previous class. Sometimes they are games, team-work or practices in which they must show their knowledge about the grammar structure reviewed. T2 tries to vary the activities because she feels that that motivates students to understand and learn grammar. During the class she is aware of big errors to correct them on time. If there is more time, students work with the book.

The last class of the week (1 hour) is exclusively to practice speaking. T2 explained that she likes to prepare interesting activities that not always imply the use of the structures; those activities have a more communicative purpose. This time she does not correct students during the activities; she gives them the chance to speak freely without interruptions. However, she notices important errors and tries to give individual feedback, usually at the end of the class. In this way T2 explained how she teaches, she said that the same is done every week.

Now, in terms of skills and sub skills, T2 said that she teaches listening, speaking, grammar and a little writing, indirectly. Speaking is emphasized because T2 thinks that in many jobs learners are required to speak, more than write, for example. Reading is

not taught because T2 says the readings in the book are too long and they include many activities and she does not have time to cover that. She prefers to use that time to practice speaking. Vocabulary is not included either because students are supposed to have learned it in the previous courses. Once we know which skills and sub skills are included, let us describe, according to T2 answers, how each one is taught and evaluated.

Listening is taught through the CD included with the book. Even though there is only one listening activity per unit, not all of them are done, just the ones the teacher considers. . She chooses the simplest ones in which students only have to choose the answer, the ones where they have to write are avoided most of the time. T2 explained that one reason for not doing them is because students have some problems to understand the audio and that takes them a lot of time because the same recording has to be played at least three times. She prefers to help students to understand what they listen when speaking among themselves. There is no evaluation for this skill.

In terms of speaking, sometimes students are taught through the practice of dialogues included in the book or presentations about topics students themselves select. Those presentations are important because they represent 20% of students' grade. When doing them students are evaluated according to how well they present their topics. According to T2, she does not have a marking scheme/ rubric or a specific criterion of assessment to evaluate; she said that the presentation is evaluated like a whole, which means holistically. Students should be well prepared and must speak in English. If they have many grammar mistakes, their grade decreases. The presentation itself is also important. For example, if they use Power Point or cardboards, if they bring extra material or not or if they do a good research or not. T2 said that what she wants is to see if students make an effort preparing it. Pronunciation mistakes are taken into account just when they are too many. Teacher takes notes and at the end of the presentation, while another group is preparing to do their presentation, she tells students what their mistakes were and their grade. Sometimes students participate in other activities in which they have to speak in a free way. For example, T2 asks them to work in groups and gives each group six pictures. Learners are given some time and afterwards that they have to present a story without notes. They just have to speak. T2 affirms that when doing this kind of activities, students are more motivated to speak because they can say whatever they want, and the teacher does not interrupt them to make corrections. Another important

way to practice speaking is carried out every two months. Students work in groups in a specific project. T2 assigns the task and student organizes themselves to have it ready in two months. Those projects are based on interesting topics that many times include some aspects of the English culture. For example, students were asked once to make a model of an English amusement park. They had to do some research and prepare a presentation. T2 said that they were beautiful. T2 emphasized that those projects work great because students feel motivated to participate to be the best ones, and also because they actually enjoy what they do. In those projects the same students give a grade to their classmates (co-evaluation); the group who gets the highest one is the winner. For T2 the most important is that through these projects students learn about the English culture. Finally, she explained that she likes to use role- plays because they give students practice on speaking. These activities do not get any grade but serve as practice for students.

Regarding writing, the only activities in which students practice it is when answering questions from the book, or questions that the teacher writes in the board. There is not a formal teaching or evaluation of this skill. T2 explained she prefers to dedicate that time to practice speaking.

Now, the way T2 grammar is taught is the following. She presents the grammar rule or structure, gives plenty of examples, makes students write some examples but trying to write something about themselves, and some examples are written on the board and reviewed. T2 always tries to make sure that everybody understands. After enough practice and if students do not have questions, they follow with the book exercises. Sometimes T2 brings extra grammar exercises mainly to work with drills. The presentation of the grammar rule or structure is always in Spanish because T2 believes that this important part of language should be very clear and understandable and that is not always possible if she explains it in English. In some occasions students present the rules, but it is also in Spanish. The grammar exercises from the book or the ones she brings to the classroom are always checked; T2 explained that this revision is very important because students must study them to be able to participate in the following classes. When students finish a grammar activity, they give their books to the teacher; she checks the answers and corrects them. However, only the first students get this personalized revision because when many of students finish, they checked the answers

together. There is no grade for those activities, but T2 said that students should correct their mistakes if they have any.

Vocabulary is not taught according to T2, but she said that it is obvious that when working in the class, students find new words and through the activities they can learn words. There is no evaluation for vocabulary exclusively.

The evaluation is based on the percentages assigned to obtain students grade since the evaluation of each skill is already explained. In terms of grading, students' grade is obtained in the following way: 10% is given for attendance; 10 % is for homework, activities, tasks, papers; 20% is for oral presentations; 30 % for projects, and 30 % for the written test. Listening is not included in this test and there is not an oral test.

If we remember that, according to Littlewood (2004), the four skills should be taught, practice and evaluated, we can say that in those terms the approach T2 does not fit with this concept. However, we have to take into account also, that a communicative approach tends to emphasize speaking, as in T2 teaching, which in general terms means that she is using a communicative approach which is limited to speaking skill. Now, in terms of the syllabus (which it will be analyzed later), not all the skill are included, which could mean that T2 is following the guidelines stated on it.

Now, by analyzing the data obtained through the interview, we can see that with regard to the language used in the classroom, there is no predominance of English or Spanish, both are used for different purposes. As we remember in a communicative approach Nunan (1999) suggests minimizing the limitations of the classroom and making a class more communicative through the use of the foreign language for classroom management and as a teaching medium, however T2 uses Spanish for explaining grammar and classroom management, in this way she limits communication on some aspects of the teaching.

Regarding skills, she did not include reading and vocabulary, and writing is not paid enough attention; there is a clear emphasis on grammar and speaking over listening, which is minimized. Listening is only taught when T2 decides it and she only includes easy tasks which represent no challenge for students, which is important in a communicative listening activity. There is no extra material to support this skill and there is no evaluation for it

Speaking is given an important role in the classroom and it seems that T2 tries to include cultural facts. This helps students to learn about the culture of the target language which is an element considered in the communicative approach. T2 corrects students only when she considers it opportune. Little by little she gives students more opportunities to speak freely. She guides them, corrects them and lets them free but usually gives them feedback which surely helps them to improve their speaking skill. It seems that the purpose of T2 is that at least students get familiar with the language and lose the fear to speak.

Writing is not taught and evaluated, however when students write while doing activities it should be written grammatically correct since it is grammar what they are practicing. As we can see the importance given to the writing skill is just a little.

Grammar, as speaking is also emphasized; almost all the time in class is dedicated to learn grammar usually in a deductive way as in the GTM. However, sometimes students are the providers of knowledge and the teacher is only a guide, this is characteristic of the Communicative Language Teaching. We can notice that for T2 it is very important to make the grammar rules clear and ensure students' understanding of them since they are seemed as the basis for speaking. The teacher uses many interesting activities to evaluate students' understandings of the rules but also drills are common used for these purposes. I assume she makes students practice grammar a lot. Vocabulary is not taught but as students practice a lot of new grammar structures and rules, we can say that they learn some new words through them.

In sum, taking into account that not all the skills are included, and that grammar is the main focus of the class we could say that T2 method used to teach at CONALEP is mainly based on the GTM. However, if we remember that speaking is also encouraged and given also an important part of students' grade we could say that T2's method is a mixture of many Grammar Translation Method elements, some characteristics of the Audio lingual method (use of drills) and some of the Communicative Approach.

The observations

Once we have what T2 answered, it is turn to explain what we see through the observations. As with the previous high school, we would write first only what we

observed and then we will make the analysis taking into account some aspects of the classroom environment, language, skills and evaluation.

In the first class (two-hour-class), T2 entered the classroom and students were already organized in semicircle very close to the teacher desk. They were talking to each other but without making too much noise; when they saw the teacher, they greeted her in English before she did. She answered them and immediately after she asked one of them if he had finished reading *Twilight*. This question was the principle of a conversation among other students about the book and the movie. T2 asked some questions in Spanish and some in English, students seemed to understand when she did it in English, but most of them answered in Spanish. Some of them tried to speak in English, but they did not know the words they needed to express their ideas. Not all of them participate but they seemed to be interested in the topic.

While they continue talking about it among themselves (in Spanish) the teacher pasted a big paper on the board about the *future progressive* and started explaining it. She first explained in Spanish its uses and then the structure it should follow. After that, she provided some examples and wrote some extra on the board. Then T2 asked students to give some examples; they did it and she wrote them down. She wrote under each word of the sentence the word categories it belongs to, (subject, verb...) students did the same on their notebooks. Next she asked them to write three more examples and do the same. Then, some students were called on to write their examples on the board. The sentences were checked in group. T2 asked if they understood, they said yes and were told to complete the first two grammar activities on the book. T2 monitored the activity, and then checked some books, (from students who finished first. After sometime, they checked the answers together; T2 called on some students and they gave the answers; if they were wrong, other students were asked to do it. If nobody knew, T2 gave the answer and explained it one more time.

After the revision, T2 took the paper on the board away and pasted a new one about the future perfect. They followed the same procedure as in the first grammar structure. After revising three more grammar exercises, T2 made sure everybody understood the explanation. Then, students were asked to do a speaking activity; they were asked to work in groups of three in a speaking activity from the book. Two students were scientists, and one was an interviewer. They had to practice a talk about environmental

problems and how the world will be on 20 years. There were on the book some guideline questions that made students' task easier. T2 gave them some time and then students were asked to perform their interviews. All of them passed to the front and did it. When some groups made many errors, T2 corrected them at the end of their presentations. When they finished, T2 quickly explained once again the structures reviewed at the beginning of the class and gave students a paper with two exercises about it (without books); students had to complete sentences and write complete sentences about how their life in twenty years will be using the future progressive or the future perfect. To finish the class, T2 asked them to study what they learned.

The second class (one-hour-class) started in the same way. But this time there were no grammar explanations; students were asked to work in pairs on the *Conversation* section of the book. They had to read and practice the conversation and pay attention to the structures reviewed the last class. Then, they were asked to solve the activity related to the conversation in which they had to answer true/false questions. The activity did not take long and they checked the answers together.

In the last activity students were asked to work in groups of four and imagine their life in twenty years. They should think about school, job, family, money or whatever they wanted; and share their information in the group. After some time they should find out if their expectations were the same or different. At the end, the group should report to the class what they found out. All members participated and T2 monitored the activity all the time. Many students asked her questions about vocabulary and she helped them by telling them what the equivalent English word was. All the instructions and questions were done in Spanish, the conversation was supposed to be in English but students used Spanish when they did not find the way to express their ideas in English. The presentations, however, were in English. During the presentations, T2 took some notes, but she did not correct anything at the end.

Having described the observations, let us continue with their analysis. The classroom environment seems fine for the class, students were calm and they seemed to be waiting for the English subject. It was evident that T2-students have a good relationship; they were sitting in semicircle, which becomes a circle with T2's desk. According to Nunan (1999), this kind of organization is better to create an environment of confidence in

which everyone feels free to ask questions and participate in all kind of tasks, and as consequence communication is promoted.

The languages used in the classroom are English and Spanish. Most of the time T2 uses Spanish to explain and clarify; English is the means to perform the activities. We can notice that the decision to switch from Spanish to English or vice versa is not that arbitrary; when students need to speak in Spanish they do it; and when the teacher notices that they do not understand when she speaks in English, she turns to Spanish. So, in terms of language, we can say that both the mother tongue and the target language are used in a balanced way

Now, regarding skills, reading is not taught because of time. In consequence, there is no evaluation of this skill. As Littlewood (1981) points out, the teaching of all skills and its integration is crucial for communication, but for T2 results almost impossible because of the time, and the big number of students she has. Unfortunately, we did not observe any listening activity but relying on T2 comments we can say that listening is not given the attention it needs and the few activities done are not very challenging. We suggest that if T2 emphasized listening a little bit more, speaking could be improved also, taking into account that real communication involves the ability to perform well in all skills.

Different from listening and reading, speaking is really emphasized; even though students have some problems when speaking, they try to do it. However, if they need Spanish, they feel confident to use it. One of the principles of the CLT states that students can use Spanish on the first stages but then, the teacher should encourage them to only use English. We could say, then, that T2 is not trying to improve students' speaking skills (taking into account that we are talking about an English IV class). However, there are some positive elements in T2 teaching, as the communicative elements in the activities which try to involve students' experiences and feelings, the confidence T2 gives them to try speaking, the feedback she gives them to help the skill improvement, and variation in the activities which are not limited to the book. She corrects learners when it is necessary, but when the mistakes do not affect the main purpose of the activities, which seems to be communication, she lets them pass. As for the teaching of speaking, it can be drawn that T2 teaching has, in effect, important communicative elements.

As T2 said, writing was not taught as the skill to create pieces of writing like letters for example, but it was used instead in order to complete grammar exercises, as the sentences should be written grammatically correct. It seems that it is all that matters in this skill.

Finally, regarding grammar, which is taught deductively, it was observed that T2 is the main source of knowledge. This sub skill is the most emphasized in the classroom; for T2 that students learn the grammatical structures or rules seems quite important. She makes all her best to help them understand and she always tries to make students know the correct answers for the activities. It seems as if she did not want students to get confused at all. Furthermore, she uses colors and big letters to make it more attractive; in fact, the extra material she brings to the classroom is to practice grammar. It is important to mention that T2 dedicates much time to teach only structures, however when she thinks students are ready, she makes them transfer their knowledge to more communicative activities, for example, to express thoughts about themselves. Even though grammar is the most important part of the class, it is taught in Spanish. If T2 tried to do it in English, almost the whole class would be focused on the target language.

Now, in terms of evaluation, it was evident the importance of grammar and speaking over the other skills. T2 is really concerned about evaluating students all the time on the emphasized skills. Only by looking at the percentages given to speaking and grammar, we can notice how important they are. Activities from other skills are not as important, they only count as assignments, and a big percentage of the grade will be defined through the students' ability to perform in speaking and grammar. In those terms we can say that the evaluation is grammar and speaking based.

Summarizing the observations, it was found out that although T2 told us that she uses her own method of teaching by combining the GTM (50%) and the communicative approach (50%), we could notice that grammar is still given more weight over speaking, reading, listening and writing. T2's teaching display many grammatical elements that coincide with what she told us, however, if we take into account that one of the most important principles of a communicative approach is the teaching and integration of skills, we can see that the other 50%, which is supposed to be communicative, is not completely a half of T2's teaching. It is true that T2 promotes oral communication but

students learning is not supported by the teaching of the other skills. Then, there is communication but is limited to speaking. In sum, it is possible to say that the classes carried out in our group under study at CONALEP have some important characteristics of the Communicative Language Teaching and the Audiolingual method. However, there is still a tendency towards the Grammar Translation Method. Now, we turn to testing to have a better picture of the T2' teaching and evaluation.

The tests

So far, the interview and observations have showed that the teaching at CONALEP is mainly grammatical with important characteristics of the communicative approach. To follow with the analysis, the tests students took will be described through examples and explanations. These are some examples:

I. Complete each sentence with the correct preposition: *for, against, of, on, to, in, about*.

1. Finally, we succeeded _____ persuading them to stay.
2. The students object _____ staying late on Fridays.
3. The company apologized _____ keeping us waiting.
4. In the end, we decided _____ buying a dog. We don't think that's a good idea.
5. Tom and Janet have often talked _____ moving away from the city.
6. They insisted _____ paying for almost everything during my stay.
7. We're thinking _____ selling the car and buying a new one.

In order to complete this exercise, students need to know the meanings and uses of each preposition. If they learn them, they will not have many problems to solve it. Notice that learners do not have to decide which preposition goes with a given word because of the ending -ing (since all words end in the same way) but they have to know about collocation, which preposition is more appropriate to the linguistic context. The following example is made up of ten items originally; here are just included the first five.

II. Circle the correct option in each sentence. (8 points)

Ex: Sometimes her job is rather (boring / bored).

1. The children were really (frightening / frightened) by the monster they saw in the movie.

2. His parents were (shocking / shocked) when they heard about the accident.
3. Our teacher often tells (amusing / amused) stories.
4. The teacher was (satisfying / satisfied) with the students' work.
5. It was a very (embarrassing/ embarrassed) situation for everyone.

Now, here it is evident that what students need to know is what kind of adjectives is used for things and what for people. Furthermore, they have an example that helps them a lot. So, this exercise is not challenging and only tests students' knowledge about the use of adjectives. It is the same case in the following example. Students are given a model and then they just need to know how to change the modal and auxiliary verbs to the past tense.

III. Use the cues to write wishes.

Ex. You don't have much free time. I wish I had more free time.

1. You can't play the piano. _____.
2. We have school tomorrow. _____.
3. You don't know the answer. _____.
4. You are not very tall. _____.
5. You can't pronounce English well. _____.

In that example, students are asked to demonstrate they know the structures to express wishes through the use of drills in which all items are based on the same pattern. This is another example:

IV. Complete the sentences with the adjective or adverb form of the word in parentheses.

Ex: (polite) The polite child held the door for me. I thanked her politely.

1. (careful) The _____ scientist performed an experiment. Then she _____ recorded the results.
2. (nervous) The speaker keeps looking _____ through his notes. He looked _____ before the presentation.
3. (bad) The forward missed the penalty shot _____. He seldom makes such a _____ shot.
4. (excited) The child was _____ at the fair. She ran _____ up to the clowns.

The purpose is to test learners' knowledge of some adjectives and the formation of adverbs derived from them. There are more exercises in the tests like this one but we better include some different ones that seem to be more communicative. This is an example:

Look at the picture. Then choose the correct answer to complete each statement.



- We'll stand in line
- until they let us into the concert.
 - until we wake up.
 - until we check our e-mail.
 - until we finish eating dinner.



- I'll see you
- after I take my car to the service station.
 - when my business trip is over.
 - as soon as I walk the dog.
 - as soon as I wash the dishes.



- I'll e-mail the report to you
- as soon as I hang up.
 - when dinner is ready.
 - after the rain stops.
 - as soon as my bank gives me my PIN number.

In this activity, it is clear the communicative purpose. Students are not practicing grammar. Here, they must be able to recognize which sentence is better according to a given context (picture). In this way the social element of communication is included. However, it is not that difficult to decide which the answer is because the other options are distracting sentences easy to identify. There is another example of this kind:

Complete the conversations. Move the choices to the correct boxes.

| | |
|--|--|
| Sorry, I'm used to looking out the window. | It's not worth spending time doing that. Let's play a game! |
| It's less expensive, too! | It's no use offering to fix it. I want a refund! |
| Would you mind changing seats with me? | I'm sure we can help you with your computer problem. |
| Would you like to try tonight's special? It's escargots. | I'm searching for some information, but I'm having trouble finding it. |

Again, T2 does not intend to see if students know a specific rule. She wants them to complete a real message. Again, students are helped by pictures to create a social context. There were many other examples, but we already included at least one of all the types. So, let us better move on to the analysis of them.

As we could see through the tests items, there is an emphasis on grammar on the written test. This sub skill is tested mainly through drills; we also found out that there were activities related to vocabulary, even though T2 had mentioned she did not teach it.

However, there are some exercises (5 and 6, for example) that show some communicative elements on them. They take into account the social factor of communication; they are not checking if students can write a grammar structure correctly, they are actually testing students understanding of the situation. They do not seem to be that challenging but at least they do not focus only on grammar rules or structures.

Having analyzed the test, we can assume that the tests are mainly grammar-based; however some activities have communicative elements which coincide with the communicative aspects of T2's teaching. The communicative characteristics are evident. However, there is still a big emphasis on grammar.

The book

The book that we are about to describe is *My World 6* by Manuel dos Santos by McGraw-Hill. Let's begin with the description of the content table.

| UNIT | GRAMMAR | FUNCTIONS | LANGUAGE |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 Can you get used to it? | Verb + gerund Expression + gerund Preposition + gerund Verbs and prepositions Be used to / get used to | To discuss people's lifestyles and habits. To compare cultures and lifestyles | They miss eating food from their country. My dream of living in a foreign country will come true one day. I'm thinking of moving to Rome. I'm used to driving on the right. |

Source: Dos Santos Manuel. (2005) *My world 6*. McGraw-Hill.

The content table is divided into 12 units; each one is organized in four sections: the title of the unit, grammar, functions, and language. Just by looking at the table, we identify that the skills and sub skills included could be all of them since there is no specification if they are spoken, written, read or listened. However, as there is a specific box for grammar it seems that this sub skill is emphasized over the others.

At first view, the table shows the importance given to grammar since the first section is for grammar points. This is a characteristic of the structural syllabus which organizes

language based on grammar structures. It is also identifiable the inclusion of functions which are characteristic of the functional/notional syllabus. However, taking into account Tarey's ideas (1988), the functions are not written in the way they are supposed to be done. As we have said, function express actions performed with language and should be written like that, *apologizing, greeting*, etc. Then, in *My World* there is also a misunderstanding about functions. The last section is called language, there is nothing else than pieces of language structured in the way the grammar points suggest. In summary, the content table of *My World 6* is based on a structural syllabus with some characteristic of the functional/notional syllabus.

Having described the content table, it is time to move to the description of the first unit in order to have a better idea of the book organization. The first unit is titled *Can you get used to it?* The first section of the unit is given for new language. There are some small pictures with some information about them. Their purpose is to introduce new language structures. At the bottom of the page there is a short dialogue to practice the new structures. This pattern is followed in all units. Check the following example:

Which of the following would you do or be, give your opinions and compare with a partner

work out / go for a walk



I'd rather go for a walk than work out. It doesn't burn as many calories, but it's less tiring.

Your opinion: _____

There are three more like this example that teach two new words each. In all of them the structure *I'd rather* or *I wish* is included. At the bottom of each exercise like this one there is a small conversation practice in which students practice two questions and answers written using the new structures.

In the second section, *Conversation*, there is a dialogue in which the new structures of language are revised once again. A true-false exercise about the dialogue is included. All units have the *Conversation* section. The following conversation will be followed by an exercise which is common through the whole book. It is a true/ false exercise.

Conversation

Mike: thank you for bringing me to this great restaurant.

Kanya: You are welcome. So, tell me, Mike, are you getting used to living in Thailand?

Mike: Yeah, I haven't have a lot of trouble adjusting to life here so far.

Kanya: Really. Don't you find the traffic in Bangkok stressful?

Mike: It doesn't bother me in the least. I lived in Sao Paulo before I moved here, so I'm used to heavy traffic.

Kanya: And what things aren't you used to yet?

The conversation follows as far as the middle of the page and it continues exemplifying the uses of *used to*. It is important to mention that the previous section, *New language*, introduces the same structures used in this section, then we can assume that the conversation serves to continue learning the new vocabulary and structures.

Answer true or false

1. Mike is getting used to live in Thailand
2. He's had no trouble relating to the Thai people.
3. Mike isn't used to busy traffic.
4. He's already used to the spicy food
5. He finds the language hard.

Students need to check the conversation and decide if it is true or false. In all the questions the new structure is used. In each unit, at the bottom of the *Conversation* section, there is a brief listening activity. This is an example:

Listen to the conversation between Caroline and Mandy, and answer true or false.

1. ___ The community college is offering free evening courses
2. ___ It is offering computing and accounting courses
3. ___ Mandy would like to study French
4. ___ Caroline is thinking of taking cooking classes

Most of the listening activities are short and of the true/ false type, however, in some of them students have to complete tables. It is important to remember that T2 does not do all of them; only the simplest one like the one above.

Now, the third section comprises a grammar point; the whole page is about it. In the next page there are four exercises to practice grammar. Then, grammar rules and practice activities are given together two pages. We will not include the grammar box because it is almost a page long; we'd better focus on two sample activities. The following example was reduced to three items, the original one is formed by six.

Complete the sentences using the correct preposition and verb form.

1. My family is thinking _____ (move) to a different town.

2. The manager decided _____ (fire) the employee.
3. Have you ever talked _____ (go) to china with your parents?

Here, students must remember a grammar structure and write it correctly through a drill (exercise very characteristic of the audiolingual method). However, in the following example the practice is a little bit more complicated.

Write sentences according to the situation. Adam used to live in a small town in Canada. Now, she is living in Mexico City.

When he first arrived

1. Noise At first he wasn't used to the noise.
2. Take the subway _____

Now

1. Hectic traffic Now _____
2. Crowded buses _____

In this example, a contextual element has been included. Students first have to situate themselves on the given context, besides, in order to complete it, they must have some knowledge about some aspects of the living in a town in Canada and in Mexico City. That means that they are not only learning about grammar but also about cultural facts.

In section fourth, there is a reading of one and a half page. The other half of the page is given for a reading exercise in which students have to answer questions about the reading. At the very bottom of the page there are two activities, one is a writing task and the other is about speaking. In all units the writing and speaking activities are related to the reading. The next three examples correspond to the last three skills.

Answer the questions about the text.

1. Explain in your own words what the organization Doctors without borders does?
2. When was it founded and by whom?
3. In what kind of places do the organization's volunteers normally work?
4. Besides providing medical assistance, in what other ways has MSF helped people?
5. Why do you think Kauchner is referred to as "beloved and sometimes not so beloved"?

In most of the questions, students are asked to find in the text specific information, as in two, three, and four. In question one, they are also looking for specific information but they are asked to paraphrase it. Only in question 5 students need to analyze what they read, they must infer, taking into account the context, what the phrase means. This last question gives to the reading task a more communicative purpose since students are not

asked just to read again and write what the book says but they have to analyze the phrase and give it a contextual meaning. The last example is about writing.

1. Write about cultural aspects of your country that foreigners may have trouble adapting to.

All the writing activities included in the book are referred to the previous reading activity. Students are asked most of the times to write about the same subject of the reading but taking into account their own experiences or way of living. It does not specify how long the paper should be, but by reading the instruction, one notices that at least it should cover three paragraphs: introduction, body of the text, and conclusion. The speaking activity was composed by four questions. Here we provide only two.

Speaking

1. What do you like and dislike about the way of life in your country?
2. Which country would you find it easy or difficult to get used to living in? Why?

As in the writing activity, here, students speaking is about the reading again, but transferring the concepts to their own life. We could notice also that almost all readings, writings and speaking activities of each unit are related and most of them support the new structures learned in the unit.

In summary, through the book we found out that the language used is English and all the skills are included. However, there is more emphasis on grammar and reading; the importance of grammar (just by the amount of pages noticed) coincides with T2 teaching, but if we remember that she also emphasizes speaking and does not teach reading, this suggests that the book is not the most appropriate for her purposes. Most of the activities designed for each skill reinforce the new structures of each unit. However, some of them also include communicative elements as the use of a social context or the extrapolation of the information to students' own experiences. Then, it could be assumed that the activities in *My world 6* are a combination of grammar-based activities with some communicative elements. But again, it is important to remember that T2 only uses the grammar section, some listening and speaking activities while reading and writing (in which we found more communicative elements) are not taught.

The syllabus

The last element to analyze is the syllabus, which teachers are given at the beginning of the course. According to the syllabus of the English 6 subject, it provides students with

the necessary tools to establish a conversation in English. It gives priority to the functional use of the grammatical structures and vocabulary based on didactic, visual and audio aids in favor of the establishment of any kind of oral communication in English.

The general objective of English 6 is to give student the tools to speak, understand, and write in English using different grammar tenses. The specific objectives state that at the end of the course students will be able to:

1. Use present progressive and present simple, be going to and past in his/her conversation.
2. Use gerunds and imperatives in his/her conversation.
3. Use conditionals, past perfect, future progressive and future perfect in his/her conversation.

The table shows that the only skill included is speaking since all the objectives are focused on conversations. Furthermore, the aim is the learning of specific grammatical structures; that means that grammar (sub skill) is also highlighted. The syllabus states that the objectives can be reached if students are taught:

- To use the structures: Going to/Will, Be going to, present progressive and present simple in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.
- To use past perfect, past simple, past progressive and third conditional in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.
- To use the structures: gerund as subject, Be + adjective + preposition + gerund, Verb + gerund and Verb + preposition + gerund in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.
- To use imperatives, adverb clauses, May/Might and have in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.
- To speak using verb + object + infinitive, gerunds and infinitives zero and first conditionals in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.
- To speak using tag questions, second and third conditional, which + past perfect, future progressive and future perfect in his/her conversation, according to the grammatical structures and idiomatic expressions.

In the syllabus each unit of the book *My World 6* is specified and organized according to the grammar structure, which means that the bibliography is included. Furthermore, it gives some suggestions of books and web sites to find extra material. It is interesting that in each unit an oral and writing test are considered, which means that students' improvements should be checked at the end of each unit.

By analyzing the information in the syllabus, we found that there is a clear emphasis on grammar and speaking. All the content is organized based on grammar structures that should be followed by oral practice. In fact, grammar and speaking are the only two language areas evaluated. Although writing is included in the general objective, we did not find anything about it in the syllabus.

In brief, the course is based on speaking development with an emphasis on students' grammatical accuracy on language. This characteristic of the precision when speaking belongs to the audiolingual method. The other skills and sub skills are almost neglected. Taking into account that the general objective considers the writing skill, and that in the specific objectives it is not even mentioned, it could be said that the same syllabus has some inconsistencies in its design. The syllabus implemented in English 6 course at CONALEP is mainly speaking –based through the use of accurate grammar rules and structures. The importance of speaking gives it a communicative element, however as grammar is very important to develop speaking we can say that the method preferred in the syllabus is the Audiolingual method.

Overall analysis of CONALEP teaching of EFL

Once we have described and analyzed all the factors involved on T2 teaching, it is time to triangulate the information to get a general view of teaching at CONALEP. First, we corroborated that the book *My world 6*) was the one used by T2 and specified on the syllabus. T2 used it as the main tool for teaching her students; however, there was also extra material, mainly about grammar.

In terms of language, the books, the syllabus and the tests demonstrate that English is the language used for teaching. However, this does not coincide with the interview and the observations that let us know that the language used in the classroom is not only English but also Spanish for teaching purposes. Furthermore, the evaluation of the two main language areas (grammar and vocabulary) is carried out in English. Then, we conclude that there are some incongruities between the language the syllabus and the book suggest to use and the language that is actually used in the classroom. For example, T2 uses Spanish for giving instructions when she could do it in English in order to manage the classroom in the target language and promotes a more communicative environment.

Regarding skills, it was found that all of them are included in the book with emphasis on grammar and reading, however, the syllabus only takes into account grammar and speaking for teaching and evaluation. As for the interview and observations, they showed that reading, writing and vocabulary are not included; listening is not given enough importance, and even when speaking is emphasized, grammar is still the most taught skill. This means that the book is not the most adequate for T2's course since it prioritizes reading, and actually this skill is not taught in class. There is no congruity among all the factors analyzed but something we can draw from the data is that grammar is still the most important issue in the class.

Most of the book activities used to teach grammar and the ones T2 described and included in the test were similar. Many of them were drills (used in the audiolingual grammar translation method and in the communicative approach), and although T2 said she does not teach vocabulary, we found in the tests some exercises that involve this sub-skill. There were also some grammar activities that have some communicative elements; they were found in the book and in the tests as T2 said. This coincided with the syllabus which gives much importance to grammar. The other activities included in the book (writing, listening) have communicative elements, (the use of the social context, for example) but they were not used because T2 does not include those skills in her teaching. For that same reason they are not included in the tests. The speaking activities of the book were carried out in class, however T2 also included other ones she prepared that seemed to be more communicative. Even though there were no specific methods to tests speaking, the presentations count as an oral exam while grammar was the only aspect taken into account in the written test.

In summary, the grammar and the speaking exercises are the only ones that fit on all the elements analyzed. Even though, speaking was emphasized, in many cases it was only a way to corroborate if students had understood grammar. Then we can say that the 50% of the class which was supposed to be communicative (according to T2) do not reach that percentage.

Now, in terms of evaluation, the main inconsistencies were found in the book, because unlike the syllabus, the tests, and the data provided by the interview and observations, this includes all the skills. The interviews, observations, tests, and syllabus showed that

grammar and speaking were the skills more evaluated. Listening activities only count as class work and reading, writing and vocabulary are not even included in the class.

In sum, the view of T2 teaching as a whole is of a class based on the development of correct speaking through the learning of grammar structures and rules through a variety of activities. Some communicative elements were identified, (the emphasis of speaking, the use of the social context on some activities) but they were not as much as the importance given to grammar. With this teaching students are likely to be good at grammar and speaking, but they could not have an integral language learning because the other skills will not support speaking and grammar. If we take into account that we are talking about the learning of a foreign language that later might be useful for students' future working needs, such as reading a text for example; and not about a second language in which speaking will be crucial for communication, we could say that T2 is not taken into account students' necessities when she excluded the other skills. Then, their knowledge will be limited to speaking performed through accurate grammar rules. T2's teaching then is mainly based on the audiolingual method (make students speak and correct them to make the speaking more accurate) and some characteristics of the Communicative Language Teaching, such as the emphasis of speaking.

4.3 COBACH 2

The interview

The last teaching to be analyzed is the one from COBACH. The teacher will be identified as T3 henceforth. According to her, the method she uses is mainly grammatical with some communicative elements. T3 explained that teachers at COBACH are required to use the Grammar Translation Method; (however in the official syllabus it is other the method suggested and will be discussed later). She also pointed out that they try to include some communicative elements, for example the teaching of the four skills. The book they used is selected by the school academy of English; the one used for English 4 is *Skyline 3* from Mc Millan.

T3 explained that the most used language (by her and by the students) is Spanish. However, she tries to have students express themselves in English, at least the greetings, commands, and students' questions are supposed to be in English. With these routines

students get used to the language. She explained that she cannot speak all the time in English because there are some aspects such as the grammar explanations which are not always easy to understand in English. T3 has to make the grammar rules clear and she thinks Spanish is the best vehicle for this purpose. However, the activities are carried out in English and students seem to understand them.

Let us follow with T3 description of a common class. She said that her classes have the same pattern and are mostly based on the book. She said that she usually starts with a warm up activity in which a review of the previous class is done. She tries that students remember what they saw, and she helps them when they do not know. Then, T3 follows with the book activities. She tries to cover all of them, however, as listening is taught separately by another teacher, she does not always use the listening activities. Most activities are related each other, but T3 says that even when she tries hard to cover all of them, it is not always possible; but what she always includes is the grammar section. T3 mentioned that most of the grammar structures are not explained in the book; usually there are examples in which the rule is expressed and then there are some questions that guide students to discover them; however, that is not enough to make the rules or structures clear. Therefore, T3 usually explains the rules or structures after students' inferences. She tries to give more examples and asks students to do the same in order to clarify any question they could have. Then students are asked to complete the grammar exercise, T3 mentioned that there are not many grammar activities on the book, for that reason she has to find others related to the topic they are studying in order to provide students with more practice. She usually uses drills because she thinks they are a good tool when students are learning a specific grammar structure.

T3 also explained that the activities that involve the other skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) are done as the book presents them. Students practice these skills through those activities. All the activities done in the classroom count as class work and it is recorded by T3. She does not have always time to check the exercises in class, but she signs them and checks and counts them every two months. When the activities are checked in class the activities are also signed and then answers are checked together. Speaking activities count as participations and are recorded on T3's list.

T3 added that in the classroom they count with an electronic board, and that she uses it mainly to practice grammar and vocabulary in a more interactive way through the use of software called *Hot Potatoes*; sometimes when there is time, she uses the e-board to practice reading. The practice done with the e-board does not count as a grade or participation. According to T3, they are only a way to check if students understand what she teaches them. T3 thinks that this tool motivates students to learn grammar because they seemed to be encouraged when using it.

Finally, T3 closes up the class by making a review of what has been taught. She usually assigns the writing activities as homework because they take a lot of time if done in the classroom.

Now, in terms of skills, the class covers the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing plus grammar. T3 said that she does not teach vocabulary. Looking at one at a time, we have that reading is practiced with the book readings and exercises. The reading activities vary but in most of them the purpose is to understand what they read. Sometimes T3 uses the E-board to show the reading. She said that some students use copies instead of the book and she thinks that it results more interesting when they see the pictures included in the book (when it is the case) in colors. In other occasions she does not show the reading but the activities or exercises in order to do them together. When students do them individually in their books, they get a signature if they finish, in order to make the activity countable. However, if they do it in teams, there is no signature.

Listening is not emphasized in the class. The rarely times T3 covers the book listening activities the tracks are played twice and immediately afterwards the answer are checked together but the activities do not count as part of their grade. Only when there is no time to check the answers, T3 signs students' books and then every two months she counts the signatures. The reason to avoid listening activities in the classroom is that the listening grade is obtained in an external way. Students have to complete a number of listening practices which are done in the Language Lab. The listening practices are mainly about gap filling activities, sometimes there are also exercises of pronunciation in which students have to hear a word and repeat it. According to the language lab assistant, each practice is sealed or stamped and this is worth 5 points. Students do the practices, and then they check the answers all together with the person

in charge of the lab; if they are incorrect they are told what the correct answer is. When everything is checked and the practice finishes, students get the stamp, it does not matter if they did it wrong or right, just by the fact of doing the practice they get the points. Every two months the person in charge of the lab gives T3 the records of students and T3 writes the corresponding percentage on her list.

The speaking skill is taught with activities from the book. Students have to work in pairs or groups most of the time. T3 mentioned that discussions are the activities more used. Although they are not part of a grade, they count as participation and are useful for students to correct pronunciation. Besides that, sometimes T3 asks students to prepare group presentations about topics of the book. They do not get a grade either with the presentations, but they count as participation, and the end of each presentation T3 corrects student's mistakes on structure used, pronunciation or vocabulary. There is no oral evaluation; this skill only counts as participation.

Writing is not given much attention. T3 explained that common writing exercises are to write short paragraphs following guide lines that the book provides. All writing activities are related to the topics of the readings included. However, T3 pointed out that most writing tasks are assigned as homework because the time is not enough to do them in the classroom. She collects the papers, then at home corrects them (if they have mistakes), records who did the homework and then returns the papers to the students. Those activities count as homework, just by doing them students get the percentage given to class/homework. T3 mentioned that unfortunately she does not have time to always check writings. Because of that not all the activities included in the book are done. She said: there are many students, which means I would have to check and correct many papers and I would never finish. I think it is not fair to make student write if I am not going to be able to read all papers and correct them, that is why I'd better not assign them."

Usually grammar is taught deductively. However, when T3 considers that the grammar structures are easy to understand or when she has more time, she gives students the opportunity to first infer the rules before explaining them. T3 said that grammar is the area she gives more attention; this is because at the end of the semester students are evaluated externally with a totally grammatical test. This global test is not prepared by teachers, but they know that they have to prepare students for it since it is part of

students' final grade. The grammar structures and rules are always explained by T3 (in Spanish) and many exercises are used to make students learn them. Teacher tries to bring to the classroom interesting grammar exercises, mainly drills, because in the book there are not many. The grammar activities are checked together or signed, they count as class work which has a percentage of students' grade.

T3 explained that she does not teach vocabulary. During the class, when students find a new word they ask T3 for the meaning or they use their dictionary which they are supposed to bring with them in every English session.

As for evaluation, we already explained how it is done in each skill. Thus we will focus on the evaluation percentages breakdown. Students' grade is made up by the following aspects: class/home work and participation in class (writing, reading, speaking work) are given 35% of the grade, the language lab has the 15% and the written test has the 50% left. Reading and writing are not included in the written test, there is no oral test and listening is given a proportion of the grade, but it is obtained just by counting the practices students do. Then, a great percentage of the grade is given to the written test which will be analyzed later on.

Through the interview we found out that English and Spanish are used in the classroom. T3 is aware of the difficulty of carrying out a class just in English; however, the greetings, commands, and students' questions are supposed to be in English. With these routines students get used to the language. According to Littlewood (1983), this is a good way to help students to familiarize with the target language and open the window of communication. The use of the mother tongue is still used more than the target language which is not the mean of instruction when teaching grammar, for example, and even though the activities are in English most of the time students use Spanish when they want to clarify or ask something they do not understand.

Now, regarding skills, all of them are included in the syllabus, book, and in class. However there is no integration of them. Grammar is emphasized and taught separately; reading, writing and speaking (through the book activities) just serve as homework, and even listening is evaluated by another person. If we take into account that an important part of communicative approach is the covering integral aspect of language, we could say that the way skills are taught has communicative characteristics. The activities are

mainly based on the book; however they seemed to be enough to give students the opportunity to know how each skill works.

As for speaking, those activities count as participation and they are not evaluated. The speaking activities are limited to the book and presentations that also count as participation. However in the presentations, do not seem to be interaction among students, the one in front of the class is just given an explanation that s/e might be learned by heart. The fact of making students speak, as in the presentations, gives to the teaching of speaking a characteristic of the audiolingual method which according to Celce-Murcia (1991) has as a goal oral production in the target language.

Writing is practiced sometimes and only as homework; and even though T3 corrects students' mistakes on their papers, might be they do not even notice the corrections because papers are returned to them corrected but they do not have to check the papers again or re-write them in order to notice what their mistakes were and improve their writing skills.

Although students are asked sometimes to infer grammar, T3 always gives explanations of structures or rules; all those explanations are in Spanish which do not offer students a challenge to try to understand English. The activities done in class count as class work and they are practiced a lot through extra material, mainly drills which are common in the audiolingual method. Grammar is the only aspect evaluated in the written test, which shows its main role in the teaching. As for vocabulary, it is not taught, however when encountering new words the main source to get the meaning is the teacher who gives the translation; there is no attempt to make students infer meanings form context or use other means as pictures or realia which are suggested in a communicative approach.

In brief, according to the interview, the language most used in the classroom is Spanish. Although all skills are included as in the communicative approach, they are not given the enough importance (except for grammar). These skills are not integrated and the tests are only based on grammar. Grammar and listening have some characteristics of the audiolingual method through the use of drills and the language lab respectively. Consequently, we could say that, in terms of the interview, T3 teaching in COBACH is a combination of grammar-based and audiolingual elements with some elements of the communicative approach through the teaching of all skills.

The observations

About the classroom environment, we observed that the sitting arrangement was traditional. There was also an electronic board and a lap top which we supposed are aids which help on the English teaching. The 34 students were organized on rows and the teacher was in front, the place where her desk was located on a kind of platform or stage. Students were relatively calm when T3 arrived. She entered the classroom and without greeting asked: *¿Quién se acuerda qué vimos la última clase?* Some students answered that they learned about tag questions. T3 explained a little bit about it. After that she wrote on the board some examples (which were on the book) about the passive voice and explained which structure should be followed. After that she asked if students, in Spanish, understood and asked them to complete the grammar activity of the book. Students had to complete sentences by adding the passive structures. Then, in Spanish again, she asked them to write three examples on their notebooks. When students finished the two activities, they checked them together; she called on some students. If the answer was incorrect, T3 asked another student.

Then she gave students a sheet of paper with grammar exercises about the same topic. There were about six activities, mainly drills. Students were asked to complete them, she gave them 20 minutes. Before the time finished, three students had finished and their assignments were and revised and signed. When the time was over, T3 asked students (in Spanish) to stand up and bring their papers to her desk in order to sign them. When she finished signing them, they checked the answers together. Students were asked to keep the sheet of paper to be later recorded on T3's list.

After that students were asked to go to their books on a reading speaking-activity. They were asked first to read and after that to complete the true/false exercise; they did it. Then, they checked answers. Next, they were asked to work in pairs, as the instruction of the speaking activity said, and to imagine that her parents made an important invention years ago. They should say what the invention was and how this helps humanity; T3 pointed out that they should try to use the passive voice as much as possible. They started working and the teacher monitored the activity. When they finished, T3 asked who wanted to participate and talk about what they discussed, nobody answered and she insisted; a girl and a boy participated. T3 corrected pronunciation and clarified (in Spanish) that students should not confuse *invent* with

discover because each word has a different meaning. She asked students what each word means in Spanish and said that in Spanish they were the same. She asked once again if anybody wanted to participate, as nobody answered again, they finished the activity. The participation was recorded on the list. To finish the class, students did another activity of the book, which was about speaking. They were asked to work in groups of four and discuss four questions about important discoveries and inventions. They did it and, once again, when they finished, they were asked to participate. This time two groups did it and their participations were also recorded. T3 corrected pronunciation while they were speaking. There was no homework.

The second class started in the same way, (review of the present perfect) then, in the e-board students were asked to complete drills to practice the present perfect structures. All of them wanted to participate; if a student made a mistake, another student passed and corrected it. When they finished, they were asked to copy the complete sentences on their notebooks and highlight the present perfect structure. This time the participations were not recorded. To finish the class students were asked to do a speaking activity of the book, the procedure was the same as in the first class. When the participation finished, students were assigned as homework the next activity of the book which was to write a text about the patterns they followed when buying something.

Well, now we have all the data about observations gathered, it is important to say that in T3 class there was a good environment. Students looked used and kind of interested in the class. The sitting arrangement was very traditional, students on rows facing the teacher. As Nunan (1989) points out, this kind of sitting arrangement gives the teacher an authoritarian role which could fit with the role given to teachers on the Grammar Translation Method.

Regarding the language used for teaching, and taking into account that the classroom management was done in Spanish, we can say that Spanish is the language most used. Even though T3 spoke sometimes in English, she only did it for expressing very simple commands. As for students, they only speak English when reading a question/answer of the activities, or when doing speaking activities. Students used some Spanish in the discussions where they were supposed to use the target language, but they were not reprimanded for their behavior. Then, more than 70% of the class was in Spanish. In

terms of the bibliography, the tool used was *Skyline 3* with the help of some extra grammar material which was mainly used to teach grammar.

Concerning skills, reading activities were done through the book in which exercises seem to be communicative; students had to understand what they read to complete the exercise. However, we did not notice any interest of T3 in explaining a little bit more about the topic, or extending the reading content to students' experience. In fact, we could say that the reading activities were only done because the book has them, but the way of carrying them out did not seem to encourage students to read. Besides, the activities just counted as class work, it did not matter if students did them right or wrong, what the fact of having done them was enough for T3. In this sense, it could be said that reading activities are not encouraging or motivating for students; they are just another part of the classroom activities to complete the time of the class.

Speaking, as reading, was also included in the class through the book activities. The case of speaking was very similar to reading. Even though when the activities had communicative elements and seemed to be good, they were carried out without much emphasis, students were asked to do them, they did them, and participated, if they wanted. T3 did not encourage them to take their chance to speak or to share their opinions. Students did practice speaking when discussing, but it was not enough because sometimes they used Spanish and T3 did not encourage them to better use English. For her, it seemed to be fine. If we remember that in a Communicative Approach students should be encouraged to use the target language as much as possible, we can assume that the teaching of speaking did not fit entirely within this approach.

With regard to writing, we corroborated that activities for this skill are assigned as homework. In the book, most of the time the writing activities were related to another activity, but as T3 uses writing activities just as homework. We can assume that she separated the activities, in this way she broke the activities into single skills. Besides T3 did not help students with the writing activities, it means, she did not explain the homework, did not offer them some ideas or at least something to make them think about what to write; T3 just said what the homework was about and that was it, she did not even check if students listened to her. In general, we can say that writing is not given the enough importance and in this way students are not able to improve this skill.

In terms of grammar, the structures and rules were taught in a deductive way, as in the Grammar Translation Method. There were diverse grammar activities that kept students' attention. These activities seemed to be well planned; they promoted students participation (when using the e-board, for example), and provided them with a lot of practice. The use of extra material based on drills mainly showed audiolingual characteristics. Grammar seemed to be the most emphasized element in the classroom; just the time dedicated to it, and the use of extra material to make it clearer revealed its importance. As we can see, grammar is still the most emphasized sub skill. As for vocabulary, no activities were done, however we can see that T3 makes clear the difference in meaning between two words helping herself with the Spanish meaning of the two words, then we can say she uses translation to teach vocabulary, which is a common technique of the Grammar Translation Method.

Now, in terms of evaluation, we noticed the importance of checking grammar. T3 used exercises after explanations in which students are not able to use their books or notes to solve them because T3 really wanted to evaluate students understanding of the rules. The other skills, however, seemed to be minimized; it is like they just serve as fillers. As for listening, it is also evaluated but not according to students performance or skills; students get the percentage for listening just by attending the lab and doing the practice. Finally, if we take into account that there is not an oral, reading, listening or writing test, and that the written test only evaluates grammar, we can assume that the evaluation is mainly grammar-based.

In sum, through the observations we found out that even though all the skills are included as in the Communicative Language Teaching, grammar is the most emphasized in terms of evaluation and teaching (mainly through drills). If we take into account that and we add that Spanish is the most used language in the classroom, we can conclude that T3's teaching is a combination of mainly grammar-based elements, some audio lingual characteristics (drills and practice of pronunciation in the lab) and some communicative elements. In this way we finish with the observation. It is the turn to describe the tests provided by T3.

The tests

The written test has the greater percentage on students' grade. In order to see which skill(s) or sub-skill(s) is/are included on the tests, we will describe some examples.

I. Rewrite the following direct questions into Indirect Questions.

1. Where should Gaby study English?

2. How deep is the Caribbean Sea?

3. What time does the restaurant open?

This example is originally made up of 5 items but all of them have the same purpose. Students need to know how to change direct questions into indirect questions. For that, they have to remember a grammar structure seen on class. The exercise has the form of a drill. There are also five items in the original exercise of the next example. Here, only two are included.

Complete the sentences with the correct **question tag**.

1. Teresa has done her homework for 2 hours, _____?

2. The rabbits don't eat meat, _____?

Once again, students' work is related to the learning of grammar structures, through the use of drills. It means that all questions have the same pattern. There are many exercises like this one. Let us check the last one, which is also about grammar.

I. Complete each sentence about inventions using the passive voice.

1. One of the first traffic signals _____ (develop) by Morgan.

2. Before this many people _____ (kill) in traffic accidents.

3. Morgan's device _____ (use) until today's system of red, yellow and green lights.

If students learned the principles of the passive voice in class, they would not have trouble to solve these items. Again, they are tested on a specific grammar structure through a drill. It is important to mention that all the exercises included in the test are of the same kind we already exemplified.

As the examples showed, grammar is the only sub skill included in the tests, in the same way the use of drills is the exercise preferred to test the learning of grammar structures and rules. As we mentioned before, none of the other skills or sub skills are taken into account in the written test which only by itself conforms 50% of students' grade. Then,

it can be assumed that half of students' grade is based on their knowledge of grammar structures.

Briefly, through the tests, students are evaluated on grammar structures by the use of drills which are very common in the audiolingual method; none of them has communicative elements such the use of the social context, they are clearly grammar-based. That means that the tests are a combination of the grammar translation method and the audiolingual method. Let us continue with the analysis of the book.

The book

The book used to teach English IV at COBACH is *Skyline 3* by Brewster, Davies and Rogers. In this course it is used the second part of the book, that means that for English IV students start with unit seven of the Skyline 3.

As in the case of the other schools, we have included a unit of the content table and the description of that unit. In this case, it will be unit seven. The following is the sample unit of the content table.

| Unit | Lesson | Grammar | Functions | Vocabulary | Pronunciation |
|----------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------|---------------|
| Living culture | 1 Celebrations | - Present | -Describing | -Festivals | -Weak forms |
| | 2 Culture on the table | passive | celebrations and customs | -Food and ingredients | -verb + to |
| | 3 Culture at home | - Expressions followed by verb + -ing | -Describing food | -Culture | |
| | 4 Lifeline to intercultural communication | or to + verb | -Talking about customs in your own country -Talking about cultural differences | | |

Source: Brewster, Davies and Rogers. *Skyline 3*.

The content table shows that the skills and sub- skills included explicitly are speaking, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. As it is not specified in the functions if they will be done written or orally, we can say that writing and listening are also included. At first view, reading is not included. It is evident that the sub- skills have more weight than the skills; at least that can be inferred through the organization of the content table.

The covering of grammar characterizes the table as part of the structural syllabus. However, the functions of language that are also included give it a communicative element. Another communicative element is the teaching of culture.

Some elements that pertain to the Audiolingual method are also identified. As Celce-Murcia (1991) states about this method, its short term focus and goals are good pronunciation; and as the table shows, there is a specific section for it. The audiolingual method also has students to learn structures which as we see are included in the grammar section. In general the content table of *Sky Line 3* is a mixed of structural and functional syllabus with some elements of the Communicative approach and the Audiolingual method.

To corroborate what the content table shows, we turn to the description of unit seven. As we saw in the table above, the unit is divided into four lessons. It is interesting to notice that each lesson includes all the skills. And it is more interesting that they are integrated with other skills. For example, there are reading-speaking, written-speaking, listening-speaking or reading-writing exercises. 3. The following is an example about reading and speaking.

a. In pairs mark the sentences True or False

Chinese New Year is celebrated on January 1. T F

San Fermín is a city in Spain T F

b. Now read the extracts and check your answers

Reading...

c. In groups, talk about which of these celebrations would you like to go and why.

In this exercise there is a continuity in which students are doing. As we can see, the reading is introduced by a pre-reading task, which helps students to infer what they are going to read. It helps them to think, use their previous knowledge or experiences about the topic and create speculation about the reading. In this way, an interest in the reading task is arisen. Then, they have to read the extracts about cultural facts. Next, that they are organized in a group speaking activity, in which they continue with the topic of the reading but in a more personal way they have to speak about the knowledge they have about the topic. The next example is about writing and speaking.

- a. Write a short description of a festival in your country. Use the questions in the box to help you.

When is the festival? Where is it held? Why is it organized What happens?
Do you eat any special food or wear special clothes at the festival?

- b. Exchange descriptions with a partner. Read your partner descriptions. Talk about the festivals.

Ex. A. What do you and your family usually do on Christmas?

B. we usually celebrate at my aunt's house. We have a big meal, and...

Almost all the activities in the book are organized in this way. For that reason we include an example of the grammar section which is different an exercise about it.

Grammar builder

- a. Look at the examples in the box and answer the questions.

Active

They **make** Mc Donald's hamburgers from 100% pure beef.

They **cook** the beef on a grill.

Passive

Mc Donald's hamburgers **are made** from 100% pure beef.

The beef **is cooked** on a grill

1. How is the passive formed?
2. How is the passive voice different from the active voice?
3. Is there an equivalent to this structure in your language?
4. How does the present passive change in the singular and plural?

- b. Rewrite these sentences using the present passive. Look at the first example to help you.

Ex. Americans eat thousands of hot dogs every year

Thousands of hot dogs are eaten every year by Americans.

1. You make pizzas from tomato sauce, mozzarella cheese and dough.
2. The biggest companies spend millions of dollars on TV advertising

In this example we can notice the attempt to make students infer the grammar rules. The questions serve as a guide to help them discover how the passive voice works. In those terms we can say that in the book grammar is taught inductively. Now, concerning the grammar activity, it is based on a drill to make students practice the just learned structure. As we have mentioned before, drills are common in the audiolingual method.

Through the book we found that all skills and sub skills are integrated in *Skyline 3*; culture is also included. As Littlewood (1981) suggests, it is important to include those two aspects in a communicative approach since real communication is an integrated process that involves all skills. Besides, to learn a language means to learn the culture of that language which we noticed through the examples.

The integration of skills is, according to Littlewood (1981), a practice of the Communicative Language Teaching. However, in the book there is a tendency to practice speaking; almost all the other skills are practiced with speaking. That shows that this skill is emphasized in the book. Grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are also included, but they do not look too difficult or boring because they are divided in all the lessons. That means that students are taught small parts of a grammar point between listening, speaking, reading and writing exercises. This makes it easier for them and at the same time an integral teaching is achieved.

By looking at the book one can notice that it is well organized and promotes communication. With this book students are not supposed to learn skills separately but they are encouraged to communicate in a natural way. In summary, *Skyline 3* is a book designed under the principles of the communicative approach.

The syllabus

According to the syllabus designed for the Dirección General de Bachilleres (DGB) for COBACH students, the objective of the English course is to make students use the English language orally through their participation in interactive and communicative functions; additionally, its aim is to make students able to recognize different types of texts and to write them. In the same way students will be able to read different types of texts and comprehend aural information in an intermediate level. The disciplinary approach proposed for the Dirección General de Bachilleres to the English teaching is the communicative and functional approach since has as main objective the development and improvement of the different communicative skills such as oral and written production, and listening and reading.

The content for the course is divided into main topics of general concern that take place in interpersonal relationships. For that reason, communication is the central theme in which the contents of the syllabus go around. These contents are directed to the

development of the communicative competence (oral and written production; reading and listening comprehension) in the foreign language. For this reason, the syllabus highlights the evaluation of all skills; it reads: the students' competence in the four language skills will be evaluated (speaking, listening, writing and reading), through text writing, short readings, role plays, and comprehension of recorded material. The following example illustrates how the content is organized.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| <i>Function.</i> | To confirm information using questions |
| <i>Language.</i> | weather, public places |
| <i>Grammar.</i> | Tag questions: The day seems rainy. Doesn't it? The cathedral isn't far from here. Is it? |
| <i>Culture.</i> | To discuss what are some important public places in different countries and cultures. |

Source: Rico, J.M. Dirección General de Bachilleres.

Even though the objectives specify the teaching of the four skills, through this table we can see that reading is not included. Then, it is evident that the objectives do not correspond with the contents supposed to be taught.

On the table, functions are considered which are part of the functional/notional syllabus (used in the communicative approach). Though (as in the other syllabus) the objective for writing is not adequate. There is also a grammar section which is common of the structural syllabus. Besides, there is a language section that refers to vocabulary. Finally, there is a section for culture, as Littlewood (1983) mentions culture is very important in a language and it should be taught to help students understand that language. Taking into account these findings together with the functional characteristics it could be said that this syllabus has key communicative elements. In summary, the syllabus designed for COBACH students is a mix of structural, functional and many communicative elements.

Overall analysis of COBACH teaching of EFL

Following the same line of the other analyses it has to be mentioned first that the bibliography that T3 mentioned in the interview was in effect the one used in the classroom. However, this does not appear in the syllabus. This can be explained because the teachers are the ones in charge to select the books, but they do not design the syllabus

In terms of language used, we found that in the tests, book, and syllabus the language promoted and encouraged for classroom use is English. However, in the same book there are some parts in which the grammar sections make use of the mother tongue (Spanish in this case) to help students understand a grammar structure. The information gathered from the interviews and observations also support this contradiction, as the language used for teaching was mainly Spanish. Thus, regarding language we can notice that there are inconsistencies between the language supposed to be used (English) and the one that is actually used (Spanish) in the teaching.

As for as the language skills are concerned, the book and the syllabus suggest the inclusion of the four skills and the two sub skills. In contrast, the test shows that the only skill included is grammar. It was also found through the interview and the observations that although when all the skills are included, there is no integration of them (in fact, speaking is taught by another person). Besides, they are not given the enough importance, except for grammar that is the main area of language emphasized in the classroom. Again, there is no congruity among the factors analyzed; then we can say that even the book and syllabus are designed on a communicative approach; students are not actually taught in this way.

Now, in terms of evaluation we found that the book and syllabus suggested the evaluation of the four skills and the two sub skills; however the interviews, observations, and tests did not coincide. Grammar is the only aspect included on the test. What is true is that all skills are given a percentage of students' grade but grammar is emphasized because the other skills count as participation or class/homework. In sum, there are many inconsistencies in the evaluation; the book and the syllabus do not play a role in it because what actually T3 does is to limit the evaluation to grammar structures.

To end up with the analysis of the COBACH, we need to underline that even though there are important communicative elements of T3 teaching at this high school mainly showed through the syllabus and book, the method preferred is the Grammar Translation Method. The inconsistencies and mismatches between the different instructional resources are clear and the waste of some activities of the book, or the fact of using English when could be feasible to use Spanish is evident; it does not matter what T3 is supposed/required to teach, at the end the teacher is the one who decides what to do, which as we found was mainly grammar.

So far, the analysis of the teaching at the three high schools has already done. Now, it would be easy to say that none of those teaching methods used at the high schools matches with the one reflected at the CEI placement test, which was defined as communicative by teacher in charge of the test. However, before assuming this result, considerate is imperative to describe the test of the Centro de Idiomas. In this way we can see if the test is really based on the Communicative Approach. In the following section the CEI placement test is analyzed in detail.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF THE CEI PLACEMENT TEST

In order to analyze the CEI placement test, first the interview to the coordinator of the placement test, which is the responsible of the test, is discussed. Secondly, the test itself is analyzed in terms of language, skills, and type of activities.

The CEI placement test is a diagnostic test to the English courses whose objective is to evaluate not only college students, but also to the community in general since it is open to the society. It is a test based on the communicative approach and evaluates students on five levels, (the test has six levels, but intro and elemental are evaluated together because of a new institutional reform that eliminates the elemental level on all English courses). They are introductory-elemental, basic, pre-intermediate, intermediate, and post-intermediate. Each level tests students' knowledge on four skills: speaking, reading, listening and writing; and one sub skill, use of language which involves grammar and vocabulary. There are also two writing sections, one after the basic level and the other at the end of the test. This means, for example, that if students want to be placed on the second level they have to do the first writing; and if they want to be placed on the third, fourth or fifth level, they must complete the last writing. That is the most difficult part of the exam and it is what takes longer.

There is not a specific time assigned for each skill or each level. Two and a half hours is the maximum time allotted for the exam. However, if a student decides to finish the test, s/he can be given half an hour more. It is the students who decide where and when to stop.

Six full-time teachers working at CEI are in charge of designing the placement test. The version under study has been adapted three times in ten years. This last time the number of items was reduced as well as the time given to solve it. The questions included in the

exam are taken and adapted from different books; the main ones used are *Interchange*, *The world*, and *Skyline* in their different levels because there is not a data base or an item bank. There is a minimal and austere compilation of questions that are changed regularly by the six instructors; the present version has been in use for the last two years. In the last updating the modifications were done in terms of questions, spelling mistakes, phrases reformulation, re-recording of the listening instructions and restructuring of the writing section.

There is an attempt to design a new test based on competences; and make it faster to solve. Furthermore, there is an attempt to reduce the writings to only one because some students in the middle of the test think: “well, I’d better finish here because I do not want to do the second writing”.

Most of the items of the test consist of True/False and multiple choice questions. The interviewee pointed out that, in general, the test is fluent and the readings are short. The way to know if a student passes a determined level is the average of each skill section, however what actually determines the level is the oral and written section.

In terms of skills, listening, for example, is evaluated in group. It takes place in a small room with good acoustics, and students do not use headphones. All the exercises have instructions, a time to read questions and another to respond them; each exercise is played twice. The exercises are simple and they are mainly of *True/False* and *Multiple choice*. All the answers are evaluated using an answer key.

The listening of the first two levels is done at the beginning and the ones belonging to the next three levels are played an hour later. The tasks are easy actually, and students are given a previous explanation about it. Even though there have been groups of 40 students, there have not been problems because the recording is well done. Multiple choice questions are the most used. The most difficult part students have to do is in the most advanced level where they have to complete a table (which implies an integration of skills) but it is not too complicated because they do not have to write too much. Listening is evaluated with an answer key.

In terms of speaking, there is an oral examination done by the same exam proctor. At the end or in the middle of the exam, s/he calls on students, one at a time, and interviews them. There is not interaction in a way; it is a question- answer format, in

which the interviewer only asks and the interviewee only answers. In fact, there are some monologues. Only when the student has a very advanced English level is when there is some interaction. The interaction level is not evaluated and it is what the six-teachers-committee wants to do for the next oral test. To grade the oral test, all proctors have a small table with specific aspects (communication, fluency, grammar and vocabulary, and pronunciation). The proctor writes some comments and the level s/he proposes. The teacher recommends, taking into account what s/he hears and the development of the interview, the level at which the students should be placed.

The writing skill is evaluated through two writing tasks. The first one is about a description and the last one is an essay. The same proctor is in charge of evaluating students' writings according to her/his experience. Finally, regarding the Use of English section, all are multiple choice questions and it is evaluated with an answer key.

There is no a band or rubric to assess writing; actually the placement test emerged as a result of the need to find a way to diagnose students; it was an abrupt decision. In fact, there are no rubrics; only speaking has a table with four elements that help teachers to evaluate students; however, this table is not as determinant as the teacher's experience.

There are no documented statistics about the results of the placement test. However, according to placement test coordinator, out 700 students, 70% are placed at introductory-elemental level. The 30% left are placed at basic or pre-intermediate. Even though, there is no record to show the students' high schools of origin, it could be said that students from private schools or with any certificate in English are the ones placed at the higher levels.

In the CEI, teachers involved in the design of the placement test do not want any more to evaluate students' knowledge on technical aspects of language, syntax or the amount of words s/he knows, what they want is to know if students are able to get along well in English in a specific context. Therefore, they want students to speak and write well, able to read an article and write a summary, able to be competent in a working environment which is their purpose once they finish the Bachelor's degree. With this data about the CEI placement test, let us turn now to the descriptions of the sections covered in the CEI placement test. The first one will be listening.

Listening

In almost all the levels the multiple choice listening activities are the most common. Students have to choose an answer according to what they understand. It varies in the elemental and the post intermediate level. In the former they have to complete a column-match exercise. In the latter they must complete a chart. All those types of activities are common in the communicative approach because they have communicative purposes. Students must understand and interpret messages and information not only isolated words, (Littlewood, 1981).

In all levels students are given cues that, according to Littlewood, are beneficial in the first stages. However, as students get more knowledge, those cues must be less used. This is the case of the listening activity of the last level, in which students must be able to extract meaning and write it with their own words. In those terms, we can say that the listening activities included in the CEI placement tests are communicative.

To illustrate how the complexity of the listening activities increases, we present below activities from the first and the last level.

Introductory level

Listen to the conversation. Write the letter of the correct option on the line.

1. Bob works at _____.

a) a Mexican restaurant

b) a French restaurant

c) the Center restaurant

Post-intermediate level

Listen to three people talking about their positive and negative experiences in life, and then complete the chart with the experiences – positive or negative– that are missing.

| | Experiences | Positive or negative |
|---------------|--|----------------------|
| Andrew | Tried to listen more and not be so assertive. | Positive |
| | _____. | Positive |
| | _____. | Positive |
| | Watched comedy TV shows; enjoyed British sense of humor. | Positive |
| Amy | Felt homesick and missed her family | Negative |
| | _____. | Negative |
| | _____. | Positive |
| | Spanish improved dramatically. | Positive |
| | _____. | Negative |

Source: Exubic del CEI. Coordinación: Jiménez, A.B. 2007

This last example includes another important communicative element, which is the contextual factor. Here, students must recognize which ideas are positive and which are negative through the intonation and attitude of the speaker when talking about positive or negative facts.

The listening section is graded with an answer key, so there is no major problem with it. Only in the example above there is some flexibility, but the answer should keep the same idea written on the answer key. Until here, it could be said that the listening section of the CEI placement test is, in effect, communicative. The following section to describe is Use of Language.

Use of Language

It is, of the whole test, the section with the greatest number of items. After a close revision, it was found that many questions test only knowledge of grammar structures. Most of the questions follow the same pattern showed in the next example:

"I _____ from Argentina."

- a) coming b) come c) comes d) do come

However, there are some others which test vocabulary, as in the following examples.

Her favorite _____ in her new apartment is the kitchen.

- a) salon b) flat c) furniture d) room

He _____ in a new apartment downtown.

- a) habits b) leaves c) lives d) rests

These questions are not evaluating grammar; they are actually testing students' knowledge about vocabulary and, as we mentioned before, vocabulary is important in a Communicative Approach to express efficiently in an accurate way. (Nunan, n.d.) The pattern of the next example is not common in the test; however, we decided to include it because we think it shows communicative characteristics.

She works Monday through Friday. She doesn't work on _____.

- a) Saturday and Sunday. c) Saturday and Wednesday.
b) Sunday and Tuesday. d) Sunday and Thursday.

As we can see, this question tests students' ability not only to know the days of the week (vocabulary) but also their non linguistic knowledge about the days most people used to work. It means that if their social knowledge about which are the weekdays and which are the weekends, they will not have trouble to solve it.

This item tests student's recognition of spelling and pronunciation words, appropriateness of a word for a given context and vocabulary knowledge. This shows that it is a complete question that not only is grammar-based but is more communicative. In the last two levels the Use of Language section is designed in the following way:

In sentences 1 to 15, there are three underlined words/phrases, marked (A), (B), and (C). Circle the word/phrase that is GRAMMATICALLY INCORRECT.

1. Although she (A) is quite shy (B) but she has made (C) a lot of friends.
2. She said (A) me she (B) was going (C) on Friday.
3. I (A) like to thank you for looking (B) after my cat (C) while I was away.
4. I wish the job (A) I'm doing now (B) was as (C) satisfied as my previous one.
5. The TV is a (A) little loud. (B) Could you possibly turn it (C) off a bit?

As the same instruction said, the purpose here is to correct grammar mistakes in different sentences. As in the case of the Listening section, in this one student answers are also checked with an answer key. Here there are no variations; there is only a good

answer for each question.

After revising the test, we found out that there are some communicative elements in the Use of Language section of the CEI placement test combined with other questions that are 100% grammar-based. In order to follow with the analysis, we move on to the Reading section.

Reading

The readings included in this section seemed to be taken from authentic media. This is important because for the Communicative Approach it is good to expose learners to real language, not only to readings designed to learn new vocabulary or specific structures. The questions test students' comprehension of the texts. They have to understand, make inferences and get conclusions in order to solve them. In each level the difficulty of the task increases. We have to remember that Littlewood (1981) suggests that a good reading task should be challenging. On this basis we can say that the readings are designed under a communicative approach. Just to clarify what has been said we include one example of a readings task from the elemental level.

Read the postcards and check (✓) the correct boxes in the chart.

(text)

| | Agatha | Doris | Both |
|--|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1. would like to go back to Thailand one day | | | |
| 2. got ill | | | |
| 3. enjoyed sightseeing | | | |
| 4. didn't like the hotel. | | | |
| 5. liked the fruit | | | |
| 6. bought fruit from the street market | | | |

Source: Exubic del CEI. Coordinación: Jiménez, A.B. 2007

I have to mention that the reading of this text does not have the explicit answer of the chart. Students need to understand the reading to complete it efficiently. The reading section is also graded with an answer key. After revising the reading tasks we can say that they are communicative indeed. The next section included in the CEI placement test is writing.

Writing

When teachers try to make student communicate through writing, it is important that they give them guidelines to help them to structure their compositions. Besides, those guidelines are helpful to ensure that all students will be evaluated on the same aspects. The writing tasks included in the placement test are designed in that way. For beginners the help is more than the one provided for advanced levels. It is important to mention that unlike the other skills, writing is not evaluated at each level. There are only two writing activities, one after the basic level, and one at the end of the post-intermediate level. We have included here as an example only the first writing task.

Write about a person you know very well. Write about his/her life. (80–100 words at least). You can use this plan:

- Paragraph 1:** Who the person is.
 What the person looks like.
 What the person is like.
- Paragraph 2:** What activities this person did when he/she was a child.
- Paragraph 3:** What activities this person does nowadays.
- Paragraph 4:** What activities this person is going to do in his/her future.
- Paragraph 5:** What's your opinion about this person.

Students have the chance to choose the person they want. Even though they are given some guidelines, they are not obliged to follow them. If they want, they can write other aspects that could be more interesting for them. As Littlewood claims (1981), free writing promotes communication because it gives writers the opportunity to write about something they like and are interested in. Sometimes this opportunity is bigger, but just having an element that allows students to choose from different options makes a writing task better than one in which students do not have chance to express themselves. Following his claim, we can say that the writing section promotes communication.

This section is graded by the same proctor. The responsible of the placement test pointed out that he/she grades the writing task according to his/her perception and experience. There is no systematic way to do it. According to this, and taking into account Weir's suggestion (1993) about the use of a global marking scheme or any other method to be more objective when grading writing, it could be assumed that the

CEI placement test could be improved in terms of grading writing. The last section to analyze is speaking.

Speaking

The oral test is carried out sometimes in the middle of the written test or at the end. It is done individually and it is supposed to be an interview. The following are some questions planned for each level.

Intro/ elementary

What's your name?
How do you spell your name / last name?
Where are you from?

Basic

21. How many times did you brush your teeth yesterday?
22. What did you read last weekend?
23. Who did you talk with last night?

Pre-intermediate

1. When you were a kid, did you use to collect stamps?
2. Tell me about your wishes, what things do you wish you could do
3. Have you ever eaten any exotic dish?
4. Have you ever been to a foreign country? Where?

Intermediate

1. How do you consider yourself?
2. Do you like when people are direct, straight forward, honest?

Post- intermediate

Discussion

Discuss with the student some of the next topics:

If young couples want to get married, they must first get the permission of their parents
Students ought to be able to choose all their own courses. They learn best when they study things that interest them.

From intro to intermediate level what we see are just isolated questions. It is not a conversation. The reason for this could be the time, since we have to take into account that sometimes the groups taking the exam are formed by 700 students and interact with all of them could take a lot of time. Only the post intermediate level there is a discussion in which the student seemed to interact more with the teacher. The difficulty of the questions is on the knowledge of vocabulary and well grammar- constructed answers. Only at the last level there is a kind of interaction student/proctor. The responsible of the placement test at CEI explained that the test is individually and

students are moved to the next level if they are able to understand and answer the question of the previous one. Speaking is graded based on the following table:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Communication: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Fluency: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Vocabulary and grammar | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Pronunciation: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Source: Exubic from the CEI, 2007.

The table shows that the areas evaluated are Communication, Fluency, Vocabulary and Grammar, and Pronunciation. However, we wonder how can communication be evaluated if there are no interactive or communicative elements in the oral test? It is just an interview that does not have more purpose than see if students have enough knowledge about language structures and vocabulary to answer them.

According to Weir (1993), it is important to follow a method to grade students. Teachers cannot only decide how many points to give a student just by their experience. It would be good to have something that describes what deserves a 1 or a 2 grade. The point here is that the grading should be more objective and not be subject to a proctor's decision in a specific time.

The big picture of the CEI placement test shows that it has in effect many communicative elements, as for example the covering of the four skills and the two sub-skills. However, it has some elements that do not correspond to this approach such as the lack of skills integration, the grammar-based questions of the Use of Language and the lack of interaction in the speaking section.

In general terms, it could be said that the CEI placement test is mainly communicative since in most of the skills and sub-skills we find communicative elements but it still has important characteristics of the grammar translation method .

4.5 CONTRASTING THE PLACEMENT TEST AND THE TEACHING OF T1, T2 AND T3

First, we found out that the method used by T1 at CBTis is almost 100% a Grammar Translation Method. The teaching of T1 was easily identified as most of the method or

approach elements correspond to the GTM. Consequently, if students from this school took the CEI placement test, they would not be placed in a higher level since they are not able to perform in all the skills. As we remember, students taking the CEI placement test have to pass all the sections (skills) in order to pass a level and be moved to the next one. Then, if we take into account the analysis of T1 teaching at CBTis that shows that students are taught grammar only, we can predict that those students will probably do well in the Use of English, but they are likely to fail the other skills as they are not trained in speaking, listening, reading or writing.

Second, T2's teaching at CONALEP shows a tendency towards the audiolingual method (the intention to make students speak in a grammatical correct way, the use and repetition of dialogs, the practice through drills, the emphasis on speaking and grammar). Nonetheless, it also has characteristics of the Grammar Translation Method (such as the importance given to grammar structures and the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, translation exercises). Interestingly, there were also some communicative elements like attempts to teach and improve speaking taking into account the social context, which does not correspond to the principles of the Grammatical Method; the teaching of the other skills was limited, however.

Consequently, the group of learners studied from CONALEP might do well in the speaking and grammar sections of the CEI placement test achieving at least a basic level. However, in the other skills (listening, reading and writing) probably their knowledge would not be enough to reach even a basic level. Again, considering the factor that in order for the students to pass a level they must obtain a passing grade of seven in **all** the language skills), we can predict that students under study from CONALEP would not be placed in a level higher than basic.

Third, the English teaching method preferred by T3 at COBACH is the audiolingual method. The key factors we took into account for this assumption were the use of drills to teach grammar and the language lab. However, it was found that it has important communicative elements (more than the one of the CONALEP teaching) and good attempts to develop the other skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Students from this school have a basic knowledge of how each skill works under a communicative framework. Even though there is still a tendency to teach mainly grammar, they have some knowledge about the other skills. That means that some of

them could be placed at least in a basic level because could complete and pass each one of the sections included in the CEI placement test. Besides that, the kind of activities they do in their books (which is the most used tool for teaching) showed to be communicative which implies that coincide with the kind of activities included in the placement test.

Fourth, as mentioned in the interview, the CEI English placement test is designed mainly on the basis of a communicative approach. However, there are some areas such as speaking and use of language that could be improved to make it more communicative. For example, in the speaking section, through the interview we notice that the interaction student-teacher seems to be limited, and as the Coordinator of the test explained, there are even some parts of the interview that are like a monologue because there is no interaction. Although this could be a matter of time which is beyond teachers' possibilities, what is a fact is that an important factor highlighted by the Communicative Approach is the interaction in communicative encounters. Furthermore, on the table/rubric used to evaluate students, the category *communication* is taken into account and we wonder how this is evaluated since there is no a description or a band to base the grade, and if interaction is absent in the interview.

As for the use of language, we found out that almost all the questions lack communicative elements. There are no functional, social elements or non linguistic knowledge involved in the questions which could give to this section more communicative characteristics.

Fifth, as it becomes evident, none of the teaching methods used at high school coincides 100% with the one reflected on the CEI placement test. The most important limitation for students is with regard to the skills included. Our two groups of learners under study from CBTis and CONALEP are not taught all the skills and this is determinant to pass the levels on the CEI placement test. In those terms, we can assume that if T1 and T2' students from CBTIS and CONALEP took the test now, the great majority would be placed in an introductory or elemental level since their knowledge is limited to some skills. COBACH students taught by T3 seem to be more benefited in this aspect because they are able to perform in all the skills at least in a basic level. However, as their knowledge on some skills is not emphasized, we could assume that if they took the exam at this moment, they could be placed in a basic level. That would also depend on

their personal achievements of the English course at high school.

With the research findings we can predict that none of the high school groups analyzed will be able to be placed in a pre-intermediate, intermediate or post intermediate level. Even though they were be able to perform well in one or two skills, they would not pass the level since we know that they must pass the five sections, and as we explained before, in none of the three schools the four skills and the two sub-skills are given the importance and time enough to practice. In fact, in the groups from CBTis and CONALEP there are skills (listening and reading at CBTis and reading and writing at CONALEP) that are not even included. Let us finish with the following comparative table to make the differences clearer.

| | METHOD PREFERRED | SKILLS/SUBSKILLS EMPHASIZED | EVALUATION |
|--------------------|---|--|---|
| CBTIS 253 | Grammar Translation Method/Audiolingual method | Grammar Vocabulary | All the skills included are averaged; students do not need pass each one for separate to pass a course. |
| CONALEP | Audiolingual Method with emphasis on Speaking | Grammar Speaking | All the skills included are averaged; students do not need pass each one for separate to pass a course. |
| COBACH 2 | Communicative Approach with emphasis on Grammar | Grammar Speaking Reading Listening Writing Vocabulary | All the skills included are averaged; students do not need pass each one for separate to pass a course. |
| CEI PLACEMENT TEST | Communicative Approach | Listening Reading Speaking Writing Grammar Vocabulary | Per skill average (pass each skill is necessary to be moved to the next level) |

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Since our objective was to analyze the teaching of EFL at some classes from high schools in Chetumal and contrast it with the method implied in the CEI placement test, this study has shown that there are actually incongruities and gaps between the teaching methods used at high schools and the one reflected on the CEI placement test.

The three groups under study showed particular English teaching elements which affect directly the students learning. In the first two groups from CBTis and CONALEP we found a tendency for the Grammar Translation Method and the Audiolingual method, respectively. If we take into account that the English teaching subject is not a stationary process and that should always take into account the improvements done in this area, we could say that our findings show that this process of continuous development does not seem to be reflected on the groups under study. There is backwardness in T1 and T2 teaching, because of different factors we have already mentioned, that is reflected on the students' development. In this case we compared the teaching with the Communicative Approach followed at CEI-UQROO, but we should not forget that even this approach has new discoveries and improvements. Then, if in some schools the Grammar Translation Method is still the means for English teaching, we can imagine how behind students are from the new tendencies and trends in learning English. We do not know if these are better or worse, but some of them at least seem to involve more communication, which has become a need for all people nowadays.

In COBACH we found that the Communicative Approach is in fact the one followed on the syllabus, which means that should be used for teaching. The book (which was completely communicative), and the teaching itself showed that, in effect, communication is given importance. In these terms, COBACH students seemed to be better prepared to use the English language. There is, therefore, an important progress on the group from COBACH, their teaching is more updated which means that they are in a continuous process which is very important in any area of life.

In all the groups we found out important factors that could be limitations for English teaching: time and class size. These facts are not decided by the English teachers but we are sure that are the cause of many of the decisions they make to teach students. As we know, English teaching is a very difficult area in which sometimes we depend on external decisions that, we wanted or not, affect the course of our actions.

It is very sad, but it is true that even though public high school students spend at least five years learning English, most of them would not be able to be placed in at least a basic level of English at the CEI. Let us summarize our findings and enlist some important facts:

1. In the three groups under study we found important differences between what the syllabi objectives state and what students are actually taught at English classes. Through the research we noticed that there are some factors that prevent to reach the objectives, but in general time seems to be one of the main ones.
2. It seems that the syllabi objectives are very ambitious but the teaching method and/or conditions are not the most ideal to reach the planned objectives. Probably the designers do not consider factors such as time and class size which could be interfering on the students' achievement, as the time allotted for the English classes seems not enough and the classes are usually very large.
3. There is a gap between what students are taught at high schools and what they are tested through the CEI placement test. The high school objectives do not coincide 100% with the ones from the CEI-UQROO. These differences identified in the methods used in each institution shed some light on the possible reasons why students are placed at Intro or very low levels in the CEI placement test.
4. There are no links between the high schools and higher education. None of them know about the objectives or purposes of the other. There is no a collaboration relationship between the institution which could be helpful to benefit the students.

My humble opinion is that English courses at high schools should be given more importance as there is a lot to do about it, from the redesign of programs to the continuous evaluation of how the courses are doing in the schools. There is not point at designing a syllabus and selecting a book if at the end they are not going to be used appropriately. For this, a needs analysis is a must in order to identify the students' needs, Mexico and the whole world demands, the real conditions, and so on.

The CEI placement test from the UQROO should be also subject of revision and analysis to try finding always something to improve. Furthermore, the CEI should count

with a data base about the students taking the English placement test which could be helpful for further research.

Finally, I hope this research will be useful to do further investigation. This is just a starting point in a subject of great importance. It will be very useful that more people know about this problem and try to find solutions. Experimental research could complement this research, for example. In this way we could corroborate and go further in order to find solutions to the problems of English language teaching. What you read here is the first step of a very long way. Do not stop here. We have to continue researching and informing people that we have a problem that must be solved.

APENDIX

Interview to the responsible of the CEI placement test

1. What is the CEI Placement Test about?
2. Which skills are included in the CEI Placement Test?
3. How much time is given for each skill?
4. How many questions are included per skill?
5. Who is/are the Placement Test designer (s)?
6. Do you make a revision of the exam? Who is in charge to do it? Is there any committee?
7. Where are the questions taken from?
8. Do you have a *Banco de reactivos*? From which books are the questions taken from ? (authors)
9. How often do you update the Placement Test?
10. Do you try to keep the same pattern? How different is one version to another?
11. Is the exam divided into levels? Is it an *all-round* exam?
12. Are all skills evaluated or included in each level?
13. How do you evaluate the listening skill? Is it individual/ in group?
14. How do you evaluate speaking? How many teachers participate? Is it individual /in pairs?
15. What kind of tasks are performed in:
 - Reading
 - Writing
 - Listening
 - Speaking
16. What kind of method do you use to evaluate/ grade students? Is it holistic, atomist or...?
17. Do you use any kind of rubric?
18. Who is in charge to grade students?
19. What are the statistics of the placement test? Do you know them?
20. Do you have information about the school of origin of the students?
21. What kind of methods and books are used to teach at the SAC?
22. We know you are working in a new version of the Placement test? Why is it? How different is going to be?

Interview protocol (for high school teachers)

School: _____ **Level:** _____

1. Which bibliography do you use?
2. Do you use other books to complement the bibliography?
3. Does the system select the bibliography?
4. Which method do you use to teach English in your classroom?
5. Does the system tell you which method you have to use?
6. Which language do you prefer students to use, why?
7. Which language do you use with your students regularly?
8. Which skills are included in the syllabus?
9. Are any of these skills emphasized? In which level?
10. Can you tell me how a common class is?
11. How do you teach reading?
12. How do you teach listening?
13. How do you teach speaking?
14. How do you teach writing?
15. How do you teach grammar and vocabulary?
16. Do your students actually speak in English or Spanish?
17. How do you motivate your students?
18. What is the students' attitude towards the English learning?
19. How do you evaluate students? Exam, Projects, presentations, homework, etc.
20. How often do you evaluate students?
21. Do you include an oral evaluation?
22. What about a listening evaluation?
23. How do you get students' final grade?

Observation guide

| Aspect | | | Comments | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|---------|-------------------|---|
| Method preferred | | | | |
| Language used | English | Spanish | Directions | % |
| | English | Spanish | Misunderstandings | |
| | English | Spanish | Other | |
| Connection to previous lesson(review) | Yes | No | | |
| Examples/ modeling | Yes | No | | |
| Check for understanding | Yes | No | | |
| Monitoring | Yes | No | | |
| Variety of activities | Yes | No | | |
| Skills developed | | | | |
| Speaking | Yes | No | Role play | |
| | | | Presentations | |
| | | | Debates | |
| | | | Dialogue | |
| | | | Conversation | |
| | | | Other | |
| Reading | Yes | No | Aloud | |
| | | | Silence | |
| | | | Specific purpose | |
| | | | Other | |
| Writing | Yes | No | Correction | |
| | | | Feedback | |
| | | | Other | |
| Listening | Yes | No | Cd/ type | |
| | | | Voice | |
| Vocabulary | Yes | No | Copy | |
| | | | Memorization | |
| | | | Dictation | |
| | | | Other | |
| Grammar | Yes | No | Inductive | |
| | | | Deductive | |
| | | | Other | |
| Pronunciation | Yes | No | How | |
| Use of dictionary | Yes | No | When? | |
| Overcorrection/error | Yes | No | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----|----|--------------------|
| correction | | | |
| Use the chalkboard? | Yes | No | |
| Ss use the chalkboard? (Purpose) | yes | no | |
| Motivation (when) | Yes | No | |
| Book work | Yes | no | % |
| Individual work | Yes | No | Kind of activities |
| Pair/group work | Yes | no | Kind of activities |
| Lesson, flexible? | Yes | no | % |
| Extra-material | Yes | No | Charts |
| | | | Pictures |
| | | | Colors |
| | | | Songs |
| | | | Internet |
| | | | Extra readings |
| | | | Games |
| | | | Music |
| Homework | Yes | No | % |
| Daily evaluation | Yes | No | How? |
| Encourage communication | Yes | No | % |
| Concern about students 'performance | Yes | No | % |

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