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### Students' Oral Production Outcomes: Exploring Task-Based Oral Activities in an Additional Language Learning Context

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## **Abstract**

The present study explores students' oral production outcomes by comparing a closed and guided task-based activity and an open task-based one in an additional language learning context. In order to achieve such goal, real data from first-year students of *Batxillerat* at IES Forat del Vent's high school in Barcelona was extracted for the present study. Students performed two types of task-based activities, based on Willis (1996) major core goals, which were later compared and contrasted with learners' and teacher's perceptions on TBL. Real samples of data were collected and later analysed from 16 audio-recordings within three sessions, 23 perception questionnaires and the teacher's interview. Results revealed that students' English oral production was really improved through a more specific and guided task-based activity, although they prefer to rely on an open task-based one. For this reason, there is an urgent need to raise awareness of the importance of the implementation of TB activities among ELT teachers.

**Keywords:** Task-Based Activities, Task-Based Learning, Oral Production Outcomes

## Resum

El present estudi explora els resultats de la producció oral dels estudiants mitjançant la comparació d'una activitat basada en una tasca guiada i una tasca oberta en un context d'aprenentatge de llengua addicional. Per tal d'assolir aquest objectiu, es van extreure dades reals dels alumnes de primer curs de Batxillerat de l'IES Forat del Vent a Barcelona. Els estudiants van realitzar dos tipus d'activitats basades en els objectius principals de Willis (1996), que posteriorment es van comparar i contrastar amb les percepcions dels alumnes i del professor sobre l'aprenentatge basat en tasques. Es van recollir mostres reals de dades i es van analitzar posteriorment a partir de 16 àudio enregistraments extrets de tres sessions, 23 qüestionaris de percepció i una entrevista al professor. Els resultats van revelar que la producció oral anglesa dels estudiants es va millorar realment mitjançant una activitat basada en tasques més específica i guiada, tot i que els estudiants prefereixen confiar en una tasca oberta. Per aquest motiu, és urgent conscienciar sobre la importància de la implementació de les activitats d'enfocament basat en tasques entre els professors d'anglès.

**Paraules Clau:** Activitats Basades en Tasques, Aprenentatge Basat en Tasques, Resultats de Producció Oral

## Resumen

El presente estudio explora los resultados de la producción oral de los estudiantes mediante la comparación de una actividad basada en una tarea guiada y una tarea abierta en un contexto de aprendizaje de lengua adicional. Para poder lograr este objetivo, se extrajeron datos reales de los alumnos de primer curso de Bachillerato del IES Forat del Vent en Barcelona. Los estudiantes realizaron dos tipos de actividades basadas en tareas, centradas en los principales objetivos de Willis (1996), que posteriormente se compararon y contrastaron con las percepciones de los alumnos y del docente sobre el aprendizaje basado en tareas. Se recogieron muestras reales de datos y se analizaron posteriormente a partir de 16 grabaciones de audio extraídas de tres sesiones, 23 cuestionarios de percepción y una entrevista al profesor. Los resultados revelaron que la producción oral inglesa de los estudiantes se mejoró realmente mediante una actividad basada en tareas más específica y guiada, aunque prefieren confiar en una tarea abierta. Por este motivo, es urgente concienciar sobre la importancia de la implementación de las actividades de enfoque basado en tareas entre los profesores de inglés.

**Palabras Clave:** Actividades Basadas en Tareas, Aprendizaje Basado en Tareas, Resultados de Producción Oral

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# 1. Introduction

As the process of an Additional Language Acquisition (ALA) has been one of the main concerns in education, many studies have proved that students' oral production in an Additional Language (AL) context could be achieved by means of instruction and exposure. Taking two oral task-based activities as the target of instruction, Peña & Onatra (2009) state that "Task-Based Learning (TBL) highlights the instrumental value of language. Under this approach, activities have a perceived purpose and a clear outcome." Considering Peña and Onatra's statement, the present paper seeks to analyse students' oral production by comparing a closed task-based activity and an open task-based one based on Willis (1996) major core goals in order to fully explore learners' oral output in an Additional Language (AL) context.

Over the last years, several studies from different authors around the world have been concerned about the effectiveness of task-based learning. Yet, from them, there are only few studies carried out in Spain and more concretely, in the multilingual community of Catalonia. Consequently, there is an urgent need to explore task-based oral activities in an English as an AL context. Up to this point, many English Language Teaching (ELT) teachers should be able to provide students with useful task-based activities in the target language. For this reason, and although the present study is not focused on students' L1 usage, it is still necessary to explore students' oral output in the TL through the task-based approach.

The process of L1 oral acquisition is almost natural, whereas in an additional language context, students' oral production may contain errors and inappropriate uses. Since 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat* students have been exposed to English instruction for many years, this study aims to focus on the impacts of performing task-based oral activities in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context and how these results can be related to students' and the teacher's main perceptions when performing task-based activities.

Since the vast majority of the participants are Catalan and Spanish native speakers, the present research is needed in order to investigate if students have acquired fluency in their AL oral performances. Furthermore, learners' main perceptions are also taken into account, as it is relevant to fully explore the effectiveness of task-based oral activities. Real data is extracted by means of audio recordings (4-5 min per group) and it is analysed in terms of utterance percentages in the Additional Language (AL) oral production. The utterances' analysis provides a general idea of the circumstances in which students may be more or less fluent in task-based activities and the reasons for it.

The present study is divided into seven main sections. In section 2, the main research questions, hypotheses and objectives are presented in detail. A theoretical framework is provided in section 3, which is divided into two subsections. The first one deals with a general and descriptive approach on task-based learning, and the second one corresponds to the previous studies on the task-based approach. In section 4, the methodology used in the present study is presented in detail. Afterwards, the results and discussion of the present study are drawn in sections 5 and 6. After that, the conclusions of the descriptive research are provided in section 7. Finally, both the list of all the references used in the present study and the annexes can be found in sections 8 and 9 respectively.



## **2. Research Questions, Hypotheses and Objectives**

The main educational purpose of this study is to analyse students' English oral production through task-based activities in order to enhance students' oral output in the target language. Thus, the research questions of this paper are:

1. Is English oral production really improved through a more specific and guided task-based activity or through a less specific task-based one?
2. What are the main students' perceptions when performing task-based activities?

Two main hypotheses are extremely considered in the present study. Firstly, a closed task-based activity would enhance their fluency due to the fact that closed tasks have a specific goal, whereas an open task-based one would challenge students' fluency and accuracy in their oral output. Secondly, students' main perceptions regarding both tasks will be positive only for the guided one, as learners will be completely involved when performing the task. Furthermore, students will make few errors in English oral production due to the fact that they have been exposed to English throughout the years. However, the reasons which might lead participants to use the L1 or not may vary significantly among learners. Depending on the students' proficiency in the AL, some instances of the L1 will arise due to many possible aspects, such as comprehension misunderstandings. Considering the previous research questions and hypotheses, the present study is focused on the following specific objectives:

1. To explore students' oral production through oral task-based activities.
2. To consider students' main perceptions and concerns about their English oral production in task-based activities.
3. To design and implement task-based activities.
4. To compare a guided task-based activity and a less specific task-based one.
5. To analyse students' oral production outcomes and their main perceptions in an EAL learning context.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand the process of students' oral production in an ESL context based on task-based activities, previous research on the topic will be discussed and analysed in the theoretical framework section. This section is divided into two main subsections; (3.1) a general and descriptive approach on the Task-Based Teaching (TBL) and (3.2) previous research on task-based activities.

#### **3.1. The Task-Based Approach: A General Overview**

Dealing with an Additional Language may be a very demanding task for both students and teachers. Given the fact that the process of learning an AL might be different for each individual because of their different needs, it is not difficult to imagine that teachers should aim to adapt to their students in the way they can. According to Willis (1996), there are three conditions in which the acquisition of a L2 or AL takes place: exposure, use and motivation in the target language.

Traditional teaching methods and practices are being set aside by innovative teaching methods. Over the last years, the grammar-translation method was the predominant method among teachers and consisted of a set of grammar rules, vocabulary lists and translation activities found in textbooks (Brandl, 2008). Since there was an urgent need to improve students' oral output in the target language, new teaching practices, such as the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Teaching (TBT), have increased its popularity among teachers.

According to Sánchez (2004), TBA, also known as Task-Based Learning (TBL), Task-Based Teaching (TBT) and Task-Based Instruction (TBI), is a branch of CLT and has its origins in the early 80s. The task-based approach was based on the 'Bangalore project' (the Communicational Language Teaching Project), which put special emphasis on meaning rather than form and content. Sánchez states that "the project aimed at improving the SOS ('Situational Oral Approach') and the emphasis lay on competence and communication" (2004, p.41).

During the past few years, TBA has been a recurrent topic among researchers and several studies have been carried out in order to fully explore task-based learning. A definition of task has been provided by Prahbu (1987) in Sánchez (2004, p.41) as a “special kind of activities carried out in the classroom” and by Ellis (2003, p.3) as “tasks are activities that call for primarily meaning-focused language use”. Nevertheless, exercises have been described as “an activity in which there is no communicative purpose”. (Littlewood, 2004, cited in Ellis, 2009, p.321). Hence, Ellis (2009) highlights that a classroom activity must be considered a ‘task’ if it is based on the following criteria:

- 1) The primary focus should be on ‘meaning’ (by which is meant that learners should be mainly concerned with processing the semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances).
- 2) There should be some kind of ‘gap’ (i.e. a need to convey information, to express an opinion or to infer meaning).
- 3) Learners should largely have to rely on their own resources (linguistic and non-linguistic) in order to complete the activity.
- 4) There is a clearly defined outcome other than the use of language (i.e. the language serves as the means for achieving the outcome, not as an end in its own right).

(Ellis 2009, p.223)

According to Estaire & Zanón (1994), tasks can be divided into communication tasks and enabling tasks. The former involves the learner into the target language’s comprehension, production and oral interaction and its main focus is on meaning rather than form. By contrast, the latter acts as a support for communication tasks, whose main purpose is to provide learners with the necessary tools to carry out the communication task. One of the most relevant authors regarding TBL is Willis (1996). Right on the first instances of his work, the author provides the classification of six types of tasks within TBL, summarized in:

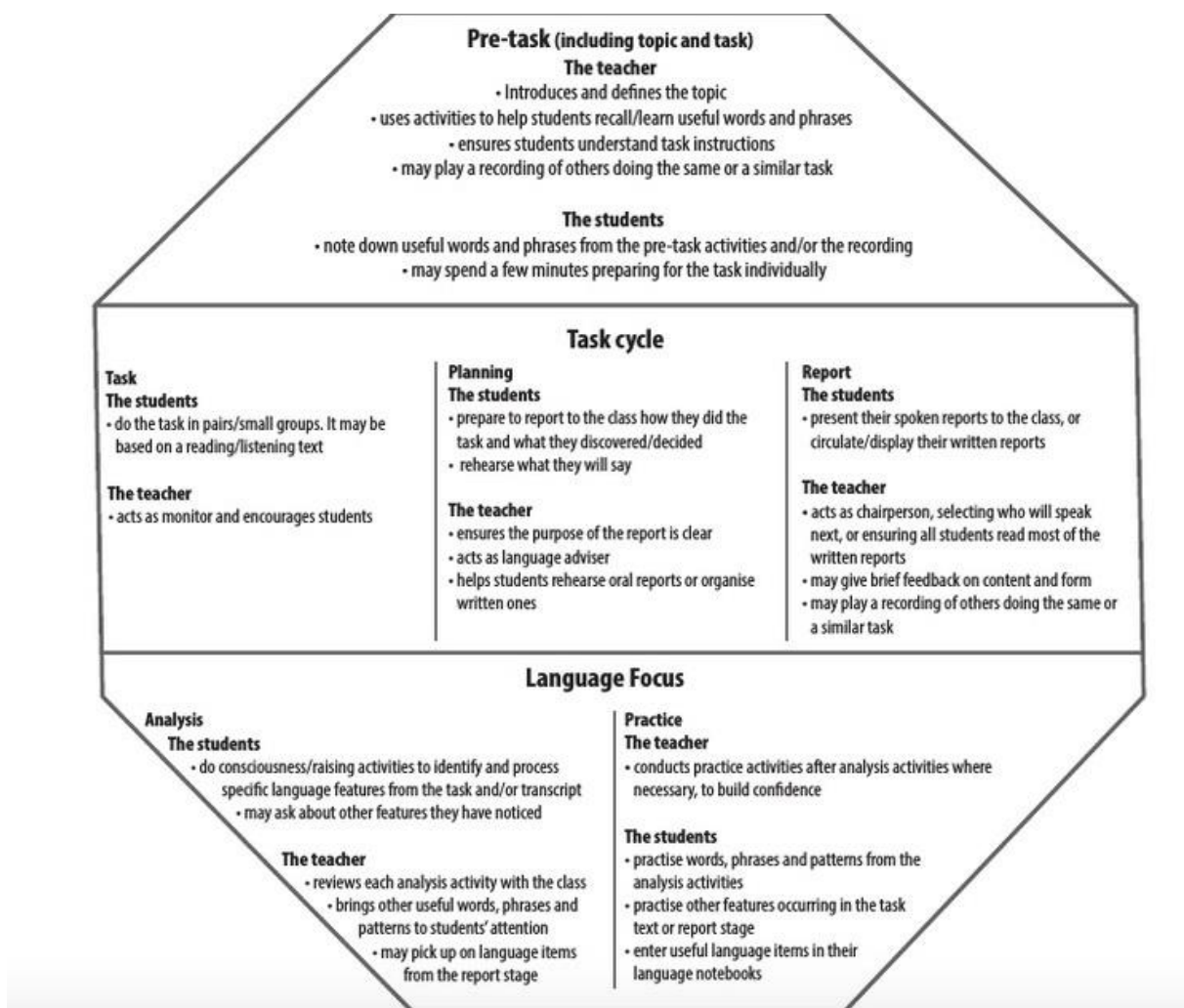
- 1) **Listing:** Completed list or draft mind map. Listing may be unimaginative, but in practice, listing tasks tend to generate a lot of talk as learners explain their ideas. The processes involved are brainstorming, in which learners draw on their own knowledge; and fin-finding, in which learners find things out by asking each other or other people.

- 2) **Ordering and sorting:** Set of information or data that has been ordered and sorted according to specified criteria. These tasks involved four main processes: sequencing items, ranking items, categorising items and classifying items.
- 3) **Comparing:** Vary according to the individual task goals, but could be the items appropriately matched or assembled, or the identification of similarities and/or differences. ‘Spot the differences’ between two pictures, two story endings, two accounts of the same difference.
- 4) **Problem solving:** Solution(s) to the problem, which can be evaluated. Analysing real or hypothetical situations, reasoning and decision making. Problem-solving tasks demands upon people’s intellectual and reasoning powers and, though challenging, they are engaging and often satisfying to solve.
- 5) **Sharing personal experiences:** Narrating, describing, exploring and explaining attitudes, opinions, reactions. The resulting interaction is closer to casual social conversation. Sharing personal experiences is something we do very often in daily life: we may simply be passing the time of day, being sociable during other task types. Since it is so common outside the classroom, sharing personal experiences should be encouraged.
- 6) **Creative tasks:** End product which can be appreciated by a wider audience. Creative tasks tend to have more stages than the usual classroom tasks. They can involve out-of-class research and are often referred to as ‘projects’.

Given the fact that the main goal of TBA is to reach a natural language learning context in order to avoid the systematic and traditional one, social interaction is highly considered by authors like Richards & Rodgers (2001), Robinson (2001) and Nunan (2004). Real communication interaction is the basis of the communicative purpose and thus, daily life situations encourage students’ oral production in the target language. For this reason, the main goal of this descriptive research is to design and implement two different task-based activities based on what Ellis (2009) refers as ‘unfocused’ and ‘focused’ tasks:

Tasks can be ‘unfocused’ or ‘focused’. Unfocused tasks are tasks designed to provide learners with opportunities for using language in general communicatively. Focused tasks are tasks designed to provide opportunities for communicating using some specific linguistic feature (typically a grammatical structure). [...] For this reason, the target linguistic feature of a focused task is ‘hidden’. (Ellis, 2009, p.223)

Notwithstanding, Ellis’ (2009) idea of ‘focused’ and ‘unfocused’ tasks was based on Willis (1996) ‘closed’ and ‘open’ tasks. The author claims that the former one is highly “structured and has very specific goals”, whereas the latter is “more loosely structured, with a less specific goal”. The main hypothesis stated by Willis (1996) is that, in general terms, students are more involved in tasks which have a clear objective. Besides, the author goes beyond this main idea and proposes the structural framework of TBL shown in table 1 (Willis, 1996, p.155).



**Table 1.** Overview of the TBL Framework

As it can be observed in table 1, the pre-task phase introduces the topic, useful phrases and words that students may use during the task cycle. Within the task cycle, learners are encouraged to perform the task by using the target language in order to improve and enhance language learning. The three conditions mentioned by the author in the very first part of this section –exposure, use and motivation– take place in this part of the cycle. Last but not least, the final step of the TBL framework is language focus. There is an analysis of the performed task, in which learners will have already worked with the target language.

In order to get a better understanding of TBL, Willis (1996) provided real data in two of the six types of task-based activities. An open task activity and a closed task-based one were carried out by elementary native-speakers. In the first one, subjects had to compare experiences of sea journeys, whereas in the second one, they had to play a ‘Spot the difference’ game co-operatively. Among all the data that he collected from the transcriptions, the author found significant features, which are deeply explained below. Overall, the conclusions drawn from the experiment were that students had a better oral production outcome on the closed-task based activity.

1. Evidence of real-time composing, e.g. unfinished utterances, back-tracking, repetition, use of: *erm, er...*
2. Linking devices and signal words that mark stages in the discourse, e.g. *right, so, in fact, but...*
3. Follow-up words, e.g. *Yeah, Oh, Mm, Okay...*
4. Final evaluation. Stories and anecdotes, both written and spoken, normally end with an evaluative comment, e.g. *Oh, terrible.*
5. Phrases with no subject, e.g. *Not on a long journey, no.*
6. Questions without verbs, e.g. *Okay? What number?*
7. Lexical phrases that seem to be whole units, e.g. *in fact, on the way back, me and the rest of my family, spread like the plague.*

(Willis, 1996, p.32)

Note that the main purpose of the present study is not to carry out the TBL framework above, but rather to design and implement two task-based activities within a limited period of time in an EAL context, as Willis’ (1996) example above. Consequently, the comparison of task-based activities will shed light on the understanding of additional language oral production and the effectiveness of task-based activities.

### **3.2. Previous Research on the Task-Based Approach**

In order to synthesize all the information provided in the previous section, Peña & Onatra (2009) thesis is crucial to the present paper, since the main focus of their research was to analyse the implementation of task-based oral activities through the TBL framework provided above by Willis (1996). The authors asked 16 seventh grade English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Colombia whose L1 was Spanish. Subjects were divided into four experimental groups and were provided with codified numbers in order to protect their identities and organize data more easily.

The experiment consisted of carrying out a set of oral task-based activities in order to encourage students' oral production. Some of the oral activities were focused on interaction with peers through conversations, interviews and dialogues, whereas the other ones were focused on individual presentations based on their interests. The data was collected by means of audio recordings, field notes and proformas along the 9 months of duration. The results revealed significant differences among the transactional and interactional activities. Peña & Onatra (2009) divided the patterns of students' oral output into three categories according to the phenomena they had observed. The first one is students' mistakes as an encouragement to the learning process. The second one deals with the strategies used by subjects in order to continue with the oral task. The third one provides external elements –related to their social character– implied in students' oral presentations.

Peña & Onatra (2009) concluded that learners were more confident when talking to others about their main interests in their oral presentations, whereas they were more anxious when performing the interview task. Furthermore, subjects borrowed patterns from their mother tongue, made use of word invention and combined both English and Spanish utterances. Although both authors affirm that getting learners to speak is a very demanding task due to several elements regarding students' oral proficiency, they state that such process is also rewarding when they are provided with a confident learning environment. For this reason, students should learn how to deal with oral production mistakes and drawbacks in order to continue with the fulfilment of a task.

Kasap (2005) and Hadi (2013) were interested in the effectiveness and perceptions of Task-Based Learning. The fact that both authors used questionnaires as the target of the experiment for their research is relevant for the present study, since they provided a better understanding of students' perceptions and beliefs towards TBA. Kasap (2005) mainly focused on the improvement of oral task-based activities as well as student and teacher's main perceptions in order to foster a positive learning environment.

According to Kasap (2005), "Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) had many methodological offspring which attempted to shape the principles of CLT into more specific teaching practices". For this reason, the researcher considered important to carry out a study based on TBL in improving students' oral skills since, together with CLT, TBL was one of the newest teaching approaches in the field. Kasap (2005)'s study involved one English teacher working at Anadolu University School of Foreign Languages (AUSFL) and 45 lower-intermediate level students. Subjects were divided in two classes of 25 and 20 students each.

The data was gathered through pre- and post-interviews to the teacher, pre- and post-tests to intermediate level students and final questionnaires. Tests were carried out to compare the improvement of both groups by taking students' interests into consideration. The results showed that, after having analysed all the previous data, students had positive perceptions towards TBL. Furthermore, the interview with the English teacher provided a positive belief on TBL. Consequently, Kasap (2005)'s study demonstrates that this study provided a better understanding on the adaptation of some task-based activities in the usual textbook in order to engage learners into an active oral practice of the target language while improving their speaking skills.

Hadi's (2013) study mainly focused on students' perceptions of Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The participants of her research were 88 monolingual speakers of Persian tested in Iran, whose main additional language was English. Participants were female learners studying at the Kish Language Institute (Iran) and were chosen randomly among pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced levels.



The author carried out a survey based on task-based questionnaires to examine the amount of knowledge regarding the implementation of TBLT. The perception questionnaire was based on some Likert-type statements and two open-ended questions. The results revealed that students had a high knowledge regarding the TBLT practices and positive views towards this approach. Yet some of them had negative perceptions towards the implementation of TBLT due to the fact that they did not have enough exposure on TBA:

For the learners who have not had much exposure to task-based learning, the most important reason why they avoided participating in task-based activities was that they did not find their teachers proficient enough in the target language. They believed their teachers did not have the necessary experience and mastery to implement TBLT. Moreover, most of the learners were not used to TBLT. They were accustomed to the traditional lecture-oriented methods and teacher-centred classrooms.

(Hadi, 2013, p.108)

Another study which will be taken into consideration is Abd El Fattah's (2006) doctoral dissertation. The research questions of the study required both qualitative and quantitative research since the author aimed to answer if a task-based instruction program designed in the light of the cognitive approach in developing secondary stage students' speaking skills would be effective or not. For this reason, the study aimed to identify the speaking skills necessary for first year secondary school students and provide the appropriate strategies for designing a task-based program in developing first year secondary students' overall speaking skill as well as speaking subskills.

Having in mind the aims of the study, two classes were randomly selected from Saray El Kobba (Cairo Governmental Secondary School). Subjects were divided in two groups: 38 students in the experimental group and 38 students in the control group. The experimental group received task-based instruction based on a designed task-based program, whereas students in the control group received regular instruction. Before carrying out the experiment, a pre-test and a post-test were given to both groups to study the effectiveness of the task-based program.

The results revealed that the task-based program carried out by the experimental group proved to be effective in enhancing students' oral output. The oral proficiency of each group was similar at the beginning of the study. Nonetheless, Abd El Fattah (2006) concluded that "there were statistically significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the post- test in overall speaking in favour of the experimental group" (2006, p.195).

All the previous authors are relevant for this piece of research since they all approached the main goal of the present study: the impacts of performing task-based oral activities in an EFL context and how these results can be related to students' and the teacher's main perceptions when performing task-based activities. Peña & Onatra (2009) and Abd El Fattah's (2006) studies have shown how Task-Based Instruction (TBI) has improved students' AL oral skills through a task-based program.

Although Kasap (2005) and Hadi (2013) did not implicitly carry out oral task-based activities as Peña & Onatra (2009) and Abd El Fattah (2006) did, their research put special emphasis on TBA's beliefs and perceptions, which are also relevant for the present study since all the participants are asked to express their beliefs and perceptions through a final questionnaire. Kasap (2005) and Hadi's (2013) results have shown that foreign language students have positive perceptions towards task-based learning and thus students have arisen awareness of their own language learning process.

## **4. Methodology**

The present section includes information about the method used, the contextualization of the participants, the main subjects involved in the study, the instruments used to gather the data collection and data analysis procedures. A deeper explanation of the chosen methodology is provided in order to give an answer to the research questions previously established.

## **4.1. Method**

As has been previously stated, the main aim of the present study was to gather clear evidences of the effectiveness of open and closed task-based activities concerning students' oral production. In order to do so, a mixed method containing both a quantitative and qualitative research is provided in the results section. Data from 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat* students from IES Forat del Vent will be extracted by means of two task-based activities and a questionnaire. The structure's analysis may provide a general idea of the context in which students may increase their English oral output when doing open or closed task-based activities.

Since the present study cannot be unfold within a teaching unit, the experiment has been designed and implemented in 3 sessions containing two task-based activities in an EFL context. The main idea was to implement and design Willis' (1996) TBL Framework explained in section 3.1. Nonetheless, it was not possible to carry out such framework due to the researcher and the students' schedules. For this reason, the two main tasks provided in the annex section are focused on the development of what Willis (1996) refers to as task cycle.

## **4.2. Contextualization**

In order to fully understand the framework where the present study develops, it is key to be acquainted with the context in which the participants are surrounded by. The high school IES Forat del Vent is a state school located in Cerdanyola del Vallès, a town near Barcelona. According to the School Education Plan of IES Forat del Vent (2015) –SEP in English, PEC in Spanish and Catalan– IES Forat del Vent was the first high school that existed in the town. The Centre's Linguistic Project (CLP) determines the use of the different languages that are present in the high school, being Catalan the language of instruction of the centre. Notwithstanding, the language most commonly used by the vast majority of the students is Spanish.

In general terms, the main additional language is English and the main goal is to achieve a B2 level in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001). Furthermore, the high school offers the possibility to study French as another additional language. The basic organizational strategy is the establishment of homogeneous groups of students according to the knowledge and mastery of the English language in all the courses of the ESO stage. By contrast, *Batxillerat* students are divided into heterogeneous groups, mainly formed by the class group.

The main aim of the introduction of the English language in IES Forat del Vent as an AL is to find that at the end of their schooling students can use at least one foreign language. Furthermore, teachers aim to design didactic units with special care to the use of English, which does not go to the detriment of the conceptual and procedural contents of each subject. In order to achieve such goals, the English department determines and controls the progressive introduction of English as a working language in all the different educational levels.

### **4.3. Participants**

A total number of 23 first of *Batxillerat* students of English as an Additional Language (EAL) context participated as subjects for the present study. The class group is made up of 26 students. However, at the very beginning of the study, a group of three students denied to participate in the experiment due to the fact that they did not want to be recorded. Subjects decided to take the technological baccalaureate before applying for their studies. They were all 16-17 aged Catalan and Spanish native speakers who mainly came from the same secondary school or from other high schools in the town which did not have continuity after the ESO stage. The minimum number of students per class was 15 and the maximum 30 per classroom.

Students were assumed to have acquired a First Certificate level by the end of their *Batxillerat* studies. Despite the fact that subjects were not English native speakers, first-year *Batxillerat* students have been exposed to English as an additional language in both elementary and secondary school by following the Spanish educational system's proposal: 3 hours per week.

Furthermore, some learners may have taken extra classes in a language school, together with short periods of time in some English-speaking countries and summer courses. Consequently, students' EFL level varied from lower to more advanced ones due to the fact that they have received a different amount of exposure to the target language.

The English teacher of 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat* is a Catalan and Spanish female teacher who graduated in English Studies 25 years ago and who, therefore, possessed an excellent knowledge of both the students' L1 and the target language. Her contribution was essential since her teaching practices were necessary to carry out the present study. According to the student's needs, each teacher follows his/her own teaching methodology. For this reason, the English teacher used Wetz's (2014) textbook as the main teaching tool since it was provided by the Catalan educational system.

#### **4.4. Instruments**

The material consisted of a closed task-based activity with some specific useful expressions that students had to use when performing the task, and an open task-based activity, based on what Willis (1996) refers as 'open' and 'closed' tasks. The main purpose of both activities was to analyse the effectiveness of both tasks in terms of fluency and interaction. The data was elicited by means of lesson recordings in small groups of three in order to analyse students' AL oral output. Students filled in an Informed Consent Form with all the information on how the study would be conducted, as their consent was required to record the sessions (see Annex A).

The task-based activities were extracted and adapted from Wetz's (2014) textbook. Since the coursebook is the main teaching tool in the classroom, the tasks were focused on unit 5, concerning the topic of *Behaviour*. The closed task-based activity was based on Willis' (1996) type of task, which consisted on comparing and contrasting the photos in order to find all the possible similarities and differences by using some useful expressions (see Annex B).

By contrast, the open task-based activity, also based on Willis (1996)'s type of tasks, consisted of sharing personal experiences regarding a bad experience they had with someone who was impolite to them, without using any useful expressions (see Annex C). Both task-based activities were distributed to students in a printed copy by the researcher.

In order to analyse student's oral performances, the main instrument used in the study were the audio recordings obtained from the students' performances (see Annex G). Only the relevant transcriptions for the analysis of the results were extracted from the recordings, since there were 16 audio files divided into 8 groups and tasks. Besides, a proforma's template was extracted and adapted from Peña & Onatra's (2009) study. Such tool served as a support to gather the selected data and considered the aspects of pronunciation, fluency and the performance of the groups as a whole when analysing the recordings (see Annex D).

A perception questionnaire was extracted and adapted from Hadi's (2013) study in order to get clear evidences of their main perceptions and beliefs about both task-based activities (see Annex E). The perception questionnaire also reflected the importance of AL oral production in general terms. Finally, an interview with a total number of 6 questions was provided to the teacher in order to get her perception towards the implementation of TBT (see Annex F).

#### **4.5. Procedure and Data Analysis**

The two task-based activities performed by students determined their fluency, accuracy and interaction on the AL oral production. Therefore, the purpose of these activities was to appreciate if the comparison between a closed task-based activity and an open task-based one would enhance students' oral output in an AL context. Both a quantitative and a qualitative data analysis were carried out in order to provide evidence of students' oral performances and students' perceptions on open and closed task-based activities. The implementation of the main tasks, the proformas, the students' perception questionnaires and the teacher's interview followed the main competences and key contents provided by the Catalan Curriculum (2008) based on the involved in table 2.

The research started on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2018 and finished on April 20<sup>th</sup> 2018. The teacher's interview took place after the experiment, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May. Since there were 23 participants, students formed small groups of 3 and one group of 2. Participants formed a total number of 8 groups and each task was audio recorded in a single file, that is, one audio file for task A and one audio file for task B, making a total number of 16 audio recordings. Therefore, the performance of both tasks lasted 3 hours within a week divided into 3 sessions. Note that the action is repeated throughout the whole sessions with more than one group within 5–10' per task.

<b>Area:</b> English	<b>Unit:</b> <i>5. Behaviour</i>	<b>Timing:</b> <i>3 sessions</i>	<b>Class:</b> <i>1<sup>st</sup> of Batxillerat</i>	<b>Academic Year:</b> 2017-2018 <i>(3rd term)</i>	<b>Researcher:</b> Sara
Dimensions and specific competences			Specific Learning Objectives		
Oral communicative dimension C1. Get information and interpret oral texts C2. Plan and produce diverse oral texts adequate to communicative situation. C3. Use oral interaction strategies to communicate.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ To explore oral production through oral task-based activities.</li> <li>✓ To perform a closed task-based activity and an open task-based one.</li> <li>✓ To describe and compare two photos.</li> <li>✓ To talk about personal experiences.</li> </ul>		
Key Contents			Diversity		
CC2. Oral comprehension strategies CC3. Speaking strategies CC9. Search and management of information CC.10. Selection of the information criteria CC.12. Adequacy, coherence and cohesion CC.15. Creative production			Attention to diversity will be taken into account when giving materials, tasks and instructions in order to accommodate all students' capacities. Groups will be formed according to students' preferences within the class group.		

Session	Tasks	Grouping	Time	Key Contents	Specific Competences
<b>Session 1:</b>  16-04-2018	<b>3 Small Groups of 3:</b>  Introduction and explanation of the study. Students fill in the informed consent form, ask some questions if necessary and give them back to the researcher.	SG	5'	CC2	C1
	The researcher takes one group to another classroom and explains them task A. In group, students perform the first task.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3

	Students perform task B and anonymously fill in the final questionnaire.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3
<b>Session 2:</b> 18-04-2018	<b>3 Small Groups of 3:</b> Introduction and explanation of the study. Students fill in the informed consent form, ask some questions if necessary and give them back to the researcher.	WG	5'	CC2	C1
	The researcher takes one group to another classroom and explains them task A. In group, students perform the first task.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3
	Students perform task B and anonymously fill in the final questionnaire.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3
<b>Session 3:</b> 20-04-2018	<b>1 Small Group of 2</b> <b>1 Small Group of 3</b> Introduction and explanation of the study. Students fill in the informed consent form, ask some questions if necessary and give them back to the researcher.	SG	5'	CC2	C1
	The researcher takes one group to another classroom and explains them task A. In group, students perform the first task.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3
	Students perform task B and anonymously fill in the final questionnaire.	SG	5-8'	CC3 CC12 CC15	C2 C3

**Table 1.** Data Collection Procedure

The Informed Consent Form was given to them at the very beginning of the sessions (one copy for each student and one copy for the researcher). Each group of participants were given the closed task-based activity first, followed by the open task-based one. The proformas were used by the researcher at the same time in which students were performing the tasks. After both tasks, the perception questionnaire was administered to the participants. By the end of the third session, subjects had completed the task-based activities and the questionnaires.



All the utterances made by students during the three sessions were transcribed and later analysed in the results and discussion sections. Students' oral instances were counted as a total number of utterances to obtain percentages. Among all the data that has been collected from the transcriptions and the proformas, students' oral output was classified according to the function they fulfilled as indicators of fluency and accuracy within a total number of items (65), taking into consideration Willis (1996, p.32) major core goals, namely:

- (1) Evidence of real-time composing, e.g. unfinished utterances, back-tracking, repetition, use of: *erm, er...*
- (2) Linking devices and signal words that mark stages in the discourse, e.g. *right, so, in fact, but...*
- (3) Follow-up words, e.g. *Yeah, Oh, Mm, Okay...*
- (4) Final evaluation. Stories and anecdotes, both written and spoken, normally end with an evaluative comment, e.g. *Oh, terrible.*
- (5) Phrases with no subject, e.g. *Not on a long journey, no.*
- (6) Questions without verbs, e.g. *Okay? What number?*
- (7) Lexical phrases that seem to be whole units, e.g. *in fact, on the way back, me and the rest of my family, spread like the plague.*

Nevertheless, the utterances' analysis may provide a general idea of the circumstances in which students may need to make use of the L1. For this reason, the use of the L1 was considered in the present descriptive research:

- (8) Use of the L1 (Spanish/Catalan)

Given the fact that the perception questionnaire followed the Likert-type style, each item was calculated in each of the statements as a total number of items to obtain percentages. Thus, the number of times that it has come out Strongly Agree (SA) was counted, followed by the number of times that Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) have been chosen by the respondents. As far as the teacher's interview is concerned, a qualitative data analysis was provided in order to get the teacher's main perception towards the implementation of task-based oral activities. The answers were compared and contrasted with the students' perceptions on TBL, together with learners' oral outcomes.

## **5. Results**

The following tables show the results that have been acquired from the 16 recordings of the task-based activities, taking the proformas as a support to gather the selected data. Furthermore, the students' perception questionnaires and the teacher's interview are later described in this section. Once all the results have been presented, a deeper analysis of them are provided in the discussion section, as well as a careful answer to both research questions. The data is presented by following two different approaches; quantitatively and qualitatively.

### **5.1. Students' Oral Production Outcomes**

As for the quantitative analysis, Tables 3 and 4 provide the number of Students' oral instances observed in the 16 audio-recordings during the three sessions within a total number of 65 items and their respective percentages, based on Willis' (1996) major core goals. Each group of students were audio recorded first performing task A and then performing task B. As for the closed task-based activity (task A), results are depicted in the table below:

<b>Linguistic Features based on Willis (1996)</b>	<b>Total number of Linguistic Features</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
(1) Evidence of real-time composing	25/65	<b>41.66 %</b>
(2) Linking devices and signal words	7/65	<b>10.8 %</b>
(3) Follow-up words	11/65	<b>16.92 %</b>
(4) Final evaluation	1/65	<b>1.66 %</b>
(5) Phrases with no subject	3/65	<b>4.61 %</b>
(6) Questions without verbs	2/65	<b>3.07 %</b>
(7) Lexical phrases that seem to be whole units	1/65	<b>1.66 %</b>
(8) Use of the L1 (Spanish/Catalan)	13/65	<b>20 %</b>

**Table 2.** Students' linguistic features in task A

As table 3 reflects, the vast majority of the participants (41.66%) gave evidence of real-time composing (*er, erm.*) when performing the more guided and closed task. A 10.8% of the respondents made use of linking devices and signal words that marked stages in the discourse, e.g. *right, so, in fact, but, well, etcetera*. By contrast, follow-up words obtained a 16.92 per cent. Only a 1.66% was provided in final evaluation utterances and in lexical phrases that seem to be whole units. Subjects scored a 4.61% of phrases with no subject, almost the same percentage in questions without verbs (3.07%). Finally, a 20% of the subjects made use of their mother tongue during the closed oral task-based activity. In order to compare and contrast the previous results, table 4 exhibits in percentages the number of Students' oral instances in the open task-based activity (task B) during the whole sessions within a total number of 65 items, also based on Willis' (1996) classification.

<b>Linguistic Features based on Willis (1996)</b>	<b>Total number of Linguistic Features</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
(1) Evidence of real-time composing	27/65	<b>45 %</b>
(2) Linking devices and signal words	8/65	<b>12.30 %</b>
(3) Follow-up words	14/65	<b>21.53 %</b>
(4) Final evaluation	3/65	<b>4.61 %</b>
(5) Phrases with no subject	0/65	<b>0 %</b>
(6) Questions without verbs	3/65	<b>5 %</b>
(7) Lexical phrases that seem to be whole units	1/65	<b>1.66 %</b>
(8) Use of the L1 (Spanish/Catalan)	9/65	<b>15 %</b>

**Table 3.** Students' linguistic features in task B

As table 4 reveals, a 45% of the participants gave evidence of real-time composing utterances, followed by a 12.30% of students making use of linking devices and signal words, like *but* and *well*. Furthermore, subjects obtained a 4.61% in sentences containing a final evaluation utterance. By contrast, students did not give evidence of phrases in which there was no subject. Only a 5% of the students made questions without verbs, followed by a low percentage (1.66%) in lexical phrases that seem to be whole units. Finally, the use of the mother tongue in task B proved that it was statistically different compared to task A. Only a 15% of the subjects made use of their L1 during the open task-based activity.

## 5.2. Students' Perceptions on Task-Based Activities

As far as the perception questionnaires are concerned, table 5 exhibits the percentages obtained from the students' beliefs and perceptions towards both task-based activities. Individual student responses were inspected regarding their oral production in tasks A and B exclusively.

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1) I have been able to speak fluently.	3/23 13%	6/23 26.1%	11/23 <b>47.8%</b>	2/23 8.7%	1/23 4.3%
2) I felt more comfortable with task A because it was more guided and the useful expressions have helped me.	3/23 13%	7/23 <b>30.4%</b>	6/23 26.1%	7/23 <b>30.4%</b>	0/23 0
3) I felt more comfortable with task B because I had more freedom when speaking in English without using any guide.	5/23 21.7%	8/23 <b>34.8%</b>	5/23 21.7%	4/23 17.4%	1/23 4.3%
4) I helped others in the group.	1/23 4.3%	7/23 30.4%	9/23 <b>39.1%</b>	1/23 4.3%	5/23 21.7%
5) I like doing speaking task-based activities.	9/23 <b>39.1%</b>	9/23 <b>39.1%</b>	3/23 13%	2/23 8.7%	0/23 0%

**Table 4.** Students' perceptions on Task-Based Oral Activities

As reflected in table 5, a 47.8% of the students gave neutral responses when analysing their fluency regarding both tasks. However, a 30.4% of the participants agreed that felt more comfortable with task A, sharing the same percentage of the respondents who disagreed. Besides, unpredictable results were observed in statement number 3. A 34.8% of the subjects were indeed comfortable when performing task B, followed by a 17.4% of students who disagreed. Besides, most of the students gave neutral responses in helping others in the group (39.1%). Finally, the same percentage was obtained in statement 5, in which students strongly agreed that they do like task-based oral activities.

### **5.3. Teacher's Perceptions on the Implementation of TBA**

As far as the qualitative analysis is concerned, the English teacher's interview (see Annex 6) provided useful information for the present study. Overall, the teacher had rewarding and positive beliefs towards the implementation of TBLT in the English classroom. In the first question, she affirmed that the most important issue regarding students' learning process is to be able to communicate in real-life contexts by using the target language appropriately. Furthermore, she is indeed interested in the implementation of TBLT for being a new appealing approach. Thus, she has occasionally implemented task-based activities in which she could observe that, by using task-based oral activities, students have the opportunity to express themselves successfully. In question number 3, the teacher states that students' main preference is to perform a closed task-based activity (task A) due to the fact that they prefer to rely on the useful expressions provided in the main task.

Furthermore, the teacher's main perception towards Wetz's (2015) textbook regarding TBLT is positive. The teacher affirms that the activities planned in the textbook are good and well organized. However, she states that this book could provide more useful task-based activities. Finally, the teacher adds that she was able to observe that students sometimes feel overwhelmed when doing speaking activities, maybe because they think they are not fluent enough. However, students gave neutral responses when they were asked about their perceptions towards their fluency in English.

## **6. Discussion**

This study attempted to explore the impacts of performing task-based oral activities in an EAL context and how these results can be related to the students' and the teacher's main perceptions towards TBLT. The main research question proposed in the present paper was if students' English oral production was really improved through a more specific and guided task-based activity or through a less specific task-based one. Besides, the second research question was related to the students' and teacher's perceptions when performing task-based activities.

For this reason, the main hypothesis of the present study was that a closed task-based activity would enhance their fluency due to the fact that closed tasks have a specific goal, whereas an open task-based one would decrease their fluency in their oral output. Furthermore, the second hypothesis stated was that students' main perceptions regarding both tasks will be only positive for the guided one, as learners will be completely involved when performing task A. The analysis presented in tables 3 and 4 (pages 21 and 22 respectively) has given a successful answer to the first research question provided in the study. For this reason, results revealed that the first hypothesis has been validated. Nonetheless, some of the sentences need to be discussed in detail, since there have been some unpredictable results. Overall, among all the core goals established by Willis (1996), the percentages obtained in task A were lower than in task B.

The results previously presented have revealed that students gave a 41.66 % of real-time composing utterances in sentences like (1a), compared to the highest percentage (45%) in task B (1b). Such percentages indicate that students were more confident and comfortable when performing a closed task-based activity, as the less they used real-time composing utterances, the more confident they felt. The reason why students may have used real-time composing utterances is mainly because they are looking for the right words before continuing with their speech. The following examples (extracted from Annex 7) may give a clear conception of such usage:

- (1) a. I think that the problem is that in picture A, **er** the teacher **er** [...]
- b. In the morning, the mum of... **erm**... one child [...]

As it can be observed, students had a low percentage on the usage of linking devices and signal words, 10.8% in task A (2a) and 12.30% in task B (2b). Moreover, students obtained a 16.92 % in follow-up words in task A (3a) and a 21.53 % in task B (3b). This is mainly because task B was less guided and thus students needed to rely on more follow-up words to continue their speech.

As far as final evaluation utterances are concerned, students obtained a low percentage (1.66 %) in task A (4a), whereas a 4.61% was obtained in task B (4b). Students made use of final evaluation utterances in task B due to the fact that open task-based activities required to talk about personal experiences. Thus, learners were probably concerned about what his/her classmate is explaining (4b).

- (2) a. [...] and **well**, in the second picture is a private school.
  - b. I have and I, **well**, continue having a bad experience with my brothers.
- (3) a. In picture A is just er, **yes**, coming in the class [...]
  - b. [...] all the trail and, **okay**, I hate this [...]
- (4) a. It's a possibility.
  - b. **Oh, I'm sorry about you.** I know exactly how you feel.

Furthermore, students obtained a 4.61% in task A in sentences with no subject. Learners have the tendency to do so when they correct their classmates' mistakes (5a). Conversely, it is interesting to highlight that students did not give evidence of phrases with no subjects in task B (0%). Regarding students' use of questions without verbs, the results revealed that subjects obtained a higher percentage in task B (5%). It is interesting to observe that in (6a), participants used questions without verbs to find out the meaning of a word in task A, whereas in task B, they intentionally used such structure to help their classmates.

- (5) a. white, white, is white
- (6) a. Eye contact...?
  - b. Annoying?



As for lexical phrases that seem to be whole units, subjects obtained lower percentages in both tasks. The students' level of English may also be a relevant factor for such usage, since teenagers tend to repeat or reaffirm what they are saying within their speech (7a) or they are looking for the audience's approval (7b).

- (7) a. There is a student that misbehaves and in the second photo the girl is giving the books I think or maybe taking the books from the other students, who knows, it could be, maybe yes.
- b. Well, I remember that, I'm sure you have a cousin like mine, that, when I was in a car, erm...

Given the fact that this study has considered the use of the L1 in English oral production, the reasons which might lead participants to use their mother tongue or not varies significantly among learners. The analysis presented in Tables 3 and 4 provided information on the specific instances of L1 usage during each session. It is undeniable that the participants' use of L1 was highly perceived in a closed task-based activity (20%), compared to a 15% in task B. Depending on the students' proficiency in the AL, some instances of the L1 arose due to many possible aspects, such as comprehension misunderstandings or a lack of knowledge of a given word in the target language (8b, 8c). By expressing such word in the L1, subjects wanted to make sure they provide a clear message (8a).

- (8) a. ¿Mates?  
b. ¿Como se dice "igual"?  
c. Salón del Manga

Even if they have been studying English since at an early age, students made some errors in their English oral output (9a), although some differences are considerable noticed. When comparing both tasks, unexpected language phenomena took place in the examples below. As it can be observed, the transfer of linguistic features between languages in the speech of plurilingual individuals has taken place in the examples (9b), (9c) and (9d). Students made a literal translation from one language to another of the concept represented by a lexical unit, known as semantic calque (Turull, 2001).

- (9) a. **there is more persons.**
- b. but I'm **daltonic.**
- c. erm a person in the class... erm... was... **talking very tall** [...]
- d. **Don't er you pass** when [...]

Overall, the results of the questionnaire demonstrated that students had positive perceptions in regard with task-based activities, although they gave neutral responses regarding their own fluency in English. Therefore, and answering one of the two research questions, the positive perceptions observed in the questionnaires and the interview helped the researcher gain insight into the effects of task-based activities. Notwithstanding, questions 3 and 4 were highly significant for the previous findings since the teacher of this study used task-based activities but only to a limited extent.

**Absolutely yes, I sometimes do, but it is not always possible.** At the beginning they seem lost but later I have observed that they enjoy more. In general, I observed them while practicing the English language and I must say that, within task-based oral activities, students have the opportunity to express themselves successfully.

Up to this point, results confirmed that students obtained lower percentages when analysing the core goals established by Willis (1996) in task A. However, it is worth discussing students' main perceptions towards statements 3 and 4. Students shared the same percentage (30.4%) of agreement and disagreement in statement 3, in which students were asked if they felt more comfortable with task A. Besides, a 34.8% agreed to feel more comfortable with the open-task based activity (task B). Thus, the results led to different conclusions when analysing the teacher's main perceptions.

As far as their preferences are concerned, **I think that they prefer to rely on closed task-based activities**, mainly because the more help they get, the less nervous they are when performing the task. They are more used to guided task activities where everything is well structured. However, I think that doing something less structured could also be good for them.

As reflected in the previous example, an inconsistency arose when subjects were asked to give their perception towards both tasks. Students obtained better results in the closed task-based activity but they prefer to rely on an open task-based one. Besides, the teacher also pointed out that they would rely on task B, which is also what the second hypothesis stood for. Therefore, results rejected the second hypothesis stated at the very beginning of this study, that is, students' main perceptions regarding both tasks would be only positive for the guided one. As explained in section 3, students are not divided according to their level of English in the *Batxillerat* stage. Nonetheless, some of the students have a high level of English compared to others. For this reason, learners may prefer to talk about personal experiences, which were not restricted by the useful expressions. Finally, either students nor the teacher agree that task-based oral activities are useful for the educational purpose.

As far as the course book is concerned, the teacher has a positive perception towards the introduction of the textbook as the main tool instruction in the classroom. However, the teacher affirms that ELT teachers sometimes need to adapt and design new task-based oral activities due to the fact that textbooks do not provide enough tasks. The main reason why ELT teachers implement task-based activities on their own is mainly because they have to consider the students' needs.

Yes, I think that the activities that are planned in the textbook are good and well organized. However, **I think that this book could provide more task-based activities**, as I think that they are really important in today's society. We, as teachers, have to adapt to the textbook in the way we can. I must say that **I sometimes implement some task-based activities that are not in the textbook and they worked really well.**

After having analysed the data, it can be confirmed that a closed task-based activity has a positive influence on students' fluency regarding the major core goals provided by Willis (1996). However, there is a need to balance the usage of both activities in order to develop students' autonomous work. By doing so, students may interiorize the concepts in a more successful way when performing oral activities and the teacher would not only be conscious of the positiveness of using both task-based activities but also receive positive feedback from the students.

## 7. Conclusions

The present study was conducted in order to explore to what extent a closed task-based oral activity and an open task-based one would enhance students' oral output in an EAL learning context. In order to achieve such goal, real samples of data were collected and later analysed from audio-recordings within three sessions, 23 perception questionnaires and the teacher's interview. Notwithstanding, and regarding the wide and clear classification of the data that their study presented, the chosen paper as the main reference for the present study was Willis' (1996). Furthermore, Peña & Onatra's (2009) and Hadi's (2013) studies were also highly considered in the present research since they provided useful tools to carry on the study. Although the classification seen in Willis' (1996) study had a significant variety of core goals, few more purposes needed to be added in order to fulfil all the different data subdivision, mainly the use of the L1 when performing task-based oral activities.

The main participants involved were 23 first-year students of First of *Batxillerat* at IES Forat del Vent high school whose native language were Catalan and Spanish. The results were expressed both quantitatively and qualitatively. As for the quantitative analysis, several tables were created in which real data extracted from the recordings was divided into linguistic features, raw numbers and percentages. As for the qualitative analysis, some real examples of the students' recordings, as well as the teacher's interview, were elicited in a more detailed explanation.

The final data scrutiny provided in the results section showed how the use of a closed-task based activity had a positive effect on students' oral output in the target language. Nevertheless, the implementation of both task-based activities must be balanced. For this reason, it can be concluded that TBL can be integrated in the Catalan Curriculum (2008) with standard textbook-based instruction in order to motivate the students who respond positively to the implementation of task-based activities.

Having said that, the present study has successfully given answer to the research questions and hypotheses previously established, although one of the two hypotheses has not been validated. For this reason, the set of objectives presented in section 2 have been successfully achieved, since the present piece of research has explored students' oral production successfully. There has been an implementation of the task-based activities, which were previously designed by the researcher. Furthermore, the present paper considered students' main perceptions on task-based activities, compared both tasks and analyse both the students' oral production outcomes and the learners' main perceptions on task-based activities.

### **7.1. Limitations of the Study and Further Research**

First and foremost, the present study had certain limitations, those being the students' English oral proficiency and the inadequacy of implementing full task-based instruction. Had the researcher been able to do so, the implementation of the TBL Framework provided by Willis (1996), who established three phases in the task-based approach (the pre-task phase, the task cycle and language focus phase) would have provided significant data collection regarding students' English oral proficiency.

From all the gathered data, it can be observed that students had a different level of English and thus their oral output varied according to their fluency achieved in the target language. In this case, students relied on their classmates on several occasions when they had to deal with unknown vocabulary and/or concepts. Regarding the results obtained in students' main preferences, percentages were quite similar and thus, the number of subjects of study would be considered as another limitation for the present paper. If there had been more participants to be analysed, the data may have been different. Finally, the collection of more qualitative data could have given the researcher the chance to gain more insight into learners' and teachers' individual perceptions on task-based activities.

Last but not least, further research on the main topic of this paper is still required, since there are only few studies carried out in in the multilingual community of Catalonia. For this reason, there is an urgent need to raise awareness of the importance of the implementation of TB activities among ELT teachers. Since researchers have found it compelling to account for the occasions when students made linguistic transfers from one language to another, further research on the field should deeply analyse –in terms of morphology and syntax– the role of the L1 when performing task-based activities.

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## 9. Annexes

### 9.1. Annex A: Informed Consent Form



Facultat de Psicologia,  
Ciències de l'Educació  
i de l'Esport

#### CONSENTIMENT INFORMAT PER LA PERSONA PARTICIPANT

##### **Títol del Treball de fi de Màster:**

Exploring Task-Based Oral Activities in an English as an Additional Language Context

**Investigador responsable:** Sara González Fernández

**E-mail:** [saragf3@blanquerna.url.edu](mailto:saragf3@blanquerna.url.edu)

##### **INFORMACIÓ BÀSICA del Treball de Fi de Màster**

Es faran unes proves orals tenint en compte els continguts i les competències dins l'àmbit de la llengua anglesa. Es duran a terme dues activitats diferents en grups de tres, seguint la metodologia del Task-Based Teaching. Per tant, l'objectiu principal de la recerca és explorar aquest tipus de metodologia en les aules. Les veus de les persones participants seran gravades amb ús exclusiu de la persona responsable de la investigació. Posteriorment, les persones participants emplenaran un qüestionari relacionat amb les activitats prèviament realitzades.

El material i/o les dades obtingudes gràcies a la seva participació en aquest Treball de Recerca seran d'ús exclusiu intern de la Facultat de Psicologia, Ciències de l'Educació i l'Esport-Blanquerna. En el cas que fossin incloses en una publicació dins de l'àmbit acadèmic i científic complirien estrictament les condicions ètiques de confidencialitat exigides en una recerca d'aquestes característiques.

La persona participant ha de llegir i contestar les següents preguntes amb atenció (encerclar la resposta correcta):

Ha llegit tota informació que li ha estat facilitada sobre aquest projecte?    SÍ    /    NO

Ha tingut l'oportunitat de preguntar i comentar qüestions sobre el projecte?    SÍ    /    NO

Ha rebut suficient informació sobre aquest projecte?    SÍ    /    NO

Ha rebut respostes satisfactòries a totes les preguntes?    SÍ    /    NO

Està d'acord en participar-hi?    SÍ    /    NO

Autoritza la seva participació en el projecte?    SÍ    /    NO

**Signatura de la persona participant  
(noms i cognoms entre parèntesi):**

**Data i lloc:**

## 9.2. Annex B: Closed Task-Based Activity Sample

### SPEAKING TASK: A

1. Compare and contrast the photos. Find all the possible similarities and differences. Do you find any of these behaviours annoying? Are the people in the pictures having eye-contact?

#### USEFUL EXPRESSIONS

Both photos show...  
The thing they have in common is...  
They're different in...  
A is... than B. However, ...  
This is more / less / not as...  
In the foreground/background you can see...  
I think/believe that...



### 9.3. Annex C: Open Task-Based Activity Sample

#### SPEAKING TASK: B

1. With your partners, talk about a bad experience you had with someone who was impolite to you. How did you feel?



## 9.4. Annex D: Proformas' Template

**Observer:** Sara González

**Performance:** Small Groups of 3

**Date:**

**Group:** 1<sup>st</sup> of *Batxillerat*

**Task:** A / B

**Shift:** Morning

### TASK: A

GROUP	PRONUNCIATION	FLUENCY	PERFORMANCE

### TASK: B

GROUP	PRONUNCIATION	FLUENCY	PERFORMANCE

## 9.5. Annex E: Perception Questionnaire Template

### Learners' Perceptions and Preferences

The following questionnaire is based on your perceptions and preferences about the speaking tasks you have performed during these two sessions. For each of the following statements, please answer by putting a cross (x) in the box, according to the following scale:

Strongly Agree (SA), A (agree), N (Neutral), D (disagree), SD (strongly disagree).

<b>Questionnaire Items</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
1. I have been able to speak fluently.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I felt more comfortable with task A because it was more guided and the useful expressions have helped me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I felt more comfortable with task B because I had more freedom when speaking in English without using any guide.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I helped others in the group.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I like doing speaking task-based activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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## 9.6. Annex F: Transcription of the Interview with the Teacher

The following interview has been designed to examine the teacher's perceptions towards the Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with reference to classroom practice.

### **Duration: 5 minutes**

**Researcher:** (*reads out loud*)

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) puts special emphasis on meaning rather than form and content and focuses on asking students to do meaningful tasks by using the target language. Thus, the main purpose of TBLT is to get authentic language in an Additional Language (AL) classroom. According to Willis (1996), TBLT provides 'closed' and 'open' tasks. The author claims that the former one is highly "structured and has very specific goals", whereas the latter is "more loosely structured, with a less specific goal".

**R:** 1) According to the previous statements, what do you think about the Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT)?

**T:** Nowadays, what matters the most is to be able to communicate in real-life contexts. Thus, I think it is very important to do this kind of activities in the classroom due to the fact that books are more focused on grammar and tasks are more focused on the real world. We, as teachers, should focus on real-life contexts in which the language is practiced.

**R:** 2) Are you interested in the implementation of TBLT in your classroom?

**T:** Yes, I am interested in the implementation of TBLT in my classroom since I think it's a new appealing approach. TBLT will be good for learners because they will be able to communicate in English in an efficient way. Indeed, I sometimes implement some task-based oral activities which I find interesting.

**R:** 3) Do you think that students prefer a more guided task-based activity or an open task-based one?

**T:** As far as their preferences are concerned, I think that they prefer to rely on closed task-based activities, mainly because the more help they get, the less nervous they are when performing the task.

**R:** Why?

**T:** They are more used to guided task activities where everything is well structured. However, I think that doing something less structured could also be good for them.

**R:** 4) Do you use this kind of activities in the classroom?

**T:** Absolutely yes, I sometimes do, but it is not always possible. At the beginning they seem lost but later I have observed that they enjoy more. In general, I observed them while practicing the English language and I must say that, within task-based oral activities, students have the opportunity to express themselves successfully.

**R:** Currently, you are using Wetz's *Key to Bachillerato 1* textbook. 5) What do you think about Wetz's course book? Do you think that it provides the necessary materials to carry out task-based activities?

**T:** Yes, I think that the activities that are planned in the textbook are good and well organized. However, I think that this book could provide more task-based activities, as I think that they are really important in today's society. We, as teachers, have to adapt to the textbook in the way we can. I must say that I sometimes implement some task-based activities that are not in the textbook and they worked really well.

**R:** Okay. I'm now approaching the end of this interview. 6) Do you have any further comments?

**T:** Yes, I would like to say that the more students practice real-world situations through speaking activities, the better their oral output will be. Throughout the years, I have been able to observe that students sometimes feel overwhelmed when doing speaking activities, maybe because they think they do not possess a good English level. Even if they think they are not fluent in English, they will finally develop their English oral skills.

**R:** Okay, we have already finished the interview. Thank you so much for your participation.

**T:** Thank you.

## 9.7. Annex G: Transcription of the Students' Recordings

**Group: 1 Task: A**      16-04-2018

**Student 1:** Mm... Both photos show us a class, where I think that two teachers are coming right now. In picture B, we can see a boy doing silly things and if we compare with photo A, there are some students who are more formal.

**Student 2:** I disagree with you M. because I think that the teacher in picture A is just er, yeah, coming in the class. We can see in the whiteboard that she is explaining something related to maths. [...]

**Student 1:** Also, it can be that the teacher comes to the class and the blackboard is...

**Student 2:** white, white, is white

**Student 1:** but I'm daltonic.

**Student 3:** I think that the problem is that in picture A, er the teacher er hasn't any eye contact with the boy that is in the top of the table, in the second picture, the teacher er is having eye contact with the girl who is talking to the other.

**Student 1:** I agree with you. Also, it can be another er another difference between the two photos. In picture B, the girl wears a uniform and, in the A, no, so, we can suppose that it is a private school and the other a public school.

**Student 2:** It's a possibility.

**Group: 1 Task: B**      16-04-2018

**Student 1:** Er, I have and I, well, continue having a bad experience with my brothers.

**Students 2 and 3:** Oh, horrible.

**Student 1:** yes, yes, er. Don't er you pass when your brother or your sister comes to your room and asks something and when they leave, they don't close the door?

**Students 2:** Yes. It happens, yeah, brotherhood (he laughs).



**Student 1:** and, **well**, this is a little, a little...

**Student 2:** **Annoying?**

**Student 1:** Annoying. And I ask them: Can you please, (pause) please, close the door?  
And they don't do it, it's annoying.

**Student 1:** What is your bad experience?

**Student 2:** **I remember that, I'm sure you have a cousin like mine, that, when I was in a car, erm** I was near my cousin and he didn't stop doing silly things. I was like: please, shut up, please! It was a bit annoying.

**Student 3:** I also remember, **yeah**, I know.

**Student 2:** And what is your bad experience, S.?

**Student 3:** I had a bad experience when I was in primary school. All of my classmates were talking. The teacher **er...** always shouted at me and I was doing nothing! You feel very bad.

**Group: 2 Task: A      16-04-2018**

**Student 1:** In the photos we can see students **er...** they are different each other. In the first photo, it's a primary school and the teacher is bad. He sees the untidy class and she punished them and in the second picture is a private school. The teacher is explaining maths and it's a quite class. [...]

**Student 2:** In picture B, **well**, it is a trigonometric class. In picture A, we can see a girl delivering books to the rest of the class. In picture B there is an outgoing behaviour. There is a boy in the table that makes contrast with picture B.

**Student 3:** The difference with the photo A and B, I think that in photo A the boy is in the table and in photo B, the class is more **ordenate** [...] In picture B, the teacher is explaining... **mates?**

**Student 2:** Maths.

**Student 3:** **Er, eso.** maths.

**Group: 2 Task: B**

**16-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Once, I decided to go for a walk with my dog. In the park, I saw a boy with a dog. The boy **well**, was a little bit crazy and **er, well**, he didn't want to clean the shit of the dog. I told him to tidy up. He didn't reply at me.

**Student 2:** I remember one time at school that a mate of my class **er** through me the pencil case to the window (He laughs). And... **er so** it fell in the floor and well, my calculator was broken. [...] I put 2 plus 2 and the result was 5.

**Student 1:** What did you do?

**Student 2:** I stole (He laughs) a **erm** a calculator from, **well**, the person who through me the pencil case.

**Student 3:** The other day, in class, one boy said to me "mouse" (they all laugh). And then well, I felt bad.

**Student 1:** And did you tell the teacher?

**Student 3:** Yes, and he told me, **well, er... que pasara de él.** [...]

**Student 1:** **That's terrible!**

**Group: 3 Task: A**

**16-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Both photos show a class with the students and the teacher. (pause). I think they are **er** different. One class is... **er... ¿Cómo se dice?** [...]

**Student 2:** In the first photo, **there is a student that misbehaves and in the second photo the girl is giving the books I think or maybe taking the books from the other students, who knows, it could be, maybe yes.**

**Student 1:** The B image shows... **Bueno... erm...** the girl is dominating the class than A. **No sé si lo he dicho bien.**

**Student 3:** Also, in photo B, the class is clean, **so** in A it's dirty.

**Group: 3 Task: B**

**16-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Once, **er**, when I went to **Salón del Manga**, the day was normal until a guy stole my bag and he run, run away from me, and I follow him. I felt very angry because no one can steal my bag.

**Student 2:** Is that a true story?

**Student 1:** Not at all, but **yeah**, it could be.

**Student 2:** My story is not what happened to me but to a person I know. He was buying the watch to his friend for her girlfriend's birthday, and... the... (pause) the guy who sold him the watch was impolite to him. When my friend **er... yeah**, my friend, asked a question, the behaving of the seller was... was bad.

**Student 1:** He is rude. And you, P.?

**Student 3:** One day, I lost **erm** I lost my eh... **¿Cómo se dice carpeta?**

**Student 1:** Folder.

**Student 3:** **Ah**, yes, folder. And people, **er, well, yeah**, one guy stole it. I went to the secretary to recover my folder. It was full of papers and someone stole my papers and I think it's not normal to steal papers.

**Student 2:** Oh, that's annoying!

**Group: 4 Task: A**

**18-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Pictures A and B are different because, **Okay**, I can see that in picture A, **erm**, there is a boy standing at the table and in B looks like more formal. First of all, because they are all wearing a uniform. [...]

**Student 2:** **Er**, I think that in these photos, **yeah**, there is the contrast of two types of schools. The first one is very organised and the other it isn't.

There is a long pause between student 2 and student 3, so the researcher intervenes.

**Researcher:** How many differences can you see?

**Student 3:** **Es que solo hay esas dos diferencias, ¿verdad?**

**Researcher:** There is another one. What about the eye contact?

**Student 3:** Eye contact...?

**Student 1:** (whispering) **Contacto Visual!**

**Student 3:** Ah, er... In picture B, two students are... no sé... talking about the class of maths and in this class only er... are the girls. Algo así...

**Student 1:** [...] in picture B I can see that they are formal. What do you think?

**Student 2:** It might be funnier to be in class A than B because in B it would be more boring. [...]

**Group: 4 Task: B      18-04-2018**

**Student 3:** Mmm while we are the erm... in Educational Physics, the group of... o sigui.... The group of... osea, the class, were talking when we were doing class y... nada, eso.

**Student 2:** I agree. I was there too and it was a little bit frustrating because we tried to explain something and they didn't stop talking.

**Student 1:** I was there too. Some of them were doing stupid things like jumping and they were (pause), they were basically in clouds I guess. Also, as he said, they were talking and ignoring us. I would like to talk about another bad experience. When I was in the changing room, a guy was occupying all the bench and I didn't have enough space to put my bag in there. I felt ignored.

**Student 2:** Oh, I'm sorry about you. I know exactly how you feel.

**Group: 5 Task: A      18-04-2018**

**Student 1:** In the first photo we can see a boy up in the table. I think this is the situation when the teacher doesn't come to the class, you are really happy... and erm you... (pause) do... bad things, I don't know. And then, the teacher comes to the class y te pillan ahí. (he laughs).

**Student 2:** I agree with you and I think that in the first photo we can see an impolite **comportament** meanwhile in the second photo, we can see that the girls are polite.

**Student 3:** I agree and in picture A I can see a boy on the table and... I see... **erm...** more, more, more boys and in picture two one girl and notebooks.

**Student 2:** **Well,** in the first photo it seems that the school is probably public because they dress up like... normal. [...] they are both dress up, **er,** well they dress up... **¿Como se dice igual?**

**Student 1:** Same. **Se dice** same.

**Group: 5 Task: B      18-04-2018**

**Student 2:** When I was in a class, the boys start to speak and... annoy me. (he laughs)

**Student 3:** **Annoy me?** (he laughs)

**Student 2:** Another thing that annoys me is when, **well,** you are walking in the street and (he laughs) and you see a doggy shit. (they all laugh). Sorry. And that's it.

**Student 1:** One thing that bothers me it's... **Bueno...** when I go to the mountain [...] the people go in very long groups and he **¿ocupar?** all the trail and, **okay,** I hate this because I say "Hello" and the people see me in the mountain. [...]

**Student 2:** Well, I'm agree with you and when I'm in the street too, I hate when the dogs are crossing down all the street or the trace, it's... because you have to stop and it's horrible.

**Researcher:** G., do you want to say something else?

**Student 3:** When I play football in the... in the morning, the mum of... **erm...** one child says: "I don't play football here because the ball **er... es que no sé como decirlo...** can seat.

**Group: 6 Task: A**

**18-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Okay, we can see that both photos show a classroom, I would say a classroom, with a difference. In picture A is all a mess and in picture B is all organized and relax.

**Student 2:** I think that in both pictures they are in school...(pause) but in picture A are little kids and in B are teenagers. In picture, er... kids are behaving badly because they are standing up at the table but in picture B they are like more serious and doing the tasks.

**Student 2:** (to student 3) What do you think about picture A?

There is a long pause between student 2 and student 3, so the researcher intervenes.

**Researcher:** Do you agree with her?

**Student 3:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Can you tell me the differences between both pictures?  
(long pause) No answer.

**Researcher:** For example, in picture A...

**Student 3:** No lo sé...

**Group: 6 Task: B**

**18-04-2018**

**Student 2:** Mm... I think that people are impolite when you are at the supermarket and they skip the queue. When you're walking down the street and you crush with someone and they do not apologise and when people don't clean up the dog's shit. (she laughs). [...]

**Student 1:** How do you feel?

**Student 2:** They do not say sorry, yeah, bad.

**Student 1:** I thought about kids nowadays. Little kids like first of ESO kids or something like that. I don't know what happened but with music like Reggaeton (they all laugh) they feel like they are the best and they do not care about others. [...] they do whatever they want. It's so rude!

(Long pause)

**Student 2:** (to student 3) When you are in class and they are screaming; how do you feel?

(There is a long pause between student 2 and student 3, so the researcher intervenes)

**Researcher:** Do you feel angry?

**Student 3:** Yes.

**Group: 7 Task: A      20-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Both photos show kids in a class. **Mm, er**, B is a class from maths or something like this and they are studying in silence and in picture A, they are screaming and making noise.

**Student 2:** I'm agree with you. I think that in the photos they are in a school or high school and they are in class **but...** I think that in picture A they are funny and **there is more persons.**

**Student 1:** In the background of picture A, you can see **erm...** the teacher that she just arrived to the class and she watched the scene.

**Student 2:** And they are different because in picture B, only there are girls and in A... **no, no girls no.**

**Student 1:** In the picture, **erm, yeah**, I agree with you that in the picture B there are only girls, **yeah**, but maybe in the class there are boys and girls.

**Group: 7 Task: B      20-04-2018**

**Student 1:** **er...** I had a bad experience with a woman that was the boss of my brother. She said to my mother that... how she let me play football (because I play football), and, my mother... **okay**, I think that she didn't tell her nothing but she was angry and she told me and I... (pause) felt angry, more or less, because I don't understand **erm** how a person of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can think like this.

**Student 2:** I also had a bad experience, *okay*, that is that I was in the class. *Erm*, I was studying with my friends and *erm* a person in the class... *erm*... was... *talking very tall* and it is *erm*... for me, I can't concentrate and I have an important exam and we told to this person to be quiet but *er* he doesn't do it and *erm* he increased the voice and that's all.

**Group: 8 Task: A                      20-04-2018**

**Student 1:** Both photos show a class *erm*, but in the class B, *okay*, I think they are more, more organized, controlled, I don't know how to say it, *but... no sé qué decir*.

**Student 2:** In the A image, we can see a more crazy behaviour, like, *no sé*.

**Student 3:** Yes, they are crazy (they all laugh).

**Student 2:** *What letter?* I think that in the photo B, they seem more educated and controller and they are different I think that in the age, *erm* they seem more younger.

**Student 3:** In the B younger and in the A older. *No, no, younger A and older B*.

**Student 1:** In the photography B, *er* the teacher eh is doing class and... and... I think that in the photography A there is a teacher, entering the class and...

**Student 2:** And she is like: "what are you doing?"

**Group: 8 Task: B                      20-04-2018**

**Student 1:** *Erm*, I think... Bueno... I normally see that some people, *erm*, when you are in a public place, some people is smoking in your face and it's impolite to me [...]. They are not respecting my health.

**Student 2:** For example, if you spit on the street, I think it's an impolite action.

**Student 3:** I don't know what to say (he laughs). An impolite action that happened to me... I don't know *Mmm* When I'm playing a football match, the parents or the people who was watching the match start to say... (pause)

**Student 2:** *Insults?*

**Student 3:** Exactly, the opponents. It's very annoying and I can't do anything.