

## **Spoken Production at B1 Level in German Through the Oral Guided Tour**

La producción oral en el B1 en alemán a través de la visita guiada oral

Adriana Quiala Taquechel<sup>1\*</sup>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4199-9071>

Marisela Jimenez Alvarez<sup>1</sup>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3067-7296>

Omayda Despaigne Negret<sup>1</sup>, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8301-1965>

<sup>1</sup> Universidad de Oriente, Santiago de Cuba

\*Autor para la correspondencia (email) [taquechel@uo.edu.cu](mailto:taquechel@uo.edu.cu)

### **ABSTRACT**

**Objective:** This research paper analyzes how oral guided tour exercises help to achieve better oral communication in German, while putting in practice the oral productions descriptors for the B1 Common Reference Level (sustained monologue), describing an experience, giving information and Addressing audiences, taking into account speaking primary aspects such as fluency, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and coherence.

**Methods:** A bibliographical study was carried out in the English Language Major at Universidad de Oriente including German as Second Foreign Language. The analysis-synthesis and hermeneutic methods were used to evaluate the sources and to point out the main aspects of oral production and communicative skills in German, to make valuable interpretations around these processes. A descriptive study with a qualitative approach was also developed using the interview, and the observation techniques. The interview was applied to Curriculum D second-year students, during the 2019-2020 academic year of the English Language Major of the Universidad de Oriente.

**Results:** The results reflect that students were able to fulfill the descriptors of the communicative strategies at the B1 level stated within the design of the exercises.

**Conclusions:** The exercises based on the oral guided tour characteristic allow developing the communicative production strategy descriptors for the B1 common reference level (sustained monologue). They strengthened the professional sphere related to international tourism of the English Language Major, where the future professionals would be language and cultural mediators in English and German.

**Keywords:** foreign language instruction, speaking, language skills, skills assessment, achievement rating.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** Este artículo analiza cómo los ejercicios de las visitas guiadas orales ayudaron a mejorar la comunicación oral en alemán, poniendo en práctica los descriptores de producción oral para el nivel de referencia común B1(monólogo sostenido), describiendo una experiencia, dando información y dirigiéndose a audiencias, incluyendo aspectos de la expresión oral tales como fluidez, gramática, vocabulario, cohesión y coherencia.

**Métodos:** Se realizó un estudio bibliográfico en la carrera de Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad de Oriente incluyendo el alemán como segunda lengua extranjera. Los métodos de análisis-síntesis y hermenéutica se utilizaron para evaluar las fuentes, señalar los principales aspectos sobre la producción oral, las habilidades comunicativas en alemán y realizar interpretaciones en torno a estos procesos. También se desarrolló un estudio descriptivo con enfoque cualitativo utilizando la entrevista y la técnica de observación. La entrevista se aplicó a estudiantes de 2do año del Currículo D, durante el año académico 2019-2020 de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa de la Universidad de Oriente.

**Resultados:** Los resultados reflejan que los estudiantes fueron capaces de cumplir con los descriptores de estrategias comunicativas en el nivel B1 planteados dentro del diseño de los ejercicios.

**Conclusiones:** Los ejercicios basados en la visita guiada oral permiten desarrollar los descriptores de las estrategias de producción comunicativa para el nivel de referencia común B1: (monólogo sostenido), fortaleciendo el ámbito profesional del turismo internacional de la Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa, donde los futuros profesionales serían mediadores lingüísticos y culturales en inglés y alemán.

**Palabras clave:** enseñanza de las lenguas extranjeras, oralidad, habilidades orales, evaluación de habilidades.

Recibido: 15/09/2021

Aprobado: 15/11/2021

## INTRODUCTION

The English Language Major with second foreign language of the Universidad de Oriente includes French and German as second foreign languages. During the academic year 2019-2020, the first three years of the major received German as a second foreign language. According to the curricula D and E, official documents approved by the Ministry of Higher Education of Cuba which describe the purpose and scope of the major and the syllabuses, students should be able to achieve the B2 level of linguistic and communicative competence from the Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The CEFR has become an important guideline in this context to improve the teaching-learning process of German as a foreign language, in order to organize and describe better students' performance and skills in the English language major. The description of the parameters to assess the students' communicative and linguistic competence changed in 2018 by the CEFR with the insertion of a new descriptive scheme that includes as part of the communicative competence Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Pragmatics as well as other communicative language activities and strategies (reception, interaction, production and mediation) within speaking, reading, writing and listening from pre-A1 to C2; improving significantly the 2001 CEFR document.

Second-year students, in the course 2019-2020, belonging to the Curriculum D, received German as a second foreign language. They received German II in the first semester and German III in the second. The subject German III was aimed at achieving the B1 level according to the descriptors of the 2018 CEFR in speaking, reading, writing, and listening within the communicative language activities and strategies.

Speaking is one of the most challenging to students because it implies a harmonious integration among vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension to produce a coherent oral text and effective communication in any environment.

Speaking is defined as an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information. Its form and meaning are dependent on the context in which it occurs, the participants, and the purposes of speaking (Burns and Joyce (1997), as cited by Torky, 2006, p. 30). This definition takes into account the different communicative language activities and strategies stated by the 2018 CEFR regarding speaking, which include overall oral comprehension and overall oral production.

The categories for spoken production are organized in terms of three macro-functions (interpersonal, transactional, evaluative), with two more specialized genres: "Addressing audiences" and "Public announcements". "Sustained monologue: describing experience" focuses mainly on descriptions and narratives while "Sustained monologue: putting a case (e.g. in a debate)" describes the ability to sustain an argument, which may well be made in a long turn in the context of normal conversation and discussion. "Sustained monologue: giving information" is a new 2018 scale, created by transferring certain descriptors from the scale for "Information exchange" that implied monologue rather than dialogue. (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 69)

The observation of the students' performance in the classroom in the first semester, showed that students preferred writing rather than speaking exercises since they felt inhibited to speak in German, because of the fear of making grammatical mistakes, mispronouncing certain difficult words, or not having the adequate vocabulary to respond in a spontaneous communicative situation. Hence, it was necessary to use a specific textual genre that could embody sustained monologue in giving information, describing experience, and addressing audiences, as well as motivating them to find an appealing topic to speak about.

The oral guided tour as an oral genre belongs to the touristic text. It implies previous research in order to gather data and the learning of specific vocabulary. The tour guides not only describe meaningful places and historical figures, but also the presentation of interesting stories or anecdotes to capture the audience attention, besides answering their questions.

There can be identified two forms of guided tours with two different historical moments: the expository guided tour provides knowledge to tourists, and the interactional guided tour. The two

forms of organization of the discourse and the structure of the visits do not imply that they are currently totally split from one another. It is common for both models to be juxtaposed at different times during the same visit. (Gómez, Córdoba and Fonseca, 2010, p. 6).

Therefore, during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020 in the subject German III, a series of oral production exercises was carried out, where they had to prepare an oral guided tour through emblematic touristic places of the city Santiago de Cuba.

The main objective of this research paper is to analyze how the oral guided tour exercises contributed to achieving better oral communication in German, while putting in practice the mentioned oral productions descriptors for the B1 Common Reference Level. Likewise, primary aspects of speaking such as fluency, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and coherence, were taken into account.

## METHODS

The research corresponds to a bibliographical study that includes the Common European Frame of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as it has become an important guideline to improve the teaching-learning process of German as a foreign language. It also covered the oral guided tour as an oral genre belonging to the touristic text. The information compiled and interpreted helped make qualitative analyses for reordering the exercises and designing the oral guided tours.

The general objective of the research was to demonstrate how these oral guided tour exercises contributed to improving oral communication in German, through practicing oral production for the B1 descriptors for the B1 Common Reference Level. The specific objectives were to analyze students' achievement in the B1 level regarding the communicative strategies: Sustained monologue: describing an experience, Sustained monologue: giving information, and addressing audiences as well as speaking parameters for evaluating fluency, vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and coherence within these communicative strategies.

This study involved the 14 students of the 2<sup>nd</sup> year belonging to Curriculum D of the English Language Major of the Universidad de Oriente, during the second semester of the academic year 2019-2020. For the compilation of the data it was applied an interview and a class

observation. The interview was conducted about the students' training practice in touristic facilities such as hotels, museums and travel agencies. They all expressed their comfortability in the English language when giving information about services and emblematic touristic places and their reticence to speak in German about the same topics with German native speaking tourists.

The application of the oral tour exercises involved the 14 students and had two stages. In the first stage, they had to choose among several historical and emblematic places of the city of Santiago de Cuba, which are frequently visited by foreign tourists, in order to gather information about those places and write down a script with the main ideas for their guided tour.

The second stage dealt with oral production. They were divided into two to three students and were given different communicative contexts in which oral guided tours could take place. They had to play randomly a tourist guide, an agent in a touristic information office or a museum guide, and a German-speaking tourist in the classroom. They also had to prepare a video about the chosen place, doing an oral guided tour taking into account one of the audiovisual materials studied in class: *Hamburg in 5 Minuten*, where two people talked about the most important places of that German city in only 5 minutes. Furthermore, they were required to give information and describe these places, narrate a small story or anecdote about that place, ask for information, and give an opinion about the received information.

Classroom observation helped compile the data to assess students' achievement for the 2018 CEFR, B1 level oral production descriptors belonging to the studied communicative strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis and synthesis of the content and descriptors for the German Learning Methods *DaF Kompakt A1-B1*, *Optimal B1* and *Menschen B1*, the objectives for the subject German III and the Syllabus D, the 2018 CEFR descriptors for oral production, the literature defining speaking and the strategies to improve the teaching-learning process, the literature concerning touristic texts and the oral guided tour were taken into account in the theoretical discussion.

The interview showed that students in contact with German tourists preferred to establish a dialogue in English rather than in German since they did not feel they had enough vocabulary or the proper communicative strategies to carry out communication in their second foreign language.

The tour-guided exercises were based on the action-focus approach proposed in the 2018 CEFR since students were preparing themselves to act out situations related to one of their professional spheres: international tourism, stated in the syllabus of the major. Moreover, a tour guide plays an important role as sociolinguistic and intercultural mediators; and the correct use of the language is an indispensable part of it.

The interactive approach was also taken into account since they had to combine the monologue (while giving information, describing the place, telling a story) with the dialogue resulting from addressing the tourists (asking and giving opinions about the place). These exercises were aimed at improving oral production in German as a second foreign language through the oral guided tour.

The improvement in the oral communication in German at a B1 Common Reference Level through the oral guided tour exercises was assessed through quantitative data analysis techniques and the correspondent interpretation of these data in order to discuss the results.

The exercises were inserted within Unit 2: *Neu in Hamburg*, which appears in the textbook *DaF Kompakt A1-B1*. This unit belongs to the B1 level and the exercises of writing, reading, listening and speaking comprehension and production, aimed at describing the experiences tourists have when visiting this city. In this topic, the oral guided tour exercises about the city of Santiago de Cuba were inserted, to give the 14 students of the second year the communicative language strategies and activities to improve their oral production in German, recreating a professional context they have experienced during their work practice; which is also contemplated within their professional scope once they are graduated.

The observation in the classroom and the videos prepared by the students allowed to gather the data concerning the students oral production in German, taking into account the following oral production descriptors for the B1 Common Reference Level: *sustained monologue: describing experience* (can describe events, real or imagined, can narrate a story and can describe people, places and possessions in simple terms); *sustained monologue: giving information* (can report straightforward factual information on a familiar topic, for example,

to indicate the nature of a problem or to give detailed directions, provided they can prepare beforehand); *addressing audiences* (can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within their field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision, can take follow-up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the delivery is rapid).

Regarding the communicative *strategy Sustained monologue: describing an experience*, the students should be able to describe the emblematic place of the city in Santiago de Cuba, narrate a small anecdote related to that place following a logical sequence. Table 1 represents the number of students, out of a total of 14, who were able to fulfill all the descriptors.

**Table1:** Sustained monologue: describing experience B1

Descriptors	Number of Students
1. Can give straightforward descriptions on a variety of familiar subjects within their field of interest.	12
2. Can reasonably fluently relate a straightforward narrative or description as a sequence of points	11
3. Can give detailed accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions.	9
4. Can narrate a story.	11
5. Can describe events, real or imagined	12

The analysis of the data of this table shows that descriptors 1 and 5, applied to the description of the main features of the chosen touristic place after finding information and preparing a script, were successful. 12 of the 14 Students could describe the place coherently, fluently, and with the appropriate vocabulary.

According to Nilsson and Zillinger (2020, p. 289), storytelling plays a major role in oral guided tours, as stories create meaning through contextualization and the embodiment of emotions. Descriptors 2 and 4 showed that students were successfully able to narrate a small anecdote or story to enrich their oral guided tour organizing, following a logical sequence of events aiming at the referential function of the language.

When describing feelings and reactions as part of the interaction in the oral guided tour, they presented more difficulties since only nine of them were able to react and describe how they felt about their experience during the oral guided tour. Laksana, (2016, pág. 6) summarizes



speaking as a process of interaction where speakers tend to build meaning through producing, receiving, and processing information. In that sense, the correct assessment of the speaking exercises in German needs to take into account not only what students are able to say, but also how they respond in a communicative situation.

The communicative strategy *Sustained monologue: giving information B1*, only one descriptor was taken into account for these exercises (can report straightforward factual information on a familiar topic, for example, to indicate the nature of a problem or to give detailed directions, they can prepare beforehand) and 12 of the 14 students were able to fulfill this descriptor successfully. The main intention of the oral tourist guide is to give information about a specific place. Furthermore, students needed to prepare themselves and conduct small research to present the information in a coherent and organized manner.

The communicative strategy *Addressing audiences* was taken into account to measure students' capabilities in these exercises since oral guided tours imply addressing a group of people that can be small, only a couple of tourists or a large crowd with more than twenty. Table 2 represents the number of students, out of a total of 14, who were able to fulfill all the descriptors.

**Table 2:** Addressing audiences B1

Descriptors	Number of Students
1. Can give a prepared presentation on a familiar topic within their field, outlining similarities and differences. (E.g. between products, countries/regions, plans).	12
2. Can give a prepared straightforward presentation on a familiar topic within their field which is clear enough to be followed without difficulty most of the time, and in which the main points are explained with reasonable precision.	12
3. Can take follow-up questions, but may have to ask for repetition if the delivery is rapid	11

The analysis of the data indicates that students were able to present and describe successfully the emblematic places of Santiago de Cuba. Moreover, they could establish a comparison between the cities Santiago the Cuba, and Hamburg, since they studied that topic in German III. Only in the case of descriptor 3, three of the 14 students had difficulties to respond the follow-up questions.

Consequently, Table 3 represents the parameters that were used to assess each of the communicative strategies as well as the oral guided tour and the resulting interaction. These parameters comprise fluency, grammar, vocabulary, cohesion, and coherence correspondent to the B1 common reference level for German as a foreign language. This chart reflects the number of students that were able to master these aspects of speaking in German as a foreign language.

**Table 3:** Speaking evaluation parameters

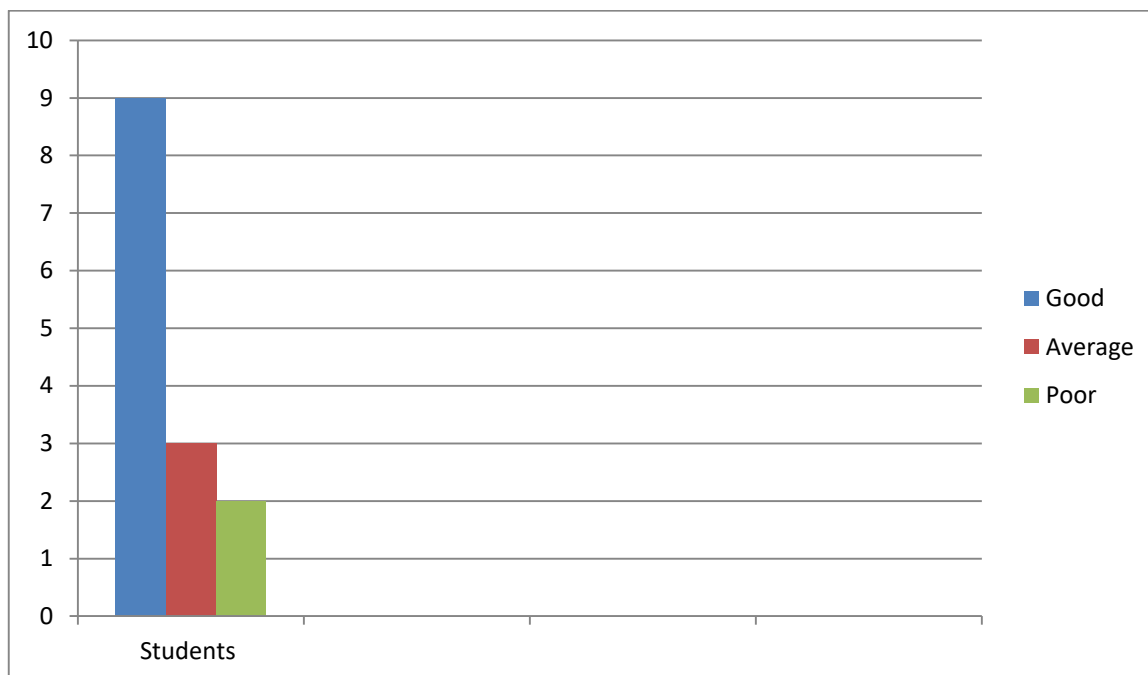
Descriptors	Good	Average	Poor
Fluency: the student is able to maintain his/her speech although the pauses to organize grammatical and lexical elements are evident, especially during long periods of spontaneous interaction.	9	3	2
Vocabulary: the student is able to express him/herself about topics concerning everyday life, work, family, travel, and current events.	11	1	2
Grammar: It has a repertoire of the grammatical structure that allows communication: the genitive; the declination of the adjectives in the nominative, accusative, and dative; subordinated sentences; past tense (perfect and preterit), past subjunctive; verbs with a preposition and all the pronouns.	7	5	2
Cohesion and coherence: the student is able to use simple discourse markers to follow a sequence of lineal events. The student is able to explain the reasons for certain opinions, plans, and actions.	10	2	2

This table shows that students find grammar the most challenging aspect due to the complexity of the structures and the several constructions and word collocations that they need to bear in mind while speaking, which is reflected in the fluency. The first stage of research and preparing a script of the exercises, certainly help to improve vocabulary, since they have time to find those words that may be new to them and also organize the sequence in which the information is given, which is reflected in the cohesion and coherence.

The following chart represents the students' results regarding the overall oral production descriptor to the B1 level after the oral guided tour exercises. The results are presented taking into account the evaluation made by the teacher and the students themselves on a 2 to 5

points scale. Only two of the 14 students of the second year were not able to fulfill any of the previously mentioned descriptors, and 3 of them had difficulties that did not hamper the general development of the communicative situations.

Figure 1 reflects the students' competence regarding oral production. Only two students were not able to achieve a satisfactory level and 3 of them had difficulties with all the parameters reflected in Table 3, but still were able to carry out the exercises successfully.



**Fig.1:** Represents the achievement of the students regarding Overall oral production descriptor B1. (Can reasonably fluently sustain a straightforward description of one of a variety of subjects within their field of interest, presenting it as a linear sequence of points)

The analysis of these results shows that the oral guided tour as a touristic genre can be a successful tool in oral communicative situations related to tourism as a professional sphere. The results reflect that students were able to fulfill the descriptors of the communicative strategies at the B1 level stated within the design of the exercises.

The oral guide tour comprises several communicative strategies and allows students to develop discursive competence defined as the ability to interact linguistically within the framework of an act of communication, capturing or producing meaningful texts that are perceived as a coherent whole that is appropriate to the situation and the topic. (Fernández,

2010, p. 351). That means that students should be able to have a satisfactory performance in communicative situations and adapt themselves to the language rules and the contexts where the communicative situation takes place.

The results of this research paper show that there are still aspects that need to be improved within the teaching-learning process of speaking in German as a second foreign language. Grammar poses a challenge to the students since it affects the fluency of the speech. On the other hand, it becomes necessary to design other exercises that help students be more spontaneous in the oral guided tour; which means they will not have the chance in real-life communicative situations to prepare all the questions and answers beforehand.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The use of the oral guided tour in speaking production exercises is a useful tool for foreign language teachers to develop many of the communicative strategies stated in the 2018 CEFR which contribute to motivating students' involvement in the foreign language teaching-learning process.

The analysis of the compiled data reflects that students were able to achieve a satisfactory level of performance in speaking German as a second foreign language.

These exercises aim at a professional sphere related to international tourism of the English Language Major, where the future professionals would be intercultural mediators in English and German.

## **Acknowledgments**

The authors would like to thank Professor Ana María Martínez Sánchez for her valuable contribution in the application of the exercises and the analysis of the results.

## REFERENCES

- Council of Europe. (2020). *Common European Framework of Reference for languages: Learning, teaching assessment*. Access: 3/07/2020. Available at: <http://www.coe.int/lang-CEFR>
- Fernández, S. (2010). *La competencia discursiva*. Monográficos marco ELE. Access: 5/04/2021. Available at: <https://marcoele.com/descargas/nava>
- Gómez, S., Córdoba, G., & Fonseca, F. (2010). *Una visita conceptual a las visitas guiadas en turismo*. Departamento de Turismo, Facultad de Ciencias Económicas, UNLP, La Plata. Access: 5/04/2021. Available at: <https://www.aacademica.org>
- Laksana, A. (2016). *The effectiveness of using chain story game in teaching speaking (An Experimental Research at the Eighth Grade Students of SMP Negeri 1 Jatilawang in the Academic Year 2015/2016)*. Access: 5/04/2021. Available at: <http://repository.ump.ac.id/2221>
- Nilsson, J., & Zillinger, M. (2020). Free guided tours: storytelling as a means of globalizing urban places. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 20(3), 286-301. Access: 5/04/2021. Available at: DOI: 10.1080/15022250.2020.1772866
- Torky, S. A. (2006). *The Effectiveness of a Task-Based Instruction Program in Developing the English Language Speaking Skills of Secondary Stage Students*. Access: 5/04/2021. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed>

**Adriana Quiala Taquechel:** Bachelor in the English Language with German as a Second Foreign Language. She is a professor at the English Language Major in the Foreign Language Faculty at the University of Oriente where she teaches the subjects Semantics and German as a second Foreign Language. She has received courses for German teachers in the Goethe Institute of Dresden, Germany. She has worked as translator and interpreter in international events and is part of The Voluntary Translation Project of documents related with Covid- 19.

### Declaration of conflict of interest:

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interest.

**Authorial responsibility statement:**

**Adriana Quijala Taquechel:** searched for the necessary information in the consulted sources, carried out the interview, and the observation of the participants in the study and the systematization of the paper.

**Marisela Jiménez Alvarez:** coordinated the work team and the research methods used in this paper, guided the search for information, as well the systematization of the paper.

**Omayda Despaigne Negret:** contributed to the analysis of the collected data, corrected and revised the paper composition.