Promoting Engagement in the English Language Learning through the Use of Visual Aids

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Abstract

This action research project was developed in order to comprehend how the use of visual learning aids would be able to promote, for the students, the engagement in the English language learning process, as a foreign language. This action research was put into action at Institución Educativa Juan María Céspedes, throughout two school periods, for second grade students. The methods used to collect the data from the students; cooperating teacher and school were the observations, an interview and a survey, which were taken for triangulation as a way of analyzing what was explored and evinced. Findings disclosed that activities conducted by means of visual learning aids not just promoted the students' engagement in learning English, but they might also bring some benefits such as students' attention improvement, facilitating students' understanding of the topics, words and expressions, and raising students' participation in class.

Key words: Engagement, visual learning aids, students' understanding.

Promoviendo Compromiso en el Aprendizaje del Idioma Inglés a través del uso de las Ayudas Audiovisuales.

Degree Requirement

This action research project is submitted as a requirement of the Bachelor of Education in Foreign Languages Teaching (English-French) at Escuela de Idiomas, Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellín, Colombia.

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To conclude, I appreciate all the support given by my Cooperating Teacher, Nelson Rojas, who always allowed me to develop my research and teaching work and helped me improve my performance in order to provide a better assistance to the students' needs and a better response to the class demands. As well, my gratitude goes for all the students, who are the reason why this project was possible. I consider that they have many things from which the teachers can learn too.

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Preface

The Action Research project was carried out in a Public School called Juan María Céspedes, located in "La Comuna 16" of Laureles in Medellín, it had 1.800 students totally. This school comprised distinct educational services in levels such as Pre-school, elementary, middle and high school along with the vocational education. The project consisted of 41 second-grade students, 30 boys and 11 girls aged between 7 and 8 years old. It lasted around eleven months.

By methods such as observations, it was possible to identify the main problems that affected the teaching and learning practices in class. Especially the fact that many students' behavior was very disruptive to the lessons development, most of them did not engage in learning the English language; that is to say, they did not understand the meaning and use of words and expressions neither did the activities proposed in a productive way. In that sense, Language Learning Aids were conceived as a teaching instruction and as a learning strategy that could help students become more motivated and curious for knowing about English. Bearing in mind that the materials would comprise illustrative flashcards and readings, animated videos, sticky songs and interactive slides and games, as well as drawings made by the students themselves.

After obtaining more data through observations and interview for Cooperating Teacher, it could be stated that the visual learning aids, in fact, promoted and increased the

students' engagement in the English language learning. Since it was evidenced that students, increasingly participated and worked in an active way, by giving them the chance to play, explore and draw. Activities such as songs and drawings proved to be very effective materials for teaching in order to foster and improve students' engagement in learning English.

Description of the context

This project was carried out in a Public School called Juan María Céspedes, located in "La Comuna 16" of Laureles in Medellín, it had 1.800 students totally. This school comprised distinct educational services in levels such as Pre-school, elementary, middle and high school along with the vocational education. Its institutional pedagogic model proposed a social and integral constructivist focus that intended to develop critical thinking, several competences and the different intelligences through meaningful experiences and cognitive development.

Its pedagogical actions were based on the divergent thinking and needs of the students and their communities, In addition to this; it intended to strengthen the teamwork in order to give place to democratic values such as liberty, responsibility and autonomy; and to allow other ways of expressions that let people establish a better communication and sense of belonging. Its philosophical and ideological fundamentals were based on the National Political Constitution and the demand of the citizens in a globalized world.

With respect to the facilities of this scholar complex, It was found that it comprised three floors with 28 classrooms totally, four bathrooms, a Science room, a mechanics room, a spacious computers room, a newspaper mural, some murals of the local football teams "Nacional and Medellín" in a small football pitch. A spacious English room with a TV Set, video beam, a computer and some different English posters. There was as well, a library

equipped with a spacious room, a video beam, 24 computers, a loud speaker, and a great deal of children's books. The school also had a basketball court, a football pitch, a spacious yard, and a cafeteria for all the students. Moreover, for the teacher and administrators staff, there was a director's room, a teachers' room, and four coordinators' rooms, all these last three rooms with computers and Wi-Fi. The classroom, where the observation was carried out, was spacious enough for 41 students, which contained 48 chairs, a teacher's desk, some drawers, to put away the students' materials and notebooks, a board divided into two parts; the first one a chalkboard and the second one a white board. In addition to this, there was an overhead projector with loudspeakers.

In this Educational Institution, English was taught as a foreign language. Students took 120 hours of English lessons a year. Particularly, the second graders were supposed to attend English Class for three hours weekly. The class observed consisted of 41 second-grade students, 30 boys and 11 girls aged between 7 and 8 years old, who belonged to the socioeconomic strata ranged between 2 and 3. In accordance with the English syllabus, second graders were expected to express some of their feelings, what they liked and what they did not like, name clothes, fruits, vegetables and general food and describe the food they ate, and the clothes they wore. The students were assessed every period, which means, every three months, through a rubric that determined the degree of development or progress; concerning the standards defined in the English Language Proficiency, which were the following: superior level, high level, basic level and low level. Which contained different criteria such as "being, knowing and doing" that placed the students, according to their performance in each period.

For the assessment, the English syllabus had some indicators of each student's academic performance, which were as follow superior, high, and basic according to three criteria or

competences "knowing, being and doing". Which offered a feedback that explained the students' aspects to be improved and strengths, instead of just grading.

The teacher, in charge of the group observed, graduated in 2006 as a Physical Education Teacher from Universidad Surcolombiana. He started to work as an English teacher in 2016, in "Juan María Céspedes" with 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Totally, he had 12 years of experience as a teacher, most of these years working as a Volleyball Trainer in several institutions, specifically in "Escuela de Ingeniería de Antioquia" and in the public school called "Juan María Céspedes" in which he had 3 years of experience working there, especially in his own area.

Statement of the Problem

This action research was developed in an English course in a public school for about ten months. During this time, it was observed that there was not a structured language Instruction that could lead students to engage in the English language learning and develop the activities proposed in the class in a meaningful way.

The issues that called the attention was the fact that most of the time in the English classes; the students' attention span was quite short. They easily lost their attention on what they were doing, because some of them preferred to interact between them, or just because the topic was not interesting for them. Due to this, the teacher had to spend a lot of time asking students to pay attention to him instead of developing the lesson. These circumstances repeatedly occurred in the class and were constantly observed: *"The teacher started the class taking attendance amid the shouts and chats by the students. Most of them were unfocused and got distracted with all around them". (Journal excerpt, August 03, 2016).* Consequently, it was necessary to find the way that helped teachers to get students involved in the activities

intended to learn English, in a thorough and meaningful way, in which they could develop the communicative skills and make use of the language. *Engagement is conceptualized as the time and effort students invest in educational activities (Kuh, 2009).*

Another issue was the lack of an organized language instruction. It means that the teacher did not develop the lesson in a sequenced or progressive way that could facilitate the establishment and achievement of the goal of the lesson proposed, there was not a variety of strategies or activities that could help students understand the topic and its purpose. The next issue was constituted by the lack of use of different interactive, technological or illustrative resources that could make the understanding of the meaning and context of the topics easier; consequently, the lack of opportunity to make use of different learning and teaching tools could not turn out to be appealing and encouraging for students. *It is necessary to have more technological resources at school in order to develop more interactive and effective English classes (Teacher's Interview excerpt, August 03, 2016).* The last issue is that the students' oral and written comprehension and production was very poor, which implied a lack of students' engagement and immersion in the target language. *According to Vygotsky (1978) when teachers structure or organize learning opportunities at the appropriate level and with the right support, students become engaged in learning.* That is why, it was important to identify an appropriate language Instruction that could help as teachers as students to have a meaningful and purposeful learning and teaching process.

It is undeniable that the problems found in the class could arise because of the large amount of students and indiscipline, which also made the class management and the teacher's performance, be complicated. However, it was important to find out how the English teacher could foster the students' engagement in the activities proposed in class, as well as their English learning process. Taking into account the above-mentioned issues, "engagement"

was considered the core aspect to attend to, since if the students did not spend time, did not

devote energy neither strived to do the activities and homework proposed, in order to learn

English, there would not be any useful development of topics or any consistent and

meaningful learning and teaching process. So, Instructional practices driven from earlier

motivational constructs are used to infuse students engagement and motivation (Guthrie et al.,

2007).That is why, it was essential to take into consideration, the importance of the use of

different illustrative teaching and learning means as visual learning aids, based on the

students' context, likes, experiences and interests.

Underwood's work (1989) (as cited in Chun and Plass, 1996), stated that, "A

commonplace principle for human learning is visual memory. We remember images better

than words; hence, we remember words better if they are strongly associated with images.

Koren's work, (1999) (as cited in Chun and Plass, 1996) showed that foreign words

associated with actual objects or imagery techniques are learned more easily than words

without these associations. As from the previously cited, the implementation of Visual

Learning Aids was reasonably considered, as part of an organized language instruction and as

the core idea that could help come through the different difficulties raised above. Especially,

"the students' lack of engagement in learning English", that is to say, the purpose was to

foster the students' engagement, in their own English learning process, since it constituted the

means to help students understand the topics proposed in class, to motivate students through

the implementation of textbooks, interactive captions, slides, videos, flashcards, mimics, and

so on. As well, to make use of the language during the development of the activities

associated with their interests and imagination, on the condition that it could be properly

adapted to their level and age. Likewise, to create a better learning atmosphere and make

students active actors of their own learning process.

Theoretical Background

This action research project was supported by a theoretical framework, which consisted of some theories; providing some definitions and explanations, of the main concepts and ideas that could allow develop and constitute the whole notion of this research work. These main concepts and ideas were born from what was found by means of different observations, which were carried out in a group of second graders, since the observations permitted to find out that students did not engage in the English Language meaningfully. It means that they did not participate actively, did not pay attention to the teacher's instructions, did not understand the topics proposed and did not develop the exercises successfully. Under these circumstances, one of those main ideas was the implementation of the Visual Learning Aids.

Firstly, some theories concerning "children's language learning process" was raised, taking into consideration that this project was developed upon children aged between seven and eight; for that reason was important to understand how "the children's language learning process" works in order to make the teaching practice respond in an appropriate and well-timed way. Secondly, the term "Visual Learning Aids" was explained in order to understand the language strategy that was implemented in class with the purpose of improving the teaching practice. Thirdly, the term "motivation" was described by means of ideas raised by some authors, since it can be seen as the condition so that students can be engaged in the

language. Fourthly, the concept "engagement" was explained through some theories that could let people better understand the meaning of this substantial term that was brought up as part of the purpose of this project, mainly to be promoted in the students by the teacher in the classroom in order to involve them in what they are learning.

Uttal, Schreiber, & DeLoache's work (as cited in Newman & Veni, 2015) states that in the pre-operational stage, children (2 – 7 years old) begin to represent the world with words and images. Hence, by using symbolic thought, it will be more effective for them to learn languages, since they are fascinated by images and moving elements. Learning vocabulary enables them to think about people, objects, and feelings. Teaching pre-operational children by using concrete teaching aids such as animated images related to the vocabularies that appear on the screen enables the children to interact with them. As from these ideas, it was strongly believed that it was necessary to focus, the English Language teaching practice, on concrete objects or images representing people, animals, and situations, with simple language instructions. By making use of illustrative and interactive materials, which could easily motivate and appeal students to the lessons; in a way that they could search, assume and discover, through images, words, and real objects, within the reach of them.

Robson's work (as cited in Guz and Tetiurka 2013) Claims that gathering direct, hands-on experiences and exploring the environment allow children to build expertise and develop new ways of thinking. According to this, it was important to take into consideration the idea of developing contextualized activities that could relate to their environment, interests and experiences, which could help students to make associations between their previous knowledge, the lessons topics and their lives and to found the way to gain more competences. In this sense, Williams and Burden's work (as cited in Guz and Tetiurka 2013)

argues that children can only understand and focus on what is "meaningful to them" and in ways that are "meaningful to them."

Rather's work (as cited in Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2015) defines Visual aids as those instructional devices, which are used in the classroom to encourage learning and make it easier and motivating. The material like models, charts, filmstrip, projectors, radio, television, maps are called instructional aids. Thanks to this, it could be possible to believe that visual aids become an instructional strategy that could manage to motivate students to participate and work in class; as well, to facilitate the students' understanding of the topics raised in class. It also comprises Burrow's work (as cited in Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2015) which argues that Visual aids can be very useful in supporting a topic, and the amalgamation of both visual and audio stimuli is particularly effective since the two most important senses are involved. This claim leads to consider that visual learning aids could help the teacher draw students' attention more easily, since the materials that would be used, such as videos, slides, flashcards, charts, etc., could facilitate the teacher's communication with the students, without using a lot of the mother tongue or interpretation strategy, give a context to the words and expressions studied. Dolati and Mikaili's work (as cited in Dolati and Richards, 2012) states that for many English learners, whenever they think of vocabulary, they think of learning a list of new words with meanings in their native language without any real context practice. They may even write down lines of new words without any idea of the real use of them in context.

Covington & Müeller's work (as cited in Theodotou, 2014) explains that intrinsic motivation has been defined variously as a tendency to engage in activities for their own sake, just for the pleasure derived in performing them or for the satisfaction of curiosity. It correlates with an internal force that triggers people to participate in activities, and this particular force makes students engage actively and look forward to learning new academic

concepts. Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci's work (as cited in Theodotou, 2014) explains extrinsic motivation as the desire of people to participate in activities in order to gain something different from the task itself.

Fredricks et al. (2004) described engagement as a malleable, developing, and multidimensional construct that consists of three broad dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. The first involves positive conduct, such as adhering to the norms of the classroom, following the rules, and refraining from engaging in disruptive behaviors. The cognitive engagement refers to students' investment in learning, and involves aspects such as willingness and thoughtfulness to expend the effort required to understand difficult tasks. It also identified emotional engagement as students' positive and negative emotional reactions toward teachers, classmates, academic works, and school in general.

To sum up, the Visual learning aids were conceived, as a language learning strategy and a language teaching instruction; due to the fact that could help the teacher do more illustrative, appealing and interactive classes for the children. Which could contribute to facilitate the students' understanding and learning, to raise students' motivation in most of their areas of life; and finally, to engage them, essentially, in the English language learning. Taking into account the importance of recognizing the students' efforts, performance and works, developing topics through illustrative material, in a way that might provide a clear meaning and context of the vocabulary taught in every lesson.

To conclude, it is important to take into consideration the previous statement of the problems observed and found in class, and the theoretical support brought up and raised, in order to answer the following question.

Research question

How can the use of visual learning aids promote the 2nd graders' engagement in the English language learning at Juan María Céspedes School?

Objectives

General objective
To promote 2nd graders' engagement in the English Language Learning.

Specific Objectives

• To describe how Visual Learning Aids promote students' engagement.

• To analyze how Visual Learning Aids promote students' engagement.

• To evaluate the benefits of the Visual Learning Aids with respect to the students' engagement.

Action Plan

Throughout the first semester of this action research project, only some observations were carried out based on second graders. These observations were logged in journals, class after class, which turned out to be the paramount source. Initially, to explore the different aspects presented in the classroom, to identify the different problems affecting teaching and learning and the possible solutions to be implemented, in order to improve these school practices; and finally, the most importantly, to describe how real was the solution. As a result of that, it was possible to structure a proposal of instructional and research actions.

During the second semester, the instructional and research actions proposal was developed along with the observation process. In the instructional action, it was proposed to develop the different English lessons topics, proposed by the school, by using the visual learning aids focused on fostering the students' engagement in learning English. For this reason, posters, flashcards, slides, games, short picture books, drawings and videos were implemented as part of visual learning aids. In the second term of the second semester, surveys were applied for the students in order to analyze how the implementation of the visual learning aids contributed to the students' engagement in English learning. Next, an interview for the cooperating teacher was carried out aiming at evaluating the benefits of the use of the visual learning aids in the English course.

Development of Actions

With the purpose of complying with the objectives proposed in this action research project, some research and teaching processes were put into action, which will be describe as follows.

The topics that were included in the lessons plan, in order to develop the instructional actions, emerged from a previous agreement with the Cooperating Teacher and in accordance with the institutional English syllabus. Which was assigned to the second graders and comprised topics such as class instructions, greetings, personal information, school objects, ordinal and cardinal numbers; as well, fruits, vegetables, general food, clothes and expressions such as "I like, I don't like, I love, I hate". In addition to this, it was included two more topics concerning two readings, the first one called "Sometimes" by Keith Baker (2003) and the second one called "Things I like" by Anthony Browne (1989). All these topics were applied within the second semester of this project (January-June), and approached in class

through Visual Aids by using materials like posters, flashcards, slides, games slides, short picture books, drawings, songs and videos.

During the development of the lessons, the students were meant to play, as when they played a game by counting different objects and animals that popped up through slides. Then, each student had to choose the correct number and say, in English, how many objects or animals of the same figure there were in the image in order to learn cardinal numbers (Journal 8, March 27th, 2017). The students had to guess, as when they played a Concentration Game, which consisted of 32 pieces of paper, illustrated with pictures of school objects, and with their respective word; the pieces were face down and the students had to remember the place of each pair (Journal 5, March 13th, 2017). The students were supposed to draw, as when they drew different things that they liked, and in another piece of paper, they drew the things that they did not like; they had to color and name them in English. Finally, they had to present their work to the rest of the class. They had to read, as when the students read a short story named "Sometimes" along with the teacher. The reading was displayed through a TV set. It was read twice. Then, the teacher socialized with the students, the meaning of the different words of the story and keywords concerning feelings, as well, he asked them to recognize all kinds of objects or elements that appeared in the story (Journal 11, April 21st, 2017). Finally, they had to sing and to dance, as when students sang a song related to "school items" using the mimicry or moving to illustrate different objects that could be found at school (Journal 5, March 13th, 2017).

Hensen, McTaggart, Schmuck's work (as cited in Johnson, 2005) claims that Action research can be defined as the process of studying a real school or classroom situation to understand and improve the quality of actions or instruction. With the purpose of developing this action research project, it was proposed to make use of three methods to collect data.

These data were mainly concerning the students' behavior, performance in class, and use of the English Language. The data also consisted in the possible difficulties or weaknesses to overcome or improve, in the teaching and learning practice, such as students' lack of engagement in the English language; as well, the data helped to found the necessity of implementing the visual learning aids, as a strategy to find a possible solution.

The methods used were an observation per class, an Interview for the Cooperating Teacher, finally a survey for the students. Firstly, the observations were carried during a year. In the first semester, ten observations were carried in order to study the school context and the students' needs, thanks to these observations, it was possible to find out what were the aspects to be corrected, or else, improved for the teaching and learning interaction; for instance, the little students' participation, the lack of students' discipline, the lack of students' knowledge of the language, and the large amount of students in a classroom. Three months later, the visual learning aids were raised, as an instructional action strategy and as the means to solve the different difficulties noticed in the English lessons. Next, during the second semester, the observations were still used; at that time, as a method to view the different students' behaviors, performance, reactions and use of English language along with the implementation of the visual learning aids. The purpose, of using the observations, was to describe how the Visual learning aids promote students' engagement in learning. Secondly, an Interview for the Cooperating Teacher was carried out. The Interview comprised five questions. These questions were raised in a way that the teacher could describe what he observed from the students; their behaviors, participation, motivation, performance in the activities, and the understanding of the language. Also, that the teacher could express his impressions in terms of the usefulness of the Visual Learning Aids with respect to the students' engagement, as from what he noticed in class. It was applied in May. Moreover, the

purpose with this Interview was to evaluate the benefits of the Visual Learning Aids with respect to the students' engagement. Lastly, the survey for students, which could not be done because of a national strike carried out by the teachers of public schools, that is why, it was not possible to gather information through surveys from students which was supposed to be applied in June, that consisted of five questions. The purpose with this method was to gather data that could allow analyzing how Visual Learning Aids promote students' engagement.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected during all the action research work, was based on the five steps suggested by Altrichter (1993). Firstly, to read data in order to understand better what happened in the research and Instructional actions. Secondly, to highlight the most significant events and find out the different patterns. Thirdly, to elaborate a diagram that facilitates the comprehension of those facts. Fourthly, to interpret data explaining the facts along with theory that supports that interpretation. Finally, to draw the conclusions.

Findings and Interpretation

Students' Motivation

By means of the data collected, it was possible to establish that the use of illustrative materials such as flashcards represented through images along with words or expressions could be very appealing for the students, especially for children. It can also be stated that when the students know what they are supposed to do or the topics are clear enough, they turn out to be more motivated and willing to participate. The teacher stated, "The students enjoyed a lot, those activities carried out by means of flashcards, games, drawings, as well as songs." (Interview to the Cooperating teacher, May 9, 2017). On the other hand, similar

conditions were evidenced in the journal in terms of students' behavior. For instance when the teacher introduced the different greetings, questions and corresponding answers through Flashcards containing illustrative images. "Most of the students showed a good spirit to prepare for having a good performance and succeeding in the activity." (Journal Entry 12 February 27th, 2017). Uttal, Schreiber, & DeLoache's work (as cited in Newman & Veni, 2015) states that in the pre-operational stage, children (2 – 7 years old) begin to represent the world with words and images. Hence, by using symbolic thought, it will be more effective for them to learn languages, since they are fascinated by images and moving elements. In this category, it was found that illustrated material such as flashcards, drawings and songs could help encourage students to participate in class, to be willing to work in class and to be engaged in understanding and learning the English language. Since the students are in a stage, in which they can learn easier through images and sticky sounds. As well, all those visual learning aids, previously mentioned, could also help the teacher to handle the students' disruptive behavior. It is important to take into account Rather's work (as cited in Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2015) which defines Visual aids as those instructional devices, which are used in the classroom to encourage learning and make it easier and motivating. That is to say, in this sense, it could be possible to observe that the visual learning aids not just help motivate students to learn, but also facilitate the students' learning and understanding process.

Fostering Students' Engagement

It also could be evidenced that the activities carried out through songs could contribute to reduce disruptive behaviors, obtaining a better development of the class by gaining students' attention, motivation; and consequently, engagement in participating and doing the activities proposed in class. As from what was found in the data collected, it was possible to claim that the songs became an effective strategy to reestablish the students'

discipline, attention, to foster students' engagement in developing the activities proposed and to help in understanding and learning the lesson applied in class; it also helps to recover the students' attention, discipline and interaction between the students and teacher; since the students pay, more easily, attention to the teacher's instructions. The songs with an encouraging pace seem to be very sticky for them. It was observed that when the teacher proposed a song, they quickly intended to keep the pace of it by clapping and moving. When the teachers lost students' attention and discipline, they were easily brought back.

According to the Cooperating Teacher, there was an increase on the students' engagement in terms of attention, participation and work in class; the teacher stated, "I noticed that there was more engagement on the behalf of the kids." (Interview to the Cooperating teacher, May 9th, 2017). This was supported by what was registered in class through the research journal as follows "the song called "Good Afternoon" has proven to be a successful way to get the students attention and keep them quiet. The response to the song by the students was very positive, because it worked as a strategy to keep them attentive and active at working in class." (Journal Entry 13, February 27th, 2017). As well, "The students showed a better attention to the lesson and the teacher could carry out the entire lesson plan. The video that comprised a song, in this case about school objects, proved to be effective since most of the students participated in an active way, although there were a few of them playing around." (Journal Entry 16, March 16th, 2017).

Fredricks et al. (2004) described engagement as a malleable, developing, and multidimensional construct that consists of three broad dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. The first involves positive conduct, such as adhering to the norms of the classroom, following the rules, and refraining from engaging in disruptive behaviors. The cognitive engagement refers to students' investment in learning, and involves aspects such as

willingness and thoughtfulness to expend the effort required to understand difficult tasks. It also identified emotional engagement as students' positive and negative emotional reactions toward teachers, classmates, academic works, and school in general. It means that engagement involves students' discipline, efforts, and motivation. Moreover, since the engagement is malleable and developing, it might change over time; it could be improved or deteriorated, it might depend on the consistency and versatility in the use of the visual learning aids. Therefore, it is important to keep students engaged with a wide variety of materials and strategies.

Burrow's work (as cited in Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2015) argues that Visual aids can be very useful in supporting a topic, and the amalgamation of both visual and audio stimuli is particularly effective since the two most important senses are involved. This means that the activities such as videos, games slides, flashcards, etc., may involve different stimuli, in this case visual stimulus, which could imply a positive effect, in a way that might lead students to engage in the activities put into action and could promote learning in those children who can easily learn by watching. As well, activities such as songs can stimulate the sense of hearing in a way that may offer the opportunity to children to study the English language not just by watching, but also involving hearing stimulus. Furthermore, it could give place to those students who can learn, with ease, by listening.

It was evident that the students became very attentive and participative each time that the teacher asked them to sing and they seemed to get more involved in working when they were assigned to make drawings (Journal Entry 14, March 6th, 2017). To conclude, it is possible to state that the main strategies or materials that should be used in order to foster students' engagement are the songs and drawings.

Visual Learning Aids Benefits

According to the data collected, it was found that one of the main benefits of using Visual

Learning Aids is the fact that they may facilitate the understanding of different words and

expressions since they are represented by images, which could give a clear idea of their

meanings. Activities such as cutting out and singing imply stimuli that help children to

understand the teacher's instructions, explanations and lessons in a better way. Then the

teacher concludes, "The audiovisual learning aids were very important because they

facilitated the understanding of all the English topics (Interview to the Cooperating teacher,

May 9th, 2017). The response of the students towards the activity proposed by the Teacher

through the slides was beneficial and showed an evidence of understanding the Topic, since

many of them could recognize the different school objects words and use. (Journal Entry 15,

March 13th, 2017). The involved students demonstrated that they could recognize most

School Objects by the words and images. It means that most of the students complied with

the purpose of the activities done in class, which is learning the School Objects. (Journal

Entry 16, March 23rd, 2017).

Dolati and Mikaili's work (as cited in Dolati and Richards, 2012) states that for many

English learners, whenever they think of vocabulary, they think of learning a list of new

words with meanings in their native language without any real context practice. They may

even write down lines of new words without any idea of the real use of them in context.

Which means that it is necessary to learn from context and not from a list of words. It is also

important to give a context to the words through images or drawings that could give the

conditions to the children, in order to understand without difficulties, since at their age, they

are more able to learn by means of concrete objects or images.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this action research project was to promote 2nd graders'

engagement in the English Language Learning. Consequently, thanks to the use of different

interactive and illustrative materials such as videos, flashcards, slides, games, songs, readings

and drawings in class, it may be stated that the visual learning aids, in fact, promoted and

increased the students' engagement in the English language learning. That is to say, students,

increasingly participated and worked in an active way; by giving them the chance to play,

explore and draw. Activities such as songs and drawings proved to be very effective materials

for teaching in order to foster and improve students engagement, firstly because they enjoy to

keep the pace of any sticky song, clap and move their body; secondly due to the necessity,

that emerge from them, of doing a good job, being praised for it and not to be behind with

their classmates.

It is possible to conclude that visual learning aids may facilitate the students'

understanding, since it offers the opportunity to study topics, words or expressions amid a

context that display a meaning and a use, especially for children who need to be supported

with images or sounds regarding concrete objects. It is possible to state that the visual

learning aids not just help motivate students to learn, but also facilitate the students' learning

and understanding process.

When sometimes most of the students wanted to participate, it was somewhat difficult to give the opportunity to all the students to participate or do an activity, for instance on the board, because of the time. It is substantial to bear in mind that the students' engagement could improve time after time, but also could deteriorate, it means that teachers should have a wide variety of interactive and illustrative activities that can help teacher keep students motivated and curious.

One of the most challenging aspects of using the visual learning aids is to do transitions from one topic or activity to another one, since it could take long time to prepare or the materials to continue with another activity; that is why, it is very important to use alternative ways of keeping the students spending time in their works, since their attention span is very short.

Reflection

This research process means a rewarding experience with many teachings that enrich my personal and professional experience. Personally, this action research project meant a series of significant experiences that contributed positively to my development as a person and a professional, from which I learned many social and educational issues comprised at school. For example, as a professional, I started to value much more the importance of promoting education and providing the conditions for that since people are children, not just when they grow up because childhood, in my opinion, is the most substantial stage of a human being's life. Therefore, it is important, as a teacher, to be involved in the process of making this possible. As well, intending to improve the teaching and learning practice in a classroom is a good starting point. I hope this project will contribute in a positive way to the

development of future teaching and research works that would intend to use Visual Aids to

lead students to engage in learning English as a foreign language.

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