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ANALYZING THE INFLUENCE OF VISUAL CUES IN THE ENGLISH CLASSROOM:

A CASE STUDY AT LA SALLE BONANOVA.

CAN THE USE OF VISUAL CUES MODIFY

MOTIVATION AND LEARNING RESULTS?

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ABSTRACT

This research deals with using visual cues in teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) and proves that visuals should be integrated in the language classroom due to the positive effects they have on students. This article, based on different researches, includes four following components. First, the importance of visuals in second language acquisition to inspire students' intrinsic motivation, as a way of scaffolding to get more interaction. Secondly, this research emphasizes how the culture affects cognitive structures, and how it helps on the language learning process. Thirdly, it also places value on the role of the teacher to foster the children's linguistic development. Lastly, the principles of Universal Design of Learning (UDL) have been considered. Therefore, throughout the research question: *Can the use of visual cues modify motivation and learning results*, this article studies the way of teaching and learning English with visuals, analysing how they impact on the students' learning process. For that reason, I conducted research in 2 groups of first grade, where visuals have been used only in one of them. In order to check the previous situation, an observation grid was handed. After this, a set of sessions were designed for Group A, composed by 16 students, and for Group B, composed by 11 students. The outcomes have been measured with qualitative and quantitative methods. Due to the results, it can be resumed that the use of visuals in the classroom can help the students to absorb the content and become motivated.

Key words: Visual support, teaching practice, motivation, English as a Second language, input, visual learning.

RESUM

Aquesta recerca tracta d'utilitzar el suport visual dins l'ensenyament de l'Anglès com a Segona Llengua (ESL) i comprovar que les imatges haurien de ser integrades dins de la classe de llengua, a causa dels efectes positius que aquestes imatges tenen en els estudiants. Aquest article, basat en diferents recerques, inclou quatre components. En primer lloc, la importància del suport visual en l'adquisició de la segona llengua, per desenvolupar la motivació intrínseca dels estudiants, com a tècnica de bastida per aconseguir més interaccions. En segon lloc, aquesta recerca emfatitza com la cultura afecta les estructures cognitives i com ajuda en el procés d'aprenentatge de la llengua. En tercer lloc, valora la funció del mestre per promoure el desenvolupament lingüístic dels alumnes. Per últim, s'han tingut en compte els principis del Disseny Universal d'Aprenentatge (UDL). Per aquest motiu, a través de la pregunta de recerca: *Pot l'ús del suport visual modificar la motivació i els resultats d'aprenentatge*, aquest article

estudia la manera d'ensenyar i aprendre anglès amb imatges, analitzant com aquestes impacten en el procés d'aprenentatge dels estudiants. D'aquesta manera, vaig conduir la recerca dins de 2 grups de primer grau, on les imatges només han estat usades en només un d'ells. Per tal de comprovar la situació anterior, es va passar una graella d'observació. Posteriorment, un conjunt de sessions van ser dissenyades pel Grup A, compost per 16 estudiants, i pel Grup B, compost per 11 estudiants. Els resultats han estat mesurats amb mètodes qualitius i quantitius. A causa dels resultats, es pot resumir que l'ús del suport visual a l'aula ajuda als estudiants a assimilar el contingut i esdevenir motivat.

Paraules clau: Suport visual, pràctica docent, motivació, Anglès com a Segona Llengua, input, aprenentatge visual.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación trata de utilizar el apoyo visual dentro de la enseñanza del Inglés como Segunda Lengua (ESL) y comprobar que las imágenes deberían ser integradas dentro de la clase de lengua, a causa de los efectos positivos que estas imágenes comportan en los estudiantes. Este artículo, basado en diferentes investigaciones, incluye cuatro componentes. En primer lugar, la importancia del apoyo visual en la adquisición de la segunda lengua, para desarrollar la motivación intrínseca de los estudiantes, como técnica de andamiaje para conseguir más interacciones. En segundo lugar, esta investigación enfatiza cómo la cultura puede afectar las estructuras cognitivas y cómo ayuda en el proceso de aprendizaje de la lengua. En tercer lugar, valora la función del maestro para promover el desarrollo lingüístico de los alumnos. Por último, se han tenido en cuenta los principios del Diseño Universal del Aprendizaje (UDL). Por este motivo, a través de la pregunta de investigación: *Puede el uso del apoyo visual, modificar la motivación y los resultados de aprendizaje*, este artículo estudia la manera de enseñar y aprender inglés mediante imágenes, analizando cómo éstas impactan en el proceso de aprendizaje de los alumnos. De este modo, conduje la investigación en 2 grupos de primer grado, donde las imágenes sólo han sido usadas en uno de estos grupos. Para comprobar la situación anterior, se pasó una tabla de observación. Posteriormente, un conjunto de sesiones fueron diseñadas para el Grupo A, compuesto por 16 estudiantes, y para el Grupo B, compuesto por 11 alumnos. Los resultados han sido medidos con métodos cualitativos y cuantitativos. Debido a estos resultados, se puede concluir que el uso del apoyo visual en el aula, ayuda a los estudiantes a asimilar el contenido y acontecer motivado.

Palabras clave: Soporte visual, práctica docente, motivación, Inglés como Segunda Lengua, input, aprendizaje visual.

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

Nowadays, images have a lot of power in our society. We live in the age of visual culture where our lives are surrounded by images. No one can therefore doubt of the importance of them to qualify and reinforce any type of information, so images interact with our brains and create communication.

85% of the information stored on our brain derives from visual references. Considering the importance of these visual cues during the learning process to retain new concepts, it is essential to prepare and add this type of information on our message, to create a communicative environment in an EFL classroom.

For that reason, the present paper examines the valuable aspects of the use of visual support in the language classroom. It also analyses how these visual cues impact on the students' learning results and on their motivation during the acquisition of a second language.

This teacher action research consists of the application of visual cues on one group of Kids1 stage students from La Salle Bonanova to compare it with another Kids1 group, in which visual cues are not going to be applied. Both groups are identified as English language learners (ELLs), so English is seen as their second language (ESOL). The teacher is going to introduce visual cues only in one group (Group A) to analyse afterwards the differences between Group A and Group B in terms of their learning results and their motivation.

After reviewing many research – based strategies, I decided to explore how the visual support could enhance their English language learning. When I refer to images and visuals, I am not referring to images placed without sense in the classroom but imparting real meaning to them to assimilate it and give added value. For that reason, I would like to explore if the use of visuals in the classroom provides a more meaningful context for the students and let them to become more participative in the class group.

Considering the aspects that are going to be analysed, the first aim of this paper is to explore the classroom reality, related with methodology and student's motivation before the application of visual cues. To do so, I have developed an observation grid and a teacher's diary.

The second objective is to design a teaching proposal, based on 4 sessions for one group of Kids 1, in which visuals are integrated, in order to assess their benefits for students.

The third and closing objective of this paper is to analyse the application of visual cues in the English classroom, comparing the learning results and motivation of students from Group A and Group B.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUALS IN SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Nowadays, in our daily life, we are surrounded by images, so one thing that cannot be denied is that our students live in a media world, in which most of the information is provided by visual input. According to Aguledo (2015), images play an important role in attention, motivation, comprehension and retention during the learning process. Besides, authors as Gorman and Schultz (2010) reinforce the importance of the addition of visuals in this age of visual culture so, both reading and writing may be enhanced by naming – the learning of the definitions – but by sight and context.

Stimulating students to use of visual aids is positive and it enriches their learning experience for second language acquisition (Halwani, 2017). In addition, when referring to student's motivation and according to Cho, Xu and Rhodes (2010), visuals are one way to inspire students' intrinsic motivation and activate their prior knowledge.

Nevertheless, what seems to be clear and regarding Linda and Cooper (2002) is that from the time they are born until about five years of age when they begin to read, children get most of their information via visual observation. Consequently, providing an abundance of visual information was an approach that teachers sought to implement.

Considering that visual literacy is acquired before verbal literacy (Cooper, 2002), authors as Henry and Simpson (2001) agree with the fact that the role of visual aids and how they are used can be highly engaging in the educational structure to develop English as second language. Furthermore, Herrera et al (2010) and Townsend (2009) mention that the application of visuals provides an additional dimension of support when teaching language to ELLS.

Moreover, with respect to the application of visual aids, Halwani (2017) mentions that also interaction improves when teachers use them. The results of their study show that visuals work

as a way of scaffolding to get more interaction. On the top of that, students absorb and participate more in the classroom and they become more interactive. Seeing that, visual aids help the students to be an active participant in the class with no fear of giving wrong answers. In this way, visual cues also have an important role in routines. According to Bruner (1983), routines allow to scaffold and give the students security of the familiar with the new. Consequently, the use of visual cues in these routines would enhance the language learning of the students.

Even so, the results of the study examined by Sato and Suzuki (2010) showed that a combination of text and visuals is essential, rather than using one or the other, likely because of the availability of multiple learning styles and connections.

VISUAL CUES AND CULTURE

A recurrent concern of L2 teachers and educators has always been the connection between language and culture. Different researchers have become aware that a second language cannot be learned or taught without addressing the culture in which it is used.

Pulverness (2003) asserts that language cultural content has to be included in language teaching programs. For that reason, the relation commented above between language and culture has to be understood by the people who is involved in language teaching.

Related to the previous idea, Wallace (1973) pointed out that even all the difficulties we all have in defining culture, language and thought, what is clear is that culture affects cognitive structures and it could also help as a motivating effect on the language learner and their learning process (Genc and Bada, 2005). Therefore, taking into account the findings of their study, culture class changes student's attitudes, raising cultural awareness and language skills and contributing to teaching profession.

Nevertheless, highlighting Linguistic Relativity, Richards, Platt J and Platt H (1992) mention that our world's perception is related with our native language, so the cultural differences appear when finding distinctions between one language and another. Even so, the experience that children have with cultures is more intense than that experienced by adults, because as Wertheimer and Foy (1980) pointed out, the children rely more heavily on visual information to gain meaning. Thus, even if they may not be able to read in their first language, they comprehend and draw conclusions through visual information.

In addition to this, it is true that the ability to comprehend pictorial literacy is learned but this learning takes place more rapidly in a culture where pictures are frequently seen (Goldsmith, 1984). Accordingly, children that have been visual learners since birth and understanding this visual information, they bring with them their first culture and it may serve as a bridge to new culture and new language (Dame, 1995). Then, taking into account Linda and Cooper (2002), environment influences the culture because it develops the visual experiences available.

THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

To begin with, teachers need to be aware of how learners acquire a new language. On one hand, theories such as **Innatism (Chomsky, 1959), Social Interaction (Vygotsky, 1978)** or Cognitive Development (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969) demonstrated that diverse factors could influence in the acquisition of a language. Moreover, on the other hand, Krashen (1983) mentions that there are some similarities in the order of the acquisition for second language and for first language.

For that reason, focusing on the role of the teacher and according to Kersten, Steinlen, Tiefenthal, Wippermann and Flyman Mattsson (2010), it is important to place value on different components to foster the children's linguistic development. One of the most important aspect is the quality and the quantity of the L2 input that the teacher gives them; a good L2 teacher gives the children many chances to understand the language, providing constant L2 input with the aim to combine the meaning of the language with the actions that children observe. Secondly, another factor to consider is the contextualization of L2, taking into account that learners do not have to understand every single word said by teacher but what they mean. Taking this in account, pictures can help the students to connect their mother tongue and English, so direct translations are not needed.

For that reason, it is in this part of the children's learning process where strategies like visual cues have to be implemented, because they enable the child to understand a situation without having to rely on language at all. Due to the fact that teachers must bring the real world into the classroom to make the acquisition of the language more meaningful for the students (Brinton, 2001), teachers also may guide students away from concrete thinking into subjective thought (Gorman and Schultz, 2010), helping the students to create order and find the patterns that will help them to understand what is true and what is outright false. For that reason, if teachers develop subjective thought in the class, they would allow students to introduce their

previous experiences or tastes, reflexing their perspective with their views reality and giving them a new way to discuss and present their opinions and interpretations.

Turning to Kersten, Steinlen, Tiefenthal, Wippermann and Flyman Mattsson (2010) and following their guideline number 4, teacher creates an environment which promotes multi-sensory learning, defined as “*using visual, auditory and kinesthetic modalities, sometimes at the same time*”. In this case, teacher develops meaningful tasks where language is used as a means of communication, providing opportunities to interact. The child needs to feel comfortable both with the method used and the environment where the lessons take place.

In addition to this and taking into consideration Van Staden (2011), visual supports are usually used as scaffolding for the students with different ways in different level. According to Piaget and Inhelder (1969), the child understands the world from his or her own viewpoint and no other. For that reason, teachers are required to boost the student’s ability to comprehend pictures. In like manner, it is important to consider the different levels of image perception that Goldsmith (1984) mentioned. So, according to Goldsmith (1984) children’s use of visual information follows levels of interpretation, context, sequence or pictorial literacy. In this manner, students can detect the image, recognize it and match it to an object, or percept it and identify it, being able to give a name or label to the image.

Finally, after considering the aspects commented on above, one of the most important factor that teachers have to bear in mind during the student’s learning development is motivation. Motivation is the reason why students act in a particular way and it is fundamental to learn successfully. According to Mayer and Moreno (1998), visuals can help arising the students interest, curiosity and motivation, making the lesson more interesting. Also, Siegler (1991) mentions that children tend to pay greater attention to a referent that already interests them.

Different theories have been used to understand how people are motivated. Nevertheless, what seems to be clear among the researchers is that there are two factors that affect motivation: the probability of success and the incentive for success. Therefore, according to Cho, Xu and Rhodes (2010), an individual who has low intrinsic motivation may become motivated if the probability of success has the greatest reward. So, motivation and engagement can feed and influence each other. For that reason, opportunities to use visual cues are one means of strengthening student motivation, which in turn increases student engagement in activities (Cho, Xu and Rhodes 2010). Thus, visual materials help to make the activities more motivating and meaningful for the students.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN OF LEARNING (UDL)

There is a perceived need to devote a special paragraph to Universal Design of Learning (UDL) and to consider the principles that Meyer, Rose and Gordon, (2014) laid out.

On one hand, UDL methodology was created by a group of researchers to improve learning results of students with special needs. But they realized that the curriculum was inflexible and irrelevant for many students, not only for those with special needs. Thus, UDL promotes good practices in the field of neuroscience, education and technology, providing students real and equal opportunities to learn and creating significant learning experiences.

Then, taking UDL in consideration, teachers who give lessons or develop the curriculum may wonder if their curricula is designed to all of the students. Furthermore, they can also apply UDL principles to ensure that materials, methods and educational evaluation takes every student into consideration, at the same time that it reaches their goal. So, teachers would help students to have equal opportunities to be successful, reducing barriers and optimizing levels of challenge.

On the other hand, it is also important to know that the three main principles of Universal Design of Learning are related to the variety of skills, needs and interests to learning, based on neuroscience research, in relation with three primary brain networks.

Moreover, while teacher takes into consideration these three key principles (Representation, Action & Expression and Means of Engagement), visuals would enable the teacher to commit and sustain attention on the variance of students learning.

As a result of integrating visuals in the class the three following principles and their respective guidelines from Universal Design of Learning that deal with visual cues are going to be considered (*See Appendix 1 – The Main Principles of UDL*): a) Provide multiple means of representation, b) Provide multiple means of action and expression, c) Provide options for recruiting interest

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

METHOD

This research revolves around one question: *Can the use of visual cues modify motivation and learning results in the English classroom*, where English is the second language of the students.

Thus, the main objective of the research is to analyse the application of visual cues in an English classroom, as a second language.

In order to answer the question and objectives formulated, a qualitative method has been followed. Moreover, taking into account that it is a teacher action research, so the teacher analysed was the researcher that conducts the study, a field research and an explanatory study has been carried out in a natural context.

For that reason, the instruments used to collect the information during this field research have been the systematic observation and the systematic analysis of video recordings. The results have been transcribed and codified according to a combined method, to integrate the information and draw some conclusions.

INSTRUMENTS

As it has been mentioned before, to gather the information needed for the research, different data – analysis tools have been used.

On the one hand, to identify the research problem and analyse the classroom before the application of visual cues, some systematic observations have been done through an observation grid, which help me to become aware of the previous situation of the classroom, meeting the day - to - day reality of it. The grid consists of 15 aspects, divided into teacher's role and student's role (*See Appendix 2 – Observation Grid*). Therefore, the other resource applied was a teacher's diary, where I indicate the student's attention and participation before the utilization of visual supports.

On the other hand, the support to collect this information during the didactic proposal, where I implemented and integrated visual supports, was video recording; a multimedia resource to interpret and note the classroom reality to analyse it, afterwards, with the grid presented before, to evaluate and compare the differences on learning results between the two groups.

PARTICIPANTS

This study was conducted at La Salle Bonanova, situated in Bonanova neighbourhood, Barcelona. It was developed with two groups of First Grade students for whom English is a second language. The main language that they use in the school is Catalan, and English is first introduced in their Early Years Education.

There are not cultural differences in the classroom between the students. The average class size is around 17 students and participants have not been selected specifically. Group A is formed by 17 students and 12 different students of Group B. For that reason, the study was developed in a small group activity.

They are used to learning English through a traditional way, so their main resource in the classroom is the book.

PROCEDURE

In reference to procedure, to carry out the research the eight stages of action research proposed by Robson and Kartan (2015) have been followed.

First of all, the inquiry, has been defined; it includes timing, people involved and the research question. Secondly, to describe and analyse the previous situation, the teacher has been collecting evaluative data through a teacher's diary and an observation grid, which includes 10 items regarding the role of the teacher and 5 items in reference to student's role. After rewiring the data and looking for contradictions, some changes regarding visual cues have been introduced. The teacher has monitored the changed by introducing visual cues in one class of Kids1 students. Then, the responses have been transcribed and a codification has been done.

The data obtained has been compared and analysed and some conclusions have been reached to answer the main question and the aims of this research.

ETHICAL ASPECTS

Everybody has been informed of the research orally in some detail. On one hand, the teacher has explained to their students the project and the process for data collection. On the other hand, the aims of the study have been shared with the school, asking them for permission to record some classes, as well as ensuring them confidentiality.

In addition, the results have been used only for the study and the student's personal information shall not be made public. As a teacher and researcher, I can guarantee that there has not been any inconvenient during the project.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results and discussion are presented according to the aims of the study.

OBJECTIVE 1

Firstly, in relation with the first aim of the study: to explore the classroom reality, related with methodology and student's motivation before the application of visual cues, the study was conducted at La Salle Bonanova, a private school in Barcelona.

La Salle is based on the approach of Plurilingualism and offers plurilingual education in Catalan, Spanish and English. Regarding that one of their principal objective is that students achieve the main linguistic competences they would need in their daily life, La Salle Bonanova offers Langcentre, which are extracurricular English classes for those students who want to improve their English level. The regular timetable for the students of Langcentre – Kids1 is after lunch time, from 13:45 to 14:25 pm. For that reason, the current action research has been implemented during these classes, with two groups of Kids1 students.

Regarding the classroom reality, the differences between the two groups which have been analysed before the application of visual cues, are the following:

GROUP A Visual cues are used	GROUP B Visual cues are not used
Monday – Tuesday <i>13:45 – 14:25</i>	Wednesday – Thursday <i>13:45 – 14:25</i>
<p style="text-align: center;">Types of activities and classroom resources</p> <p>On one hand, in relation with the types of the activities used and taking into account that the methodology of the classrooms is based on the book, the activities done by students are those which the book proposes. Basically, the book divides each theme into a story, grammar structures and a pair speaking related with these structures. It also includes vocabulary related with the story, two pages with new words of vocabulary and phonics. Moreover, at the end of each theme, there is a graphic that students have to follow and, through the vocabulary learned in the lesson, they have to write the answer of a number given. It is true that all the activities are followed by images, so it seems to be easy to comprehend the activities proposed.</p>	

On the other hand, each classroom has new technological equipment, such as interactive whiteboards with projectors to provide the students with the very best learning tools. The students have also access to their book at home, because the book brings them a CD with all the stories, songs and activities.

The Role of the Teacher

Secondly, with respect to the role of the teacher and in relation with the use of visuals, images do not always appear well integrated in the classroom. Following the results collected in the observation grid that has been presented before (*Appendix 2*), the role developed by the teacher in both groups is the same. Bearing this in mind, visual cues are not used in a meaningful way, so the teacher applies them under book's consideration and not intentionally. Consequently, there is not a specific way of teaching where visual cues are implemented to support instructions, keep the student's motivation and attention or scaffold the class.

Student's Role

This group is formed by 16 students from 5 to 6 years. In addition, the group is composed by 10 girls and 6 boys with no cultural differences.

Besides, there are no special needs detected in the group.

Therefore, the relation between classmates is good, so they do not show problems with working cooperatively. There are different "pair – friends" but they are not sitting down together. At times they talk too much but they take seriously their work and respect the instructions given by the teacher.

Regarding their English level and due to the fact that they are used to listening English at school, they follow short instructions. Although they usually talk with their mother tongue to express their feelings or during cooperative activities. Apart from that, none of the students watch the TV or talks in English at home.

Student's Role

This group is formed by 11 students from 5 to 6 years. In addition, the group is composed by 3 girls and 8 boys with no cultural differences.

Besides, we can find a student with a behaviour that sometimes disrupts the class. In occasions some students follow him, reason why it could be more difficult when instructing the group.

Occasionally, the relation between classmates could be better; They act in a very competitive way, specially five boys who are friends outside. For that reason, they sometimes show difficulties to work cooperatively. Consequently, the behaviours in the group are very different and there are three students who seems to be a little shy.

Unlike the other group, the English level showed by this group is better than Group A. At least, 4 students watch the TV and listen to songs in English at home. As a result, these students do not show difficulties to follow the class and, consequently, the others copy and imitate them.

Overall and taking their age into consideration, their English level is good and they seem to be engaged in the English classrooms.	However, what is certain is that some of the students of this group seems to feel, individually, more insecure, while together their comprehension is better than Group A. Overall, they also appear to be engaged in English classrooms.
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OBJECTIVE 2

In relation to the second aim: to design and implement a teaching proposal, based on visual support, a teaching proposal have been designed after observing the methodological weaknesses with visual cues in the classroom. Furthermore, this teaching proposal has been guided by the three main principles of UDL and it has taken into account the results of different studies.

For that reason, taking into consideration guideline number 1 from UDL Principle I – Provide options for perception – and also the guideline number 5, which has been presented before, teacher has included visuals in a story, to provide options for perception and for language. After listening to the story, told by the teacher, the students have to draw what they have understood, adding explanatory words.

This activity has been done during two lessons:

	GROUP A Visual cues are used	GROUP B Visual cues are not used
Storytelling	<p>Lesson 1 – <i>(See Appendix 3 – Flashcards)</i> The story has been told with big flashcards. Each flashcard was a frame of the story.</p>	<p>Lesson 1 and Lesson 2 The teacher has explained the story without any support. She has only read the book individually to explain them the story. It is true that she has changed her voice and she has reproduced the gestures used with Group A.</p>
	<p>Lesson 2 The story has been told using a media tool. It has been projected on the digital board. The students could see all the vignettes together.</p>	

In addition, regarding the importance that different authors such as Bruner (1983), Van Staden (2011) or Halwani (2017) give to scaffolding, and also taking into account guideline number 2 from UDL Principle I – Provide options for language and symbols – and guideline number 5 from Principle II – Provide options for expression and communication – visual cues have been implemented to scaffold the class, trying to get more participation while providing a comprehensible strategy, and giving the students security with the new.

To do so, in this part of the study a daily routine and a non – verbal glossary have been created.

The use of visuals to scaffold the class	Daily Routine
	<p>To start the class, a “Hello” song has been projected on the board. This song focuses on how we feel while we greet each other.</p> <p>Non – verbal Glossary (<i>See Appendix 4 – Non-verbal glossary</i>):</p> <p>Five groups of pictures have been referenced to give them instructions. These pictures are animals, so they are more meaningful for students. The picture glossary treats:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Work cooperatively b) Control the voice c) Material and tidy up d) Circle time e) Line up

Finally, in relation with Principle III from UDL – Provide options for recruiting interest – the character of a parrot has been created to keep the student’s attention (*See Appendix 5 – A Parrot to recruit students’ interest*). The decision of creating a parrot has connection with the topic of the lesson: “Lola, the pirate!” Considering that all the Unit’s vocabulary is related with pirates, a parrot has appeared to explain some activities, provide clarifications and quieting students down.

OBJECTIVE 3

In relation to the third aim: to analyse the application of visual cues in the classroom, the results are the following:

1. Storytelling

	GROUP A <i>Visual cues are used</i>	GROUP B <i>Visual cues are not used</i>
Before the story	<p>Both groups were motivated by listen to the story.</p> <p>It is true that, when the teacher has explained the activity, some students of Group B have demotivated in knowing that they would not see the pictures of the story.</p>	
During the story	<p>They have been highly concentrated. While the teacher has been telling the story, nobody has spoken. Seeing their facial expressions, they seem to be engaged. The story leaves them gasping with awe. They have felt comfortable sitting down on the floor while they have been looking at the pictures of the story.</p>	<p>While teacher has told the story, they have been talking about their playground experiences.</p> <p><i>E: ¿Habéis visto que hoy había un colom en las escaleras?</i></p> <p><i>A: Sí, ¡no podía volar!</i></p> <p><i>J: Marta, podem anar a mirar si encara està?</i></p> <p>They have also asked for the meaning of some words but they answer each other. They do not wait for the teacher's answer. Thus, they confuse pirate with parrot, which does not have a specific mention.</p> <p>In addition, they have not felt comfortable sitting down on the floor, because they asked to sit down on their chairs.</p> <p><i>N: Podem tornar ja a les nostres cadires?</i></p> <p><i>P: Ay (...) ¡este es mi sitio, tira para allá!</i></p> <p><i>Al: No, estaba yo primero. Bueno pues me voy a mi silla.</i></p> <p>There has not been an eye – contact between the majority of the students and the teacher.</p>

Taking their attitudes in consideration, they have worked quietly and efficiently.

J: Marta, podem posar música de fons mentres treballem?

T: Yes, of course! Do you want to listen pirates songs?

All: Yes!! (They start singing while they work peacefully).

They have only asked teacher for help to write the words correctly.

P: Com s'escriu "hat"?

T: h – a – t. Why?

P: Perquè ho vull dibuixar i no sé com s'escriu

T: (...) and where I explained something related with a hat?

P: No, però ho he vist aquí (pointing a vignette) i jo també ho vull dibuixar, però no sabia com s'escrivia.

They have also shared their material and their points of view.

B: T'agrada el meu dibuix?

M: Sí, molt! I el meu? Això és el pirate, s'assembla?

B: (...) Ay, es veritat, jo també dibuixaré la fruita als arbres.

G: Mira mi pirata, tiene la misma cara de malo.

X: Pues mira el mío, ¡le he hecho el mismo gorro!

Firstly, it seems that these students have not the same desire as students of Group B to do the drawings after the story, because they do not comprehend it.

Al: I què dibuixem si no he entès cap paraula del conte? Què faig, un dibuix lliure?

Ale: No he entendido nada!

E: Podem agafar el book please?

Al: No, perquè llavors copiaràs els dibuixos

J: Pues cuando estás en tu casa te vuelves a leer la historia con los dibujos.

Secondly, regarding their attitudes, they have developed a highly competitive behavior. They have not been cooperative, so they have not shared their materials or ideas.

Ar: Marta, es que yo no he entendido nada.

P: Ah! Pues yo he entendido 4 cosas. ¡Me estás copiando Dani!

D: No te estoy copiando, esto también lo he entendido yo (drawing a pyramid, which does not appear in the story)

Furthermore, their story understanding has treated as a secret.

K: Estoy haciendo una cosa muy difícil de hacer

P: Nadie va a entender lo mío.

In addition, as well as Group A students, they have also asked for the meaning of some words, but they have also asked how to draw them.

D: Què és pirate?

J: Un ocell!

E: ¿Cómo se dibuja un monkey? Es que no recuerdo como eran los monkeys!

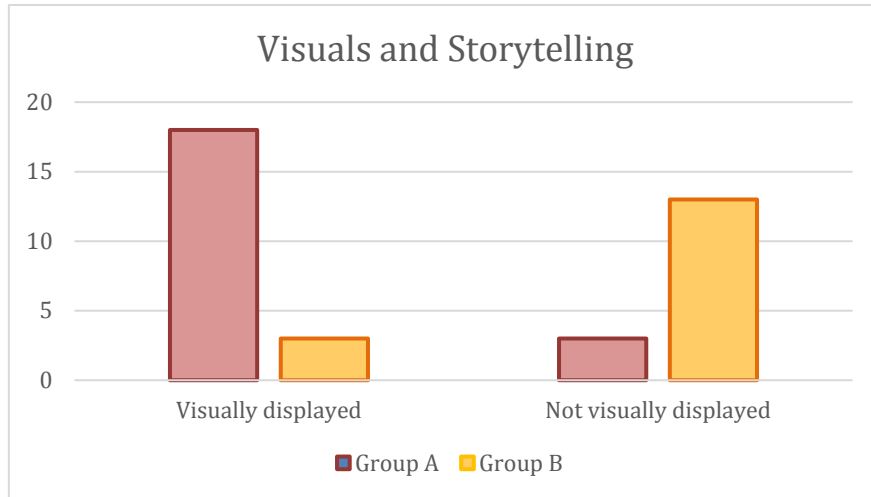
Al: Marta, pots dibuixar una calavera a la pissarra?

T: Why?(...)

Al: (...) Perquè els pirates porten calaveres crec, però no sé com són i no la puc dibuixar.

The results from each group are going to be divided in two groups:

- a. Elements that are visually displayed on the story and the teacher has not explained.
- b. Elements that are not visually displayed on the story and the teacher has not explained.

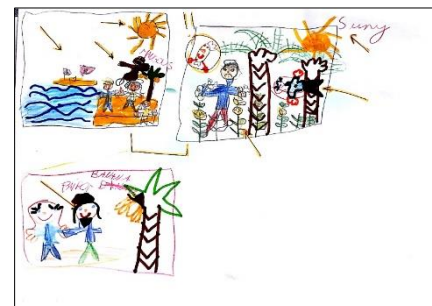


On one hand, looking at the drawings of Group A, they have drawn 13 aspects that the teacher has not said during the story, but which are visually displayed on it, such as a woman stretched out in a hammock, a parrot as a main character, the manner in which they have distribute the animals and fruits, the colour of the pirates' clothes, the weather or the quantity of pirates (three). One important aspect to highlight is that some students have divided the story in vignettes, coinciding with what they have seen on the board or through the flashcards.



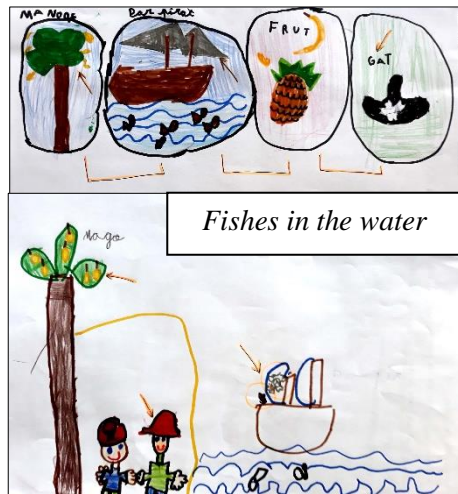
Fruits' and animals' distribution

A pirate in a hammock

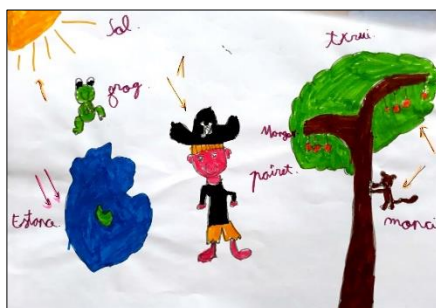


The organization of the story in vignettes

By contrast, they have drawn 3 things that do not appear on any of the images of the story and they are not explained either by the teacher. Even so, it is true that these three aspects are related with the story and they are common factors of a natural drawing, so they do not change the meaning of their drawing. For example, they have drawn grass on the ground and fishes in the water. They have also changed the colour of the pirate ship and the colour of some piece of clothing.



On the other hand, students of Group B differ from Group A learners. They have only drawn 3 things displayed on the story and 18 aspects that we do not visually perceive on it. In relation with the three elements shown on the story, they are obvious elements that we could find in all of the stories. For instance, most of the students have painted the weather, fruits on the top of the three and some of them have also drawn a parrot – they may have confused the word for pirate –.



The weather, a pirate and trees with fruits

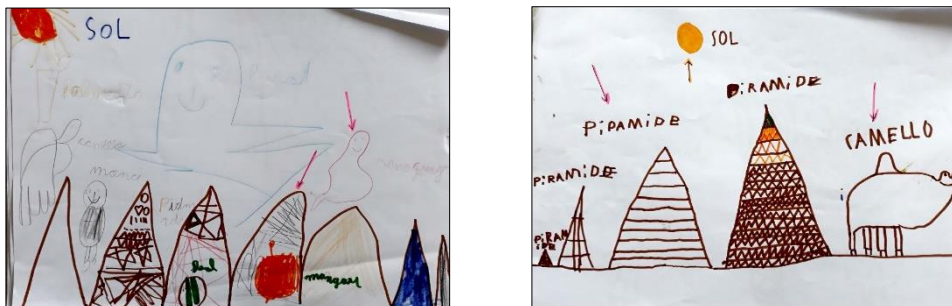
Furthermore, contrary to the results of Group A, the eighteen different aspects that are not visually displayed on the story, drawn by students of Group B, have not a close relation with

the description explained on the story, because they have painted aleatory objects, related with pirates' world. For instance, they have drawn an island, a shark in the sea, swords for the pirates or black flags with skulls.



Elements related with pirates' world

In addition, taking into consideration their results but also their behaviours and comments between classmates during the activity, we could consider that some students have done free drawing, so some students have painted pyramids, different animals or different types of food. Moreover, it is true that these students, as we could see in their results, have imitated each other. Thus, some pupils have taken a concrete idea to amplify freely.



Similar drawings of different students

Furthermore, the drawings have not been organized by vignettes and the quantity of pirates or the colours of their clothes have been modified.



2. The use of visuals to scaffold the class

a. Daily Routine:

<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are used</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are not used</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Daily Routine</p> <p>After starting the class with a song projected on the board, whereby students have seen the steps which allow them to follow the song, the aspects that are important to consider are the following. Firstly, all of the students are concentrating on what the song is saying. The manner of how they conduct themselves shows that they are enjoying the moment. So, they seem to feel driven by the song. All the same, the fact of watching the song on the board cause that scholars do not take a look among each other's. By contrast, they repeat the gestures of cartoons and they engage in do it well. In the same way, all of them are equally involved in their work and participation. For that reason, nobody has the role of protagonist during the song. They do not feel the need of imitate a classmate, because they believe in themselves, knowing that they are acting as the cartoons of the song. Consequently, it seems that they have no fear of being wrong. At the end, when the song has finished, they watch that another song is going to start, reason why they ask me if they can listen it, showing predisposition to new learning.</p>	<p>After introducing a song to start the class but considering that this song has been listened without visual support, there are different aspects to consider. On one hand, students do not sing. Consequently, they only say some words of the song aleatory. Thus, they seem to be lost, because they do not know how the song continues, so they wait for the reactions of their classmates. With this point in mind, we can observe that the student with the highest English level is the student who has the role of protagonist, reason why the others copy all of his gestures, no mattering whether he commits a mistake (as we can see, he is wrong in two moments but he is likewise copied). Moreover, they are constantly looking to one another and laughing for no reason. In addition, some students' attitudes and unhappy faces show that they have fear of being wrong. Finally, another important differential is the fact that this group do not ask for more songs at the end. So, when the initial song has finished, they leave to their places.</p>

b. Non – verbal picture glossary:

<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are used</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are not used</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Non – verbal picture glossary</p> <p>Throughout the results that I have been observed through a non – verbal picture glossary, in the interaction between students of Group A, I have noted that most of the students comprehend the notion of looking first and responding second. Taking this point in mind, the video recordings that have been used show that students have been willing with the pictures and their meanings. They paid attention to each picture and waited for their charge. In addition, considering the quality of interactions, we can see a cohesive group, where students participate and feel freely to collaborate in the class, respecting their turn and comprehending each situation. Furthermore, they have given a positive answer to the application of a visual glossary: they certainly know what to do, what helps them to feel more comfortable and it produces the increasing of their use of English as a second language. Furthermore, pictures have also promoted students’ individual speaking. For example, there is a moment when a student has not a pencil and the teacher ask him to point the pencil’s picture, giving him the structure to ask for a pencil. Moreover, another situation to highlight is when the teacher, through pictures to control the volume of voice, asks them to calm down. While explaining the activity, a girl pointed the seahorse, emphasizing that they could not talk because that animal means silence.</p>	<p>In respect of Group B, I have been done the class without any visual cue. Accordingly, analyzing students’ behaviors during the records, we can perceive that some students do not understand what the teacher is asking them, being the reason why she has to repeat the command several times, explaining what she has said, using different words. Meanwhile, the other students are talking, without according any importance to their teacher’ – classmate’ interaction. By contrast, it is true that students carry out all the activities proposed by the teacher. But, it is important to consider the manner in which they have done it (talking, at the same time, about other topics and using their mother tongue); A: <i>Quina pàgina?</i> J: <i>No trobo el meu llibre!</i> D: <i>¡Me ha tocado el lapis de doble punta!</i>), they appear to be disperse.</p> <p>Therefore, the development of some activities, in terms of organization and comprehension, without a non – verbal glossary, is slower. Consequently, teacher has repeatedly asked for silence and she has also attended a lot of questions during the explanation. In terms of their concentration during the exercise, it is similar than students of Group A. However, this group is not aware of their volume of voice. Thus, they speak very loudly all along. In addition, when the teacher asks them to make a circle, some students maintain their slow work pace, in order to finish the activity that they are doing. The others just imitate their classmates.</p>

3. A parrot to recruit student's interest

<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP A</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are used</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">GROUP B</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Visual cues are not used</p>
<p style="text-align: center; vertical-align: middle;">Parrot</p> <p>On one hand, the emergence of a parrot makes students relax, so they have turned in to silence without any order. In addition, they have stopped doing their work to listen what the parrot wanted to tell them. Also, the character of a parrot is the one in charge of explaining the indications to continue with the activity, such as clarifying them the page needed to start. Furthermore, the students have seen the need to interact with the character, when they did not comprehend the page in which they should work, finding a way to ask him what to do. Consequently, when they have achieved their objective (to arrive to the page and understand the type of the activity), they have waved their hands, saying him goodbye and starting unrestrictedly the activity in pairs. At the end of the session, it has noted the need to emerge the parrot again, when pupils are tidying up, because they are not following the instructions given by the teacher. For this reason, the parrot announces them that the class has finished, so they have to line up and go to the playground. Then, the students have listened actively and have reacted positively.</p>	<p>On the other hand, in relation with students of Group B, in which group the parrot has not appeared, some differences have been appreciated. Firstly, the students' conducts seem to be more unfocused. Thus, they have got distracted with unimportant things occurring in class. As we can appreciate on the registration, for example, they have placed value on the recording, focusing on the camera while messing around. (<i>P: ¿estás grabando? E: ¡Hola! – including facial grimacing</i>). Moreover, it can be perceived that students have been more scattered, and that is the reason why some problems have derived. Therefore, taking in consideration students' behaviours, it has to be mentioned that their dispersion has become more obvious. Accordingly, they have not listened the teacher actively and, in some occasions, it has also seemed that they have gone their own way.</p>

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study was to explore how the visual support could enhance students' English language learning, while providing a more meaningful context for the students and letting them to become more participative in the class group. Thenceforward, the observations of first grade groups, the interventions with them and the recordings have contributed to develop this research.

First of all, in relation to the students' learning results and taking into account the objective number 1, the observation grid showed that the outcomes between students of Group A and Group B only differ slightly from their behaviours. By the way, it is true that they did not expose the same level of English, but both groups normally used their mother tongue to express themselves orally. For that reason, it was easy to apply visual cues and analyse too this application, bearing in mind that the methodology used in class and the role of the teacher was merely the same.

Along these lines, one of the most important aspects that have been verified during this research is the kind of transformation of the participants in which group pictures have been implemented. So, visual inputs have played a significant role during the process of different phases of their language acquisition. As it has been demonstrated in this case, with students of Group A from La Salle Bonanova, images have allowed the pupils to create communication, helping them to connect their mother tongue and English. Moreover, it has been shown that students became more interactive in the classroom. Thus, visuals made the scholars learn to lose their fear of giving wrong answers, engaging themselves in classroom communication.

Besides, another important aspect to highlight after the application of visual support in the classroom, and which coincides both in literature and the real case analysed, is the need of a combination of text and visuals, providing the students a multiple learning style and connections in the class. Thus, children can gain meaning, so visuals clarify the connotation of some words and messages.

On the other hand, in relation to the motivation and attention of students in the classroom, the findings from the case studied also revealed that visuals can enhance the learners in terms of their motivation and interests, engaging themselves in the classroom. Furthermore, a positive attitude towards the use of visuals in the language classroom has been shown. The students of Group A indicated their desire to have more classes with pictures, especially with the parrot and the non – verbal glossary as a way to scaffold the classroom activities.

To sum up, after having analysed all the information gathered from literature and from the real cases studied, it could be said that teachers should incorporate visual support in their interventions, trying to create a classroom environment filled with meaningful visual cues, while recognizing the advantages of employing visual cues in the language learning process, in order to benefit the classroom dynamics, gain students attention and increasing their motivation.

Regarding the limitations of the research, the working time was very unlikely; taking into account that it is the teacher who goes to the playground and look for the students, the 45 minutes of the lesson are not real, so the earliest time to start the class was at 13:50. In addition, the fact that the teacher was at the same time the researcher makes the investigation difficult, because sometimes it could be challenging to analyse yourself without any other point of view, trying to do not judge your groups and your actions, while using the same non – verbal communication.

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APPENDICES

1. THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF UDL

PRINCIPLE I. PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF REPRESENTATION

- Guideline 1: Provide options for perception.

“Learning is impossible if information is imperceptible to the learner (...). To reduce barriers to learning, it is important to ensure that key information is equally perceptible to all learners by providing the same information through different modalities (...) to access and comprehend for many others”.

- Guideline 2: Provide options for language and symbols

“An important instructional strategy is to ensure that alternative representations are provided not only for accessibility, but for clarity and comprehensibility across all learners”

PRINCIPLE II: PROVIDE MULTIPLE MEANS OF ACTION AND EXPRESSION

- Guideline 5: Provide options for expression and communication

“It is important to provide alternative modalities for expression, both to the level the playing field among learners and to allow the learner to appropriately (or easily) express knowledge, ideas and concepts in the learning environment”

PRINCIPLE III: PROVIDE OPTIONS FOR RECRUITING INTEREST

- Guideline 7: Provide options for recruiting interest

“Teachers devote considerable effort to recruiting learner attention and engagement. But learners differ significantly in what attracts their attention and engages their interest” (...). It is, therefore, important to have alternative ways to recruit learner interest, ways that reflect the important inter- and intra-individual differences amongst learners.

- Guideline 8: Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence

“Many kinds of learning require sustained attention and effort. When motivated to do so, many learners can regulate their attention and affect in order to sustain the effort and concentration that such learning will require (...) In the meantime, the external environment must provide options that can equalize accessibility by supporting learners who differ in initial motivation and self-regulation skills”.

2. OBSERVATION GRID

OBSERVATION 1					
Date 19.03.18 <small>(after observing the group several times)</small>	Time 13:50 – 14:20		Group: A – Monday and Tuesday		
Teacher's Role					
	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Comments</i>
I use visual cues to support instructions				X	I don't use visual cues to explain what they have to do. I only explain it orally (Take the box, open your book, etc.) I have never used pictograms or flashcards to support instructions. Additionally, if they don't understand me, I accompany the word with a gesture, not with a visual cue.
I use visual cues to promote understanding		X			The methodology of the class is "based on the book". For that reason, visual information is what appear in the book. (stories, vocabulary, etc).
I use visual cues to make predictions				X	We do not work prediction.
I use visual cues to keep motivation			X		I keep their motivation with the images that appear in the book. Sometimes we also play games on the board or we do storytelling.
I use visual cues to scaffold the class.				X	I don't share with my students the structure of the class or what we are going to do during the week.

					I don't use visual cue to start or finish the class.
I use visual cues to get their attention.			X		Sometimes we play games on the board or we tell stories, but there's not a character or a specific visual support to get their attention. It is difficult to catch their attention at the beginning of the class, because they come from the playground and they talk about their toys and what they have shared.
I use visual cues when it is collaborative learning			X		It depends on the activities and on what we want to focus.
I use visual cues to activate prior knowledge.			X		Each page of the book is different, but the topic is the same. I activate prior knowledge without using a lot of images.
I use visual cues of a symbol of creative writing.				X	I don't place value on writing. However, writing is always guided and it is based on a map with images that they have to follow and write the answer.
I use visual cues to facilitate text connections.		X			In activities where they have to write, are always guided by images.
Students' Role					
Students conversate and participate			X		Their conversation and participation depend on their level of English. (Blanca and Maria are the girls that participate more in this group)

					<p>The others also try to participate but only when they have the structure to do it.</p> <p>Sometimes, their conversation during the class is not related with the topic or the activities.</p>
Students attitude's are positive	X				<p>Students seems to be engaged.</p> <p>They attend the class actively and they show good attitudes to new activities.</p>
Students understand oral communication			X		<p>They follow the class but they always focus the attention on the images that appears on the book.</p>
Students are engaged in reading and writing activities				X	<p>They hate the final activity where they have to write.</p> <p>They only enjoy when they have to label their drawings.</p> <p>Taking into account their age, we don't place a lot of value on reading alone and writing activities.</p>
Students are afraid of giving wrong answers				X	<p>They don't think about right or wrong answers, they just participate and try to guess the correct answer.</p>

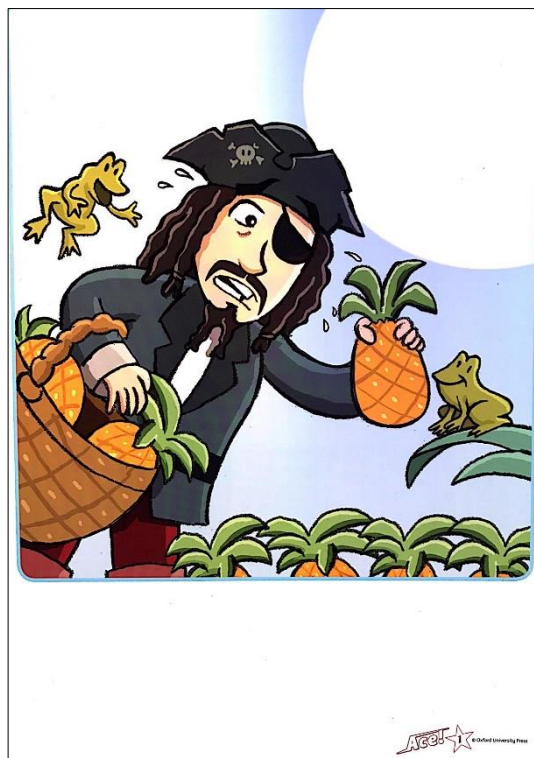
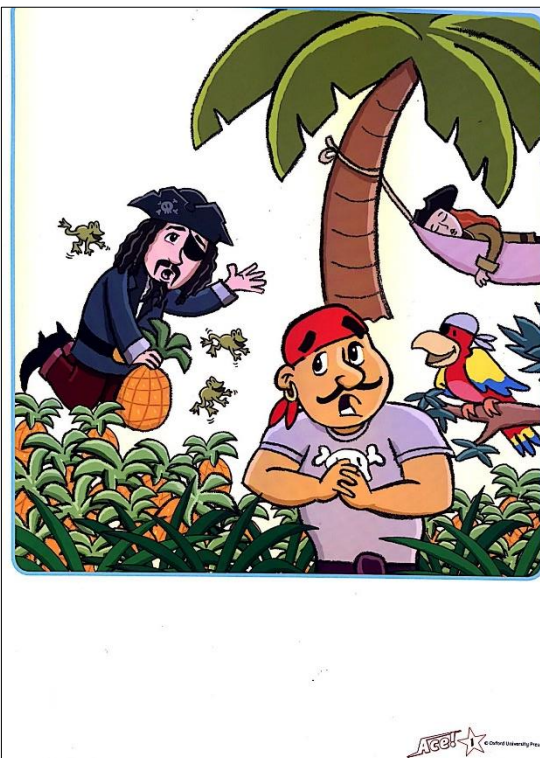
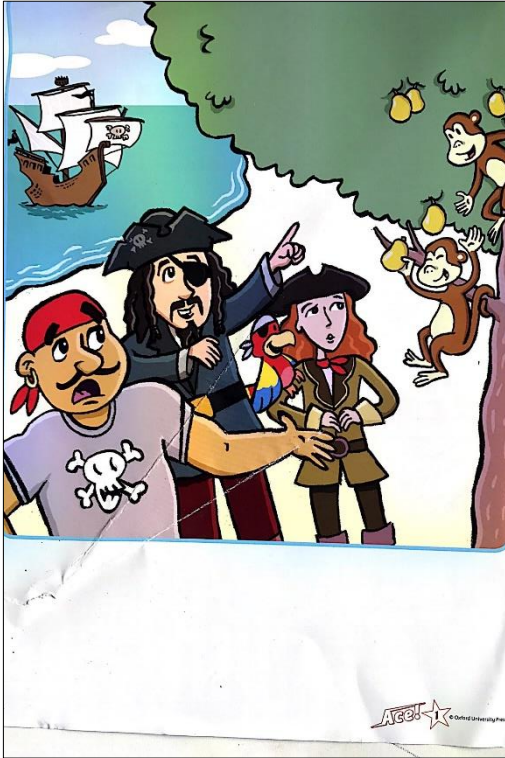
OBSERVATION 2

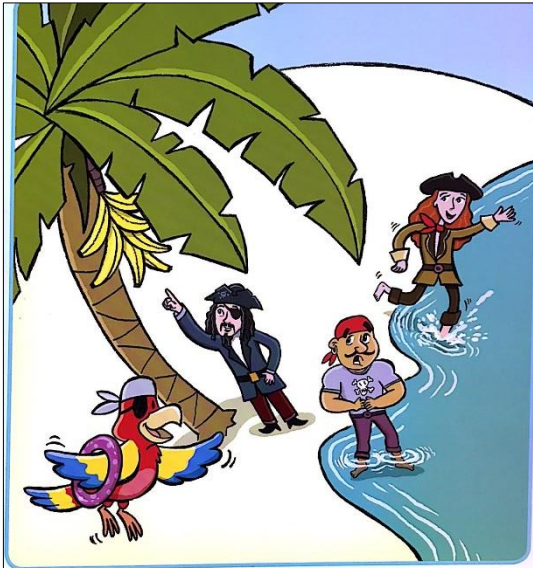
Date 20.03.18 <small>(after observing the group several times)</small>	Time 13:50 – 14:20			Group: B – Wednesday and Thursday	
Teacher's Role					
	<i>A lot</i>	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Comments</i>
I use visual cues to support instructions				X	I use non-verbal communication, like gestures or they just do it by imitation.
I use visual cues to promote understanding		X			Sometimes I draw on the board the meaning of the word which they have not understood. We always use the book where we can find images that promote understanding.
I use visual cues to make predictions				X	We do not work prediction.
I use visual cues to keep motivation		X			Playing games, watching and hearing songs on the digital board...but not trough flashcards or an explicit resource.
I use visual cues to scaffold the class.				X	I rarely share the structure of the class with my students.
I use visual cues to get their attention.			X		Maybe I could talk about the information that the image brings us, but I do not add a new visual cue to get their attention.

I use visual cues when it is collaborative learning			X		It depends on the activities and on what we want to focus.
I use visual cues to activate prior knowledge.		X			Guided by the book
I use visual cues of a symbol of creative writing.				X	I don't place value on writing. However, writing is always guided and it is based on a map with images that they have to follow and write the answer.
I use visual cues to facilitate text connections.		X			Guided by the book
Students' Role					
Students conversate and participate	X				The English level of this group is higher than the other. There are more kids that understand what I say. During the activity, they talk about the topic and share their ideas (but not in English).
Students attitudes are positive			X		However, their attitudes could be better. Edu's attitude disrupt the class a lot. He catches the attention of the other boys. The group works better when Edu doesn't attend the class. They seem to be more concentrate.
Students understand oral communication		X			In general, most of the students have a good oral comprehension.

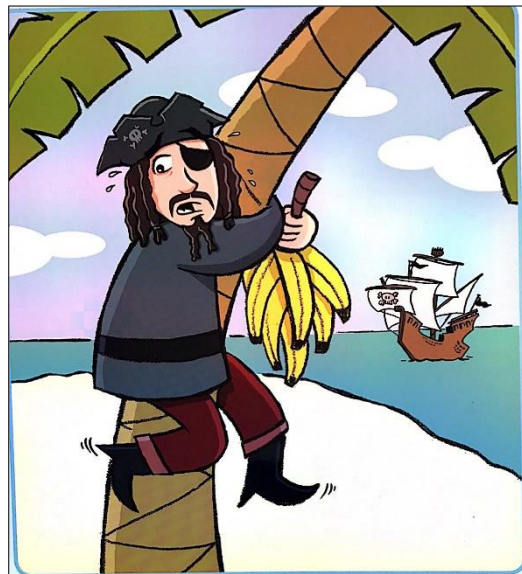
					Only one or two students (Dani and Ariadna) show difficulties to understand what I have said.
Students are engaged in reading and writing activities				X	They don't like the activities where they have to write or read alone.
Students are afraid of giving wrong answers			X		Some students, specially Pau, Ariadna and Dani seems to be shy and they also show fear for giving wrong answers. In occasions, they are afraid when they do not comprehend the teacher.

3. FLASHCARDS TO TELL THE STORY

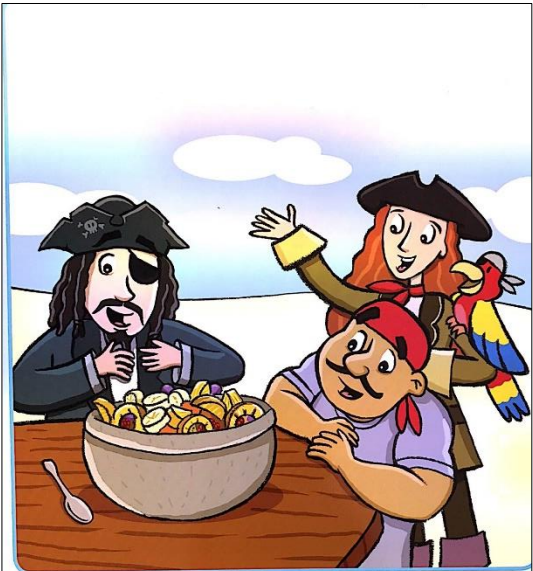




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4. NON-VERBAL GLOSSARY



Pictures to give instructions



Pictures for controlling volume of voice



Pictures for lining up



Pictures for tidying up



Pictures for sitting down on a circle

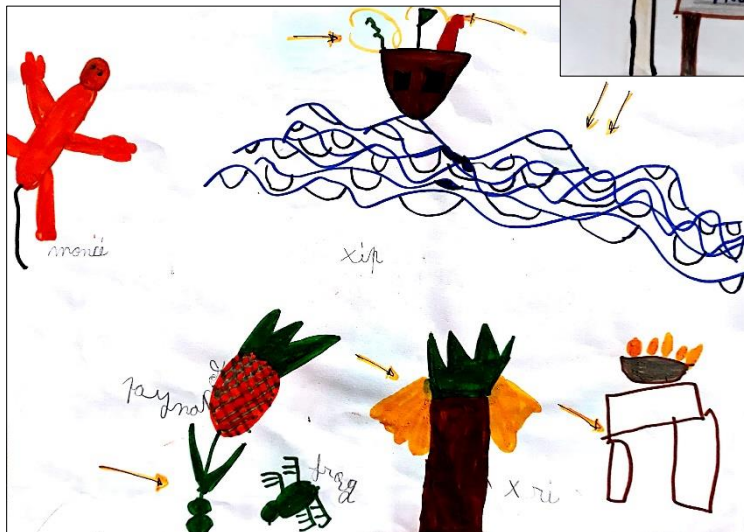


Pictures for working in groups

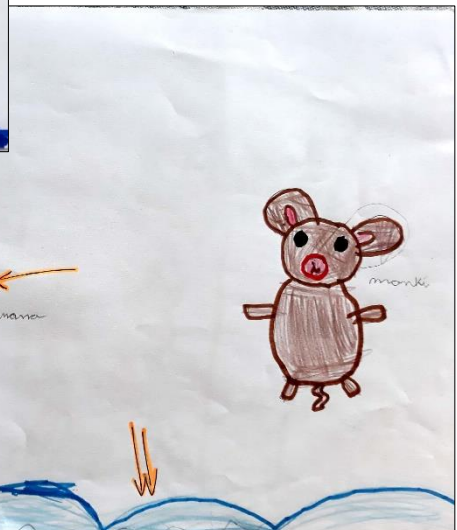
5. A PARROT TO RECRUIT STUDENTS' INTEREST



6. RESULTS: DRAWINGS OF GROUP A









7. RESULTS: DRAWINGS OF GROUP B



