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Visual literacy: a way to foster and listening and speaking skills at corporación unificada de educación superior CUN

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VISUAL LITERACY: A WAY TO FOSTER LISTENING AND SPEAKING

SKILLS AT CORPORACIÓN UNIFICADA NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN

SUPERIOR CUN

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Abstract

This study was developed by four students of B.A. in modern foreign languages at Universidad de la Salle who did their pedagogical practices at Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior CUN and intended to research about how the use of visual literacy activities helps students at CUN to foster their speaking and listening skills, with the participation of students and teachers at CUN at different levels and in different EFL classes. Activities were implemented based on the use of visual literacy in order to focus the research.

The project was conducted under the qualitative approach and action research method that guided the whole project. Instruments such as journals, questionnaires and interviews allowed the participation of the entire population during the research. The data collected was organized and analyzed under the grounded theory and validity strategy for qualitative research triangulation. Finally, some of the results showed that an alternative way to improve listening and speaking skills in students at CUN is through the implementation of an English club based on the use of visual literacy activities.

Key words:

Visual literacy, listening skill, speaking skill and English Club.

Resumen

Este estudio fue realizado por estudiantes de licenciatura en lenguas modernas de la Universidad de la Salle quienes desarrollaron sus prácticas pedagógicas en la Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior CUN e investigaron acerca de cómo el uso de la alfabetización visual ayudo a los estudiantes de la CUN a mejorar sus habilidades de habla y escucha, con la participación tanto de estudiantes como de profesores de la CUN en diferentes niveles y de distintas carreras en las clases de Inglés como lengua extranjera, fueron implementadas actividades basadas en la alfabetización visual para enfocar nuestra investigación.

El proyecto fue conducido bajo el enfoque cualitativo en donde la investigación acción guio todo el proyecto. Instrumentos como diarios de campo, cuestionarios y entrevistas permitieron la participación de toda la población durante la investigación, los datos recolectados fueron organizados y analizados utilizando métodos de la teoría fundamentada y la estrategia de validez para estudios cualitativos, triangulación; finalmente los resultados muestran que una de las maneras de mejorar las habilidades de escucha y habla en los estudiantes de la CUN es a través de la implementación de un club de Inglés basado en actividades de alfabetización visual.

Palabras claves:

Alfabetización visual, habilidad de escucha, habilidad de habla y club de inglés.

Chapter One: Introduction

Teaching and learning processes have changed over time because of the advances in education. In most of the academic texts and instruments designed to carry out the teaching of a second language, it can be seen how a high percentage of images and visual effects are included in them in order to encourage students to develop an active attitude in their learning process. According to Petterson (1993) *"Visual literacy is the learned ability to interpret visual images accurately and to create such messages, translating visual images into verbal language and vice versa." (p. 135)*

The research problem emerged from the analysis of the data registered in our journals during the first semester, when we focused our observations on identifying factors that could affect the English teaching and learning process at the Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior, CUN. One of the factors we found was that the CUN students did not have enough time to practice what they had learned in English classes. The period of time used in classes to practice essential skills such as speaking and listening was short due to the fact that the whole class had to comply with the schedule.

This project was implemented according to the qualitative approach and some factors stated by Creswell: firstly, the development of the whole project in a *"natural setting" (Creswell, 2003, p. 175)* that is the environment where the CUN students were attending their classes; secondly, the use of *"multiple sources of data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 175)* in the project. Instruments were used such as journals, questionnaires and interviews in order to collect data. Finally, *"the researcher as a key instrument" (Creswell, 2003, p. 175),* as researchers we were the ones who collected the complete information. The entire project was guided based on the action research method from the statements of *McMillan (2008)*

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who considers that *"action research is a systematic investigation conducted by practitioners to provide information to immediately improve teaching and learning" (McMillan, 2008, p. 329)*

Based on what Petterson (1993) stated about the use of visual literacy and the factors previously mentioned that affect the English learning process at CUN students, the project focused on researching: How does the use of visual literacy help students to foster speaking and listening skills at CUN? Activities were designed and implemented based on the visual literacy of CUN students in order to determine the impact of visual literacy on the students' practices of listening and speaking skills.

During the implementation of visual literacy activities data was collected from observations registered in journals. Other important instruments like interviews and questionnaires were used in order to gather information about students and the teachers' points of view with regard to their English teaching and learning process and how the use of visual aids contribute or not to their English practices.

Finally the data gathered from the instruments were organized and analyzed following procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) in the grounded theory. In terms of validity, some procedures proposed by Johnson (1997) in the validity strategy of triangulation were taken into account. The results obtained by this process showed that visual literacy was an alternative way to improve listening and speaking skills in CUN students.

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Justification

Based on the observations developed during the second semester of 2011 at CUN and the information gathered in our journals, we noticed the lack of time for the students to practice what they had learned in class, especially the lack of practice in listening and speaking skills. Due to this and based on what Petterson (1993) stated: *"visual literacy is the learned ability to interpret visual images accurately and create such messages, translating visual images into verbal language and vice versa" (p. 135),* we focused our project research on the use of visual literacy to foster listening and speaking skills in students at CUN.

Considering different statements proposed by some researchers like Rakes (1999) who mentioned how the use of visual images as material in the class helps students with the learning process because it is a good way for students to develop their English skills, we considered that the implementation of activities based on visual literacy would be a great strategy for the students to practice not only what they have learned in class but also to practice their listening and speaking skills.

During both semesters in 2012, we not only taught the contents required at CUN according to the syllabus, but we also applied activities based on the use of visual literacy according to the institutional program in which we wanted to encourage the practice of students' listening and speaking skills.

Finally, we as researchers wanted to contribute to the EFL teaching and learning process at CUN by proposing the implementation of an English club as a didactic strategy to improve speaking and listening skills in students at CUN by mainly developing activities based on visual literacy.

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Statement of the problem

We are four students of Licenciatura in the Spanish, English and French Languages of the Universidad de la Salle. In general, as a part of our educational process as teachers, the students of this program have to do some semesters of practicum in different educational institutions proposed by the university in order to improve our learning process. We were assigned to do our pedagogical practicum at Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior CUN. We carried this out with an adult population during four hours per week. We had to work individually with a homeroom teacher. We also worked the last three semesters with different English levels (A.1.1, A.2.1, B.1.1, and English Business). Each semester had its own aim. In the first semester, we did the observational part. In the second one, we applied some instruments (journals, questionnaires and semi- structured interviews to teachers and students) in order to collect data, and in the last one we implemented intervention activities.

Through the observation during our first semester of practicum, we as researchers gathered information about the English learning process at CUN in order to find an object of study. We were able to identify that some important issues are the lack of time for the students to practice what they had learned in the English classes and the lack of interest showed by some students. Due to this, promoting an intervention activity was considered, where CUN students can practice what they have learned in their English classes and improve important skills in their professional studies such as listening and speaking.

It was considered from the assertion of Petterson (1993) who states that *"visual literacy is the learned ability to interpret visual images accurately and to create such messages, translating visual images into verbal language and vice versa" (p. 135)* that the use of

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visual literacy is considered as natural learning for Petterson (1993) in the development of activities that focus on fostering the students' listening and speaking skills.

We therefore consider that Visual Literacy is useful for enriching students' learning process. Through visual aids and activities that engage and attract the students´ attention they can be motivated to improve the limitations in their English observed by us at CUN. That is why we believe that this initiative is feasible and contributes to the improvement of the learning process in the English classes at CUN through the implementation of an English club based on the use of visual literacy.

Research Question

How does the use of visual literacy activities developed in an English class help adult students to foster listening and speaking skills at Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior CUN?

Objectives

Main objective

➢ To examine how using visual literacy activities foster listening and speaking skills in adult students at CUN.

Specific Objectives

➢ To design visual literacy activities in order to enhance students' listening and speaking skills in English classes at CUN.

➢ To implement visual literacy activities in English classes for CUN students.

➢ To determine the impact of using visual literacy in class activities.

➢ To propose the implementation of an English club based on visual literacy as a didactic strategy to improve listening and speaking skills in students at CUN.

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Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter provides a panorama related to the main constructs that support this research with the intention of implementing a strategy that helps students to get involved in their foreign language acquisition at CUN.

In the first part, we use visual literacy because that is the focus of this study. The second part of this research talks about listening and speaking skills that could be reinforced in order to improve the students' learning process, allowing them to communicate in the English foreign language. The last part describes the English club because it is the strategy with which we will implement the visual literacy activities.

Background of the study

Considering the importance of the concept Visual Literacy for this Project, and taking into account that according to Petterson (1993) *"visual literacy is the learned ability to interpret visual images accurately and to create such messages, translating visual images into verbal language and vice versa." (p. 135),* we believe that through images, students are given an interpretation of meaning, using their perceptions and thinking in a cognitive process.

Using images in a current activity they can translate their perceptions into verbal language and then share it in a communicative way, in order to express their comprehension. Also, studies related to the use of visual literacy in which researchers noticed that the use of images in a media device or in a book had positive effects on the understanding of a second language like English, helped us to consider the usefulness of visual literacy for improving the students' listening and speaking skills.

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Some important articles show how visual literacy can be used for improving the student's skills. In a web article published by Rakes (1999) *"Teaching visual literacy in a multimedia age"(p. 18),* she mentions how the use of visual images as material in the class helps students with the learning process because it is a good way for students to develop their English skills. Rakes (1999) gives an example that when an image causes a discussion, the students can debate about it and during this, they would be practicing their listening and speaking skills.

Through this project using the appropriate visual activities, the students have the opportunity to improve their listening and speaking skills and the aim of collecting information at CUN will be also reached. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to use visual literacy materials, taking into account ages, levels and interests, because students should interpret and read the images and relate them with the processes of speaking and listening.

Another important aspect mentioned by Stokes (2001) in her article *"Visual Literacy in Teaching and Learning: A Literature Perspective" (p. 4)*, is that the use of visual literacy through multimedia promotes its success by involving students with positive results. This affirmation comes through her analysis of studies developed by Mayer, Bove, Bryman, Mars, and Tapangco (1996) who conducted researches relating to the use of visual literacy. It is more successful when words and pictures are presented together than when a summary contains only text (Stokes 2001). Stokes considers that in this project, in the same way that the text requires images in order to be more understandable, the class also requires the use of visual aids in order to be more interactive, dynamic, motivated, and understandable.

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The article entitled *"Developing Visual Literacy for Greater Comprehension"* by O'Neil (2011), relates the use of pictures in teaching because they can help teachers support their lessons, review and assess the previous lesson, and also help students in the acquisition of new vocabulary, encouraging them to familiarize with the words included in reading stories and others activities in order to help students develop their skills.

This article also talks about the benefits of working with picture books where elements are included with different colors, lines, shapes, etc., that provide descriptions of the environments, helping the students to become engaged, because they can support the teaching process, enriching the way how words describe a story. O'Neil (2011) defines the concept of visual literacy as a group of attributes that includes image, gesture and music, as well as the written and spoken word. Through the development of the activities proposed for the classes, the use of visual literacy, taking into account what O'Neil (2011) mentioned in her article about students' acquisition of vocabulary and the use of pictures with different colors and shapes, this project intends to develop and improve students listening and speaking skills by encouraging CUN students with different types of images and videos.

Moreover, Begoray (2001) carried out a study in which she found out that using visual literacy as a strategy in the English classes was a positive influence on the students' learning process and also ameliorated the ability to assess the learning. In this study, teachers observe that students were *"increasingly able to comprehend the multiple layered visual and verbal information from television or computer screens" (p. 201).* During the developing of this study, she realizes how the attitude of teachers influenced the good performance of the students. It was a challenge for the educators, because using visual material is time- consuming but the benefits are many. Teachers could demonstrate that the

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students' participation was more active, they could incorporate all the skills in the English class by using visual aids. They took in consideration what Rief (1992) reminded us: *"I need to remember to give my students the opportunities to say things in ways they have 'no words for"* (p. 164). This means that the role of the teacher using visual material is crucial in the teaching and learning process because his or her efforts can enrich the method of acquiring a second language.

Theoretical framework

Visual literacy

Some studies have demonstrated that seeing is not a simple process since it also involves the action of building meanings. This view of visual literacy will be observed and supported by the view of different authors. Debes (1969) mentions that *"visual literacy is a group of vision competences that the human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. When these competences are developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions. Through the creative use of these competences, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication"* (p. 185). It means that students can connect the images shown in the class with their own experiences, making the knowledge gained remain impressed on their minds. In that way, students will be able to interpret, identify and communicate in different contexts. This kind of literacy helps people to achieve academic or professional goals, developing knowledge strengths in their community.

The usefulness of visual literacy in a population like CUN will be explored and analyzed because our principal aim is help the students to improve their listening and speaking skills, since as Berger (2006) said, *"Human language first develops sight*

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recognition, then speaking, and later reading and writing" (p. 1). Visual images play a special role in human understanding. People recognize four skills but the real importance of visual aids are not always mentioned. Berger (2006) also states that we always visualize something when we are thinking. According to this perspective it is important that teachers take advantage of this natural process. It would be very helpful to integrate images in every activity in order to encourage students to retain the new information. Activities that include images support the teaching process make the English classes more successful and dynamic, taking into account that nowadays the principal aim of the teaching process is to help students learn how to communicate in different contexts.

This point of view is similar to the concept presented by Schramm (1977) who states that the use of images is not only effective in engaging the students' attention. Images are also useful in presenting the material, stimulating the use of it, encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and guiding the learner through the activity. It means that when teachers use colorful material, students find a way to interpret and show what they have learned. They incorporate material with meaningful messages because they have had their own experiences in class. Students use images to contextualize different events and improve their own learning process.

An important physical perspective for taking into account images in the learning process according to Lindstrom (1999) is that *"the reason that images are so powerful is due in part to the way we are wired physiologically. He states that "our eyes are the most powerful information conduit to the brain." (p. 7).* He also talks about how we perceive full color images in just a fraction of a second. Another important motive for using images in a learning process is because images are stored in long-term memory. That is why we can

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easily remember a person's face rather than a person's name. In that way we can use images to help students recall information. If students can connect the information with images they can start building their own concepts in their minds, allowing them to improve and facilitate communication with the rest of the community. This concept is associated with what Bamford (2003), cited by Linares (2010), says about visual literacy. She claims that *"the proliferation of images means that visual literacy is crucial for obtaining information, constructing knowledge and building successful educational outcomes" (p. 2).* The concept helped us corroborate that images help students to interpret meanings, reinforcing the contents in a natural way and creating strong meanings that stay in the students´ mind, allowing them to develop different skills.

In addition, Felte (2008) states that *"visual literacy involves the ability to understand, produce, and use culturally significant images, objects, and visible actions." (p. 60).* Summing up these concepts, we consider that the use of visual literacy in the English class can help students at CUN to develop and improve their listening and speaking skills because the contents are studied in a dynamic way. Activities that contain images also allow the students to interact in a confident way. Moreover, the use of this kind of material ameliorates and facilitates the teachers' presentations. It allows students and teachers to join in the same process of enhancing the students' attention by making the comprehension of any topic easier.

Listening skill

This research is based on listening and speaking skills, abilities students do not use in English classes. The idea is to implement visual literacy activities in order to get students to become familiarized with and improve those abilities.

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Spratt, Pulverness and Williams (2007) defined listening as follows: *"Like reading, listening is a receptive skill since it involves responding to language rather than producing it. Listening involves making sense of the meaningful (having meaning) sounds of language." (p. 30)*

Listening skill can help students improve pronunciation and fluency when they speak, so this research wants to implement Visual Literacy activities so that students can practice and emphasize this skill.

On the one hand, Harmer (2009) states that it is an enriching practice when pictures are used in listening exercises because while students are listening to the speaker, they can relate and predict by using visual images in order to choose the correct answer.

Harmer (2009) says that the development of communicative skills such as listening and speaking are improved through constant practice. Some listening comprehension exercises used to practice more frequently are: listening to music sung in English, watching films in English with subtitles, karaoke exercises, role plays and to listening to conversation on video. When people listen to music sung in English they encounter difficulties because sometimes the singer leaves silences, but these issues can improve listening activities.

When students participate by doing many listening exercises, they can become involved in English language conversational dynamics more easily because students have more confidence in what they are saying. This is a relevant advance in their learning process.

On the other hand, Wilson (2008) says that listening skill is a principal instrument to communicate one's own understanding input to improve the English learning process. It is because listening is considered to be the main support that allows communication between two or more speakers.

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Continuing with the same author, when people who are learning English listen to native speakers every day, they begin to develop the ability to recognize acoustic signals, pronunciation, intonation and speech. Listening skill stimulates the imagination and its aim is to gather information about what the speaker is talking about.

According to Wilson (2008), listening involves features such as Elision, Assimilation and Intrusion. Elision is when some sounds are omitted by a speaker. Assimilation is when the first sound changes to hold another sound. Intrusion is when a sound is incorporated by the speaker reading two words in one. For example, when there is a grammatical contraction.

Furthermore, Wilson (2008) argues that listening is considered a difficult skill, taking into account the following four principal means: the characteristic of the message, the delivery, the listener and the environment.

➢ When characteristics of the message are mentioned, it is focused on the pronunciation of some words, unknown vocabulary and grammatical structures.

➢ Delivery refers to reciprocal interaction and nonreciprocal listening. Reciprocal listening is when there are conversations that allow speakers to create more strategies to foster the precision of the message. When it is nonreciprocal, the listeners do not have the opportunity to have an active interaction, as for example, listening to the radio. In this part, the listener is not a part of a dialogue and it is very difficult to launch strategies for comprehension because there is no interactive communication.

➢ Characteristic of the listener refers to different learning modes, that some students develop this ability easily whereas it is so difficult for others. According to the Multiple Intelligences theory, people have different ways of learning. For instance,

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music intelligence is a way of learning a new language for people who have a developed listening ability.

> The environment is important in students' listening performance because the conditions condition the effectiveness of the learning process: noise, disturbance, concentration and factors associated with the truthfulness of the message.

The use of pre-listening activities and visual aids can be a favorable opportunity for the student to relate to what they hear with what they see and react to the message already given.

To sum up, Harmer (2009) and Wilson (2008) mention that the listening skill is a good way to improve the capacity to recognize the sounds, proper pronunciation and speech through the correct use of visual activities and the performance obtained by each student. As a result, this research is supported in that the listening skill is important in the learning process in English. A previous theory will be taken into account regarding the results of real classes in which students did a series of planned activities in order to confirm that visual literacy could be an excellent strategy to get students to improve their listening skill in English.

Speaking skill

This research is based on fostering listening and speaking skills, bearing in mind that in the process of second language acquisition (SLA), students need to acquire all skills to communicate with others. Nevertheless, it is very important to take into account what the following authors say about the speaking skill.

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Firstly, this skill is a vehicle that has allowed learning EFL. It requires more attention to thought as a recognized form of expression, bearing in mind that through speaking skill, a student can make or lose friends (Bygate, 2004).

Secondly, Nunan (1999) mentions the importance of spontaneity in the teaching of a second language based on the speaking skill when students develop oral presentations they have planned or do spontaneously, considering that they often talk about their daily routines by using common expressions according to the context, which helps them improve their levels of fluency and accuracy.

Besides, developing this kind of activities helps students to be in a peaceful and comfortable environment, taking into account what Luoma (2004) says about *"speaking as interaction and speaking as a social and situation-based activity. All these perspectives regard speaking as an integral part of people's daily lives" (p. 9).*

Thirdly, Harmer (2004) states the main reasons for teaching speaking: *"firstly, speaking activities provide rehearsal opportunities–chances to practice real-life speaking in the safety of the classroom. Secondly, speaking tasks in which students try to use any or all of the language they know provide feedback for both teacher and students" (p. 123).* Therefore, in the implementation visual literacy activities to foster listening and speaking skills in a population like CUN, it is necessary to take into account the relationship between the teacher and the students, which should be comfortable in order to express feelings, thoughts and ideas in a successful learning process.

Moreover, Harmer (2004) suggests three types of speaking activities: photographic competition, role-play and interview. Luoma (2004) recommends different examples of activities that can be used to improve and develop the speaking skill. For instance, the

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interaction between partners talking about a picture to describe it in detail, giving their own interpretations and finding differences and similarities with others or telling a story according to what the pictures show.

Finally, the proposals mentioned enrich this research from the viewpoint that these can be applied as visual literacy activities that allow students to improve speaking and listening skills using pictures or visual aids that facilitate learning in a different way. As a result, students become autonomous people who speak the language fluently and accurately.

English Club

English Club is an important concept in this project because this proposal is what we as researchers considered as a useful pedagogic strategy based on the findings obtained from the data analysis process, taking into account suggestions and comments by students and teachers. This concept is a proposal because it is not an implemented space at CUN. However, we consider the implementation of the English club is viable according to the results. In consideration of the importance of this concept, we have decided to support it with theoretical studies from authors such as Cornes, Sandler, Crystal, and Gardner who through their studies contribute to the framework of this proposal.

The English Club is not a concept that has a specific definition. Cornes and Sandler (1993) state that a club *"is a voluntary group of individuals who derive mutual benefit from sharing one or more of the following: production cost, member´s characteristic, or a good characterized by excludable benefits." (p. 346).* These authors mention three specific fields in which the members of a club obtain a benefit. In this project, the benefits will be obtained from sharing the member´s characteristics. There are two special characteristics from the previous definition of a club that are essential for this project: *"Voluntary"*

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according to Cornes and Sandler (1993) *"members choose to belong because they anticipate a net benefit from membership" (p. 347).* One of the aims of this project is the implementation of an English Club where CUN students can improve their communicative skills by practicing the target language through visual activities. The benefit that the students acquire from membership is to practice their language and enhance their level of English.

Secondly, Cornes and Sandler (1993) state that *"Clubs involve sharing, whether it be the use of an impure public good or the enjoyment of the desirable attributes of the members." (p. 348).* Sharing not only personal interest in improving the target language but also sharing qualities, features and experiences of the members of the English club surely permits that the benefits sought by the students will be accomplished.

In the implementation of an English club at CUN, which is our intention, there are some important aspects that have to be taken into account, according to Gardner (2002). These are:

➢ The implementation of an English Club from the interest and desires of the students.

➢ Another important aspect mentioned by Gardner (2002), is the high level of responsibility that the students acquire in these kinds of activities because they are who decide to go to the club instead of going anywhere else. They decide to go to the club voluntarily.

➢ Gardner (2002) mentions authors like Hurby (2001) who recognizes the importance of how these clubs should be conducted. If there is a power or authority

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image in the club it is very important to define the roles of the facilitators and the roles that the facilitators expect of the students.

➢ Some students from different clubs mentioned in the book by Gardner (2002) felt like a weirdo in front of their classmates, but they mentioned that they felt good sharing with their peers in the clubs because they could exchange with people who share the same interests in the club.

English, according to Crystal (2003), is the most taught language around the world and depends on us as teachers to look for new, innovative and dynamic teaching strategies that encourage students to learn English, not only in its structure and content but also by practicing it in different contexts.

In conclusion the implementation of the English club at CUN is a strategy that helps the students in their process of practicing English, and teachers in their process of teaching English because it is a strategy that from the viewpoint of Cornes and Sandler (1993), students recognize the benefits from being involved in it.

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Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter explains all Research Methodology process and tools used in this research such as: approach, action research, research population, research methodology, instruments of data collection, intervention activities, data analysis and validating.

Approach

The methodology of this Project was based on the qualitative approach mainly because the whole Project was developed where the population was, that is "*a natural setting*" according to Creswell (2007) *"Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (p. 175)*. From the beginning of the project in the second semester of 2011, when the research started with the observation process in order to identify the research problem and until the second semester of 2012 when the research finished with the implementation of visual literacy activities and the compilation of information, the project was developed at CUN with the participation of its students and teachers.

Furthermore, in our role as researchers, we gathered information through instruments like questionnaires, interviews and journals, identifying behaviors and impacts on the population. *"Qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell, 2007, p. 4)*. The data obtained during the research revealed the viewpoints of the students and teachers about the students' process of learning English. Through this data we identified the issue and implemented visual literacy activities according to the students' interests.

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Action Research

Taking into consideration what action research is: *"action research is a systematic investigation conducted by practitioners to provide information to immediately improve teaching and learning" (McMillan, 2008, p. 329).* One of the aims of this project was not only to find a research problem in the population but was also to evaluate the research problem and act on it in order to respond to the issue of implementing activities. Based on the result of these activities, we propose an intervention strategy.

Another important aspect of action research that is related to qualitative research is that the participants are truly participants in the research by providing their comments, behaviors and viewpoints about their process of learning English, important information that is analyzed qualitatively and helps to take action on the issue.

McMillan (2008) stated four steps when conducting action research:

➤ *"Select a focus, topic, or issue to study*

➤ *Determine, design and collect data*

➤ *Summarize and interpret data*

➤ *Take action based on findings"(p. 332)*

According to these steps of conducting action research, these steps were determined for the project:

"Select a focus, topic, or issue to study"

➤ After the first practicum semester, when we were observing and analyzing the population where we as student teachers were immersed, based on the data registered in the journals, we identified issues that helped us to focus our research on the use of visual literacy activities to foster listening and speaking skills at CUN students.

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"Determine, design and collect data"

➢ We decided to focus this project under the qualitative approach and action research as the method to develop a project that contributes to the process of students learning English at CUN. The instruments considered for gathering the data were journals, questionnaires and interviews.

"Summarize and interpret data"

➢ After gathering the information, the data were summarized and analyzed by using data triangulation in four categories: visual literacy, fostering listening and speaking skills, workshop activities and the English club proposal. From these categories some findings emerged.

"Take action based on findings"

➢ Based on the findings that emerged, we decided to propose an English club as a pedagogical strategy to be implemented at CUN in order to respond to the students' and teachers' interest in generating new spaces of English interaction.

Research Population

CUN is a private institution with thirty years of experience. It is committed to innovation in the process of forming its students through three main administrative areas: sciences, engineering and communications. With eight branches in Bogotá that have the required spaces where it can carry out the teaching and learning process, CUN offers people from all social levels the opportunity of being in higher education.

This institution has an atmosphere of respect, equality of gender, race or socio-economic strata. This atmosphere is part of the social value that CUN wants to promote,

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values such as commitment, integrity, respect, creativity and adaptability according to the vision of the institution.

EFL is a subject that all the students at CUN have to study as a requirement. There was an average of 25 students in each of the 12 groups assigned to the four researchers. Teachers the students are divided in groups according to the common European framework beginning in the introductory level A1.1 up to the most advanced level B. 1. 1., and the courses assigned for this project changed in each of the three semesters for each of the four researchers. For this reason continuity in the process with the same students was not possible.

In the English classes, there are students who belong to diverse programs such as business, tourism, hotel administration, accounting and graphic design, among others. Even when all the students at CUN are in different programs, and as members of a specific culture, they have diverse habits according to their beliefs and skills. The English room is a venue where all the students at CUN share an interest in learning a second language, in this case English and its culture, considering that *"a language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language" (Brown, 1994, p. 165).*

Culture in the classroom was not established just for each researcher. Setting the class rules, teaching a second language and a second culture was also for all the students who contribute to the English Class through their attitudes and behaviors, making every student in the class go through a process of acculturation, in which the students get involved in the class.

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Research Process

According the cycle proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) in Burns (1999), we decided to follow their steps in order to gather the information for this project.

➢ Observation: In the first step we found that students did not pay enough attention in the class because some of them had different levels of knowledge and because they did not use images or something that would attract their attention. Another aspect that we perceived is that they did not have time for putting into practice what they had learned because they did not have time to practice their listening and speaking skills, they could not speak at all, making the communication part something without value in the class.

➢ Planning: After our observations, we decided to start reading about authors that support ideas to enrich the students' learning process. Then we continued planning something that ameliorates the lack of practice in order to enhance students' motivation. We chose some activities with the purpose of knowing if they were helpful in the learning process at CUN.

➢ Action: We determined that the use of images would be a good way to help our students, because as Petterson (1993) said, images have the ability to translate into verbal language. For us, it was a great reason for integrating intervention activities in order to foster listening and speaking skills in students at CUN. As we had different English levels to teach, we decided on some intervention activities to reinforce especially vocabulary, implementing the use of colorful visual aids.

➢ Reflection: Finally, after some interventions we collected and analyzed as a group the information gathered in our English classes during three semesters, finding

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that visual literacy is a good way to promote not only reading and writing but listening and speaking skills too.
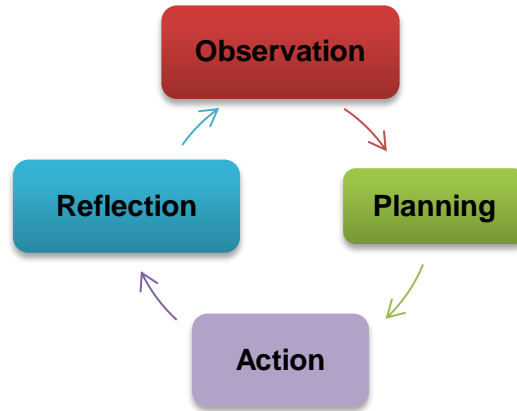

Figure 3.1. Research Methodology (Kemmis and McTaggart 1999).

Data Collection Instruments

In order to gather reliable information to support this research, instruments were used such as journals, questionnaires and semi- structured interviews, in the following order:
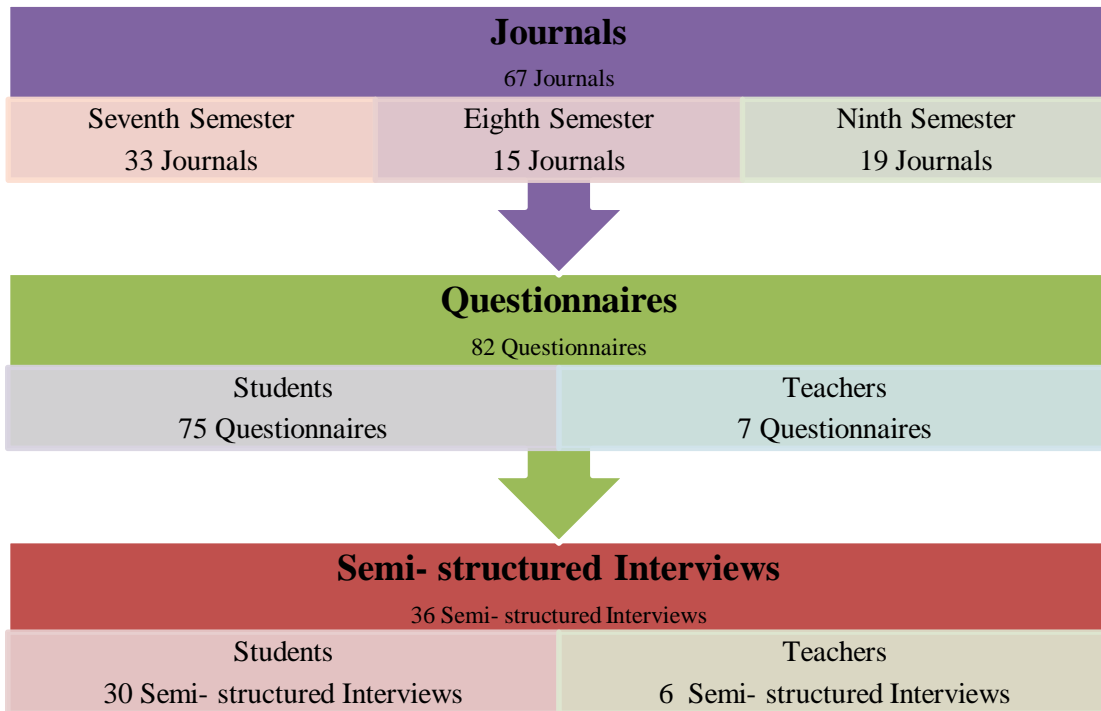
Figure 3.2. Instruments of Data Collection.

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As researchers, we used these instruments of data collection to get specific information from three different points of view: teaching practitioners, students and head teachers. Through these instruments, we as researchers gathered opinions, feelings, attitudes, estimations, beliefs, behaviors, thoughts and reflections that helped to complement the research process, bringing together all the relevant information to validate the contents of this project.

Journals

Journals were the first tool used in this research. In the three semesters (seventh, eighth and ninth) sixty- seven journals were gathered by the four researchers. We used this tool because it permits observing in detail the students' improvement in the development of English classes, as Wallace (1998) mentioned: *"One of the most important of these (benefits) is that this approach can provide access to the hidden affective variables that greatly influence the way teachers teach and students learn" (p. 63).*

Wallace (1998) named Brock Yu and Wong who proposed that journals have many advantage, some of which are to identify variables and create new questions and hypotheses about teaching and learning processes.

In the seventh semester thirty- three journals were gathered by the four researchers. The main objective of this observation was to establish a theme, a possible problem or a proposal to improve any aspect of the English learning process. General observations were made about the setting, location, students' characteristics and students' strengths and weaknesses.

In the eighth semester, fifteen journals were gathered and these were focused on the interventions activities carried out by teaching practitioners. In this semester, the research

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theme was already established, so activities associated with visual literacy to improve

listening and speaking skills were implemented. The observations were focused on the

design of the activities and the students' reactions in relation to them.

In the ninth semester, nineteen journals were gathered, focused on students' meaningful

advances and reactions about the activities designed, using visual literacy to improve

listening and speaking skills.
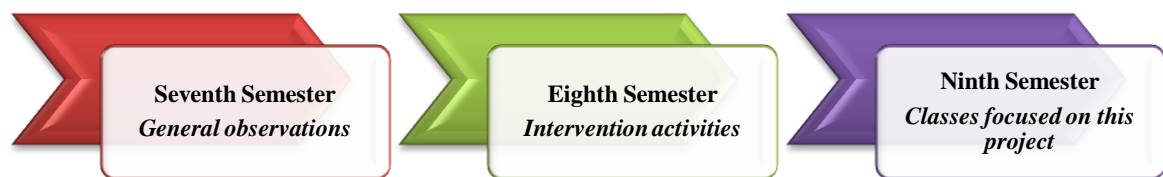
Figure 3.3. Journals process

Questionnaires

Johnson and Christensen (2004) propose that *"A questionnaire is a self- report data-collection instrument that each research participant fills out as part of a research study. Researchers use questionnaires so they can obtain information about the thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, perception, personality and behavioral intentions of research participants." (p. 163)*

In the eighth semester, gathering the questionnaires and observations about the

intervention activities were carried out simultaneously. Eighty-two questionnaires were

gathered, seventy-five from students and seven from teachers. It is important to mention

that the researchers could not collect more teachers' questionnaires due to the fact that the

English teachers who worked at CUN at night were the same seven during all the

semesters.

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Questionnaire forms were filled out by students and teachers, it being very important for this research to consider both points of view in order to develop reliability. The researchers gathered the questionnaire forms from seventy-five students, written in Spanish so that they could be easily answered due to the fact that they did not have the necessary level to have answered in English.

The questionnaire had ten questions, with seven multiple-choice questions and three open-ended questions. In this questionnaire, aspects were taken into account such as the importance of students' learning English, the students' opinion about their level of English, the skills they most wanted to improve in the English class, the time spent studying English outside the class, the activities developed by the English teacher to promote all the communication skills, the kinds of activities they wanted to develop in the English class, the importance of images in English class activities, an activity in which they wanted to participate (Tutoring, Presentations and the English Club) and their participation in the English class.

The teachers' questionnaire was about the English language. This questionnaire had ten questions, five multiple-choice questions and five open-ended questions. The questions were very similar to the students' questionnaire but were focused on the teachers' opinion about class activities, the communication skills that are promoted in the development of the classes and the use of other strategies to improve the students' level of English, identifying students' strengths and weaknesses.

Semi-structured Interview

Semi-structured interviews allow formulating new questions during the interview. Before doing it, the principal questions should be already done. However, during the

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interview, new questions may arise in order to obtain clear and precise information. As Wallace (2008) stated: *"As its name indicates, the semi-structured interview is a kind of compromise between the two extremes. There will almost certainly be a prepared interview schedule but most of the questions will probably be open questions." (p. 147).*

The researchers carried out thirty-six interviews, thirty interviews with students and six interviews with teachers. The interviews were carried out in the ninth semester, being the final tool used by the researches to collect information. The interview with the students was in Spanish and in English with the teachers.

The interviews with the students consisted of eleven questions and ten questions for the teachers, designed to complement the information previously given by them in the questionnaires.

Intervention activities

The intervention activities were designed, following a lesson plan related to the Communicational Language Teaching developed at CUN. Littlewood (1981) states that *"communicational language teaching pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language, combining these into a more fully communicative view" (p. 1),* so the point was to promote communication skills in the classroom, deepening into fostering listening and speaking skills using visual material.

Our lesson plans were created by following these steps:

➢ To enumerate the lesson plans.

➢ To give the course information.

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➢ To write the information about the lesson bearing in mind the date, hour, topic, general goal, language, the communication and learning cultural objectives, and the materials or resources.

➢ To describe the lesson: The description of the lesson was derived from following the stages of the activity, and providing the procedure and the time.

➢ Warm up: The warm up took no more than 15 minutes in each English class. This activity was focused on giving a feedback about the previous topic through the development of some games like memory games, puzzles and Who Wants to Be a Millionaire, among others. These were applied in order to get the students' attention and motivate them to practice English in a different way.

➢ Pre-activity: This part represented the introduction of the new topic. It was done by giving students an explanation about the topic by taking into account grammar rules and examples to facilitate the students' comprehension.

➢ Current activity: The researcher teachers showed students the activity and explained them the way to develop it correctly, with the intention of practicing the topic presented before. They implemented activities like role play using pictures relating to real-life because it helped the students to speak spontaneously from previous knowledge and to interact with their partners.

➢ Final activity: To end the activity, we considered asking questions about the topic in order to clarify doubts and to check if the topic was understood.

➢ Homework assignment: Homework was associated in order to deepen the topic studied. For instance, developing other exercises from the book established at CUN or creating group dialogues or a poster where they had to use pictures or images.

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➢ Comments – observations: This part was carried out by the CUN teacher and advisor of the Universidad de la Salle, who observed and reviewed the class developed by the research teachers. They did this through suggestions, opinions and perceptions about the activity presented.
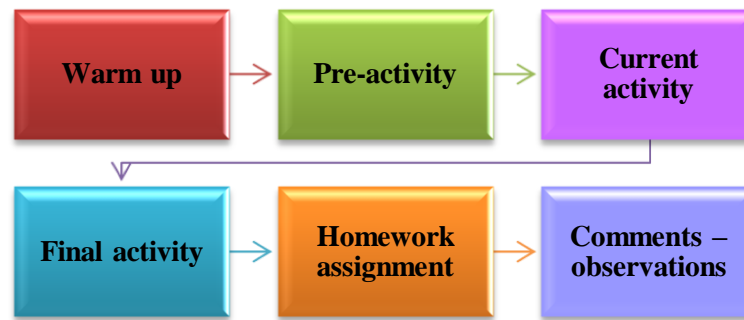
Figure 3.4. Intervention activities

Data Analysis

During the process of analyzing the data collected by this research, we found the grounded approach suitable for this study, since it helped us understand how visual literacy may influence the English learning process in students at CUN. As Strauss and Corbin (1990) affirm, grounded theory emerges from data that permits interpreting and theorizing about information gathered during the research process. In this study, the lack of time for practicing what students at CUN had learned and the lack of interest showed by the students were the focus for choosing the intervention activities, and the students' perceptions became the material for analysis.

The analysis of the data begins with coding, which according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) has a fundamental function that consists of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data. We did this process in order to group, find and name our research categories. Another important theory that helped us organize the categories

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was that mentioned by Auerbach and Silverstain (2005) who suggest the process of how to obtain a category:

➢ **Raw text:** It is all the information gathered through the different sources of data collection used during the research process (journals, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews).

➢ **Relevant text:** The second part of the process looks for text that is considered relevant and related to the specific research purpose. To accomplish this process, we read and underlined information gathered by the instruments of data collection. The idea was to highlight pertinent words or sentences that we considered connected to the intention of the research.

➢ **Repeating ideas:** This stage of the data analysis consists of grouping the same or similar ideas and words or phrases expressed by the research participants. Then we read, colored, and placed similar information provided by the previous stage (relevant ideas) and from different instruments into separate boxes. This process served to identify similarities presented by students' perceptions when we use intervention activities using visual literacy in order to foster listening and speaking skills.

➢ **Theme:** This is the fourth part of the data analysis process and consists of finding common patterns for similar ideas that are grouped in the relevant ideas process. In this sense, we reviewed the list of phrases from each box and proposed a general code name for those ideas.

➢ **Theoretical constructs:** The fifth part of the data analysis organizes the themes into a larger abstract idea in which we synthesize common themes in a single but relevant idea (category). To carry out this part of the process, we assigned a "word" for

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those themes that had something in common, taking into account our own interpretation and theoretical support.

> **Theoretical narrative:** This component of the process is a summary of what was done and learned during the research study. This step in the data analysis combines student experiences, researcher concerns, and theoretical support in order to explain how the process of collecting data helped synthesize themes into categories and how the whole process facilitated an answer to the research questions.

Categories are the result of analyzing journals, questionnaires, and interviews. As a result of the previous stages, we present the following categories obtained during this research study.

Accompanying the development of the project, an important amount of information was collected due to the instruments considered for that purpose. During the three semesters during which our practicum at CUN was developed, we registered the information collected in our observations in journals. These journals demonstrate the whole process conducted at CUN from the observational phase to the intervention phase. Another instrument that let us to know the viewpoints of both the students and teachers about the use of visual literacy in their process of learning English was the questionnaire. This instrument was implemented during the second semester and it received a positive response from the CUN students.

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Table 3.1. *Categories and subcategories emerging from instruments of data collection.*

		CATEGORIES	SUBCATEGORIES	Journals 7º *General observations*	Journals 8º *Intervention activities*	Journals 9º *Classes focused on this project*	Total
JOURNALS		Semesters / Observations					
		Visual Literacy	Usefulness	38	25	15	78
		Fostering students' listening and speaking skills	Promote Listening	45	18	6	69
			Encourage Speaking	34	18	3	55
		Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening activities	35	15	6	56
			Speaking activities	25	18	9	52
		English Club Proposal	Setting	7	6	18	31
			Engagement	7	7	20	34
					Total		
STUDENTS	**STUDENTS' QUESTIONNAIRES**	Visual Literacy	Usefulness		75		
		Fostering students listening and speaking skills	Promote Listening		51		
			Encourage Speaking		55		
		Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening		162		
			Speaking		88		
		English Club Proposal	Setting		35		
			Engagement		214		
	STUDENTS' INTERVIEW	Visual Literacy	Usefulness		28		
		Fostering students listening and speaking skills	Promotes Listening		17		
			Encourages Speaking		13		
		Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening		21		
			Speaking		17		
		English Club Proposal	Setting		26		
			Engagement		52		
TEACHERS	**TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRES**	Visual Literacy	Usefulness		6		
		Fostering students listening and speaking skills	Promote Listening		8		
			Encourage Speaking		8		
		Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening		4		
			Speaking		5		
		English Club Proposal	Setting		9		
			Engagement		18		
	TEACHERS' INTERVIEW	Visual Literacy	Usefulness		15		
		Fostering students listening and speaking skills	Promotes Listening		3		
			Encourages Speaking		6		
		Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening		6		
			Speaking		9		
		English Club Proposal	Setting		8		
			Engagement		15		

Validating

Some validating procedures stated by Johnson (1997) help us in the process of

analyzing the data gathered by the instruments, giving reliability to the results obtained

after the process. One of the descriptive validating procedures suggested by Johnson (1997)

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is that *"the investigator triangulation involves the use of multiple observers to record and describe the research participants' behavior and the context in which they were located"* *(p. 285).* During the entire research the four researchers were immersed where the research took place.

In the analysis of the results, the registers of the four researchers were taken into account in order to contrast them and corroborate the data for reaching the results. Furthermore, another important strategy that is described by Johnson (1997) as internal validation is *"data triangulation that refers to the use of multiple data sources while using a single method" (p. 289).* This validation strategy was adopted in the project by taking into account that in the use of the interviews or questionnaires as instruments to collect data, we obtained the comments and suggestions of both teachers and students. These important data were also considered for reaching the results.

The importance of having collected different kinds of information from three different instruments gave us the possibility to contrast the data collected and discuss among us as researchers in order to obtain findings that not only supported the project but also contributed to the students' process of learning English at CUN.

According to our main objective *"To examine how the use of visual literacy activities fosters listening and speaking skills in adult students at CUN",* the object of study for this project was the development of activities applying visual literacy in order to foster listening and speaking skills in CUN students. This object of study let us know about the behaviors, conduct and knowledge of students in the development of activities, in order to assess the role of visual literacy activities that foster communication skills.

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Chapter Four: Results

We obtained three main categories and subcategories from the data gathered. We will discuss the findings supported with examples from the students and teachers as well as the theory that upheld this research study and our personal points of view that came up during the implementation.

Table 4.2. *Categories and subcategories*

Categories	Subcategories
Visual Literacy	Usefulness
Fostering students listening and speaking skills	Promote Listening
	Encourage Speaking
Classroom listening and speaking activities	Listening activities
	Speaking activities
English Club Proposal	Setting
	Engagement

Visual Literacy

The first category relates to students' and teachers' perceptions about the use of images during the English class, how students participated in the activities that were proposed by the four researchers and how students expressed their feelings, emotions, and comprehension about the use of images.

Berger (2006) states *"that we always visualize something when we are thinking" (p. 1).* According to this concept, students revealed that the use of images in the English classes were meaningful for them because they felt a good connection between the content and the images during the activities. We found positive results when we started to use visual aids. We used activities such as games, posters, oral presentations about drawings made by the

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students, songs with images, puzzles, etc., that made the classes more successful. The activities involved the four skills but we emphasized listening and speaking tasks. The students demonstrated that they were more creative and were more relaxed when they prepared their speaking activities because we connected all the activities with real situations, trying to find topics relating to their social context and looking for something funny. Images played a big role in the class. The students could understand more easily and they told us that it was more effective to use drawings and games that using large amounts of text.

- *"So I divided the classroom in two groups. The idea was that one person from each group got a flash card according to the past tense verbs. They had to put it on the board depending on if they had regular or irregular verbs. With this game I could realize how their attitude was more positive; they played and enjoyed the activity. They participated actively and understood what I wanted to explain to them. The material was very useful because was clear and colorful so they could understand the meaning of each action. Even people that never talk could participate and enjoy the game, they were not afraid to talk." (Journal N° 61).*

Lindstrom (1999) talks about how we perceive the full color images in just a fraction of a second, also that another important motive for using visual aids in a learning process is because images are stored in long-term memory. We can show how the activities with colorful images developed better results in the students' learning process. In this case, the exercise consisted of listening to a short story and organizing a sequence of flash cards. The students followed the instructions and participated in an active way. Sometimes they could

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not understand the whole story but they associated some words with the images, obtaining a success result.

Figure 4.1. Proposed activity – Journal Nº52

We as researchers could understand that images are a powerful conduit of knowledge because they work as a link between the text and previous knowledge. As Lindstrom (1999) said, *"the human process visualizes 60.000 times faster than text". (p. 7).* Because of that, the images helped the students to interpret and communicate what they wanted to say in EFL. Through the use of the different activities, they could associate images with words, which made them to speak more fluently.
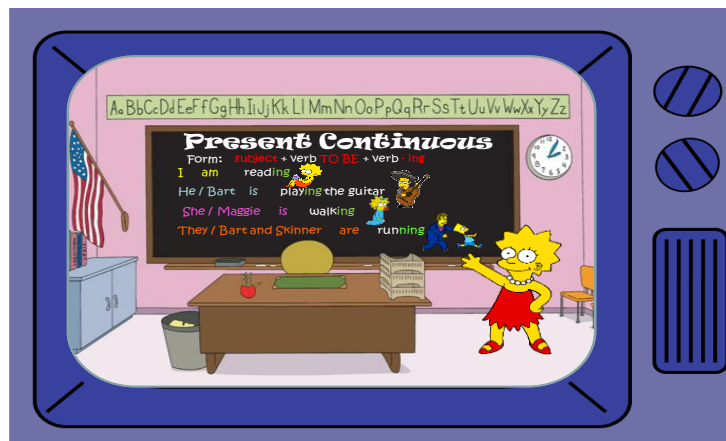

Figure 4.2. Proposed activity – Journal Nº59

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We also considered that the topics are more interesting for the students when recognized images are used, where the activity included images of The Simpsons (a T.V. program), for example. The attitude of the students was totally different; they showed interest and respect for the English session.

- *"I could observe that since the group enjoyed the presentation because I used The Simpsons TV program as an example, they showed more interest in the explanation. Then I started by explaining about the differences between the simple future and going to. In this activity, I gave them a short explanation and I contextualized them with a real situation. I chose a speaking activity for them in order to clarify doubts about the topic. The attitude during this class was very different; they participated in a good way." (Journal N°59).*

Additionally, we understood that it was indispensable to work more on using social components as part of the class. Taking into account the students' context we could take advantage of getting a lot of information, because as Lerner (2001) mentioned, *"learning in schools is meaningful and fruitful when there is an interaction between the context and the class content". (p. 37).* It means that we cannot use only images if we want to teach something new. It is more meaningful if we connect images and content with real situations; in that way the students keep in mind what they learn because is something that relates to their lives.

- *"The participation of the students was active because they not only paid attention to the things they had to say in order to describe the personage, but they also paid attention when the other groups were describing their personages in order to*

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guess who the personage was and being able to answer and getting a mark." (Journal

Nº63).

In this example, we can see how a didactic activity can be a great tool to make the students interact with other people, teaching them to work as a team, improving their listening and speaking skills and enhancing their motivation.

In a teaching process, students and teacher work cooperatively to build meaningful knowledge. For the students, they can apply and understand English content in activities or topics of their interest, and for the teachers it is a process in which they can teach, adjust, and re-evaluate their teaching and learning practices used in their institutional syllabus.

The teachers´ interviews revealed how the usefulness of visual aids can influence the students learning process. Most of the teachers answered in a positive way when we asked them regard visual literacy. In the next example we can see the point of view of some of them, when we asked if they believe that visual literacy could be used to improve some student's skills:

- *Yes, we are in a very visual society, so the form that they can learn and they are looking at very different things yes so that is why I like to work the virtually with blogs ahh the internet pages but very visual (Male professor at CUN, interview Nº2 August 21ˢᵗ, 2012)*

They agree about the importance of using visual aids because through their own experiences they find that this is a good way to encourage their teaching process. They said:

- *I try to use visual material because most of the students have facilities and to remember things by images and I think that kind of of ahhh, that kind of things is very*

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good for them to learn something, to memorize something (Female professor at CUN,

interview Nº1 August 21st, 2012)

- *Visual literacy it´s very important because it is easier for them to identify*

characteristics through the use of pictures (Male professor at CUN, interview Nº5

August 28th, 2012)

Based on this research experience, we believe it is important to evaluate our practices as

teachers in order to identify and understand the magnitude of linking students' realities to

the program content and the learning process.

As a result, we think that images should be valuable elements to be implemented in the

process of learning in EFL, because everything in our lives has an image as a reference.

Fostering students' listening and speaking skills

The category "fostering students' listening and speaking skills" and the subcategories of

"promoting listening" and "encouraging speaking" through the development of classroom

activities focusing on visual literacy, are related to the objectives and the research question

of this study.

We promoted listening skill through visual activities that contributed to the EFL

learning process of CUN students, while activities implemented to encourage the speaking

skill were carried out looking to stimulate students to do something, telling them what they

are doing is good, in order to enhance the students' interest and motivation for learning a

second language.

Consequently, the journals described the students' reactions and the strategies used to

foster listening and speaking skills through the use of visual literacy activities, taking into

account that when we developed these kinds of activities, most of the students participated

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actively; all of them had the capacity to answer the questions correctly and interact with their partners, working in groups. It allowed the researchers to know about the students´ level regarding speaking or listening in EFL.

Promoting listening activities by using visual aids, according to the activity presented in one class at CUN that was registered in journal N°67: *"The video offers the students the facility to read the English subtitles while they listen to it".* We determined that through this activity, students easily associated the images and comprehended the meaning of the story on answering some questions related to the activity. (Figure N°4.3) Besides, students could understand not only what the activity was about but also they improved the correct pronunciation of the words and sentences. As a result, students enjoy this kind of activity and it helps us as teachers to reinforce the topic.

Figure 4.3. Proposed activity – Journal N°67

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The activity described could be mentioned by Harmer (2009) and Wilson (2008) about the importance of developing the listening skill to enhance pronunciation and speech and recognizing the correct sounds.

On the other hand, encouraging speaking activities based on visual literacy, from an activity developed in one class at CUN that related to "*students organized in pairs and I gave each group an image of technological resources in the future. Students had to speak about this picture using the future" (Journal N°50).* It allowed us identify that when students had to speak about technological resources using "will" to express the future, they used the picture that helped them to produce spontaneous new ideas. Then they passed in front of the class, they showed the picture to their partners and this picture easily made them remember what they wished to express.

This activity could be supported with the viewpoint presented by Nunan (1999), who suggested the implementation of an oral presentation in a spontaneous way and perhaps the use of a picture from activities recommended by Luoma (2004).

Moreover, the speaking activities presented help students to clarify doubts about the topic, avoiding speaking in Spanish so to encourage them to use the target language, by pushing them to speak with their classmates, even though most of the activities were developed individually, by trying to ask questions to students who did not speak actively during the classes.

While in the data collected and analyzed from the students and teachers, we found that in spite of the importance of fostering listening and speaking skills in their classes, in questionnaires N°2 and N°6, teachers argued that there was not enough time to implement

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listening and speaking skills in a proper way, and in questionnaire N°4 a female teacher answered that according to *"their level, it was difficult to do activities related to speaking"*.

Nevertheless, with reference to mentioned by Female professor at CUN in the interview Nº1 *"I try to improve the listening and the speaking, speaking which are the more difficult abilities for them, and I try to practice those because ahhh, for them is very difficult to listen a native speaker or also to speak even between them",* we analyzed that in spite of the lack time teachers implement activities based on the difficulties that students have in the learning process.

Finally, we evidenced that students sometimes did not feel comfortable using English language in the classroom because they felt ashamed and they did not show interest in the English class.

Classroom listening and speaking activities

Throughout the English classes, students did not have the chance to work in Listening and Speaking activities for two main reasons: lack of technological resources and lack of time (English classes sessions were very short, about 2 hours per week). *"It would be nice if we could use different activities in order to attract their attention but the technological resources at CUN sometimes do not work." (Journal Nº 26)*

It was seen that the recorders were busy with previous requirements mandatory for borrowing them, at other times it was so difficult to move them from one branch to another, etc. The researchers noticed that the teacher explained the activity but there was not enough time for students to practice doing Listening and Speaking activities. *"There was not enough time for them to practice speaking and listening" (Journal Nº 27).*

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Adding to these situations, researchers found that teachers did not promote Listening and Speaking skills regularly with didactic, innovative and creative activities. Besides, students had difficulties in language communication. Since Reading and Writing skills are promoted actively and are a constant in English classes, it is a relevant aspect in delaying the advance of Listening and Speaking skills.

- *"Students have not had the exercises necessary to develop skills in speaking fluency or develop good pronunciation." (Journal Nº4).*

- *"I observed that students need to implement more Listening and Speaking tasks in order to help them develop listening and speaking skills because the teacher only prepares activities to improve reading and writing skills." (Journal Nº11).*

As the main objective, the researchers focused on designing Listening and Speaking activities using visual literacy as the main strategy in order for students to start improving those skills. So to reach this objective, Listening and Speaking activities were done most of the time in English classes, as is mentioned by Harmer (2009): Listening and Speaking activities are improved through constant practice.

- *"It is important to recognize that the students fulfilled their homework because they only used images to make the presentation and nearly all the students applied the vocabulary and grammar studied in the previous classes. It is advisable to make several speaking exercises in order to avoid that students be uncomfortable when they make a presentation, because through speaking activities students can improve their level of English and remove the fear when they speak in public." (Journal Nº13).*

- *"The images allow students to understand the vocabulary." (Journal Nº16).*

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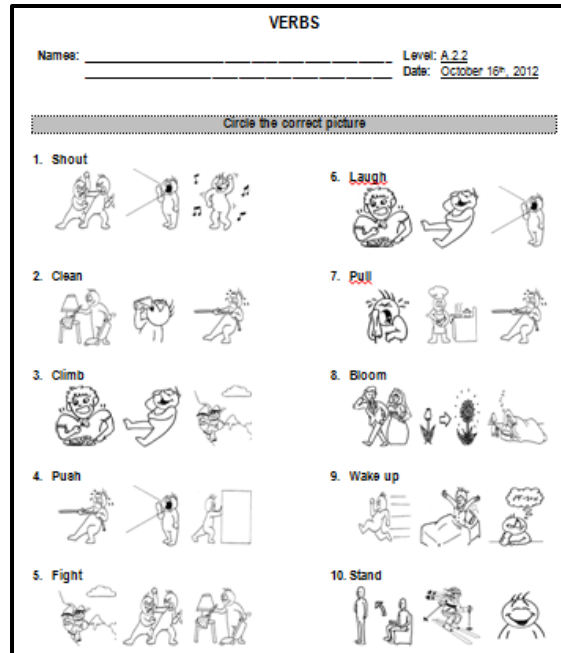

Figure 4.4. Proposed activity- Journal Nº16

- *"I had tried to use images in all the activities that I prepared for this group*
because our project is based on visual literacy. I could see that students show more
interest in this kind of task than when they just read from the book." (Journal Nº24).

Figure 4.5. Proposed activity – Journal Nº24

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- *"I designed a point in the test with some pictures. In this point students did better than in other points. It is meaningful enough for our project because students assimilate the information more quickly when we use material with some pictures. It is easier for students to identify the structure, sequence and actions in pictures." (Journal Nº49).*

Figure 4.6. Proposed activity – Journal Nº49

Teaching practitioners promoted Listening and Speaking activities as is seen in some journals. For example, in Journal Nº 34, students had to design a poster with some Bogotá tourist places and they had to present and talk about them.

Figure 4.7. Proposed activity – Journal Nº34

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In Journal Nº 36, the activity was focused on a movie about business called "Wall Street", so a group of students had to ask some questions as a dialogue and the other group answered them. In addition, students worked on a worksheet by organizing some pictures pieces of the movie in order to get a sequence and finally they had to talk about it.

Figure 4.8. Proposed activity – Journal Nº36

Teaching practitioners integrated Listening and Speaking using visual literacy and although students still showed some difficulties with those skills, their advance was relevant. For instance, in Journal Nº 50, students had to organize posters relating to the future, so they spoke about technological resources in the future. Taking into account the results of this activity, it was noticed that the use of images to produce sentences is an excellent language resource because it allows people to be more creative and expand the vocabulary to complement what he or she is saying.

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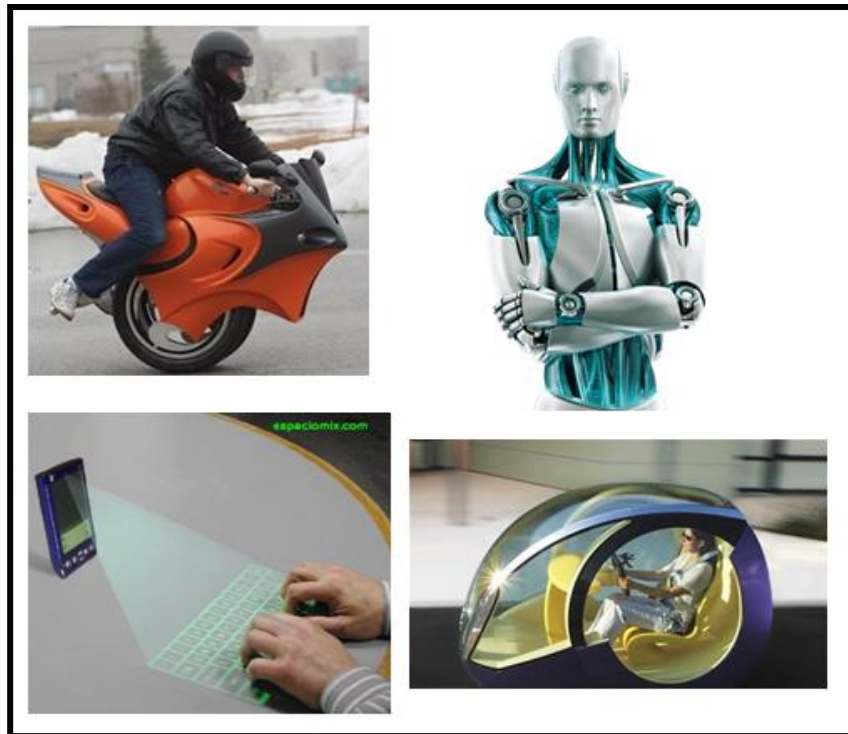
Figure 4.9. Proposed activity – Journal Nº50

In Journal Nº 51, students had as homework to design a poster with many pictures and introduce it. The topic was "the world in the future" using the grammatical tense "will", so with prepared expositions students used the posters and they talked more easily from the meaning of the pictures.

On the other hand, students wanted to improve Listening and Speaking skills through activities which allow them interaction and participation, as for example watching movies, role play and listening to songs, because they prefer activities where they can interact using visual images as a resource in language communication.

Students are interested in practicing and trying to improve their skills out of class but they do not feel comfortable and do not have enough autonomous learning to do it. For example, most of them like to listen to music in English and try to sing the songs by

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repetition, watch movies with subtitles in English and surf on the Internet, among others. Some student's comments:

- *"Ha, ha!, I don't know, I like to watch movies or maybe when I watch football games in English" (Male student at CUN, interview Nº1, May 8th, 2012)*

- *"Outside my class, I like to listen to music in English, pay attention when somebody is speaking in English, learn English vocabulary" (Male student at CUN, interview Nº3, May 8th, 2012)*

Besides, students and teachers considered it important to implement activities that are enjoyable for students and useful in improving their level of English, as for example, watching movies and videos, doing roles play, listening to songs and playing video games, but it is not possible to integrate those skills for lack of time and so they prefer to only work on Reading and Writing skills in English classes.
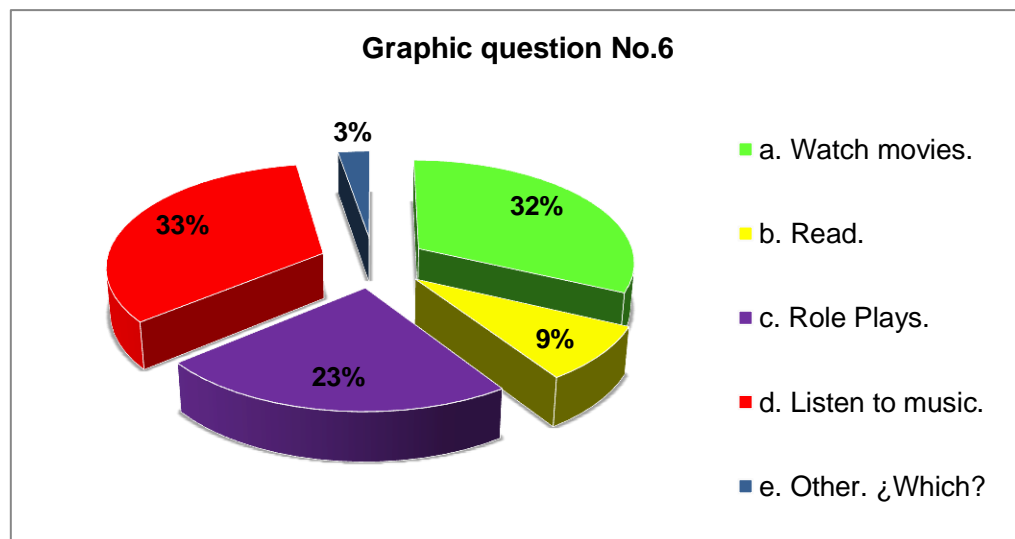

Figure 4.10. Graphic results students' questionnaire

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English Club Proposal

Through the development of this project, we noticed that one special feature of the project is that the use of visual literacy activities for fostering listening and speaking skills can be held not only in the classroom space. From our point of view, it is a useful tool that can be used in different spaces apart of the classroom. Taking into account this consideration, one of our specific objectives *"To propose the implementation of an intervention activity to foster speaking and listening skills in students at CUN as a didactic strategy",* and the data collected during the research, we have considered that the use of visual literacy activities in a space such as an English club could be a very important strategy, not only for fostering the speaking and listening skills, but also for engaging the CUN students with their own learning process.

This consideration has been taken into account by the project as a proposal for the implementation of an English club at CUN, and in the same way as any of our supporting concepts, the proposal of an English club has been studied and supported by authors, and from the important data collected by our instruments of journals, questionnaires and interviews, the following findings were the results of the data analysis for the category of an "English club proposal" and its subcategories of "engagement" and "setting".

Taking into account the process of open coding according to Creswell (1998) *"in the open coding phase, the researcher examines the text (e.g., transcripts, field notes, documents) for salient categories of information supported by the text." (p. 160).* The data collected by our instruments of journals, questionnaires and semi- structured interviews were analyzed in order to organize the information gathered, narrowing the key concepts

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into categories that finally support this "English club proposal" and its subcategories of "engagement" and " setting".

The subcategory of "engagement" is based on what Finn (1993) stated: *"Engagement in school may be viewed behaviorally-that is, whether a student participates regularly in classroom and school activities-or affectively, whether a student feels that he or she `belongs` in the school setting and values school-relevant outcomes." (p. 5).*

In this subcategory according to Finn (1993), the comments and opinions mentioned by students and teachers at CUN in the questionnaires and semi- structured interviews were analyzed, together with the students' participation in the visual literacy activities conducted in the classroom, as reported in the journals.

Two important instruments from which we gathered information relating to our intervention activity to foster listening and speaking skills were the questionnaires and semi- structured interviews. These instruments were not only applied to students but also to teachers; the data obtained from the students questionnaires and interviews leaves proof of the positive behavior that students have when they were asked about the implementation of an additional space in which they could practice their knowledge in English.

Through their comments and opinions, some of the students suggest that the implementation of an additional space for practicing English, among various reasons, would increase their expectations and interest in learning more for enhancing their level of English. This space also gives them more confidence when practicing the language and when speaking with their peers. The English club was the main activity in which the students would like to participate, followed by tutorials. Taking these responses into

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consideration, we noticed that the tutorial space was already implemented and the English club was not yet implemented.

Some additional information showed us that the students would like to find audiovisual activities and talks based on specific topics in these spaces (questionnaire implemented on students, question N°9). These activities are more related to activities that can be developed in an English Club than could be developed in tutorial spaces.

The data obtained from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaires and semi- structured interviews evidence that from the teacher's point of view, students were not the only ones that are willing to participate in different and more dynamic and motivational spaces where the students can practice the language and satisfy their interest in learning a foreign language such as English. Most of the teachers were willing to participate in it by giving time from their classes so that this English club could be held at CUN. According to their comments, they also recognized the importance of a space such an English club:

- *"Because having contact with other students at the same level can motivate them to learn because they are not going to be afraid of making mistakes and they feel more confident in themselves." (Female professor at CUN, interview N°1, August 21st, 2012)*
- *"The idea of an English club is that they have to speak, they have to listen and they have to use visuals in different forms so that they can take some meanings, some kind of fostering skills in order to practice" (Male professor at CUN, interview N°2, August 21st, 2012)*
- *"It is a specific moment when they can participate, they can express their ideas about everything and more than in an academic way they can communicate at the real*

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moment in a real way and they can use the vocabulary they have" (Male professor at CUN, interview Nº3, August 28th, 2012).

In the subcategory of "setting", understood as the environment in which the English club might be developed, it was contrasted with the English class environment in which the visual literacy activities were developed. This contrast was based on the data gathered from both the teachers' and students' interviews and from the journals recorded during the practicum at CUN.

In accordance with the information collected through the observations that were recorded in journals for three semesters at CUN, the environment where the classes were developed regarding the available space most of the time, the necessary space where the students could work in groups or organize round tables to develop the activities, the space in some of the rooms were inadequate in relation to the number of students in the room, causing discomfort when teachers and students move around and a warm ambience with little air circulation.

Otherwise, the CUN rooms had adequate chairs, blackboards and interior lighting in most of them, facilitating the good development of the class. However, at certain times the availability of technological resources such as tape recorders, computers or video projectors was limited because some of these resources had to be moved from a different branch "Teacher changed classroom from students' presentations to the use of Video Bean. We were in the classroom 306 G. This classroom is wide" (Journal N°4) on occasions, all the students had to be moved from one classroom to another when it was necessary to use the video projector.

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Some comments from teachers and students at CUN recorded in the interviews evidence interest in the implementation of a space such as a laboratory or any other room that is outside and different from the classroom. This space will be where English activities such as film discussions, games, role playing, performances and audiovisual activities, among others, suggested by teachers from CUN, help students interact and communicate with others.

In conclusion, the implications that the category "English club proposal" as an strategic proposal evidenced the students' and teachers' interest for creating a new space at CUN for practicing English and fostering speaking and listening skills in CUN students through the use of visual literacy activities.

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Chapter Five: Conclusions

In this chapter based on the results obtained from the analysis of the data, we present the conclusions of the study with the intention of responding to how the use of visual literacy contributes to fostering listening and speaking skills at CUN. We describe how this process contributed to the teaching and learning of EFL.

According to Petterson (1993) *"visual literacy is the learned ability to interpret visual images accurately and to create such messages, translating visual images into verbal language and vice versa." (p. 135).* It was evidenced in the Project that the use of visual literacy not only improves and enriches the development of the class, making them more dynamic, active and interesting, it also helps adult students at CUN to produce sentences and practice the target language from the knowledge acquired in their English classes. The presence of images makes students use the knowledge they have learned and look for new knowledge in order to improve their level of English.

Moreover, this research contributed to help students express themselves orally and also help them analyze situations in critical manner that in most of the situations are expressed only through an image.

This research apart of contribute with the development of an alternative means to promote the practice of English at CUN. It also helps us as researchers to enrich our teaching practice by allowing us to design the workshops, to implement the activities and to evaluate the use of visual literacy while improving listening and speaking abilities in a population like CUN. The experience and results obtained during this process will be useful in our teaching profession when we look for English learning and practice by students.

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This project led ourselves to notice the importance of researching in educational environments because through research we can evaluate teaching and learning processes in a context in order to discover possible issues that can be improved during the process, permitting the construction of an optimal learning and teaching environment.

This research was based from the beginning on the need to practice listening and speaking skills. These abilities were rarely used by students in their English classes at CUN, so the idea was to implement visual literacy activities in order to get students familiarized with and increase the practice of these abilities during the class developing some activities and extra class by means of one proposal of an English Club implementation.

Considering the findings of this project and the students' and teachers' comments and suggestions in which they let us know about their interest and engagement that they will be immersed in when the development of a space like an English Club is contemplated, the development of a space like an English club is a pedagogical strategy that will allow practicing English by CUN students.

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Appendix A: Journal VII semester form

Journal No. 1 – August 23th 2011		
Description	**Reflection**	**Course of propose**

Appendix B: Journal VIII semester form

Journal No. 1 – February 14th 2012	
Teacher´s role	**Activity Assessment**
Suggestions or feedback:	

Appendix C: Journal IX semester form

Journal No. 1 – August 14th 2012
Activity Assessment
Suggestions or feedback:

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Appendix D: Students questionnaire form

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SALLE

Respetado estudiante, la presente encuesta tiene como objetivo conocer su opinión sobre algunos temas relacionados con su proceso de aprendizaje en el idioma Ingles, esto con el fin de mejorar los procesos académicos que corresponden a esta área.

La información que se recolecte en esta encuesta será confidencial y se utilizara únicamente con fines académicos e investigativos.

NOMBRE:_____EDAD:_____ NIVEL:_____

En el siguiente cuestionario usted deberá marcar con una equis (X) la respuesta que más se ajuste a su condición, por favor haga la justificación cuando se requiera.

1. Es el aprendizaje del idioma Inglés para usted:

   a. Necesario.
   b. Obligatorio.
   c. Opcional.

2. Considera su nivel de Inglés:

   a. Excelente.
   b. Bueno.
   c. Regular.
   d. Malo.

3. Clasifique de mayor a menor siendo cuatro (4) la calificación más alta y uno (1) la menor, la habilidad que le gustaría mejorar en la clase de inglés.

   a. Escribir.
   b. Escuchar.
   c. Leer.
   d. Hablar.

4. ¿Cuántas horas a la semana se dedica usted a estudiar inglés, fuera de clase?

   a. Entre 1 y 2 horas.
   b. Entre 3 y 4 horas.
   c. Entre 5 y 6 horas.
   d. Más de 6 horas
   e. No le dedico tiempo.

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5. ¿Las actividades que realiza su Docente de Inglés promueve todas las habilidades comunicativas? (Escribir, escuchar, leer y hablar).

    a. Si.
    b. No.
    ¿Por qué? _____
_____

6. ¿Qué tipo de actividades te gustaría desarrollar en la clase de inglés? Escoga dos.

    a. Ver películas.
    b. Hacer lecturas.
    c. Realizar diálogos.
    d. Escuchar canciones.
    e. Otra. ¿Cuál?_____

7. ¿Le gusta encontrar imágenes en las actividades de inglés que usted realiza?
    a. Si.
    b. No.
    ¿Por qué? _____
_____

8. De acuerdo con el aprendizaje del idioma inglés ¿En cuál de las siguientes actividades le gustaría participar? Escoja una.

    a. Tutorías.
    b. Exposiciones.
    c. Club de Ingles.
    d. Otra. ¿Cuál?_____

9. De acuerdo con la respuesta que dio en la pregunta número 8. ¿Qué le gustaría encontrar en esa actividad? Escoja dos.

    a. Actividades audiovisuales.
    b. Lecturas generales.
    c. Conversaciones de temas específicos.
    d. Escritura de textos
    e. Otra. ¿Cuál?_____

10. ¿Participa usted activamente en clase?

    a. Si.
    b. No.
    ¿Por qué? _____
_____

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Appendix E: Students interview form

Entrevista Estudiantes de la CUN.

Buenas noches /días /tardes, estamos con _____ quien es un estudiante de la CUN él / ella están en el nivel _____ y él / ella han aceptado participar en esta entrevista con el fin de recolectar datos sobre su proceso de aprendizaje, intereses, motivaciones, debilidades, entre otros. Esta información será utilizada para fines investigativos en nuestro proyecto con el fin de ayudar a mejorar las habilidades comunicativas de los estudiantes a través de la creación de un club de conversación basado en alfabetización visual. La información será de carácter confidencial.

1. ¿Cree usted que el proceso de aprendizaje de una segunda lengua en este caso el inglés es importante en su carrera? ¿Por qué?

2. ¿Se siente cómodo con el nivel que tiene? ¿Por qué?

3. ¿En su opinión cual es la habilidad que usted debe reforzar: hablar, leer, escribir, escuchar? Por qué?

4. ¿Está interesado en la adquisición de una segunda lengua como el inglés o lo hace solo porque es un requisito?

5. ¿Qué clase de actividades disfruta en su clase de inglés? ¿Por qué?

6. ¿Usted considera que las imágenes lo pueden ayudar en su proceso de aprendizaje? ¿Por qué?

7. ¿Cuántas horas dedica a estudiar inglés fuera de clase?

8. ¿Le gustaría tener un lugar diferente, algo así como un aula especial donde pueda poner en práctica lo que aprende en su clase de inglés? ¿Por qué?

9. ¿Las actividades propuestas en su clase son suficientes para su proceso de aprendizaje o le gustaría proponer algo distinto?

10. ¿Qué clase de material llama su atención en las clases de inglés?

11. ¿Puede decirme que actividades realiza para reforzar el aprendizaje del inglés fuera de clase?

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Appendix F: Teachers questionnaire form

LA SALLE UNIVERSITY

The aim of the present survey is to know your point of view about some topics related to the process of English language learning in your students, the information collected in this survey will be confidential and it will be used only for academic and research purposes.

NAME:_____CLASS LEVEL:_____

In the following survey you should mark with a cross (X) the answer of your choice, please justify when required.

1. The English language learning for your students should be:

   a. Necessary.
   b. Mandatory.
   c. Optional.

2. Please choose two skills you think it are the most important in your students learning process.

   a. Writing.
   b. Listening.
   c. Reading.
   d. Speaking.

3. Do the activities that you perform in the English Class promote all the language skills (writing, listening, reading and speaking)?

   a. Yes.
   b. No.
   Why? _____
   _____
   _____

4. What activities do you consider are the most advisable for improving the English level in your students?

   a. Movies.
   b. Readings.
   c. Role plays.
   d. Songs.
   e. Another. Which? _____

5. Do you use pictures in your English class material?

    a. Yes.
    b. No.
    Why?_____
    _____
    _____

6. Which of the following activities do you think your students would like to participate in?

    a. Tutoring.
    b. Presentations.
    c. English Club.
    d. Another. Which? _____

7. Would you allow your students to take 30 minutes of your class to participate in one of the mentioned above?

    a. Yes.
    b. No.
    Why? _____
    _____
    _____

8. Do you think an English Club could improve your students' English level?

    a. Yes.
    b. No.
    Why? _____
    _____
    _____

9. Do you think the curriculum at CUN enhances the four communicative skills?
    _____
    _____
    _____

10. Please list you students' strengths and weaknesses in the chart below.

Strengths	Weaknesses

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Appendix G: Teachers Interview Form

TEACHER INTERVIEW AT CUN

Good evening, we are with teacher _____, who has accepted to participate in this interview and share some information about his / her teaching process in order to gather data for our project, which is based in the implementation of an English club in order to foster listening and speaking skills of students at CUN, based in the use of visual literacy.

The information collected in this interview will be confidential and it will be used only with academic and research purposes.

1. What levels are you working with at CUN?
2. What are the main disadvantages that you find in your students learning process?
3. What kind of skills do you try to improve in you English classes?
4. In what kind of activities do your students participate actively?
5. Do you implement the use of images in your English classes?
6. Do you think that visual literacy can be used to improve some student's skills?
7. What kind of extra activities offer CUN for their students?
8. Do you think that the implementation of an English club could be used as a learning strategy for your students? Why?
9. Could you give your students 30 minutes of your classes in order that they participate in an English club?
10. What kind of activities do you consider important to carry out in an English club?

Thank you so much for your valuable help on this.

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Appendix H. Lesson Plan Form

UNIVERSIDAD DE LA SALLE
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN
LICENCIATURA EN LENGUA CASTELLANA, INGLÉS Y FRANCÉS
PRÁCTICA PEDAGÓGICA INVESTIGATIVA

LESSON PLAN N.

COURSE INFORMATION			
TEACHER			
PLACE			
COURSE/CLASS		NUMBER OF STUDENTS	
POPULATION		STUDENTS' CEFR LEVEL	
LESSON INFORMATION			
DATE		HOUR	
LESSON TOPIC			
GENERAL LESSON GOAL			
LANGUAGE OBJECTIVE(S)			
COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE(S)			
LEARNING / CULTURE OBJECTIVE(S)			
MATERIALS/ RESOURCES			
LESSON DESCRIPTION			
STAGE – ACTIVITY	PROCEDURE		TIME
WARM UP			
PRE-ACTIVITY			
WHILE ACTIVITY			
AFTER ACTIVITY			
HOMEWORK-ASSIGNMENT			
COMMENTS-OBSERVATIONS			

Appendix I. Photographs

Students' participation in activity about languages. Journal Nº 68
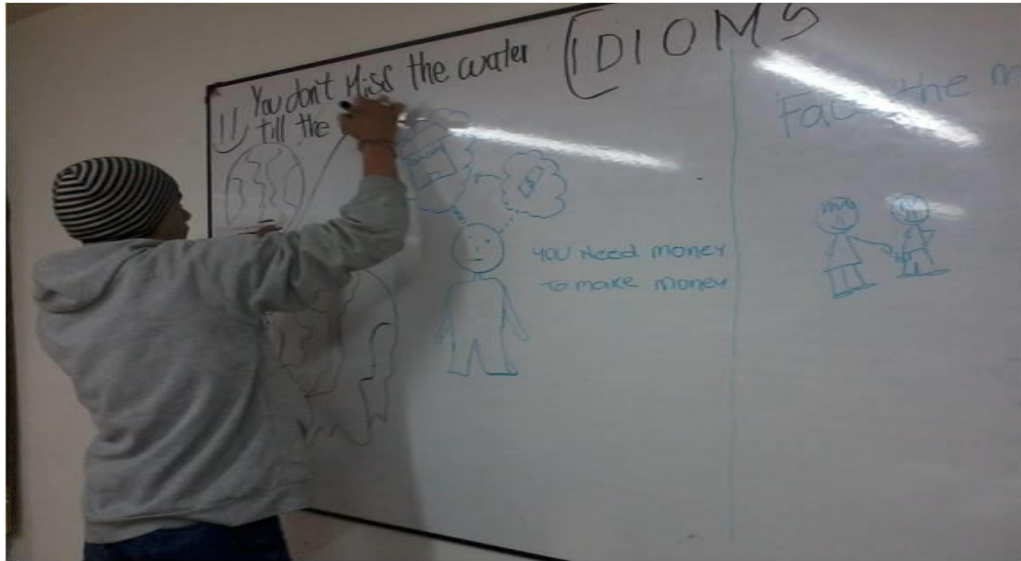
Students' production activity about languages. Journal Nº68