



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**

**THE USE OF VISUAL MATERIALS WITH YOUNG LEARNERS: A**

**CLASSROOM OBSERVATION APPROACH**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF LANGUAGES FOR THE**

**DEGREE OF**

**LICENCIADO EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS**

**BY**

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**Puebla, Pue.**

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# BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA

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THE USE OF VISUAL MATERIALS WITH YOUNG LEARNERS: A CLASSROOM  
OBSERVATION APPROACH

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LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
Acknowledgments	3
Dedications	4
Table of contents	5
Abstract	9
 <b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.0 Introduction to the problem	10
1.1 Rationale	10
1.2 Location of research	11
1.3 Purpose of the study	11
1.4 Research aims	11
1.5 Research questions	11
1.6 Significance of the study	12
1.7 The context of the research	12
1.8 Chapter conclusion	13
 <b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0 Chapter introduction	14
2.1 Young learners	15
2.1.1 Teaching young learners	16

2.1.2 The role of the teacher	17
2.2 Children's memory	20
2.3 Materials development	21
2.3.1 Visual aids	24
2.3.2 Type of materials	27
2.4 Learning styles	29
2.5 Teaching vocabulary	32
2.5.1 Learning words	35
2.6 Cognitive development	38
2.7 Chapter conclusion	41
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY</b>	
3.0 Chapter introduction	42
3.1 Participants	42
3.2 Research methodology	43
3.3 Research procedure	43
3.3.1 Data collection procedures	44
3.3.2 Data analysis procedures	44
3.4 Chapter conclusion	45

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.0 Chapter introduction	46
4.1 Research questions	46
4.2 Results	46
4.2.1 Visual materials effects	46
4.2.1. Table Visual materials: students' effects	47
4.2.2 Children's reactions	50
4.2.3 How visual materials support English vocabulary	50
4.2.4 Children's attitudes	51
4.2.4. Table: children's attitudes	51
4.3 Chapter conclusion	52

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Chapter introduction	53
5.1 Findings and significance of the study	53
5.2 Accomplishment of the research aims	54
5.3 Answer to the research questions	54
5.3.1 Visual materials effects on children learning	54
5.3.2 Do visual materials improve English vocabulary?	55

5.3.3 Children's attitudes	55
5.4 Personal reflection on the research experience	56
5.5 Limitations of the research	57
5.6 Suggestions for further research	57
Bibliography	58



## ABSTRACT

Currently, the majority of parents want to provide their children with a second language to get a good job or to have a good level of English, nevertheless some schools do not have an English teacher, who can teach English as a second language to young learners.

This study, carried out at a kindergarten in central Mexico, attempted first, to evaluate the use of visual materials with young learners and second to evaluate the children's attitudes towards materials. In order to achieve these two aims, a classroom observation was used to collect the necessary data.

The results of this research project suggested that using visual materials help children to improve their English vocabulary, the materials used in the present study were pictures, flash-cards, videos and real artefacts.

## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM**

Currently the majority of the writers have said that visual is the most fundamental of all senses, according to Fyle and Law (1988:2) “depiction, picturing and seeing are ubiquitous feature of the process by which most human beings come to know the world as it really is for them” (p. 3).

It is known that the first sense that we develop is the visual one, which human beings have already developed since childhood. Berger (1979) suggests “that seeing comes before words “(p.4). As this author mentions for children the principal sense that they develop is the visual, in this way as a future teacher we should use this sense to improve English vocabulary.

One of the reasons why I decided to research this topic is because when I was in my social service I did not know how to teach children; nevertheless, I was using visual materials in order to teach vocabulary and these materials were a useful tool for teaching English to young learners.

### **1.1 RATIONALE**

I decided to research this topic because visual materials could be useful tools in order to increase English vocabulary to children; McCarthy (1990) underlines the importance of vocabulary by saying: “No matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in a L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way”

(p.530).Furthermore, it is important to teach vocabulary to children to start having words to express their ideas without problems, visual materials could be tools in order to teach vocabulary to young learners and also to motivate them by using different visual materials like flash cards, pictures or videos.

## 1.2 LOCATION OF RESEARCH

This study was carried out in a public kindergarten in Puebla, the participants of the research were children in the second year, and they were 4. This was the first time these children had contact with English.

## 1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The priority of this research was to investigate what the effects were about using visual materials to improve English vocabulary with young learners; this research also aimed to evaluate children's attitudes towards visual materials in the classroom.

## 1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

- To know if visual materials help young learners to improve their vocabulary.
- To evaluate what children's attitudes are towards visual materials.

## 1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1. Do visual materials help young learners to improve English vocabulary? If so, how?

RQ2. What are children's attitudes towards visual materials?

## 1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important because visual materials could be a tool that teachers can use in order to get the children's attention. Porter and Margaret (1992) assert that "using visual materials not only make what you have to say more comprehensive to your students, they can make it more interesting as well". For that reason, this research was based on visual materials for teaching vocabulary to children because these materials help teachers to get the children's attention into the classroom and also make the courses more attractive for kids.

## 1.7 THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

The following areas of research are related to this study: 2.1 Young learners, 2.1.1 Teaching young learners, 2.1.2 The role of the teacher in an English classroom, 2.2 Children's memory, 2.3 Materials development, 2.3.1 Visual aids, 2.3.2 Type of materials, 2.4 Learning styles, 2.5 Teaching vocabulary, 2.5.1 Learning words and 2.6 Cognitive development.

## 1.8 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

In this chapter background information about this research was presented. Moreover, the research aims, research questions, and the purpose were presented. This chapter provides an introduction about the research, chapter II presents the literature review, chapter III describes the methodology used to carry out this study, in chapter IV the results are presented and in the last chapter V the conclusions are drawn.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

Interest of teaching English to young learners has been steadily growing in the recent years. There is no doubt partly in response to the rapidly growing demand for it to be taught at even younger ages by parents. They want to provide their children with a competitive educational level of English. This chapter provides a literature review of the following topics:

#### **2.1 Young learners**

##### **2.1.1 Teaching young learners**

##### **2.1.2 The role of the teacher in an English classroom**

#### **2.2 Children's memory**

#### **2.3 Materials development**

##### **2.3.1 Visual aids**

##### **2.3.2 Type of materials**

#### **2.4 Learning styles**

#### **2.5 Teaching vocabulary**

##### **2.5.1 Learning words**

#### **2.6 Cognitive development**

## 2.1 YOUNG LEARNERS

According to Pinter (2006) there are many factors that influence children's maturity: for example, their culture, and their environment (city or rural), their sex, the expectation of the peers and parents. The approach and type of activity that teachers decide to use with a class will be influenced by knowledge of their circumstances, attitudes, and interest rather than simply by the children's physical age. As Pinter (2006) points out, "all children are unique, and two children at the chronological age can exhibit markedly different characteristics" (p. 7). Therefore children in the same age have a lot of differences and these differences can affect or help them in learning a second language.

According to Cameron (2001), children have a positive attitude, when they learn a foreign language. They try to be active; playing and participating in activities. Sometimes they cannot catch attention more than five or ten minutes during an activity. They do not have knowledge about their first language in grammar structure. Thus, they cannot understand what they are learning because they just play with the material and enjoy the moment of repeating the vocabulary. It is known that children always want to be the first in each activity; for that reason, the teacher must create different activities in the classroom in order for children to pay attention during the class.

Children learn according to their different ages, therefore they develop more their speaking and listening because they cannot already write or read. As Pinter (2006) points out, "all children are unique, and two children at the chronological age can exhibit markedly different characteristics" In addition of this it is necessary to analyze the ages of children in which this research is based on.

Reilly (2000) said: “‘very young learners’ refers to children who are three to six years old, a child of that age cannot read or write anything in their own language, children are learning a second language only by developing their listening and speaking. Therefore, a teacher just works with listening and speaking skills, which can improve the student’s vocabulary and pronunciation.

### 2.1.1 TEACHING YOUNG LEARNERS

It is known that teaching young learners is not an easy job because as teachers we need to create attractive and useful activities in order for children to pay attention during the class. Younger learners respond to language according to what it does or what they can do with it, rather than treating it as an intellectual game or abstract system. This has both, advantages and disadvantages: on the one hand they respond to the meaning underlying the language used and do not worry about individual words or sentences; on the other hand, they do not make the analytical links that older learners do in addition of this idea Philips (1993: P.7) said: Young learners have the advantages of being great imitators, are often unselfconscious, and are usually prepared to enjoy the activities the teacher has prepared for them.

Philips (1993: P.7) said: Young learners have the advantages of being great imitators, are often unselfconscious, and are usually prepared to enjoy the activities the teacher has prepared for them. These factors mean that it is easy to maintain a high degree of motivation and to make the English class an enjoyable, stimulating experience for the children. The following are some opinions that Philips points out to be taken into account by teachers at the moment of teaching young learners:



- The activities should be simple enough for the children to understand what is expected from them.
- The task should be within their abilities: it needs to be achievable but at the same time sufficiently stimulating for them to feel satisfied with their work.
- The activities should be largely orally based- indeed, with very young children listening activities will take up a large portion of the class time.
- Written activities should be used sparingly with younger children. Children of six or seven years old are often not yet proficient in the mechanics of writing in their own language.

For that reason the activities must be attractive for them in order that teachers always get their attention during the sessions, furthermore teachers must control the time for each activity at least 10 minutes per activity will be enough for children at the moment of doing these activities.

### 2.1.2 THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN AN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

In this section the teacher's role in the classroom and what a role is are described. The term "role", as Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) point out, is a technical term "which originally comes from sociology and refers to the shared expectation of how an individual should behave. In other words, roles describe what people are supposed to do" (p. 119). For that reason every tool into the classroom takes a role at the moment of teaching children. Therefore the role of the teacher into the classroom is not only to be a teacher; teachers are also facilitators, sometimes a friend who can advise students when they have problems.

Littlewood (1981) conceptualizes the role of the language teacher broadly as the “facilitator of learning” (p. 92). In the context of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) instead of the rather narrow concept of the “teacher as instructor”. Littlewood says that a teacher’s role as a facilitator entails the sub-roles of an “overseer” of student’s learning, a “classroom manager”, a “consultant” or “adviser”, and sometimes, “co-communicator” with the learners and some roles are controller, organizer, assessor, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, and observer.

Harmer (2001) looks at the term “facilitator” in a much broader way than Littlewood does, and points out that the ultimate aim of all roles is “co-communicator” with the learners to facilitate the students’ progress in some way or the other. Therefore teachers have to find the way in which students can make a progress with the English language into the classroom, it could be by using different kind of materials or activities that make a progress.

In addition Richards and Rodgers (1986) consider teacher roles as part of the “design” component of a method, pointing out that these are related to the following issues (p. 24):

- (a) The types of function teachers are expected to fulfill.
- (b) The degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place.
- (c) The degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught.
- (d) The interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners

Teachers have to check the different contents in which the students' progress will be significant and teachers must create an exceptional environment into the classroom in order for teachers to improve the correlation teacher- student and student-teacher.

As Pine and Boy (1997) express, "pupils feel the personal emotional structure of the teacher long before they feel the impact of the intellectual content offered by that teacher" (p.1401). It is evident that teachers' performance in class will give an influence for their students; a teacher who does not lead a warm atmosphere in class will find lost spirits of students to learn. Also Pine and Boy said that "effective teachers create learning atmospheres which are cognitively and affectively expanding; learning atmospheres which enable the learner to become a more adequate and knowledgeable person"(p.1401).

Thus, the teachers' role is very critical in language teaching. According to Yan and Zhang (2002), there are three basic roles for teachers: "lecturer", "teacher", and "facilitator". They made distinctions among the three based on the theory of affective factors. "Lecturers" are those who solely consider their professional skills but neglect teaching methodology. "Teachers" here refers to those who possess professional skills and teaching methodology but seldom care students' affective experience. "Facilitators" are like those who not only take characters of the former two but also care students' affective state and learning process to help them in language learning. As facilitators, they try to break the invisible wall and communicate with students in time so that the previous opposite two sides can be changed into a harmonious group. Both learning and teaching go on smoothly without tension. There is no doubt that such facilitators can be successful ones for they explore attentively

students' psychological feelings, skillfully manipulate students from loving language classes and attract students to participate actively.

Tudor (1993) looks at the role of the teacher in the context of the notion of the learner-center classroom, a kind of classroom in which the focus is on the active involvement of the learners in the learning process. However, before considering what entails the role of the teacher in such a changed view of the classroom, it is worthwhile to have a look at the traditional roles that an English language teacher has been performing since teachers teach young learners.

Based on Linse (2005), "Teachers of young learners should provide the care necessary to meet these needs so that they thrive and focus on learning, in other words, teacher of young learners have two jobs, to provide care and to provide instruction. In order to provide the best possible instruction, you need to adjust educational experiences to meet the developmental stages of the individual child" (p. 120-134). Therefore teaching children is not only give them class, also the teacher should be a confident person in which sometimes children can trust on them.

## 2.2 CHILDREN'S MEMORY

Memory is a fundamental capacity that plays a vital role in social, emotional and cognitive functioning. Our memories form the basis for our sense of self, guide our thoughts and decisions, influence our emotional reactions, and allow us to learn in addition Baddeley and Hitch (1974) argued that "working memory is used for temporarily storing and carrying out computational processes on mental representations necessary for successful task performance" (p.634-654). Also Baddeley (1986), said "working memory is the process of

temporarily maintaining information in an active form so that it is available for further processing.”

Children do have memories before the age of 2, as measured by a variety of laboratory tasks, also explicit memories are not retrieved before this time period in later life (Eacott and Crawley, 1998). It is known that children have an incredible memory because some of them learn by touching the things or by repeating the words that their parents say, in this way children are going to create their own vocabulary by remembering each word.

In the first 5 years of the children there is an overall expansion of the brain volume related to development of both gray matter and white matter structure (Casey, 2000), in which children develop their capabilities and skills in their mother tongue.

### 2.3 MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Materials play an important role when teaching vocabulary to young learners because children are not ready to read or to write anything. Materials like images, songs, games and videos about the topic will help children to acquire the vocabulary used during the class. In addition teachers select the adequate material according to the necessities of the children and their learning styles in order for them to have a significant learning during the sessions.

Fyfe and Law (1988p:2), claim that “depiction picturing and seeing are ubiquitous feature of the process by which most human beings come to know the world as it really is for them before words”. For that reason it is quite important to develop visual materials as future tools not only for children, also teachers can help themselves to give clear description about vocabulary.

Baynham (2007, p. 60), claims that “materials developers also need to be conscious of relationships between the vocabulary load, structure or language functions learners are exposed to and are expected to produce and the influence of affective factors, such as interlocutor support, on successful communication. One way of doing this is by bringing the outside into the classroom”. Therefore, the material will be a tool which teachers use in order for students to have a significant learning, in this way teachers adapt the material based on their learning style and in the activities for the session.

Tomlinson (2003) suggests that “the most important thing the learning materials have to do is to help the learner to connect the learning experience in the classroom to their lives outside the classroom” (p. 18). For that reason, the teacher must associate the materials with the child’s life in order to improve their abilities and connect the different activities with the real life. Maley (1995, p. 221), says that “materials development is best seen as a form of operationalized tacit knowledge which involves trusting our intuitions and beliefs”.

Hall (1995, p. 8) poses the crucial question, “how do we think people learn a language? In answering his own question, Hall (ibid) discusses the following principles which he thinks should underpin everything we do in planning and writing our materials:

- The need to communicate.
- The need for long- term goals.
- The need for authenticity.
- The need for student- centeredness.

Tan (2000, pp. 5-6) says that “materials should be designed to help learners to:

- Be consciously aware of the unfamiliar usages of language they have heard or read in native speaker contexts;
- Investigate how these unfamiliar usages are employed in natural authentic communication, and finally:
- Experiment with these usages in spoken or written communication, so that they become familiar”.

Tomlinson (1998, p. 5-22) describes some principles that materials should observe:

- Materials should achieve impact.
- Materials should help the learners to develop confidence.
- Materials should require and facilitate learner’s self-investment.
- Learners must be ready to acquire the points being taught.
- Materials should expose the learners to language in authentic use.
- The learner attention should be drawn to linguistics features of the input.
- Materials should provide the learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purpose.
- Materials should take into account that the positive effects of instruction are usually delayed.
- Materials should take into account that learners differ in learning style.
- Material should take into account that learner differ in affective attitude.

- Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

Even though this list was considered by Tomlinson useful in addition to this list Richard (2001, p. 264) considers this “list to be somewhat cumbersome to apply and he suggests the following qualities that materials should reflect:

- Gives learners something they can take away from the lesson.
- Teaches something learners feel they can use.
- Gives learners a sense of achievement.
- Practices learning items in an interesting and novel way.
- Provides a pleasurable learning experience.
- Provides opportunities for individual practice.
- Provides opportunities for personalization.
- Provides opportunities for self- assessment of learning”.

### 2.3.1 VISUAL AIDS

The majority of the visual materials are the images that teachers show in class, there are teachers that prefer this kind of material because it is easier for children to learn in a funny way. Teachers should know how to select and adequate materials according to the topic and the children’s ages. Wright and Haleem, (1991, p. 4), mentions that “one of the most important aspects of language teaching is the role of visual materials: the importance of using visual media to make one’s teaching more effective, communicative and interesting. However, many teachers even experienced teachers, do not exploit the potential of visual



materials to the full. In addition, deciding which techniques to use, for which language teaching purpose is often problematical.

In addition, Singh (2005) supports this idea by saying “often teachers know the value of certain visual aids, but they fail to utilize them to the fullest because they do not take time to explain their use (p. 177)”. Sometimes teachers just use the visual aids but they do not take time to explain for what reason students use these visual aids, and sometimes they do not know how to apply the visual aids.

Coppen (1969:102) explains that children have to learn to read pictures and charts just as they have to learn to read printed words. The pictures must be simple and unambiguous, should not include irrelevant matter, and should be so designed that the visual emphasis falls on the teaching point. Colors should contrast well and all the main items should be large enough to be clearly visible to all children. In presenting the material, the children’s attention must be directed in such a way that they observe, what is important and are able to draw conclusions from what they see.

It is known that human beings learn more by seeing something; in addition of this, Girma (1983) states that psychologists have found that 84% of what we learn we get from seeing; 13% of what we learn we get from hearing; and only 3% we learn in other ways. This implies that most of what we learn is through visual material.

Visual materials stimulate presentation, accelerates learning and group activities. Events, concepts, and processes become more meaningful to the students; they better conceptualize the printed or spoken words attempt to desire through visual materials. Allen (1983) adds that children have an uncanny ability for learning languages and an instinctive avenue to

success. Visual materials actually economize time; insure more effective learning of vocabulary and permanent retention than do verbal instruction.

When the students learn vocabulary through visual materials they are struggling to develop their knowledge and cognitive power to be successful academically. In addition to this, Mayer and Massa (2003) elaborate that a visualizer prefers to learn through the use of visual modes of thinking and instruction involving pictures. This indicates that visual learners have the advantages of using more than one medium to learn vocabulary even if they are good at processing visual things.

According to Doff (1988, p.14), “the use of real objects, pictures and mime for suitable vocabulary is a very effective method as it is direct, interesting, and it makes an impression of the class”. This implies that using visuals holds the attention of the learners on meaning, and helps them to make the language used in the class more real and alive.

Based on Joshi (1995), Visual aids are used to increase the effectiveness of classroom teaching-learning process. Teachers increase the students’ vocabulary by using visual aids also, they can get the students’ attention during the session. In a study by Vissa (1994), it was found that the use of visual aids helped better teaching; and a variety of teaching aids brought about stimulus variation that is essential to sustain students' attention.

Porter and Margaret (1992) assert that using visual materials not only make what you have to say more comprehensive to your students, they can make it more interesting as well. For that reason in the majority of the cases students get involved by using visual aids like flashcards, pictures, images to be interested in the class and also they want to participate at the moment of speaking.

Based on Wright (1989: 14), “Visual aids used to motivate the student to speak, to create a context with which his speech will have meaning; to provide the student with information to use in speech, including objects, actions, and events; to provide the student with non-verbal clues for manipulation work and to provide non-verbal prompts to dialogue reproduction or to dialogue invention.” These are the reasons why I considered that visual aids will be tools for teaching English vocabulary to children, also visual aids provide students the vocabulary necessary for speaking. Wright (1991:4), summarizes the role of pictures in teaching vocabulary by saying, “A picture can often show an action more easily than even a talented actor can demonstrate.”

### 2.3.2 TYPE OF MATERIALS

There are a lot of materials that teachers may use in the classroom. Teachers should adequate and select correctly the different material for example: visuals material like images, auditory like songs or something that the child can touch in that way children will acquire vocabulary according to the different materials that teachers bring to them.

According to Hill (1990), the use of various types of visual materials in teaching vocabulary increases the intrinsic motivation of the learners. Therefore the learners develop interest towards what they learn; they can actively engage themselves in the activities to be performed, which in turn assist them to learn language meaningfully.

Tomlinson (2001, p. 66), claims that “materials include anything which can be used to facilitate the learning of a language. They can be linguistic, visual, auditory or kinesthetic, and they can be presented in print, through live performance or display, or on cassette, CD-ROM, DVD or the internet; they can be instructional, experiential, elucidative or

exploratory, in that they can inform learners about the language, they can provide experiences of the language in use, they can stimulate language use or they can help learners to make discoveries about the language for themselves”.

Based on Richards (2001, p. 251) “instructional materials generally serve as the basis for much of the language input learners receive and the language practice that occur in the classroom”.

Dobson (1974, pp. 71-72) explains that “if you have a set of flashcards that show a figure or figures performing different activities such as sleeping, getting up, eating a meal, reading the newspaper, driving, working in an office and so on, you can have a student put the flashcards into a logical sequence and tell a story based on the sequence”. In that way flashcard and postcards develop the learners’ self-study and create fun as they are shuffled.

Cable (1977) mentions that “blackboard is the most conveniently available instructional device to display lettering and diagrams, drawn on the spot in front of the class. Even if you have little talent as an artist, you can make stick figures to present people and draw simple outlines of subjects which you can then use as elements in the composition of a dialogue, an improvisation, or a story or as discussion topics in general” (p.46).

According to Doff (1988) teachers or learners do not need to be wonderful artists to draw a picture that can be used in teaching vocabulary; the most important thing is to communicate the message. For that reason no matter the material of the picture or how you draw, the important thing here is to communicate something to children.

## 2.4 LEARNING STYLES

According to Galek, E. (1995, p. 1) “Learning style refers to an individual’s natural, habitual, and preferred ways of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills. This learning style persists, regardless of teaching methods and content areas”. There are six cognitive learning styles:

- “Field independent learner: learns more effectively step by step, or sequentially, beginning with analyzing fact and proceeding to ideas.
- Field dependent learner: learns more effectively in context, holistically, intuitively and is especially sensitive to human relationship and interactions.
- Analytic learner: learns more effectively individually, prefers setting own goals, and responds to a sequential, linear, step-by-step presentation of materials.
- Global learner: learns more effectively through concrete experience, and by interactions with other people.
- Reflective learner: learns more effectively when she or he has time to consider options before responding.
- Impulsive learner: learns more effectively when she or he is able to respond immediately and to take risks.

The learning model of perception and process is further categorized into four learner types:

- Converger (common sense learner): learns more effectively when she or he is able to perceive abstractly and to process actively.

- Diverger (innovative learner): learns more effectively when she or he is able to perceive concretely and to process reflectively.
- Assimilator (analytic learner): learns more effectively when she or he is able to perceive abstractly and to process reflectively.
- Accommodator (dynamic learner): learns more effectively when she or he is able to perceive concretely and to process actively”.

Galek, E. (1995, p.2), also talks about the sensory learning style like:

- Auditory learner: learns more effectively through the ear (hearing).
- Visual learner: learns more effectively through the eyes (seeing).
- Tactile learner: learns more effectively through touch (hands-on).
- Kinesthetic learner: learns more effectively through concrete complete body experience (whole-body involvement).
- Haptic learner: some researchers combine the tactile and kinesthetic modalities and call them haptic: haptic learner learns more effectively through touch and whole-body involvement.

Educationalists introduced the concept of learning style as a “description of the attitudes and behaviours that determine our preferred way of learning” (Honey, 2001,p.89). Keefe (1979) defined a learning style as “characteristics cognitive, affective and psychological behaviours that serve as relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with, and respond to the learning environment”(p.56-58).

Scarcella (1990, p.114) refers to learning styles like “cognitive and interactional patterns which affect the ways in which students perceive, remember and think”. This means that students’ learning styles affect all their environment, all their thoughts and the way the students learn or think about something.

The notion of the learning style implies individual difference as Reid (1987) states, “learning style is a pervasive quality in the learning strategies or the learning behavior of an individual” (p.89). Learning style is the way in which students can easily learn something, for example there are students that only see words and learn easily. According to Dunn (1993), learning style is the way students begin to concentrate on, process, internalize, and remember new and difficult academic information.

Also Reid (1995) has developed a learning style model based on how students learn best using their perceptions: Visual students like to read and obtain information from visual stimulation. These learners prefer using pictures, imageries, and spatial perceptions. Auditory: Auditory students are comfortable without visual input and learn from unembellished lectures, conversations, and oral directions. Kinesthetic: Kinesthetic students like lots of hands on movement and enjoy working. They favor using body, hands, and tactile sense. And tactile preferences and also two social aspects of learning: Group (interpersonal): They favor learning in groups or with other people and Individual (intrapersonal): They prefer to work alone and to be a self-reader.

The learning styles should be identified by the English teacher or educators in order to provide useful tools that help students improve their English vocabulary and help students to learn important information.

## 2.5 TEACHING VOCABULARY

Teaching vocabulary is one of the most discussed parts of teaching English as a foreign language. According to Hatch and Brown (1995), Vocabulary is a list of words that speakers of a language use. Therefore all people have their own vocabulary, it could be academic vocabulary or colloquial vocabulary, teachers teach academic vocabulary in the majority of the cases but students are growing up and learning both (colloquial and academic).

McCarthy (1990) underlines the importance of vocabulary by saying: “No matter how well the students learn grammar, no matter how successfully the sounds of L2 are mastered, without words to express a wide range of meanings, communication in L2 just cannot happen in any meaningful way” (p.62) Therefore it is quite important that teachers teach not only the academic vocabulary even they have to teach colloquial vocabulary in order for students be able to express their ideas without problems.

Harmer (1991) also states the importance of vocabulary by saying, "If language structure makes up the skeleton of the language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh"(p.153). It is known that without vocabulary we cannot communicate between us because vocabulary is an important part of our language.

Regarding this, Cook (2001) states that “effective acquisition of vocabulary can never be just the learning of individual words and their meanings in isolation, but it needs the use of various senses to visualize the meaning of the words”(p.60-61). It could be by touching or seeing the things. Mayer and Sims (1994) indicate that an increasing body of research evidence supports that students' learning is affected positively by presenting words and



illustrations or pictures together. For that reason it is necessary that teachers write the name of the things in order for students to analyze the way in which that word is written and associate the word with the picture.

Harmer (1991) further states that “an ability to manipulate grammatical structures does not have any potential for expressing meaning unless words are used”(p.60-61). Visual materials help young learners to motivate them to speak, to create a context with which their speech will have meaning. Most of what we learn we get through visual materials, so that is why the use of visual materials is very important in teaching English as they commit information to long-term memory.

The word vocabulary generally represents a summary of words or their combinations in a particular language. As Ur (2000) remarked, that one item of vocabulary can consist of more than one word. E.g. ‘post-office’ consists of two words and still expresses one idea. Therefore there are some words that have two words with a single idea, there are some other examples like sister-in-law; this word has three different words and still has a single idea.

Abebe G.T(1997) and Jeylan A.(1999) mention that “the use of vocabulary learning from the learners’ point of view and varieties of vocabulary learning strategies respectively and the knowledge of vocabulary is crucial for learning skills in reading, listening, writing and speaking.” Both underlined the importance of vocabulary to communicate effectively and efficiently in second/ foreign language learning classroom. This also indicates that having knowledge of vocabulary facilitates the way children are competent and effective users of the language.

According to the national reading panel (NRP) (2000), “a foundation of vocabulary knowledge must be in place early if children are going to perform successfully in school” (p.23).

Based on Becker, W.C. (1977), “even though students can learn approximately 3,000 words per year on the average, or eight words per day, many do not, and the vocabulary gap tends to increase significantly throughout school; thus, early differences in vocabulary knowledge have strong implication for students long term educational success” (P.47: 518-543)

In addition, Bauman, J.F. and Kame’enui, E.J. (1991) for example, identify three main goals for vocabulary instruction:

- Teaching students how to learn words independently.
- Teaching students specific words as tools of communication.
- Helping students appreciate words as tools of communication.

Among the panel’s (2000) findings were that vocabulary should be taught both directly and indirectly to be effective; Panel recommended that students be exposed to vocabulary words several times and have repeated practice to learn them. In addition, Panel argued that learning in rich contexts, incidental learning, and the use of computer technology all help children develop larger vocabularies (p.6-9). Also The National Reading Panel’s review (2000) identified five basic approaches to vocabulary instruction which should be used together:

- Explicit instruction (particularly of difficult words and words that are not part of pupils’ everyday experience).

- Indirect instruction (i.e. exposure to a wide range of reading materials).
- Multimedia methods (going beyond the text to include other medias such as visual stimulus, the use of the computer or sign language)
- Capacity methods (focusing on making reading an automatic activity).
- Association methods (encouraging learners to draw connections between what they do know and unfamiliar words).

### 2.5.1 LEARNING WORDS

To know a word is the basic procedure that every child knows a word when he is 3 years old, it is important to mention that the process of acquiring a word will help us as a teacher to identify the way in which children can learn a new word, it could be using material based on the four skills or just skills like listening and speaking because children cannot write or read yet, Duke, N. and Moses,A. (2003) also pointed to the effectiveness of raising “word consciousness by playing with words through games, songs and videos, and encouraging children to recognize when they have encountered new words and notice special characteristics of words”(p.9)

Also teachers must analyze the learning style of the children so that the materials can improve their vocabulary and therefore children learn a new word. One of the criteria affecting the teacher’s choice is the frequency in which the particular item is used in common language. According to Harmer (1993: 154) ,“The words which are most commonly used are the ones we should teach first.” For that reason in some cases it is important to teach the words that children use in their life continuously, in order for them to learn those words in their second language. However, most frequent words do not usually convey much information, being so-called ‘empty’ words (i.e. grammar words) and to be

able to communicate, learners need considerable amount of words bearing some meaning (McCarthy, 1990: 82).

According to Cameron (2001) learning a new word is not a simple task that is done once and then completed. Learning words is a cyclical process of meeting new words and initial learning, followed by meeting those words again, each time extending knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in the foreign language. Learning a word takes a long time and many exposures to the word used in different situations.

Also Cameron (2001) says that knowing a word includes:

1. Receptive knowledge: Recognizing and Understanding its meaning when heard/ read.
2. Memory: Recall it when needed.
3. Conceptual knowledge: Use it with correct meaning.
4. Using it correctly in spoken form.
5. Grammatical knowledge: Accurate use.
6. Collocation knowledge.
7. Orthographic knowledge: spelling .
8. Pragmatic knowledge: style and register.
9. Connotational knowledge: positive and negative associations.
10. Metalinguistic knowledge: grammatical properties.
11. Cultural Content: what is the significance of use in the culture (deliver milk).

Another aspect to think about is the coverage of the words, meaning that teachers have to start teaching basic words in order for students to analyze them, then students are ready to review words with more complexity. As Harmer (1993: 154) stated, “the words covering more things are likely to be taught before words with only one specific meaning, E.g. the word ‘book’ will be taught before words ‘notebook or exercise book’.

In the first place, the teacher should consider the learner’s needs. Allen (1983) pointed out that it is useful to provide the learner with words for ‘classroom language’ just at the early stages of the course. She continues that it is important for the teacher to predict what words the student needs to know for talking about everyday life, people and things surrounding them. “When such words are learnt, the new language can immediately be put to use” (Allen 1983: 108).

Cronbach (1942) noted that “knowing a word involves the ability to select situations in which it is appropriately applied, recall different meanings of the word, and recognize exactly in which situations the word does and does not apply” (p.206-207). Furthermore children can memorize a word by seeing again, for example if someone teaches them that a little table is a table when they see a table again automatically they say the word.

Calfee and Drum (1986) noted that knowing a word well involves depth of meaning; precision of meaning; facile access (think of scrabble and crossword puzzle experts); the ability to articulate one’s understanding; flexibility in the application of the knowledge of a word the appreciation of metaphor, analogy, word play; the ability to recognize a synonym, to define, to use a word expressively. For that reason, the teacher checks how students get involved at the moment of saying a new word and in which cases they can use the word.

According to Nagy and Scott (2000), the complexity of what it means to know a word when they discussed five aspects of the complexity of word knowledge:

- Incrementally.
- Polysemy.
- Multidimensionality.
- Interrelatedness.
- Heterogeneity.

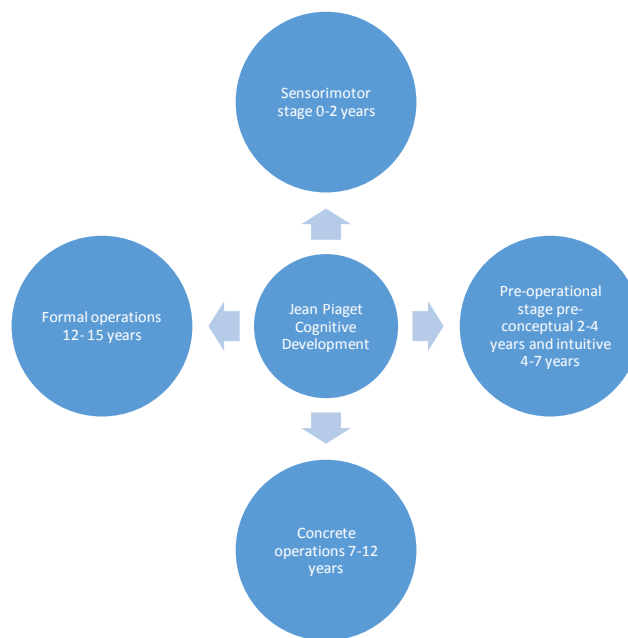
Nagy and Scott (ibid) explained the complexity of word knowledge. They demonstrated that most words are learned in stages. Words are different: Some words are learned quickly; others take a longer time; some have multiple meanings and are confusing; others are low-frequency words that we do not use or hear often; some words have many associations with other words, while others do not and are difficult to understand.

## 2.6 CHILDREN COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

It is known that the critical period is the stage in which children develop their cognitive development according to Piaget (1952), “development takes place in a sequence of well-defined stages. In order to reach a certain stage of development, the child must have gone through all the preceding stages; Piaget identified four principal stages of cognitive development. At birth he argued that the child possesses only innate reflexes. In the first stage of development, which Piaget called the sensorimotor period, behavior is organized around sensory and motor processes. This stage lasts through infancy until the child is about two years old. Next the preoperational stage comes, which lasts until the age about 6

to 7. This stage is characterized by egocentric thought, which means that these children are unable to adopt alternative viewpoints to their own and are unable to change their point of view. The concrete operations stage lasts until the age of about twelve, the child is now able to adopt alternative viewpoints, as shown by the observation task and the last stage the formal operation period that starts at twelve and which last until age 15 to 16 years old.” Also Jean Piaget proposed “that the main mechanisms of cognitive development are assimilation and accommodation. Assimilation is the way in which information is abstracted from the world to fit existing cognitive structure; accommodation is the way in which cognitive structures are adjusted in order to accommodate otherwise incompatible information”. (p1114-1128).

FIGURE:.1 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT



Piaget (1978) showed that “there was no correlation between the development of object permanence and linguistic development once the child’s age was taken into account. Furthermore, infants comprehend names as much as six months before the stage of objects permanence is completed”(p126-128). For that reason children learn by manipulating the object of the environment in which they are.

The critical period hypothesis by Lennerberg (1967) holds that primary language acquisition must occur during a critical period which ends at about the age of puberty with the establishment of cerebral lateralization of function. A strong implication of this hypothesis is that the processes involved in any language acquisition which takes place after the age of puberty will be qualitatively different from those involved in first language acquisition.



## 2.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the literature review of 2.1 Young learners, 2.1.1 Teaching young learners, 2.1.2 The role of the teacher in an English classroom, 2.2 Children's memory, 2.3 Materials development, 2.3.1 Visual aids, 2.3.2 Type of materials, 2.4 Learning styles, 2.5 Teaching vocabulary, 2.5.1 Learning words and 2.6 Cognitive development. The next chapter provides the methodology used to collect the necessary data for this study.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

This research is about the effects and children's attitudes towards visual materials when teachers are teaching children from 4 years old in a public kindergarten. The purpose of this research is twofold: to know what the effects are about using visual materials to teach English vocabulary to young learners and Children's attitudes toward visual materials.

This research was carried out using classroom observations; therefore, to collect the data it was necessary to design an observation format. In this chapter a description on how the data were collected is described; it also provides detailed information about the participants, setting, and the instruments.

### **3.1 PARTICIPANTS**

The participants of this research were 38 children, 28 males and 10 females that were in the second year of kindergarten, they were 4 years old. This research project was made in a public kindergarten in central Mexico. This school has two classrooms: A and B groups, in the classrooms there are approximately 15 to 18 children. In Mexico, children have to study kindergarten school for three years. The majority of children start kindergarten at 3 and conclude around 6 to 7 years old. This school provides elementary education to children, children's parents must be employees of the ISSSTEP (Instituto de Seguridad y Servicio Social de los Trabajadores al servicio de los poderes del Estado de Puebla ) if they want to be in this school; this school also provides children breakfast and lunch every day.

I decided to do this research project with them because at that moment I was doing my social service there and I did not know how to teach English vocabulary to young learners. In this case visual materials were used in order to increase the children's vocabulary.

### 3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach. According to Lincoln and Denzin (1994, p. 4) "qualitative researchers employ a variety of strategies and methods to collect and analyze a variety of empirical materials". Also Dey (1993, p. 47) classified "qualitative data analysis into three related processes: describing, classifying and connecting".

This research project is a case study. According to Merriam (1988) a case study is "an exploration of a bounded system or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied a program, an event, an activity, or individuals. For example several programs (multi-site study) or a single program (within-site) might be selected for study" (p. 61).

### 3.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The analysis must first offer thorough and comprehensive description that include the context of action, the intentions of the social actor, and the processes in which the social action is embedded. Second, Dey (1993, p. 47) suggests that "data should be classified in order to give meaning, the categorization of data and the assigning of data bits to theme and codes and third he suggests that categorized or coded data can be analyzed in terms of patterns and connections that emerge". Data is classified with different visual materials in a table in order to analyze the information collected.

### 3.3.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

The method of observation was used to collect the necessary data for this research. According to Hopkins, D.(1993) “it as a pivotal activity with a crucial role to play in classroom research, teachers’ personal-professional growth, and school development as a whole; observation with its associated techniques is also often embedded in a larger-scale research plan as one method among others, when perhaps a variety of data resources is appropriate” (p. 4).

The classroom observation format used to collect the data for this research was designed based on the research questions. The instrument contains two tables: the first table divides group A and B, these tables show the different visual materials used in the classes: pictures, videos, flash cards and real artefacts.

### 3.3.2 DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

The data was classified in group “A” and “B”, in order to clarify the different facts that were found during the application of the classroom observations; these visual materials were presented in the classroom observations: pictures, flash-cards, videos and real artefacts. Each column in the tables provides the different effects that were presented during the classroom observations. The second table shows the children’s attitudes of the two groups, different attitudes are provided in order to analyze the data collected.

### 3.4 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter provides the procedures used to collect the data, the design of the instruments and the information about the participants and setting in which this research was carried out. In the following chapter, analysis of the data will be shown. Evidence taken from the classroom observations will be presented in order to support the different categories of visual materials found in the data analysis procedure.

## **CHAPTER IV: RESULTS**

### **4.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, the results obtained from the analysis of the data are presented and analyzed following the order of the research questions in each section. First the effects of the material used and then the children's attitudes are showed in order to give a clear description of the use of visual materials with young learners.

### **4.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

RQ1: Do visual materials help young learners to improve English vocabulary if so, how?

RQ2: What are children's attitudes towards visual materials?

### **4.2 RESULTS**

The data was classified in a table with the four visual materials presented during the classroom observation, in each column factors and what children said are presented, in order to get a general view about what children expressed when teacher applied the materials. The second table presents the different children 'attitudes towards visual materials.

#### **4.2.1 VISUAL MATERIALS EFFECTS**

The next table (4.1) shows the different kind of visual materials applied in both groups; the table contains the visual materials used in the observed classes and the children's effects toward the materials.

TABLE 4.2.1 VISUAL MATERIALS: STUDENTS' EFFECTS

<b>Students' effects</b>				
<b>Visual materials</b>	<b>Pictures</b>	<b>Flash cards</b>	<b>Videos</b>	<b>Real objects</b>
Group A ( three observations)	Children were interested in the pictures: They were quiet and paying attention to the different colors of the different images.  Children were fascinated: they were seeing the pictures that the teacher presented.	Children were smiling during the class.  Children asked the teacher if they were going to play with flash cards.  Children shared flash cards in order to say vocabulary.  Some children did not do the activity.  Children were	Children were paying attention to the video.  Children were repeating some words about family.  Some children were tired and at the end of the video, they wanted to sleep.  Children were watching the	Children play with the ball.  Some children had difficulties: they cannot catch the ball, they cannot throw the ball towards other children.  Children were shouting all the time and laughing.  Children did not want to

	<p>In some moments children did not pay attention to the teacher when he explained pictures. Children broke some pictures during the class.</p>	<p>repeating words like: “mommy and daddy”. Children did not want to take back flash cards.</p>	<p>video and repeating the song. Children in some cases were talking to other students.</p>	<p>come back to the classroom.</p>
<p>Group B (three observations)</p>	<p>Children were talking to their classmates during the class. Some children were paying attention and some others were not.</p>	<p>Teacher did not use them.</p>	<p>Children were paying attention during the video. Children were repeating the song. Some children were bothering other</p>	<p>Teacher did not use them.</p>



	<p>Children were sharing the pictures in order to get something else.</p> <p>Children were repeating some colors like “blue, red and green”.</p> <p>Children were excited about pictures.</p> <p>Children did not want to take back pictures.</p> <p>Children broke some pictures.</p>		<p>classmates.</p> <p>Children were asking about some other colors.</p> <p>Some children wanted to sleep in the classroom.</p> <p>Children wanted to see another video.</p> <p>Some children were bored about the video because some of them had already seen that video.</p>	
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#### 4.2.2 CHILDREN'S REACTIONS

The following were the children's reaction towards visual materials:

- Children were interested in the pictures, they were watching the different pictures because pictures were colorful, and children were asking about the different colors that the pictures had.
- Children were paying attention when teacher played the video, during the video children were repeating words like: “mommy, daddy, red and blue”.
- Children did not want to take back flash cards and did not want to share with other children, some children stored the pictures.
- Children were saying the different words when the teacher showed pictures.
- Children had difficulties with real artefacts like ball because they did not catch the ball and also did not throw the ball.
- With videos some children were talking to other children, some children wanted to sleep at the end of the video.

#### 4.2.3 HOW VISUAL MATERIALS SUPPORT ENGLISH VOCABULARY

In some cases children associated the images with the pictures, teacher showed the flash cards and they automatically said words, some of the words were: “mommy, daddy, red and blue”. The same happened with the videos, the children sang and repeated during the videos, even when the videos finished children were singing the song in the lunchtime, they were also comparing the different flash cards in order to say the vocabulary and when a classmate was in front of them, children showed the flash card and they said the word.

It is important to say that when the teacher asked children about what they had learned, children wanted to explain what happened during the class and what new words they learned.

#### 4.2.4 CHILDREN’S ATTITUDES

Table (4.2) contains the children’s attitudes of the two groups; these attitudes were present during the classroom observations.

TABLE: 4.2.1 CHILDREN’S ATTITUDES

Children’s attitudes	
Bored	Motivated
<p>Children wanted to sleep at the end of the video (Length of the video 4 minutes).</p> <p>They were doing other things during the video.</p> <p>They were talking to someone else during the video.</p>	<p>Asking for other colors not the ones included for the class.</p> <p>Children didn’t want to share the materials</p> <p>They wanted to continue playing in other subjects.</p> <p>They wanted to see more videos.</p> <p>Children were saying what they have learned when someone asked them.</p> <p>Children asked teacher for more new words such as: pelota , muñeca.</p>

### 4.3 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the analysis of the data collected. In the following chapter, the conclusions of this research are presented. Furthermore, the significance of the findings is discussed, as well as the limitations, and the general conclusions of this research are explained.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS**

### **5.0 CHAPTER INTRODUCTION**

This research project was concluded in order to reach the research aims and answer the research questions. The research questions were answered one by one in order to explain how the research aims were accomplished. This chapter also discusses the limitations of this investigation, findings and significance of the study and suggestions for further research about the use of visual materials to teach English vocabulary to young learners.

### **5.1 FINDINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research provided useful information about the use of visual materials with young learners. The findings suggest that the participants experienced some kind of development during the use of visual materials. The findings also suggest an impact in the acquisition of vocabulary by using these materials.

It is important to say that there are a lot of different materials that teacher could use at the moment of teaching. This research only shows the visual materials selected to teach in the school of the participants and in two classrooms: A and B. I hope this research contributes a little in this area. Knowing the impact of visual materials on children was important for my professional development in my future teaching, now I know what to do at the moment of teaching young learners.

## 5.2 ACCOMPLISHMENT OF THE RESEARCH AIMS

These were the research aims during this research project:

- To evaluate if visual material helps young learners to improve their vocabulary.
- To evaluate what children's attitudes are towards visual materials.

These aims were accomplished during the classroom observations in two different groups using visual materials like pictures, flash-cards and real objects in which the data were collected by observing the effects and attitudes towards visual materials.

## 5.3 ANSWER TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section presents the answer to the research questions about the use of visual materials with young learner; a general conclusion for each research question is presented as follows.

### 5.3.1 VISUAL MATERIAL EFFECTS ON CHILDREN LEARNING

In general based on the observations the following are the effects of using visual materials to teach vocabulary to very young learners:

Increase the interest of the children: in the majority of the classes children were quite interested in the presentation of the vocabulary, in pronouncing the words that the teacher taught them and it seems that children did not need to learn the vocabulary by heart because they associated the pictures with the words. Get children's interaction: children had fun and they really tried to share the vocabulary that they learned.

Children learned vocabulary easily: they associated the vocabulary with the pictures; in case of videos they sang the song in which they remembered the vocabulary and the object that they had already seen on the video. Children could manipulate visual materials: in this

case teachers have to create durable materials that children cannot cut up in pieces and cannot destroy.

In general these were the reactions that children had towards the majority of the visual material. The teacher used different visual materials like: videos, pictures, flash cards and real objects.

### 5.3.2 VISUAL MATERIALS TO IMPROVE ENGLISH VOCABULARY

The findings suggest that visual materials improve English vocabulary because these different kinds of visual materials had an impact in the vocabulary that children were learning during the observations. They associated the pictures with the vocabulary in which, when they saw the pictures they automatically said the word in English even if they did not know the word in Spanish and how to pronounce that word well.

Teachers should use visual materials in order to teach different words to young learners. Thus, as mentioned in the chapter II, teacher should teach basic words and afterwards difficult words related with the initial words. The use of visual materials will help children to learn vocabulary in a comfortable and an easy way.

### 5.3.3 CHILDREN'S ATTITUDES TOWARD VISUAL MATERIALS

Children really enjoyed using visual materials, they had boring and motivating attitudes about using and touching visual materials, in the majority of the cases they wanted to touch materials and they really paid attention to the colors of the pictures and flash cards.

With videos they were fascinated with the songs because afterwards they were singing the song and sharing with their other classmates but teacher should consider the time for each video because some kids get bored and also for their ages they wanted to sleep at the end of

the video. In case of flash-cards the teacher should pay attention to selfish children because some of them did not want to share the material and also teacher must create resistible materials because children have doubts about the materials and they experimented with materials.

It is important that teachers print the necessary images and give children their own materials because children cannot use scissors for cutting their own images and sometimes children started crying because they did not have enough materials than the other children.

#### 5.4 PERSONAL REFLECTION ON THE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

This was an incredible experience since I started to study this major I was quite afraid because I did not want to write this research project but in this moment this project is useful for me, nonetheless I want to continue with this research project. I think that here in Mexico we do not have a useful syllabus to teach young learners. I have a lot of problems to define the name of this research project because as a teacher I wanted to research all doubts that I have but at the end you just can research one doubt. I obtained this topic when I was doing my social service in a public kindergarten and at the moment of starting teaching I did not know how to teach children that were 4 years old because with this kind of children you can only work with listening, speaking and vocabulary; nonetheless I was working with visual materials in order for children not to get bored because in that period they want to sleep all the time, they start crying, they cannot pronounce well certain words. It was so difficult to me because I had to change my teaching methodology three times.

At the end of this project I learned more about how to teach young learners and the different kind of visual materials that I could use in future classes with children.



## 5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A lot of problems were present because at the beginning of the chapter two the majority of the books about visual materials were not available; nonetheless this specific topic was so interesting for me that I could not have changed it for another one. Chapter three was quite difficult to design a useful instrument because when I have designed one some doubts came to my mind and they made me change the instrument, at the end an interview for teacher's should have been administered in order to get more information about these materials.

I had some problems in the first kindergarten because they did not want to allow me to apply the instrument (classroom observation); nevertheless at the end I found another kindergarten in which they allowed me to apply the classroom observations.

## 5.6 SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It will be interesting to do a replica of the research but in a private kindergarten; nonetheless the result will be different because they do not have the same equipment in the classroom than in a public kindergarten and also private schools have less students.

It will be important to research the teachers' perspectives about the use of these visual materials, what materials they use instead of flash cards or videos and what methodology they use in order for children to improve their English vocabulary.

I will be interesting to research what the children's thoughts are about the use of visual materials: they like them or they do not like to use these kind of materials. This research has to be carried out with students that can already speak in a fluent way and can express what they want and like.

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