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**LICENCIATURA EN EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA CON ÉNFASIS EN INGLÉS**



**DEAF PEOPLE LEARNING AN L3 THROUGH NEW LITERACIES**  
**STRENGTHENED BY ARTS**

**MODALIDAD DE GRADO:**  
**CREACIÓN O INTERPRETACIÓN**

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## **Introduction**

New Literacies is an educational project, which was designed to apply a pedagogical strategy to teach and learn English as a third language to a Deaf group of people from the foundation “Árbol de Vida” (FUNDARVID). This strategy focuses on reading and writing skills enhanced by the use of arts to enhance the learning content, that improve the communicative competence of the students contemplating the visual abilities that Deaf people develop through the acquisition of their mother tongue (Colombian Sign Language); taking as a theoretical basis the importance of the language in use, under the Halliday’s theory of systemic functional linguistics; the Ainscow’s concept of inclusion, and art perspective by Vigotsky.

The pedagogical intervention relied on the students’ abilities, fortitudes, and weaknesses to transform continuously the teaching-learning strategy; understanding and recognizing the Deaf person as a social being with specific attitudes, prejudices, beliefs, values, etc., stressing their active role to lead their own learning process; giving them a voice to communicate their experiences and thoughts. During the development of the project the students learned about the English language, and in addition, some painting and drawing techniques to perform, design and create an artwork as a final result of their learning process in which they have the opportunity to share with the hearing community a brief description in English of their thoughts, feelings and perceptions of them as deaf people in a hearing society who decide to deny their roles as common citizens with great abilities as the surrounding people.

This proposal emerges from the idea of fostering the inclusion of Deaf people in the academic hearing community in Bogotá, taking into consideration the impact of different kind of academic strategies designed specifically to enrich and improve the learning process. It is imperative to highlight the role of the teacher along the course, and in this matter to

empower qualified teachers to be able to face the challenges of the education in any context; adapting their methodologies to improve activities that can work for everybody, looking for potential, and the benefit of the individual but working as a group.

In order to understand “New Literacies Project” this document shows as a first instance the justification and purpose, clarifying the main reasons to develop it; then it is necessary to expose the theoretical framework which supports the pedagogical immersion based on the triad language-inclusion-art; then the pedagogical intervention from planning to practice, to later explain the step by step process that guide this teaching and learning experience, enhancing the language assumptions in the Deaf educational context, and finally, the conclusions achieved during this research, pointing up some implications to consider.

## **Justification and Purpose of the Project**

This project is willing to generate an impact on the participants through English language encounters, using art as a mean. It is required to create a work of art that expresses ideas and feelings from the Deaf community, from their own story, to the society. The result is something that they can show to the world without barriers of culture, language or signs; with different interpretations from the spectators, but with a lot of meaning to be decoded. There are a lot of ideas that Deaf people usually don't share with the society, just because there is a huge obstacle between them and the people who uses spoken language. Sometimes, people forget that communication is not equal to talk, and that are a lot of alternatives to communicate ideas without using words; that is why, there is a motivation to create and show that being Deaf is not a disability or an illness, is an identity, and a way of living.

The purpose of art is to relate learning to a use of the senses, looking for an approach to the first language learning through the discovering of concepts, contexts, environments and situations. It is different to identify a concept through the senses instead of writing a word and its meaning, because the relation world-idea can show as a result a better understanding for the student; through the creation of links the students will have something to relate with. A clear example of this is when the word blue is taken, a teacher cannot clearly explain what specifically blue is, the teacher may say that is a color, but the student will understand better while he or she sees the blue color.

All the activities designed or adapted for this project are focused on Deaf people, but they are not just for them. In other words, all the activities are made to foster inclusion, and allow a meaningful learning in Deaf and hearing people; so, the activities applied can be used in a classroom with hearing students, deaf students, or both of them.

It is essential to show to the hearing community through the development of this

project, that the Deaf community is not formed by people with illnesses, or “disabled” people. The words and the world are changing, there is not a disability nowadays, and we talk about abilities to carry out the tasks required. The students will have the opportunity to show that they have knowledge and that their opinion does matter, they will empower the paradigms and break those physical conditions that have categorized them in a circle full of barriers.

But not only the empowerment and a comprehensive education and development of the Deaf students from FUNDARVID is the purpose of this project, the goal is also to encourage teachers to take action into the classroom about how the class is developed, inspiring new ways of teaching from a different perspective. Recognizing that the education in history has been revolutionized through time as a result of an evolution, every day there are issues of the teaching pedagogy that needs to be re-evaluated, to progress and cover minorities, embracing new concepts and sharing history and stories with more people.

Through the next pages, the reader will experience how these differences between two social groups (Deaf people and hearing people) can be so noticeable, from words, customs, experiences, the process of learning, among other interesting features. During the development of New Literacies Project, the barriers started to break, and a community that did not use to share with people outside their inner circle, opens up to new challenges, and start to learn one from each other, fostering equality and inclusion in their context.

## Theoretical Basis

New literacies project lies over the theoretical triad of language, inclusion and art perspective, this conjunction performs the essence of the English teaching methodology applied to the sample of deaf students from “Árbol de Vida” Foundation (FUNDARVID).

The language perspective is supported by the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) by M. A. K. Halliday, who determines that language is semiotic; it is a system of signs used to create meaning and it is social because this system of meaning is heavily influenced by the social system within the language is used. Highlighting the idea that language is not simply *“A representation of reality; it is also a piece of interaction between speaker and listener”*. (Halliday cited by Meyer, 1987, p. 20) Halliday understands the social man not as opposition of individual one, but the individual in his social environment.

Language represents the speaker’s knowledge and behavior, both related with the construction of the human as a social being in a specific context. According to Bernstein cited by Cisneros & Silva (2007) the social context is a semiotic structure, a wide range of meanings which comes from the semiotic system that builds the culture; in other words, highlighting the functional part of Halliday’s theory, language has been shaped and determined by what we use it for, fostering at the same time cultural practices.

The second component of the triad is the inclusion, including the exclusion ideas of Michel Foucault and Mel Ainscow’s theories. Foucault’s notion is developed about the idea of the abnormal and the Panopticon: He mentions the existence of three main groups in the society of the XIX century that are shaped by the abnormal ones. These statements and ideas that he expressed are taken from a course presented at the College de France between 1974 and 1975. Therefore, the definition that Foucault gave of the abnormal people was divided into three subgroups: The *monsters*, the *incorrigibles*, and the *onanists*. The monsters are the

people that are not equal in physical aspects and, that is the reason why they are considered a danger for the society until a specific period. So, these monsters are defined by the law, not just the juridical law, but the natural law of existence. If the human being does not fit in the context, if they do not have the same abilities and characteristics that the “normal people” should have, they are considered as monsters (Foucault, M., 1975. Translated by Burchell, G., 2004). Subsequently, these people will be labeled as incorrigible that are sent to a Panopticon (a place where all the people that is marginalized from society is “reformed”).

Bearing in mind Foucault’s ideas about exclusion in the society, it is important to contrast with inclusion perspectives as the one stated by Mel Ainscow: There is the concept of educational inclusion which involves an adaptation of the curriculum to improve academic and social learning processes, to reach different kinds of population, promoting a meaningful learning. Taking into account Mel Ainscow’s theory (2005), inclusion can be defined following some characteristics that are distinctive of this term: *Inclusion is a process*: Inclusion is not something that can be achieved from one day to another, instead of that it is part of a process of research and continuous improvement; *Inclusion is concerned with the identification and removal of barriers*: Inclusion is about researching and working for an improvement of the problem-solving skills, fostering the development of abilities while living in diversity; *Inclusion is about the presence, participation and achievement of all students*: In an inclusive context, the place (context), the experiences in the process of learning and the outcomes of the students must be taken into account, and finally, *Inclusion involves a particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement*: Even though that the educational programs are made to assure a meaningful learning for all students, an inclusive education focuses on the “minority”, that is population that might be endangered because of the context, socioeconomic settings, abilities, culture, ethnicity, gender, etc.



In order to improve the learning process, an art perspective was required to support the use of art not only as a mean but as a result at the same time. Taking as a theoretical background the *Psychology of Art* by Vygotsky (1965), the art perspective that the project will follow is related to how the sociocultural context of the artist is reflected in his artwork, in other words, understand the art as a manifestation of a social feeling. The artwork's purpose is to catch the attention and emotion from other individuals to communicate values, thoughts, ideas, philosophies, feelings; in short, the richness of the artist as a person involved in a society. The communication is bidirectional in the way that it looks for a reaction from the viewer; the artwork is inviting it to create a relationship with it, discuss, reflect or criticize, and this is possible because the artwork compiles social and cultural experiences that are shared and that constitute a collective sense in social beings.

Art, as is mentioned on the article "*El Valor del Arte en el Proceso Educativo*" (2006) by the author Lourdes Palacios, all the connections that are made as a result of sensory experiences are crucial to acquire knowledge. In addition to this idea, the use of art in different activities acts as an evidence of the plasticity of the brain that is present along the human life as a result of the interaction with the environment. The use of art is involved with two of the most important of the human being: sensation and perception. The sensory system is one of the most important resources involved in the process of learning, because it makes part of the process that allows the creation of concepts and the recall of them through memory processes. Through the perception, a person acquires the ability to explore and understand its world.

The previous concepts constitute the base to understand the principles that guide New Literacies Project, language makes part of the code that creates an environment of inclusion and fosters the communication between different members of the society, linking different fields of life like education, work, health, etc. It is important to point up the fact that being

social does not mean that everything should be collective as a need to be approved by a big group of people; instead of that, social appeared where a man exists with his own life experiences. The language and art are deeply linked through the sign which represents social interaction, building strong relationships between society members.

An artwork in this case is a representation, product of the experiences, background and perspectives of the Deaf community. Is important to highlight, first, these representations are multi-perspective, because the point of view changes from one person to another, relating to own experiences and attitudes, and second, the perception of the image is a cultural issue in which the social relationships and the moral values will define the point of view of the observer, that is the reason why the development of the artwork by the Deaf community from FUNDARVID is relevant, looking for a final piece to be shown on a hearing society. The ideas, feelings and perspectives of the Deaf people will be expressed intelligibly sharing the ideas to the society in general; as a result, there is a concept produced that any kind of public could understand, fostering communication between two communities that have built a barrier of language.

Through the development of the project, the use of the senses to carry out art activities was really important, because their use in different tasks are meaningful to read the immediate context, and to transform experiences into symbols, through the connection of the taste, touch, sight, hearing and smell. Following that idea, art acts as a bridge of communication with other communities, making public a private knowledge; there are ideas that can easily be understood through words, but this knowledge can be improved through visual images, textures, sounds, smells, etc. Through the promotion of different kinds of intelligence, the academic inequality can be decreased, improving skills in different students with innovative and significant tools to learn. This fosters a cultural diversity and an inclusive context, considering the fact that students integrate intelligence and feelings that are the result

of the interaction in a social and cultural context.

## **Development of pedagogical intervention**

The inclusion in the classrooms is the consequence of many factors that influence the academic process: from the teachers' training, the fostering of the innovation of new teaching methodologies to improve the skills and micro-skills required to reach a good English proficiency, the amelioration of the space in which the students learn to improve and promote a healthy space of development, to the creation of materials that fit and change appropriately considering as important factors: age, economic issues, cultural features, skills to be developed, among others.

The participants of the project were chosen through a long period in which we had the opportunity to make a call using printable sheets and putting them in universities like Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Universidad Pedagógica Nacional, and ECCI (Escuela Colombiana de Carreras Industriales) with the awareness of deaf population studying there. Also, the websites were used in order to spread the information in a larger range, so the websites and social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were used to summon Deaf people interested to participate in the project. A survey was published through the Google platform to get to know the name and the range of age of the participants interested in the project, but unfortunately after weeks of searching, anybody appeared to be interested, so it was time to turn to the big institutions for help. We had the opportunity to ask for help in FENASCOL (Federación Nacional de Sordos de Colombia), INSOR (Instituto Nacional de Sordos) and ASORSUB (Asociación de Sordos de Suba) but in spite of the proposal, the institutions did not agree to help the project because it was not essential in the process of learning of Deaf people.

With intent to keep the search and find some people of the Deaf community we had the opportunity to communicate with SENTIR i.p.s foundation and the school for Deaf

people Filadelfia, but the answers were similar: the priority of Deaf people was to learn Spanish and not English because it was not useful. After all this process, more or less two months passed by and the time was a reason of pressure for the project.

Finally, with no apparent interest from the Deaf population (because most of them considered that English was not as important as Spanish for the learning process of Deaf people), the project was about to be focused on academic production, because the sample group was not even near to one person; for that reason we gave the deadline for the submission of the survey. Due to the last opportunity to carry out New Literacies Project, we look for family support; maybe someone could help us find a person interested in being part of the project. And eventually someone appeared, a young girl with a brother that was deaf, and with interests in learning English. He was a seventeen years old boy who had attended a few times to a foundation for Deaf people and her sister thought that probably someone there could be interested too. Immediately, we looked for the foundation and found “Fundación para Sordos, Árbol de Vida (FUNDARVID)”.

According to a survey made at the beginning of the project, the group that started to work with us belonged to Fundación Arbol de Vida community, the ages were between 17-33 years old, and some of the types of deafness involved were related to Sensorineural hearing loss and profound deafness. Some of them were studying in school, some others in university, and the rest were not studying at the moment. The majority of the group was used to use Spanish written and read in different contexts, like school, home, social networks, reading (tales, magazines, books, etc.), community life (supermarket, drugstore, and others). The participants expressed the lack of English courses for deaf people in Bogotá, and that is why they were interested on this project. They related their interests with the communication between Deaf and hearing community, or being able to read and understand all the information that is common in readings or social networks.

At the first meeting with the people of the foundation, we had the opportunity to have an idea of what was to share with them regarding that in this specific context we were the minority. We made the proposal of the project to all the people there, and they showed a lot of interest in learning a new language because they could use it at university, work or even at home. Having in mind that time management is difficult for everybody that have other responsibilities, the agreement was to work each Saturday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm that was the time when the official meeting of FUNDARVID had time. Consequently, New Literacies project started in June 2015.

Having a group to work with, the next step was to design the lessons in which they were going to develop a lot of skills of the third language. The characteristics that we took into account were related to meaningful learning, learning through the senses, art as a way to communicate, interaction between Deaf and hearing community and personal improvement. In that matter, we focused on designing the classes contemplating the space that the foundation had, the lack of access to internet, and no visual devices; but fortunately, the foundation provided us a board and enough chairs for the group; those elements were the necessary to start to work with them.

Additionally, we took into account learning characteristics of the Deaf people, because as hearing people we have phonological awareness, and this feature makes easier the learning of our mother tongue, and any language in specific. So, it is relevant to understand that a Deaf child is not a hearing child without the ability to hear (Padden, A., Ramsey, C. 1998, cited in Figueroa, V., Lissi, M. 2005). For Deaf people, the process is different: First, the visual image goes to the occipital lobe, the primary visual cortex identifies the signs, and subsequently the order of these images is processed in the secondary visual cortex. The information is sent to Wernicke area, and at the moment of signing, the Broca area is activated (Rojas, A., 2013). This process means that being visual is fundamental for deaf

people learning, and that issue is reflected through the development of this project.

To start the course, we thought that an interpreter was necessary to improve the learning process, but the person who helped us the first time was not able to attend each class during the whole project. In order to find an interpreter, we looked for someone who had the willing to help us without earning money, but although we sent many messages no one would collaborate as a social service. This project has not a financial support provided by any institution, so as founders, designers, and teachers, we were not able to pay someone to help us as an interpreter. We were engaged with the teaching and learning process of the students through designing materials with meaningful visual references, and proper dynamics to make them feel involved with the foreign language learning and to foster the interest in the language.

Bearing in mind the situation, and running out of opportunities to find someone who could mediate the communication, we proposed to the students to find the way to communicate without an interpreter, and they agreed, they considered that not having a complete proficiency of the Colombian Sign Language (CSL), was not a barrier that could deny the access to an effective communication. Here, the Spanish language took place as a mediator to let us as teachers learn and improve our Colombian Sign Language and at the same time allowing them to learn and improve their English skills as a third language, building a relationship in which we learn together about language, culture, and ourselves.

An important issue to highlight from the design of different classes is the kind of material to use for Deaf students, and the answer is simple. They use materials as any other student that has the ability to understand the world through the interaction with it. In this case, the use of senses is the key answer: there are many ways to explore and understand the world, and as humans, during childhood we start to learn to identify what we see around us, and the sight is something that as hearing people we do not improve as we should do. Being

deaf is a synonym of a detailed sight; gestures, movements, speed or strong signed words or acts are some characteristics that describe the temper or the personality of a person, and deaf people understand it very well. From a teacher's point of view, this is fortitude to stimulate during a learning process, which is the reason why the design of material should be engaged with sight, and supported with taste, smell, touch and what we know as intrinsic motivation.

To ensure the appropriate development of the English course, it started with a diagnostic class in order to test the students qualitatively according to their previous knowledge: the class development was focused on games, art activities as painting or drawing, which looked for the recognition of familiar words in English, the personal interests of the participants and their dislikes. What we found was that few of them recognized some words like house, father, mother, hello, blue, red, dog, cat, etc. showing a poor background in the foreign language (Annex 1); however, the way that they used to represent ideas through drawing or paintings was higher than we expected, and we realized how fast was their process of association sign-English word, in contrast with some hearing students and the time that they spend to associate Spanish-English word.

The student's approach to the English language was almost nonexistent; the ones that were still in school could relate some basic words without using it in a proper context, and the other participants just could relate words that are part of our daily context. In that way we could see in a wider way how apart they have been from learning English as a third language. This language is important for them, because as the sign language is different in each country, through English they can find out what is happening with their community in other countries, how the law has been taking its part in their lives, and most importantly, they can communicate around the world without barriers.

As a clarification, the English language is an L3 in this context because we take Colombian Sign Language as an L1 or mother tongue, which is the main system of



communication for Deaf people; the L2 is involved in the context where Deaf people live, but it is not the most used mean to communicate their ideas. Finally, L3 is a new language introduced in the context, which is not essential for the communication in the environment, but it is helpful in the academic, personal or social development of the person.

During the first meeting the most difficult thing to understand was not the foreign language, instead of that, the imaginary about how supposed to be the Deaf community from a hearing person's perspective was significant to promote misunderstandings when we established a communication, but this was an obstacle that performed the role of ice breaker between students and teachers for a short time until the whole group naturalized the situation that we were experiencing.

The classes were developed through the interaction of three stages: art, reading and writing. One stage complemented the other ones meaningfully, creating relations between different skills of the new language and the development of senses. As well, we considered that the learning process is something that a person can internalize in a meaningful way because it deals with his real context: in other words, when the person is able to apply the concepts that he learns in his daily routine, he would not forget it, because it has been transformed into a tool to solve his needs. Then, if students learn the vocabulary that is related to them, they would remember it easier than if they learn unusual vocabulary.

In order to develop this idea, we are going to present and explain the different stages in different paragraphs, but without forgetting that those stages are interacted along the development of the project. First, the *Reading Stage* was carried out through the use of material that could develop skills, including vocabulary, situations, comprehension, and relations, between others. *Green Eggs and Ham* by Doctor Seuss (1960) was the first reading to be chosen because of its ease comprehension: the text repeats several times the same words referring to location, animals, places, food, means of transport, etc.; it reproduces a rich

environment that promotes and strengthens the association English word-sign of Deaf students. Reading the whole text took two classes, taking into account the length of the book, the quantity of new English words, and the explanation related to tenses, vocabulary and the order of the sentence to be understood. The images of the book helped to increase the students' comprehension, and made easy the process to recognize and link image-English word-sign.

Along the reading the cooperative work took the first place, because the students shared what they understood with their partners and some of them corrected the mistakes or explained again the meaning of words that didn't appear frequently. During the second reading session, some students performed a role-play about *Green eggs and Ham*, and were recorded to later analyze the level of their reading comprehension; at the end, students developed a worksheet with materials that include scissors, glue, printable images and a writing part. (Annex 2)

The results were astonishing, they clearly identified the main idea of the text in the foreign language, differentiated nouns from verbs, recognized the meaning of words in Colombian sign language and Spanish language, and identified words grammatically correct. (Brown, H., 2001)

Next reading was "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" (Grimm Brothers, 1854) but this time the reading comprehension was more difficult than the first reading; the main problem was the vocabulary, many words were in old English or did not have sign. Moreover, the text used present perfect tense and past perfect tense, and it represented a difficulty because of the use of the tense was unclear even in Spanish language, and apparently does not exist or its use is not common in Colombian Sign Language; for this reason was not possible to finish the text.

The students do not have problems to understand the present, past and future tense,

but present perfect and past perfect was a hard challenge, contemplating their linguistic context; on the other part, the comprehension of the students was very good, but it was too literal, they were a bit confused with sentences that have an implied meaning (not literal) before the explanation about the context in the reading. (Annex 3)

Other texts worked in class were poems, original texts following the contexts, and a lot of images. It is important to clarify the fact that reading not only involves texts, but also involves images. The ability to understand the meaning of a drawing, a painting or even a photograph also makes part of the development of reading skills.

The *Writing Stage* had part along the art activities that the sample group took, associating perceptions with different concepts, and promoting art creation in order to understand abstract ideas, writing skills were developed through different tasks keeping in mind a previous contextualization of the background of the exercise.

It is important to mention the fact that the structure of sign language is similar to the structure that is used in written and spoken English, so at the moment of making a composition, the structure was not a real problem; the students' weakness was at the moment of understanding the context of a word, and trying to differentiate multiple words with similar meanings that can be used in different settings.

An example of the comprehension of the word considering its context was evidenced through the use of the book *Green Eggs and Ham*, by Dr. Seuss. The students started with a reading session, followed by an art session, and after different activities of reading comprehension. They had the opportunity to prove the acquired knowledge with worksheets designed especially for them: they were able to answer questions about the book in a written way, as well they were able to create short paragraphs following the idea of the book, and most importantly, they were able to share with different persons (deaf and hearing people) the ideas that they developed through the activity. (Annex 4)

The writing sessions were planned to develop and improve the students' skills to communicate through written words. Each activity that used art, reading texts, immersions or other dynamics, was carefully organized and planned, to motivate students to create habits of writing in a new language.

In that order of ideas, developing writing skills to communicate can break barriers between Deaf and hearing people, because through short texts, different experiences can be shared no matter its nature, even though there must be a process of sensitization and contextualization of different situations that are meant to be shared.

During the improvement of the writing skills, there were some micro-skills taken into account at the moment of creating the worksheets and tasks: one of the most important was to accomplish a communicative function through written texts according to a purpose, a context and a target population. The activities also were designed to produce an adequate core of words, working on the use of appropriate word order patterns looking for cohesion in a text, linking events, relating different categories of ideas and their details, generalizations and examples. (Brown, H., 2001)

In one of the sessions that were carried out at FUNDARVID, we were visited by a deaf person that was living in the USA for months, and we shared experiences about how written language helped him to communicate with people in that country, no matter if they were deaf or hearing people, he could keep a conversation in a written way meanwhile he adapts to a new context with a new system of sign language.

In that sense, writing can act as a mean to communicate two communities that have been separated with the idea that they cannot communicate between each other. Through the development of different micro skills, the community can easily communicate their ideas to the world, because as one of our students said: "My ideas are important to the world, I am important, and I can do great things" (FUNDARVID student, 2015).

Finally, we had the *Art Stage*, and it took part as a mean and as a result of the pedagogical intervention, because the arts are a mean to represent the real perspective of the artist, in this case, the art helped to introduce the students' ideas, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and establishing a communication bridge that allows hearing and Deaf people to talk, discuss, criticize, defend, learn, and interchange ideas with the one who emits the message. Reminding that one of the purposes of this project is to create an art gallery that expose the students' point of view about their context, New Literacies project looked for some proficient people who could help us to guide the art training that the students needed to accomplish a great artwork.

During art sessions the theory of color was important, introducing colors' semiotic, and how the artist uses them to emphasize the message that he wants to transmit, being sensitive with the viewer. The exercise was developed using a landscape that the students drew on a big cardboard; the idea was that they could paint the half of the landscape with warm colors, and the other half with cold colors. In that sense, they could discover how a color palette can change the idea that a drawing gives to the viewer. The students discovered that one color could mean loneliness or sadness in one painting, and other color could mean something completely different; this work influenced the final result.

Later, an artist from Universidad Nacional de Colombia guided a painting workshop, in which the black and white colors should capture the essence of a situation, reproducing a "still-life" painting, the students showed great skills to this work; at the beginning was hard because the artist spoke too fast and was difficult for teachers to translate in the same speed, but following the instructions step by step the students could enjoy this experience. (Annex 5)

Through this activity, students could discover about the point of view that a painter and an observer can have from a painting. They noticed that the drawing and the way to paint it could change if they changed seats with their partner, because they could see different

pieces of the fruits or the bottle of wine and even the light reflection was different. The shades made with black paint and water, demonstrated how they could focus on something, or how they could express feelings through the painting.

The self-portrait activity was an interesting workshop guided by an artist from Universidad Pedagógica Nacional; during this session besides to learn many things about drawing, the students had the opportunity to reflect about themselves, answering questions like “who am I?”, “Why am I in this way?” or “What do I like about myself?”, and it provided them the inspiration to make their own self-portrait, and later, plan and design a partner’s portrait. Afterwards, the second activity opened a discussion related to “how my partners see me vs. how I feel about myself” and the final reflection was enriching, because it allowed students to know more about themselves, their partners, and how their partners perceived them as people with important values and gifts. (Annex 6)

With activities like this one, students were able to reflect about the world that is around them, even though they are visual persons, it was important to know how detailed they perceive the world. Through the activity they realized that there are some things that in their daily life they do not detail: the characteristics of their look, the scars and birthmarks, the characteristic of their clothes, and so on. This strengthens the interaction that the student has with the world, fostering a stronger communication with the context, not only through images, but sensations, smells, tastes, etc.

Near to finish the course, as teachers we decided to visit the “Museo Nacional” to immerse students in a wide artistic perspective, and offering an alternative to feel inspired to design and draft their final artwork. The families and friends of our participants were invited to share with them a different experience; we had the opportunity to contact someone who helped us to schedule a visit on a day that every deaf person that wanted to visit the museum could enter with us. An interpreter guided our visit explaining the content of each room; the

participants were able to admire famous artworks, different painting techniques, and discriminate some art movements. For some of them, this was their first experience at a museum, and they were excited. Along the visit, they didn't know very well about the rules of the museum, and as persons that relate senses to learn, they started to touch some paintings (action forbidden at museums), even though the guide told them it was not appropriate, they could feel the sensation of oil painting, and different materials that artists used to elaborate their artworks in order to understand better the techniques used to create such interesting paintings.

There were a lot of famous artworks and artists that the students didn't know, and for that reason it was interesting, for example the moment that someone explained about the correct way to sign "Botero", a famous Colombian painter that uses to create artworks with a lot of volume. Sculptures, paintings, photographs, videos, and even historic elements were an amazing tool to approach the group to artistic expressions, and most importantly, the culture of our ancestors, and so many and interesting objects and facts that make that visit an amazing experience.

This visit encouraged them to visualize their ideas, and made them think about what they would like to represent, and in that sense, create the first draft gathering what they had learned and experienced in more than five months.

Besides these important activities, art was always present: through drawings, small sculptures, paintings, compositions, theater, and other different activities that were carried out along the different sessions. Through art, we found another way to communicate ideas, to clarify concepts, to teach and learn new words; it was a tool that helped us comprehend how complex communication can be, and how barriers can disappear, even if it is in a foreign language.

Even though these three perspectives were planned through a lot of activities, not all

of them could be carried out because of time, institutional meetings, and other activities that had time along the implementation of the process. When developing a plan to implement during a period, is determining to take these features into account and that is the reason why some class sessions were modified. It is important to highlight as well the materials that were used along the process, some materials were adapted and the others were created by us in order to foster a meaningful learning. Art materials like dough, paper, paints, aqua painting, oil painting, colors, markers, readings, images, photos, paintings, worksheets, and others, were really important for the development of the project.

Besides of carrying out the activities mentioned above, the learning progress of our students during the foreign language course depended on their motivation, and consequently their compromise with the project. At the beginning, the students were motivated and attended on time each Saturday during approximately four months, but later we could notice that they lost their compromise with the pass of time: some of them had trouble with their university or work schedule to be on time, and the foundation meetings or celebrations also affected the classes. To face this obstacle we decided to be flexible with the time to start the class, even if this represented to extend the English course, and to keep the motivation we identified that the students do not recognize their important role on the project, so it was needed to be clearer with our purpose, and explain why they were the best sample to develop this project. As a consequence, we help them to realize that they were not just students; they were leaders that represented the Deaf community in Bogotá, and important persons for our society in a common context. Another strategy to enhance students' motivation was short term tasks; they needed to notice their advances in a short period to keep their internal and external motivation in a high position.



## **Gallery “*The Misted Window*”**

In this chapter, it is presented the stage by stage process that students followed to define, design and create their final artworks; all the activities that appear here were the key to encourage the New Literacies final production. *The Misted Window* is a chance to get closer to Deaf community of FUNDARVID, to accept the difference and take advantage of it learning as much as possible of this point of view that is usually covered of mist.

### ***First Stage***

The students were introduced to different art techniques through different sessions (some of them mentioned in the pedagogical intervention), and after doing different activities that implied the use of art and its different kinds of expression, they started to create their own work of art. The first activity required to think and write about something they would like to say to the whole world or something that they would like to show from the deaf community to the hearing community. Students started to draw instead of writing; they decided to show experiences and important things that they believe must be shared to their neighbors, classmates, families, etc.

The group started to plan ideas from their former knowledge of the world and the community that surround them to create a meaningful message that could be transmitted in a way different to the common ones, signed messages or translated ideas.

The first drawing was made during a session in FUNDARVID, they started to draw some images that represented feelings or situations that could involve them in real life. Even though it was a simple draft, the students thought that it was better to dedicate some time to think about the ideas, link them and express a more structured idea. It is important to highlight the fact that all the ideas were the result of a hard work, in which the group in general worked hard to express to a part of the society that is apart from them, how they are not completely different, and they can communicate through artistic means too.

The following sessions, students created some cards to express in written words what they wanted to express artistically, this process was made in the foreign language. They tried hard to describe the meaning of their work of art, looking for some new words, adjectives, meanings in general that could express all the characteristics of their drawing. The result was a very interesting description carefully carried out, trying to make an understandable paragraph, and an appropriated structure, but besides writing, these descriptions tried to gather the essence of the artwork, showing more than a simple description, trying to spread a way of thinking.

At that moment we could understand how complex ideas can be, and we found out that words sometimes are not enough to express a feeling or a situation. When a person communicates through words, the fifty percent of the meaning is literally created and the other fifty percent is made symbolic; that is the reason why, the deaf community participants hope that all the people that see their work can think and understand all their ideas, it is like “walking on their shoes”. The main objective is to break stereotypes; to show how interesting are the thoughts of the other person if the community cares about it. It was considered the fact that the observer changes the meaning of the artwork regarding its experiences and ideas that they have risen through their lifetime, but it is an otherness issue the exercise of understanding the work of art of their creation.

The next sessions after that, the group arrived with amazing drafts of their ideas. It was impressive the fact that there was one thing common in almost all the drawings, there were trees in almost all the drafts, and taking into account that they developed the drawings in different places, it was not possible to share ideas. And it was interesting the meaning of each tree: trying to show different feelings and conceptions based on different expressions: some trees came out of the hands, others came out of the head, and others from the floor.

In the meanwhile they were explaining the meaning of each drawing, the mother of

one of the participants expressed that they take the trees as a very important shape, because they relate trees with thinking, ideas, intelligence, and signs that can be expressed. As additional information is important to mention that the sign of the foundation (FUNDARVID) is a tree, and the symbol that represent them as a collective also includes a tree on it.

After this step, students started to modify the initial drawings, thinking about some techniques that they discovered when they went to the National Museum to see different works of art, and some methods to draw and paint that the guest artists showed them. Each one of them thought about colors, shape, volume, meaning, and all the characteristics that they considered important to modify before they start to capture the final idea.

There was a proposal of using different art resources, and the students made a feedback about the different art expressions; they had to decide if they wanted to choose photography, sculpture, painting, and drawing, create videos, etc., to start the creation of the work that they wanted to show. Once they decided, there were programmed sessions to carry out the development of the artworks: they shared ideas with their partners, explained each other why they developed those specific ideas, and it was a meaningful experience for all the persons that were present at the moment, because it was an opportunity to share and improve the work that the group was carrying out.

To create a final work, it was necessary to choose some materials to start the creation of the final composition, each one requested for materials that they thought were appropriated for the development of the creation, some of these materials were: oil painting, paint brushes, a canvas, watercolor paper, charcoal pencils, Indian ink of different colors, pencils, eraser, turpentine, linseed oil, etc.

### ***Second Stage***

This stage achieved the hardest part of the final artwork, because here was involved

the conceptual or abstract goals of the participants; the discussion about controversial arguments related to Deaf and hearing perspectives took place as a relevant field, where students identified their roles as social agents, and claimed acknowledgment from hearing people. During this time, students discussed about their way of life into a hearing community, highlighting their main difficulties and improving possible solutions to overcome those situations, but it took a low percentage of time talking about obstacles that they must face as a Deaf community in contrast to the hours spent to express their abilities to face their daily life experiences as high school students, university students, teachers, trainers, etc.

As researchers, we consider relevant the debate around the need of an interpreter (Colombian Sign Language - Spanish), some students stated that they could go along the city without the help from an interpreter, because they feel able to face common situations using signs, writing on papers, or even speaking in specific cases to be understood, recognizing that the majority of the places that they frequent are led by Deaf people.

Nevertheless, most of the students realized that the interpreter helps a lot in common places as universities, some schools, hospital, jobs, etc., because hearing people do not use to feel wary to comprehend them, as they usually do with foreigners or people with different linguistic codes. Despite they clarify that interpreters helps, but do not substitute their minds or feelings; they are aware of how capable they are to design and achieve their goals in life.

After they communicated their opinions and arguments to build the concept that they wanted to share, they started the process of creating a draft that satisfied their particular ideas, to later work on the material that they requested. It was a hard work; they tried to do their best while doing the artwork that is going to see the light at the end of the project. Each one of them had the opportunity to apply all the knowledge that they learned along the process, not only in matters of art, but in the representation of symbolic ideas through art.

Almost 4 months were needed to conclude the creation of the artworks, due to

different events that interrupted the process. In spite of that, all the participants gave the best of them to create a result that satisfied them as creators of messages through arts.

The results were unbelievable, the students were so proud of the things that they achieved, because it was a representation of something that meant a lot to them, and for that reason, it was something valuable. For example, one of the participants decided to work with oil paint, his ideas were clear and he wanted to share his thoughts with the world, even though that in the first drawing activities he did not feel so comfortable, when he finished his work he couldn't believe it: he was proud, and showed everyone the amazing work that he achieved. It was something exciting, he knew that he had produced something that had an intellectual and emotional meaning, and he could create it through a new language.

### ***Final Stage***

In order to understand the final product, and recognize the processes developed by students, it is necessary to explain that some participants who were really involved with New Literacies project could not finish the process (artwork) because of their academic or work duties, that is the reason why here you can find the written descriptions of the finished works of art, following their own explanations:

*Faceless Tree in Black and White (Annex 7)*

*Charcoal pencil on watercolor paper*

*35x50 cm*

In this artwork, there is represented a “faceless tree in black and white that represents a person free and intelligent that protests to support people, this person is someone strong that nobody knows”. Through this drawing, the participant wants to represent the constant struggle against the government and some entities, to fight for the rights of the people that are in need. To complement the explanation, the participant states:

“Hice este dibujo con el que quiero presentar un concepto de cómo me siento. Lo negro del rostro representa la fuerza, la defensa y resistencia, por el contrario, lo blanco representa el silencio y la flexibilidad necesaria para hacer un trabajo integrado y fuerte.

Por otra parte, el árbol que nace de la cabeza, representa como la semilla de la educación que padres y profesores sembraron en nosotros, germina y se fortalece, con los principios inculcados para que cualquier persona no ‘Se la monte’ a uno, sino que uno como sordo se pueda defender. Es importante aclarar que el rostro que se ve es un rostro plano, que no critica, ni ataca, es un rostro silencioso, es simplemente una persona”.

*Deaf People Fight (Annex 8)*

*Charcoal pencil, ecoline paint on watercolor paper*

*35x50 cm.*

The participant that created this artwork based his ideas on movements that use to fight united to get a general will, with common thoughts and ideas: “Deaf people do not need a translator; deaf people could communicate their ideas through texts or other means”. With this statement, the Deaf People Fight is a sign of independence and self-sufficiency to face the world. As the reason that inspired this work of art, the author states:

“El dibujo que hice significa que los sordos y los oyentes están integrados, porque es muy importante la comunicación para la inclusión, que los sordos puedan interactuar tranquilamente en Lengua de Señas Colombiana (LSC), sin que los oyentes se estén quejando porque somos sordos”.

*Tree-man (Annex 9)*

*Oil paint on canvas*

*35x50 cm.*

This artwork represents a person that can show the ideas and the thoughts of the mind through the sign language; these signs and these words are fed by the eyes that give them a meaning, eyes that are making the ideas grow even more. To communicate is to increase ideas, to exchange knowledge, to discover the world through a collaborative way. Below, the participant explains this work of art detailedly:

“En el dibujo se ve que de las dos manos salen ramas como si fueran árboles. El hombre está parado sobre un piso de pasto y detrás de él hay plantas. El hombre mira al cielo, pues está lloviendo como se ve aquí (señala las nubes) y esta lluvia lo moja todo, moja sus ramas y esto hace que crezcan. Yo estoy muy contento de poder entregarles este hombre-árbol.

En las nubes hay ojos abiertos que lloran y estas lágrimas de agua que caen permiten que florezca la vida en las ramas que salen de cada dedo. Estas ramas crecen y luego sus hojas caen al suelo y permiten que allí también crezca vida, que nazca el pasto y las plantas que también se alimentan de la lluvia para vivir”

## **Limitations**

The communication was the issue that shaped the project, at the beginning was hard because as teachers, we have just one level of proficiency in Colombian Sign Language and the students sign very fast, and used a lot of signs that were new and complex for us; moreover, along the classes we realized that the Spanish language has a big quantity of words that do not have comparable signs, consequently these words do not have meaning for Deaf people. It often represents a significant obstacle in the sense that took a lot of time to find and explain the perfect synonym for the Spanish word, and usually this new word does not have a sign too; so it was difficult to solve, but drawings, diagrams and in some cases assistants' help as interpreters were the key to find a way to understand the unknown words.

During the English course was possible to build a friendly relation with each student, and it improved our level of communication because having an idea of the student's personality provided us the bridge to explain in a better way the unknown concepts, activities, games, role plays, etc.; in order to achieve the goals of the class, some students performed a role as leaders with their partners according to their abilities to comprehend faster the topics and activities, dealing with questions or asking for clearer instructions.

To break a language barrier means to understand a context, to improve communication means with the other, because even though there is a "difference" between hearing and deaf people, we are persons that have the opportunity to share the same background, and we are surrounded by the same place, same problem, and same environment. In this way, breaking a barrier means to improve methodologies to communicate with them, words are not the only resource to express ideas, we can use drawings, representations, photographs, mimics, and all the boundless quantity of means.

It is important to mention as well the fact that the deaf community sometimes feels pressure from the hearing community to learn Spanish with good levels of proficiency,



generating frustration in many students, and as a result, they reject the Spanish as a mean of communication. To learn a new language is not meant to be against the will of the person, quite the opposite, they must be encouraged to learn through different means and methodologies, fostering a culture, a communication of ideas, and a whole new world.

At the end of the course, students and teachers accomplished a higher proficiency level in English as a foreign language, Spanish as a second language (students) and Colombian Sign Language (as mother tongue for students and a second language for teachers). Furthermore, as researchers, we created a bond with the Deaf community in foundation *Árbol de Vida (FUNDARVID)*, that allowed us to learn about them as a minority social group immerse in a wide hearing society, which in some cases ignore the existence of the community and their rights, whereas they demand to be heard by a government because they feel in the same way; but on the other hand, this community showed us how some of them have succeeded despite the obstacles and could achieve their educational and working objectives; improving the communication differences with their environment, and appropriating strategies to deal with their daily challenges.

As it is necessary and relevant, not only our opinion about the deaf community has to be taken into account. Along the sessions, the community expressed that they felt a barrier between them and the hearing community because there must be always a translator because they would not be able to communicate without the help of an intermediary. Even though they had that thinking about the communication, they also felt self-sufficient against the world; they consider themselves independent and able to do whatever they want to do. This, is very important in order to show to the hearing community that the deaf community are not disabled people, they have the same abilities as anyone else, and they could learn in a common context (official schools) if the infrastructure, the community, the curriculum, and the teachers could be prepared for it.

## Conclusions

New Literacies project is the result of months of collaborative working between the Deaf community and us as representatives of the hearing community, bearing in mind that our concept of New Literacies has been built gathering experiences of the teaching and learning process, we define it as an innovative way of teaching using different methods available in the environment, leaving aside the traditional way of education, centering the methodology on the human being, the context, and their needs as people, leaving behind differences of abilities, gender, age, race, etc. This project innovates an educational alternative to promote inclusion of Deaf people from Bogotá, who felt interested in learning English as a third language. As a result, the researchers designed and applied a teaching strategy for a small group of Deaf people from the foundation *Árbol de Vida* (FUNDARVID); it was a free English course, along nine months that used art as a learning tool to motivate the students to face their context through different ways.

The teaching exercise is not just a practice of teachers, the main principle to teach is the existence of someone to learn, so the teaching labor is shaped by the learner needs and those needs deal with the immediate context, student abilities and motivation, because if teacher or student do not have an active role guided by his personal motivation, the teaching or learning process would fail, and at the end, the consequence is to obtain short term memory results.

Inviting unknown people (proficient in arts) for the group was interesting to improve the students' abilities, the first reaction of the participants was related to the idea that they were not good enough to draw or paint, but with few instructions they could feel confident with themselves, and their final artwork reflects this experience. The visitors who helped us were people who had trained in art for a long time, and have not met a deaf person before; for them this experience improved their professional life, and clarified some stereotypes that they

had about people with “special needs”. The students enjoyed each workshop and they learned that their abilities were better than they thought, improving their self-perception to assume new challenges.

During approximately fifty-two (52) hours of hard work, the teaching strategy was shaped until the last second, they were not just Deaf students, they were high school students, teachers, trainers, university students, adults, young-adults, friends, workers, parents, sons, boyfriends, girlfriends, and so on. Being aware of these characteristics, as teachers we had to design different kinds of classes that deal with our students’ expectations, and the final objective of New Literacies. Approximately 30 sessions were carried out in New Literacies Project, and this as a result fostered a better communication, a better relation between hearing teachers and Deaf students, issue that cannot be left aside. The number of activities applied is significant to develop meaningful learning, a wider view of English language, and more opportunities to improve communication skills.

To work with young-adults and adults is amazing, because they are focused on a goal, and is easier for them to understand the required changes to achieve it; the participants were fast learners, and it was the first concept to keep in mind to plan the classes, the next challenge was to be as clear as possible, explaining each detail with words easy to understand, the problem with this statement is when it is pretended to explain something that is abstract or symbolic, because of the direct meaning uses to be perceived as the only one, or that also occurs when the Spanish word, even if it looks like a common one, it does not exist in Colombian sign language.

Transforming the teaching strategy according to students’ needs, and situational context was the key to analyze the learning process, and as a consequence the English learning progress: the research exposed how important were the changes along the course because short goals enrich the final objective, and each one represents a profit, which

enhance different skills; for example, drawing activities promote the reading skills, familiarizing the new word with the mental image of the sign; it also helps to represent symbolic ideas implicit in the texts.

Furthermore, the variation showed the fortitudes of each student in a wide range of activities, meanwhile, the communication between students and teachers shaped the next activities in a communicative exchange, discussing, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of workshops, giving opinions, taking decisions, etc. Nowadays, the education should be structured according to societal evolution, and the brain plasticity fits perfect with this example, acknowledging that learning is a full-time work during the whole life, so it is very important to train the skills which will help us later to deal with our daily routine from childhood to an old age. Being deaf is just a way of life which focuses on sensitive skills that are closely related to the sight and touch, and the brain function is shaped by these sensitive experiences that could impoverish or enrich the particular reality of someone.

As a result, the research highlight first: the use of senses strengthened the learning process of the foreign language, but this fact is not just functional for deaf people, it reinforces the learning experience in hearing people too, second, Colombia has a big population with special needs, but probably the word “*special*” should be replaced by “*different*”, because recognize the difference let us comprehend that homogenize politics, education, etc. does not work to our real context and obstruct the progress in general, third, the strategies succeeded with fewer people because they were focused on particular skills, they have great probability to work on a big mass, it is a reliable principle, fourth, the weight of stereotypes is really heavy, it affects the self-perception of a deaf person as part of a solid group (Deaf community), in the sense that limits their own development in contrast with a big group that performs what is supposed to be the right way because they are the majority, it contributes to create a barrier between cultural minority and majority, in which both reject the

other one. From a hearing point of view, the hearing loss is perceived as an illness that needs compassion, because the deaf person lost something, and this is a myth, to be deaf is a way of life, in the Colombian context is similar to be a foreigner, they use a different linguistic code to represent their reality, fifth, English as a third language provide a high number of advantages to Deaf people in their personal, professional, and labor aspects; in addition, it works as a common code to empower the relation between Deaf and hearing community, that used to be seen as unsettled, and finally, Deaf people represent a student population with a high-quality learning conditions, and arts are a good tool to engage students' motivation with the learning purposes.

New literacies project has succeeded as an educational strategy to promote inclusion in the foreign language (English) learning context of Deaf community from FUNDARVID, it requires great will, and an open mind to deal with different challenges; the elements that all professionals need to achieve a goal in their particular fields. The participants varied along the course, but the results are meaningful to foster future educational projects that deal with teaching, and learning language processes, materials design and special needs population.

As a recommendation, we consider some important features as the classroom characteristics, for example, an illuminated place with devices that support the learning experience; more hours per week for students and teachers interaction, and practice the new concepts: visit different places outside the classroom that are related to learning purposes; promote students' exchange with other people that have similar interest, and involve the senses in the teaching-learning process as it was the first time that they are going to explore something, the richness of improving these experiences are for life.

To conclude, we would like to reflect on the way to perceive people who is different from us, or with special needs; actually, the fact is not about tolerance or may be, respect; it is a matter of intelligence, the astonishing ability to solve problems allow us to recognize that as

different persons we have a wide range of skills to confront the reality (this concept understood as a social construct), and those skills provide us the way of life that we deserve, taking into consideration how capable we are to understand something unknown as a problem.

### *The point of view of the participants*

It is important for us as the developers of this project, to highlight the voice of the community who participated in New Literacies, and for that reason, here we are going to present some opinions that the students gave through a video record. The ideas are going to be presented in Spanish because it has been already translated from Colombian Sign Language (CSL) to Spanish and the information is not intended to be translated again to avoid loss in the meaning of these words.

For the participants of this Project learning English was a meaningful experience which as a result can foster communication between two communities that had been separated as a product of using different codes, and as a consequence, they think that they can be able to interact with deaf or hearing people through a new language in a written way, as participant J says:

“Si yo sé inglés voy a poder comunicarme por escrito con los oyentes y luego poder interactuar con mi comunidad sorda. Por el contrario si yo nunca he practicado o me he formado en inglés, todas las personas me van a ignorar porque no me sé comunicar, diferente a si me he formado que voy a poder escribir e interpretar lo que me escriben”. (Participant J, New Literacies Project, 2016).

For some students who participated in this Project, this was the first time learning a new language and to create an enriching experience, the methodology was different as it was explained above. All the activities were designed to make the students feel motivated to learn the new language, and avoid experiences as the ones that they have faced through the

learning of the Spanish language. Highlighting this point, participant D and participant L stated:

“Es la primera vez que yo participo y me ha parecido una experiencia muy interesante. Relacionar el aprendizaje de vocabulario con actividades de arte, me ha parecido interesante y creo que sirve para practicar aunque es poco tiempo. Al comienzo pensé que las actividades artísticas serían aparte de la enseñanza del inglés, pero lo que vi es que se buscó integrar el vocabulario en inglés en cada actividad y me pareció algo chévere”. (Participant D, New Literacies Project, 2016)

“A mí me gusta porque podemos aprender cosas en inglés, pero también dibujar, hacer esculturas, aprender a escribir y otras cosas que nos incentiven a estar contentos, a mí me ha gustado mucho aprender inglés poco a poco”. (Participant L, New Literacies Project, 2016)

Aside from teaching English and make the students interact with art and their senses, one of the purposes of this work was to shatter the barrier that has been built by these communities as the result of being “different”. This was one of the main topics addressed by our students, they recognize the existence of those barriers, but at the same time, they know that they are able to break them. Teaching English language to Deaf people has been a controversy because some people don’t think that English is necessary or essential as Spanish language is for the Deaf community. As we mentioned above, it was difficult to find a population that was interested in this project, but as a result, now we can present these valuable words, for all the communities, teachers and students out there, that are still building this barrier. Participants D and D1 talk about these barriers below:

“Creo que los sordos enfrentan barreras en el contexto para aprender el inglés, pero si esas barreras se rompen claramente van a poder aprender el inglés. Por ejemplo, gracias a que profesoras oyentes asumen la formación a personas sordas y nos

explican el inglés, es que se rompen estas barreras, de otra manera, seguiríamos buscando quien nos enseñara. Gracias a ellas podemos aprender poco a poco y generar apertura” (Participan D, New Literacies Project, 2016).

“El inglés no es una barrera para los sordos, claro que podemos aprender inglés como los oyentes, así como los oyentes pueden aprender LSC y eso hay que tenerlo claro. Además que aprender inglés permite ampliar nuestro horizonte y conocer diferentes cosas que antes no veíamos

...La inclusión entre sordos y oyentes es un proceso que permite que se vayan acercando e integrando. Siempre la costumbre ha sido enseñar a los sordos sólo español y a los oyentes inglés, por eso, en este momento se podría hacer un intercambio para que los sordos enseñáramos a los oyentes LSC y ellos a nosotros inglés, eso sería un verdadero cambio en el proceso de inclusión y en el contacto entre las comunidades”. (Participant D1, New Literacies Project, 2016)



### **Implications in the educational field**

Language is everything around us, images, symbols, words, gestures, signs, etc., and to learn something is necessary to have a well-structured language system that allows the student to make connections between the experiences of the everyday life and new concepts. As it was mentioned before, the world around us is a symbolic universe; everything has a meaning and can be expressed through different means. This project was meaningful for the persons involved because they could realize that not just gestures and signs are a tool for communication, everything around can be used to express ideas, feelings, thoughts or needs.

The world is diverse, and even though the barriers seem to be unbreakable, there is infinity of possibilities to communicate. For example, during one class, we had an artist as a guest, and the students recognized the power of the images. They noticed that a line can change everything, that a self-portrait can say a lot about themselves, about their mood, their perception of the world, and the perceptions of other people about them. Now they know how to use art means to share ideas with hearing people or even foreign people, improving their use of the image.

The use of sign language was very important in this project because it acted as a mean to connect Spanish and English, making a three-step translation: English → Sign language → Spanish. The group could use the sign language to learn English in a reading and written way. In one of the sessions we had the opportunity to work with a poem of the Colombian writer Jairo Aníbal Niño, we translated the poem to English and then divided the poem in different pieces. Through the connection between English, sign language, and Spanish, they had the opportunity to organize the poem and then narrate it.

By means of language, the people learn and explore, and the academic community takes language as something really important. The deaf community has had a lot of inconveniences in the educational field because the system designed by the government does

not suit their needs or do not fulfill the demand of the population. Taking into account the second journal of the “Boletín Observatorio Social - Población Sorda Colombiana” (2011) published by the INSOR (Instituto Nacional de Sordos), from the demand of the research made by the 54 (Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística) on 2010, that year that was of approximately 857.132 deaf persons; of that population, just 33.343 were enrolled in kindergartens, in primary, the number of deaf kids was about 368.482, of that population enrolled in school, just 134.708 are able to reach high school. The abandon of the schools is the result of the existence of inefficient methodologies to teach in diverse communities. Even though the attempts of creating an inclusive context in official schools, deaf students still feel that they are separated from their partners, with the difference of having a translator (sign spoken Spanish-sign language) everything is still the same.

It is important to remark that along the development of the project, the improvement of skills was not graded quantitatively, because there are some mistakes in the numeric system, and not all the abilities can be seen in just one number. Instead of that, the skills were seen through different and dynamic activities that allow us to see the progress of the students through the stages.

As well as the methodology applied in the project did not include long hours of theory from a translator, all the tasks were dynamic that made the students interact with their environment with the use of the senses, so through sensation and perception, they were able to explore their world, and to learn from it. For example, there was an activity with flavors, the group had the opportunity to taste and make a connection between taste, texture, smell, word, and sound. It is necessary to show the fact that English classes can be carried out in different ways, using all the things that are around us.

It is relevant to mention that the materials and activities have to be designed by the teacher that is going to apply the strategy, being aware of the context in which the Deaf

community is interacting. In that sense, problems of comprehension or misunderstandings will not appear during the development of the sessions.

Having in mind the developing and implementation of the project, we realize that is possible to teach a foreign language to the deaf community, and that it will be useful for them in order to know more about their community around the world, and as well they will have the opportunity to expand their knowledge. A foreign language is not exclusively of the hearing community, and through the design of appropriate methodologies, the deaf community can be taught, and these methodologies can be used to improve the skills of the hearing community as well.

As a recommendation to create or apply a project like New Literacies, is important to emphasize some issues before and during the development of it: for instance, it is important that the proficiency in Colombian Sign Language (CSL) of the teacher can allow a fluent communication, because sometimes, the discourse thread can be affected, and as a result, the students get bored or they don't understand the idea. In addition, it is significant for the students' group to have time availability to carry out all the activities and fulfill the goals of the project. Finally, it is important to remember that a good curriculum design will foster a meaningful learning and a proper development for the students and the teacher as well; all the topics should be interrelated, emphasizing the connection between the topics and the activities that are going to be developed.

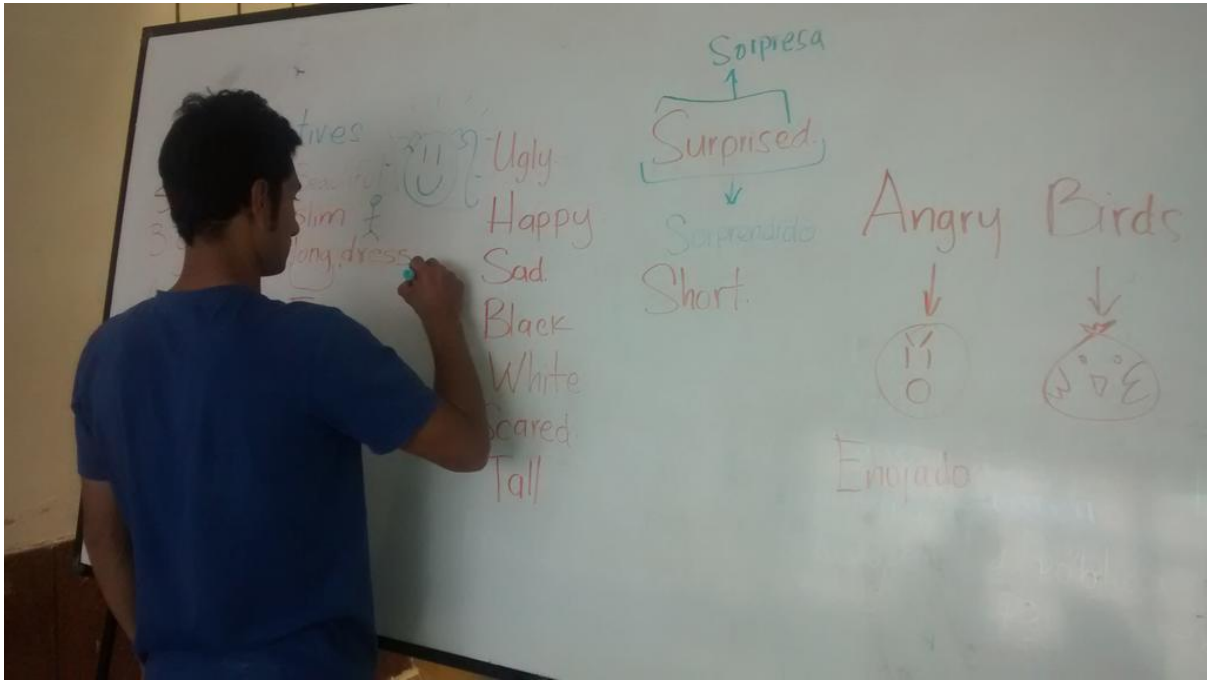
If the teachers that are now working in different schools in the country, or the teachers-to-be could discover all the tools around to teach, improving their proficiency in Colombian Sign Language and braille as a required subject during university programs, they would not feel unprepared to teach people that do not have the same abilities that the majority of the students. It is not about saying "it is the work of a special educator", the people that belong to the Deaf community can be part of our family, our neighbors or our partners, so

they can relate easily the context, and have the same dexterity to think, create, design, apply, to communicate.

In despite that along this part of the text, it is explained language and education in different points of view, they are not separated, because they are linked one from the other, making possible that the human being interacts with the world, discover and learn about it. It is possible a diverse teaching and learning experiences, through an open wide vision about what education is, it is not just about preparing people for a productive context, but it is about educating people, that can interact and create knowledge and new experiences.

Annexes

Annex 1



Annex 2



Annex 3

Diana Milagras Murillo A  
 Small = pequeño      Angry = enojado  
 Beard = Barba      Man = hombre  
 Hat = Sombrero  
 Big Nose = Nariz grande

Hombre esta enojado y tiene sombrero, Nariz grande, y barba. Es pequeño

slim      Beautiful      Woman

long dress      cape

Annex 4

Green eggs and ham by Dr. Seuss  
 Workshop  
 I am Sam-I-am catche Big

1. Draw how do you think that are the Green eggs with ham

2. Paint in which places Sam-I-am offered green eggs with ham to the main character (Paint on the cards given)

3. Which animals appeared in the tale (draw):

mouse

fox

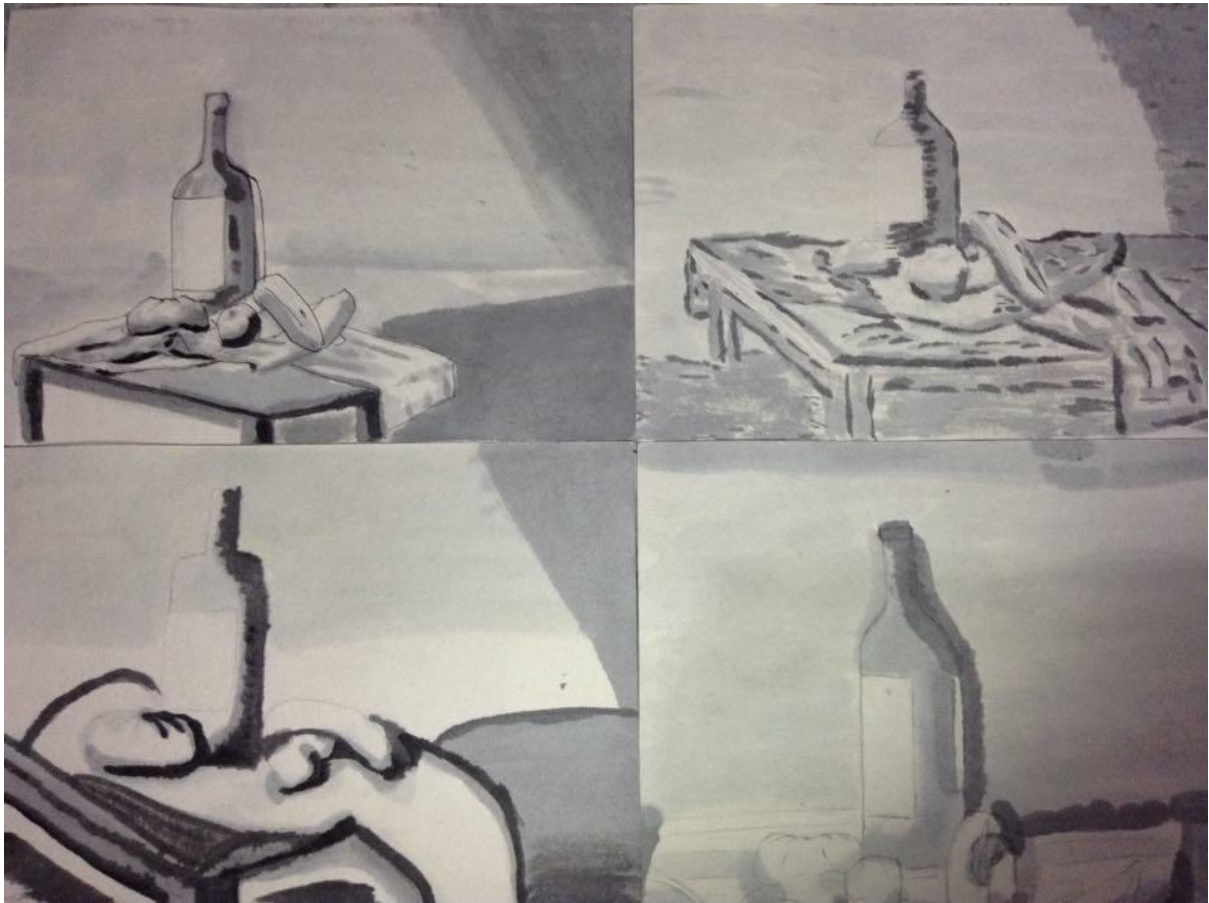
goat

4. Do you like Green eggs with ham? What do you like?  
 I like hamburguer and Hot dog

5. What was the best part of the tale? Sculpt it in paper with scissiors.

Answer the following questions:  
 Which color were the eggs with ham?  
 A. Yellow B. Red  C. Green  
 Which object do you find in the forest?  
 A. Car  B. Tree C. Train  
 Which animals appears in the tale?  
 A. Mouse B. Dog  C. Fox D. Cat E. Chicken  F. Goat  
 You use it to transport:  
 A. Eggs  B. Train C. Goat  D. Car  
 Building where we live:  
 A. Box  B. House C. Train  
 Do you like them in a box?  
 A. Nike B. Would  C. Like  
 The antonym of light:  
 A. Dark B. Rain C. Goat

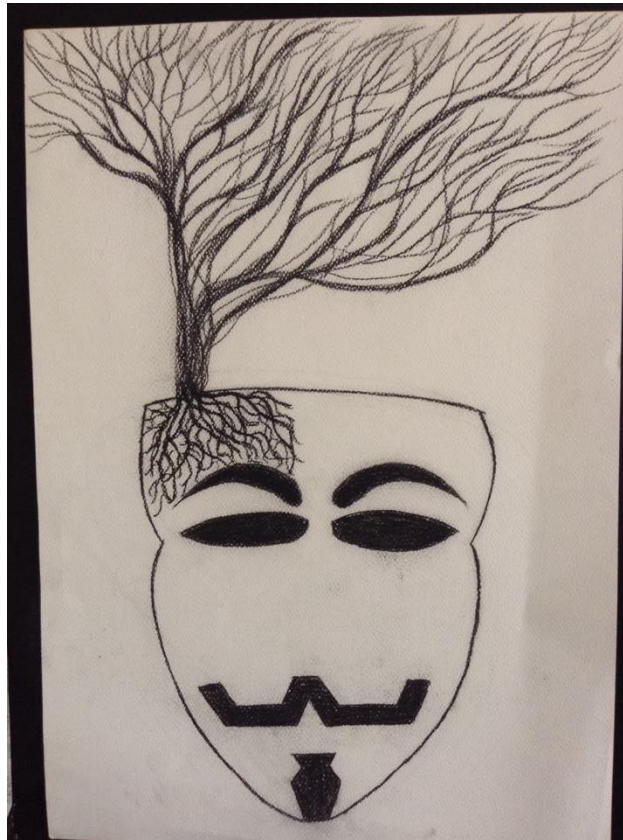
Annex 5



Annex 6



Annex 7



Annex 8





*Annex 9*



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