

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE METHODOLOGY EMPLOYED WITH HEARING IMPAIRED LEARNERS IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de
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Resumen

Actualmente la población de no oyentes está incursionando en el campo de la educación, en busca de mejores oportunidades laborales. Debido a esto los no oyentes están llegando a todos los escenarios educativos, incluido el aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras. Las exigencias educativas son las mismas para toda la población independientemente de sus limitaciones físicas.

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo describir la metodología utilizada por el profesor de inglés de una institución pública de la ciudad de Pereira, con estudiantes de grado décimo y once, los cuales son no oyentes.

A través de la información recolectada durante las observaciones de campo realizadas en esta escuela, y el análisis comparativo de la misma mediante la triangulación de los datos obtenidos, surgieron los siguientes hallazgos: características de la metodología utilizada por el profesor de inglés con los estudiantes no oyentes, las actitudes de los estudiantes frente a la clase de inglés,

Del estudio surgen también posibles líneas de futura investigación que contribuyan a conseguir una mejor educación para los estudiantes con discapacidad auditiva.

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Table of contents

Statement of the Problem	1
Description of the Study	4
Research Questions	5
Literature Review	6
Sign Language	6
Lip Reading	6
Levels of Hearing Loss	7
Hearing-Impaired Bilingualism	8
Hearing Impaired Development of Oral Language	12
Hearing Impaired People Learning Style	12
Inclusive Classrooms	15
Teaching Strategies for Hearing-Impaired Learners	18
Use of the Mother Tongue to Teach a Foreign Language	21
Methodology	23
Context	23
Participants	24
Methods for Data Collection	25
Observations	25
Interview	27
Researchers' Role and Identity	27
Data Analysis	28

Findings	30
Characteristics of the Methodology.....	30
Used in the English Class with Hearing Impaired Learners	
Predominance of Sign Language in	30
the English Class	
Lack of Use of Oral Foreign.....	33
Language by the English Teacher	
Deductive Teaching Method Prevalent.....	35
During Instruction	
Minimum Use of Visual Aids.....	36
Activities Based on the Lexical.....	38
Competence	
Managing Students' Behavior through	40
Physical Proximity and Sound	
Assessing the Effectiveness of.....	41
Lessons	
2. Positive Students' Classroom.....	43
Behaviour	
Supportive Learning among the.....	43
Students in the English Class	
Active Role of the Students during the.....	45
Classroom Activities	
Discussion	47
Illustration of English instruction for.....	47
hearing impaired learners	
Methodology applied with hearing.....	47
impaired learners	
Characteristics of hearing impaired.....	54
learners` behavior during the English	

classes

Instructional and Research Implications	55
Instructional Implications	55
Research Implications	57
Conclusion	59
References	61
Annex	64

Statement of the Problem

Nowadays, English has become one of the most promoted languages around the world and it is the language of international business, diplomacy, and academic environments. Also, the new tendencies of world labor market that involve globalization, technology, and professional development require students to achieve a high level of English communicative competence. Aware of this reality, Colombia has launched the project “Vision Colombia 2019”, which is a project designed by the Colombian government to envision education, society, economy, and culture in the country in ten years. A priority of this project is the national program of bilingualism called “Colombia Bilingüe 2019”.

The Colombian Ministry of National Education (MEN) has adapted the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: teaching, learning and assessment (2001) to the national context, in order for learners to achieve a high level of English communicative competence, so that they can reach international standards to communicate in academic, social, and cultural settings.

According to MEN regulations, Colombian high school graduates should have achieved a B1 level of mastery over the English language and should have developed their communicative competence in all four skills. Students in the B1 level should be able to comprehend clearly specific and principal ideas of ordinary input on common issues familiar to them. Moreover, they can interact in different situations in foreigner countries where the language is used and produce written language about topics familiar to them by connecting their ideas in coherent way. In an oral way students can illustrate actions, wishes, situations, aspirations in a brief way by providing arguments and explanations for their own opinions.

The competences to be achieved in high school are basically based on hearing students who are able to develop the four skills and to use them in real life context.

However, the Colombia Bilingüe Plan does not take under consideration the hearing-impaired population who has specific skills to develop and requires different methodologies to acquire knowledge; who are a considerable amount of population according to the last DANE statistics conducted in year 2005 of 41'242,948 citizens in Colombia, 456.642 were hearing impaired.

Before 1994, MEN (1974) through resolution 5419 especial education was focused only to teach oral language to hearing-impaired students, without taking into account the cultural component that is involved in sign language. Most of the classes were focused only on oral pattern drills; thus, generating frustration to hearing-impaired learners and at the same time rising discrimination between hearing and hearing-impaired population in terms of job opportunities and access to higher levels of education.

In the 90s the educational policies of the Colombian government specifically require that students with disabilities be included in the General Educational System, and not secluded in special schools. According to law 115 of 1994, people with physical, mental, and sensorial disabilities share the same opportunities in a flexible, open and heterogeneous way, in order to develop their capacities in plenty, specifically for the Colombian hearing-impaired population. Law 324 of 1996 states in the article 6 that the government will provide formal and non formal institutions with different opportunities to support hearing impaired people in their learning process and integrate them to the society.

Despite the mandates in favor of providing equal educational opportunities to people with disabilities, foreign language instruction does not seem to be included in the educational needs of this population. In the case of hearing-impaired children, who can learn to communicate in the language of the community, are not included in the foreign language instruction mandates of the country. The Colombia Bilingüe project does not make any special provisions for the hearing impaired students, whose special needs do not seem to be considered.

Moreover, it does not seem to provide any kind of special training for the future teachers of these students with special needs.

In the institution In Other Words (IOW) the new teachers do not have previous training in sign language; therefore, they learn it with the assistance of their colleagues, who have been for a longer time at the institution.

Description of the Study

As future teachers, it is of great concern to us to find out how to best support students with disabilities to learn English as a foreign language, particularly hearing impaired students.

In our city, the school In Other Words (IOW) specially targets hearing-impaired children and provides them with English-as-a-foreign-language education. Due to the fact that the education of the hearing-impaired population is a field unknown to us, IOW offers a unique opportunity to explore how English instruction is provided to this population.

In our study, we aim at identifying how English instruction is being provided to hearing-impaired students in high school.

This study will provide us with an opportunity to expand our knowledge on an educational issue that we have not been exposed to and that we consider of the utmost importance in our community today.

With this purpose in mind we pose the following research questions that will guide our study:

Research Questions

Main Question:

What does the English instruction for hearing impaired students look like at the In Other Words Institution?

Our main question is focused on the English instruction received by hearing impaired learners. As instruction covers many issues, we want to delimitate it to the methodology applied in the English class, and the students' reactions towards that methodology. The following sub questions will address these issues:

Sub questions:

- a. What methodologies does the English teacher use in the hearing impaired setting?
- b. What is the hearing impaired students' learning behavior during the English class?

Literature Review

The aim of this project is to describe the instruction given to hearing impaired students in English classes as a foreign language. In order to develop this project and to understand this complex issue, it is necessary to have a background about specific topics, such as how hearing impaired population learns a second language considering that their mother tongue is sign language and they acquire Spanish as a second language. Different levels of deafness and hearing impaired students' learning styles are also considered in this section as they will influence the teaching strategies that can be used in the classroom. Finally some findings about the importance of inclusive settings for the hearing impaired population will be highlighted. It is important to clarify that the hearing impaired educational setting does not count with plenty of research material and documents.

Sign Language

Sign languages are the main way of communication of hearing impaired people in their everyday life. In many countries, sign languages are only taught in schools for the hearing impaired population and its use is restricted primarily to the Deaf community. Many other countries have adapted more than one foreign sign language. Moreover, each country has diverse regions which have developed different sign language dialects.

Lip Reading

Lip reading is a method of communication by which hearing impaired people read the interlocutor's speech on the movements of their lips and mouth. It is also known as speech reading and it was implemented since World War I. Hearing impaired people also rely on interpreting meaning through reading gestures and body language.

Levels of Hearing Loss

A hearing impaired person is the one who has difficulties for understanding oral information and for having natural and fluid conversations. In terms of audition levels, it is important to take into account that all hearing impaired people are not totally deaf. There are different levels of hearing loss, such as:

Profound hearing loss, which is the most extreme hearing loss, indicates that the hearing impaired person may not hear any speech at all. This implies that this population depends on visual aids and develops non-verbal strategies to communicate, for instance sign language and/or speech reading.

People with severe hearing loss have difficulty hearing in all circumstances. They may hear speech only if the speaker is communicating in a loudly way or if he is near him. Under unfavorable environmental conditions, a person who has a severe hearing loss may miss 100% of meaning in an utterance. They can only have a conversation in the most perfect situations, such as face to face interaction in quiet environments and even then, they need to be able to make use of speech-reading.

A moderate hearing loss may cause the listener to miss 50-75% of information in an utterance. A person with this kind of impairment would not have trouble communicating at short distances and listening to people face to face. However, they would have some trouble in medium distance or if they cannot see the other person. It also includes trouble listening to usual conversations and hearing consonants in words.

A mild hearing loss may cause the listener to miss 25-40% of an utterance. The brain receives most of the sound but it is not able to decode all the information. An indicator of mild hearing loss is difficulty on comprehending someone who is far away than usual in a conversation, even though, if they are

close and the background environment is noisy it is difficult for the person with mild hearing loss to understand the utterance.

A unilateral hearing loss is the impairment suffered by a person who has problems hearing through just one of his ears. A person with this kind of hearing loss has difficulties on locating the source of the sounds and understanding some conversations in specific circumstances, for instance, hearing distant dialogues, particularly if the person is talking on the problematic side of the listener or if the conversation is taking place in a noisy environment and the good ear is near to the noise.

Hearing-Impaired Bilingualism

The concept of hearing impaired bilingualism has been a great concern for several researchers. On Domínguez' (2003) study, the researcher distinguished two perspectives about bilingualism: the first one is 'successive bilingualism' which considers sign language as the mother tongue of the hearing impaired children and, therefore, the first one to be used to develop the different learning processes. After mastering the first language, deaf students will be presented the oral language of their community. The second perspective is the 'simultaneous bilingualism' characterized by the presentation of both languages at the same time. Since childhood, the hearing impaired children are in contact with users of sign and oral language. However, Ahlgren (1994) cited on Domínguez (2003) states that sign language will be learned faster than oral language, even if both of them are presented simultaneously.

Hoyos and Flores (1994) statement supports Ahlgren's (1994) point of view by arguing that hearing impaired people already have a first language to communicate which is sign language and that in the moment of acquiring the

language of the hearing community, they make the same mistakes that a hearing person makes when acquiring a second language.

Hermans, Knoors, Ormel, & Verhoeven' (2007) perspectives aligned with Hoyos and Flores (1994) when they argue that even if hearing impaired children are raised with two languages, a spoken one and a sign language, present many difficulties to develop bilingualism, for a specific reason: deaf children do not have the same opportunities to access the spoken language due to their impairment. Hearing impaired people have to use different strategies in order to understand the spoken language, for instance, visual aids and lip reading (also known as speech reading).

Antia and Levine (2001) cited in Hermans, Knoors, Ormel, & Verhoeven (2007) pointed out that many hearing impaired children did not develop an extensive repertoire of sign language due to the fact that their hearing relatives are not familiar with these signs; in addition, teachers normally do not know or learn sign language.

Hermans et al (2007) stated as well that hearing impaired population when developing the two languages will not master all the skills of one of the two languages. Hearing impaired learners usually present difficulties especially in reading, when learning languages.

Musselman, 2000; Padden & Ramsey, (2000) cited on Hermans (2007) emphasized that hearing impaired learners in their first years of life develop their two languages, sign language as their first language and the spoken language of their country as the second language. In the process of acquiring these two languages deaf children show difficulties using the spoken language as a mean to develop reading during their childhood. Nevertheless, they overcome this problem as time passes by. Furthermore; they reinforce the acquired knowledge about spoken language through continuous expositions to written language.

Wauters, Knoors, Vervloed, and Aarnoutse (2001) research cited on Hermans et al (2007) revealed that deaf children gain from the use of sign language when developing the reading skill as it allows them to understand unknown or difficult vocabulary. The study was conducted with sixteen hearing impaired students whose age ranged from six years and one month to ten years and one month, who were involved in reading sessions under different conditions: the first condition was the 'speech only' which consisted on showing a picture to deaf students followed by the pronunciation of the teacher, then students received the label of the pictures and were asked to pronounce them. The second condition involved the 'speech and sign' which consisted on showing the picture and its written word to the students; in addition, the teacher pronounced the word and then showed the sign of this word in sign language.

Wauters et al (2001) findings reported that deaf children memorized a significant quantity of words in the 'speech and sign' condition in contrast to the 'speech only' condition.

On the other hand, Rottenberg (2000) conducted a study in a public elementary school in Southwestern suburban school district; with seven preschool hearing impaired children. These seven children were divided in two different classroom settings. The first setting used total communication, which was based primarily on using sign language for English, lip reading, and speech; and in the second setting sign language was absent and only oral communication, was based on audition, lip reading, and speech was used.

Four children were participants in the total communication class and three in the oral communication class. The ages of the participants ranged from three years to four years. Children hearing loss was moderate, severe and profound.

In Rottenberg (2000) work it was found that children from both groups paid close attention to the development of their literacy making use of reading, drawing and writing activities. During the study, children were autonomous and active learners on their own literacy. When children were allowed to make their own decisions in relation with reading and writing activities, they showed a higher level of interest and participation and were more involved in processes of negotiation and cooperation with other classmates in literacy events.

Rottenberg (2000) stated that supplying children with opportunities to make their own decisions on choosing the literacy events they want to participate in, creates a safe environment for the learners, and leads them to be actively engaged in their literacy learning.

Claros-Kartchner conducted another research study in Canada in year 2006 in relation with linguistic identity among the Canadian hearing impaired population. Claros- Kartchner reported that the majority of the deaf population considers sign language as their mother tongue since it is their means to engage with other people and share personal experiences. Mother tongue is considered to be the one that you acquire in the first years of life. As Claros-Kartchner (2006) reported, since most hearing impaired children grow in hearing families, with parents and relatives who do not always realize the problem their offspring are facing, it is usual for hearing impaired children to start their linguistic development by acquiring a language which fulfills their most immediate communicative needs; those needs usually include communicating with hearing people that do not know sign language. Thus, it cannot be assumed that sign language is always the first language developed by a hearing impaired person.

Hearing Impaired Development of Oral Language

Deaf learners have different levels of hearing loss; therefore, many researchers were interested on finding out if deaf learners were able to develop oral language and how useful this process could be. Fry was the first researcher to take an interest in analyzing how oral language worked with this population. Spencer & Marschark (2006) reported how Fry found that there were some hearing impaired children able to perform basic speaking skills in oral language. In addition, he noted that they could use the spoken language due to a variety of significant issues as for instance the amount and simplicity of the oral language deaf students were exposed to. However, he also highlighted that deaf children presented difficulties when learning the spoken language, due to the lack of visual and auditory clues.

Through time, different technological devices have been developed and tried in order to find aids that could help the hearing impaired population to comprehend and repeat isolated words of the spoken language. In addition, some methods for developing oral skills in the deaf population have appeared. However, even with all this new developments, children with profound hearing loss still have fewer opportunities to learn the oral language than those with mild or moderate hearing loss.

Hearing Impaired People Learning Styles

Learning styles are the different ways and approaches people use to learn a variety of topics in an easier and better way. Casey (2009) suggests that hearing impaired learners develop three different learning styles; firstly, deaf students prefer activities based on tactile styles, which involve hands on exercises. Secondly, they enjoy kinesthetic activities, such as games, songs and warm ups, in which students have the opportunity to move around the classroom creating an

amusing learning atmosphere for everyone. Finally, deaf students, who are visual learners, prefer images, pictures, colors, and mind maps to remember specific information as they are able to picture objects in their minds.

Maxwell (1985) and Rottenberg and Searfoss (1992) reported that hearing and hearing impaired people's learning styles differ on the use of reading and writing skills. The literacy skills that hearing impaired people develop have as an aim being a bridge of communication to convey meaning among themselves and with hearing people and to gain access to a world where the majority of people use a verbal mode of communication.

According to Padden and Ramsey (1993); Ruiz (1995), and Williams (1994), quoted in Briggles' (2005) work, hearing impaired children develop a finger spelling strategy as a way to remember in an easier way words in print. Hearing impaired children use the sign language alphabet, which is applied in their daily communication; in order to transcribe words into written language. Finger spelling is characterized as a simple connection between hand shapes with print letters of any word. These hand shapes function as manual encoding of vocal languages, and it is phonetically structured and it is produced as a coordinated motor skill, and fluently perceived. The strategy used by children helps them to make connections between the order of the written words and the fingers.

Stanovich (1991) cited on Musselman (2000), states that finger spelling is helpful to develop reading, because students focus their attention on letters and on the orthography of words. Finger spelling is useful for hearing impaired learners as a way to represent written language in a comprehensive and unambiguous way.

In the field of teaching hearing impaired students, it is important to be aware of which are the diverse learning styles students have when learning specific topics. In addition, it is significant to know; which are the roles teachers develop when teaching hearing impaired students, having in mind their students' learning preferences.

Lang, Stilson, Kavanagh, Lui & Basile (1999) conducted a research with hearing impaired college learners who studied business or computer technology and their teachers. The researchers collected data about their learning styles. Lang et al (1999) employed the Grasha-Riechmann Student Learning Style Scales (GRSLSS) to find out the learning styles hearing impaired college students prefer.

The GRSLSS included six learning preferences: competitive learners are those who enjoy participating in contests in order to perform better than their peers and they prefer teacher-centered instruction. Participative learners liked to assist to classes and are responsible of their own learning process and prefer student-centered classes. Dependent learners preferred teacher-centered classes and approaches, strong leadership outlines and notes on the board; they preferred a passive role in which they are clearly told what they have to learn and do. Independent learners are those who enjoyed working on their own, listening other people's points of view, had self-assurance in abilities and prefer student-centered classes. Avoidant learners were those students who have little eagerness for learning, were always bored or astounded in class and prefer self-evaluation for grading. Finally, collaborative learners were those who enjoy sharing thoughts and ideas with others and working for a same goal.

In the Lang et al's (1999) study, the GRSLSS scores reported that the predominant style among deaf students was the dependent style, followed by the participative and collaborative scales, which had similar ratings. In the first case, it could be observed that hearing impaired students look to the teacher and to their classmates as an aid and guidance in the class and they preferred an authority figure to tell them what to do. In the second, participative style, the work demonstrated that students took pleasure in learning information about the lessons and using the course resources in a high extent. Finally, the collaborative style showed that students enjoyed learning by sharing thoughts and ideas with others and collaborating with the facilitator.

In addition, Lang et al (1999) highlighted that the hearing impaired students were not competitive and that it could be difficult for them to adjust to a competitive teaching style. The researchers affirmed that deaf students that had the participative style had positive attitudes towards the classes, they used material adequately and they obtained better grades.

The researchers also reported that most of the instructors promoted a dependent learning style in their students, since they had an organized teaching style in relation to the characteristics of their learners. The teachers in their classes used outlines, notes, clear deadlines, and performed teacher-centered activities. Another finding was that students' and teachers' learning styles were compatible.

Lang et al's (1999) study suggested the importance of being aware of students' learning styles when teaching any subject and emphasized the fact that teachers have to adjust their teaching styles to their students learning preferences and be conscious of their students' personal capacities, characteristics and abilities.

Inclusive Classrooms

Special education teachers should take into account the fact that they need to develop different strategies in order to engage students in their lessons, thus raising their motivation and generating interest towards the English class.

Bunch (1994); Giangreco, Baumgart & Doyle (1985) cited on Cawthon (2001) illustrate inclusive classroom as an educational model where both hearing and hearing impaired students participate in the same educational environment. Its main goal is to integrate deaf students in normal settings, thus promoting cooperation among all the members of the school.

A study developed by Cawthon (2001) reported different teaching strategies that have been used in classes where hearing and hearing impaired students are involved in the same classroom, with the guidance of an English teacher and an interpreter of sign language.

Cawthon (2001) investigated the types of teacher speech (i.e. the way teachers address their students) used in an inclusive classroom, where both hearing and hearing impaired students are integrated for instruction. The researcher took into account the philosophies involved in the way that the English teacher addressed both hearing and hearing impaired students and the role that an interpreter of sign language plays as a bridge for communication between hearing and hearing impaired students and their teachers.

The context of the research was an urban public school, where the researcher selected two classrooms: A kindergarten / first grade classroom¹ with 7 hearing impaired students and 9 hearing learners, and the second one was a second / third grade classroom with 2 hearing impaired students and 12 hearing learners.

Cawthon (2001) reported in her findings two strategies that a teacher can adopt in order to take advantage of an inclusive classroom environment: finger spelling and using a monitor or an interpreter in order to engage both hearing and hearing impaired students into the learning session.

In her work, Cawthon explained the importance of having a small number of students in an inclusive classroom as it is of the utmost importance to attend effectively to students' individual needs. She also emphasized the importance of the bridge of communication that teachers need to create between hearing and hearing impaired students, through the use of sign language and the participation of the interpreter.

Cawthon's findings demonstrated the importance of developing a suitable environment for hearing and hearing impaired students, thus avoiding discrimination and misunderstanding. Inclusive classrooms could provide a meaningful environment, where learning in terms of communication could be

¹ In this school Kindergarten students and First grade students come together as a single group for English language instruction. It is the same case with Second and Third grade.

enhanced by taking advantage of both hearing and hearing impaired students' linguistic features. Based on her findings about the role of an interpreter, a teacher can prepare a session with simultaneous communication, focusing on literacy, so that both hearing and hearing impaired students can have an active role in the classroom.

Cawthon also drew from her findings the purposes of having an interpreter of sign language in an inclusive classroom. The first purpose reported is to translate the oral interactions of hearing students in sign language; however, the interpreter only translates relevant issues in order to help hearing impaired learners to understand the utterances of the teacher and their hearing classmates. A second purpose of the interpreter in the classroom is to be a bridge of communication between the students and the teacher. This communication helps hearing impaired students to have an active role during discussions done in the class and at the same time, hearing students can understand the arguments of hearing impaired students, thus generating effective and meaningful communication among both types of learners.

Teaching Strategies for Hearing-Impaired Learners

Hearing impaired learners have different needs in comparison to their hearing peers, that is why teachers need to develop different strategies, in order to convey meaning and to facilitate the understanding of any kind of instruction. Based on the requirements of this population, teachers may bear in mind strategies to facilitate comprehension, such as: laying on facial expressions, gestures, and body language.

According to Fukuda (2009) before giving any kind of instruction, the teacher must be sure that he has all the students' attention to communicate directly with each one of them. In order to achieve this goal, the teacher can make use of different strategies, for instance, touching students' shoulders or waving his hands.

In an inclusive classroom the teacher should stand where the hearing impaired learners can see him, with the intention of providing them with visual linguistic input.

Fukuda (2009) also argued that hearing impaired learners depend on visual aids to receive any kind of information; they rely on drawings, pictures, flashcards, or an outline with the main activities that will be developing in the class. In order to raise the effectiveness of the visual resources as learning aids, it is necessary to plan the design of these tools with clarity as their main feature so that learners will have a clear understanding about the proper task that they have to perform during the learning session.

Fukuda (2009) highlighted the importance of reinforcing the written language of hearing impaired by asking them to write their questions, requests, or any doubt that they have. In order to accomplish these written tasks, the teacher should give clear instructions and provide guidelines and examples that help students to present their needs.

Jiang (2000) cited on Hermans et al (2007) commented that, the reading based instructional techniques that have been proved to be useful in order to teach hearing impaired students written words, rely on sign-based reading vocabulary. This instructional technique helps the deaf people to comprehend new reading words; however, the employment of this technique will not be enough for hearing impaired students to develop complex writing.

On the other hand, Saliva's (2006) work based on strategies to teach deaf children to read aloud suggested that it is crucial in the moment of reading a story book to these children to use sign language, mimics, body language and gestures. Besides, he recommended speaking in both languages, sign language and the language of the written text. Moreover, it is important to make the story telling process significant and enjoyable for the children by using strategies as asking questions by sing gestures, making transitions among characters in the book

through different gestures, mimics, body language, and different elements of the environment.

Cabrera, Frei & Lissi (2005) conducted a research project in which 27 teachers of deaf students designed, implemented and shared their experiences to improve the process of teaching and learning literacy. The study took place in three Chilean schools (one in Santiago, the other in Viña del Mar and the last one in Temuco).

An important issue that helped in the development of this study was that all teachers knew sign language and used it as the main means of communication in order to engage students in the learning session, thus raising their motivation.

Cabrera, Frei & Lissi (2005) in their study suggested some successful strategies to improve writing abilities, such as: a personal diary where students wrote to their teachers about their learning experiences. The purpose of this diary was to provide a tool for students to express themselves through writing. Correction was focused on content not on grammar or spelling. Students also had the opportunity of creating comics, stories, newspapers, jokes, letters, drawings according to their personal interests. Motivation was increased by offering access to a great variety of materials (colorful papers, pictures, magazines, color pencils, envelops, etc.) that learners could use for their written production. Besides, the research done by Cabrera, Frei & Lissi (2005) demonstrated that the implementation of multimedia tools was useful to increase students' enthusiasm towards their writing process.

Other study based on reading comprehension is Espina & Giordano's work which suggested that in order to develop the reading comprehension skill with hearing impaired students. The writers suggest the use of the same kind of reading methodology employed with hearing learners. This methodology is composed three stages: pre-reading, reading and post-reading.

In the pre-reading stage, it is important to encourage the students to explore all the reading material by allowing them to touch, and recognize the books used in the learning session. Moreover, teachers have to activate the background knowledge of the students about the topic, the characters, and situations of the book, asking them to deduce about the content of the text in order to contrast their hypotheses with the content itself.

In the reading stage, Espina & Giordano (n.d) emphasize the importance of making use of the predictive reading strategy, encouraging students to predict what is going to happen next in the story. This strategy should be used two or three times in different phases of the activity in order to check students' understanding during the process.

It is in this stage when the students will confirm whether their hypotheses were right or wrong. Furthermore, it is important to return to the sections where deaf learners presented problems or difficulties with understanding so that they have the opportunity to clarify their doubts with the teacher and express their interest on the story.

In the post-reading stage the teacher should request the students to retell the story by asking them about the content of the book. Other post-reading activity could be reconstructing the sequence of the story using drawings. Other activities such as artwork, drawing, posters, and exhibits could also be implemented in this stage.

Use of the Mother Tongue to Teach a Foreign Language

Through time researchers have had different points of view about the role of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom that have finally consolidated in two opposite perspectives: one which is in favor of using students' mother tongue as the main language of instruction in the foreign language classroom; and the other, which considers the mother tongue as an aid to complement the instruction of the foreign language when it is necessary.

Auerbach (1993) cited on Larrea (n.d) reported that the mother tongue raised students' confidence, helping them to overcome their limitations to use the foreign language. In addition, Atkinson (1993) cited on Larrea stated that the mother tongue could be a useful tool to learn a foreign language if it is used properly.

Larrea (n.d) agrees with Auerbach (1993) and Atkinson (1993) on the opinion that when adult students are learning a foreign language their mother tongue can be functional as they can contrast and compare their native language with the target one.

However, Larrea (n.d) declared that the mother tongue should not be used to introduce simple vocabulary or to recall students' knowledge about elements that they have already studied.

In addition, Larrea (n.d) considered that the constantly use of the mother tongue in the classroom would interfere with the students' learning process of the foreign language.

Thus, although Larrea defends the role of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom, this author coincides with Atkinson's (1993, cited on Martin,2001) in the recommendation that the target language be used as the main tool of interaction in the classroom, in order to practice the foreign language

Methodology

Context

In Risaralda there is only one institution that provides special education adapted to the necessities of the hearing impaired students of the region. The institution from now on will be labeled as In Other Words (IOW). The school was originally founded for hearing-impaired students, now it houses both hearing and non-hearing students today in both in elementary and high school levels.

In Other Words is a public primary and secondary school. It has 511 students, from which 391 are hearing and 120 are hearing impaired. The school has 27 teachers, from which only one teaches English. The curriculum of the school includes a language area, which emphasizes Colombian sign language, Spanish and English.

The school teaches Colombian sign language (CSL), Spanish and English. For instruction in the three languages, hearing and hearing-impaired students are separated in two classrooms. According to information from school teachers, separating the students stems from the fact that both populations have different learning styles and developmental abilities.

IOW only has one English teacher (James), and he only teaches middle (6th, 7th, and 8th) and high school (9th, 10th, 11th) grades to both hearing and hearing-impaired student. Since James is the only English teacher in the school, the school decided to put together the students from 6th and 7th grades, 8th and 9th, and 10th and 11th grades for English instruction. In this configuration for English classes, hearing and hearing impaired students remain separated. This classroom configuration has consequences related to the number of students in one classroom and adds to the challenge of teaching a foreign language to these two populations.

Participants

The primary participant of this research study is James², the English teacher. Secondary participants include the hearing and hearing-impaired students in 10th and 11th grade because these students are the ones with more experience learning English at the school.

James is Colombian, and holds a degree on Business Administration. His career as a teacher at IOW started four years ago, when he began teaching mathematics to both hearing and hearing impaired students. Because at the time James did not know sign language, he was provided an interpreter so that he could teach his classes. Neither the school, nor local state institutions provide formal training in sign language to teachers at IOW. As a result, James had to learn Colombian sign language by himself with the assistance of his colleagues and students at the school.

James became an English teacher at IOW two years ago, after being appointed by the principal, since he was the only one capable of teaching English. Two years ago he took up the responsibility for teaching English in high school to hearing and hearing impaired students. His experience with English goes back ten years ago, when he took several courses at a language institute in his city of origin.

The students attending to the English classes are from 10th and 11th grade, these students are hearing-impaired, there are 27 students, from which four are in 10th grade and 23 are in 11th grade. These students have different levels of hearing loss which are segmented in four with profound loss, 19 with severe loss, and four with moderate loss, in fact they can articulate some phonemes and words. Their age range from 17 to 23 years old, there are two students who are 17, five are 18, seven are 19, two are 20, four are 21, four are 22, and three are 23. They have

² All names of people and institutions are pseudonyms.

three different social status, there are low medium and high; 11, 12, and 4; respectively.

Methods for Data Collection:

As this project attempts to identify the English methodology in hearing impaired students of 10th and 11th grade, we will conduct observations and a semi-structured interview with the teacher.

Observations

From May to July, we conducted six observations, each one of two hours, once per week observing what the English instruction look like for hearing impaired students and what methodologies the English teacher used with this population. We documented the observations through field notes. We videotaped two English classes as an aid to understand sign language and we transcribed the videos with the help of an interpreter. We described the English teacher instruction in the classroom and the interaction among the teacher-students, students-teacher and students-students. We documented the activities done in each class and the materials used by the teacher. In addition, we paid close attention to students' performance during the class and the way they helped and corrected each other. The strategies used by the students to understand the new vocabulary and to guide their peers in different activities were also portrayed in the observations.

These observations will provide data related to the methodology that the teacher uses in the English class; which includes giving instruction, the way the teacher monitors understanding, the interaction patterns teacher-learner, learner-learner, strategies used for giving feedback, the kind of activities developed during the class, the material the teacher uses and the rapport he makes with the class including eye contact, body language and the use of sign language.

Field notes will be used to gather all the information observed during the English class. After each observation, we will consolidate our field notes into one expanded version, rich in detail, description, and dialogue.

Our plan is to collect video recordings of the English classes to support our observation, as sign language is highly used in the hearing impaired English classes; we realized that we need video to document in detail the interactions between students and teacher. However, we only could video tape two English sessions.

Before starting the observations, we took a basic CSL course which was provided by IOW, and guided by eleventh grade students to all the community. We took this course for four months, two hours per week; in this course we learned basic CSL vocabulary, in order to have an idea about what the teacher communicates in CSL during the English class.

Three of the observations were conducted by two researches, and the other three involved the whole research team. During these months of observation we faced many difficulties: firstly, before starting the research we had to ask for several authorizations following the policies of the school in order to perform the observations; we asked for permission to video tape the English class, however, they denied us this possibility due to the assumptions of being judged.

Secondly, throughout the observation process, we also experienced significant difficulties, being the main ones: not understanding the sign language and the lack of video recordings at the beginning of the process as an aid to collect data; also the school had many cultural events and teachers meetings, which were programmed during the days of the observations delaying the data collection process. Besides, the schedule was too flexible and it had sudden changes that made the process longer.

Finally, after being aware of the predominance of sign language during the English class, we asked again for permission to video record the sessions, however, we had to repeat the same process of following school policies from the beginning, specially filling longer forms and looking for different members of staff.

Interview

We conducted a semi-structured open-ended interview with James (8 minutes and 30 seconds), to have information about James' background in terms of teaching English, to know about his perspectives about the methodology used in the English class, the performance of hearing impaired students in class, his didactic, his criteria for choosing activities, and his points of view towards the learning process of hearing impaired students. This interview was done at middle of the observations, in order to compare and contrast the answers obtained during the interview with the English classes and the observations conducted. The interview was recorded and transcribed literally.

Researchers' Role and Identity

Our role as researchers in the project is as observers, because our aim is to recognize the methodology the teacher applies in the English class with hearing impaired learners. Our intention is to identify through observations the following issues: the teacher's role, the way he gives feedback and instructions, the rapport with the students, the way he monitors his students, activities and materials used in the class.

We identify as English pre-service teachers, who are learning Colombian Sign Language thanks to our interest in this project and who are also aware of the special needs of hearing-impaired students towards the learning of a foreign language in this case English as a mean of being part of the society and to access to a job and to opportunities for higher education.

Data Analysis

Based on grounded theory, we used the 'constant comparative method' (Glasser & Strauss, 1967) to analyze our data. After gathering all the data, (observations interviews and video tapes) we transcribed it to facilitate the analysis.

While we were transcribing the field notes, we coded events when the teacher or students were using Colombian sign language to communicate. The abbreviations are the followings: **(TSLge)** means teacher using Colombian sign language, and **(S-SLge)** which means students using Colombian Sign language (CSL). During the observations we started to realize issues related with our research question, for instance the predominance of sign language during the classroom, the particular ways of starting interaction both by the teacher and the students, the prevalence of vocabulary based activities, the ways in which the teacher gave feedback to the students, how supportive students were among themselves

We followed the triangulation analytical method: we individually read several times the transcribed information, and then each one of us coded with colors similar events or behaviors related to methodology issues such as material, activities, teacher calling students attention, students calling their classmates' attention, feedback, activities, material, language instruction, finger-spelling among others.

After coding the information from the transcriptions of the observations, the interviews and the video tapes, we compared our results and agreed on the main categories that would group our individual codes. Our advisor gave us some ideas for starting to classify our data, as for instance considering several factors in which it was recommended to separate teachers' performance from students' attitudes.

The advisor gave us the first insight about how to start organizing our codes into two main groups, one containing the factors related to the teacher's performance (teaching strategies, materials, activities implemented in the class,

language of instruction and group management) and the other grouping students' reactions towards the class (participation, interaction in the class, supportive behavior).

With the help of our advisor, we used a graphic organizer to help us identify the main categories that arose from our codes. The analysis was a two way process, continuously going from the data to the research question and from the research question to the data. This process helped us to refine the initial categories and subcategories, discarding those for which we could not find a direct relation with our research question and also those for which we did not have relevant data to use as evidence. Finally, through analysis and discussions among ourselves we agreed on the two main categories: characteristics of the methodology identified in the class and students' reactions towards the English class. These categories became the major findings that allowed us to answer our main research question: Characteristics of the methodology used in the English class with hearing impaired learners.

In order to answer the sub question posed at the beginning of our study (What is the hearing impaired students' learning behavior during the English class?), we identified two key aspects to address: students' supportive learning and students' attitudes to classroom activities. The field notes and the video tape transcriptions were the main sources of data for answering this question.

Findings

1. Characteristics of the Methodology Used in the English Class with Hearing Impaired Learners.

From the analysis of the collected data for our study, we identified some important features of the methodology used in the English class with hearing impaired learners. We will proceed to describe them and provide evidence to support our interpretation.

Predominance of Sign Language in the English Class.

Our observations showed that the teacher mainly used Colombian sign language (CSL) in different events in the classroom avoiding oral language, whether it was English or Spanish. The teacher used CSL at different stages in the lesson. For instance, when giving instructions, the teacher gave them by using CSL, gestures and body language; when checking understanding, the teacher simply asked the students if they had understood using CSL, and two different signs with the purpose of verifying students' comprehension about his instructions. Finally when giving feedback to the students, he normally used his thumb, facial gestures, and nodding.

The following excerpts of the data from the field notes and interview, illustrate the prevalence of sign language in the class. The label ***TSLge*** at the beginning of the previous sample from the data indicates that the teacher used Colombian sign language throughout the giving instructions stage. The translation of the teacher's instructions is ours.

This excerpt illustrates the teacher giving instructions:

(Field notes, May 7th.) James giving instruction using CSL to illustrate an activity.

(Paraphrasing of his sign language speech)

- **(TSLge)** Get in groups of 8 students, I will have a piece of paper with a word in English about the vocabulary we learned last class, so one student of each group is going to come here in front of the classroom and act out the word so that a student of his group guesses what is the verb or word. You cannot use the sign of the word just act it out and one of the students of the group has to go out and write the word in English correctly.

James used sign language to explain the students the grouping, procedure and rules of a vocabulary game they were going to use in the class. No English, whether written or oral, was used for any part of the explanation. The teacher did not use of body language or demonstration to help students understand the instructions.

Another example from the data that supports this finding can be observed in the following part from the field notes:

(Field notes May 14th, James explaining an outdoors activity using CSL)

- **(TSLge)** The students who are standing up have to run and go to the other side of the playground and read and memorize a piece of text that is in English and come fast and dictate it to their partner by using sign language. Please the ones who are going to dictate the text cannot write down the text only memorize pieces and come to dictate to your couple and the student that are sitting down have to write the text in English and they cannot look back.

As it can be observed, teacher relied on Colombian sign language to explain the activity to the students. No oral communicative use of English was done during the process, even though; the students have different hearing levels that might

allow them to benefit from oral input. The teacher is aware of this fact because he uses aural signs as clapping for calling students' attention. However he avoided using English oral language in the class. We could compare this kind of procedure to the one used by a teacher who uses their students' mother tongue as the means of instructions in the classroom.

This sample shows James checking understanding about his instructions:

(Field notes, May 14th, after explaining an activity he asked the students.

- **(TSLge)** Do you now understand what you have to do?

(Field notes, May 21st.)

- **(TSLge)** Do you understand the activity? The list of words is in which language?

These two examples of the language used by the teacher to check understanding of instructions showed the clear predominance of sign language in the interaction processes in the classroom. It also illustrates that even though, the teacher is using CSL which is a language that all the students understand, he restricted the use of it or other language to a common sign that it is limited to a yes/no question whose main purpose is to check if the students are understanding his instructions and explanations.

This example shows the teacher's positive or negative feedback to students' performance.

(Field notes, June 17th.)

- **(TSLge)** Well done, that is the sign for "hello." *He showed his thumb in order to acknowledge the student's right answer.*

As it can be noticed from the reflective note written after the interpretation of the teacher's behavior when giving positive feedback, a single sign in CSL was used to inform students about the result of the activity. Again oral or written English was absent from the process and the only language used with real communicative

purposes was Colombian sign language. The language learning theories suggest that learners have to be exposed to the linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic competences, besides they recommend that learners have to be exposed to a linguistic input, and to use the language for communicative purposes in order to develop their receptive and productive skills. However, James focused his class in some aspects of the linguistic competence, by teaching grammar structures and vocabulary; moreover, he did not provide an oral input of the target language, this factor happened due to the population he teaches, nevertheless, using the linguistic input could be an advantage for those students that can hear some sounds or use lip reading to develop their communicative competences.

Lack of Use of the Oral Foreign Language by the English Teacher.

Data from the field diary and interview revealed that oral language whether English or Spanish, was absent from the classroom. We could notice that students always used sounds made either with their throats (unintelligible oral sounds) or lips (smooching sound) in order to call their classmates' attention. James, on the other hand, always used clapping. The teacher's and students' behaviors when calling attention made us realize that both the teacher and the students were aware of the fact that a number of students could hear sounds to some extent. However, the teacher seemed to avoid using any kind of oral language during the class.

We observed that whenever James entered the classroom, before starting the class he would clap to call students attention. The reaction of students was to stop what they were doing and to pay attention to what the teacher was saying in sign language. The following are some excerpts from our field notes observations that illustrate the interaction taking place in the English class.

This is an excerpt of the teacher calling students' attention

(Field notes May 14th) James is explaining the instructions to do an activity outdoors.

- Students are doing different things so the teacher claps and starts touching some students' shoulders to call their attention and continue explaining the game.

The previous example showed that James, in order to call students attention used two different strategies. The first strategy involved clapping. This demonstrated that James was aware that some students in the classroom could hear some sounds. The second strategy involved approaching and touching the students who were next to him. This issue demonstrated that James was also aware that in the classroom there were students that had profound or severe hearing loss that could not hear his clapping.

The following excerpt will illustrate the way in which students call their classmates attention.

(Field notes, May 14th) the teacher, using CSL, asks a student to go to the board and write the word **experience**.

- The student writes [**experince**], and the learners start making sounds, so the student turns, watches a partner, who is finger-spelling the word correctly, and he erases the word he wrote and writes it down again, this time correctly. (*experience*).

The sample above demonstrated that in order to call their partners' attention, they normally used unintelligible sounds and approach and touch them. The fact that they use sounds to call each other attention showed that they also were aware of their partners' hearing capacities.

Deductive Teaching Method Prevalent During Instruction.

During the English sessions, it was observed that James employed a deductive teaching method, in which he presented a general concept by explaining it and afterwards he presented several examples of it to the students. James' sessions were divided in two stages: first, an opening part, in which he explained step by step, vocabulary and/or grammar and presented examples. During the second stage, he asked the students to repeat the pattern presented several times, and to complete very controlled exercises in which they had to simply change an element in the sentence.

The following excerpts illustrate the presentation strategy used by the teacher:

(Field notes, August 13th. Review of the previous lesson.)

- **(TSLge)** I am going to explain many things such as: there is, there are, how much, and how many (the teacher writes the four expressions on the whiteboard as he talks). **(TSLge)** For example, what I can count and what I cannot count.
- **(TSLge)** Look at me; be focused here; look at the words. (*The teacher writes "there is" and "there are" on the whiteboard.*) "There is" is for what? (*The teacher points to the expression "there is"*) **(TSLge)** How many? I am going to give you an example: a table (*The teacher draws a table on the whiteboard and points to it while he makes the sign for "cuántos" in CSL.*) It is singular, just one table. One table. Do we use "there is" or "there are"? (*The teacher again teacher points to the expressions "there is" and "there are" on the whiteboard.*) (TSLge and pointing to the whiteboard) We use "there is" because it is only one. What happens with "there are"? It is plural, more than one, for example three chairs, do we use "there is" or "there are"?

As it is shown from the excerpts taken from the field notes, James was doing a review about a topic that he taught in the previous session, he first told the

students all the grammatical topics they were going to work on in the class, he wrote them on the board so that students could see what he was exactly talking about. Then, he began to give the students some explanations about the different uses of some expressions in English such as: “there is” and “there are” After, he reinforced step by step the use of the previous expressions mentioned and he gave some examples with these expressions. It was noticed that this strategy was totally based on a deductive teaching method, in which it is the teacher who gives all the information to the students, without letting the students go beyond and find their own answers, as it was shown in the data excerpt James was always asking questions, but he was the one who gave answers to the questions he made. Then, he gave some examples, in order to clarify the topic. Students here are passive learners since they are just paying attention to the teacher’s explanation and doing similar exercises proposed by him.

Minimum Use of Visual Aids.

We observed that IOW counts with a variety of resources and materials for the teachers, such as a multimedia room, English text books, a TV set, and a DVD player. These materials could provide valuable visual input to the hearing-impaired students to support the English lessons. However, the data gathered during the observations illustrated that James did not use any of the resources provided by the school. Instead, he mainly used the whiteboard by writing vocabulary and drawing once in a while. The prevalent use of the whiteboard is evidenced in the following extract of the field notes.

(Field notes, June 17th.)

- Teacher draws a face on the board and labels each part of it with eyes, nose, and mouth.

As it can be observed in the sample, the teacher was making use of the whiteboard to draw a face in order to teach the parts of the face such as eyes,

nose and mouth. The teacher was using visual aids to facilitate the new vocabulary by drawing the face, in which students could make the connection between the English written word and the drew part of the face. Nevertheless, other materials, such as realia and videos, could be used in order to make the activities more interesting.

The following excerpt illustrates the way that the teacher used the board to present vocabulary to students.

(Field notes, June 17th)

- **(TSLge)** I will write some expressions on the board, then I will call one by one, and I will point at random some expressions. You have to show me the sign for the word that I point on the board.

The teacher wrote on the board the following vocabulary: good morning, good afternoon, good evening, be quiet, repeat after me, thank you, please, repeat me again, please, understand, finish, not yet, sit down, and I am sorry.

In this sample, it can be noticed that the teacher used the whiteboard as an aid to introduce new vocabulary to the students, by writing all the words on the board, and then using sign language to translate the meaning of each expression. The whiteboard could be seen as a bridge between English written language and CSL, as hearing impaired students are visual they need a way to understand and apprehend the new vocabulary by connecting it with their mother tongue. In both samples, the teacher was relying just on the whiteboard and his ability for drawing to give new vocabulary to the students.

Activities Based on the Lexical Competence.

During the data collection process, it was noticed that the activities taking place in the English class were based on lexical issues, involving mainly vocabulary and grammar. The vocabulary was presented by using Colombian sign

language. The teacher also wrote the words on the whiteboard both in English and Spanish. In addition, the grammar aspect was focused on the presentation of structures and rules of the language.

The activities done by the students involved:

- Dictations, in which one student read silently a text in English and then by using CSL dictated it to a partner, who in turn had to write the text in English.
- Translation, where students transferred vocabulary from written English to written Spanish or vice versa, or from CSL to written English or from written English to CSL.
- Matching activities, where students had to match the English written word with the Spanish written word or vice versa.
- Drawings tasks, where learners had to read a text and based on the information, they had to draw.
- Finally mimics, in which students had to go to the front and perform a word while the other students guessed it and wrote it on the board. Evidence of these activities was taken from the field notes.

This sample illustrates James instructions concern with the activity to be done.

(Field notes, June 17th)

- **(TSLge)** I will write some expressions on the board, then I will call one by one, and I will point at random some expressions, you have to show me the sign for the word that I point on the board.

This example showed clearly, that the activity that students were going to perform was based on vocabulary and transferring, in which students read a word in English written on the whiteboard and then they had to make the sign of the word in CSL. This activity acted as a diagnosis, to check if students recognized written vocabulary in English, and if they could associate that vocabulary with their mother tongue. This was an activity that is totally controlled by the teacher and that it only involved transferring words into signs. The words were not related to any

communicative situation, they were not the answer to a question. It was just a vocabulary translation exercise.

(Field notes, May 14th)

- **(TSLge)** The students who are standing up have to run and go to the other side of the playground and read and memorize a piece of text that is in English and come fast and dictate it to their partner by using Colombian sign language. Please, the ones who are going to dictate the text cannot write down the text only memorize pieces of it. Then you have to come back and dictate it to your partner. And the students who are sitting down have to write the text in English and they cannot look back.

In this sample of the data, it is evidenced that this activity proposed by the teacher is essentially based on transferring, in which some students had to memorize a written English text and then transfer it into CSL to dictate it to a classmate. Then, this classmate had to write in English what he understood from the learner that used CSL.

Managing Students' Behavior through Physical Proximity and Sound.

The field notes revealed that the way in which James usually controlled learners' discipline was by clapping or approaching the students or touching their shoulders and desks. In some occasions, he also used a specific sign in sign language, which made the students who were looking at him to tell the inattentive learners to focus on the teacher's instruction.

(Field notes, May 14th) The teacher is observing what the students are doing and seeing in which part of the text they are.

- After some minutes the teacher starts to clap, and some students look at him, while others continue doing other things. The teacher gets near them

and touches their shoulders softly. The students touched by the teacher start touching those of their peers who are not yet paying attention.

In this extract of the field notes, it could be seen that the teacher controlled students' discipline by clapping and approaching the learners closer to him and touching their shoulders and desks. The students reacted to these strategies as if it was the normal behavior in the class and they felt completely comfortable with it.

(Field notes, August 13th)

- Students get distracted. Some girls are combing their hair and other students are talking (sign language), or doing different things, so the teacher calls students attention by clapping. He gets the attention of some students that hear his clapping. Then he makes a sign which means that the students who are paying attention will touch the ones who are looking to another place.

The example previously cited illustrated the other strategy used by James to control discipline. In this strategy he took advantage of the students who were paying attention to him. James used a sign that indicates to the attentive students that they had to touch the shoulders of the classmates next to them, so that the whole class gets focused again on his instructions.

Assessing the Effectiveness of Lessons.

In the sessions observed, it was found that James, from time to time, checked students' understanding of the topic by moving around the classroom and asking students about their doubts and reviewing some vocabulary taught in the class. Regularly, he stood in front of the class or sat at the teacher's desk waiting for students to approach him and ask him their questions. James checked

students' comprehension of the lesson by asking students simple questions, doing exercises on the whiteboard, and by giving to students individual exercises to solve in their notebooks.

(Field notes, May 14th) Students are doing a dictation activity, in which one student has to go to a place, memorize a piece of a text and come back to his partner and dictate it using CSL, while the other writes it in English. After the activity the teacher checks students' spelling by asking some of the students to go to the board and correct the misspelling.

- The teacher takes another paper and writes down a misspelling word **[drity]**. **(T-SLge)** who comes to the board to correct the spelling of this word. Then a student goes to the board and writes the word correctly. **[dirty]**. The teacher continuous doing the same activity with words that contained spelling mistakes.

In this excerpt, it can be noticed that the teacher assessed students' spelling by asking them to go individually to the whiteboard and correct the misspelling words. This strategy is used to help students to understand the spelling of words.

(Field notes, August 27th) Students were supposed to make a drawing based on a short written description given by the teacher.

- While students are doing the drawing, James is walking around the students, looking at what the students are doing, and clarifying students' doubts about vocabulary.
- A student finishes doing the drawing, he has drawn a woman with blond, straight hair, with blue eyes, and thin, so **(TSLge)** the teacher starts asking him about the information on the text, for example **(TSLge)** 'what is curly?'

'What is 'thin'?' And the student through CSL gives the appropriate answers, so the teacher says (TSLge) 'it is very good.'

As it can be seen from the previous sample, the teacher monitored students' understanding of vocabulary through the use of simple questions. In this case, some of the characteristics of the drawing made by the student did not fit the given description. The teacher, maybe because he knows that drawing is not the strongest suit of this particular student, asked him questions to check if he really understood the meaning of the words or not. Finding that the student actually knows the vocabulary, he accepts the mismatches in the drawing without further questions.

2. Positive Students' Classroom Behaviour.

During the observations, it was interesting to notice students' learning behavior in the English class. It could be observed that the students were willing to help each other during the activities taking place and to correct their classmates' mistakes. They also participated actively and enthusiastically in all the activities proposed by James.

Supportive Learning among the Students in the English Class.

From the data collected in the field notes, it was noticed that students interacted in an active and supportive way with their peers, in different activities. Some of those cooperative interactions were observed for instance when a student did not know how to write a word in English and they asked for help to their peers. Usually, another student that knew the word used finger-spelling, in order to cooperate in the achievement of the task. It was also observed that in case of not being able to identify a written word in English, they normally asked a peer the

meaning of the word by using finger-spelling. Next, the student who had the answer told the meaning by using CSL. Other tactic was based on approaching the student who was making the spelling or grammar mistake, by erasing the error and writing the word correctly. Finally, they performed harmoniously in activities that implied working cooperatively in pairs or small groups. The following data shows the interaction among students in the class.

(Field notes, August 13th) students are doing examples of demonstrative adjectives in the whiteboard.

- A student that always participates in the classes goes to the board and writes 'there is a' and asks a classmate using sign language (**S-SLge**) how do you spell 'table'? Several students start using finger-spelling to help their friend. So the student finishes writing the sentence 'there is a table'.

This sample of the data clearly demonstrated that students were very supportive with their classmates when they had any kind of doubt, and that they usually tried to answer their classmates' questions. To accomplish this, they used CSL and finger spelling when they wanted to correct a spelling mistake. It also could be observed that in the learning session, there was a predominance of supportive cooperation among students.

On the other hand, the excerpt also showed a marked contrast between hearing and hearing impaired students. Our experience, both as students and as pre-service teachers doing practice in a hearing setting, has shown us that it is unusual to see students requesting help from their peers, while in the hearing impaired setting this supportive strategy is common and well accepted by the students.

(Field notes, August 13th)

- **(S-SLge)** Who helps me? The student is looking at her partners and asking for help to do the example. Some students start finger-spelling to help her. She finally writes 'how much bread is there?' And 'how many bananas is there?'

The previous excerpt showed that students highly trusted their classmates and felt not afraid of asking for support in case of a difficulty with a lexical issue, thus creating a safe environment in which all the students were comfortable participating.

(Field notes, June 17th) New vocabulary about the face was presented to the students. During the exercise that followed, the learner at the whiteboard made a spelling mistake and some other students cooperate with him in order to correct the mistake, as it is shown in the following excerpt from the data.

- The student writes 'KECK' instead of 'Neck'. Other students start to make sounds and the ones who are near start to touch him and they said: (S-SLge) Be careful, look at us, we are going to finger-spell it in order to help you to correct it. The student corrects the mistake with the help of his classmates: 'NECK'.

It could be observed in the previous sample that students peer corrected among themselves, when they made a spelling mistake in English. Besides, it could be seen that the strategy they used to correct these mistakes was by using finger spelling, so that the student who made the mistake could write letter by letter the right word. Moreover, the sample illustrated that hearing impaired learners received their partners' feedback positively and they appreciated their peers' help.

Active Role of the Students during the Classroom Activities.

The observations revealed that students interacted enthusiastically with the diverse activities proposed by James in the classroom. The usual activities students performed were focused on reviewing previous vocabulary, reflecting on what they were doing, matching words with pictures, filling the blanks, doing mimics, describing others physical appearance, doing drawings, and transferring from CSL to English or vice versa. Examples from the field notes illustrate the point cited.

(Field notes, May 7th)

- Mimic for practicing vocabulary. The teacher proposes the students a game activity. He asks students to organize in three groups and students do it swiftly. He asks for volunteers from each group to start the activity and plenty of students want to participate. All students volunteer.

The teacher did not need to force any student to participate in the activity. Their willingness was evident in the way they reacted. Students were working in groups cooperating with each other. In this activity they had to mimic a word in English, so that their partners could guess and write it on the board. Students were very confident when they had to be in front of the class and they all wanted to participate actively in the activity.

(Field note, August 27th)

- The teacher gives students the tasks of creating a drawing from a written description. Students immediately start fulfilling the task with great interest, using colors, asking the others when they have a problem remembering the

vocabulary, checking what their closer classmates are doing... They show the teacher their progress and ask him for feedback.

As it can be seen from this excerpt from the field notes students were committed to finish the task and were willing to show it to the teacher, who asked them about the vocabulary from the text. In addition, students were supportive among themselves helping each other to remember the vocabulary presented in the text.

Discussion

The following research questions guided the data collection and analysis for this study:

1. What does the English instruction look like for hearing impaired students?
2. What methodologies does the English teacher use in the hearing impaired setting?
3. What is the hearing impaired students' learning behavior during the English class?

We organized the discussion of the findings to address each one of these questions. In the first section, we discussed the characteristics of the methodology used in the English class with hearing impaired learners. In the second section, we illustrate students' reaction towards the English class development taking into account learners' interaction with the teacher, their classmates, the activities, and the way in which they collaborate among themselves.

Illustration of English instruction for hearing impaired learners

Methodology applied with hearing impaired learners

The data revealed that James always used Colombian Sign language in the English class in order to give instructions, explain grammar, introduce new vocabulary, give feedback and check understanding. Most of the time, James employed clapping as a strategy to call the students' attention and to begin with the introduction of a new topic. Moreover, James used body language, gestures, nodding, and his thumb as a way of giving positive or negative feedback to his students.

We wonder what would be the impact of the use of English oral language in the class with this specific population, having in mind that the students have different levels of hearing loss, and that some of them are able to develop lip reading. According to Fry's (1966) work, some deaf students are able to develop basic oral language and repeat isolated words, with the use of visual and auditory cues. In relation with listening skills, Fry's reports that hearing impaired learners could recognize morphemes, by using lip reading. It is thus arguable that the use of English oral language with students that have a low level of impairment could be helpful to facilitate them learning some words and using them orally to communicate with hearing people.

The data collected showed that James had a deductive teaching method in which he was the centre of the class. He used to provide all the information concerned with grammar and vocabulary to his students and to give many examples about the new topic in isolated sentences on the board. The students then practiced using the same parameters presented by the teacher and writing similar sentences in their notebooks. The way in which the teacher conducted the session showed characteristics of what Lang (1999) calls 'a dependent teaching style'(p.23), because James assumed total control of the class in terms of choice and presentation of topics, activities and assessment allowing students little or no active participation in their learning process.

This finding aligns with Lang, Stilson, Kavanagh, Lui & Basile's (1999) study, where they argue that instructors in charge of hearing impaired population promoted a dependent learning style in their students since they had an organized teaching style in relation to the characteristics of their students. The teachers in their classes used outlines, notes, clear deadlines, and performed teacher-centered activities. Our finding suggests that James used this teaching method and style because of his beliefs, background knowledge, teaching styles, the special characteristics of the population, and his students' learning styles that are based on visual and kinesthetic techniques.

This finding is significant since it suggests similarities to methodological approaches to teach EFL to hearing students which have been widely criticized. The finding illustrates the prevalent behaviorist instructional choices that James often made in his classes. Behaviorist approaches to EFL teaching have been criticized because students are considered as passive participants of their learning process, students are seen as reactive and not as proactive, since it does not promote autonomous learning, decreasing their motivation, creativity, satisfaction and limiting the learning process, turning them into receivers of information. We wonder if in a context of non-hearing or hard-of-hearing students these criticisms would also apply. If they do, we could propose here that alternative approaches to teaching English to HI populations could be plausible.

For example, the direct approach could help in terms of avoiding translation to students' second language (Spanish), since all the new material or vocabulary is presented through actions and pictures; it should be easier for students to make the connection between the action or picture with the English written word. Obviously, it is important to adapt this approach because of the population we are addressing. From the observations conducted, we found out that the teacher used the three languages in the classroom to explain grammar or present new vocabulary, the languages were: CSL, Spanish and English. So, we think that if the teacher uses actions and a big amount of visual materials, it would not be necessary to translate from Spanish to English or use CSL. Even though, there will be some circumstances where using CSL will be useful, but not transferring to Spanish.

An additional approach that could be successfully used with this population is the reading approach, for many reasons: Firstly, because most of hearing impaired students develop only literacy skills in their second and foreign language and usually they are incapable of hearing sounds from a long distance. Secondly, this approach does not focus on pronunciation or in developing spoken language.

Thirdly, it is not focused on grammar aspects of the language, but on general comprehension of texts. All these characteristics above mentioned would point at the suitability of the reading approach to take advantage of deaf learners' strongest input channel.

Taking into account that our main aim when learning a foreign language is to communicate with others, it could be considered the possibility of learning international sign language in order to communicate with hearing impaired people from English speaking countries.

The data revealed that James used the whiteboard frequently for listing the new vocabulary and its meaning in Spanish, and for drawing nouns to clarify meaning. In addition, he used worksheets where students had to fill the gaps, match, and translate from English to Spanish and vice versa. Other kinds of materials were short English texts that students had to translate into CSL or English.

It is interesting to notice that although Fukuda (2009) strongly recommends using all kind of visual aids as drawings, pictures, flashcards, or an outline with the main activities that students will be developing in the class in order to effectively guide hearing impaired students through any learning process, our findings showed that the use of visual aids was restricted to handmade drawings on the whiteboard for illustrating vocabulary.

Nowadays a great variety of visual material like flashcards, charts, videos or posters just to mention some are available for teachers to facilitate the learning process of the foreign language. Moreover, the school counts with technological tools like a computer lab and multimedia room that would allow the teacher to use to advantage the information and communication technologies in order to support the foreign language learning process. This material would be appropriate to be applied with hearing impaired. As deaf students normally receive information

through sight, all these materials should be functional for teachers as an aid for facilitating the development of communicative competences and bringing the reality of the foreign language into the classroom.

We ponder what the results would be if all these materials were used in the English class with this special population. It would be interesting to study if, as Rottenberg's (2000) states, the use of appropriate materials that take advantage of their strongest input channel could promote the development of effectively communicative literacy skills.

Our finding about the activities used in the English class showed that the activities were based mainly on translation exercises, from written English to written Spanish and vice versa and from written English to CSL and vice versa.

Although there is not much research about what would be the most productive strategies for teaching English to hearing impaired learners, the translation method has been extremely criticized in hearing Foreign language instructional settings, because they focus on grammar issues instead of on the communicative use of language. The linguistic knowledge achieved, though important, has been proved insufficient for effective communication by modern theory.

One of the characteristics of most criticized characteristics of the grammar translation method was its extensive use of the mother tongue. As it has been shown in the findings, James use of English oral language in the class is minimum. He usually uses CSL or written Spanish as the language of communication with the learners. This fact diminishes the opportunities for getting significant input in the target language.

Although the role of the mother tongue has been recently reevaluated and experts such as Auerbach (1993) defend that the use of the mother tongue in the foreign language classroom could be helpful in order to give students confidence and as a tool to contrast and compare between elements of the mother tongue and

the foreign language Larrea (n.d.) arguments that using students' mother tongue in the classroom may interfere in the process of learning the target language and recommends that its use be restricted to those occasions in which it is absolutely necessary for clarifying a difficult point. Both Larrea and Atkinson coincide in their suggestion that the target language be used as the main communicative language in the classroom.

Taking into account the previously exposed arguments, it is a matter of concern for us how such an extensive use of CSL and Spanish done by the teacher may affect the development of communicative skills in the foreign language.

The findings based on the methodology used by the English teacher with hearing impaired students suggest that the English teacher manage students' discipline through clapping, using a specific sign, approaching and touching students' shoulders. We consider this finding significant for all the teachers involved in the education of hearing impaired students, because it shows one of the cultural components of this special population which we do not know in depth. It also illustrates the differences in terms of managing discipline between a hearing and a non-hearing classroom.

We found out that in a hearing impaired setting these ways of managing discipline and calling students attention are normal for the students and that they do not feel offended or threatened when the teacher approaches them and touches them. However, from our experience as students and pre-service teachers in a hearing setting, we have noticed that approaching or touching students in the classroom may be considered impolite or inappropriate, it might affect students' affective filter and cause them to feel uncomfortable. In a hearing classroom, teachers normally use their voice to control discipline through expressions such as 'may I have your attention, please', 'please, pay attention', 'be quiet', among others. Our finding demonstrates some strategies to be used with non-hearing

students, this finding aligns with Fukuda's (2009) work in which she suggests teachers to touch students' shoulders and wave their hands to call their attention.

Our finding concerning the characteristics of the methodology employed by the teacher shows that the strategies used by James to assess the effectiveness of the lesson are similar to those presented by Scrivener (200.....) for dealing with students' comprehension in hearing settings. As Scrivener argues, one of the main roles of the teacher in the classroom involves active monitoring of students progress and understanding. We observed that James had a very active role in the class and did not wait for students to address him but continuously walked around, checking what the students do, asking questions, giving instructions, clarifying vocabulary and doubts. He seemed very aware of the dependant learning style of his students and did not rely on their autonomy to cope with the difficulties of the task.

Although we consider the fact of adapting the teaching methodology to students' learning and affective needs as a positive feature of teacher's performance, it can be argued that encouraging such dependant learning style might go against developing autonomy on the learners' part, something that could help students to improve their literacy skills. Developing communicative abilities in a foreign language is a complex and long process that needs not only abundant comprehensible input and guidance from the teacher, but also students' autonomous learning that allows them to improve their skills out of the classroom.

Characteristics of hearing impaired learners` behavior during the English classes

Our findings related to deaf learners` behavior revealed that students had a positive attitude towards learning English as they could be observed working actively and engaged in all the activities proposed by the teacher. During these activities students showed a cooperative behavior among themselves.

We consider this finding very significant since little research has been done based on collaborative learning among deaf students. We found that hearing impaired learners at the IOW institution were very supportive with their peers in terms of correcting their classmates' mistakes, clarifying James' instructions, and providing vocabulary needed in a task.

This finding supports the findings by Lang, Stilson, Kavanagh, Lui & Basile (1999) in which it is explained that hearing impaired learners have a participative and collaborative learning style. In our finding we discovered that learners were collaborative among themselves.

The hearing impaired students observed for this research project were not only willing to help other classmates but also confident to ask and receive support from their peers. Group work was achieved without discussion or arguments. Students enjoyed sharing their knowledge to accomplish the proposed tasks, volunteered in all kind of activities even to show the outcome of individual exercises without fear of making mistakes or losing face in front of their peers.

Instructional and Research Implications

Instructional Implications

It is important for educators to realize that since the Colombian law demands the inclusion of students with disabilities in the public educational system, educators should be prepared to face any kind of learners, including hearing impaired learners. Therefore, all universities and institutes that offer teaching training programs should train their pre-service teachers to face and teach students with any kind of disabilities.

Since EFL educators need to rely on occasions on the mother tongue of their students in order to help them acquire the foreign language, it would be of great help to have a command of the mother tongue of the hearing impaired population, Colombian Sign Language (CSL), to be able to assess the necessities of this special population in the area of English as a foreign language and provide the best possible education for them.

Based on our findings about how the English instruction is given to hearing impaired learners at the IOW Institution, we suggest that teachers should focus on communicative activities that help students to use the language to convey meaning and make it significant as a tool for communication.

EFL teachers must understand the cultural elements specific to the hearing impaired community that involve not only the usage of CSL but a very expressive and abundant use of facial expressions, body language, imitation of other people gestures or physical characteristics, personal distance, among other issues.

When teaching this special population it is important to keep in mind as English teachers, that deaf students, due to the special characteristics of their mother tongue (CSL) do a different use of grammar and vocabulary than hearing students of the same age and educational level. This fact must necessarily impact their written production in English.

In relation with the materials used for the EFL class, we consider of special importance that EFL teachers should take advantage of the hearing impaired population strength for learning through the visual channel. For this population, the type and quality of the materials and the strategic use that the teacher makes of them is obviously extremely relevant as their visual channel provides all the information about the world.

Elements such as drawings, pictures, flashcards and realia need always to be of good quality and meaningful for students, but these characteristics are specially demanded in the case of teaching students whose main input channel is the visual one. Information and communication technologies are other possible source of materials and activities that the teacher and students could take advantage of for the development of communicative abilities. As Frei & Lissi (2005) demonstrated that these aids were useful to increase students' enthusiasm towards their writing process.

Future EFL teachers need to keep in mind that the hearing impaired population develop other abilities and strategies in order to acquire new knowledge. Among these abilities we could mention their strong capacity for focusing on the task at hand, the ability to memorize written vocabulary and signs and their supportive learning disposition to help and accept help from each other. Therefore we suggest that these learning characteristics should be capitalized through the use of cooperative activities where students can work in groups and assist each other.

Research Implications

The multifaceted nature of how to teach English as a foreign language to a special population in this case hearing impaired people, calls for research efforts in the educational area. In the instructional part, this study showed that there is potential in teaching hearing impaired people a foreign language based on

vocabulary, but research needs to clarify how such instruction should be implemented in order to effectively help the learners to develop English reading and writing skills.

Among the issues that call for further research we consider of great importance the design of an appropriate curriculum that may consider the linguistic and affective needs of the hearing impaired population and that exploits the skills deaf students develop in their second language (Spanish) in order to facilitate the acquisition of communicative abilities in the foreign language.

Research must also identify the most suitable instructional materials, and practices, including computer supported resources and activities, for teaching English to hearing impaired learners. It is urgent to conduct a study that aims at designing, implementing and evaluating new materials for teaching English to this particular population in order to establish which the specific materials are that can be used to take advantage of hearing impaired students' visual channel.

In the area related to teachers' performance in the class, qualitative longitudinal research could reveal the methodologies, methods, teaching strategies, and language instruction currently applied and their impact on hearing impaired students' development of communicative skills to be implemented with this deaf population.

The avoidance of the oral English language noticed in the instructional context of the observed class and the teacher's predominant use of sign language when giving instructions or explanations call for further research to discover the usefulness of the use of English oral language in the class. It is a matter of study to find out what the impact will be if teachers use spoken English in the class and if it would be beneficial for them.

Further research could focus on the factors that are involved in the development of an EFL session for hearing impaired students and their impact towards the students' learning process.

A longitudinal research study based on the progress of hearing impaired students learning English since elementary grades could be conducted in order to discover if an early start at learning English would enable hearing impaired students to develop communicative abilities such as writing and reading, in the three languages (sign language, Spanish and English).

Conclusion

The findings of this research illustrated the methodology applied with hearing impaired learners in IOW institution in terms of the predominance of Colombian sign language during the English classes along with a deductive teaching method in which the teacher performs a “dependent teaching style” (Lang et al 2000).

The findings also reported that deaf students are very supportive among them, that they help each other during individual, pair and group work and that they enjoy developing activities, tasks and games proposed by the teacher in the class. Moreover, it was found that hearing impaired students have a high level of concentration in the English class.

From the findings above mentioned, the following educational implications suggested that instruction for hearing impaired learners should be based on linguistic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic competences, in which students can interact with more contextualized and purposeful language. It is also suggested the use of visual and colorful teaching aids and realia, that may motivate and interest students as well as taking advantage of their strongest linguistic input channel.

Finally, it seems advisable that teachers should take advantage of deaf learners’ collaborative learning style to expose students to more supportive and significant activities in which they can share knowledge and doubts with others. It is also recommended to use English oral language during the whole sessions as an aid for those students that have a low level of deafness and that can lip read.

This study leads to further researches in the field that may focus with aspects such as: the design of a curriculum based on deaf students’ linguistics and affective needs, the development of instruction that takes into account literacy skills instead of only vocabulary and grammar; the design, implementation and

assessment of new material for this special population to identify the most effective strategies for them, the impact of current methodologies, methods, teaching strategies and language instruction used with hearing impaired learners, the effectiveness use of spoken English in the class.

Educators need to be prepared to deal with the special necessities of their students. The particular perception of the world of hearing impaired learners make them a challenge to teachers, but a challenge that we need to face is if we want to eliminate discrimination and make educational inclusion a reality. This research project is just a step on the road but hopefully it will be the seed for further research that deals with education for deaf people.

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Annex

INTERVIEW TO THE TEACHER OF ENGLISH

1. ¿Cómo fue que empezaste a enseñar inglés en el colegio?
2. ¿Cuántos años tienes?
3. ¿Por que estudiaste inglés?
4. ¿Hiciste un estudio técnico, no solamente como aprender el inglés, ¿sino que más les enseñaban en ese técnico en inglés?
5. ¿Y ahora que estás en el colegio, has recibido alguna formación académica en cuanto a pedagogía o la enseñanza del inglés?
6. ¿Alguna vez pensaste en dedicarte a la docencia del inglés?
7. ¿Y entonces, cuando enseñaste a enseñar inglés en la institución?
8. ¿Y antes de que empezaras a enseñar el inglés o cuando lo empezaste a enseñar, fue solo para los oyentes o también para los no oyentes?
9. Y... teniendo en cuenta la experiencia que has tenido hasta el momento en la enseñanza del inglés con estudiantes no oyentes, ¿cuál crees que es el futuro de esta población con relación al aprendizaje del inglés?
10. Entonces, según eso, ¿cuáles serían las fortalezas que tienen ellos en cuanto al inglés, los estudiantes no oyentes?
11. ¿Y para los estudiantes no oyentes utilizas algo diferente?
12. ¿Y en cuánto a actividades, que clase de actividades haces con los oyentes que son diferentes con los no oyentes?
13. ¿Motivas a tus estudiantes en cuanto a la importancia de saber inglés? ¿Sí o no, y por qué?

14. ¿Y tú has mirado el desempeño que ellos han tenido en la parte de lectura?
¿Ellos sí son capaces de leer y comprender un texto, o por lo menos seguir instrucciones en la lengua escrita en el inglés?
15. ¿Y cómo haces para dar las instrucciones en una clase y saber si ellos entendieron lo que estas enseñando?