



Implementation of Didactic Teaching Material at a Rural School in Puerto Arango, Florencia, Caquetá

Implementación de Material Didáctico en un Colegio Rural en Puerto Arango en Florencia, Caquetá

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Abstract

Currently, speaking and writing as Productive Skills play a remarkably important role, being the responsible of allowing learners to communicate their ideas and express their thoughts when learning a foreign language. Whereby, the principal objective of this study was focused on the identification, adaptation and implementation of didactic English teaching materials and strategies that fostered the English Language Productive Skills from 4th graders at Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango in Florencia, Caquetá. The results showed a positive impact in the students writing and speaking skills performance when they were exposed

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to material and strategies identified and designed in accordance to their level and academic requirements. At the same time, students evidenced satisfactory self-correction levels when maintaining short and simple conversations with other classmates and the teachers using the English Language, proving that a proper stimulation can also increase their participation and attention indices.

Key words. *English Language Productive Skills, writing, speaking, didactic teaching material, role of materials in the language classroom.*

Resumen

En la actualidad, el habla y la escritura como habilidades productoras juegan un rol muy importante, siendo las responsables de permitir a los estudiantes comunicar sus ideas y expresar sus pensamientos al aprender un idioma extranjero. Por ello, el objetivo principal de este estudio se enfocó en la identificación, adaptación e implementación de estrategias de enseñanza y material didáctico que fortalecieran las habilidades productoras del idioma Inglés en estudiantes de 4º grado en la Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango en Florencia, Caquetá. Los resultados mostraron un impacto positivo en el desempeño de las habilidades de escritura y habla de los estudiantes cuando eran expuestos a material y estrategias identificadas y diseñadas de acuerdo a su nivel y requerimientos académicos. Al mismo tiempo, los estudiantes evidenciaron niveles de autocorrección satisfactorios al mantener conversaciones cortas y sencillas con otros compañeros y los docentes usando el idioma Inglés, probando que una estimulación apropiada puede también incrementar sus índices de participación y atención.

Palabras clave. habilidades productivas del idioma inglés, escritura, expresión oral, enseñanza de materiales didácticos, rol de los materiales en el aula de idiomas.

Introduction

Learning a new language such as English involves the understanding of a huge variety of unknown vocabulary and the mastering of different skills. For this reason, nowadays, when teaching new knowledge, teachers are required to look for the most accurate manners to reach the students to the target language and work responsibly on the selection, adaptation and implementation of didactic material to be used according to the students' real context and needs. So that, the implementation of strategies and didactic materials that bring a positive impact to the students inside the classes are key aspects to guarantee better learning processes.

This research project was developed as a bridge to connect with different and adequate teaching strategies and material that help students get interested in the process of learning the foreign language. The objective of this study was mainly focused on the identification, selection and implementation/application of Didactic English teaching strategies and material that fulfills the students' real needs, considering their context and the English Language productive skills (speaking and writing) they have to develop in fourth grade. Students were selected taking into consideration their proficiency in each one of the aforementioned competences, developing strategies that take them from the actual level until reaching a significant and satisfactory performance when writing and speaking. The study was carried out with primary students with an age range

from 9 to 11 years old at Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango, an institution located in the rural area of Florencia Caquetá. The target group was selected based on a purpose sampling strategy, being chosen considering the objective of the research project.

Problem statement

Many efforts have been undertaken to improve the indices of efficiency in schools, such as increasing the number of teachers, providing endowment for institutions and different policies and programs that get focused on improving students' knowledge in general. Nonetheless, students from rural areas do not have adequate material for developing an accurate learning process in the English subject (De Cardenas, 1982, p.2). Because of those reasons and many more, in rural institutions there is not efficiency in the different levels of education.

The 14 students of 4th grade from Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango, Venecia seat, belong to a small school located far from the main city of the department of Caquetá, Florencia, and they did not have an official English class. Furthermore, there was not enough material that assures an appropriate English Language Teaching-learning process. All of this brings as main consequence problems with the students' correct development of the English language productive skills. Besides, they did not have even basic notions about how to write or speak in the FL (English). This situation affects seriously their performance in any of the official exams they are supposed to take when finishing high school, in which it is required to show a balanced mastering of the writing, reading, listening and speaking skills. The lack of training in those skills will also

affect students' enrollment in universities, causing difficulties not only in their academic but also in their professional development.

Justification

Currently, selecting and using the appropriate material inside the classrooms has become an essential aspect if better learning processes are pretended to be achieved. Crawford, J. (1995) states that if the materials must be flexible; thus, students can develop different skills as well as strategies; additionally, it is important that teachers have in mind the context and also the students' background. Consequently, teachers need to adapt the materials they are going to use in the classroom according to the students' context and needs, in that way, they will provide their students with significant knowledge. Besides, if the material implemented has a strong connection and relationship with the strategies, the learning process will be more effective for the learners.

In that order and considering the essential role of the English Language in the present and for the upcoming years, reaching students since initial grades to the language turns into something essential that assures them in somehow, opportunities and life conditions like the ones children from other places have. The research study was important for providing the target population with a learning process developed according to their needs and educational features, in which students have the opportunity to interact with each other. This was achieved by selecting, adapting and implementing didactic material according to the learners' language level. All the material selected, adapted and implemented was organized in a guide book as it is shown in the results.

Through the development of the project, rural education was also benefited. As rural students are located far from the city, they do not have the possibility to receive a qualified teaching process in English subject with specified teachers, so that their knowledge concerning this language was not the expected for the educational level. The research served as a mean to foster not only students' writing and speaking but also to expand their social interactions and cultural borders. Along the development of the study, they were led to understand the importance of respecting others' viewpoints and ideas.

Objectives

General Objective

To improve English Language Productive Skills of 4th graders through the implementation of Didactic Teaching Material at Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango in Florencia, Caquetá.

Specific objectives

- To select and adapt Didactic Teaching Material according to the students' needs.
- To implement Didactic Teaching Material to foster writing and speaking levels.
- To analyze the impact in the implementation of Didactic Teaching Material in the 4th graders classroom.

Main Research Question:

How to foster English Language Productive Skills of 4th Graders through the implementation of Didactic Teaching Material at Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango in Florencia, Caquetá?

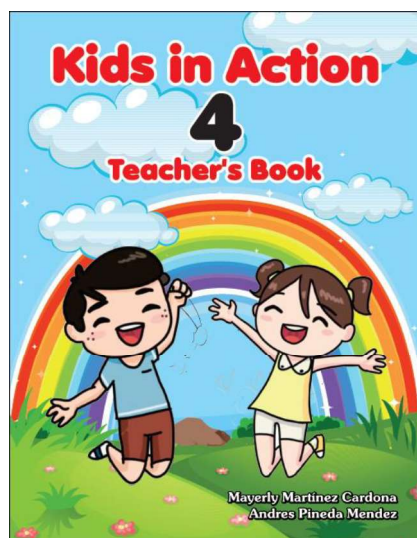
Conceptual Framework

This section contains a specific review of the main concepts concerning the research study developed.

English Language Productive Skills

The production of language involves the articulation of four language skills (writing, speaking, listening and reading). All of them work together to become a final product which is language production. Learners receive information by listening to (music, videos, audios etc.) and also by reading (newspaper, poems, books, etc.), and then they produce the outcome, it means that what they have gathered by listening and reading is produced (output) through the use of the speaking and writing skills.

In this sense, Sárosdy, Farczádi, Zoltán, & Vadna (2006) argue that writing and speaking correspond to the output stages in language teaching; thus, when students are learning a new language, their main objective is to communicate messages working within a context.



Speaking Skill

Speaking is an English Productive Skill that is related to the oral process in the language production. It is a very important skill in the English learning process, but most of the times, it is considered to be difficult for students. McDonough, Shaw, & Masuhara (2003) indicate that social relationships involve expressing opinions, solving communicative problems or expressing desires and wishes.

Lesäkövä, (2008) reported that: “Speaking belongs to productive skills; it is more frequently used than writing. The main function of spoken language is to socialize individuals” (p. 27). On the other hand, writing and speaking skills are produced in real time and hearing takes time in a specific moment. Although the two English Language Productive Skills (writing and speaking) play an important role in the process of Language production, speaking tends to be used more frequently, especially because in everyday conversations, speaking is

implemented as mean convey information and ideas in a faster and clearer form. Moreover, speaking is also seen as a process of interaction in which the main clue is to construct and convey meaning. To do so, the information shared is received and then processed.

Hence, the speaking process must be considered one of the essential parts into the teaching of English as L2. So that teachers are required to be creative and explore new ways of teaching it providing students with authentic and reliable information and materials, contextualizing that unknown knowledge, allowing the students to process and appropriate from it in a more significant manner.

Writing Skill

The second important concept to be defined in this section is concerned to the English Productive Skill writing, which is a skill that contributes to organize people's thoughts in a meaningful way by using paper and pen or a computer. About it, Grossmann (as cited in Bashrin, 2013) declares that writing can be developed in different ways, from doing a list of groceries until writing a book or a formal document.

Working on the writing skill involves the mastering of well-structured grammatical features as well as a wide range of vocabulary. Writing plays different functions, but it is typically used for the transmission of cultural knowledge and also for sharing information, for entertainment or for social contact. Additionally, writing can be described as a mean of communication among people. When

starting to write, it is required to follow and maintain some language rules such as coherence, cohesion, in general the organization of the text. Bader, (2007).

Didactic Teaching Material.

When talking about didactic teaching material, it becomes important to understand its role played inside the classroom as facilitator of new environments. That is to say didactic materials can be considered as facilitators of learning processes being helpful because they answer the question what to teach with? Besides, this type of material contributes to motivate students' interaction levels activating their relationships. (Jimenez & Peñaloza, 2011). Moreover, language learning and didactic materials constitute a central factor in creating significant teaching and learning environments in which students are provided with a space to practice abilities and knowledge already acquired.

Crawford, (1995) remarks the importance of using meaningful teaching materials, always having in mind the students' context because the language is a social manifestation, hence, teachers are responsible to maintain a balance between the input and output in communication.

Methodology

This part develops a description of the type of research, the population, methodological steps or phases and all the procedures that were developed to conduct this research study.

Type of research

The process carried out was basically supported on an Action Research in which researchers developed an intervention procedure to implement the didactic material and the teaching strategies selected.

Participants

The target population for this study was a sample of 14 rural students from 4th grade of Institución Educativa Rural Puerto Arango. As the main aim of the research process was to work on fostering English Language Productive Skills, writing and speaking, the sample was selected based on a purposive sampling method, using a homogenous sampling.

Instruments

In order to gather the data during the development of the study, they were implemented classroom observations, videos, field diaries and interviews.

Procedure

Phase 1. Beginning of The Research Process (observing and planning)

This phase was divided into two sub-phases, a sub-phase of observation and a sub-phase of materials and strategies identification, selection and planning.

The classroom observation

The observation was developed during two weeks, twice a week. Along this period of time, students were observed having their current English classes using field diaries and videos. Moreover, the three initial interviews were applied. There was not any intervention. The video recorded, the field diaries written during this phase and the interviews information were analyzed, providing relevant details about the teaching strategies and materials used by the teacher to finally start identifying, selecting and planning the didactic material and teaching strategies to be applied in the second phase.

Materials and strategies planning

After being analyzed the information collected through the videos and field diaries, the researchers began the material identification, selection as well as the strategies planning and preparation. These strategies and activities were chosen considering the data gathered during the previous sub-phase and the students' context and needs. As a result, a didactic unit and twelve lesson plans were created to be implemented during the classes' development.

Phase 2. Classes Development (acting and reflecting)

Once the didactic material and strategies were prepared, the researchers started their implementation inside the 4th graders English class. At the same time, evidences of each intervention were collected by using research instruments such as videos. The three final interviews were applied at the end of this phase and served as a mean to explore students' considerations after the didactic material and teaching strategies implementation. During this phase and after each class, researchers developed an analysis and a reflection process to observe if what was

being implemented was actually appropriated or some aspects needed to be improved for next class intervention.

Phase 3. Results analysis and guide book design

This phase was mainly used to organize and analyze all the results gathered after the development of the intervention phase. Similarly, the guide book, called Kids in Action 4, to be given to the institution, was prepared and designed. The guide book was organized according to the topics studied and materials implemented. It also contained a detailed description of each one of the activities carried out during the classes' development. It showed the process to be followed as an option when applying the didactic material and teaching strategies.

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to improve the productive skills of a group of students from a rural institution through the implementation of didactic teaching material.

A first key result of the project demonstrated the effectiveness of applying well-contextualized didactic teaching and learning material inside the classroom. Its significance was evident when being directly connected to the different activities developed by the learners. According to Garton and Graves (2014); the materials are important in language learning and teaching; they are really meaningful when are related to students' interests and needs. This assertion consolidates what was found out and besides states the important role that materials play in teaching and learning. Hence, the implementation of material

must be carefully carried out and based on a thorough students' need analysis that guarantees a more positive and meaningful impact.

Crawford, (1995) also supports the aforementioned assertion, highlighting the importance of effective teaching materials as well as using appropriate didactic teaching and learning. Likewise; the findings identified in the interventions and interviews showed that teaching the English Language Productive Skills (writing and speaking) in a Foreign Language is a complex process that required the teachers to find new strategies that motivate and catch students' attention. But this is also a process in which students put into practice what they learn in the classes. About this aspect, Nipa, (2013) points out that "Productive skills are crucial as they give students the opportunity to practice real life activities in classroom. Learners received language by listening and trying to produce language through productive skills" (p.3). Whereby, all spaces provided during the classes' development strengthen, as the results proved, and gave the 4th graders tools to rehearse upon previous and new knowledge, evidencing in most of the learners a better oral and writing performance at the end of the process.

In terms of writing, a large part of the students immersed in the process denoted better levels of grammar and structure accuracy. There was also a significant vocabulary identification and organization according to the context during the writing exercises executed. Regardless writing process, Lesáková, (2008), indicates that to be successful in teaching writing skills it is necessary to make sure that the students start with controlled writing and when they become more confident, teacher provides guided writing in accordance to specific aspects such as context and content. This contributes to foster learners writing production

by their own. (p.18). Thence, the writing process is required to consider two key types of exercises, controlled and guided. Controlled writing helps learners start reaching grammar, structure and vocabulary, while guided writing works as an indicator to correct still existing mistakes and improve lack of vocabulary.

Apart from writing, speaking skill was also a central part of the study that although was challenging for learners, showed positive results in their final performance. The research project development mainly provided students with space to real time and guided oral practice inside the classrooms, in which teachers were facilitators and guides when carrying out the activities. This increased students' confidence and accuracy in speaking. Nipa, (2014) supports the previous statement when positing that speaking can be produced and processed in real time in face-to-face conversations. (p.4). Lesáková, (2008) also states about the aforementioned statement that when students are exposed to guided oral work, vocabulary is enriched as well as pronunciation of practical phrases and words because it gives the students a real context and a common situation where the role-play or conversation take place (p.31).

The process of fostering speaking skill in English Language led students to be able to understand how to correct mistakes during oral practice by themselves (Self-correction). Besides improving pronunciation and fluency in speaking, most of the students ended up being aware of the importance of self-correcting each other without any teachers' guidance. Khosaa, Sharif & Malghani, (2016) emphasize on the key role of the "independent Self-correction" because it goes beyond correcting the results and process, it involves students' active role in their own learning process. In brief, self-correction allows the learners to take control

in somehow of their own learning process when being themselves the ones who find out mistakes and propose a correction. In speaking, self-correction fosters students' confidence because they are not completely required to do or say exactly what the teachers mention.

Conclusions

The study of fostering English language productive skills of 4th graders through the implementation of didactic teaching material showed a significant impact in the students' learning. They could improve their writing and speaking skill simultaneously.

Student's opinions about the didactic teaching material implemented evidenced that it is a helpful tool to facilitate English learning process.

Identifying students' English level before the implementation of any process leads to understand their language difficulties and needs, helping teachers prepare and select specific teaching activities and material to work on the improvement of the flaws found appropriately.

Being aware of the real context in which students develop daily learning and teaching processes is an essential aspect to be taken into consideration when selecting, adapting and implementing the didactic teaching material, because it provides them with a more familiar environment even though they are learning a completely different language.

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