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On the Possibility of Teaching English Grammar through Visual Aids: You Will See What We Mean

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Introduction

Learning a second language has become an important component of living in society these days. Its relevance comes from the necessity to communicate with each other in the current globalized world, to cross boundaries and have a wider range of opportunities. One of the benefits of learning a second language is more job opportunities and promotions in different working areas due to the constantly increasing careers that demand second language knowledge, especially regarding the English language (Weatherford, 1986). Moreover, knowing a second language helps people have a different perspective on the world, which allows them to become aware of the cultural and social differences among people and places. These are just a few of the many benefits that learning a second language can offer to people.

It is strongly believed among the non-specialized people that one of the main factors of English language learning is grammar; therefore, it should be learned so that the messages are conveyed in an accurate way and communication among people takes place. However, grammar instruction for English as Second language (ESL) has been called into question as Ronald W. Langacker (2008) states "let's face it −grammar has a bad reputation" (p. 3). The same idea is expressed by Cheng (1984), who claims that "grammar no longer holds pride of place in syllabus design" (p. 78). At first sight, the Communicative Approach seems to be the precursor of this lessened importance given to grammar teaching in the current ESL classrooms. This approach has taken an amazing role in the language learning and the teaching purpose, emphasizing that grammar is not too important for ESL learners since the main purpose of language usage is communication (Krashen, 1981).

The Communicative Approach is based on real-life situations in which communication takes the important role of helping people interact with each other (Richards, 2006). This approach does not focus explicitly on the teaching of grammar since the conveyance of the

message is the most important aspect to accomplish communication. However, teachers should not neglect the teaching of grammar since it is necessary to accurately communicate with others by means of the second language (Odlin, 1994; Thornbury, 1999). In its curriculum for fifth grade, the Chilean Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) looks for the development of communicative abilities, the command of vocabulary and of grammar structures (2004). Therefore, by knowing the basic grammatical structures and vocabulary, students will develop their communicative skills in the English language.

In spite of the apparent dichotomy between the Communicative Approach and grammar instruction, when grammar teaching is complemented and reinforced with visual aids, students can feel more comfortable in the ESL classroom, which sparks their motivation to learn. Because of globalization, images have become very important in the cognitive development of students, which makes iconic representation also important for second language acquisition (Vale & Freunteun, 1995). Actually, visual aids are instructional materials that offer many advantages (Vale & Freunteun, 1995; Meredith, 1947; Corder, 1963). In addition to this, visual aids can improve the teaching of grammar; however, they are not exploited to the fullest in the ESL classrooms (Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1998).

The purpose of the present research paper is to study both the benefits of grammar instruction in the context of a communicative trend in language teaching, and the way visual aids serve in ESL grammar instruction. The remainder parts of the paper are organized as follows: Chapter I elaborates on the context in which grammar instruction can be framed in Chile. Chapter II, the Theoretical Framework, reviews the Communicative Approach in language teaching, and the relevance of grammar in the ESL classroom in terms of its implications in the second language learning process. Next, two Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories by Krashen (1982) are presented: the Affective Filter theory and the Comprehensible input theory. This

chapter also covers visual aids by including a description of three learning styles –auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–, and the characteristics of the brain functions in relation to SLA, along with a depiction of three main visual aids types. Chapter III offers a discussion on the relevance of teaching English grammar through visual aids in the ESL classrooms in Chile. This chapter aims to acknowledge the benefits that this teaching method can bring to ESL learners in the Chilean society under the perspective of the Communicative Approach. After the discussion, some examples of visual aids to teach grammar content are presented (Appendix) so as to portrait their usage in the ESL classroom. In Chapter IV, conclusions and suggestions for further research are presented.

1. Chapter I: State of the Art

Learning English as second language has gained major relevance due to the great amount of people who wish to learn it, making the language internationally known (McKay, 2003). Due to its role as a *lingua franca*, English has become the key to access a wide range of opportunities in the current globalized world since it enables communication between non-native speakers around the world (Hempel, 2009). Moreover, in Latin America, the English language has become relevant due to its contributions to the development of each country (Matear, 2008). Hence, the necessity to communicate in the globalized world has made essential for people to speak the English language.

English language teaching is seen as a potential source of economic growth in Chile along with quality education for everyone (Matear, 2008). In a research study, McKay (2003) summarizes the orientations of the 1998 reform for the English curricula from 7^{th} to 12^{th} grade established by the Chilean Ministry of Education. The main goal of learning English as a second language established in the curricula is to "reflect the role of English in the world today, the scope of worldwide communication networks, the geographical and regional characteristics of Chile, and the demands of the Chilean labor market" (McKay, 2003, p. 141). The curricula emphasized the use of communicative teaching methods and the training of the receptive skills (reading and listening) over the productive ones (speaking and writing) (*ibid*). This shows the attempts of the Ministry of Education to incorporate Chile into a global community that needs the English language to communicate.

English language teaching has had several changes attempting to improve Chilean education and adjust to the new tendencies in teaching. This process of changes has gone from methods that favor only the receptive skills to a more communicative paradigm which not only puts emphasis on the four language skills, but also encourages group work. There have been

changes in the curriculum for the English language, namely the 1998 educational reform, the curricular adjustments proposed in 2009 and the implementation of the SIMCE Inglés. To be able to understand such a process, a brief review is presented as follows.

1.1. The Communicative Approach in Chile

The Communicative Approach started to be acknowledged in Chile before the 1998 educational reform. Beside the changes that the reform introduced, teachers had already been strongly encouraged by the Ministry of Education to use communicative teaching methods based on the tendencies around English speaking countries. According to McKay's research (2003), the Ministry of Education promoted group work as an expression of the Communicative Approach in English lessons. However, many teachers believed that group work did not necessarily mean to create a communicative classroom because they already had provided the students with many other instances to communicate in the classroom, such as teacher-student dialogue. Besides, there were several teachers that considered the large amount of student per class detrimental to the implementation of communicative tasks when trying to use group work. Therefore, many English teachers felt relieved when the Ministry of Education lessened the emphasis on work group (*ibid*). There appears then to have been a negative response towards the implementations of the Communicative Approach, at least in the format of group work. However, English teachers do acknowledge the relevance of communicative activities (McKay, 2003).

In 2009, the curriculum for the English language established by the Ministry of Education changed so as to include improvements and incorporate communicative activities. The fundamental objectives and the minimum contents for primary and secondary education expect students to develop communicative abilities that allow them to get involved in written or oral situations, practice that enables them to know and understand other cultures and lifestyles besides

their own (MINEDUC, 2009). Different from the 1998 reform, the adjustments of the 2009 English curriculum are meant to develop the four language abilities (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and to enable students to develop communicative skills so that they can use their knowledge of the language beneficially in the educational, commercial, scientific, and technological fields (MINEDUC, 2009; Unidad de Currículum, UCE., 2009). Therefore, the changes in the curriculum put emphasis on the development of communicative skills.

Undoubtedly, there have been curricular improvements, but there is also a further point to be considered: the capability of Chilean teachers to adjust themselves to the Communicative Approach. For Sheehan (2009), the Communicative Approach requires teachers with a high English level, which they can use all the time during the class; who have enough time to prepare and carry out activities; and who are energetic, have efficient classroom management skills and are also interested in motivating their students to use the English language (as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). In this regard, Sheehan (2009, *ibid*) claims that, even though there are some good teachers, there are no such teachers in Chile who can meet all of these requirements to perform communicative language teaching. Therefore, there is a perceivable gap in the training of Chilean English teachers. However, it is important not to assume that these teachers lack the necessary competence to create a communicative environment in a classroom, but that their competence is not reflected in their performance.

1.2. Chilean Students' Competence on English as a Second Language

1.2.1. A Diagnostic Study

The students' competence cannot be accurately measured by simple observation; there are other ways to approximate to the real evidence of what students' competence in the English language is, namely tests to measure proficiency. In order to measure the Chilean students'

proficiency level in the English language, a study was carried out in 2004 by the Ministry of Education. The study consisted in a test designed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) ESOL (English for speakers of other languages), which was implemented in 299 schools to a total of 11,000 students from 8th and 12th grade (University of Cambridge, ESOL Examinations & MINEDUC, 2004). The study aimed to inform about the English teaching in Chile, the students' English level, and the English teachers' performance. While students from 8th and 12th grades were asked to participate in the study by answering the same English test and a survey, teachers were only asked to answer the survey (*ibid*). The study sought to reveal how much did the Chilean students really know about the English language.

The study showed that regardless the efforts, Chilean students finish high school with a low English proficiency level. Most 8th graders (67%) and 12th graders (45%) could only reach the Lower Breakthrough level, which represents the ability to comprehend simple written and oral instructions, read short messages, and recognize words and expressions when hearing them. Moreover, there was a little but not less important percent of student who reached the 5th level called Pre Breakthrough which refers to little or no comprehension of the English language. These two last levels −the Lower Breakthrough and the Pre Breakthrough− were especially created for Chilean students since they were not suitable for the three existing levels established for the international standards set by the Association of Language Testers of Europe (ALTE), (University of Cambridge, ESOL Examinations & MINEDUC, 2004). The study also showed that most of the students from both grades showed a better understanding of the written language rather than the spoken language. It (*ibid*) also indicated that only 5% of students finished high school reaching the Autonomous English level (ALTE 2), which means being able to express ideas in a limited way during familiar and unfamiliar situations (MINEDUC, 2010).

There are several reasons why students in Chile have not achieved the competence levels

expected by the Ministry of Education. According to Sheehan (2009), the little exposition of students to the English language is the main cause of the students' low competence in the language (as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). This British teacher, who worked for the English Open Doors Programme as an advisor, notices that one of the reasons for the low English competence that students have is that teachers do not use English to teach the language (less than 5% of teachers do). In addition, Sheehan (2009, *ibid*) mentions that what makes it difficult for students to acquire the language is that some teachers are not well-prepared to teach due to, in most of the cases, a lack of materials to use in the language lessons. Furthermore, that lack of materials reflects that teachers do not have enough time to prepare their lessons properly. All these problems prevent students from acquiring English in Chile; thus, lessening their opportunities in this globalized world (Sheehan, 2009, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009).

1.2.2. The SIMCE Inglés

The SIMCE test (Sistema de Medición de la Calidad de la Enseñanza) is applied to Chilean junior students in order to assess them on their competence in several areas of education such as Spanish, Mathematics, Physics, and –in 2010 for the first time–, English. The main purpose of the test is: "contribuir al mejoramiento de la calidad y equidad de la educación, informando sobre el desempeño de los alumnos y alumnas en distintas disciplinas y sobre el contexto escolar y familiar en el que aprenden" (MINEDUC, 2010, para. 1). The SIMCE test then aims to show the students' knowledge in different areas of education.

In October, 2010, all Chilean 11th grade students took the SIMCE Inglés test, which was an adaptation of the TOEIC Bridge test (Test of English for International Communication) developed by the Educational Testing Service in order to measure the reading and listening skills of the students. In this way, the educational centers can also become aware of the strengths and

weaknesses they have in terms of English language teaching. The idea then is to improve the quality of education in the field of English from the results yielded by the test (MINEDUC, 2010). SIMCE Inglés remains being the only standardized test taken in the majority of the public schools in Chile providing the MINEDUC, students, teachers, and parents with evidence of what the students know and what they still have to learn.

The test results are not surprising if what Sheehan (2009) claims is considered (as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). While only 11% of 11th year students showed to understand simple statements and short pieces of text, the other 89% of them did not even reach the basic English level (EMOL, 2011). Consequently, the current Minister of Education, Joaquín Lavín, announced that the test results will the basis from which the MINEDUC is going to work in order to improve the ESL education to obtain better results in the future. Within the following weeks, a National Plan of English will be presented, which includes, among other features, remedial courses for students (*ibid*). With these measures, the MINEDUC pretends to reinforce the English language teaching so as to attain a better level of English in order to meet the requirements of the current globalized world.

1.3. The Perceivable Problem

To sum up, an effective English language teaching and learning have not been reached in Chile yet. From the information presented by Mckay (2003), Matear (2008) and Sheehan (2009, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009), it can be inferred that English language teaching and learning in a communicative setting is not being accomplished in the Chilean classrooms. The study carried out in 2004 the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations and MINEDUC (2004) shows that students are not receiving efficient English teaching since the materials and teachers are not fulfilling the purposes that the Ministry of Education established for ESL learners. From

this perspective, it is necessary to find a way of improving the English language teaching in Chile by making a better use of the Communicative Approach. Hence, this works aims to suggest a solution that improves the language teaching in the ESL classrooms in Chile in order to help students achieve proficiency in the English language.

2. Chapter II: Theoretical Framework

2.1. The Communicative Approach

The Communicative Approach arose in Europe in the 1960s as a response to the grammar-based approaches used in the teaching of second languages. There was a need "for changing educational realities in Europe [by articulating and developing] alternative methods of language teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 65). Such need is attributable to the rejection to the audio-lingual approach and the popularity of Chomsky's criticism to traditional language teaching, which created the basis of new movements that stressed avoidance on mastering language structures over communicating (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). In this sense, Brown (2000) explains that second language teaching started to be considered not only as another structured developmental process, "but also as the creation of meaning through interactive negotiation among learners" (p. 245). Therefore, the Communicative Approach means a paradigmatic change in second language education.

The Communicative Approach in second language teaching and learning is directly related to the development of the communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). Hymes (1967) defines communicative competence as "the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages" (as cited in Brown. 2000, p. 246). By the same token, Leaver, Ehrman and Shekhtman (2005) refer to the communicative competence as "the ability to use the language for communication with native speakers in authentic situations" (p. 10). However, English is not necessarily used between non-native and native speakers only, but also as a *lingua franca*. In this sense, the kind of tasks that help develop communicative competence are those ones that emulate real-life functions such as "apologizing, describing, inviting, [and] promising [because they] emphasize the way grammatical forms may be used," not the grammatical forms per se (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 2). Thus, communicative competence is a means of

contextualizing knowledge and being able to use it in real situations.

Since the communicative competence is the main goal of the Communicative Approach (Hymes, 1967, as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986), it is reflected through several ways in the teaching process. Regarding communicative tasks, Winkler (2007) explains that,

> [a] communicative classroom means that students are engaged in more task-based activities rather than rote memorization. Task-based instruction implies that learners are engaged in tasks in the classroom that come as close as possible to mirroring tasks that they might do with the second language in a natural language setting. (p. 59)

In addition, concerning teacher's feedback, the only kinds of error that are corrected are those ones that interfere in conveying meaning (Ur, 1999). In terms of learning outcomes, fluency is considered more relevant than accuracy (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). To sum up, a communicative classroom implies considerations in both instruction and evaluation.

On the whole, the Communicative Approach represents an entire paradigm in second language teaching and learning; therefore, worthy to be considered in Chilean ESL instruction as it has been reported (McKay, 2003).

2.2. The Case against Grammar

It is pertinent now to focus attention on one of the major controversies among language teachers and linguists; the relevance of teaching grammar. To teach or not to teach grammar became an important issue in the teaching of a second language since "different movements (…) put in doubt the appropriacy of traditional terms, the usefulness of an analytical and explanatory approach and the importance of grammatical accuracy" (Grauberg, 1997, p. 34). The origins of the criticism against grammar can be rooted even to the 20's (Thornbury, 1999), but it became stronger in the 60's (Grauberg, 1997). The importance of this controversy lies in the unquestionable relevant role that grammar had had so far in second language teaching: as

Rutherford (1987) points out “teaching grammar has been central to and often synonym with teaching foreign language for the past 2,500 years” (as cited in Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1998, p. 1). As noted, notwithstanding its historical relevance, the criticism against grammar is strong and essentially based on Chomsky’s and Krashen’s theories, which are explained later.

The use of grammar as a valid approach has been called into question since the Communicative Approach became fashionable. Among the communicative views of language teaching, the idea that grammar is developed naturally is one of the major arguments in favor of the rejection of grammar instruction. Such idea derives from Chomsky’s Theory of Universal Grammar (1965). From his point of view, since grammar is developed naturally in the brain, there is no need to give such importance to its formal instruction. Indeed, Chomsky believes that “[the] attempt to subvert the natural order by sticking rigidly to traditional grammar and insisting on immediate accuracy are foredoomed” (as cited in Thornbury, 1999, p. 19). However, Chomsky (1957) does not dismiss grammar instruction; he supports the idea that, “[grammatical knowledge] should support the other objectives in language teaching” (as cited in Swarbrick, 2002, p. 143). Hence, Chomsky believes that grammar instruction is not a banned content in schools; nevertheless, it should not be given priority in the language curriculum.

In addition to Chomsky’s ideas, Krashen suggests that there is a difference between acquisition and learning. Krashen (1981; 1982) argues that when people acquire a language they are not aware of the grammar rules, but they have a sense of what is right or wrong. In addition, Krashen (1982) maintains that language acquisition depends only on the environmental setting and the input received by the learner (as cited in Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). On the other hand, Krashen (1981; 1982) refers to language learning as an explicit and conscious process in which learners know, are aware of the grammar rules of the language, and the way they work. Based on this distinction, grammar instruction does not seem to be necessary in order to acquire a

language; therefore, it would bear little relevance in the ESL classroom. In fact, Krashen (*ibid*) maintains that since learning implies explicit knowledge on the language, its role in language processing is limited (as cited in Ellis, 1990). Thus, according to this author, grammar instruction represents explicitness, which he does not consider relevant and even counterproductive for language acquisition.

Thus far, it is clear that the Communicative Approach can be seen as a differing way of teaching in relation to formal grammar instruction, a fact that has discredited grammar in ESL classrooms. The grammar controversy is a consequence of the great importance that Chomsky's and Krashen's ideas have among language researchers and teachers. However, while Chomsky does not entirely discredit the role of grammatical knowledge, "so widespread was the influence of Krashen's work that it might be said to have turned grammar teaching into a transgressive activity" (Swarbrick, 2002, p. 143).

2.3. The Notion of Grammar

Certainly, the concept of grammar is controversial; however, what is it meant by grammar in this study? This section introduces critical concepts in the study of language acquisition from the point of view of grammar. First of all, the notion of grammar is introduced by presenting a brief etymological review and a general definition. In addition, grammar is differentiated from the concept of syntax. Afterward, a description of how Noam Chomsky perceives grammar is given. All these elucidations are presented in order to frame the main perceptions towards the notion grammar.

2.3.1. Introduction to the Concept of Grammar

The word grammar can trace its origins back to the ancient Greece. The history of

grammar starts with the word *gramma,* or alphabetic letter. With time, as Dikema (1961) outlines, *gramma* turned into *graphein*, which means to write (as cited in Hoffman, 2005). *Grammata,* the plural form of *graphein*, also changed into *grammatike,* meaning "the art of knowing one's letters" (*ibid*, p. 281). Regarding the English language, and as the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* states, the word *grammar* can be traced back to the Middle English word *gramere* and the Anglo-French *gramaire*, which means *learning,* keeping the essence of the meaning Greeks had given to the word (Mish, 2006). Thus, based on the etymology of the word, we can say that grammar refers to the knowledge about a language.

Explanations of the notion of grammar stress on its role as a configurative organization in language. The *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* defines grammar as "the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units such as words and phrases are combined to produce sentences in the language" (as cited in Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 231). At the same time, the *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* depicts grammar as "the characteristic system of inflection and syntax of a language" (Mish, 2006, p. 543). By the same token, Guasti (2002) describes grammar as a system of knowledge that a person has to develop in order to know a language. Following Guasti, Dykes (2007) defines grammar as "the abstract system of rules in terms of which a person's mastery of his native language can be explained" (p. 5). Thus, grammar is a system that determines how languages work in terms of both production and understanding of words and sentences. Nevertheless, this is a simplified depiction of the notion of grammar, which needs further clarification.

2.3.2. Grammar versus Syntax

Teachers and people who are involved in the language teaching world usually mistake grammar for syntax, as a recent undergraduate research paper shows: "The fact that grammar is a

wider term that includes morphology, phonetics, semantics and syntax is not usually taken into account" (Walper, 2010, p. 24). In this regard, Hoffman (2005) observes that teachers should learn more about it and make the term grammar clearer. In order to clarify such misunderstanding, the notion of syntax is contrasted with the notion of grammar in the following paragraphs.

However, before considering the difference existing between grammar and syntax, it is important to isolate the concept of syntax in the first place. The definitions that can found of "syntax" characterize it as an ordering device in language, and the very etymology of the word suggests its role in language. First of all, the English word syntax comes from the Latin word *syntaxis*, which means regular arrangement (Mish, 2006). Generally, syntax is defined as a "way in which linguistic elements are put together to form [phrases, clauses and sentences]" (*ibid*, p. 1269). In the same way, Richards and Schmidt (2002) add that syntax concerns rules of sentence formation and interrelation, which is supported by Noam Chomsky (2002) when defining syntax as "the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages" (p. 11). Hence, syntax is a determined pattern that a language follows in order to create phrases and sentences.

To conclude, the main difference between grammar and syntax is the subordination that syntax has in relation to grammar. Grammar is a general term that encompasses semantics (rules governing meaning), morphology (rules governing words), phonetics (rules governing sounds) and syntax. In this manner, syntax does not explain the meaning of a given sentence but just the role that the words are playing in it. This implies that the term grammar can be used to refer to the inquiry of a language as a whole, while syntax is the domain that remits to sentence construction and association. Thus, grammar has a larger scope because of its complete reflection

of a language; in contrast, syntax explains language functioning from a narrower perspective (Aitchison, 2008; Aarts, 2001; Fromkin & Rodman, 1993).

2.3.3. Chomsky's View of Grammar

Chomsky has been one of the most influential linguists in the field of grammar. He approached this field mostly based on the theory of Universal Grammar, which states that native speakers have an implicit and innate grammatical knowledge. In this regard, Chomsky made the distinction between *competence* and *performance*, explaining that people's *performance* in language does not reflect their underlying knowledge (Cook & Newson, 2007). Chomsky also developed the theory of Transformational-Generative Grammar, which is said to come from the ideas of Universal Grammar. This section reviews the concepts of Universal Grammar (UG), competence and performance, and Transformational-Generative Grammar (TGG) in order to widen the conceptual framework of grammar.

2.3.3.1. Universal Grammar

The Universal Grammar theory (UG) claims that human beings are born with a basic pattern in their brain, which gives them the capacity of learning languages innately. According to Chomsky, that inherent and innate human capacity is explained by a Universal Grammar. Chomsky maintains that children are born equipped with the basic but fundamental element of language. This idea is based on the fact that toddlers show to know things about language which cannot have been learnt by mere exposure. An equally significant aspect of UG is that it sets common codes or parameters that apply to all languages (e.g. subject/verb relation), but allows certain properties to change among languages (e.g. the optional omission of the subject in Spanish). Based on this latter point, UG does not explain language acquisition per se; children

need to collect data about a particular language in order to adjust UG parameters to those of that particular language. Hence, UG can be defined as a basic and natural language system that all humans are born with, which is complemented with the grammar gained through exposure to the language (Chomsky, 1965; Cook & Newson, 2007; Cook, 1985; Guasti, 2002).

2.3.3.2. Competence and Performance

In his analysis of what UG implies, Chomsky discusses the concepts of *competence* and *performance*, which he dichotomizes in terms of meaning. On the one hand, *competence* is the "speaker's-hearer's knowledge of his language" (Chomsky, 1965, p. 4). And, on the other hand, *performance* is defined as "the actual use of language in concrete situations" (*ibid*). By the same token, Canale and Swain (1980) state that, "competence refers to knowledge of grammar and other aspects of language while performance refers to actual use" (p. 3). Thus, *competence* is what people know about the language (a grammar), while *performance* is what people do with the knowledge they have on language.

But, how is this distinction related to UG? As defined before, UG is an innate capacity that human beings have, and *competence* is an implicit ability; therefore innate too. Fromkin and Rodman (1993) further explain that *competence* is "the linguistic system –the sounds, structures, meaning, words, and rules for putting all [those items] together – [which] is learned subconsciously with no awareness that rules are being learned" (p. 12). In this sense, Radford (2004) clarifies that *competence* is "the fluent native speaker's tacit knowledge of his or her language", while *performanc*e is what people actually say or understand by what someone else says on a given occasion" (p. 2). The assumption that *competence* is subconscious makes it very similar to the nature of UG; therefore, one can also assume that competence is essentially built on UG (Cook & Newson, 2007).

2.3.3.3. Transformational - Generative Grammar

Another important contribution made by Chomsky is the theory of Transformational-Generative Grammar (TGG), or just Transformational Grammar. Chomsky believes that sentences have a *deep* and a *surface structure*. The meaning that each sentence conveys is originated in its *deep structure;* while the phonetic interpretation of a sentence is a result of the *surface structure*, which is a "physical description" (Lyons, 1977, p. 80). Chomsky (1965) believes that the *deep structure* should be similar in all languages, and that the *surface structure* differs among languages until the point it conceals the *deep structure*. Thus, TTG is a theory which suggests that sentences possess an implicit construction that sets the logic from what the sentence is understood (the *deep structure*), and an overt construction that sets the context (the surface structure).

Deep structures turn into *surface structures* by a process that Chomsky calls *transformation*. The essence of the process of *transformation* in TTG is that from one *deep structure*, many *surface structures* can be formed. The first possible sentence resulting from the deep structure, called *kernel sentence,* can be the basis of many other sentences (Chomsky, 1965). The following sentences are given to set an example of *transformation* from the *deep* to *surface structure*s:

1. *The man opened the door.* (kernel sentence)
2. *The man did not open the door.*
3. *Did the man open the door?*
4. *Didn't the man open the door?*
5. *The door was opened by the man.*
6. *The door was not opened by the man.*
7. *Was the door opened by the man?*
8. *Wasn't the door opened by the man?* (Lyons, 1977, p. 75)

Additionally to the derivation in meaning that these sentences represent, for Chomsky, TTG explains the relationship in meaning that different sentences have. For instance, the active

sentence *Charlie broke the window* shares the same deep structures as *The window was broken by Charlie* because the message is the same. Hence, TTG would explain the undetermined amount of sentences that a language user can create as well as the capacity of expressing the same meaning with different words (Chomsky, 1965; Lyons, 1977; Yule, 2010).

As a conclusion, we can highlight that the term grammar can be used from many other perspectives, but the ideas presented in this section are the ones most related to the notions of grammar in second language acquisition. Terms such as Universal Grammar, competence, performance, and TGG should be at least considered in any inquiry into language acquisition.

2.4. Krashen and SLA

Having considered the ideas of Chomsky regarding grammar and language acquisition, it is now reasonable to look at Krashen's ideas, which can be as important. Krashen (1982) has five hypotheses about language acquisition related to the development of second language competence; however, this review focuses only on the Comprehensible Input and the Affective Filter hypotheses due to their pertinence to the discussion in the following chapter.

2.4.1. The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis

The Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, or just Input Hypothesis, maintains that people acquire language and make progress in their performance due to what Krashen calls *I +1*. The *I* corresponds to the level of competence in which a person already is, and *+1* represents a language repertoire, which is slightly more complex than the current level of the language learner. According to this hypothesis, "we acquire [a language] only when we understand language that contains structure that is a little beyond where we are now" (Krashen, 1982, p. 21). However, in order for a person to understand those new structures, meaningful contextualization

is necessary. In other words, a person's capacity to understand language structures that she or he has never heard before is attributable to "clues based on the situation and the context, extralinguistic information, and knowledge of the world" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 132). Hence, the essence of the Input Hypothesis is that people use the information they have, namely context and previous knowledge, to make sense of the new language features they are being exposed to.

This hypothesis strongly stresses a relation between the acquisition of a first language (L1) and a second language. Krashen (1982) believes that just as children are supplied with understandable speech by caretakers in the L1, second language learners need to be provided with a simplified, but still challenging input or teacher-talk. In addition, Krashen (*ibid*) suggests that there is a silent period in first language acquisition during which children are still developing their understanding of the language; thus, they are not ready to speak. According to this author, this silent period should be considered in second language lessons as well, in order to prevent students from using grammatical rules from their first language (Krashen, 1982; Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Thus, comprehensible input would be fundamental in second language acquisition too. However, comprehensible input is not enough per se; "[the] fact that some people who are exposed to large quantities of comprehensible input do not necessarily acquire a language successfully is accounted by Krashen's affective filter hypothesis" (Lightbown & Spada, 2010, p. 37).

2.4.2. The Affective Filter Hypothesis

Another contribution of Krashen to second language acquisition is the Affective Filter hypothesis, which suggests that emotional factors can negatively or positively affect the process of acquiring a second language. In this sense, Krashen (1982) explains that "the Affective Filter

hypothesis captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary with respect to the strength or level of their Affective Filters" (p. 38). He believes that people are not optimal for acquiring a second language if what he calls "affective filter" is high or strong. According to Krashen (*ibid*), there are three affective variables that play an important role in second language acquisition: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. What follows is a description of the Affective Filter variables.

2.4.2.1. Motivation

Either in second language learning or in any learning process, motivation can be defined as the reason of doing something (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). From a cognitive perspective, Keller (1983) defines motivation as "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect" (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 160). Lightbown and Spada (2006) mention that: "there is ample evidence that positive motivation is associated with a willingness to keep learning" (p. 63). More categorically, Alatis, Altman and P. Alatis (1981) claim that "motivation is probably the most frequently used term for explaining the success or failure of virtually complex tasks" (p. 121). Therefore, motivation is the personal eagerness or disposition to do something, which may determine achievements in learning.

Regarding second language acquisition specifically, motivation influences the disposition to learn the target language, which has a repercussion on the acquisition process effectiveness. Krashen (1982) suggests that motivated second language (L2) learners perform better than the ones who are not. In this regard, Ebata (2009) explains that motivation "produces effective second-language communicators by planting in the learners the seeds of self-confidence. It successfully makes them continuously engage themselves in learning even after they achieve the

goal" (as cited in Vyas & Patel, 2009, p. 183). Similarly, Gardner (1985) claims that motivation is the result of the satisfaction that the second language offers them (as cited in Du, 2009). Certainly, motivation is a key factor for the success of ESL learners.

2.4.2.2. Self-confidence

Self-confidence is the personal belief that an individual has about her/his capacities (Stevens, 2010*).* According to Krashen (1981), self-confidence is the behavioral result of "lack of anxiety, ongoing personality, and self-esteem" (p. 23). The importance of this variable in education lies on the fact that without self-confidence, students are likely not to try engaging in learning activities (Du, 2009). In this regard, Brown (2007) claims that "no successful cognitive or affective activity can be carried out without some degree of self-esteem, self-confidence, and belief of your own capacities for that activity" (p. 145). Therefore, self-confidence makes students dare to perform activities since they can trust their ability to do so.

Similar benefits of self-confidence can be mentioned in relation to second language acquisition. Krashen (1981) suggests that the success of an L2 learner can be determined by the degree of self-confidence that the learner has. In fact, willingness to take part in class activities makes some students more likely to monitor their own performance so that they can outperform those students who are not very confident (Brown, 2000). Thus, self-confidence allows students to be "less inhibited, and because of (…) ego strength, to make the necessary mistakes involved in language learning with less threat to [the] ego" (Brown, 1977, as cited in Krashen, 1981, p. 23).

2.4.2.3. Anxiety

In terms of language learning, anxiety is defined as a certain fear of using the language, usually in public (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Scovel (1978) suggests that anxiety "is associated with feelings of uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry" (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 151). Generalizing the term, Leaver *et al.* (2005) state that anxiety is "a kind of nervous system" (p. 93) which can be detrimental to L2 learners. Moreover, when anxiety overwhelms students, "the cognitive resources are diminished [and] abstract reasoning suffers" (Leaver *et al.*, *ibid*, p. 207). In regards to the Affective Filter hypothesis, anxiety also significantly affects the process of second language acquisition since students only succeed in acquiring a second language in a classroom where the levels of anxiety are kept low (Krashen, 1981).

To sum up, motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety are the three affective variables involved in second language acquisition. These variables should not be understood in isolation when analyzing SLA. In fact, each of these three variables has an influence on the others; therefore, a successful L2 learner is one who is motivated, confident, and has overcome anxiety. If these conditions are met, the affective filter will be low, and acquisition can occur through exposure to comprehensible input (Du, 2009; Krashen, 1981, 1982).

2.5. Learning Styles

By the same token, student's different learning styles should also be taken into account when teaching English as a second language because, in order to help students learn, teachers should know their learning styles so that they can plan accordingly (LeFever, 1995). Logan (1980) claims that "people learn – even the same material – in different ways" (as cited in Altman & James, 1980, p. 95). Hence, it is important to consider that the acquisition of knowledge will be attained in a more satisfactory way when the students' different learning styles are considered

among the activities included in the ESL lesson. To be able to understand in more detail the implications of the concept, the definition of learning styles is given along with the description of three learning styles.

2.5.1. What is a Learning Style?

A learning style is a tendency a person has to learn things in a specific way. LeFever (1995) defines learning styles as "the way in which a person sees and perceives things best" (p. 17). In the same manner, Brown (2000) refers to the learning styles as "those general characteristics of intellectual functioning (and personality type, as well) that pertain to you as an individual, and that differentiate you from someone else" (p. 114). In addition, Skehan (1991) depicts a learning style as "a general predisposition, voluntary or not, toward processing information in a particular way" (as cited in Brown, 2000, p. 114). To sum up, a learning style can be defined as the manner in which people process and learn information according to their abilities and personality. Learning styles appear then to be a critical factor for learning and instruction.

2.5.2. Types of Learning Styles and Second Language Acquisition

The amount of learning styles is large and not specific (Oxford 2003); therefore, it is practical to narrow down the analysis to one particular perspective. Fortunately, there are only three learning styles based on the perceptive sense the learner uses the most in the cognitive processes. Leaver (1998) concludes that the three main learning styles are: auditory, kinesthetic and visual, which are sensory preferences for second language learning (as cited in Leaver *et al.*, 2005). These three types are described as follows.

2.5.2.1. Visual learners

Students who are visual learners are likely to learn through visual stimuli. Leaver *et al.* (2005) suggest that "visual learners acquire new vocabulary primarily through sight; they understand grammar better when they can read about it in a book" (p. 67). In addition, Leaver (1998) distinguishes two types of visual learners: the imagists and the verbalists (as cited in Leaver *et al.*, *ibid*). The first ones can easily picture what they have read or heard in the second language by keeping the information codified in the image they create. The second ones think of the contents given to them in English as words, picturing the word itself in their brains (Leaver *et al.*, 2005). By the same token, Brown (2000) states that "visual learners tend to prefer reading and studying charts, drawings, and other graphic information" (p. 122). Figure 1 illustrates a visual verbalist learner (on the left) and a visual imagist learner (on the right).

Figure 1

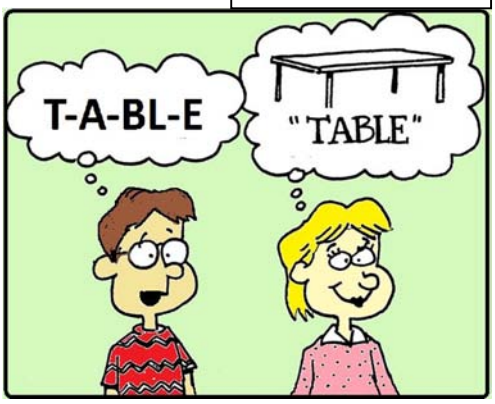


Figure 1. Adapted from " What are graphic organizers," by E. Ablett, D. Bellizzi, J. Byers, S. Cove, A. Frey, D. Guskin, J. Hanke, R. Koopmans, J. Newcomb, and C. Snitzer, 2011. Copyright 2011 by E. Ablett *et. al.*

2.5.2.2. Auditory Learners

Students who are auditory learners tend to learn more easily through sounds (Leaver *et al.*, 2005). Brown (2000) explains that, "auditory learners prefer listening to lectures and audiotapes" (p. 122). Fernández (2009) suggests that reading is likely to have little meaning to

auditory learners until they hear what is being read. In figure 2, an auditory learner is learning the word table as being said by someone else.

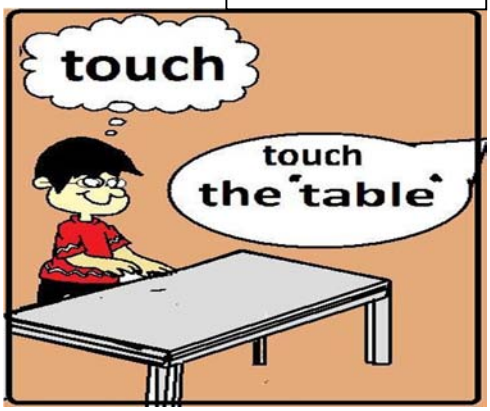
Figure 2



2.5.2.3. Kinesthetic Learners

This kind of learners shows a tendency to learn through activities that involve body movements. According to Oxford (2003), kinesthetic learners are those students who better understand content when they have the opportunity of moving or performing an action that directly relates to the content. LeFever (1995) explains that this kind of learner needs "things they can touch, feel and manipulate" (p. 105). Kinesthetic learners have a need for exploring the world and cannot be sitting for a long time (Fernandez, 2009). Leaver *et al.* (2005) further explain that kinesthetic learners "use their entire body for learning. In language classes, role plays and total physical response activities (those that require some kind of physical response, such as carrying out commands) help them learn and remember new vocabulary and grammar" (p. 69). Figure 3 illustrates a kinesthetic learner performing an action related to the verb *touch*.

Figure 3



As a conclusion, student's characteristics should be always considered by the ESL teacher. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners present preferential ways of processing information (LeFever, 1995; Leaver *et al.*, 2005; Oxford, 2003). These tendencies need to be reflected in the activities created by the teacher (LeFever, 1995). In this section, the introduction of the main learning styles was given in order to understand the relevance of acknowledging student's characteristic when teaching a second language. The following section elaborates on the kind of teaching materials selected and proposed in this research study as a means for achieving success in the ESL classroom.

2.6. Visual Aids

2.6.1. Description and Importance in Second Language Teaching

The fact that images are so important in this globalized world makes visual aids very relevant for ESL teaching, especially towards young students. Early in their lives, children become conscious about the relation existing between information in the visual and written formats. For that reason, children expect to receive visual input since they are familiarized with it to support communication. Furthermore, learning how to read partly implies using illustrations which support words in terms of their meaning in context. Therefore, the relevance those iconic

representations have both for the purpose of communication and for children's cognitive development makes visual aids significant ESL instructional materials (Vale & Feunteun, 1995).

Though visual aids are commonly related to images only, the term may refer to any teaching material that contextualizes a concept or a procedure through an iconic illustration, which goes beyond a simple image. Corder (1963) clearly defines visual aids as "anything which can be seen while the language is being spoken" (p. 85). Similarly, Kinder (1942) characterizes visual aids as the "representational and experimental materials (…) which in one way or another are used in every effective school to clarify and intensify the learners' images of the object, process, or event being studied" (p. 336). More specifically related to language instruction, Meredith (1947) explains that visual aids are the connection between any given word and the context in which such word is uttered. Meredith (*ibid*) also suggests that "visual aids must play a fundamental part and cannot be regarded as mere accessories" (p. 62). Thus, visual aids are teaching tools that help students comprehend any content through contextualization.

The ways visual aids can improve the teaching of a language are varied. By using visual aids, a teacher can provide meaningful language to learners. In this regard, Corder (1963) maintains that "the majority of objective elements in a situation which are relevant for making language meaningful are visual" (p. 85). Furthermore, Mannan (2005) remarks that visual teaching materials that "help the teacher to clarify, establish, co-relate and co-ordinate accurate concepts, interpretations and appreciations and enable him to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational, meaningful and vivid" (p. 108). Therefore, instructional visual aids can provide meaningfulness in a language class.

Specifically talking, the ESL teaching practice can also benefit from visual aids. It is evident that all the advantages for a language class can apply for an ESL class. For ESL instruction in particular, Vale and Feunteun (1995) maintain that visual aids serve as a connection

between the mother tongue and English. In addition, Chang (2006) emphasizes on the fact that "the application of visual organizers in [ESL] classes can help to create a strong communicative environment in which children are motivated to acquire English in an interactive way" (p. 4). Besides, Palmer (1937) suggests that visual aids are not a teacher-dependent teaching tool, a fact that makes language learners develop self-reliance (as cited in Meredith, 1947). Furthermore, visual aids can guarantee the understanding of the L2 input provided in the classroom (Nation & Newton, 2009). This is possible because visual aids provide conceptual scaffolding, through clues or cultural context for example, or because they account for a natural association of images and words (*ibid*; Feldman, 1976; Hinde, 1972). It follows that the use of visual aids proves not only to be crucial for L1 learners, but also for L2 students.

2.6.2. Brain Lateralization

The importance of visual aids becomes clearer when taking into account the way the brain processes language. In relation to this, Canning (1997) rightly asserts:

> It is a biological fact that the eye is not separate from the brain. The eye and brain are part of the same organ. Because human beings have evolved to have several distinct intelligences and no one general intelligence, interpretation of visuals and the use of visuals may affect learners in different ways. (As cited in Canning-Wilson, 2001, para. 23)

At the same time, Arwood and Kaulitz (2007) maintain that the visual sense is one of the primary systems, along with the acoustic sense, accountable for the "reception of meaning used for communication and language" (p. 20). To better understand the biological aspects of language processing and the role of visual information, the key idea to be considered now is that there is a lateralization of the brain regarding its functions. The brain is divided into two hemispheres which play complementary roles. The right hemisphere controls the left side of the body movements and biological processes in contrast to the left hemisphere which controls ones of the

right side (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). Additionally, perceptual and cognitive processes are also lateralized as Cook (1986, as cited in Bianki, 1993) explains:

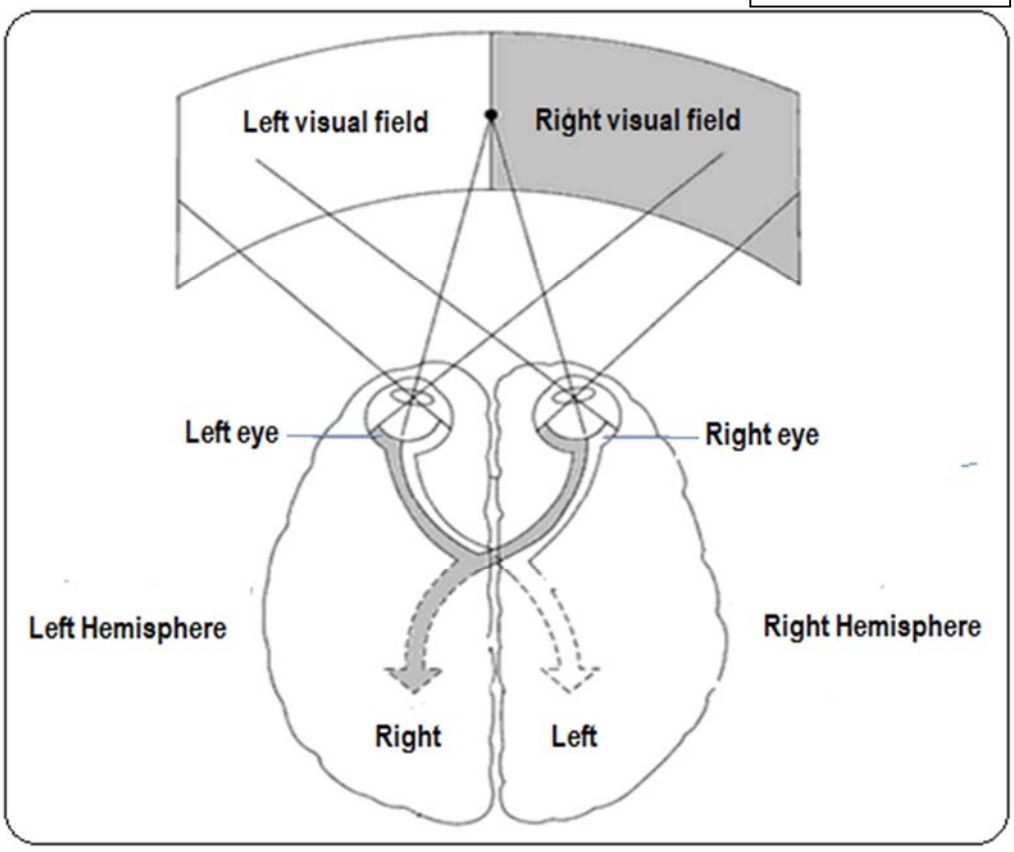
> The left hemisphere is said to be more precise, more analytic and more linear in its perception and its manipulation of the outside world. The right hemisphere is said to be more diffuse, more holistic, more geometric and more involved with the overall 'picture' when it is called upon. (p. 184)

Moreover, the left hemisphere of the brain seems to be predisposed to be in charge of speech reception and production (Aitchison, 2008; Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). In contrast, the right hemisphere is likely to process visual and spatial input as well as to develop abilities of the same sort (Smith, 2004; Kalat, 2009; Davidson & Hugdahl, 1995). Hence, there is an apparent difference between the roles of the brain hemispheres.

As mentioned, the visual information is mainly processed in the right hemisphere. Such process can be summarized as follows. The eye perception is restricted to two spatial parameters called visual fields. Both eyes have a left and a right visual field. The information from the visual fields is receipted by the eyes, and sent to the right hemisphere in which it is stored. This storage process is called memory. People can use their memory either to recall or retrieve visual information. If recalled, visual information is stored in the short-term memory; if retrieved, it is stored in the long-term memory. The difference between recalling visual information and retrieving it is that the former is only done by focusing on or choosing to remember what has been seen, while the latter needs association with other data already stored. (Carroll, 2008; Loritz, 1999; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011). Figure 4 illustrates how visual information is received and stored in the right hemisphere.

Despite the marked functions of each hemisphere −the visual processing in the right side of the brain, for instance, − it has also been suggested and sustained that language processing can also occur in the right hemisphere due to an apparently flexibility in the lateralization (Richards, 2009) up to a certain age. In relation to this, Blakemore and Frith (2005) claim that regardless the

Figure 4



Adapted from "Psychology of Language," by David Carroll, 2008. Copyright 2008 by David Carroll.

fact that "one hemisphere dominates over the other in terms of our experience of the world and our actions, both sides of the brain work together in almost all situations, tasks, and processes" (p. 60). Specifically for language processing, Carroll (2008) explains that "the right hemisphere is better prepared than the left to appreciate some of the pragmatic aspects of language [e.g. to differentiate sarcasm from a friendly comment]" (p. 374). Mitchell and Crow (2005) further clarify that:

> [The right hemisphere] is the primary mediator of a set of paralinguistic or pragmatic phenomena that accompany the words of an utterance and that can modify or influence its meaning. These higher order language functions are crucial to understanding someone's true communicative intent and thereby integrating effectively into society. (p. 964)

Particularly talking about visual processing, Lincoln (2007) reports that "perceptual information, such as how objects look, (…) is incorporated during language processing −giving rise to

language comprehension" (p. 1). In addition, Emmorey and Lane (2000) state that "the visual [cues are] used in a complementary way to convey paralinguistic information, including turn taking and other cues that serve to maintain and regulate interaction" among language speakers (p. 114). Rephrasing, both hemispheres work together to make sense comprehend and produce language.

2.6.3. Types of Visual Aids

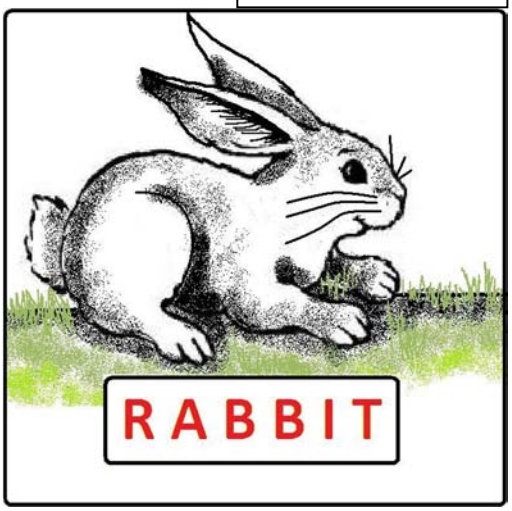
Regarding ESL teaching, visual aids can be categorized into three major types: pictures, visual organizers, and films (Richards & Rolati, 2010). This categorization is based on the type of media that these visual aids use. A description of the three types of visual aids is given as follows taking into account the processes that take place in the brain by using these kinds of instructional materials.

2.6.3.1. Pictures

Pictures, the most utilized visual aid, can be used mostly to "provide association for the learning of new words" (Richards & Rolati, 2010, p. 9). This association implies that second language learners can decode the information represented in pictures by linking it to their background knowledge of the language (Omaggio, 1979). In relation to this, Hilmo (2006) states that "pictorial aids provide an important support system upon which language learners may lean while building a comprehension bridge from the known to the unknown; or stated another way, enabling learners to rename L1 concepts with L2 labels" (p. 28). Likewise, Canning-Wilson (2001) suggests that a picture "leads the learners into drawing out language from their own knowledge and personal experiences through exposure to, immersion to the stimuli presented before them" (para. 32). By making connections with previous knowledge, the language learner

is able to create a mental representation of the new words or language features presented; therefore, that new knowledge is more likely to be stored in the long-term memory (Elkins, 2008; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011). In this sense, Astorga (1999) suggests that pictures 'facilitate' the comprehension of the written words, e.g. in a story, "by making the language of the story not only meaningful but also memorable" (p. 212). This is possible because of the contextual role of pictures, which can illustrate places, objects, people, etc. (Wright, 1989). Therefore, pictures are graphic representations that can help students retain information and understand the way the language works in context. Tangible flashcards and picture books, for instance, belong to this category. Figure 5 illustrates a tangible flashcard.

Figure 5



2.6.3.2. Visual Organizers

Visual organizers are teaching tools that present content in an arranged way. Shumin (2004) defines this type of teaching tools as "spatial representations or visual displays of the conceptual framework or key elements of the subject matter in a given area" (p. 58). In addition, Walker and Schmidt (2004) explicate that "visual organizers (…) help students generate ideas,

record and organize information and see relationships" (p. 39). By the same token, Dustman and Parker (2005) declare that this kind of visual aids allows teachers to show complex relationships, clarify concepts, organize ideas by making use of a few words; therefore, visual organizers simplify instruction. Charts, maps and diagrams can be classified as visual organizers (Richards & Rolati, 2010). Figure 6 shows a colorful diagram that explains the order in a sentence that changes from a statement to a question.

Figure 6

Subject	Auxiliary verb	Mainverb	Complement
You	–	Study	English
Do	You	Study	English

2.6.3.3. Films

In language teaching, any projected visual aid can be considered as a film (Richards & Rolati, 2010). Based on that, slides presentations, clips, videos, and projected flashcards are formats of films as visual aids (*ibid*). It is evident that the only difference between pictures and projected flashcards or visual aids is that these latter visual aids can be seen by an entire class as the same time. Focusing on clips and videos, Canning-Wilson (2000) describes them as "the selection and sequence of messages in an audio-visual context" (para. 1). Videos can make students focus more on the activity and pay attention to the words involved in it (Richard and Rolati, 2010). At the same time, it has been concluded that this attention can lead to incidental learning of new vocabulary (Lin, 2000). Therefore, films, especially in the format of videos, are

useful to emulate real linguistic situations, which can make possible a wider compression of the target language. Figure 7 illustrates a film in the format of a slide presentation.

Figure 7



Adapted from "Daily Activities Flascards," by ESLFlashcards.com, 2011. Copyright 2011 by ESLFlashcards.com.

Certainly, there are several other kinds of visual aids that can be used for ESL instruction. However, the classification given here attempts to enclose the most common formats of visual aids: pictures, visual organizers, and films. With respect to the importance of visual aids, their role is much more than ornamental in the second language classroom (Meredith, 1947). Visual teaching materials not only can address the visual learners, but also the majority of the students in a language class since images are so important in this globalized world (Vale & Feunteun, 1995). In addition, visual aids help the teacher convey and clarify meaning (Mannai, 2005). Hence, the relevance of visual aids in the ESL classroom should not be underestimated.

This chapter has presented several important aspects regarding second language acquisition as well as ESL teaching. In general, the Communicative Approach has gained importance in the field of ESL teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Brown, 2000). Such phenomenon has led to many ESL teachers to discredit grammar as a valid content (Grauberg, 1997; Swarbrick, 2002). Considering those antecedents, the concept of grammar has been elucidated as well as a description of the main theories regarding second language acquisition: Chomsky's UG and TGG, and Krashen's Input and Affective Filter hypotheses. In addition, a selected framework with a description and examples of learning styles and visual aids was given in order to address and consider the students' particularities. Under the premise that instructional materials can make the difference in the ESL classroom, all the concepts presented in this theoretical framework conjugate into the following chapter, in which we discuss the importance of grammar in ESL teaching and learning, and the role of visual aids as context providers to help students obtain a more effective understanding of the way language works in real life.

3. Chapter III: Discussion

3.1. Delimitations

Before entering the discussion itself, it is pertinent to clarify some focal points in this chapter. First of all, what is it meant by grammar in this discussion? As seen in the previous chapter, grammar is a general notion regarding language that is usually mistaken for syntax (Walper, 2010). In this chapter, the concept of grammar is understood as a synonym of the entire language system, not only syntax, which is only an element (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). It then follows that language teaching contents such as vocabulary, parts of speech, pronunciation of words, etc., are all included here under the notion of grammar. In the same way, like it has been suggested, it is assumed that to know a language means to know its grammar (Aitchison, 2008; Aarts, 2001; Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). Therefore, when referring to ESL language contents or grammar knowledge, not only syntax is being meant as it may be taken for granted.

Another central aspect to take into consideration is the importance of the Communicative Approach in the Chilean ESL curriculum (McKay, 2003). The Communicative Approach emphasizes the idea that a second language should be taught implicitly (Ellis, 1997). However, the present discussion does not focus on that issue since it has also been claimed that both implicit and explicit instructions play an important role in the ESL classroom (e.g. Larsen-Freeman, 1991, as cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001). This latter position is the one adopted in this discussion. The relevance of the Communicative Approach cannot be discarded in favor of the teaching of grammar and vice versa. Based on that premise, a way in which grammar can be taught in the framework of a Communicative Approach becomes significant for Chilean ESL education.

The present analysis develops two ideas: the importance of grammar in the acquisition of English as a second language on the one hand, and the use of visual aids to improve the teaching

and learning of grammar on the other. The discussion of the importance of grammar is considered here a primary point since there has been a strong debate on including grammar in the teaching of a second language. We strongly believe that visual aids can enhance the teaching of grammatical features in the communicative ESL classroom. Pertinently, certain references to the Chilean context are given, so as to establish the antecedents for the final conclusions.

3.2. Why to Teach English through Grammar?

Although since the emergence of the Communicative Approach grammar has been discredited (as it has been mistakenly considered as language structure only), teaching a second language through grammar can indeed offer many advantages when complemented with visual aids. In this section, the reasons and benefits that support the use of grammar in ESL situations are presented from the perspective of two authors: Odlin (1994) and Thornbury (1999). In addition to the advantages of grammar instruction, the relation that grammar has with the Communicative Approach is made explicit because such connection is commonly perceived as nonexistent.

3.2.1. Pedagogical Grammar Benefits According to Odlin

Odlin (1994) elaborated on the use of grammar in the light of what is called Pedagogical Grammar, which is basically the main method used by ESL teachers. This type of grammar teaching, according to Odlin (*ibid*), has four benefits. Firstly, the development of independent learners: students with a moderate knowledge of English grammar can monitor their own performance in contexts outside the classroom. Secondly, class time constraints: the limited time of ESL lessons makes it difficult for teachers and students to fully cover the contents. Thirdly, the avoidance of knowledge fossilization: understanding of the English grammar will allow students

to supervise themselves and avoid errors. Fourthly, the expert guidance role: language learners need to have a well-prepared teacher for them to learn a second language more efficiently. These four benefits are presented in more detail as follows.

3.2.1.1. Independent L2 Learners

As mentioned in *Perspectives on Pedagogical Grammar* by Odlin (1994), "time constraints make it virtually impossible for teachers to focus their student's attention on every [content] worth considering" (p. 12). Therefore, language learners need to compensate what teachers are not able to cover during the classroom time with what they can learn by themselves out of the class. With respect to this, Nunan (1988) suggests that second language lessons are not likely to be completed, which makes it urgent for student to "become independent analysts of the target language" by means of grammatical knowledge (as cited in Odlin, *ibid*) By the same token, Leaver *et al.* (2005) claim that, "the more you can manage your own learning while benefiting from formal instruction, the more likely it is that you will have tools for learning in unstructured settings too" (p. 201). It is relevant to mention that the independency the learner can achieve depends on both knowledge of the language, namely grammar, and affective factors (*ibid*). Therefore, grammar can give language learners the ability to continue with their own language learning process outside the school so that teachers can focus on the essential contents in the classroom.

3.2.1.2. Time Spent in L2 Learning

Closely related to the previous point, ESL lessons time constraints is a considerable motivation for pedagogical grammar. In fact,

> [the] time spent in language courses is only a fraction of what is needed to develop thoroughgoing proficiency in a second language. In many educational systems around the world, students do not begin to study a second language until secondary school. In about four years of instruction, one hour per day (in a five-day school week) might be devoted to second language instruction. In school systems with an academic year of about ten months (…) the maximum amount of classroom time spent on a second language in four years would be 800 hours (equals 5 hours X 4 weeks X 10 months X 4 years). (Odlin, 1994, p. 11)

In this regard, the time the Chilean Ministry of Education provides for second language classes is not enough to reach a high level of proficiency. For example, the Chilean educational system gives only three hours per week to the English learning classes in fifth grade (MINEDUC, 2004). Even though the purpose of the Chilean Ministry of Education is to help students communicate in the English language as accurately as possible (*ibid*), the amount of time is not sufficient for students to reach the level of English that they need. For that reason, students require knowledge of English grammar in order to supervise themselves and improving their skills of English language when they are outside the classroom.

3.2.1.3. Knowledge Fossilization

In the process of learning a second language, students tend to make the same sort of mistakes because of their first language. The persistence of those mistakes is known as fossilization. Brown (2000) defines this phenomenon as “the relative permanent incorporation of incorrect linguistics forms into a person’s second language competence” (p. 231). In relation to language learning, Odlin (1994) explains that students need to be aware of their mistakes when learning; otherwise they will perpetuate divergences in their speech in L2. In addition, Caputo, Palosaari, and Pickering (2003) claim that one way to avoid fossilization among non-native speakers of English is “enabling [them] to understand and use language structures more effectively, and so communicate more effectively” (pp. 18-19). Even Krashen (1981) points out that, “it is reliably the case that more instruction means higher proficiency, while more exposure

does not necessarily mean more proficiency in ESL" (p. 43). Regarding the Chilean context, knowledge fossilization is aggravated by the small amount of hours allotted to studying English because students do not have many chances to obtain feedback of their performance during class hours. Thus, in order for Chilean ESL students to become proficient, they are required to gain formal knowledge of English, namely grammar.

3.2.1.4. Expert Guidance

In order to learn a second language, it is important to have the proper guidance to support the knowledge the students are gaining by themselves. In this respect, teachers should be directly involved in the learning process of their L2 learners; therefore, their help is essential for students to fulfill tasks and reach a good level of proficiency. In this sense and after more than two decades of research, Ellis (1990) suggests that "learners who receive formal instruction outperform those who do not; that is, they learn more rapidly and they reach higher levels of ultimate achievement" (as cited in Odlin, 1994, pp. 13-14). Odlin (1994) considers grammatical studies within that formal instruction of the language; so, if students are taught grammar by an expert, they will be able to surpass the performance of the students who are not. Here, the expert guidance is not a contradictory idea to the independent learner; students need expert guidance during class hours while they need to be independent learners outside school.

3.2.2. Thornbury and Grammar Instruction Practicality

Scott Thornbury (1999), in his book *How to Teach Grammar*, focuses attention on the issues related to grammar instruction. He presents arguments in favor of the teaching of grammar by addressing ideas that go from grammar as a devise that create sentences, which reminds of Chomsky's Transformational Generative Grammar, to grammar as a consideration of students'

expectation. Six of the seven arguments presented by Thornbury are explained below (the fossilization argument has been omitted because it coincides with Odlin's).

3.2.2.1. The Sentence-machine Argument

The study of grammar allows people to gain knowledge on L2 regularities, which makes possible the creation of an infinite number of sentences. Since grammar sets a language pattern (a regularity), L2 learners only need to adjust to that pattern. Having familiarized with that pattern, students will be able to produce an unlimited number of sentences from the limited numbers of items that the learner can retain and learn in the classroom. Thornbury (1999) explains that "teaching grammar offers the learner the means for potentially limitless linguistic creativity" (p. 15). Grammar as a sentence machine does not necessarily limit its scope only to syntactical arrangements which the language learner needs to learn, but also to other elements of grammar as can be inferred from Thornbury's words as he wrote: "the number of possible new sentences is constrained (…) by the vocabulary at the learners' command and his or her creativity" (*ibid*). This latter point is better understood if we take into account that words and creativity are related to morphology and semantics respectively (Fromkin & Rodman, 1993). Thus, the capacity to create an indefinite number of sentences is a potential result of grammar instruction.

3.1.2.2. The Fine-tuning Argument

Grammar instruction is helpful to overcome inaccuracies that do not allow total understanding of the message. For example, the sentences *Last night I was boring in my house* and *After speaking a lot of time with him I thought that him attracted me* are misleading in terms of the message that they convey . Teaching grammar "serves as a corrective" to the ambiguity present in these sentences (Thornbury, 1999, p. 15). In this sense, Swain (1985) explains that it is

difficult to build understandable sentences without knowledge on grammatical structures. By the same token, Caputo *et al.* (2003), claim that "grammar structures are fundamental sources of misunderstanding" (p. 19). Thus, grammar instruction is necessary for L2 learners to polish their performance and reach higher level of communicative proficiency by avoiding, for instance, confusing messages.

3.2.2.3. The Advance-organizer Argument

Grammar instruction allows learners to notice language features that otherwise would go unnoticed because there is no awareness of them. Low (1977) highlights that awareness increases hypothesis testing and morphological rule formation. He also states that a high level of awareness, as opposed to incidental attention, makes L2 learners perform considerably better than those who do not focus attention on grammatical features (Thornbury, 1999; Low as cited in Gabrys, 2002). In the same sense, Schmidt (1990) claims that "noticing is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input into [knowledge or competence]" (p. 129). Moreover, Schmidt (n.d.) explains a fluent L2 speaker has certainly gone through a noticing process of grammatical features that helped her/him acquire those features later in the learning process (as cited in Thornbury, 1999). Therefore, noticing grammatical features does not only help language learners learn about the language as one may suppose, but also serves as a basis for future acquisition.

3.2.2.4. The Discrete-item Argument

Grammar represents a more manageable outcome in the teaching and learning process. Since any language may be seen as a very complex item to handle for a second language learner, grammar embodies an "apparently finite set of rules [which] can help to reduce the apparent

enormity of the learning task for both teacher and students" (Thornbury, 1999, p.16). In addition, grammatical items fit better in syllabi than do merely communicative tasks such as "narratives, instructions, and phone conversations, [which] are often taught to be large and unruly for the purposes of a lesson design" (*ibid*, p. 17). Therefore, grammar instruction is not only beneficial for students but also for teachers and their teaching practice.

3.2.2.5. Rule-of-law Argument

The fact that grammar is associated with rules is beneficial in those educational institutions where rules are considered of high importance. There are many schools that put emphasis on rules because their students are disruptive or not motivated. Grammar gives the language lesson the factor of a 'learnable rule' that is much more likely to be transmitted to students of these schools. In this sense, Thornbury (1999) suggests that "allowing learners simply to experience the language through communication may simply be out of the question [with unruly and unmotivated students]" (p. 17). Therefore, grammar is an adjustable teaching item in schools that value and need rules.

3.2.2.6. The Learner-expectation Argument

The avoidance of formal grammar instruction may lead teachers to encounter unmotivated students. Students may have expectations on how the language course, in this case the ESL course, is going to be. In many cases, students have expectations of a new class based on the experiences they have had in previous ones. In Chile, most of the students are very likely to expect a systematic and grammar-based lesson. In this way, the instructors who "ignore this expectation by encouraging learners to simply experience language is likely to frustrate and

alienate [students]" (Thornbury, 1999, p. 17). Hence, grammar instruction meets the expectations of many students, preventing them from dissatisfaction towards the class.

3.2.3. Grammar Instruction and the Communicative Classroom

It has been supported that grammar formal instruction is beneficial from the point of view of language acquisition taking into account how language works and how a language classroom usually works as well. However, what is the role of grammar particularly in the communicative classroom? Is it grammar a forbidden content in the Communicative Approach? As follows, these questions are answered.

Contrary to what many people may think, the use of grammar in the field of language teaching is not a transgression to the Communicative Approach. As proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), learners of a language need to have grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competence. Altogether, these four components form what is called communicative competence, which is an essential element of the Communicative Approach (*ibid*). Littlewood (1981) also mentions that " one of the most characteristic features of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language" (as cited in Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 66). Moreover, Thornbury (1999) claims that communicative competence, the understood goal of the communicative language teaching, is better achieved through creating meanings by communicating and "grammar is a way of tidying these meanings up" (p. 25). Therefore, grammar and the Communicative Approach are not mutually exclusive.

Following with the connection between the Communicative Approach and grammar, it is necessary to refer to the way grammar enhances the communicative classroom. In this regard, it has been declared that, at any rate, a considerable part of the message succeeds to be conveyed

because of the grammar that the language learner uses (Caputo *et. al.*, 2003). In the same way, Widdowson (1990) argues that language learners can use grammatical knowledge as a means of bridging words and the context where they are uttered, which at the same time permits learners to achieve communicative competence (as cited in Tomlinson, 2003). More emphatically, Littlewood (n.d.) asserts that "in a Communicative Approach to language teaching, grammar is not an insignificant side-issue: it is the very means by which learners become able to fulfill their communicative needs" (p. 13). Hence, in a communicative second language classroom, grammar knowledge is necessary for communication in the target language.

It must also be mentioned that a communicative classroom should consider grammar instruction in order to avoid mere communicative tasks, which can be disadvantageous. In this sense, the Department of Education of Early Childhood Education of Virginia, Unites States (2008) affirms that:

> In order to redress the limitations of purely communicative methodology, it is now widely accepted that formal grammatical features must be made explicit; however, this must be integrated with communicative activities in order to avoid a return to grammar based approaches which focused predominantly on de-contextualized structures. (p. 19)

By the same token, Larsen-Freeman (1991) suggests that "[communicative competence] cannot be attained solely through exposure to meaningful input" (as cited in Hinkel & Fotos, 2002, p. 5). Moreover, it has been claimed that in order to reach high levels of second language proficiency, communicative tasks are not enough and formal grammar teaching appears to be necessary (Ellis, 1996, as cited in Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). Taking into account such statements, it is appropriate to consider the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1981; 1982), but to assume that mere exposure to comprehensible input seems to be radical. Hence, not considering grammar within a communicative classroom may be detrimental for the second language learning process.

Thus, grammar can be seen as a part, a complementation or even a central element of communicative competence. First of all, grammatical knowledge is part of the communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). In addition, formal instruction of grammar helps second language learners to convey meaning (Thornbury, 1999; Caputo *et.al.*, 2003). Moreover, grammatical instruction prevents teachers from dogmatic communicative methodologies (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002). It can be assumed then that "[the] Communicative Approach, properly conceived, does not involve the rejection of grammar" (Widdowson, 1990, as cited in Tomlinson, 2003, p. 329).

Up to now, the benefits of grammar instruction and the relation between the concept of grammar and the Communicative Approach have been elucidated. Odlin (1994) and Thornbury (1999) give evidence of the importance of grammatical knowledge for the acquisition of ESL. Those benefits are related to the factors that a structured classroom implies. The language learners' autonomy in and out of school, the avoidance of language errors perpetuation, and better language performance are all advantages if grammar is taught in a mainstream ESL classroom (Odin, 1994). Moreover, grammar instruction not only represents practicality regarding ESL courses time constraints, it also signifies providing ESL learners with the language creating and polishing device, allowing students to focus attention on grammatical features by themselves, thus simplifying the language learning process, adjusting to students who are accustomed to rules, and meeting students' likely expectations of the class format (Thornbury,1999). In addition, grammatical knowledge is not rejected in the Communicative Approach as one may assume; in fact, it can play an essential role (Hinkel & Fotos, 2002; Littlewood, n.d; Odlin, 1994; Thornbury, 1999). Therefore, it can be said that grammar is not given the credit that it deserves.

3.3. ESL Grammar Teaching through Visual Aids

3.3.1. Visual Aids and its Potential Communicative Role

As suggested by McKay (2003), the Communicative Approach plays a major role in the Chilean ESL curricula. However, there seems to be no teachers who can perform communicative teaching in Chile (Sheehan, 2009, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). Then, having supported the relevance of grammar, what follows now is to elucidate a beneficial way to teach ESL grammar in the light of the Communicative Approach in Chile. What can ESL teachers do for improving their teaching practice? It is important to note that the approach presented in this discussion is neither the only nor the best way to teach ESL grammar; nonetheless, it may be very beneficial for teachers to use it. We now explore and clarify how using visual aids in the Chilean ESL classroom can improve the process of teaching and learning grammar.

Visual aids can signify a suitable tool for a communicative classroom. The Communicative Approach stresses the idea of communication by making use of non-verbal as well as verbal data since communication is not limited only to words (Wright, 1989; Arndt & Pesch, 1984). Actually, the strategic competence, one element of the communicative competence, is defined as being able to make use of non-verbal information in order to cope with insufficient proficiency in the language (Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006). In this sense, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) declare that "[language] processing is made possible both through non-linguistic means (…), and through linguistic means," (p. 53). Examples of expressions of non-verbal information are gestures, body movements, and body positions, all things that express intention, general dispositions and feelings (Sanders, 1987; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor, 2006). Non-verbal information, defined as the data transmitted through the unconscious communication of someone's behavior, "enables the communication not only of more information, but of different, and more complex messages" (Sanders, 1987, p. 147). Wright (1989) further explains

that: “the non-verbal information helps [people] to predict what [something] might be about, and that ability to predict helps [people] to recognize meaning more quickly” (p. 137). Then, since language instruction occurs in a ‘simulated context’, one way in which the non-verbal information of real-language use is represented in the classroom is through visual aids (Wright, 1989; Arndt & Pesch, 1984). Considering the fact that non-verbal information is mostly visual input conveyed by someone while speaking, visual aids can emulate that input and help second language students to understand people’s messages without totally understand the verbal input thus developing strategic competence for comprehending the target language.

Closely related to the preceding point, visual aids also account for the contextualization and input necessary in a communicative classroom. The Input hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1981; 1982) suggests that people acquire a second language by means of comprehensible input. Such comprehension is possible because learners are able to understand the input by using their previous knowledge and experiences, which they can relate to the new information about the language (*ibid*). Visual aids are sources of comprehensible input as Nation and Newton (2009) state: “to ensure that input can be understood requires the use of visual and contextual support for new language” (p. 21). Furthermore, when the mere verbal input is not yet meaningful, visual cues like visual aids can help second language learners reveal the meaning of unknown words or syntactic structures (Piske & Young-Scholten, 2009). This idea is also supported by MacLeod (1980) who believes that there is a close relationship between linguistics statements and the visual scene they are representing. In addition, Saraswati (2004) explains how videos, for instance, have the potential of contextualizing and, at the same time, complementing spoken language for students to have a better understanding of what is being said:

> For example, the words “I’m sorry I’m late” evoke different values in different contexts: at an office, at school, at home or at the restaurant. [Visual data] add to the importance of an utterance. They reveal attitudes -- there’s is a difference in the meaning conveyed by words said with frown or a smile. (p. 114)

Mukherjee and Roy (2003) also found that when visual aids are used to contextualize spoken speech, students can understand 30% more than without the visual support. Hence, the main feature of visual aids is their contextual role, which may be functional in a second language classroom.

From a more rhetorical analysis, the relevance of Chomsky's ideas in the development of the Communicative Approach leads the discussion into a brief elucidation of how the given characteristics of visual aids are related to UG and TGG. Let us remember that Chomsky (1965) believes that language is attributable to the existence of an innate Universal Grammar. Referring to this idea, Gozemba (1975) suggests that, "if there is indeed something approaching a universal form of grammar for speech, it is possible to consider certain universal form in visuals" (as cited in Moore and Dwyer, 1994, p. 7). More categorically, Smith (2004) explains that "the rules of grammar that comprise our competence are like the rules of visual perception" (p. 155). However, what is this presumable relation? It has been claimed that the innate grammar described by Chomsky derives from a visual representation of a certain context. In this regard, Feldman (1976) explains:

> [That] letters and words [are] originated in visual images. The earliest written symbols were not copies of sounds; they were pictures of objects. [Afterward,] they evolved into pictures of ideas. Phonic symbols, images of symbolic sounds, grew out of [pictures of objects and sounds]. In learning, to read phonic symbols—letters—it was and is necessary to forget what symbols look like and to remember only the sounds they stand for. (pp. 196-197)

In addition, Hinde (1972) suggests that non-verbal information, e.g. visual context, can be equal in nature to UG; moreover, it would resemble somehow to TTG as he says that "superficial manifestations [of visual information] are infinitely varied, [and] there seem to be uniformities of a structural kind" (p. 343). It is important to clarify that the mentioned 'superficial manifestation' would be, for Hinde (*ibid*), the surface structure of the visual language, while the 'structural uniformities' would be the deep structures. Then, we may at least conjecture that the nature of the

information provided by visual aids can be an innate process, same as UG. Therefore, if we consider that the UG and TGG theories explain the language phenomenon from a natural perspective, we may also affirm that visual aids are a way to approach language teaching in a natural-like way.

Considering more practical implications, it could be said that visual aids can lower the affective filter. Krashen (1981; 1982) supports the idea of motivation as a variable that can affect the acquisition of a second language. In this sense, it has been supported that visual aids have a good influence on the students' motivation to learn (Chang, 2006; Mannan, 2005). Generally speaking, as Krishnan (1987) asserts, "teaching aids brighten up the classroom and bring more variety and interest into language lessons" stimulating learners to speak (as cited in Saraswati, 2004, p. 119). Visual aids in particular can be very motivating for young children. In this regard, Piaget and Inhelder (2000) argue that "because young children have little knowledge of the living world and developing conceptions, they need a large amount of visual information" (as cited in Arif & Hashim, 2009, p. 3). This need for visual information is reflected in children's tendency to draw what they want to say, and in their attention to pictures (Arif & Hashim, 2009). Support for this position can be found in Vale and Feunteun (1995) as they state that "teachers can use visual aids to (…) provide support and motivation to early reading and writing in English" by taking advantage of children's preference (p. 106). Additionally, Ling (2009) concludes that films, as a visual instructional material, can build ESL students' motivation by "familiarizing learners with the target culture, and making classes more interesting" (p. 21). This interest apparently arises from the enthusiasm children have toward watching movies or videos, which can turn into a positive attitude towards language learning [if the teacher creates] challenging yet achievable learning tasks loved by students" (*ibid*). The motivation that students have because of visual aids can surely be linked to the importance of the visual input in our globalized world (Vale &

Feunteun, 1995). It is possible then to generalize that if ESL teachers make use of visual aids in their classes, their students will be more likely to learn because of the low affective filter derived from motivation.

So far, it has been suggested that visual aids are practical instructional materials to create a communicative scenario. Visual aids emulate the non-verbal information present in real-life situations. In addition, they provide comprehensible input. Besides, the nature of the information provided by visual aids is innate. Moreover, they are potentially motivating. Taking this information into consideration, using visual aids to teach grammar would represent a way to implement the Communicative Approach, in the Chilean ESL classrooms. In this way we can take advantage of the current situation in Chile, in which the most utilized teaching approach is the Grammar Translation method.

3.3.2. Types of Visual Aids and their Benefits for Second Language Teaching

In the continuous process of guaranteeing children's learning, the characteristics of different types of visual aids can be very advantageous for second language teaching. We already have addressed some features of the three types of visual aids: pictures, visual organizers, and films. Let us remember that pictures are iconic representations that can allow second language students to store new information in the long-term memory, and understand the way the language works in context by means of non-verbal information (Astorga, 1999; Canning - Wilson, 2001; Elkins, 2008; Hilmo, 2006; Omaggio, 1979; Richards & Rolati, 2010; Tuckman & Monetti, 2011; Wright, 1989). Based on the relevance of the image in this globalize world (Vale & Feunteun, 1995), the importance of the data that pictures provide is assumable and already addressed. The other two types of visual aids, visual organizers and films, do not necessarily

provide the same kind of information. These two types of visual aids have relevant particularities regarding the formats they have and the input they provide.

The value of visual organizers is understood when taking into account how they are constructed. Its design is made in such a way so as to retrieve students' background knowledge and making explicit its relation to the new knowledge (Shumin, 2004). More precisely, Karen Olsen (1995) states that "the brain is a pattern-seeking device in search of meaning and that learning is the acquisition of mental programs for using what we understand" (as cited in Dustman & Parker, 2005, p. 4). In the same sense, Sprenger (1999) maintains that visual organizers are one of the best tools for people to create meaningful association, which, as it has been reported, is the way new information is stored in the long-term memory (as cited in *ibid*). In short, visual organizers are tools that serve to arrange ideas by eliciting connections between them, which at the same time emulates the way the brain processes meaningful information.

In relation to films, we now narrow their scope to videos since they are richer and different in format than projected flashcards or slides presentations, which are mainly static images. Videos are multimedia instructional materials, which can not only convey meaning through visual input, but also through auditory input (Canning - Wilson, 2000). Thus, students can relate every utterance with a specific visual context. In this manner, Lonergam (1984) maintains:

> Videos bring a slice of real life into the classroom. [They] present the complete communicative situation. Language learners not only hear the dialogue, they also see the participants in the surrounding where there communication take place. This visual information not only leads to a fullest comprehension of the spoken language, but can also benefit learners in a number of other ways. (as cited in Garza, 1996, p. 3)

Moreover, since videos present, orally or visually, a large amount of different messages, students can gain cultural knowledge about language, and learn vocabulary incidentally (Canning - Wilson, 2001; Garza, 1996; Lin, 2004). Hence, videos are a source of language input that

encloses almost every element of language usage, providing second language students with a bigger source of comprehension than do other teaching aids.

3.4. Assumptions for the Chilean ESL Context

Having reported the characteristics of visual aids and their benefits for second language instruction, we need now to submit to the Chilean context. For this purpose, we should remember the main weaknesses in Chilean ESL teaching. First, Chilean ESL teaching does not seem to be communicative. Second, the time allotted for ESL classes is not enough to cover the contents in the curriculum. Taking into account these two antecedents, we now refer to the advantages of visual aids.

Chilean ESL teachers are not performing communicative teaching in spite of the emphasis that the MINEDUC puts on the Communicative Approach (Sheehan, 2009, as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). In this regard, MacKay (2003) concludes that these teachers do not even take advantage of group work as a communicative device in the classroom. Moreover, a recent research paper reveals that, though the Communicative Approach is encouraged by the Ministry of Education, ESL teachers are primarily using the Grammar-Translation method to teach the language (Gutiérrez & Peña, 2011). Considering that the Communicative Approach emerged as a rejection to traditional grammar methods mostly represented by the Grammar-Translation method (Ellis, 1997), it should be claimed that there is an incongruity between what the MINEDUC proposes and what teacher are doing within the classroom.

Bearing this information in mind, our belief is that teachers need to take advantage of teaching grammar rules that are already being taught. We refer to grammar rules in the ESL teaching as the presentation of structural content of the language. We believe that it could be favorable for the ESL teaching if, instead of only using translation and mere explicitation, rules

were introduced by the contextualization of their functions. Our assumption is that teaching grammar in such a structural way adjusts to the students' characteristics. Regarding this, Thornbury (1999) maintains that many second language students are so accustomed to systematic lessons that emphasize grammar rules, that they expect these rules; therefore, if those rules are not part of the lesson, students may feel unmotivated. Since these rules have had a strong emphasis in the Chilean classrooms because of the usage of the Grammar-Translation method, it would be too radical if the language was taught without rules. However, we believe that the teaching of ESL grammar needs to be complemented with visual aids to introduce grammar rules in a more meaningful way.

Regarding Chilean ESL lessons time constraints, we believe that the contextual role of pictures is particularly useful for the Chilean ESL classroom. The non-verbal information that pictures transmit can help teachers reduce the amount of time they spend on explaining a task or introducing new vocabulary. In relation to this, Odlin (1994) maintains student's grammatical knowledge allows second language teachers to better make use of time by focusing on the essential curricular contents. Consequently, if Chilean ESL teachers made use of pictures to teach grammar, they would have double possibilities of occupying the time allotted to the class in a more efficient way.

Visual organizers and videos would not necessarily help Chilean ESL teachers to reduce the time they spend on explaining, but these teaching tools would probably account for the necessary comprehensible input that Chilean students need. The relevance of these teaching tools has been addressed taking into account how they can help students retrieve information, and learn a second language by emulating reality. We believe that, though visual organizer and videos could take longer than pictures in the implementation of the content, these instructional tools are

appropriate to help students understand the language considering that only 11% of Chilean students can comprehend simple phrases and short texts in English (EMOL, 2011).

We consider appropriate to give an example of how visual aids can be used to teach grammatical features. We now present an example (Appendix) in a more detailed way, which illustrates the usage of the structure *I wish I + Past,* whose language function expresses desire. The MINEDUC suggests teaching this structure in 10th grade. This picture presents a very likely situation in which the expression of a desire through a statement is possible. It could be presented to students through a projected flashcard, so as to make it visible for everyone. We believe it is pertinent to the Chilean social context since dog attacks are frequent nowadays. What follows is that the teacher utters a sentence that directly relates to the picture, e.g. *I wish I was faster.*

Figure VIII from the Appendix



Example 7. Adapted from "Teaching Grammar Creatively," by G. Gerngross, H. Puchta, S. Thornbury. Copyright 2006 by Günter Gerngross, Herbert Puchta and Scott Thornbury.

This picture can help teachers to address the three sensory learners (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), as well as to present other grammatical content in an indirect way. It is out of question that the image would help visual learners. Since the sentence in the picture is incomplete, auditory learners use their strengths to make sense of the visual input by hearing the complete sentence given in the verbal form by the teacher. The latter could ask the students to imitate the body position of the person in the picture so as to make the statement more meaningful, thus approaching kinesthetic learners as well. In addition, through this image, students could not only learn a specific grammatical structure, but also other grammar-retaled content. For example, several adjectives or their comparatives such as *fast/er, strong/er, tall/er, big/ger,* etc. can be used to complete the sentence in the picture. Students can also incidentally learn vocabulary items such as *road* or *dog collar*. Thus, the implementation of this picture to introduce the grammar content can facilitate cognition of the three learning styles, and give students the possibility to gain knowledge besides the given structure.

Though many other inferences can be made, these are the ones with direct implications to the Chilean context. Visual aids are a different way, other than group work, of implementing the Communicative Approach in Chile. In addition, pictures can help students use the time of the ESL lesson more efficiently. Besides, visual aids could improve the little understanding of the language that Chilean ESL students have.

4. Chapter IV: Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

Having elucidated the relevance of grammar teaching through visual aids in Chilean ESL classrooms, and after considering the pertinence of the Communicative Approach for teaching and learning, it is now appropriate to withdraw conclusions about the language teaching approach we propose and its efficacy, and to suggest directions for future research in the field of second language teaching.

English as a *lingua franca* is an important aspect to consider within the current globalized world. Due to the great relevance of the English language for personal and global development, it is crucial for ESL students to learn and understand it in order to be able to use it advantageously. In this regard, the Chilean Ministry of Education expects students to reach the English level ALTE 2 and develop communicative skills in order to benefit from using the language in several areas of development such as education and technology (MINEDUC, 2009). By encouraging teachers to use communicative tasks such as group work, the MINEDUC is trying to incorporate the Communicative Approach to the ESL teaching. Consequently, knowing English has become a crucial component of the education in Chile nowadays.

In this concern, within the Communicative Approach, grammar teaching is still a vital component for ESL students, despite the bad reputation to which Langacker (2008) refers. The latter status is the consequence of the emphasis given to the Communicative Approach, which has become a fashionable method in the English language teaching nowadays. This approach does not exclude the teaching of grammar, as some people may believe, but it does argue that ESL teaching should also focus on developing communicative skills. In this regard, and as shown in this research paper, having knowledge on grammar features is favorable for ESL students in terms of accuracy to convey messages. Therefore, teaching ESL grammar becomes an essential

component when communication is the target to which people aim at when learning a second language.

Grammar plays an important role in second language learning and acquisition since it provides learners with the necessary tools to understand the way the target language works in order to use it suitably for communication. By knowing grammar rules, students can avoid language fossilization and improve their performance, among other related benefits. Moreover, students can become independent learners who can monitor their own learning process when they are outside school and when time constrains the learning experience to the classroom only. Additionally, as Thornbury (1996) believes, grammar knowledge can help ESL students create infinite numbers of sentences since they have the skills to adapt their language knowledge in order to convey the same meaning in different ways. Therefore, grammar is crucial for ESL students who are not constantly exposed to the target language, as it is the case in the Chilean society, and who are expected to develop communicative skills in the target language.

When the grammar content is provided to students by means of visual aids, the language learning process becomes appealing and meaningful for ESL students. In this regard, the visual materials provide a degree of naturalness to the language teaching and learning by emulating reality, which is fundamental for learners since the classroom does not reflect real-life language usage by itself. Besides being a source of comprehensible input, when visual aids are used to teach the English language grammar, students can retrieve previous knowledge in order to make sense of the language grammar and then use it meaningfully for communication. Moreover, as referred to in this research paper, it can be inferred that grammar instruction through visual aids in the ESL classrooms can improve students' motivation to learn and lower their affective filter so that acquisition occurs. Therefore, grammar and visual aids complement each other in a way

that makes the second language learning process more effective and meaningful for ESL students.

As shown by the results of the test carried out in 2004 and of the SIMCE Inglés test in 2010, Chilean students are far from achieving the ALTE 2 level that the MINEDUC expects them to reach. As presented in chapter I, these tests revealed that most of our students do not understand the English language. The SIMCE Inglés, the latest test taken by 11th graders, shows that 89% of students did not even reach a basic level of English. This may be the consequence of not receiving quality English teaching, as Sheehan (2009) states, a fact that makes it difficult for students to meet the expectations of the MINEDUC, and even harder for them to develop language acquisition (as cited in Arcos & Poblete, 2009). Therefore, current and future teachers should focus on helping students develop ESL communicative skills within the classroom, so that they become proficient in the target language. By investigating deeper into the ESL teaching and learning area, and especially by doing research within an actual ESL classroom, teachers could learn about how to improve their performance in order to help their students achieve language acquisition – which is the ultimate goal of second language teaching.

However, we should not forget that ESL teaching not only involves finding the most effective strategies to deliver content by using contextualized material, but it is also related to the student's abilities and predisposition to learn. In this regard, it would be helpful for teachers to be acquainted with cognitive aspects regarding the ESL learning process in order to consider these ones more directly when planning lessons and when addressing students individually. Moreover, along with the affective factors related to ESL learning presented in this paper, there are other external factors that should be considered in future research, such as time spent in ESL instruction, resources used for teaching and learning, amount of students per classroom, use of English within the classroom, and, especially, the teacher's proficiency in the English language.

Considering all of these features, teachers could find ways of developing positive attitudes towards second language learning to improve the students' proficiency in the language.

In order to perform effective communicative teaching in Chilean ESL classrooms, teachers can make use of the different visual aids (as shown in the Appendix) proposed in this paper to create picture books, short clips, or other aids to teach grammar-related content. Visual aids can be displayed in many ways that are helpful for ESL learners. For example, creating picture books by using flashcards may be a good way of recycling the same material used in the classroom to create a teaching aid that can be used with several groups of students, to teach grammar contents under different situations.

As proposed in this research paper, using visual aids to teach ESL grammar under the Communicative Approach can be favorable for students since it is believed that these ones make the learning experience more interesting (Mannan, 2005). Nonetheless, there is still much research to be done so as to improve the ESL teaching and learning process under the scope of the Communicative Approach and the great relevance of grammar rules to accomplish communication. Considering the Chilean context, we should ask ourselves, *how can the Communicative Approach subsist in a society that, regardless the emphasis given to communication, still uses methods that do not incorporate language practice and production?* In this regard, *can ESL students attain language proficiency by only using communicative tasks to teach the language?* And, *what could teachers do to cope with the little exposure of Chilean students to the language?* Another point that should be considered and further investigated is whether to teach ESL grammar implicitly or explicitly. We did not take either position in this paper, since there are authors that support both positions, and present contributions of both implicitness and explicitness to the ESL learning process. Nonetheless, s*hould ESL grammar be taught implicitly or explicitly? Are these two ways of teaching exclusive? How can teachers*

improve their teaching practice in a way that meets the MINEDUC expectations? These are just a few questions whose answers could help improve ESL teaching and learning in Chile, considering the great influence of the Communicative Approach, and the English relevance in the globalized world. Therefore, when answering these questions, we cannot forget that an image, a picture or a visual aid is worth a thousand words and even more regarding ESL grammar instruction.

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Appendix

Example 1
Level: 5th grade.
Language function: Talking about your family.
Content: Verb have/has conjugation in the present tense.
Type of visual aid: Chart.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure I

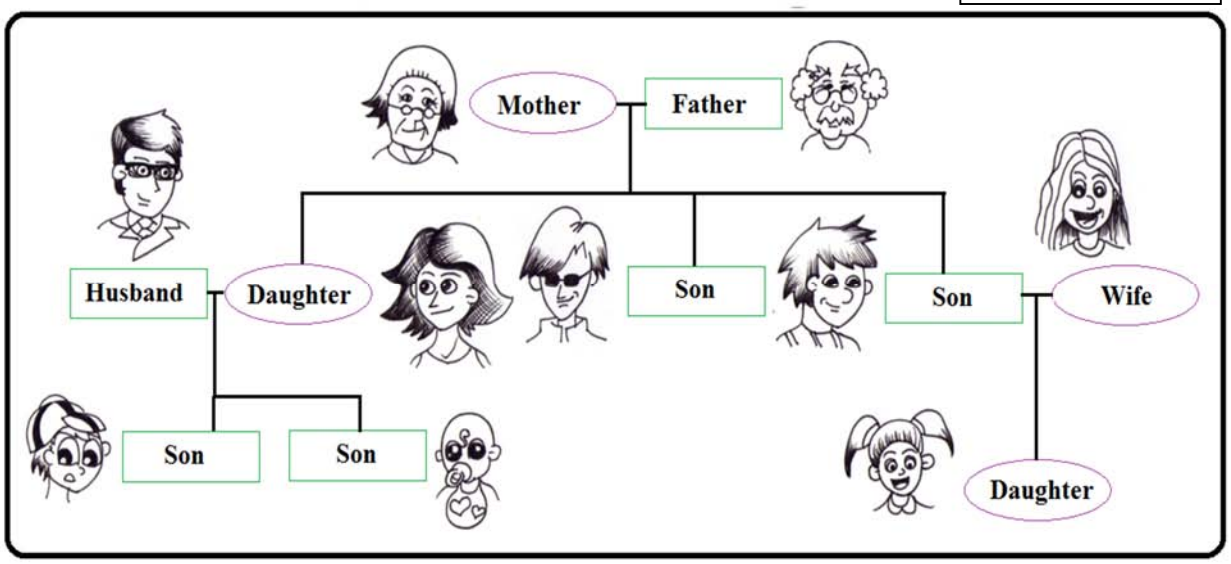


Figure I. Family tree.

Explanation:

This chart helps teachers teach vocabulary related to the family and the verb have/has. The instructor can draw this chart on the whiteboard or project it slide presentation.The teacher explains the chart by saying that it is her family chart, which tells about her family and its members. Then she mentions the people in the chart, e.g. *My parents have two sons and one daughter*. *One of my brothers has a wife and two sons*, etc. Next, she invites students to draw their family chart in their notebooks. After a few minutes, she asks students to share with the class about their family, indicating how many sisters and brothers they have, their names, etc. Students are encouraged to follow the example and use the have/have structure.

Example 2
Level: 5th grade.
Language function: Expressing likes and dislikes.
Content: I like/I don't like, and I love.
Type of visual aid: Pictures.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure II

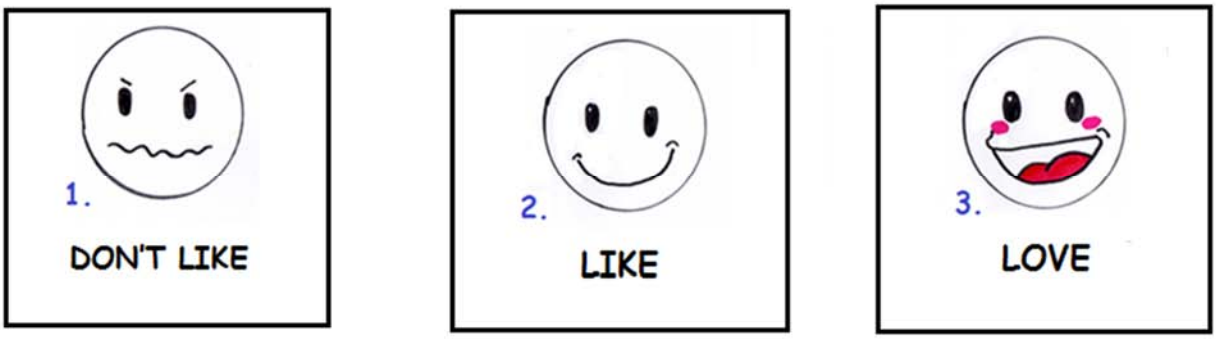


Figure II. Faces representing degrees of preferences.

Figure III

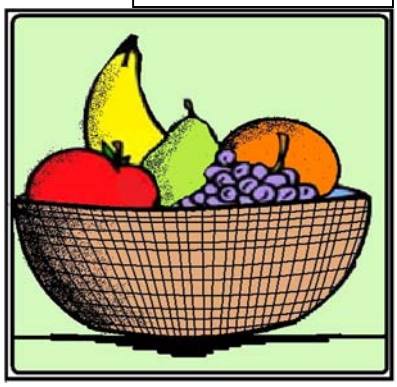


Figure III. Fruit basket.

Explanation:

As flashcards, the pictures can be used to teach about preferences and its degrees, which are represented by the faces. The teacher shows the basket image and says: *I don't like oranges*, showing face number 1. *I like apples*, showing face number 2. *I love grapes*, showing face number 3. The teacher can give many other examples, using one of the three faces to show his/her preferences for fruit. Once the teacher has referred to all of the fruit in the basket, s/he invites students to gather in pairs to talk about the fruit they like and the fruit they don't following the examples she gave according the his/her preferences. Students are also encouraged to write down their classmates preferences in a table to share them later with the rest of the class. While knowing about each other's preferences, students learn the use of like and don't like. However, this picture can also be used to teach about the names of fruit and *there is* and *there are*, in relation to the fruit in the bowl.

Example 3
Level: 5th grade.
Language function: Describing spatial relations.
Content: Prepositions (on, in, under, above, next to, etc.)
Type of visual aid: Projected flashcard.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure IV

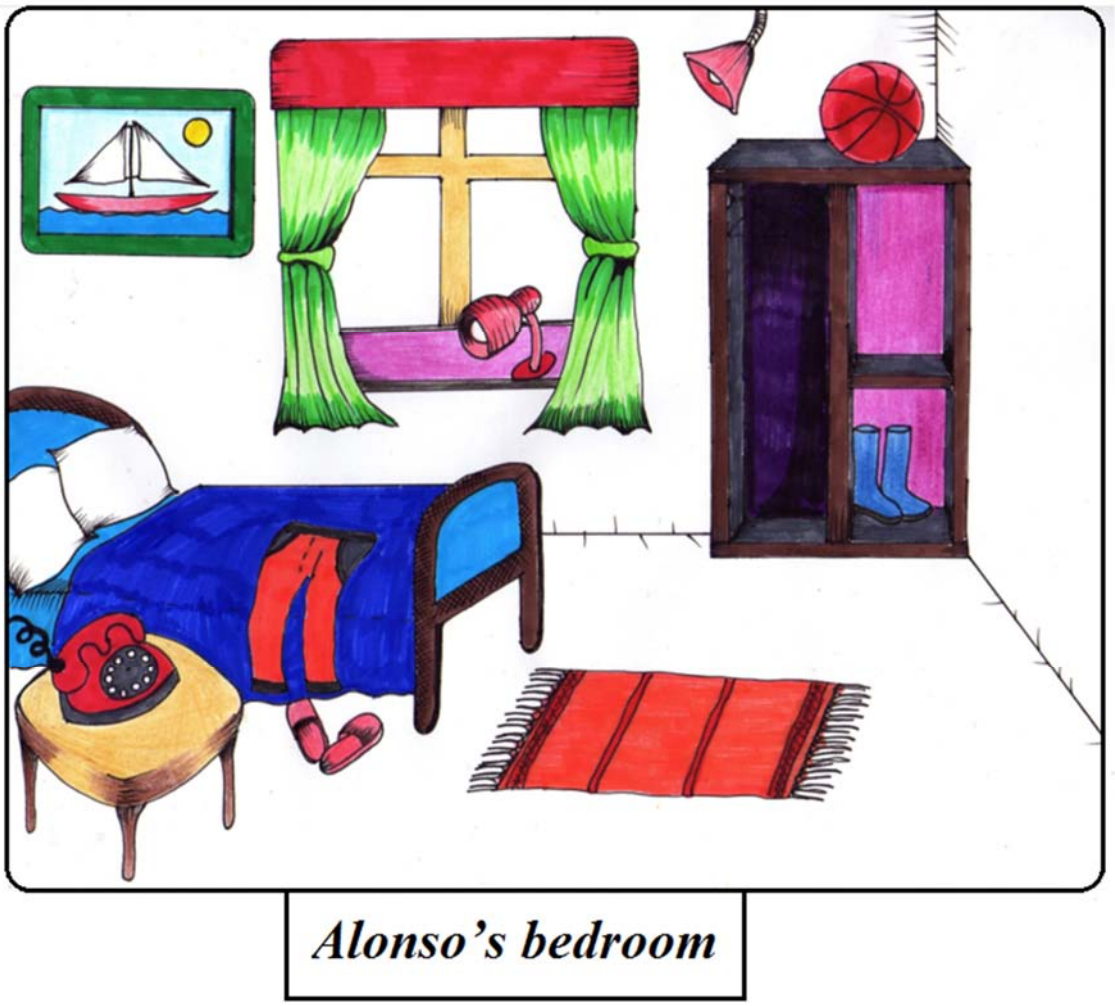


Figure IV. Picture of a bedroom to describe spatial relations.

Explanation:

This picture is useful to teach about positions in space, namely *in, on, under, above, next to*, etc. It presents a bedroom with elements in it, which students have to describe in relation to their position in the bedroom. The picture should be shown to the class as a projected flashcard so that students can see it from every point in the classroom. The teacher presents this picture and tells the students: *Alonso's red boots are in his bedroom, can you tell me where?* To which students may respond: *They are in the closet*. And so, the teacher keeps asking question about the objects in the room. The idea is that students use the prepositions: *in, on, under, above, next to, etc.* to describe the position in space of the objects. Moreover, the teacher can use this picture to teach about colors, the names of the objects and its sizes.

Example 4
Level: 5th grade.
Language function: Possibility and cause and effect.
Content: Can or can't/because.
Type of visual aid: Picture.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure V

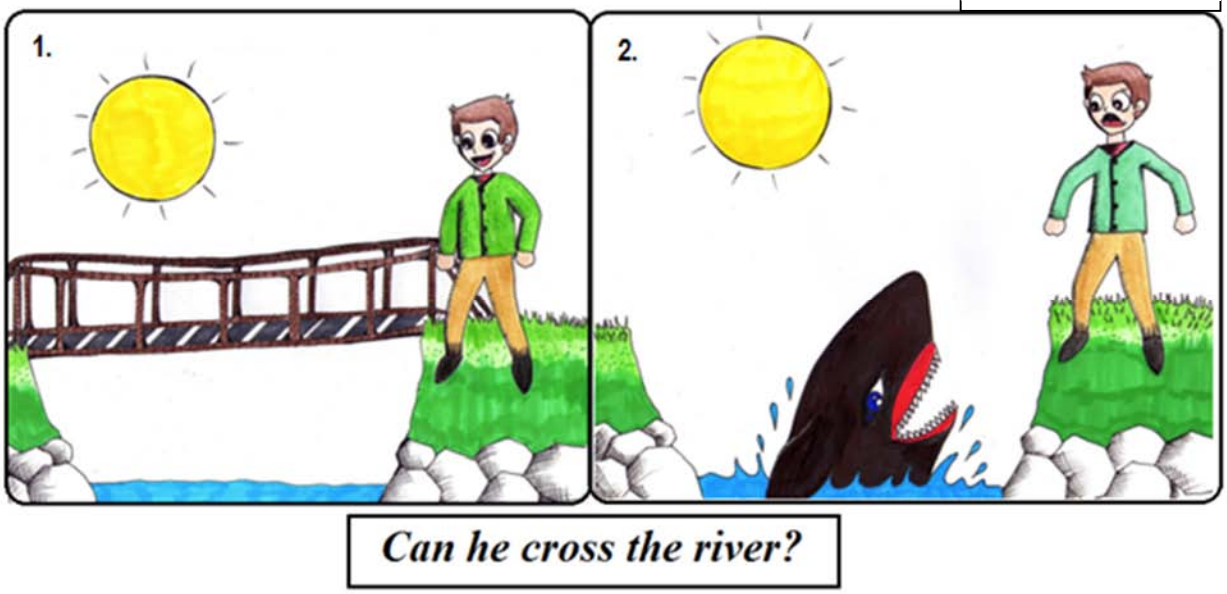


Figure V. Picture of two situations to teach about possibilities, cause and effect. Adapted from "Pictures for Language Learning," by A. Wright, 1989. Copyright 1989 Andrew Wright.

Explanation:

This image can be used to teach about possibilities and cause and effect, since it presents a situation in which the boy can or can't perform an action. To present the image, the teacher asks the students: *Can the boy cross the river?* To which the students might respond: *No, he can't, because...,* or *yes, he can, because.*…The teacher can encourage students to think about other ways of crossing the river. The purpose of the image is that by seeing it, students understand the usage of can or can't in a real situation. Moreover, the teacher can use these images to contrast and compare them.

Example 5
Level: 10th grade.
Language function: Greeting.
Content: Phonetics – intonation.
Type of visual aid: Projected flashcard.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure VI

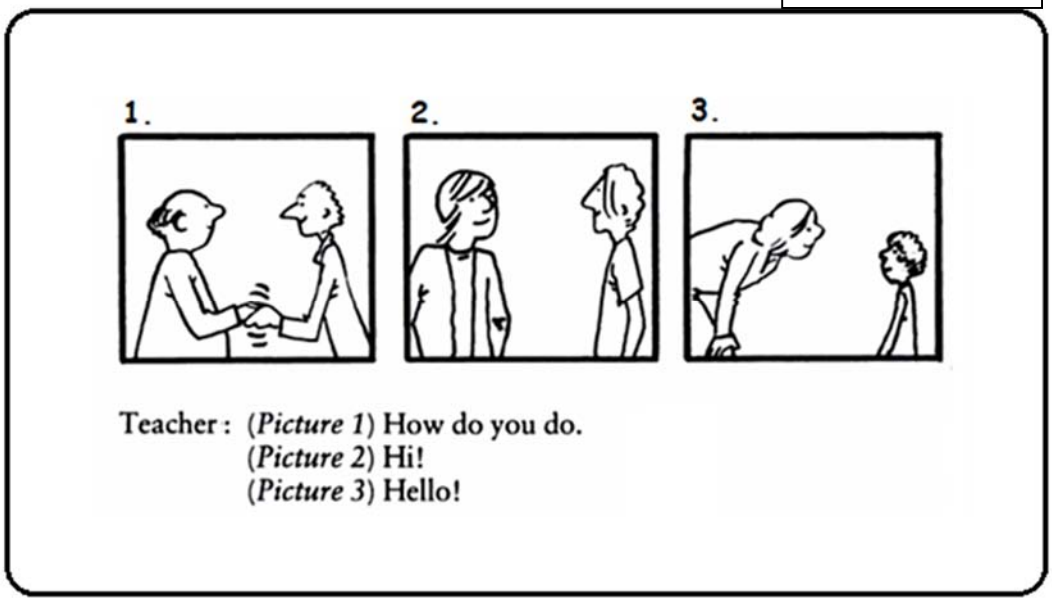


Figure VI. Representation of greetings in three different circumstances to teach speech intonation. From "Pictures for Language Learning," by A. Wright, 1989. Copyright 1989 Andrew Wright.

Explanation:

This flashcard presents three situations in which language intonation would change. The teacher reads the lines corresponding to each picture using its corresponding intonation. Then, s/he explains the change in intonation in accordance to the formality/informality of the situation along with the different ages of the people involved. Students then learn the changes of language intonation under different situations, when used to different people. This image can also be used to teach about formality and informality of speech.

Example 6
Level: 10th grade.
Language function: Retelling past events.
Content: Past simple and past continuous.
Type of visual aid: Projected flashcard.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure VII

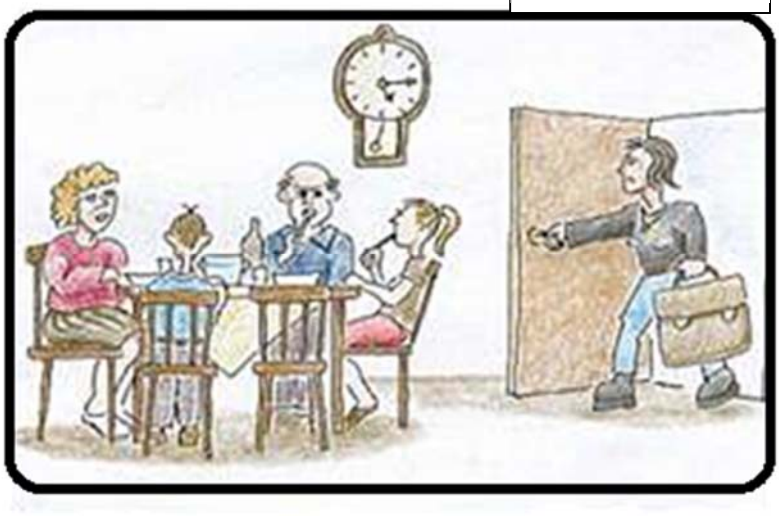


Figure VII. A family having dinner. From "English for Diversity," by M. Arboleda. Copyright 2011 by María del Mar Arboleda Caja.

Explanation:

The previous image represents a situation which involves two events: people having dinner or lunch at the table, and a person walking into the room at the same time. The idea is to present the past simple tense and the past continuous tense in a clear situation. The teacher shows this image to the students and tells them: *José came home while the family was having dinner*. Through this example, the teacher shows the difference in usage of the past simple and past continuous. S/he can give many similar examples that can be taken from the same classroom such as *While I was speaking, Daniela raised her hand*. The teacher can also invite the students to use other verbs or to explain the picture differently by asking them: *What is happening in the picture?* Moreover, through images that present two simultaneous actions, teachers can teach these two past tenses and to show their difference in usage. The image can be used to reinforce content such as adjectives, descriptions of objects or people, etc.

Example 7
Level: 10th grade.
Language function: Expressing desire.
Content: I wish I + Past.
Type of visual aid: Picture.
Purpose: Introduce the content.

Figure VIII



Figure VIII. A boy being chased by a doy. Adapted from "Teaching Grammar Creatively," by G. Gerngross, H. Puchta, S. Thornbury. Copyright 2006 by Günter Gerngross, Herbert Puchta and Scott Thornbury.

Explanation:

The teacher presents this picture through a slide presentation, a projected flashcard, or by drawing it on the whiteboard. With this image, the teacher can present the structure *I wish + Past.* The teacher gives an example appropriate to the picture, e.g. *I wish I was faster*. Then, s/he asks the students to pretend they are the person from the picture and give sentences using the structure *I wish I + Past*. Through this image, students can learn and practice this structure and several adjectives such as fast, strong, tall, big, etc.

Example 8
Level: 10th grade.
Language function: Making predictions.
Content: If/would + verb (without to)
Type of visual aid: Picture.
Purpose: Introduce/Review the content.

Figure IX

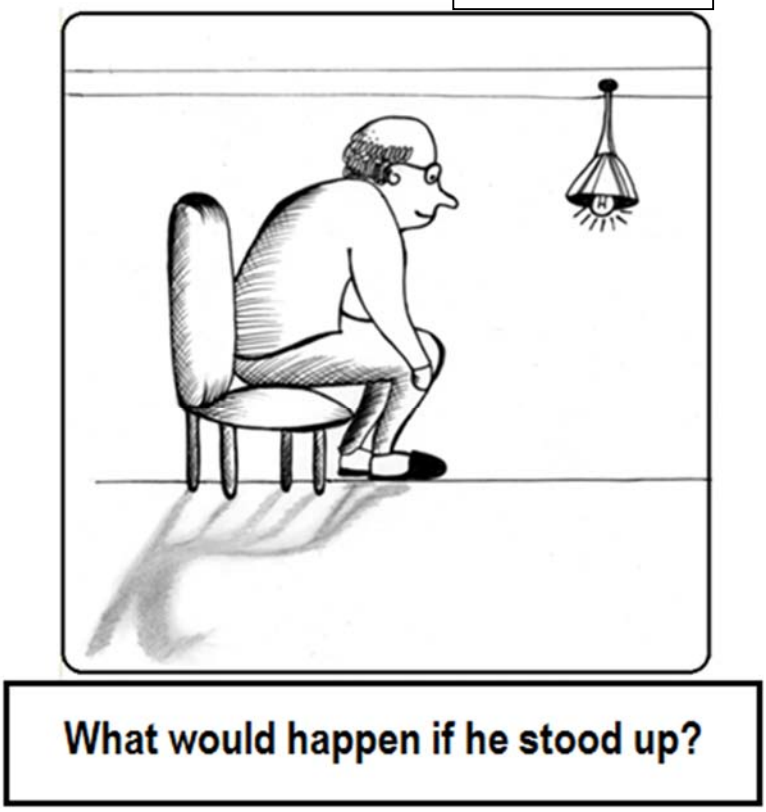


Figure IX. A man sitting on a chair. Adapted from "Pictures for Language Learning," by A. Wright, 1989. Copyright 1989 Andrew Wright.

Explanation:

This picture illustrates a situation in which there is a person who is too tall for the place in which he is at. Students are asked the question: *What would happen if he stood up?* To which they might answer: *He would hit his head*. The teacher asks this question and invites the students to answer to it using the structure *would + verb*. Through this picture, students can use their imagination and think about what would happen in this situation. The teacher should encourage students to use the structure and several verbs like hit, hurt, crush, etc. This image can be presented in a slide presentation, drawn on the whiteboard, or on a flashcard which can be passed around students, or shown around the class by the teacher. It can be used to present new grammar content, to rehearse its usage, and to review it, but it is a useful element to put students to think about hypothetical situations and make predictions about them.