Profesor Patrocinante
Yasna Yilorm
Instituto de Lingüística y Literatura

Symtalk Method:
An innovative communicative teaching practice towards EFL acquisition

Seminario de tesis para optar al
Título de Profesor de Comunicación
en Lengua Inglesa

Ruth Juset Miranda Fuenzalida
Noelia Paz Trecaman Cayunao
VALDIVIA-CHILE
2011

This work is dedicated to our parents who have always surrounded us with a

strong love shield that never let any sadness enter inside.

Acknowledgements

We owe our deepest gratitude to Jesus who has been our friend, guide and philosopher. It also gives us great pleasure in acknowledging the support and help of our Professor Yasna Yilorm, who has always believed that we could do it.

We share the credit of our work with our families that have given us the opportunity of an education from the best institutions and support throughout our lives.

We are indebted to Maurice Hazan, creator of Symtalk Method, who provided us with the necessary information and bibliography. Finally, we want to thank Escuela España, Colegio Laico, Instituto Gracia y Paz, and the teachers of English; Patricia Curin, Lucy Davis and Pilar Olabe for letting us to carry out our research in their classes.

To all of them, our immense gratefulness.

Abstract

5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders from three different elementary schools in Valdivia, Chile were exposed to the Symtalk Method during EFL instruction. The purposes of this action research were to identify, document and determine Symtalk effectiveness as a communicative teaching practice that improves the acquisition of a foreign language in an EFL Chilean context. Literature review analysis, field notes, a journal and an interview took place during two stages; (1) observation of traditional EFL teaching practices and (2) the application of Symtalk Method to EFL students. The data was analyzed quantitatively and was carried out in four parts: Observation, collection, comparison, and critical thinking about provided information. As a result, data entries showed that Symtalk Method is a successful communicative language teaching practice that contributes to students' vocabulary retention and sentence production; thus, facilitating the acquisition of English as a foreign language.

Key words: Symtalk Method, EFL, communicative language teaching practices, vocabulary retention, acquisition.

Table of contents

I.   Introduction

English has become the foremost language and the key instrument of globalization for many countries throughout the world. According to Johnson (n.d), it has been estimated that more than 380 million people speak English as their first language and two–thirds do it as their Second language. Furthermore, billions of people in non English speaking countries are willing to learn English and a third part of the world's population is exposed to it, which makes people to believe that by 2050 half of the world will be proficient in that language. Consequently, Chilean students and professionals have been requested to reinforce and improve their ability to use and understand English.

In 2003, *"English Opens doors"* or *"Inglés Abre Puertas"* program was created as a proposal of the Chilean Ministry of Education to improve English as a foreign language and make it more accessible to Chilean schools (www.mineduc.cl). As a result, many schools have been implemented with computers, technology and different teaching materials that improve foreign language classes. Besides, hundreds of native speakers from different Anglophone countries have been brought to participate in the program. However, despite of the notorious changes that English language teaching has had in Chile during the last years, little improvements have been observed. According to Hirschmann (2005), The University of Cambridge English Exam, which was taken by Chilean secondary students, demonstrated that "Sixty-seven percent of eighth graders and 45 percent of twelfth graders scored at the "Lower Breakthrough" level, meaning [that] they can only understand simple oral and written instructions in English, read short messages and recognize words and expressions by ear" (p.1). Hirschman also

emphasizes that only 5 percent of the Chilean students that took the exam, had a satisfactory English language speaking facility. Consequently, the exam results demonstrated that improvements in communicative language teaching practices are necessary in EFL Chilean classrooms. Littlewood (1981) says that "Foreign language learners need opportunities to develop these [communicative] skills by being exposed to situations where the emphasis is using their available resources for communicating meanings as efficiently and economically as possible". Therefore, despite the attempts to improve the quality of English language teaching in Chilean schools, students should be provided with more communicative activities to ensure their acquisition of the target language.

In the context, an innovative method will be applied and tested in three different Chilean schools in Valdivia. Symtalk Method, which has been used to look for positive changes in acquiring English as a foreign language. Maurice Hazan, creator of Symatlk method, in his study "Memory and Language Acquisition in New York"(2010), explains that Symtalk is an efficient communicative method that helps to implement the elemental principles of language acquisition by encoding the given information**,** calling for retrieval, and storage[1] the information as well.

---

[1] ***Encoding*** refers to the action of commiting declarative or procedural memories to our internal memory system; our brain. ***Storage*** refers to where our short or long term memory are stored. ***Retrieval*** refers to the ability to recall information with or without recall cues. From " Memory and Language Acquisition" by M.Hazan, 2010, p.11

The main goal of Symtalk method, as an EFL communicative teaching practice, is that students can orally produce sentences by recognizing pictures. Symtalk is a method that can help teachers to provide students with dynamic and attractive communicative activities. It also allows teachers to recognize the value of including images that deal with local culture. More importantly, by using Symtalk method, students retain the visual and oral information. According to Hazan (2010), this is a good example of how Semantic memory allows the brain to store information about words; how they look like, what they represent and how they are used in an organized way. (p. 11). Therefore, using Symtalk Method teacher can improve oral production in their lessons by recalling information.

Finally, as it has been previously explained, Chilean EFL classes need to include communicative language teaching practices in their lessons. Symtalk method claims to bring immediate and amazing results from the first lesson because of its great variety of activities and innovative materials. This active research will expose students from three different elementary schools in Valdivia to Symtalk activities in order to prove its effectiveness and contribution as a successful communicative language teaching practice to acquire English as a foreign language.

II. State of Art

A. Communicative Language Teaching Practice

To understand what communicative language teaching practice is, it is first necessary to define and address some contextual issues. ***Practice*** refers to "Common methods used by a specific discipline/community" (Burke, n.d.) while ***communicative teaching*** "provides students with an environment in which they are surrounded by messages in the target language that communicate interesting, relevant information in language [that] they are able to understand-language that is comprehensible for them[students]" (Curtain, & Dahlberg, 2004, p.2). As a result, communicative teaching practices are all of the methods used by the teachers, and which are focused on communicative objectives.

Thus, the orientation of EFL teachers, whose practices are communicative, is to create tasks and activities centered on students' language development. When EFL teachers plan their lessons they must focus on making their class effective in terms of communication in the foreign language. According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2004), "effective planning takes into account the educational development of the students and draws on such approaches as story form and backward design to make learning more meaningful and more memorable" (p. 158). Therefore, when planning a lesson students' needs and meaningful communicative goals are the base of a successful class. Once again, the same authors give emphasis to the importance that meaningful communication should have in every lesson; they comment that "the key element in all of these

communicative developments and approaches [use in every EFL lesson plan] is *meaning-*
that is, a primary focus on meaning rather than a focus on form."(p. 25). Thus, **meaning**
is the essential ingredient when language teachers base their lesson plans on
communicative goals.

With reference to communicative teaching practices, Richard-Amato (2005)
refers to Natural Approach as one of the intents to provide significant opportunities to
teachers to develop communicative activities in the target language,

> Although "the natural approach"- first proposed by Trace Terrell and developed
> in collaboration with Stephen Krashen- does not embody all that is
> communicative in language teaching, it does describe a branch of communicative
> teaching found in the United States, where historically it marks a turning point in
> language teaching (p.170).

Natural approach relays on real and comprehensible communication which allows
students to acquire a foreign language in the same manner that we acquire our first
language (Krashen, 1985). According to Curtain and Dahlberg (2004), "In this approach
the teacher seeks to help students "bind" new language by providing experiences and
association with vocabulary in a meaningful context, thus making both more meaningful"
(p.43). Richard-Amato (2005), also contributes with the idea that "students must acquire
the second language in much the same way that people acquire language in natural
situations therefore the term "natural approach" (p.170). This approach is based on four
principles that are bound to communicative practices and which explain the acquisition
process of a foreign language, as follows; (Richard-Amato, 2005, p.170).

A. a) *Comprehension proceeds production*

1. Comprehensible Input

Stephen Krashen (1985), states that "…humans acquire language in only one way- by understanding messages, or by receiving "comprehensible input" (P. 2) According to Kelm (2007) Input;

referred to all the exposure to foreign language that is around us…[and]…any written or spoken language that the learner encounters that may be used to construct linguistic knowledge. "Good" input is said to be comprehensible and meaning-bearing. People who interact with learners often modify their speech to facilitate learner comprehension by simplifying the input for the learner. (lesson 4)

When acquiring a language, students are first exposed to different sources of input, during this time;

the child….is simply building up competence by listening via comprehensible input. His first words in the second language are not the beginning of his second-language acquisition; rather they are the result of the comprehensible input he has received over the previous moths (Krashen, 1985, p. 9)

Therefore, comprehensible input refers to the spoken or visual input necessary for someone to acquire a language naturally.

2. Silent period

When students receive comprehensible input, there is a period of time or initial phase before they start speaking in the target language in which they are unwilling or unable to communicate orally. This interval of time is known as *silent period* and it is defined as "a stage of about one to twelve months in which the second language learner opts to focus on receptive competences rather than producing on the second language" (White, 2004, p.164). According to Krashen (1985), "[silent period is] a phenomenon that is very noticeable in child second- language acquisition."(p.9) It is also important to mention that "during silent period, teachers should not expect or force students to speak until they are ready to do so. They can respond by pointing at a person/picture/object, gesturing or nodding" (Yeung, 2009). In conclusion, an EFL student does experiment a period of time in which he or she is not expected to actively produce any language and he should not, therefore, be forced to do it.

A. b) *production must be allowed to emerge in stages*

According to Scamilla and Grassi(2000), every person, that is acquiring a language, is involved in a natural stage order to produce language. This order, which is independent in every individual, has been hypothesized by Stephan Krashen within language acquisition theory with the name of Natural Order Hypothesis (NOH).(p.119) NOH has four stages;

1) *Pre-production:*

During the production stage:

the second language student actively listens to the language input. Much like a one year old baby, the student is developing comprehension in the second language. At this level, student's reading and oral production will be marked with transference of their first language pronunciation. (Scamilla and Grassi, 2000, p. 118)

2) *Early production:*

At this level:

Students began producing utterances of one word. Students will repeat words they have often heard and that are comprehensible…[and they]… will still have transference of native language pronunciation similar to stage 1. Besides, "students will begin to incorporate different verb forms into speech but will over-generalize the grammar rules" (Scamilla and Grassi, 2000, p. 119).

3) *Speech emergence:*

During the speech emergence stage, students begin to construct simple sentences until they acquire enough language to produce increasingly complex phrases…[besides]…students at this stage begin to use differing verb forms (past, present, future, and can engage in more lengthy conversations." (Scamilla and Grassi, 2000, p. 121).

4) *Intermediate fluency:*

In this last stage:

The student can now manipulate the language to create original sentences and engage in more complex conversations. The student should have a good grasp on different verb forms (past, present, future, etc…) although grammatical mistakes are still quite common". (Scamilla and Grassi, 2000, p. 122).

A. c) *the course syllabus focuses on communicative goals*

This principle focuses its attention on communicative teaching rather than explicit grammar instruction; the student is provided with interesting and relevant topics in order to understand the message and obtain the grammatical structures in an implicit manner.

Just as a particular affective acquisition activity, for example, may entail the use of certain grammatical structures, the activity is not designed to "teach" that structure. The same is true of vocabulary; activities are not necessarily 'vocabulary builders'. Students' attention is not on vocabulary learning per se but on communication, on the goal of an activity. In this way, we encourage true vocabulary acquisition (Krashen & Terrel, 1983, p. 156)

A. d) *the activities are designed to lower the affective filter.*

The affective filter of a person can be high, low or too low and it can enhance, weaken or impede the acquisition of a language. When talking about foreign language

acquisition, affective issues, which are motivation, attitude and anxiety, will influence the learner in a positive or negative way. For instance, if a student is comfortable, relaxed, calm, motivated and happy during instruction, he or she will keep his or her filter low and it will facilitate the acquisition of the target language (Krashen, 1985). Burt, Dulay and Finocchiano (1977, chap. II) explain that emotional variables can impede acquisition. Therefore, making the classroom comfortable and more relaxed will help the students' affective filter to be accurate and thereby, it will facilitate students' learning in a more quickly and efficient manner.

In this context, certain emotional responses can also impede the effective acquisition of a language. When someone is anxious, under pressure, nervous or worried, it is said that their affective filter is high. Krashen (1985), defines affective filter as a "mental block that prevents acquirers from fully utilizing the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition" (p.3).

The affective filter can also be influenced by the teachers' attitude when performing in the classroom. In this sense, Moskowitz (1978) says; "don't forget that foreign language teachers are often in the role of providing negative feedback. They correct pronunciation and errors in speech and reading and writing". Students can be affected by negative or positive situations provided by the teacher when it comes to communicate in a foreign language. For example, motivation, anxiety, and the physical states that a student can suffer, are conditionals given by the teachers during instruction. Consequently, teachers' performance towards their students can affect or help them to feel comfortable when communicating while being exposed to the foreign language.

To end up, the significance of the affective filter concept has become a matter of discussion and an extensive research among linguistics, language teachers and scholarships since it can help or impede the natural acquisition of language. According to Krashen; "The affective filter is responsible for individual variation in second language acquisition." (Cote, & Gerken, 2004, p.202). Krashen(1985) also mentions that no matter how comprehensible input can be for the student, if the affective filter is too low or high, it will deteriorate acquisition. In this sense, communicative practices must provide students with a comfortable environment and help them to reduce negative situations, so that students acquire the target language easily and in a more natural way. In short, affective filter variation depends on emotional factors that can facilitate or impede the successful language acquisition process.

B. Symtalk Method

Symtalk is the first version of a unique ESL teaching method, which is also widely known as Qtalk. Maurice Hazan (2010), founder of Symtalk method, explains that:

> The method is based on a series of simple images that students memorize and interpret its sentences once placed side by side. The components of Symtalk include the visual system of flashcards, dialogue games, students' work book and a teachers' guide that shows you how to implement the program in your classroom.

Image[2]

Symtalk develops its theory on "neuro-muscular rehearsal; which is the action of repeating something with the goal of encoding this sound in a synapse, a storing device in the brain" (Hazand, 2010). This rehearsal helps students to master vocabulary and sentence structures until they are able to produce from simple to complex sentences by themselves. Thus, Maurice Hazan stated that,

> Designed to stimulate the three key areas of the brain used for memory and language acquisition, the heart of QTalk, which stands for "visual cues to talk" is, in short, a series of images ("QCards") representing all parts of speech - subjects, verbs, objects, conjunctions, times of day, adjectives, etc. - the most common, everyday-life vocabulary which, once mastered, create "functional fluency" in any given language. (Hazan, 2010)

---

[2] *Image:* a sample of Symtalk (Qtalk) flashcards taken from *"Memory and language acquisition"* by Maurice Hazan

(2010)

This method urges students to speak on their own, while the instructor is only a facilitator of the language. In this way, students encode the images that they later associate with its meaning and pronunciation given by the teacher. As the vocabulary and parts of speech are repeated several times, storage takes part while class content is acquired. The information can be later retrieved during the following classes or when the learner needs to recall information and associate words; this, with the minimum intervention of the educator.

Thus, Symtalk Method is a "powerful visual symbol program that teaches students to communicate in a second language within one or two sessions of training" (Rosheim, 2010). That is the reason why Symtalk incorporates visual resources to help students to retain information and make classes more comprehensible. Therefore, the capacity of visual and short term memory allows students to recall information, associate the vocabulary, and create sentences by placing the images side by side (Hazan, 2010).

B. a) Symtalk and Memory

Before explaining the relation between Symtalk and memory, it is necessary to start clarifying that there is not an exact definition of what memory really is. However, according to Hunter (1964), *memory* can be defined as an abstract and ambiguous concept. When referring to abstract, it is not alluding to the ability to examine or measure our memory as a material object, but mainly the idea of a concept which is related to certain actions. Contrarily, it is considered ambiguous in the sense that it is related to different kinds of activities such as the capacity to remember past and present events in a chronological way. In this context, Memory is related to Symtalk since learners have to

remember information and words in order to speak and use the target language. Seamons (1980) explains that in the acquisition of a second language, the terms *encoding, storage* and *retrieval* are functions of the learning and remembering information/content process. These concepts are defined below:

1. Encoding

According to the Longman dictionary of applied linguistics (1985), "encoding is the process of turning a message into a set of symbols, as part of the act of communication." (p.92). Maurice Hazan (2010) states that "Encoding refers to the action of committing declarative or procedural memories to our internal memory system; our brain" (p. 11). Therefore, students encode content when they register the output information in their brain.

2. Storage

Storage deals with the process of recording information by retaining and keeping a continuous data of the knowledge acquired through the study, experience or instruction in our memory. According to Hazan (2010), it "refers to where our short or long term memory is stored" (p. 11). Thus, when the information is valued and significant, it is moved from our short term to long term memory, where it is kept for a period of time until it is recalled to be used in the future. (Bell, Ford, & Wunderlich, 2010). Consequently, storage refers to the action of keeping significant information in our long term memory.

3. <u>Retrieval</u>

Hazan (2010) defines retrieval as "the ability to recall information with or without recall cues" (p. 11). According to Everding (2008);

> If a person wants to remember an event or some information over the long term, it must be actively engaged, and retrieving information from memory serves that purpose well," he explains. "Repeated retrieval over time is critical to effective, long-term retention." (para. 3)

Therefore, during this phase the student brings or recalls information and uses it to demonstrate that the acquisition of a foreign language has taken place. In conclusion, Maurice Hazan (2010),explains that these three key elements; *encoding, storage* and *retrieval* are directly associated with short, long term and sequential memory which are necessary in foreign language acquisition.

B. b) Symtalk association with short and long term memory

Human memories are stored in two different manners which are relevant in language acquisition. The system of *short-term memory* has been an essential topic of study for psychologists since the discipline's beginning. Dr. Boeree (2009) establishes that "short memory is related to any experience that lasts for a very short time, and that it takes a second or two for the sensory neurons that appear right after them to get over stimulation."

According to Hazan (2010), when the information is constantly reinforced, it helps to storage the data from short term memory to long term memory;

Maintenance rehearsal is essential in order to transfer information from short- to long-term memory. An example: We are better able to remember a phone number if we say it out loud three times to ourselves! Early language output is essential to the learning of a new language. When we produce the task of recalling words (aided by the visual symbol cues), we secure its transfer to long-term memory. Similarly, every time we recall a phone number, we restore it (solidifying its place) in long-term memory.

Zelizer (2004) explains that images are a great help to recall the past by freezing its illustrations in an instant already familiar to us. Symtalk reinforces short-term memory by presenting images over and over again allowing transfer and store information to long term memory until students are able to create sentences by themselves.

We deliver lessons using symbols to represent vocabulary, manipulating words within a sentence to form as many different sentences as possible. Students interpret these sentences, giving them practice in using new vocabulary in a variety of different ways. Additional activities focus on the practice of new words, and the learner gradually becomes more comfortable using the words in a variety of different sentences. (Hazan, 2010)

B. c) Symtalk in Conceptual networking and Semantic Memory

Tulving (1972) referes to Semantic Memory as a concept first introduced to psychology by Quillan (1966) in a formal dissertation. Tulving mentioned that it is "a highly structured network and images, capable of making interferences and comprehending language" (colling and Quillan, in Tulving, 1972, p.384). Thus, semantic memory is organized in a network structure that works when retrieval takes place to communicate. Another concept that emerges, when talking about Semantic Memory, is conceptual networking. Collins and Loftus (1975, as cited in Hazan, 2010), states that "conceptual networking is the automatic association of words in a network that establishes connections between concepts". Hazan (2010) explains that "only once students integrate new vocabulary into long-term memory do they begin to perform conceptual networking. That is, they begin to connect new words to the previously learned information, the beginning of second language acquisition." Thus, Hazan illustrates that: "the word "dog" is rarely found alone. There is more likelihood of saying "a dog" than simply "dog". Semantic memory stores names of objects with their most commonly found articles" (p.4)

 To conclude, Semantic Memory allows students to keep organized vocabulary and topics to make a later retrieval and connection of knowledge in communication. Hazand (2010) explains that "each QTalk lesson, which has the same methodology that a Symtalk lesson has, is composed of different topics of the language that naturally follow previous units. Oral exercises require that students perform conceptual networking as the teacher provides a word which the student uses to create a sentence." Consequently, during Symtalk instructions, students store vocabulary and images

meaning in their semantic memory. This is later retrieved by connecting concepts and making communication possible.

1. Images in conceptual networking

Coady and Huckin (1997) explain that "the vast majority of vocabulary words are learned gradually through repeated exposures in various discourse contexts" (p.225). Hazan (2010) emphasizes that Symtalk and Qtalk help students to retain vocabulary gradually, vocabulary that is recalled in a conceptual networking. He states:

> "With our method, we deliver lessons using symbols to represent vocabulary, manipulating words within a sentence to form as many different sentences as possible. Students interpret these sentences, giving them practice in using new vocabulary in a variety of different ways. Additional activities focus on the practice of new words, and the learner gradually becomes more comfortable using the words in a variety of different sentences." (tribeca)

Thus, in Symtalk method, "the teacher introduces the vocabulary at a manageable pace that confirms and expands the meaning each word while reincoding it into long term memory. (Hazan, 2010, p. 11)

2.   <u>Comprehensible input when teaching vocabulary through images</u>

According to White (2004), comprehensible input is defined as "the language that a learner can understand with the aid of contextual clues such as gestures, body language, *visual,* context, or prior knowledge" (p.162).   Symtalk uses flashcards images to teach vocabulary: "The QCards are used to first teach vocabulary individually and then to combine that vocabulary into complete sentences for instant communication" (Hazan, 2010). Jenny Robert (2010) states that the use of flash cards has a huge importance in learning process no matter the student's age. In this context, the comprehensible input provided by flashcards is fundamental when acquiring a language: "…humans acquire language in only one way –by understanding messages, or by receiving: comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, p. 2)

The core of Symtalk system is that vocabulary is taught through clear instructions and comprehensible input by using flashcards:

It is imperative that students understand vocabulary AT ALL TIMES! The instructor must clearly explain the meaning of the visuals (a lack of clarity causes interference in the memorization of new information.) The instructor then models the pronunciation of the word in the target language and encourages students to repeat these words as they focus on the images. The vast majority of QTalk visual images are self-explanatory. This is critical because information that is difficult to visualize is extremely hard to memorize. (Hazan, 2010)

Therefore, when the vocabulary is taught through images, as Symtalk method is based on; then, we are able to comprehend the message which is entirely presented in the target language. Hazan (2010) explains that no matter whether the instructor does the entire lesson in the target language, if the message is not comprehensible, students will not feel comfortable and; therefore, it can impede the acquisition of the language; "Our method of "comprehensible input" is in direct opposition to the popular method of foreign language instruction in our schools, where teachers "immerse" students in a new language by conducting the entire lesson in the target language, leaving students lost, uncomfortable, and frustrated!."

III. Research purposes

This in-depth action research was designed with the following purposes:

1) Analyze current methodologies used in Chilean classrooms to teach English as a foreign language.

2) Identify and explain Symtalk as a communicative teaching practice.

3) Document the application of Symtalk as an EFL teaching method in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades from three different schools in Valdivia, Chile.

4) Determine whether the implementation of Symtalk method in English lessons would improve students' language acquisition.

IV. Main Research question

Does Symtalk Method contribute to vocabulary retention and natural sentence production, improve foreign language acquisition in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders from three different schools in Valdivia Chile?

V. Sub questions

How do Chilean students react when they are exposed to Symtalk method?

Can Symtalk be used together with other teaching methods to make EFL lessons more comprehensible for students?

VI. Data Collection

Four groups of students from three different elementary schools in Valdivia were involved during data collection process:

- First group (5th grade): 20 primary students between 10 and 12 years old.

- Second group (6th grade): 40 primary students between 11 and 12 years old.

- Third group (7th grade): 35 primary students between 12 and 13 years old.

- Forth group (8th grade): 45 primary students between 13 and 15 years old.

The information was gathered between April and November in 2010 using the following tools and modus operandi for each group of students:

1) *Observation:* This instrument was used in two consecutive stages;

- Stage 1: *classroom observation:* Throughout three weeks, eighteen EFL lessons were observed. Special attention was given to teaching methodology and teaching materials. Students' levels of motivation, attitude, affective filter, participation, production and reaction to EFL activities were also considered and recorded.

- Stage 2: *classroom Intervention:* The same groups of students were exposed to Symtalk activities and teaching materials during three weeks. Field notes, journals, pictures, video tapes and interviews were saved and analyzed during this second stage.

2) *Interview:* A video conference interview was held over Skype with the creator of Symtalk Method, Maurice Hazan.

4) *Literature review:* Different types of resources such as books, journal, magazine and conference articles, World Wide Web sites, e-mails, and informative videos, among others, were used to collect Symtalk Method and communicative teaching practices information.

5) *Intervention:* During a period of three weeks, researchers applied Symtalk method in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th EFL grades from three different elementary schools in Valdivia.

6) *Journal:* a written record of EFL lessons was kept during the first stage of observation and the second stage of intervention. The journal documented and described the following information: Observer's name, location, grade, date, observations' duration, people involved, setting, activities, and reflective comments.

7) *Field Notes:* records of observation made during the first stage of observation and the second stage of intervention.

8) *Original Symtalk language teaching Material:* Symytalk flashcards, books and games, brought from USA, were used to apply Symtalk Method in Chilean EFL lessons.

9) *Videotapes and pictures:* while the researchers were applying the method, video tapes were recorded and pictures were taken to evidence activities and students' reaction to them.

VII. Data Analysis

Theoretically speaking, this action research was based on Stephen Krashen's SLA acquisition theory in order to prove that Symtalk is a communicative teaching practice that contributes to the acquisition of English as a foreign language. Qualitative data was carried out as follows; *a)reading the obtained information, b) topic organization, e.g. students' motivation, attitude, production etc, c)topic labeling in comments, suggestions, concerns, etc. and d) similar pattern identification by comparing and contrasting information in order to answer research questions.* After the data analysis, the follow six significant findings were inquired, stated and explained to support Symtalk contributions in vocabulary retention and sentence formation in foreign language acquisition; A) Symtalk Method is a communicative teaching practice that allows students to orally produce in the target language from the first lesson, B) Symtalk method teaching materials provide comprehensible input for foreign language acquisition, C) Symtalk teaching materials help the students' affective filter to be appropriate, facilitating motivation, concentration, and positive attitude towards the target language, D) Symtalk method helps students to retain vocabulary more effectively than other traditional methods, stimulating sentence formation, E) When using Symtalk Method, Natural Order Hypothesis is valid for natural production and foreign language acquisition, F) It is necessary to meet certain requirements to apply Symtalk Method as an EFL teacher.

VIII. The significant findings of Symtalk Method: a new challenge in EFL teaching practices.

A. **Symtalk Method is a communicative teaching practice that allows students to orally produce in the target language from the first lesson.**

a) Symtalk and Communication in EFL lessons

During the first stage of observation, data collected demonstrated that most of the students lacked the necessary vocabulary knowledge to produce orally. Activities developed during EFL instructions were not focused on language production goals as Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) explained; "[communicative teaching] provides students with an environment in which they are surrounded by messages in the target language that communicate interesting, relevant information in language" (p.2). Besides, it was noticed that teachers' prolonged speaking-time decreased the oral production time of the students in the classroom. In addition, it was observed that most of the students were able to recognize and use chunk[3] words that were taught but showing an enormous vocabulary gap related to basic units of study such as colors, animal names, food, among others., which limited them to completely understand lesson contents and orally use simple tenses in contextualized situations for descriptions. Besides, activities planned by teachers were mainly based on students' books, emphasizing writing and reading skills rather than speaking and listening. "In general, the teacher bases her lessons plan on the curriculum

---

[3] Word families; also know as "chunks", help students learn to read by providing some predictable patterns within words. Our brains learn best by recognizing and storing patterns for quick retrieval.

[students' books]. And, students do not develop any other activity that helps them to master other language skills" (Field notes entry, 1st stage, November 2010). At the same time, teachers spent most of the class explaining contents, ideas, instructions and vocabulary explicitly, using their mother tongue (Spanish) on many occasions. This situation significantly decreased students' time to speak and communicate in the target language. Therefore, students' limited vocabulary knowledge command, lesson plans mostly based on reading and writing skills, and a minimal amount of opportunities for some students to speak, did not allow them to effectively use English as a communicative tool in EFL classroom activities.

After a three week observation period, students were exposed to Symtalk method. During this stage of intervention, research proves that Symtalk improves EFL students' speaking skills through vocabulary acquisition and sentence production in the classroom. While applying the method under study, results were perceived immediately in comparison with the first stage of observation, where the students were exposed to a minimum of interaction in the target language. During second stage, students produced in the foreign language by using simple vocabulary to create full sentences. During the first session, students acquired part of the vocabulary through games and didactic activities associating auditory pronunciation with flashcards and this way, memorizing and reproducing vocabulary after several repetitions; for example, through a "Bingo activity" in which the teacher hands out small bingo cards which are based on Symtalk pictures. Then, he puts all the pictures in a bag and takes them out one by one. Students identify picture meanings and see if they have the picture that the teacher is showing." (Field

notes entry, 2nd stage, October 2010). During following sessions, students were able to retrieve the vocabulary previously acquired and created full sentences by placing the cards side by side. Besides, using Symtalk methodology, teachers' intervention only occurs at the beginning of the lesson to introduce image meanings and give precise activity instructions. As a consequence, students' talk time in EFL classes increases, improving their speaking skills and making oral production more effective. Additionally, as Maurice Hazan has explained in *Symtalk quickly tour* (Rosheim, 2010), "using Symtalk, functional oral communication skills are not only a priority, they are essential in the learning process". Hence, data analysis proves that Symtalk provides students with the necessary vocabulary and speaking opportunities to orally produce in EFL classes.

[4]   *Ex. I + speak + Chinese 3image*

----

[4] *Image3:*Symtalk image was taken from *Qtalk publishing*: http://www.qtalkpublishing.com/. Sample of a full sentence created in an EFL class.

b) Silent period in Symtalk Methodology

Regarding silent period, some researchers and specialists have stated that Symtalk Method provides students with opportunities to speak from the first lesson, not allowing silent period to occur and cease naturally, as Hazan has commented,

> There are some theories, there are people who have different methods and who disagree with me, some people feel that people should not speak readily, some people believe that there should be a period of silence on the first week or in the first month and I believe that if they can speak, if they are having fun speaking, and they are very satisfied with the experience, I believe.. why not? Let them become communicative. (Maurice Hazan interview, Tape script MOVO 34)

However, this action research provides evidence to suggest that Symtalk methodology respects students' silent period; although, it depends on every EFL teacher, who is applying Symtalk activities, to facilitate this natural process of language acquisition. Consequently, despite some negative positions which argue that Symtalk method does not respect students' silent period, it has been proved that this method does not force students to speak before feel ready to do it.

According to journal entries in the second stage of intervention, when applying Symtalk method, a variety of teaching strategies were used by the researchers in order to respect students' natural silent period. These strategies were; a) pointing out images, b) responding with a "yes" or "no", c) gesturing concepts, d) flipping through pages, e) eye contact, f) and graving hands as it is exemplified in the following activity;

In this game, [catch the fly] different Symtalk flashcards are placed on the board. Then, two students go to the front of the classroom and each of them chooses a fly swatter. A third student says the name of a flashcard aloud, and the student who first points out and hits the correct flashcard wins. (Example of Journal entry, 2)

In this activity, the students were stimulated to speak by using different strategies which did not interrupt the natural development of silent period. The participants were volunteers who felt ready and comfortable when taking part in the game.

In summary, this research found out that silent period as a natural students' language acquisition process, also occurs when applying Symtalk method. The length of the silent period can vary depending on the student's willingness to speak. Some students take longer while others feel ready to start speaking from the first lesson. Nevertheless, it is essential for EFL teachers to choose the correct strategies and activities so as not to force students to speak but provide them with the necessary tools to feel confident and willing to do it.

c) Learning Styles and Symtalk Method

Symtalk has been designed to be applied together with other EFL methodologies and address the majority of learning styles, thus, facilitating foreign language acquisition. According to Messick (as cited in Ariza, Morales-Jones, Yahya, and Zainuddin, 2002) Learning styles have been defined as the "habitual strategies determining a person's typical modes of perceiving, thinking, and problem solving" (pag. 214). Under the description mentioned above, researchers have identified four perceptual learning styles;

the visual, the tactile, the kinesthetic, and the auditory style (Shoebottom, 2011, para. 2). Symtalk system develops these four areas by providing EFL teachers with diverse teaching materials such as visual flashcards and books, auditory CDs and manipulative card games which can be complemented with different teaching strategies and activities to develop kinesthetic learning style. Thus, visual style is reinforced with images such as f*lashcards, charts and smart boards* and also the innovative *guessing bulb game* in which students have to open and close wood boxes guessing what there is inside;

> This is a game we play with students. So what we do, we ask them which object is the most logical object [inside the box] For instance [showing **the image** of a CD] I can tell them …the CD[showing the card again]… where did the CD go?..and they say: listen…so I put them in a box like that…and eventually I tell them: oh! where does the hamburger go? And they say: to eat…my teachers like it a lot [It's] very useful with younger students. We call this [game] "the guessing bulbs".(Maurice Hazan interview, Tape script MOVO 36)

The auditory style is developed by oral repetition and the interaction between the students and the teacher complemented with audio CDs. The tactile style is enhanced through games such as *QTalk wood cards, QTalk Sentence puzzles*, and the kinesthetic style is developed through movement games such as *"catch the fly"* which has been previously mentioned.

In the same manner, while Symtalk Method was being applied, during the second stage of intervention, students could develop auditory, tactile, and visual learning styles.

However, kinesthetic style, sometimes, could not be totally reinforced because of the large quantity of students and the lack of space in the classroom. In some classes, students played a game named by the researches as "whispering", which was an adaptation of the popular game "the telephone". In this game, students had to sit in a vertical line of ten students and be kept in silence. Then, by whispering, they have to transmit a message to their classmates until it reaches the last student. The main goal of this game was that students could be able to develop the majority of the learning styles and orally produce by using Symtalk Method flashcards together with other methods;

- *Visual:* the student looks at the image when the teacher shows the card, and by retrieving previous knowledge he gets the message immediately.

- *Auditory:* students listen to the whispered word, encode the message and transmit it to the person that is sat in front of them.

- *Kinesthetic:* the student in front of the line is the last one who receives the message. He runs to the whiteboard and chooses the correct image among others stuck on the board.

- *Tactile:* the student takes the correct flashcard from the board and shows it to the rest of his classmates.

In conclusion, Symtalk method and teaching strategies are carefully interwoven to reach tactile, visual, kinesthetic and auditory styles in EFL classrooms in order to stimulate students to orally produce in the target language. Thus, flashcards, smart

boards, wooden puzzles, CDs and activities such as movement games, dancing or

jumping are encouraged by Symtalk when it is used together with other methods.

B. Symtalk method teaching materials provide comprehensible input for foreign language acquisition.

a) Comprehensible input through images

The language system of Symtalk provides students with images that help them to

decode and understand the message to facilitate the acquisition of a foreign language.

During the second stage of this action research, Symtalk EMC publishing materials were

used through didactic and dynamic activities. Flashcards, practicing vocabulary boards

and English books based on images were the core of the activities developed during EFL

Chilean classes.

Image 4
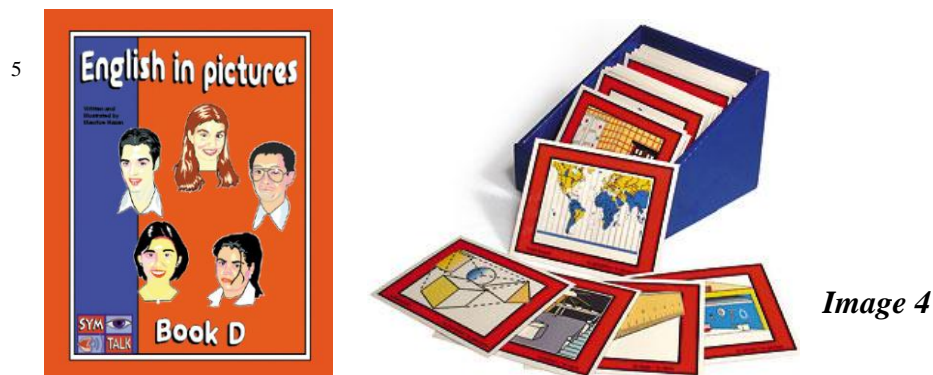
It was observed that Symtalk material worked well in every activity; however, it

was proved that when Symtalk is simultaneously applied with other methods, better

results are perceived. Even though only some of the pictures were contextualized

---

[5] *Image 4 :*Symtalk image was taken from *Qtalk publishing*: http://www.qtalkpublishing.com/.

according to Chilean reality, teachers had a positive result when carrying on their activities. According to journal data, the instant association of sounds and images arose spontaneously from the students, facilitating the understanding of the message;

> e.g. (1) ***Comments of the activity:*** As soon as the teacher shows the picture of a heart, students associate it with the verb *"to love"*. This example confirms that the use of culturally contextualized images in teaching a foreign language is essential to relate language to context as Byrne (1978, p.9) comments, "the significance of this is that the visual component took on a more appropriate and realistic function: it served to add a dimension to the language being taught". (See an example of journal entry 3)

From this point on, Symtalk flashcard images provide teachers and students with comprehensible input when teaching and acquiring a foreign language. According to Krashen (1985), "humans acquire language in only one way-by understanding messages, or receiving 'comprehensible input'" (p.2). Symtalk materials offers visual cues with every element of the speech to enjoy, learn and retain the target language, fostering communicative proficiency and listening skills in contexts that interest students. Consequently, as indicated earlier, the use of images as part of Symtalk methodology helps students to decode the messages easily and offers a solid component of comprehensible input in foreign language acquisition.

b) Symtalk Flashcards contextualized to Chilean classrooms reality

In spite of the notorious advantages of using authentic Symtalk flashcards in Chilean EFL classroom, there was a necessity to enlarge and culturally adapt flashcards in order to make them visible for all of the students in the classroom. Throughout the process of applying Symtalk method, there was evidence that Symtalk flashcards are not big enough when working with large groups of students. Some students showed difficulties when recognizing the pictures since each class was composed of 20 to 45 students and some of them were seated at the back of the room: "the size of the flashcards is too small to be recognized by forty students" (Field notes, 6th grade, second stage, 05/2010). As a result, an adaptation of flashcards sizes was applied with the purpose of reaching all the students in the classroom. Besides, the image of a kultrun, an indigenous Chilean people musical instrument, was used to signify verb "to be". Regarding material adaptation, Maurice Hazan states that "it is important to adapt them to different cultures because in some cases images are not going to work out" (Maurice Hazan interview, Tape script MOVO 36). Adaptation findings demonstrated that when enlarging flashcards sizes and adapting them to Chilean reality all students clearly distinguished the images and therefore, participated freely: "the pictures sizes now seem to be appropriate for the type of activity and all the students are able to see the images" (Field notes, 7th grade, second stage, 10/2010). In summary, despite of the good results of Symtalk flashcards in EFL classrooms, image size adaptation is necessary to reach all students when applying the method in large classes as in Chilean reality.
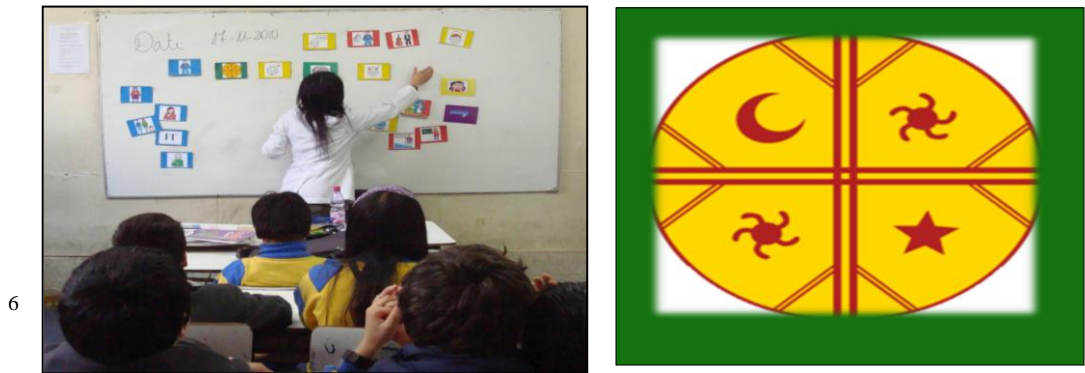
6

Image 4

C. **Symtalk teaching materials help the students' affective filter to be appropriate, facilitating motivation, concentration, and positive attitude towards the target language.**

a) Affective filter and motivation

The use of images that Symtalk incorporates to its visual system helps students to increase their motivation and feel relaxed, keeping their affective filter low enough to acquire a foreign language. According to Richard-Amato (2003), motivation involves, among other factors, "temporary expectancies, interests of the moment, curiosities…" (p.115) In this context, Symtalk visual materials are of immediate interest and value for students that take part in activities, which incorporate visual aids such as flashcards and vocabulary boards; "students are excited about placing the flashcards by themselves on the board and most of them want to participate in the activities" (Example of Journal entry, 3). Thus, students' motivation and willingness to participate enhance foreign

---

6 *Left:* Symtalk Method contextualized to Chilean EFL classes. *Right:* the image of a kultrun

language acquisition since they level their affective filter to be appropriate for acquiring a language. Besides, concern for keeping a low affective filter in language acquisition leads teachers to look for and apply the most accurate methods and approaches, making students feel comfortable and motivated during EFL lessons. Therefore, in this seeking of appropriate methodologies, Symtalk material attractive design seems to be suitable for these purposes. However, Symtalk teaching materials need to be enhance through correct use of different teaching strategies, so that students' levels of anxiety do not increase when they produce orally. Data analysis provides evidence that, during the second stage of intervention, most of the students experience feelings of success and satisfaction when they realize that they are able to remember images with their functional pronunciation:

> **Reflective comments**: Chilean students showed much motivation during the activity in which they had to interpret sentences based on images that they had memorized previously. It was observed that students felt pleased and cheerful when developing the activity because they could easily remember the meaning of the flashcards (Field notes, 6th grade, second stage, 17/05/2010).

To summarize, Symtalk teaching materials capture students' attention and curiosity, leading their motivation to a successful acquisition of a foreign language. The materials are relevant and comprehensible for the students and, when they are applied with appropriate guidelines from the EFL teacher, students' affective filter is enhanced positively.

b) Attitude toward Symtalk teaching material

Images are a great help when teaching a foreign language since they give comprehensible input to students and they can change their attitudes toward the foreign language creating a better mental pathway in the acquisition of a language. According to Amato (2003), "the *attitudes* that an individual has toward the target language and the target group (especially peers) seem to have a substantial effect on motivation in particular" (P.112). In the second stage of observation, when Symtalk materials were applied, researchers perceived that students had a positive attitude toward the activities because of the innovative, diverse and colorful images that were incorporated to EFL lessons. It was registered with pictures and other elicitation techniques such as observation that most of the students focused their attention on activities and they were not easy to be distracted by external factors, "students' attitude toward the class activities change positively as soon as Symtalk images are incorporated" (Field notes, 5th grade, second stage, 11/2010).

[7] Incorporation of Symtalk flashcards to Chilean EFL lessons

As a conclusion, changes in Chilean students' attitude produced by Symtalk material towards learning English through images constitute a contribution of Symtalk to the success of EFL lesson classroom. The attractive design of Symtalk materials keep students motivated and concentrated during activities, which, as a result, facilitates the acquisition of English.

D. **Symtalk method helps students to retain vocabulary more effectively than other traditional methods, stimulating sentence formation.**

a) Repetition as part of vocabulary acquisition

Repetition is one of the five principles of foreign language acquisition in a classroom (Maurice Hazan, 2010, p.2). This is how Symtalk Method does use repetition through images, games and didactic activities to improve foreign language vocabulary acquisition. "Using the same type of verbal and visual memory techniques children experience when they first learned to speak, Symtalk gets your students speaking and, in the process, helps them master *vocabulary* and sentence structure" (EMC Publishing, 2009). Through continuous repetition and a permanent practice, students can store image concepts and retain vocabulary better than using other traditional methodologies such as grammar translation and Audio-lingual Method. For instance, researchers noticed that in the first stage of observation, students had to translate words from Spanish to English to learn vocabulary, which made EFL classes tedious and monotonous. On the other hand, during the second stage, Symtalk Method visual cues and different strategies such as

games to make students orally produce in a more natural way. Thus, when students recognize and reproduce the vocabulary they have internalized after several repetitions natural production takes part. (Curtain and Dahlberg,2004, p.40) Consequently, Symtalk methodology masters vocabulary acquisition through the continuous and progressive repetition of images meaning. This repetition has significant results when acquiring a foreign language since students internalize vocabulary easily and naturally.

b) Conceptual networking and sentence formation

According to Maurice Hazan (2010), "each sentence in our brain has been repeated hundreds of times and is stored in one synapse" (p.4). For instance, when we speak, we do not recall isolated words, but instead we retrieve connected concepts such as nouns with their respective articles; e.g. "there is more likelihood of saying "a dog" than simply "dog" (Hazan, 2010, p.4). Therefore, when applying Symtalk Method, students are able to combine verbs that they have learned to at least 5 objects. Thus, students memorize a set of flashcards through repetition and then, they associate them to acquired vocabulary which has been stored in their brains. Images and the repetition of their functional pronunciation facilitate vocabulary retention, which is a positive characteristic of Symtalk Method in the acquisition of a foreign language. Once students have acquired vocabulary, it is easy for them to associate possible concepts such as the article "the" with the image of a dog. In the following example, students have stored the image of an apple and then made a connection with its more possible article *"an"*; they read,

Antonio　　　　　　eats　　　　　　*an* apple　[8]
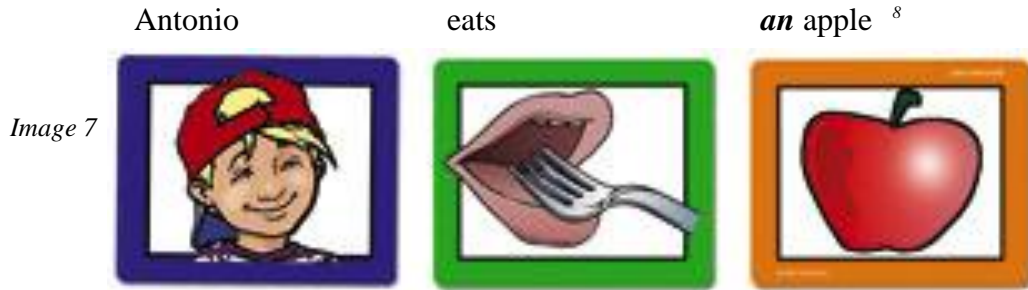
Image 7

Besides, data entry, during the action research, demonstrated that students do associate articles with images without difficulty;

One of the successful activities that the teacher develops during class is one she named "*Messing destination board*". In this activity students, in groups of three, were given different Symtalk color boards which contained a conceptual vocabulary networking. Some students spontaneously produced sentences adding articles to the images, for instance one of the students said: "I play **the** piano". (Example of Journal entry, 4)

[9]
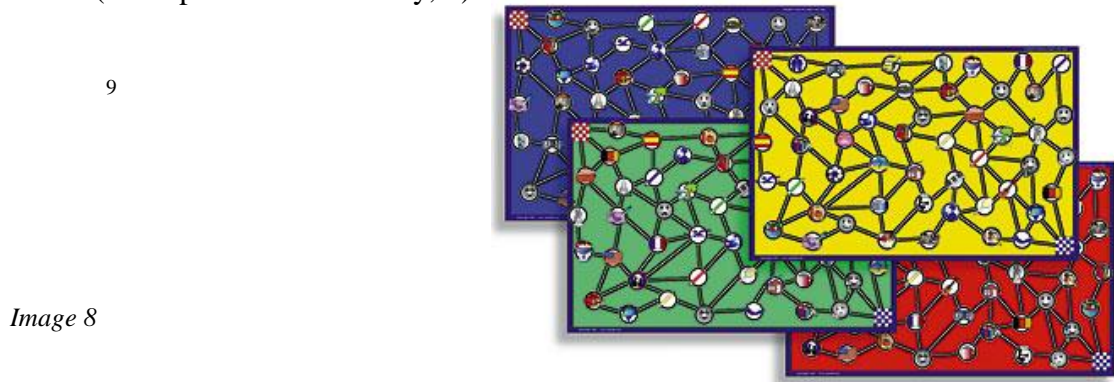
Image 8

Hence, conceptual networking allows our brain to recall information and associate related concepts. Symtalk methodology based on images helps students to retain new vocabulary and easily associate it with previous knowledge so that students could be able to create simple but full sentences in the foreign language. Therefore, students connect and combine words, creating sentences more spontaneously and improving fluency.

E.   When using Symtalk Method, Natural Order Hypothesis is valid for natural production and foreign language acquisition.

Students acquire a second language in a predictable order; a) pre-production, b) early- production, c) speech emerge and d) intermediate fluency (Escamilla and Grassi, 2000, p.114). Data entries, collected during the second stage of intervention corroborated that first stage of Natural order Hypothesis is valid when teaching students through Symtalk.

a) Pre-production stage

Throughout the research, it was confirmed that students received the input given by the teacher when using the flashcards. They repeated and imitated the vocabulary when asked. Besides, as the Natural Order theory claims, it was noticed that most of the students used to transfer the pronunciation of the English words into Spanish. Thus, the words starting with [*sh*] to [*ch*] as it was recorded in the journal with the following example; "One important aspect that caught my attention is that they used to pronounce [she] as [che]. This, because in Spanish we do not have the combination of the consonants s-h, they unconsciously transferred the pronunciation to their native

language" (Example of Journal entry, 3). Besides, during the second stage of intervention, students first learned isolated vocabulary related to personal pronouns, jobs and the verb to be by repeating them several times. Then, they were capable to combine words into simple but complete sentences such as: "she is a teacher" by placing the flashcards on the board side by side. Consequently, students started communicating in the foreign language as Maurice Hazan has stated in Tribeca Language webpage: "The QCards[10] are used to first teach *vocabulary individually* and then to combine that *vocabulary into complete sentences* for instant communication" (Maurice Hazan, 2010)

Therefore, the information collected during the second stage of the action research, verified that when using Symtalk methodology, students transfer pronunciation from Spanish into English. e.g. from "*She*" into "*Che*" . Students also acquire isolated words so that they later combine, create and produce full sentences. e.g. "She is a teacher". This proves that the first stage of "pre-production" in foreign language acquisition theory is valid.

F. It is necessary to meet certain requirements to apply Symtalk Method as an EFL teacher.

Although Symtalk is a practical foreign communicative language teaching method, EFL teachers must meet basic requirements to fully qualify for applying Symtalk in their lessons. They need to i) have a good command of English, ii) know how to teach grammar implicitly and iii) have previously used images in their classrooms.

a) Good command of English

As it has been said before, in order to acquire a foreign language, students should receive correct and clear input since "listening is a crucial first step in developing skills in a new language, and at early stages this listening is highly interactive-or interpersonal-even though students do not have much language at their disposal." (Curtain and Dahlberg, 2004, p.39). EFL teachers must speak good English because the input they transmit stays in students' memory and it represents the first model for language production. Students imitate output provided by the teachers and therefore the most correct input they receive, the most correct output they produce

b) Implicit grammar explanation

The core of Symtalk Method is to teach grammar implicitly so that students can acquire a foreign language in a more natural way. According to Richard-Amato (2003), "Students in communicative foreign language courses in which grammar is expected to be acquired inductively, through interactive process, become victims of early fossilization from which they are unlikely to recover" (p.60). When using Symtalk material, teachers who are more likely to teach explicit grammar have to encourage themselves to discover new strategies to explain grammar rules implicitly. They can give students the opportunity to acquire a language in a more natural way. In fact, when EFL teachers teach grammar in an implicit manner, they expose students to a significant amount of sentence structures; this, without alienating them to the acquisition of a foreign language. In this context, when teachers apply Symtalk Method and its sequence of images, they do

not instruct students in explicit grammar rules but they communicate them indirectly. Teachers do not teach students about rules; on the contrary, they communicate meaning as it has been previously stated. Students acquire language naturally in the same way they acquired their first language; "language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning" (Krashen and Tarrel, 1983, as cited in Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p.25)

c) Training in the use of images

Before EFL teachers apply Symtalk Method in their classrooms, it is necessary or/and require to have used images to teach English previously. In order to obtain effective results, teachers need to be able to use flashcards in different and original ways, creating new games and complementary activities to the ones that the method already includes as Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) comments, "It is important to have a variety of materials so that students do not become bored with the same picture used over and over". (p. 310). Regarding this topic, Maurice Hazan also clarifies the following;

If the teachers have used already pictures in their classrooms, they are already half way there. If they have ever used a flashcard, they already know how to introduce a flashcard. The only training is that teacher must realize that the flashcards do not have much power when they are used separately. The method is only effective when they are placed side by side because then, each picture is a logical recall cue of the next one. (Maurice Hazan interview, Tape script MOVO 38).

To successfully apply Symtalk method in EFL lessons, it is essential that teachers have a good command of English so that they can transmit effective input to their students and facilitate the acquisition of the foreign language; "learners need to be surrounded with comprehensible language-or input-in order to facilitate de acquisition of a new language" (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 33) They are also required to give implicit grammar instruction so that acquisition of the language occurs naturally; "the development of the learners' communicative abilities is seen to depend not so much in the time they spend rehearsing grammatical patterns as on the opportunities they are given to interpret, to express and to negotiate meaning in real-life situation" (Savignon, 1997, as cited in Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p.25). Therefore, teachers need to have been previously trained in the use of images. Consequently, Symtalk Method can be successfully applied if these three basic requirements are respected.

IX. Conclusion

As English language teaching has become a priority in Chile, it is important to keep current with new and innovative ideas, methods and practices. In this context, this action research has identified Symtalk Method as a communicative language teaching practice which brings numerous advantages to teachers and students.

Firstly, in order to carry out this research, the process of preparing and collecting data was gathered in two stages: *first stage of observation and second stage of intervention.* The results showed by data analysis proved that the implementation of its methodology in 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades of three different schools in Valdivia facilitates students' foreign language acquisition.

Secondly, data demonstrates that its teaching materials stimulate students to orally produce in the target language; "using Symtalk, functional oral communication skills are not only a priority, they are essential in the learning process" (Hazan in Roseheim,2010). The information obtained by the records provided evidence that; A) Symtalk Method is a communicative teaching practice that allows students to orally produce in the target language from the first lesson, B) Symtalk method teaching materials provide comprehensible input for foreign language acquisition, C) Symtalk teaching materials help the students' affective filter to be appropriate, facilitating motivation, concentration, and positive attitude towards the target language, D) Symtalk method helps students to retain vocabulary more effectively than other traditional methods, stimulating sentence formation, E) When using Symtalk Method, Natural Order Hypothesis is valid for natural

production and foreign language acquisition, F) It is necessary to meet certain requirements to apply Symtalk Method as an EFL teacher.

Besides, Symtalk methodology facilitates motivation, concentration and attitude helping students' affective filter to be appropriate to acquire a foreign language. Its attractive visual system is a consistent tool that helps teachers to encourage students to communicate from the first lesson. As this research has shown, Symtalk is a powerful teaching method that contributes with immediate results when acquiring a foreign language; students orally produce from the first lesson retaining and mastering vocabulary easily. This vocabulary is later used to form full sentences; "for instance one of the students said: "I play the piano" (Example of journal entry, 4)

Finally, as a conclusion, Symtalk method can be applied together with other methods in order to improve foreign language acquisition. Therefore, if it were incorporated to EFL classes, it would contribute with instant educational gratification.

X. Annexes

A) Sample of Field notes

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (1ⁿᵈ Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Noelia Trecaman
Location:	Colegio Laico Valdivia
Grade:	5ᵗʰ Grade
Date:	November 2010
Time:	11:45 am- 13:15 am (2 hours)

People taking Part: 18 students- mentor teacher-students in practice

Setting Description: Medium size classroom, desk row arrangement.

Activity Description: To start, the teacher says hello to her students and asks them to open their books in a specific unit. After some minutes of working in silence, the teacher asks the students to read their answers in front of the class. Later, she requests the students to go back to their books and continue working in the activities that the book contains. In general, the teacher bases her lesson plan on the curriculum. And, students do not do any different activity that helps them to develop their other learning abilities.

Reflective Comments:

1. - Students take too long to develop the activities from the book.

2. - The class is mainly based on the target language, encouraging students to force themselves to communicate in English.

3. - Class activities are only based on the book.

4. - There is no classroom management plan observed during the class.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (2ⁿᵈ Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Noelia Trecaman
Location:	Colegio Laico Valdivia
Grade:	5ᵗʰ Grade
Date:	November 2010
Time:	11:45 am- 13:15 am (2 hours)

People taking Part: 18 students- mentor teacher-students in practice

Setting Description: Medium size classroom, desk row arrangement.

Activity Description: To start, the teacher places some Symtalk flashcards side by side on the board, in order to teach personal pronouns. She pronounces the meaning of each card and students to do the same action after her, constantly. Later, the teacher introduces the verb to be and some adjectives such as: happy, sad, bored, and tired, and asks the students to pronounce the words repeatedly. After that, she places the different cards one by one showing the students implicitly, how to create meaningful sentences. To finish, and in order to reinforce word meanings, and review the vocabulary already taught, the teacher places roulette on the board using the image of different Symtalk flashcards seen at the beginning of the class. The teacher turns the arrow, and once it stops in front of one of the cards, the student previously chosen by the teacher identifies the meaning of the flashcard and creates simple sentences orally.

Reflective Comments:

Students' attitude toward the class activities change as soon as Symtalk images are incorporated. They seem to be very interested in identifying the flashcards meaning and they demonstrate a lot of interest in participating. The innovative use of the flashcards in the roulette allows students to recall information and create short sentences. Beside, students offer themselves to participate and be part of the activity constantly.

Field Notes (1ˢᵗ Stage "Observation")

Observer's name:	Noelia Trecaman
Location:	Escuela España Valdivia
Grade:	6ᵗʰ Grade
Date:	May, 2010
Time:	9:50 am- 11:30 am (2 hours)

People taking part: 40 students- mentor teacher-student in practice-observer.

Setting Description: big size classroom/ desk row arrangement.

Activity Description: In this opportunity, the teacher leaves the student in practice in charge of the class while she goes downstairs to test some students. The student in practice develops some teaching activities and sends groups of five students to take the test at the same time. Among the activities that the student in practice develops, it is possible to mention some games to learn new vocabulary related to clothes. She asks the students to stick some draws in the board representing a t-shirt, a pant, a dress, a jacket, and a pair of shoes among others. Later, after being outside the classroom, for 20 minutes, the teacher comes back to the room and stays in charge of the class. During her teaching class the room is interrupted several times by external people such as teachers, students from different levels and inspectors.

Regarding the test, it was and oral evaluation in which the students had to memorize ten classroom rules and say them aloud (there were no rubrics observed during the test). The teacher writes some words on the board and asks the students to pronounce them after her. After some minutes, the teacher asks the students to read a text from the book. While

kids are developing that activity another teacher arrives from outside the classroom in order to give a small speech regarding students' bad behavior. To end the class, the teacher asks the student to finish the activities from the book and bring them ready to the next class.

Reflective Comments:

1.-No didactic methodologies and activities were observed during the class.

2. -During this early period (8 am), students demonstrated not to be willing to work in class. They looked tired, sleepy and without interest to participate.

3. -Grammar translation is observed during the whole class.

4. - There is not classroom management ´plan observed during the teaching activities.

5.-   There is no motivation and no other type of activity that invites kids to work in class positively.

6.-**-**According to what was observed during the lesson, it seemed not have been prepared by the teacher in advance. Consequently, the students did not demonstrate interest in the class and in the activities that the teacher performed.

7.- There was a lack of affect between teacher and students. The teacher complained and yelled to the students' misbehavior all the time, even though, it was not necessary sometimes.

8. - Interruptions during the class affected the natural development of the activities.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (2nd Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Noelia Trecaman
Location:	Escuela España Valdivia
Grade:	6th Grade
Date:	May, 2010
Time:	9:50 am- 11:30 am (2 hours)

People taking part: 40 students- mentor teacher-student in practice-observer.

Setting Description: big size classroom/ desk row arrangement

Activity Description: Using Symtalk method, the teacher practices simple present sentences with the students. She places each flashcards side by side in order so that the students can pronounce the words meaning repeatedly. After that, the teacher introduces family members such as father, mother, sister, brother, grandfather, grandmother, aunt and uncle. Then, she reads the sentence aloud and the students continuously repeat after her. Later, the teacher introduces adjectives such as fat, thin, tall, short, young, old, pretty and ugly and asks the students to repeat the sentences by themselves one more time. As an extra activity, after a process of a lot of flashcard word repetition, each student receives a small piece of paper which contains a sentence based on a picture already taught by the teacher. Then, the students translate the meaning of the images into words and produce their own sentences. Besides, the teacher places all the flashcards on the board and plays a memory game with the students. This game consists on showing to the students all the flashcards images. Then, and after repeating the words several times and

in just one sequence, the teacher takes one out and hides it. The teacher asks the students to pronounce the words in the same order even though there are some flashcards that they can not see. To finish, the teacher asks some students to use the flashcards and create new sentences by themselves.

Reflective comments:

1. - The methodology was successfully developed and the students seem to have acquired all the vocabulary.

2. - Students work enthusiastically during the activity in which they had to interpret sentences based on images that they had memorized previously. It was observed that students felt cheerful when developing the activity because they could easily remember the meaning of the flashcard, which made them ask the teacher to repeat the activity one more time.

3. - It is observed that students easily remember Symtalk flashcards meanings. And, they also demonstrate to be willing to participate and create sentences using flashcards.

4. - The size of the flashcards is too small to be recognized by forty students.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (1ˢᵗ Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Ruth Miranda Fuenzalida
Location:	Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia
Grade:	7ᵗʰ Grade
Date:	October , 2010
Time:	14:00 am- 15:45 am (2 hours)

People taking part: 30 students- mentor teacher- observer (student in practice)

Setting Description: medium size classroom/ table row classroom arrangement.

Activities Description: The teacher starts the class activities asking the students to remember and write down the words studied in the previous lesson on the board. To reinforce the studied vocabulary such as: *third person singular*; he she it, they and the use of Wh *questions*; how, why, where, what and who, the teacher hands out a worksheet paper to the students. Later, she asks random questions to check the students' answer and requests them to open their books. Students work on their books in pairs and in silence during the rest of the class

Reflective Comments:

1. - Only the use of traditional methods is observed during the class.

2.-The teacher does not use classroom management strategies during the class.

3.- Feedback and vocabulary questions are given through grammar translation method.

4.- Mainly, the teacher supports her class on the use of the students' book.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (2nd Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Ruth Miranda Fuenzalida
Location:	Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia
Grade:	7th Grade
Date:	October, 2010
Time:	14:00 am- 15:45 am (2 hours)

People taking part: 30 students- mentor teacher- observer (student in practice)

Setting Description: medium size classroom/ table row classroom arrangement.

Activities Description: Using Symtalk flashcards (adapting version) students create past tense sentences with the use of the verb to be. Students read the pictures aloud after the teacher. Then, they memorize the pictures and read the sentences by themselves.

Bingo activity: The teacher hands out small bingo cards which are based on Symtalk pictures. Then, the teacher puts all the pictures in a bag and takes out one by one. Students identify pictures meaning and see if they have the picture that the teacher is showing.

Reflective Comments:

1.- Students easily remember picture meaning and they can read them using grammar structures implicitly. However, as it is a big class, not all of them are interested in the pictures.

2.- The pictures size seemed to be appropriate for the type of activity and all the students are able to see the images.

3.- Students were very enthusiastic with the bingo activity and participated a lot. Besides, they did not want the activity to finish.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (1st Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Ruth Miranda Fuenzalida
Location:	Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia
Grade:	8th Grade
Date:	October, 2010
Time:	(2 hours)

People taking part: 42 students- mentor teacher-observer (student in Practice)

Setting Description: Medium size classroom / table row classroom arrangement

Activities Description: In this opportunity, the teacher hands out a long reading text to her students. She asks them to read the document in silence and answer the questions. Even though students spend the whole hour developing this activity, they are not able to finish it.

Reflective comments:

1. - It seems that students did not enjoy the activity because it was too long.

2.- The teacher does not have a consistent lesson plan.

3.- Only reading skill was reinforced during the class.

4.- English grammar translation was observed during the activities.

Universidad Austral de Chile
Conocimiento y Naturaleza

Field Notes (2nd Stage "Application")

Observer's name:	Ruth Miranda Fuenzalida
Location:	Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia
Grade:	8th Grade
Date:	October, 2010
Time:	09:30 am- 11:15 am (2 hours)

People taking part: 42 students- mentor teacher-observer (student in Practice)

Setting Description: Medium size classroom / table row classroom arrangement

Activities Description: The teacher uses Symtalk flashcards to teach implicitly subjects and verbs. Then, she introduces subject and creates sentences in present tense. Students repeat after the teacher and then do the activity by themselves. After that, a new flashcard is introduced to the students; flashcard do/ does. Students place the flashcards between the subject and verb and create negative sentences. Then, students use the same flashcards and create questions.

Reflective Comments: Students memorize flashcards meaning and pronunciation easily. They seem to be very concentrated in trying to memorize flashcards meaning. Students learn "s" third person implicitly as well as the verbs have and has. Students want to participate during the whole class and seem to enjoy and to be very enthusiastic with the activities. However, when students are asked to write down sentences it seems to be a

hard task for them. Students can easily remember and create sentences orally but it is very difficult for them to write them down.

Among the diverse teaching resources that Qtalk publishing company has created, it incorporates specific material to be used depending on the age group…

B) Maurice Hazan Skype interview script

a) <u>SCRIPT MOVO 35</u>

Maurice Hazan: Symtalk was the first version of the method and that was sold to a publishing company in America, so I started a brand new series which is based on the same concept. It is called Qtalk because of course I cannot use Symtalk because now Symtalk belongs to another company. Am I making sense?

Ruth: yeah, we have a question there, because we went through Symtalk web page, and then we went through Qtalk web page and it has the same information. It doesn't matter if it has the same name, right?

Maurice Hazan: some of the information that is there is going to be changed. We will change the information especially regarding the methodology and the scientific part.

Maurice Hazan: I studied psychology for four years at the University of Nice, at the south of France, however, I never practice psychology. I traveled around the word and one day I arrived in Saint Luis in Missouri. Do you know where Saint Luis, Missouri is?

Ruth: Yes.

Maurice: It's in the middle of the United States, and some friends of mine were working in a school, they asked me if I would like to observe their language classes. So, they knew I had a background in psychology and my friends knew also that I could speak a few languages. My mother is German and my father [technical problems]. My both parents spoke English together, so very often, very early I could speak a few languages.

When I arrived in Saint Louis, in Missouri, and my friends asked me to observe their language classes   I know this, I compared these experiences of those young children learning language and I compared that to my experience as a young child and I noticed immediately that they were able to name colors and they were able to name… to count from one to ten or one to twenty, they were able to remember the greetings such as: hello, how are you, good bye, my name is, all these greetings, but they were not able to speak. They were not able to create sentences. The children that I observed were too young to try to introduce reading or writing because they only took French or Spanish once or twice a week, so there was no time to try to introduce reading or writing, ok?...and we all know that using pictures to teach a language or to teach anything else is very useful, we know that. However, I thought why not using a picture system and why no creating images representing verbs, right, so what makes Qtalk or Symtalk unique? It's the fact that I created many images representing verbs

Ruth: verbs and also parts of the speech because we know you also worked with the articles, adjectives, connectors…

Maurice Hazan: that's right I also created...so when I realized how well it was working I realized how fast were children were able to read those sentences, then I began creating other pictures such as conjunction, even prepositions or adverbs and so for, ok? So, after I saw how well it was working I expanded the system to more and more abstract parts of vocabulary. Am I making sense, right?

Ruth and Noelia: Yes

Maurice Hazan: At the beginning, I created Symtalk intuitively. I used my common sense and only four or five years after I had created the method that I decided to go back to my psychology text books to articulate a theory around the method because about four years after I created the method many schools in America were using it. I had to stop teaching to concentrate on writing more books in other languages. So seven years after I began my experience in creating the system I decided not to teach anymore to take a break just to become a presenter in a publisher and that's around that time we probably met… I have a question for you? Did we meet? You told me that you were working in a school in America…right?

Maurice Hazan: Basically the reason I created this method was because there was no other tool to teach a second language that was efficient. I had tried many other methods with the children to compare and I discovered that the other methods required too much time. What is important in teaching a second language is to keep the students very engaged. What is important is to make students feel that become successful very rapidly in speaking and that comes from the fact that they are already fluent in one language and they feel that if they cannot become communicative in a second language very rapidly, they get frustrated because they compare this experience with their own native language experience and they get discouraged very rapidly. So, I wanted to create something that would make people them speak from the very first lesson.

Ruth: and you said that you saw the results immediately when you put your method into practice. How was that process? Because I think at the beginning it was very difficult when you started.

Maurice Hazan: Yes, at the beginning I created the method for young children and then I adapted the method for older students but even with young children they were able to produce. I was able to see that there was language production immediately…ahm… there are some theories, there are people who have different methods and who disagree with me, some people feel that people should not speak readily, some people believe that there should be a period of silence on the first week or in the first month and I believe that if they can speak, if they are having fun speaking, and they are very satisfied with the experience, I believe.. why not? Let them become communicative. I'm also going to take this computer upstairs; right now I'm at my school because I have a school in New York city

Ruth: Tribeca

Noelia: Tribeca Language

Maurice Hazan: There is no difference between communication and grammar, it's the same thing. At the beginning with young students, their no point trying to explain grammar because they don't understand, especially here in America. In America students don't study grammar. In English classes students don't have to know what a subject or a verb and so for is because English grammar does not include conjugation and does not include genders…Because of that we do not teach at the beginning grammar at all. Grammar is the natural function of knowing how to conjugate a verb or grammar is knowing when to use the proper article or when to change an article according to a subject, that's grammar and you don't need to explain it with grammar terminology for students to understand that.

Maurice Hazan: First of all the choice of pictures is almost not very important. The pictures are just a clue. The pictures are just a way for students to be able to focus much better, much faster. Sometimes I create pictures to present some verbs and there is almost no relation between the picture and the verb. Some verbs are very abstract, so why do we use? Why do I create some pictures of verbs versus others? It is almost not very important. I don't know if I'm making myself clear. I give you an example; if you use the picture for *to use* ..do you know the one I'm talking about?

b) <u>SCRIPT MOVO 36</u>

Maurice Hazan: So this is something that I have created for adult students in the school, ok?... and the methodology with this is; I introduce five pictures of verbs in the first person singular and then I drill them, and then I introduce five objects and they have to try to tell me which picture is the most logical one. I've a PowerPoint for this and I'm going to send it to you, it's to teach adults, you're going to find it very useful for this…ok?...

Ruth and Noelia: Ok, thank you!

Maurice Hazan: It's about twenty five minutes long, you going to find that very useful. If I understand you question, before you were asking your question, and your question was some students ask you why do we use some pictures and no others? Is that correct?

Maurice Hazan: If I had a different picture for every conjugated pattern, it would make it difficult for students later to speak without pictures. In this case, the role of the teacher is simple, explain than when a certain picture is in front of another the sound will change.

Maurice Hazan: In the case like this case if they are ten or eleven, it is very easy to tell them; "hey, in Spanish is the same thing, we say…soy, eres and es…and in English we do this, with the verb "to be" also, we say "am, are, is". what I do in this case I'd give them, in a case like this, I'd give them an example, I'd tell them for instance, the people are different, the pictures change, so this is "Julian is" . Julian is at the beach, I can also say "Julian is happy" , now, what I do then I will change the subject and I would say for instance… I would say…ehm…"you are happy" now I will tell them I will simple say when the picture for *is* is after you *is* becomes *are*…that's the way I do it. However, I tell them we're going to play a little memory game we're going to speak…who has better memory, ok? So, I would say… I would ask them to repeat this to me; "you are happy' and then I say to them [changing the pictures] ah ha! What do you say now and then they have to say "he is happy" and even say…Can even you [connection problems] this is the new picture for…do you see this picture all the way.

Maurice Hazan: We, nosotros, right? Alright…" we are happy" now after that I'm going to put the picture back here and they have to tell me what they say… " he is …or I can even say…she is happy" . This is a character in the book called Sophia. I say to them and I will say to my…Why did you not say Sophia are happy? And they have to say because it's not the picture for "you" so I play a game…at the beginning I tell them it's going to be a memory game and I tell them also simple…you know sometimes with your students

..you have to…sometimes…you have to tell your students that's the way it is because really there is no exact… there is no logical reason why a language is the way it is. A language evolves very subjectively. We don't really know why we conjugate the verb "to be" in English and we don't conjugate the other verb..right?...that's the way it is. So, I just tell them, most of the time I just tell them "that's the way it is". I can create games; I create games to do that. Let me ask you a question… are you familiar with smart boards in Chile.

Ruth: yes, we call it "pizarra didactica"o no? inteligente.

Maurice Hazan: These are verbs, right? You see. They are boxes. This is a game we play with students. So what we do, we tell the students to… we tell the students which object …we ask them which object is the most logical object, right? For instance, where [this is the train] where does the train go? And then they tell me: to take … and then I tell them: ah ha! Where does…I take some objects…some object pictures. I can tell them the CDs… where did the CD go?..and they say: listen…so I put them in a box like that..and eventually I tell them: oh where does the hamburger go? And they say: to eat..so after that[audio problems] that's very useful with younger students… but I think… yeah, it's very useful. But I think your students are.. your students are a little too old for that but my teachers like it a lot.

Maurice Hazan: We call this "the guessing bulbs" and then we have many of those in every room ..ok?..I'm gonna show you something else. I'm gonna show you something that is very, very useful with students that are the age of ten and eleven. We have created

many, many new application of the method and one of them is one we call conjunction cards

Maurice Hazan: ok, so there is the girl and a cat, ok? The girl is, her name is Lilly, and Lilly is not very happy, right? It's a picture of the cat and he is sick, right?. So this is the next step. At the beginning we create sentences with pictures, we say: Lilly is happy. So we use pictures to say that at the beginning, right? Then, we show a picture of Lilly and she is not happy.. and we say..at the beginning we also create pictures with the cat is sick, that's three pictures [showing a picture] this is what we call a conjunction card. Here the student has to say: Lilly is sad because the cat is sick.

Maurice Hazan: It's two sentences, right? "Julian is happy because it's a nice day" I can say "Lucas is not happy because his bicycle is broken" right? It's very useful. This is the logical step. One word for each picture, and then one picture for one sentence. Ok? And then, you put two sentences together and at the beginning you use only the conjunction "because". The method has evolved a lot. Right now, we are creating a lot of material for English. English is going to be our area to focus for the next six months. Many, many schools are asking us to use the material in English; in China, in Japan, and many other countries in Europe. So we are going to adapt all of our new material to English. You're going to be very surprised.

Noelia: Do you use different pictures to teach different languages? For example, if you are teaching in Japan, or you want to teach in German.. Do you use a different king of image to teach a language or you use the same to teach any language.

Maurice Hazan: No, we use the same picture but sometimes there is a little bit of difference. For instance, we can introduce a picture for to eat in Chinese, we use a mouth with a chopstick and not a mouth with a fork. Am I making sense? So we have to adapt. Sometimes, there is a little bit of adaptation. Yeah, sometimes we have to change it. But, essentially it's the same method.

Maurice Hazan: So basically all of the pictures that were created for Symtalk have been modified. You have to understand that Symtalk is not my method anymore. I have changed all of the pictures, I'll give you an example, Ok? I'll give you some examples. Because also now we teach a lot of adults, I'll show you an example; a picture for children and a picture for adults, let me…especially for instance the pictures representing people [he shows a picture used for high school and a picture used for elementary school] so, we adapt the pictures for …this is an adaptation…so we are very mindful of the fact that you cannot use the same picture for children and with adults.

Maurice Hazan: You should adapt those pictures to your culture.

Maurice Hazan: It is important to adapt them to different cultures because in some cases images are not going to work out, absolutely… and please feel free to give me all your feedback …I' very… you know.. I'm very curious to know and here…this is a school but it's also a publishing company. The publishing company is downstairs where I began this interview so we have people working on the method everyday

Maurice Hazan:. We the youngest students we use the method with a, as young as two years old, but of course the approaches are a little bit different.

Noelia: ok, how many students do you teach?

Maurice Hazan: in our classes, in this school here, the classes are very small. We teach very small classes, six students or seven students at a time, not more.

Noelia: Do you think it can work with us if we teach forty students.

Maurice Hazan: Absolutely, yes. The method was created for large groups, originally. It was not creates for small groups.

c) <u>SCRIPT MOVO 37</u>

In this part of the interview Maurice Hazan explains how teachers use smart boards and Qtalk programs in their classes.

d) <u>SCRIPT MOVO 38</u>

Ruth: Has your method been tested in South America?

Maurice Hazan: I don't know if my method was tested in South America because I sold Symtalk just after we saw the method in South America. So, I don't know … I'm not sure. I don't know who uses it. I know Symtalk is used everywhere around the world but I'm sure who is using it.

Noelia: When a person creates something we usually realize we have advantages and disadvantages, so, do you consider that there is a disadvantage in your method… using your method?

Maurice Hazan: Ok, a disadvantage in the method is the fact that the teachers have to… teachers have to make in the first two to three lessons, teachers have to convince students that they must try not to take notes, especially adults. So, we have to train teachers well convincing students not to take notes, at the beginning.

Ruth: Do you think your method develops all the skills, or improve all the skills. For example; listening, reading and writing and speaking? Because one of the disadvantages that we have seen, using your method, is that… for example; when we want to the students say something, they say it. It really works in that sense but when we want them to write something they can't do it.

Maurice Hazan: Correct, right, so. The answer is very simple; the method was created to make students speak. Now, the method is a supplemental tool to teaching a second language. However, let me give you an example; if the teacher wants students write, below the pictures [showing students' book] there are some space for them to write … ok? However, the method is a communicative method. It is not based on making them read or write. But, reading and writing is very complementary to teaching a second language, as a matter of fact you should try to teach English by maybe using my pictures but also text is important.

Maurice Hazan: Every time, in the book, every time the vocabulary is introduced, it is introduced with pictures but also with text [showing the book] and the infinitive and the conjugating of the word also. So, I don't know if you only use the flashcards or you have that part. Do you use the books, also?

Ruth: Yes, we have books but we haven't used them yet because we just started using the method in our schools.

Maurice Hazan: I understand, so, in the book there is a writing component on every page. With the English series we are developing now, there is also a strong reading and writing component which anyway is very important to schools, especially in America or actually everywhere so you can assess students' progress and it a good way to assigned them homework. Yes, I do agree that you need all kind of components to teach a second language. It cannot be only with pictures, once they have some communicative skills; you need to introduce some texts…yeah…

Ruth: So, in this sense you can use this method with another one.

Maurice Hazan: Absolutely.

Noelia: Do you think that our country is ready to apply your method?

Maurice Hazan: It's very simple. The answer is very simple, today. If the teachers have used already pictures in their classrooms, they are already half way there. If they have ever used a flashcard, they already know how to introduce a flashcard. The only training is that teacher must realize that the flashcards… they do not have much power when they are used separately. The method is only effective when they are placed side by side because then, each picture is a logical recall cue of the next one. I think I explained that a little bit in the paper that you downloaded, that you printed. Training teachers is not a big problem, also, I'm developing a series of DVDs that people are gonna be able to watch, to train properly. The biggest… teachers ... The biggest problem that teachers have when

they are in the classroom is that they want to do all the talking, ok? And in the training

DVD I explain how to make students do all the talking. The method is based in what I

call *"minimum teachers intervention"*. The reason why teachers like this method is that it

makes them much, more, less basically. The role of the teachers is to introduce

vocabulary clearly and to explain conjugating patterns, but that's all. Then, after that they

have to let students to conduct the lesson.

Ruth: Have you thought about working with children with disabilities because in our

classrooms we have children with disabilities and we have to work with them… with

mental disabilities or with other ones.

Maurice Hazan: The only disability that is a problem with my method is with children

who are blind. I have had some teachers asked me what can they do with blind children

and it's not an easy answer because everybody is a visual learner, except, of course

people who are blind. I've had a lot of feedback from teachers who do work with children

with disabilities and they say that the method works pretty well with them especially with

children who are dyslexic. In our school we have a few dyslexic children who come to

our school exactly because they are not able to learn in a traditional setting. The method

is a very natural way of teaching; it's a natural way to teach so it should work with

students of all abilities. There are some children, who are what we called hyperactive.

With children who are hyperactive, we let them use something that they can play around

with. For instance, I let them use sticks or I let them use a ball that they can squeeze.

Children who are hyperactive need to have another implement that they can use with their

hands so that they can focus on the lesson. However, it's not easy to work with a child,

who is moving a lot, so, you know… A lot of question that you have asked me are a sort of what we called class management questions…and you know…class management issues are the same in every in every topic; in language, in art in everything. So, there is not an easy answer for these questions.

Ruth: What we did with students who are hyper, we created corners in the classroom so we put some pictures in some corners, so we made them move.

Maurice Hazan: Yes, absolutely. Exactly we do the same. Children who are hyperactive… we use them to become our teachers' assistance we ask them to do that.

C) Samples of Journals

    a) Sample 1

Grade: 5th grade
Topic: *Identify the personal pronouns*
 Reinforce: the use of Simple present and past.
Students: 20
Time: 8:10-9:45
Researcher: Noelia Trecaman C.
School: Colegio Laico Valdivia

Activities: *Identify the pronouns*; I, you, he, she, it, we, they.   *Reinforce:* the use of Simple present and past.   Use of Adjectives: happy, sad, bored, and worried.
Materials: Symtalk flash cards, whiteboard
Methodology and personal experience: To star to introduce Symtalk Method, the teacher asks students to stay quiet and work in lines. Once they are in complete silence, she introduces the flashcards that represent the pronouns, I, you he, she, it, we, they. Then, the students are asked to repeat the meaning of the flashcards that are represented by people images. For instance, the pronoun "I" is represented by a single girl and "we" by three people and so on. After repeating and pronouncing the meaning of the flashcards in groups, the kids identify the use of the verb be, which is represented by a the image of a Kultrun (Mapuche people's musical instrument). Besides, kids identify the use of the adjectives, sad, happy, worried and bored. To conclude, kids repeat after the teacher the meaning of Symtalk flashcards placing them side by side and forming sentences in preset simple.

Reflective comments:

Students seem to be interested in the class and motived as Richard Amato (2003) states, "motivation involves, among other factors, temporary expectancies, interests of the moment, curiosities." (p.115). Symtalk flashcards caught their attention from the first lesson which facilitated teacher's class performance and students' willingness to participate.

One of the difficulties observed during the application of the method was the size of the flashcards which were not appropriate for the amount of the students presented in the classroom. Some students showed difficulties recognizing the images.

b) Sample 2

Grade: 6th grade
Topic: Descriptive adjectives
Reinforce: Personal Pronouns-verb to be (affirmative)
Students: 45
Time: 8:00-9:45
Researcher: Ruth Miranda.
School: Escuela España Valdivia

Activities: Identify descriptive adjectives : tall, short, fat, thin, old, young

Reinforce: Personal pronouns and the use of verb to be in present simple.

Materials: Symtalk flash cards, whiteboard

Methodology and personal experience: The teacher shows personal pronouns flashcards to see if students remember their meanings. Most of them correctly say the name of the flashcards image which proves that they have stored vocabulary. Then, the teacher places the "verb to be" flashcard on the board next to each subject to review the correct use of verb with each personal pronoun. After that, the teacher shows the students six flashcards which represent adjectives. Students repeat the pronunciation given by the teacher. They understand flashcards meaning and then create full sentences by placing them next to subjects and the verb to be.

In order to reinforce vocabulary and encourage students to participate in the class, the teacher plays a game named "catch the fly". In this game, different Symtalk flashcards are placed on the board. Then, two students go to the front of the classroom and each of them chooses a fly swatter. A third student says the name of a flashcard

aloud, and the student who first points out and hits the correct flashcard wins. At the end of this activity, the teacher and the students create full sentences by placing the pronoun flashcards, verb to be flashcard and the adjectives flashcards. Some of the sentences created were: *She is tall / I am thin*

Reflective comments:

Curtain and Dahlberg (2004) comments that "pictures are very helpful in keeping the classroom in the target language." (p.309) During this game students demonstrated that they understood the meaning of the flashcards without the explicit translation of the words into their mother tongue. This demonstrates that images, used by Symtalk Method, provides students with comprehensible input which according to Krashen (1985) is the only way that humans can understand messages "by receiving comprehensible input" (p.2).

c) Sample 3

Grade: 7th grade
Topic: Personal pronouns and verbs
 Reinforce: vocabulary
Students: 30
Time: 2:00-3:45
Researcher: Ruth Miranda.
School: Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia

Activities: Identify Personal pronouns and the verb.   Use vocabulary, personal pronounce and verbs to create full sentences
Materials: Symtalk flash cards, whiteboard
Methodology and personal experience: Students learned and repeated the pronunciation of the personal pronouns; I, you, he, she, it, we and they. One important aspect that caught my attention is that they used to pronounce [she] as [che]. This, because in Spanish we do not have the combination of the consonants s-h. They unconsciously transferred the pronunciation to their native language. This situation was difficult for the teacher to handle but she overcame this problem playing a memory game. After that, they recalled vocabulary related to food and sports and created full sentences such as: • He eats and apple   • She loves soda   • They play football   Students are excited about placing the flashcards by themselves on the board

and most of them want to participate in the activities. It was observed that students, who were not comfortable at participating on the first stage of observation, were now willing to take part in every task and memory games. Flashcards helped every student to understand the meaning of the vocabulary and it was noticed that motivation increased.

Comments of the activity: As soon as the teacher shows the picture of a heart, students associate it with the verb *"to love"*. This example confirms that the use of culturally contextualized images in teaching a foreign language is essential to relate language to context as Byrne (1978, p.9) comments, "the significance of this is that the visual component took on a more appropriate and realistic function: it served to add a dimension to the language being taught".

Reflective comments:

In this class, different games and other Methodologies were complemented with Symtalk Method which represented a solid tool for the EFL teacher. Symtalk flashcards can be used with different games and provide "stimulus for a wide range of vocabulary and for sequencing activities"(Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004, p. 310)

d) Sample of journal 4

Grade: 8th grade
Topic: *Identify the personal pronouns*
 Reinforce: the use of Simple present and past.
Students: 45
Time: 9:30-11:00
Researcher: Ruth Miranda.
School: Instituto Gracia y Paz Valdivia

Activities: *reinforce*; I, you, he, she, it, we, they/ verbs and vocabulary

---

Materials:

Symtalk flash cards, whiteboard, Symtalk vocabulary boards.

Methodology and personal experience:

The teacher reviews personal pronouns and verbs by giving each student a

flashcard. Then, they have to recall last class content and create simple present

sentences orally according to the flashcard they have. It was observed that they did not

have problems at recalling information but for some of them it was complicated to

pronounce the words correctly. After that, the teacher incorporates several didactic

activities and games but one of the successful activities that the teacher develops

during class is one she named "*Messing destination board*". In this activity students, in

groups of three, were given different Symtalk color boards which contained a

conceptual vocabulary networking. Some students spontaneously produced sentences

adding articles to the images, for instance one of the students said: "I play **the** piano".

Reflective Comments:

As Maurice Hazan (2010) has stated "each sentence in our brain has been repeated hundreds of times and it is stored in one synapse." (p.4). It was surprising how student could easily combine words to create and form full sentences using only a set of pictures on a board. Besides, it was proved that through repetition students can retain vocabulary and acquire language through a permanent practice.

XI. References

Alvarez, G., & Cavanagh, P. (2003). *The capacity of visual short- term memory is set both by visual information load and by number of objects.* Manuscript submitted for publication, Undergraduate research opportunities program, University of California, Irvine, CA. Retrieved from www.urop.uci.edu/SURP/../SURP%20Social%20Sciences%204.pd

Ariza, E., Morales-Jones, C., Yahya, N., & Zainuddin, H. (2002). Why tesol?: theories and issues in teaching english as a second language with a k-12 focus. Florida: Kendall/Hunt

Bell, A., Ford, L., & Wunderlich, K. (2010). *Dialogue on learning: brain function.* Retrieved from http://www.dialogueonlearning.tc3.edu/model/environment/brainfunction-grp.htm#storage

Boeree, G.C. (2009). *General psychology:memory.* Retrieved July 24, 2010, from http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/memory.html

Burke, K. (n.d.). *Overview of effective teaching practices.* Retrieved from http://cetl.matcmadison.edu/efgb/2/2_3_2.htmhttp://education.calumet.purdue.edu/vockell/edPsybook/Edpsy6/edpsy6_long.htm

Burt, M., Dulay, H., & Finocchiano, M. (1977).*Viewpoints on english as a second language.* New York: Regrets Publishing Company.

Byrne, D. (1978). Visual in language teaching. *Visual aids for classroom unteraction*, 9-14.

Cote, R., & Gerken, L. (2004). *Adult second language acquisition in negative environment.* Retrieved from http://www.u.arizona.edu/~rcote/SPH541/Adult%20Second%20Language%20Acquisition%20in%20Negative%20Environments.pdf

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (1988). *Vocabulary and language teaching.* London: Longman.

Curtain, H., & Dahlberg, C.A. (2004). *Languages and children: making the match.* Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Coady, J., & Huckin, T. (1997). *Second language vocabulary acquisition.* NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Douglas, H. (2000). *Principles if language learning and teaching*. White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Ellis, R. (1994). *The Second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford university press.

Escamilla, K., & Grassi, E. (2000). *A brief description of second language acquisition. Professional development resource series*, (Second language acquisition), 114-126.

EMC Publishing, Initials. (2009). *Symtalk*. Retrieved from http://www.emcp.com/product_catalog/index.php?GroupID=1367

Everding, G. (2008). *Practicing information retrieval is key to memory retention, study finds*. Informally published manuscript, Newsroom, Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA. Retrieved from http://news.wustl.edu/news/Pages/11091.aspx

Gass, S.M., & Selinker, L. (2008). *Second language acquisition. an introductory course*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hazan, M. (2010). *Qtalk method*. Retrieved from http://www.tribecalanguage.com/qtalk-methods.html

Hirschmann, L. (2005, July 4). *Chilean students score poorly on cambridge english exam* . Retrieved from http://www.teachingchile.com/pdf/five_percent.pdf

Hunter, I.M. (1964). *Memory*. Harmondsworth: Pinguin books Inc.

Johnson, A. (n.d.) *The rise of English: the language of globalization in china and the European union.* Retrieve from http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article01447&context=macintl

Kelm, O. (2007, September 7). *Lesson 4: input vs. intake*. Retrieved from http://coerll.utexas.edu/methods/modules/technology/04/

Krashen, S.D. (1982). *Principles and practices in second language acquisition*. New York: Pergamon Press.

Krashen, S. (1983). *Krashen sla notions: applications of psycholinguistic research to the classroom*. Unpublished manuscript, California state university, Chico, California. Retrieved from http://www.csuchico.edu/~gthurgood/470/014_Krashen.pdf

Krashen, S.D. (1985). *The Inputh hypothesis:issues and implications*. Longman: London and New York.

Krashen, S. & Terrel, D. (1983). *The natural approach: language acquisition in the classroom.* Hayward, CA: Alemany Press. 183 pp

Littlewood, L. (1981). *Communicative language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.

Morris, T. (2009). *History and Development of the English Language class: grammar and usage*. Retrieve (2010, August 26) from

Moskowitz, G. (1978). *Caring and sharing in the foreign language class*. Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers, Inc.

http://www.uta.edu/english/tim/courses/4301w98/nov23.html

NYC Language, Inc. Qtalk Method. Retrieved March 29th ,2010 from, http://www.nyclanguage.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=934&Itemid=56

Richard, J., Platt, J., & Weber, H. (1985). Encoding. (1985). *Longman dictionary of applied linguistics*. TUTI: editorial Adrian stenton –sue lambert..

Richard-Amato, P.A. (2003). *Making it happen*. White Plains: Longman.

Robert, J. (2010). Glenn domman-flash card help language learning. Article valley, Retrieved (2010, August28) from http://www.articleclick.com/Article/Glenn-Doman-Flash-Card-Helps-Language-Learning/1355982

Rosheim, E.J. (Producer). (2010). *Symtalk quick tour www.emcschool.com*. [Web]. Retrieved from http://vimeo.com/11880693

Savignon, S.J. (n.d.). *Communicative Language Teaching: Linguistic Theory and Classroom Practice*. Retrieved (2010, August13) from http://yalepress.yale.edu/yupbooks/excerpts/03000915

Seamon, J.G. (1980). *Momory and cognition: and introduction.*. New York: Oxford University Press.Inc.

Shoebottom, P. (2011, January). *Language learning styles*. Retrieved from http://esl.fis.edu/parents/advice/styles.htm

Torre, H.(2007). *A web based tool for oral practice and assessment of grammatical structures.* Retrieved (2010, August 14) from ProQuest Digital Thesis, http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/ETD/image/etd1972.pdf

Tulvin, E. (1972). *Episodic and semantic memory* [academic press, inc, (London) Ltd. , Vol. 73-182647, pp.382-402]. (United Kindom edition), Retrieved from http://web.media.mit.edu/~jorkin/generals/papers/Tulving_memory.pdf

Vockell, E. (n.d.). *Educational psychology: a practical approach* [chap.6]. (DX reader version), Retrieved from

Weber, H. Platt, J. Richards J. (1985). *Longman group UK limited. Longman dictionary of applied linguistics*. (1st ed., p.92). Longman. England: Harlow.

White, S. (2004). *Dual language: teaching* and *learning in two languages*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc

Wilkins, D.A. (1974). *Second-language learning and teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.

Yang, A. (2005, December 05). How self-esteem and anxiety affect second language learners. Retrieved from http://t.snhu.edu/EFL-537/yangyating/Research%20Paper.doc

Yeung, N. (2009, February 17). *Working effectively with english language learners*. Retrieved from https://wiki.uww.edu/other/childdevresource/images/d/d0/Working_Effectively_with_ELLs_Wiki.pdf

Zelizer, B. (2002). Visual Rhetoric: the voice of the visual in memory. Framing memory conference;Bloomington,2001. Indiana: Bloomington. Retrieved (2010, July 24) from http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/ConferenceArchive/voiceover/voice_of_the_visual.html#titleback