



**UNIVERSITY OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS  
OF THE NICARAGUAN CARIBBEAN COAST,  
URACCAN**

**Participative Action Research**

**Methodological Strategies to Create an Engaging Classroom  
Environment, First Year Sociology Students, Second Semester  
2018**

**To obtain the Bachelor's Degree in English Language Teaching**

**Author:**

**Br. Daniela Raquel Velásquez Amador.**

**Tutor:**

**Lic. Jesús Alexis Amador Díaz**

**Bilwi, Puerto Cabezas, 2018**



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I dedicate this IAP to God in the first place because he gave me his hand in every moment during this process and he has been my strength during trying times. Moreover, I would like to dedicate this work to my mother Vivien and my uncle Ramon because they always supported me and helped when I needed it, and they believed in me more than I did; they are part of my inspiration.

And finally I want to dedicate this work to my son who is my inspiration, my closely friends who helped me and gave me advice during my learning process, my tutors teacher Juan Carlos who started with me in the process of this investigation, Teacher Rosa Palacio Who guided me in the process of this IAP and Alexis Amador who finished this process with me, and all my teachers from primary, high school and university who turned me into the professional I am today.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I thank, in the first place, God for giving me the strength to achieve my goal of completing my bachelor's degree in English teaching. I am so thankful with him for giving me talent to be a teacher.

Thanks to my teachers who made of me a professional. Thanks for being patient, being my guide during those years. Also I would like to say thank you to URACCAN Nueva Guinea and Bilwi campus for opening their doors.

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Sincerely thanks to all the people who had helped me during this long road. Thanks to the people who believed and helped me to walk towards my goal, thanks for turning this tough rock into a piece of gold. May God bless you all.

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## **Abstract**

Most people around the globe is aware of the importance of learning a second language, but English is the language that has spread all over the world. English is the language spoken in more countries throughout the world, not to mention that is likely to be spoken in every part of the world for at least some individuals in that space. For this reason, many teachers, all around, do research to find better strategies to teach this language, and specially to beginner students because their first experience with the target language is determinant of everything students learn next.

This research is focused on strategies for creating an engaging classroom environment with beginner English learners at the university. However, these strategies can be applied at different levels and with several groups as well. English teachers are responsible for teaching a second language to diverse people who have different learning styles. Therefore, English teachers must use a bunch of strategies to get the one-hundred percent out of every student in the classroom.

The strategies applied in this investigation process showed important results in the classroom atmosphere. It was noticeable scholars' changes. Students who were shy changed their behavior from timid and passive to more participative and willing to be part of the class actively, students commitment during the class was visible, and teacher's attitude help learners changed negative feelings toward the class and created new perspectives.

It is visible that students learn easily when exposed to a dynamic environment. An interactive atmosphere makes them feel comfortable when sharing with their classmates and teacher and it produces a sense of confidence when using the target language. Besides, learners have the opportunity to practice and share new words and phrases (vocabulary enrichment) learnt from music, stories, TV, or other sources that teachers promote.

## **I. Introduction**

In this era, learning a second language such as English, is an essential part of every human life for a number of easy-to-agree with reasons. In the first place, learning English highly decreases poverty. In today's world, people have jobs depending on education level. The more prepared they are; the best payment they receive. Therefore, having a strong knowledge on English, qualifies people as better prepared individuals to multitask and work in different fields. In addition to it, English learners can be creators of their own business by becoming teachers and having private English language classes.

There is an open world of opportunities for English learners concerning job opportunities and also professional development. For example, an English speaker can not only be a teacher but also be a translator, interpreter, touristic guide, hotel receptionist, call center representative and more. Besides employment affairs, English speakers also have opportunities to apply to international scholarships and travel abroad to professionalize meanwhile they meet a lot of people, know and learn about their culture at the same time.

As a result, English is clearly the language of impact in our lives for many aforementioned reasons. Therefore, it is crucial to carry out researches focused on analyzing and applying new strategies to help teachers in a beginner classroom, which is where teachers must start to elicit students' interest towards this language in order to get them engaged in it from the very beginning.

Learning English as a foreign language as said before, has become an essential part of education in the world. That's why there are many teachers around developing research to find better strategies for teaching this language, especially to beginner students.



Languages require engagement, practice and often use of it. Consequently, English teachers must incorporate a variety of activities to keep students engaged in their lesson. Beginner students must be motivated as much as possible; this will always be an essential part in the learning process.

This study took place at the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean coast- Bilwi Campus, Puerto Cabezas. To conduct the following piece of research some information was consulted from the library at the University of the Autonomous Regions of the Nicaragua Caribbean Coast (URACCAN) Nueva Guinea and Bilwi Campus. Moreover, some websites that contain scientific information, magazines that offer information associated with the topic, and some thesis found on the internet that are related to this research were a useful information source.

In the search and analysis of information, a study that proposes the use of audio-visual media for the teaching-learning process of the foreign language was found. This research was conducted by Freddy Chamorro in 2012.

(Chamorro, 2012) states that:

Audio-visual media give teachers the possibility to vary the methodology and encourage learners' motivation using techniques such as: projecting images and letters allowing the student to understand things by himself/herself. Also, using sounds, among other things so that young feel attracted particularly in learning a new language. (p. 3)

Therefore, that study developed by Mr. Chamorro suggests the use of audio-visual media as a support for the teaching learning process. So every teacher should use the investigation addressed to ninth graders, but with a wider possibility to be used with many other students of the language in different grades.

Another study conducted by students from URACCAN University in 2013 entitled environmental conditions that affect the teaching-learning process. This study was conducted in tenth graders at Bautista Genesis High School with the purpose to

demonstrate that a very well-conditioned classroom can lead to better results in education. As it is cited in the research conducted by (Obando & Torrez, 2014),

There are also classroom factors that can affect the teaching process. One factor is the physical features of the classroom. Classrooms are too small for the number of students who are in each room. Rooms are cramped for space due to the number of students, desks, and all the equipment and materials needed to make the class work.

Last year, a student from Bachelor's degree in English Teaching was working in a research based on helping students who were studying a compulsory English course. This student, in her results, says that many students have problems with the English language because their teachers were too traditional and the classes were boring. (Velasquez, 2017) "It is very important for English teachers to use new strategies where the students can be active in the class" (p.5).

In 2007, a pair of researchers wrote a monograph on Methodological Strategies to Promote English learning in Seven Graders, group "A" at National Institute Caribbean brethren (Instituto Nacional Hermanos Costeños, Bilwi RAAN, first semester 2007.

This pair of researchers found in their investigation that the use of different strategies, and materials can help students in the learning process of the target language. (Chow & Forbes, 2007) State that, "Teaching media play a very important role in the educational process and are determinant to maintain motivation and interest during the teaching-learning process" (p.36).

One of the main issues faced when learning English Language, is the overuse of traditional methods in the classrooms by the professor. As every teacher knows or at least should have an idea, Languages require engagement, practice and frequent use of it. That is why English teachers must incorporate activities to keep students engaged in using the language most of the time rather than simply carrying out a basic routine of completing workbook exercises and repetition drills to learn vocabulary.

Therefore, due to this teaching-learning phenomenon, it is recommended to deeply investigate how to create an active learning methodology to strengthen the teaching-learning process of the aforementioned language, eventually set up as follows:

What strategies can be used to create an engaging classroom environment in communicative English I, in the second semester, 2018?

This research aims to help teachers incorporate new strategies in an EFL classroom, especially in communicative English I because it is the first exposure that students have with the target language at the university. "English classes must never be quiet; they must be interactive and active to keep students engaged in the lesson". (English teaching Forum).

English teaching as a second or foreign language has several ways of learning. That is, the teacher should manage a series of methodological strategies to create an active and dynamic environment during the language teaching since there are different kinds of learning styles. For example, there are students who learn visually, others who learn through actions (acting out), the ones who learn through kinesthetic activities, through games and finally those who do best with authentic listening exercises.

(Zhou M. , 2011) says that:

In all academic classrooms, no matter what the subject matter is, there will be students with multiple learning styles and students with a variety of major, minor and negative learning styles. An effective mean of accommodating these learning styles is for teachers to change their own style and strategies and provide a variety of activities to meet the needs of different learning styles (p.73).

The use of methodological strategies is one of the factors that help the most to determine how well a student learns a second language. Therefore, this piece of

research aims to demonstrate that it is necessary for teachers to use a large list of strategies and it is also crucial to test every strategy in order to realize how suitable it is for students.

This investigation has the purpose to help teachers in the use of different strategies for creating a dynamic or engaging environment in a classroom. It was focused on developing activities to achieve the different skills in students based on learning styles.

Researching, reading, discovering, getting to know our students and applying new strategies to reach meaningful learning and higher quality knowledge in students must be a goal to keep in mind, and something that motivates every teacher to find new strategies to encourage students to have a better performance in the classroom.

URACCAN Bilwi campus is located in Kamla Community, approximately 7 kilometers north of Bilwi City. This university, nowadays, offers around 12 degrees and its campus has a baseball field, multipurpose field, and soccer field. In the university around 16 social institutions can be found, they have the objective of promoting and defending people's social rights. They work together with the university to protect and help students and their families with problems about rights.

Furthermore, this university has around 22 classrooms. All of them are designed and somehow equipped for teaching. The group selected for making this investigation process attends their class in one of these classrooms. The classroom's name is Brady Watson. This classroom is located near the multipurpose field, where we can daily see many students practicing sports. This field is sometimes designated to hold extra-curricular activities; when this happens the research target students are moved to another room because the noise interrupts the class development.

Nevertheless, having this classroom near the sport field generates an obstacle to teachers who use this classroom (Brady Watson) when he or she is teaching his/her

lesson because of the disruptive sound. In addition to it, students cannot listen clearly and are likely to be distracted watching through the windows paying attention to outside activities. It means that this room is not suitable for students.

Students have chairs but many of the chairs are broken and scratched with pens by students from the same group and from the other groups who occupy the classroom, at different schedules. On the other hand, the floor is damaged too; it has holes and when it is raining the rain comes in through the windows.

The methodological strategies could be defined as the teaching techniques that have been modified over time as a result of the necessity to improve students learning skills. These strategies are developed by teachers in order to develop a class lesson.

“Learning is related to thinking, and teaching is helping the learner to think, improving each day strategies or skills”. -Cardenas-

#### **Characteristics of the methodology.**

- **Flexible and suitable for students.** Flexible, because there are different kinds of learning, and sometimes if complex activities are given to students, they fail and they will not want to try again.
- **Practical and functional:** strategies must be simple to apply so that they can reach the proposed objectives. It means that teachers should be selective with the strategy they choose because if they select something that is not practical, students could get bored during the activity, and it might not work properly.
- **Progressive and cumulative:** strategies must be a sequence of another to complement the previous ones. It is very important to follow a sequence where the student can go further on the same line. Thus, students' knowledge can be stored and grow over time.

- **Complementarily:** it is a training process. The methods should be used in a complementary way to fulfill the objectives. Accomplish students' expectations is one of the most important tasks that all teachers need to consider, and have as a goal.
- **Interdependence:** this depends on what circumstances a method is applied, and the type of population that is available for the application.

### **Basic concepts**

A basic concept refers to the different definitions provided according to this research's objectives. In addition to the theory consulted from different sources in order to know basic concepts that are meaningful for every reader of this piece of research so that they are informed and ready to reproduce this important information.

“Para poder investigar, es indispensable poseer los conceptos y definiciones básicas y así partir de las mismas al desarrollar un proyecto de investigación” -Sindy Cheesman-

### **Learning**

Learning is one of the things acquired through experience in life.

According to (Smith, 2017) “Learning is the acquisition of new knowledge or skills through interaction with others, whether that be by being taught by a teacher, observing, or self-taught” (p.18)

Learning is not only the process of acquiring knowledge; it is also the process of changing human Behavior, and teachers are partly responsible to provide students with opportunities to interact in order to acquire knowledge, and learn from other learners (Adrian, 2014) remarks in his website's document that “each change in the behavior, relatively permanent, is present as a result of an experience” (P. 5)

Aman Sharma in her website (Learning: Meaning, Nature, Types and Theories of Learning) mentioned seven sorts of learning:

- ✓ **Motor learning:** which is defined as the result of all the activities involve with the muscular coordination. (Sharma, s.f.)
- ✓ **Verbal Learning:** This kind of learning involves visual aids used to transmit an information such as gestures, pictures, symbols, words, figures, and even sounds.
- ✓ **Concept Learning:** This learning is useful in recognizing when identifying things. (Sharma, s.f.) It is the form of learning which requires higher order mental processes.
- ✓ **Discrimination Learning:** The process by which animal or human organisms learn to differentially respond to various antecedent stimuli (Zonneveld, 2011)
- ✓ **Problem solving:** This is a higher order learning process. This learning requires the use of cognitive abilities such as thinking, reasoning, observation, imagination, generalization, etc. This is very useful to overcome difficult problems encountered by the people. (Sharma, s.f.)
- ✓ **Attitude learning:** people develop different attitudes from childhood towards people, objects and everything individuals know. Our behavior may be positive or negative depending upon our attitudes. Example: attitudes of nurse towards her profession, patients, etc. (Sharma, s.f.)

## **Methodologies**

(Council, 2006) Says that “methodology is a system of practices and procedures that a teacher uses to teach. It will be based on beliefs about the nature of language, and how it is learnt (known as 'Approach')” (p. 4)

Methods or approaches that teachers use in the classroom for teaching their lessons are Grammar Translation, the Audio-lingual Method and the Direct Method, etc. (Council, 2006) Also expresses that “Many teachers base their lessons on a mixture of methods and approaches to meet the different needs of learners and the different aims of lessons or courses”.

### **How to choose a good methodology?**

To choose a good methodology, different types of learning styles, level of difficulty, resources, time available, classroom characteristics, and students must be taken into consideration.

First, it is important to know what the student's difficulties are; it will permit teachers to select a methodology which helps to develop the learning process in an effective way.

Second, identifying learning styles in the classroom is another meaningful feature when choosing a teaching method since each student has his/her own learning style. So, it basically, means methodology usage in the classroom must be combined with different methods in order to explore the advantages of all of them.

Finally, it is relevant to use all the resources that are available for teaching English and create a variety of new ones too. Sometimes there is not much material and teachers must use all of their creativity to find the solution for this.



## **Strategies**

Strategies are a synonym of methods and techniques. They are ways to teach a lesson; these ways must be powerfully influenced by the constant use of a bunch number of strategies. Strategies can vary from teacher to teacher in different environments and also depending on the subject's need. Yet, the use of them is always meaningful concerning students' learning.

## **Education**

Education is the creation of sound mind in a sound body. It develops man's faculty, specially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness and beauty in which perfect happiness essentially lies. (Aristotle, 2004)

As A.R. Rather cited in his book Theory and Principles of Education, (Rather) "Education ought to be related to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby made powerful instrument of social, economic and cultural transformation" (p. 50).

Education starts when life starts, it never ends until dead arrives. It makes life real and valuable, for people become human beings through education and gets to understand the world because of it, too. That is why it is important to keep learning all of the time. –Daniela Velasquez-

## **Learning theories**

Adrian Villegas argues in his website's document that there are four Learning Theories, "Behaviorist Learning Theory, Constructivist Learning Theory, Cognitive Learning Theory and Connectives Learning Theory" (p. 3).

## **Behaviorist Learning Theory**

Behaviorism is primarily concerned with observable and measurable aspects of human behavior. In defining behavior, behaviorist learning theories emphasize changes in behavior that result from stimulus-response associations made by the learner. Behavior is directed by stimuli. An individual selects one response instead of another because of prior conditioning and psychological drives existing at the moment of the action.

(Zhou M. B., 2014) States that, "Behaviorist Learning suggests that an individual can be stimulate by the teacher or a tutor for creating learning behavior during the association and condition" p. 8. Bandura (1925) claims "an individual can learn through instruction or observation of a model" (p. 10)

## **Constructivist Learning Theory**

Based on observation and scientific study -- about how people learn. It says that the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different teaching practices.

Piaget's (1936) in the theory of constructivism argues that "people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences". Piaget's theory covered learning theories, teaching methods, and education reform. Two of the key components which create the construction of an individual's new knowledge are accommodation and assimilation.

## **Cognitive Learning Theory**

(Seifert, s.f.) "Cognition refers to thinking and memory processes, and cognitive development refers to long-term changes in these processes. "One of the most widely known perspectives about cognitive development is the cognitive stage theory of a Swiss psychologist named Jean Piaget" (p.14)

Piaget (1920) mentioned an important point in his theory “the human being since childhood learn, share knowledge, create theory and test them with experience in the four stage”.

Cognitive Learning Theory is the process where the teacher teaches to students evaluate the teaching process, to do a meaningful learning, to be a doer of their learning, be motivated to learn through experimentation and manage the information. Bunner (1855) says “an individual achieves a better learning when he/she does it from experiences and keeps in touch with the study’s object” (p.13)

### **Connectives Learning Theory**

Constructionists believe that knowledge is constructed and learning occurs when children create products or artifacts. They assert that learners are more likely to be engaged in learning when these artifacts are personally relevant and meaningful.

In studying the cognitive development of children and adolescents, Piaget identified four major stages: sensor motor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational. Piaget believed all children pass through these phases to advance to the next level of cognitive development. In each stage, children demonstrate new intellectual abilities and increasingly complex understanding of the world. Stages cannot be "skipped"; intellectual development always follows this sequence. The ages at which children progress through the stages are averages--they vary with the environment and background of individual children. At any given time, a child may exhibit behaviors characteristic of more than one stage.

The first stage, sensor motor, begins at birth and lasts until 18 months-2 years of age. This stage involves the use of motor activity without the use of symbols. Knowledge is limited in this stage, because it is based on physical interactions and experiences. Infants cannot predict reaction, and therefore must constantly experiment and learn through trial and error. Such exploration might include shaking a rattle or putting objects in the mouth. As they become

more mobile, infants' ability to develop cognitively increases. Early language development begins during this stage. Object permanence occurs at 7-9 months, demonstrating that memory is developing. Infants realize that an object exists after it can no longer be seen.

(Wood, 2014) Concludes that:

The concrete operational stage typically develops between the ages of 7-11 years. Intellectual development in this stage is demonstrated through the use of logical and systematic manipulation of symbols, which are related to concrete objects. Thinking becomes less egocentric with increased awareness of external events, and involves concrete references (p. 22)

(Wood, 2014) Also says that “the period from adolescence through adulthood is the formal operational stage. Adolescents and adults use symbols related to abstract concepts. Adolescents can think about multiple variables in systematic ways, can formulate hypotheses, and think about abstract relationships and concepts” (p. 24)

### **Didactics materials for a good English Teaching.**

Being an English teacher is a challenge of every day. However, this could be the most exciting profession in the world because an English teacher is creative, innovator, enjoys what he/she does, and is always a leader when working with students. Moreover, Teachers deal with people from different backgrounds, with different ideas and even culture during their work, so they need to create a magic bag from where to take out different kinds of good English teaching strategies for teaching. For instance, interactive games, competition activities, dynamics, challenging tasks, videos, audios, posters, flashcards etc. are some of the vital elements their bags must always be full with.

. (Romero, Garcia, & Santamaria, 2014) States that “Nowadays, students can learn English in different ways since teachers have found new strategies and new use of technology”

The use of powerful media like cellphones, computer software, movies videos and audios in the class is a way to control students’ and catch their attention if right usage is given to this technological tool. Therefore, even though media can make a negative impact because students often overuse it, it is important to take advantage of the positive side it offers.

### **General Objective**

- Propose methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment and strengthen first year sociology students’ learning, second semester 2018.

### **Specific Objectives**

- To identify strategies to create an engaging classroom environment with first year sociology students, second semester 2018.
- To value strategies to create an engaging classroom environment with first year sociology students, second semester 2018.
- To Determine methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment with first year sociology students, second semester 2018.
- To apply methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment with first year sociology students, second semester 2018.

## **II. Investigation Planning**

Being an English teacher is a fantastic work, just think about teaching a new language, helping other people to communicate with others. However, being an English teacher means managing different kinds of methodologies to help students achieve their goals in the learning process in the target language. In addition, English teachers must use precise strategies that have as objective helping students in all possible ways.

There are many factors that affect students when learning a second language such as English. In the first place, English is not taught at an early age. The earlier students start to learn a second language the faster will be their learning. Second, learners are afraid to learn a new language. They do not want to learn English because they are afraid to make mistakes and look ridiculous. Third, students do not make an effort to use and practice the language. They stay with what has been taught in the classroom and do not even use that learning outside. Finally, motivation is a key factor when learning a second language. Therefore, English teachers must work hard on motivation.

Sometimes, as teachers, we omit the use of different strategies and only use one strategy or implement the same traditional methods for all topics or grades that we have to teach. As a result, students get bored because classes are monotonous and this phenomenon blocks students' goals, and also English language teachers' objective which is enabling students to speak this new language. On the other hand, working with engaging activities to create an active environment through the use of new strategies can help students pursue their goals, especially in the first years at the university where students continue to learn the target language after the background knowledge brought from high school.

The University of Autonomous Regions of the Nicaraguan Caribbean Coast (URACCAN) has been implementing English courses for all majors since 2014. Last year a student from English major carried out an investigation, at URACCAN, Nueva

Guinea campus, related to these courses. This research found out that most English teachers used traditional methods and that students are not learning as they should either because of the use of strategies that do not match students' learning style or because there is some kind of failure from teachers' role which involves analyzing the effectiveness of strategies being used by themselves. (Velasquez, 2017) "There could be weaknesses in the methodology being used by the teacher; departing from something simple as it is classroom setting to something more meaningful which is students' acceptance toward the class".

Almost the same situation is lived in this campus of URACCAN. Bilwi campus also implements the Communicative English Course. I said almost the same situation because some teachers are implementing traditional methods with students in the first years where students have the first experience and this phenomenon is causing some difficulties in the learning process.

With the use of traditional methods students learn through memorization and recitation techniques. As a result, learners are not developing their critical thinking, problem solving and decision making skills and teachers are using materials that do not involve students' learning style (Whiteboard, eraser, handout, and markers).

To avoid negative feelings with the English subject, teachers should use methods and strategies that help students get engaged with the English language. Therefore, it is very meaningful to do this research on engaging strategies to create a more participative and engaging environment in the classroom.

The team for this Investigation is integrated by a student of Bachelor's Degree in English Teaching whose name is Daniela Velasquez, Author of this research, and her students who are from sociology first year. This group worked since September 2018 to April 2019 to accomplish the investigation's goals.

The instruments used to collect the information were a journal, a participative observation guide and an interview. Those tools were made with the objectives to collect the data, know students' learning styles, students' perception about the best ways to create an active classroom environment and help them express possible feelings that they are not able in public. The data will be reflected in the steps IV and V of this IAP.

A relevant fact is that all the students selected to be part of this IAP (participative action research) are from sociology first year and they are from different ethnic groups (Miskito, Mayangna, creole and Mestizo) also, Vocabulary acquisition I is the first English class this group attends.

Keeping students active in the lesson with engaging activities to break up monotony is an important step that English teachers should give in order to accomplish better results in the learning process. It is important to recognize that we need to do an extra effort to incorporate new strategies in the lessons.

Traditional approaches and methodologies are no longer effective with students because these approaches do not help learners to get good results with second languages. Therefore, it is important to highlight new methodological strategies that lead us to a new path and a different way to teach in an EFL classroom. on top of that, avoiding negative feelings toward foreign languages is one of the missions all teachers have. That's why it is important to create an atmosphere where everybody enjoys the learning process.



Problem:	Hypothesis
<p data-bbox="228 260 342 291">Cause:</p> <ul data-bbox="293 312 808 569" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="293 312 808 401">• Overuse of traditional methods in the teaching learning process.</li> <li data-bbox="293 422 808 569">• Inappropriate use of the methods in the teaching learning process.</li> </ul> <p data-bbox="228 701 331 732">Effect:</p> <ul data-bbox="293 753 808 1121" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="293 753 808 900">• Students do not develop the necessary skills in the target language.</li> <li data-bbox="293 921 808 1010">• There is clear rejection by the students toward the class.</li> <li data-bbox="293 1031 808 1121">• The indicator achievement does not match the lesson.</li> </ul>	<p data-bbox="813 260 1385 947">The application of new strategies in the learning process can help in the creation of an engaging classroom environment, where students enjoy learning a new language and do not feel frustrated and overwhelmed as if it were the most impossible task to achieve. In addition to this, being innovative is also a powerful way to create an appealing environment in the classroom since students like new things, and that can cause a feeling of comfortableness to students.</p> <p data-bbox="813 968 1385 1339">This positive feeling that students may experiment can also be used to encourage them to keep on learning the language. Finally, with these strategies, teachers will obtain better results in all the activities that students perform and students will be ready for the real world.</p>

### III. Action Plan

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	ACTION	GOALS	INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To apply methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment for first year sociology' students, second semester 2018.</li> </ul>	. Use different methodological strategies such as English songs, warm-ups, competition activities, games and authentic spelling drills.	Practice alphabet Through English songs and games that contain English alphabet sounds.	Students will assimilate English Alphabet pronunciation.	4 Classroom activities developed.
		Use different available media for students to assimilate new vocabulary.	Students will assimilate English vocabulary during class.	Use of technological media and visible materials like flashcards, power point presentations, etc.
		.Interact with students through different media where they can practice their vocabulary.	Stimulate students to practice the target language with their classmates and share their opinions in English language.	Development of a strategy which helps students speak the target language.
	Use materials and media like platform, videos,	Promote classroom's activities where	In November. Students will have a basic vocabulary where they can	Make and use different medias to interact with students to students.

	posters, story tales, and authentic speaking drills.	students can be exposed to the target language, and in this way they can interact with their classmates.	interact among them.	
		Encourage students to read fairy tales and stories.	To the end of November, students will have an enriched vocabulary.	Read story tales where students can read in groups and share.

#### **IV. Action Plan Execution**

The action plan shows in detail all of the activities that have been developed during class lessons. These activities are destined to accomplish the action objective that this investigation proposes “To apply methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment in the classroom” they have been implemented from October to the end of November in the 2018.

##### **Strategies to Create an Engaging Classroom Environment**

According to (English Teaching Forum) “English classes must never be quiet; they must be interactive and active to keep students engaged in the lesson”. (s.f). Keeping our students active while they learn is key to teach a new language.

The activities used by the teacher to keep students active and teach the lesson included songs, games, fairytales, stories, oral presentations, dialogues and authentic spelling drills.

## **Songs**

The teacher taught the alphabet to help students learn the sound of letters in this new language. The alphabet was practiced through songs and games that involved ABC sounds. The teacher used an alphabet song called “Zoo”, which uses all sounds and associates them with animal’s name to enhance learning. That is to say, using a song is a strategy that allows teachers to introduce more things than just the alphabet’s letters and thus enriching students’ vocabulary.

To present the song the teacher first showed the original song with a data show where the students heard the rhythm and saw the letters of the song. Then we proceeded to practice with a repetition drill. It was to help students in their pronunciation and finally we sang the song and added corporal movements.

## **Spelling drills**

Activities with spelling names and different words examples were carried out in the classroom with the goal to get better results. For example, hello my name is I-G-N-A-C-I-O and I have a yellow R-U-L-E-R. Then students looked for a partner and introduced their classmate to the class. Example: Hello this is my friend M-E-Y-L-I-N-G and I am M-A-R-C-O and all the class answers: Hello guys, nice to meet you. To supplement this, I divided the class into two groups and dictated. So, one student from each group went to the whiteboard while the professor spelled one word and the first to finish, won one point for his/her group. This kind of activity is an engaging activity for students because they all get involved and participate.

## **Flashcards**

Flashcards was another method used in class to get students involved in class. Flashcards are a visual method where students can observe vocabulary through pictures or drawings. The teacher showed the flashcard to students and asked if they

know the object's name in English. Some students knew some objects from the list I showed in the flashcards. Then I asked them to write it on the whiteboard to correct them later. We eventually practiced the pronunciation with the students. After that, the whiteboard was erased and the flashcards were mixed to keep on learning through the question "what is this?" flashcards were shown to students and all of them utter the words correctly.

## **Games**

Around the world

To play this game, students must:

Make flashcards with pictures of the new vocabulary on them. Do not include the written word in English.

2. Have the first two students of a row stand up.
3. Show them a flashcard.
4. The first student to correctly pronounce the vocabulary advances to the next student. The other student sits down.
5. Repeat again between the winner of the first round and the next student with a new flashcard.
6. When a student loses a round, they take the place or desk of their competitor, and the student that wins advances.
7. The winner is the student who can go all the way around the classroom winning every round until they get back to their original desk. (To practice vocabulary and speaking skill)

The use of mural expositions, posters and dialogues can be implemented as a strategy to increase the use of the target language. In addition, the use of virtual platform for developing forums as an interaction media for students – teacher.

And the last activity that the teacher used to enrich the target language was the reading of 3 fairy tales during the last classes. Those fairy tales were five little ducks,

the giving tree, and the snow man. A reflection was made based on these stories to give students the opportunity to interact and share opinions and thoughts.

### V. Reflection and Evaluation:

Dimension	Assessment by students	Assessment by the observer/ participant	Coherences	Discrepancy
Strategies used in class (students' feeling)	I like the strategies used by the teacher because I feel the classes are participative and active. The teacher uses different methodologies to teach us. She interacts with us and always motivate us to participate.	It was observed that students changed their behavior from timid and shy to more participative and willing to be part of the class activities. The teacher achieved this by using different strategies to keep students active during the teaching process.		

Learning style	Most of the students claimed that they are good at learning by listening, singing, playing games, visualizing and most of them love reading stories. These techniques are easy to do and fun. That's why students learn easier.	The teacher used games, songs, fairytales and stories to teach different topics during classes.		
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(Romero, Garcia, & Santamaria, 2014) states that “Nowadays, students can learn English in different ways since teachers have found new strategies and new use of technology” As teachers our goals should be focused on finding strategies that can help students to improve every day through existent media around us.

Smith defined that “Learning is the acquisition of new knowledge or skills through interaction with others, whether that be by being taught by a teacher, observing, or self-taught” (p.18).

When selecting a strategy, teachers should take into account students’ needs. This approach should aim at helping students understand better the new language. It is also important to evaluate students’ learning rhythm because it plays a vital role

when looking for strategies or even when creating a new one to incorporate elements that our students need to improve their proficiency in the target language.

Monotony can play a negative point in our work as teachers because monotone classes used traditional methods or involve too many repetitive activities where professors just include a whiteboard, a marker and an eraser as teaching tool. As a result, it leads our students to feel bored and they won't be engaged in the class. That's why, it is important to use different kinds of materials and resources available in our environment and also tools that can be created for getting our students' attention when the lesson is taking place.

During the investigation the teacher applied some strategies in the classroom with the objective to break out from the monotony that is usually present in our EFL classrooms. The results of these strategies applied will be detailed as follows.

To sum up this evaluation process, it is important to mention strengths and weaknesses presented during classes.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Students' commitment during classes.</p> <p>Students' participation was active.</p> <p>Students' who were shy changed from timid to active.</p> <p>Teacher's attitude helped students change their attitude toward the class.</p> <p>Students improved their writing skill with the spelling activities.</p> <p>There was interaction between students and teacher.</p>	<p>Some students were shy.</p> <p>At the beginning of the class some students had a lot difficulty to participate in the class.</p> <p>Most students did not do self-study, only a few.</p> <p>Some students were afraid to speak in the target language.</p> <p>Students participation in extracurricular activities of URACCAN during the class period.</p>



Students were involved in reading stories.	The research period lasted only nine Saturdays.
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During the lessons there were positive things (strengths) and negatives (weaknesses). For this reason, the teacher looked for solutions to the negative points by incorporating engaging activities in order to avoid the effects of students' weaknesses and assist the teaching learning process. The implementation of strategies to create an engaging classroom environment made a positive impact in the teaching-learning process in many ways.

The stimulation to students to help them deal with shyness played an important role during the whole course. Also, it played an important role in changing students' attitudes, starting from the fact that many students did not want to participate because they felt fear or insecurity to speak the target language. In the end of this process, many of the weaknesses were overcome with the students and teacher's effort. Encouragement by the professor and the use of appealing teaching strategies helped students to succeed in creating an active environment in the classroom.

Among the important changes we have the positive change in students who were shy but then they became participative, students who improved their writing skill through spelling games, and students who support their classmates that had problems.

The results had been positive, although not all the students finished with the same knowledge in vocabulary, it is normal because not all the students are equal and they learn with a different rhythm. Nevertheless, this investigation pretended to apply methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment where students could learn in a dynamic and fun atmosphere. As a result, all of what have been done has been positive because it worked and solved students' needs to learn a second language in an active way. This can be perceived in the answers given by

students to the interview applied where they expressed that the strategies during class were nice and they liked them a lot.

A good acceptance by the students was noticeable. Consequently, I would like to have more time with those guys. Although I feel satisfied with the results of my work. I have accomplished my general objective and specific objectives which has to do with identifying strategies, applying strategies and proposing strategies that can create an engaging classroom environment in an EFL classroom.

### **Some methodological strategies to create an engaging classroom environment in an EFL.**

As EFL teacher I would like to propose some useful strategies that we can put into practice with our students during the lesson.

#### **1. Around the World**

Rules

1. Make flashcards with pictures of the new vocabulary on them. Do not include the written word in English.
2. Have the first two students of a row stand up.
3. Show them a flashcard.
4. The first student to correctly pronounce the vocabulary advances to the next student. The other student sits down.
5. Repeat again between the winner of the first round and the next student with a new flashcard.
6. When a student loses a round, they take the place or desk of their competitor, and the student that wins advances.
7. The winner is the student who can go all the way around the classroom winning every round until they get back to their original desk. (To practice vocabulary and speaking skill)

## 2. Ambiguous Picture

### Rules

1. Draw a small part of a picture.
2. Ask the students what it is going to be.
3. Encourage different opinions -- do not confirm or reject their ideas.
4. Add a little more to the drawing and ask the question again.
5. Build your picture in about four or five parts.
6. Students create their own ambiguous picture.
7. Students write a description of their picture.
8. Choose several students to come and demonstrate their ambiguous picture as the class tries to guess what the picture is. After they guess, the student reads the description. (To practice speaking and writing).

## 3. BINGO

### Rules

1. Tell the students to fold a piece of paper 4 times to create 16 small squares. This is the bingo board:

Orange	Lemon	Bread	Eggs
Beans	Tomato	Milk	Meat
Rice	Mango	Oil	Onion
Juice	Cheese	Chicken	Avocado

2. Choose 16 or more different vocabulary words or images to put in the squares. Students should mix the order of the words.
3. Say different vocabulary words. If the student has that word on his or her board, he or she marks the square that corresponds to each word.

4. The goal is for a student to yell “BINGO!” when they form a line of 4 squares (horizontal, vertical, or diagonal).
5. Tell the student to read the vocabulary in the squares aloud in order to verify that the student wins. (To practice vocabulary and listening)

#### **4. Flashcards**

Flashcards can be used many times.

Preparation

1. Students fold a piece of notebook paper into rectangles.
2. Students cut or tear apart rectangles.
3. Students write simple form of verbs on one side and past forms on the other

Rules

In pairs, one student shows the other student the side that has the simple form and he or she must say the past form.

Uses: Any vocabulary or grammar (To practice reading and writing)

#### **5. Gallery Walk**

Best for a large class. Rules

1. Assign students a large group project to present to their classmates.
2. On the day of the presentation, create “stations” around the room, one for each project.
3. Assign a station to each group. One member of the group stays at the station to present the project. The rest of the class rotates around the room to listen to the different presentations and takes notes on what they hear. (To practice listening and speaking)

#### **6. Secretary**

Rules

1. Divide students into groups (minimum 3). One student in each group is the secretary.
2. Only the secretary can write during the game.

3. One student from each group leaves the classroom to view a list of words or short sentences. That student tells the secretary all of the words or sentences that he/she remembered from the list.

4. The students take turns to leave the classroom. When the first student returns then the second may leave. The first group to complete the word list or sentences wins. Uses: Vocabulary, dialogues, songs, reading, and numbers. (To practice spelling, speaking, listening and reading)

## **7. TPR (Total Physical Response) A strategy that uses movement to teach.**

### **Rules**

1. Say a vocabulary word or phrase and perform an action to represent it at the same time. Tell the students to copy your action while you say the word. Ex: If the theme is daily activities, you might say, "I brush my teeth," and you and the students mimic brushing your teeth.

2. After practicing several times, say the word or phrase without performing the action, and the students perform the action and say the word or phrase.

3. After practicing several times, perform the action and ask the students to say the word or phrase. Uses: Any vocabulary, commands (To practice listening and speaking).

## **8. Concept Cube**

A concept cube is a great strategy to employ word parts. Students receive a six-square cube (which will eventually be folded into a three dimensional cube). On each of the squares students are instructed to write down one of the following.

1. Vocabulary word
2. Antonym
3. Synonym

4. Category it belongs to
5. Essential characteristics
6. Example

Students then cut, fold and tape the cube to make a square. Then, with a partner, they roll their cube and must tell the relationship of the word that lands on top to the original vocabulary word.

### **9. Go Fish Vocabulary Game Rules**

1. Create cards with ten or twenty words that students don't know well.
2. Have students play in groups of two to four, dealing out seven cards each if there are two players, six cards for three players and five cards for four players.
3. Cards that are not dealt go into the draw pile in the center of the table.
4. Starting clockwise, the first student asks another student if s/he has a card. However, instead of simply asking for the card by naming the vocabulary word on it, the student has to ask for the card by providing the definition for the word. For example, if a student wants the word "astute," s/he has to ask, "Do you have a word that means smart?"
5. If the asked student doesn't have the specific card requested, s/he says "Go Fish for Vocab!" and the student requesting the card must select from the draw pile.

The first person to get five pairs wins, provided s/he can use the vocabulary words from each pair in one to three sentences. If s/he cannot, the round continues until another person gets five pairs.

## VI. General Conclusion.

As English teachers we have an important role in our EFL classrooms. This role is to teach a new language to diverse people who have different learning styles. That's why English teachers must go beyond the traditional way and show scholars the fun and active way to learn the target language.

Using media where the students can feel comfortable makes a difference in learners' attitude. However, if just traditional methods where the whiteboard and markers, plus not comprehensive explanation are used, and teachers are also focused on the writing skill, there will be consequences. At the end of the course, learners will not be ready to interact with someone else in the target language. (Chow & Forbes, 2007) State that, "Teaching media plays a very important role in the educational process and are determinant to keep motivation and interest during the teaching-learning process" (p.36).

Knowing these strategies and the use of them can help students interact and break the ice and start using the language purposely when they need to use it.

Using games to encourage students and have them interact among themselves, practice values, relax, and most important having our students practice the foreign language is something that all teachers should do in an EFL classroom. Nevertheless, it is not the only available option, there are many strategies to teach and keep students active during the teaching process. Some other strategies that can be used are songs, stories, flashcards, oral presentations and conversations either in public or recorded by students.

**Song and games:** Piaget (1990) in his cognitivist theory mentioned an important point "The human being since childhood learn, share knowledge, create theory and test them with experience in the four stage" (sf).

Creating an atmosphere where the students can share, test their knowledge and interact with each other can make a change in their attitudes in the learning process. When developing those activities, as the teacher in the classroom, I observed the student's commitment. Many of them were active and happy to participate in the

class. Some of them were shy at the beginning, but during the process and over time they changed their behavior and attitudes towards the class. These students joined the whole group to dance, sing the songs and play the games. It was also observed that my attitude as the group guide played a positive role because when the students were timid, I stimulated them to participate and I was close to encourage and make them feel better and secure during every activity.

**Spelling:** this activity helps in the writing skill and in mastering the ABC letters' sound when it was applied for the first time some students had a lot of difficulties when writing. However, I applied this activity during five classes and I saw improvement in students' way of using it. The vocabulary was changed in every class in order to enrich students' knowledge. At the end of the course, I saw that many students had improved in their writing skill, use of vocabulary and letters of the ABC. It will be important to remark that five classes are not enough to make much progress with students. In this case I encourage students to do self-study because classes on Saturdays is something that doesn't work if there is no more dedication on themselves. Many students practice in their homes but others do not, so it is crucial to give them a chance to participate in class to help them improve.

**Flashcards:** this is a visual media that I have considered quite important in the vocabulary acquisition because it allows students to understand what is being taught and give a clear idea about the target vocabulary without using the mother tongue. This activity is very effective and it can be used in different ways depending on our creativity.

As I said before the use of flashcards is an effective method and we can use it in different ways. For instance, it can be used as an audio-visual media where students improve their listening skill or to enhance the meaning of words and create a solid base on students' brain.



(Chamorro, 2012) States that:

Audio-visual media give teachers the possibility to vary the methodology and encourage learners' motivation using techniques such as: projecting images and letters allowing the student to understand things by himself/herself. Also, using sounds, among other things so that young feel attracted particularly in learning a new language. (p. 3).

During this activity, students were engaged in learning new vocabulary. They were excited to participate and be part of the class. It was observed that when this method was applied students learned the vocabulary more quickly. students were more active and interested in the class. Many students claimed that they liked the class and the methodology.

**Oral presentations:** The use of oral presentations helps students improve the speaking skill. Students become more confident and able to present before an audience and develop the confidence to interact with their classmates and teacher. So it is a point for students when it comes to confidence development and it is meaningful because learners are able to express in the target language with people outside the classroom. Teachers need to be careful though since most students are used to learn things by heart when doing presentations. That's why it is important to always have an ace under the sleeve. For example, questioning (of course based on students' level) after their presentations and have other students ask topic-related questions.

In my experience with this group, when performing tasks, students were timid. So, they were encouraged to participate by the professor. The group was provided with feedback on pronunciation before the presentation because they felt that pronouncing some words was too difficult, and it is important to clear up doubts to make students feel that they can do it. It is especially meaningful to help learners overcome their fears to make mistakes when they are starting to learn a new language because they need that extra push to keep going.

According to (Smith, 2017) “Learning is the acquisition of new knowledge or skills through interaction with others, whether that be by being taught by a teacher, observing, or self-taught” (p.18).

Reading stories is a funny way to teach new vocabulary because students get involved in the fantasy world and they are not limited to learn just specific words but they can learn useful phrases, sentences and words that are not in the vocabulary taught by the teacher.

When doing this activity my students were involved in reading. Actually, they wanted to take more reading to their homes because they considered it was one of the most exciting techniques during class. Students claimed that with those stories they felt that learning new vocabulary was successful and also improving their reading skill was easier. They made a reflection on one story “The giving tree” and there were amazing results. Everyone had a different idea and opinion about the story. The next stories were just commented and as a group they selected the unknown words to look at them carefully. I wanted to do more with my students, for example, a drama or role-play but I could not do it because the time was short.

It is always important to remember that “English classes must never be quiet; they must be interactive and active to keep students engaged in the lesson”. (English teaching Forum).

Engage our students in the lesson will make a great difference in the learning process. Students learn while they are playing, sharing, reading, and last but not least, students learn a lot when they enjoy the process.

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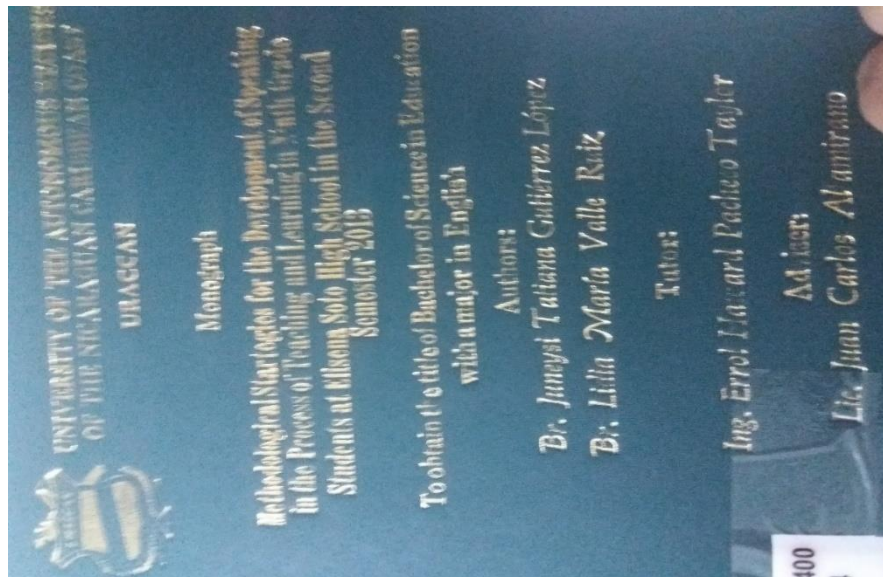
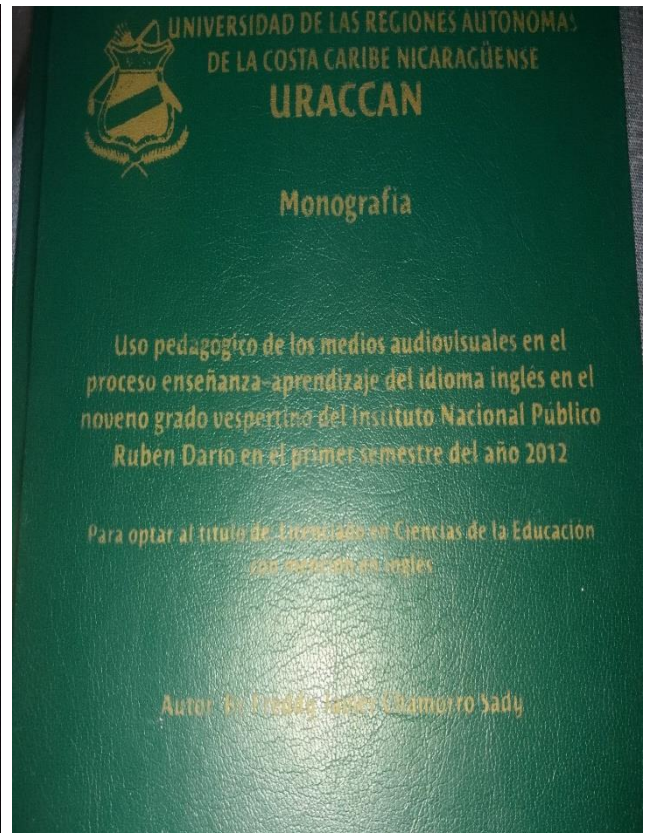
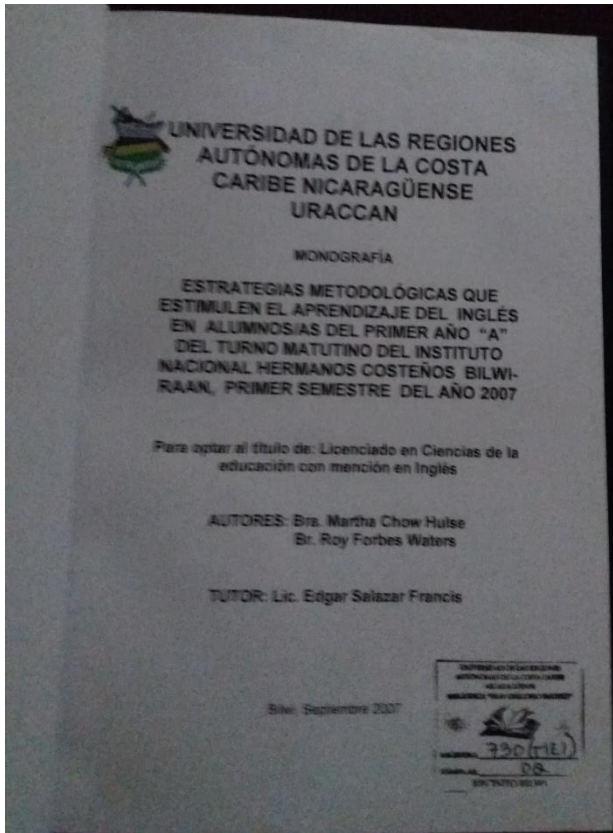
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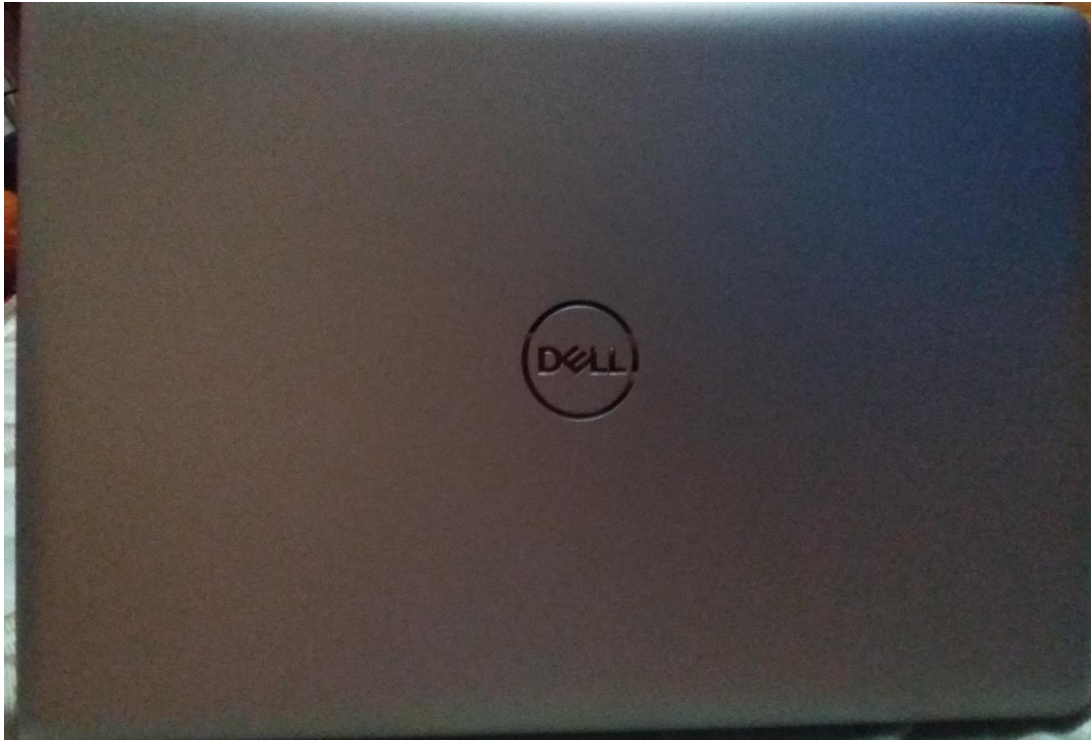
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## VIII. Appendixes



Investigations consulted.

A computer which was bought to work on this investigation.



Students, in action, presenting their murals.

Students doing oral presentations about Family members, murals (colors and shapes) and National food.



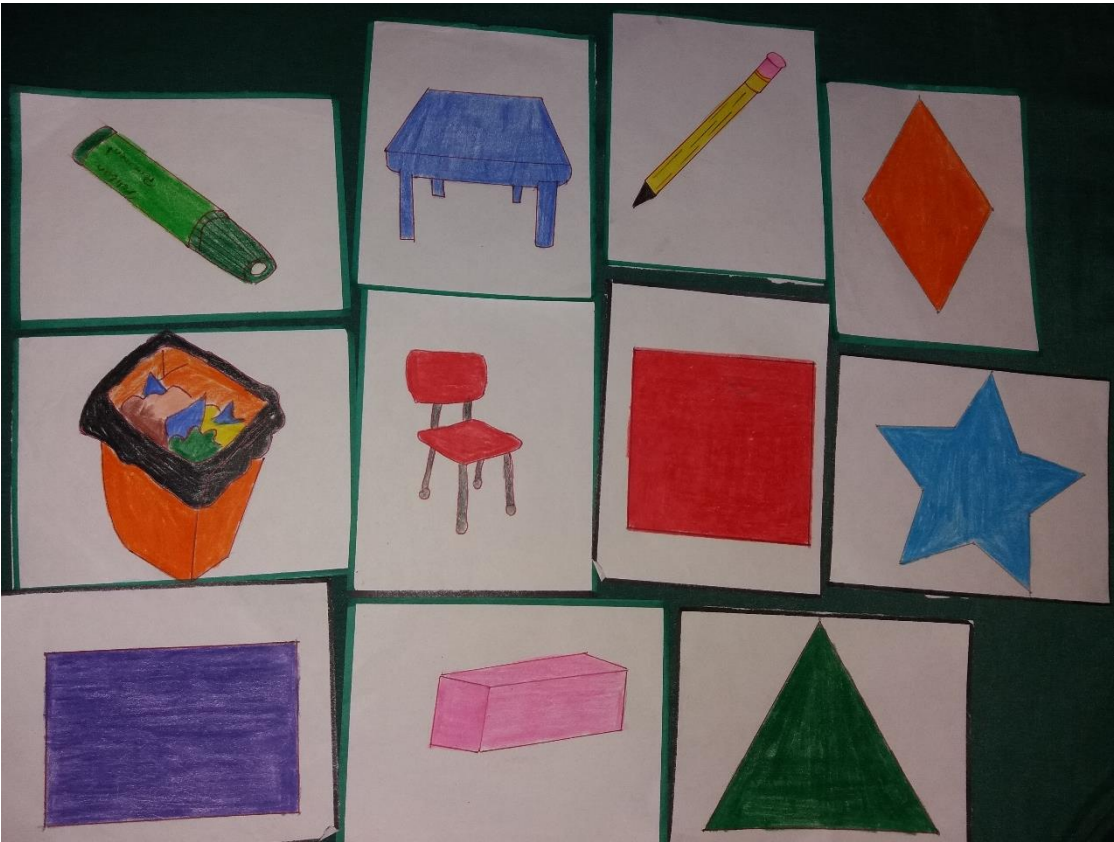








Flashcards used to teach vocabulary.







- 4- How do you feel in English class?
  
- 5- Do you feel that you are learning English? In what way?
  
- 6- How do you evaluate the strategies currently being used by the teacher in the English class?
  
- 7- Do you feel that those strategies are helping you to get a better result in your learning process?
  
- 8- What do you think it is your leaning style?
  
- 9- Do you consider the teacher's strategies match your learning style?
  
- 10- From 1 to 10 what do you consider is your English level?



**UNIVERSITY OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGIONS OF THE  
NICARAGUAN CARIBBEAN COAST**

**URACCAN**

**Observation Guide**

<b>Institution's name:</b>								
<b>Subject:</b>		<b>Level</b>						
<b>Date</b>		<b>Attendance:</b>	<b>M</b>		<b>F</b>		<b>T</b>	
<b>Objective of the observation</b>								

<b>Parameters</b>				<b>Criteria</b>	
<b>Development of the class</b>	<b>Always</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Observation</b>
students availability to participate actively					
Students' response to motivational strategies					
Students have a good attitude towards the English subject.					
Students assimilate the topic through strategies currently being used.					
Students use the vocabulary learnt in a previous class with their classmates.					

Students share their opinions and feel comfortable in the class.					
Students are responsible with the class and committed with the learning process.					



**“The snowman Short story”** read it with the students in class.

It was nearly Christmas. Katie woke up and found that the world was white and magical. ‘Snow!’ she shouted. ‘Snow for Christmas!’

She ran outside and danced in the snow.

Her brother Eddie came out too. They made a big round snowball and a small one. They put them together and made a huge snowman.

‘Hello,’ he said. ‘It’s Christmas. Would you like a present?’ ‘Yes, please!’ they said.

The snowman waved his arms. Silver crystal snowflakes filled the sky. It was so beautiful.

‘We must give you a present too,’ said Katie. They gave the snowman a carrot for a nose, a scarf for his neck and a hat for his head.

‘Happy Christmas!’ they said.

The snow stopped and the sun came out. The snowman started to melt. ‘Goodbye,’ he said. ‘Build me again next year!’