ENGLISH TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC LEARNING
DIFFICULTIES

By

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RESUMEN

Este trabajo de investigación presenta a los docentes un conocimiento general acerca de los problemas de aprendizaje más comunes que se encuentran en el aula de clase. Estos problemas ayudarán a los profesores a identificar los síntomas o señales presentados por los estudiantes. Dichos síntomas permitirán implementar y desarrollar estrategias apropiadas para las diferentes dificultades con el fin de lograr que el aprendizaje de un idioma extranjero se pueda llevar a cabo sin mayores dificultades.

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Abstract

This research paper offers the teachers background knowledge about the most common learning problems found in the classroom. These problems will help teachers identify the symptoms and signs presented by the students which will allow teachers to implement and develop appropriate strategies for the different learning difficulties with the purpose of having the learning of a foreign language be carried out with a minimum of difficulty.

English teaching strategies for children with specific learning difficulties

Recently, there has been a growing interest in English teaching strategies for children with learning difficulties because the Colombian Government established a new constitutional law which allows children with learning difficulties to have the right to receive education in any public school in Colombia. The general law of education in Colombia is about the integration with the educative service. This law says that people with physical, sensory, mental, cognitive and emotional limitations are an integral part of the educational public service in Colombia. (Ley 115 de 1994). According to this new law, English teachers have a big responsibility when they face this particular group of students because they must be prepared to implement efficient methods and approaches suitable for helping teachers to develop useful English classes.

The problem of this educational scenario is that the majority of English teachers in Colombia do not know what to do when they must teach English to children with specific learning difficulties because they have not received the specific training to do so. Since this new law does not take into account the needs and the socio-cultural factors that come into play in education in Colombia, the real necessities of teachers and students with learning difficulties constitute a big problem because teachers do not have appropriate training to deal with students with learning difficulties. Therefore, the task teachers must perform requires a lot of effort because the students need a specialized and individual education.

The purpose of this research paper is to offer teachers the necessary theoretical background about the most common learning difficulties found in the classroom, so that they can apply English teaching strategies (methods, approaches, learning principles and practical accommodations) which contribute to find solutions for teachers who must teach English to children with specific learning difficulties. At the beginning of the teaching process, teachers

should be aware of the symptoms of learning difficulties presented by these children and after that, teachers must provide suitable methods and approaches that will encourage children with specific learning difficulties to improve the learning of a foreign language with a minimum of difficulty.

The present review is necessary because it is a topic of importance for educators. Unfortunately the majority of English teachers do not know about the existence of a theoretical methodology about their profession, and in many cases, teachers do not know how to teach English because they belong to other professions such as: mathematics, Spanish, sciences and other majors and, for this reason, they do not know what to do when they must teach English to children with specific learning difficulties. According to Celce-Murcia (2001) very few language teachers have a sense of a history about their profession and are thus unaware of the historical bases of the many methodological options they have at their disposal.

The implications are evident because many teachers do not apply effective and appropriate methods and approaches during English classes and children with specific learning difficulties do not learn or learn less than other students who do not have learning difficulties. Teachers must not segregate children with specific learning difficulties, but they must integrate them because segregation is referred to segregate away something or someone from others. Thus, the discrimination is one policy that separates and removes, excluding groups such as persons with disabilities while integration is a continuous and progressive process, with the objective of incorporating the individual with special needs into the community, and this represents a transcendental landmark in education. (Romero and Lauretti, 2006).

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The integration process should be part of an overall strategy that aims to achieve quality education for all (White, 1997). Among the conditions to develop a successful integration, proposed by the author, are:

- Positive attitudes and consensus agreement of the entire community.

- A clear and accurate legislation

- Educational projects that address institutional diversity.

- Capacity of partnership between teachers, parents, specialists and students.

-Flexible, comprehensive and balanced curricula.

- Styles of open and flexible education.

- Human resources and material support.

- Appropriate training for the new concept of special educational needs.

All of the above conditions must be taken into account to carry out the integration process. It is the a responsibility of government, the educational system in Colombia (Ministry of Education), administrators, educators, specialists, parents and students who must work together to achieve the purpose mentioned before.

According to UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 1994) Inclusive Education stems from the idea that education is a basic human right and provides the foundation for achieving a more just society. "All students have the right to education whatever its nature or particular difficulties". For this reason teachers should integrate children with specific learning difficulties in classes to give them opportunities to learn a foreign language in

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the best way. Therefore, teachers have a big responsibility when they should teach English to these children in adverse circumstances in any school because they must detect signs of learning difficulties and must be prepared to implement English teaching strategies which will help and support this population to learn English easily.

Learning Difficulties (LDs)

According to the National Dissemination Center for children with difficulties (2011), "the term learning difficulty is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. A learning difficulty can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math". Learning difficulties (LDs) vary from person to person. One person with LD may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with LD.

Researchers think that learning difficulties are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. Children with learning difficulties are not "dumb" or "lazy." In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence. Their brains just process information differently. There is no "cure" for learning difficulties. They are life-long. However, children with LD can be high achievers and can be taught ways to get around the learning difficulty. With the right help, children with LD can and do learn successfully.

Learning difficulties is a term indicating heterogeneous group of difficulties that appears with acquiring and using language, reading, writing, listening and mathematics. These difficulties have an individual character and have their source in basis of dysfunctions of central nervous system. Although learning difficulties can appear together with other handicapping conditions (for instance, sensory handicap, mental retardation, behavior difficulties) or can be

influenced externally (for example, cultural differences, or insufficient or disproportionate

leading), learning difficulties are not the direct consequence of these conditions or influences.

(Zelinková 2003:10)

LD is a term that refers to a group of disorders. There are many different types of learning

difficulties. For the purposes of this work some of them will be listed and defined.

The Most Common Learning Difficulties in the Classroom

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a disorder that appears in early

childhood. You may know it by the name attention deficit disorder, or ADD. ADD/ADHD

makes it difficult for people to inhibit their spontaneous responses/responses that can involve

everything from movement to speech to attentiveness. (Smith and Segal 2011).

Dyslexia

The International Dyslexia Association defines dyslexia as a specific language disorder

where the brain is unable to distinguish processes and codify coherently; its most usual

manifestation is in problems with reading and spelling. There is no necessary connection

between the disorder and academic ability or lack of it. Dyslexia cannot be cured, but specific

accommodations through professional teaching can provide the dyslexic individual with

successful coping strategies. (Augur, 1993 and Birsh, 1999).

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Psychomotor Handicap

According to kemp, Smith, and Segal(2012),basically, motor difficulty refers to problems with movement and coordination whether it is with fine motor skills (cutting, writing) or gross motor skills (running, jumping). A motor disability is sometimes referred to as an "output" activity meaning that it relates to the output of information from the brain. In order to run, jump, write or cut something, the brain must be able to communicate with the necessary limbs to complete the action.

Signs of a Learning Difficulty

In order for teachers to identify some of the most common signs of learning difficulties and learning disorders on children, they must be able to recognize the problem early and take steps to help them. Paying attention to normal developmental milestones is very important. Early detection of developmental differences may be an early signal of a learning difficulty and problems that are spotted early can be easier to correct.

For this reason, this work presents teachers a useful chart that permits the recognition of the most common signs of specific learning difficulties. These signs are taken from the British Association and from what can be observed by children in the classroom. The chart shows a piece of information to identify the most common signs of learning difficulties and it offers the teachers a format to register the symptoms that can be identified or found in a classroom and therefore, carry out appropriate teaching methods, accommodations and approaches which will facilitate student learning,

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Table 1:

Common signs of specific learning difficulties

TYPES OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES	COMMON SIGNS OF SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES	YES	NO
ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)	1. Difficulty for concentrating on one thing in any period of time		
	2. Excessively active		
	3. Have trouble controlling their impulses		
	4. Talks excessively		
	5. Inattention and distractibility		
	6. Restlessness		
	7. Inability to sit still		
DYSLEXIA	1. May have trouble learning the alphabet		
	2. Rhyming words		
	3. Connecting letters to their sounds		
	4. May make mistakes when reading aloud		
	5. Repeat and pause often		
	6. May have trouble with spelling.		

PSYCHOMOTOR HANDICAP	1. Present problems with movement and coordination		
	2. Difficulty with fine motor skills such as: cutting and writing		
	3. Difficulty with gross motor skills such as: running, walking and jumping.		

After to identify some of the most common symptoms presented by children with specific learning difficulties; teachers should consider to applying adaptations based upon the learners needs. In fact, the adaptations will be beneficial to many other students in the same classroom. Adaptations or accommodations are simply good teaching techniques to put in practice. Accommodations are alterations in the way tasks are presented that allow children with learning disabilities to complete the same assignments as other students. Accommodations do not alter the content of assignments, give students an unfair advantage or in the case of assessments, change what a test measures.

Therefore, some suggestions are provide from Nebraska Department of Education (1996) to help teachers making appropriate changes in the classroom.

When a dyslexic student experiences difficulty with reading:

Allow partner reading, use peer tutoring, use computer games, e.g., Oregon Trail, use visual imagery, allow students to quietly read aloud (sub-vocalization), summarize key points

and have students summarize, identify main ideas and use prereading and post reading activities to pre-teach or reinforce main ideas.

When a dyslexic student experiences difficulty with writing:

Provide shorten writing assignments, provide note takers, provide fill-in-the-blank form for note taking, allow visual representation of ideas, allow student to use a tape recorder to dictate writing , use peer tutors, allow collaborative writing and provide model of writing.

When a hyperactive student experiences difficulty with attending:

Use preferential seating, build-in opportunities for movement within a lesson, be aware of the impacts of room arrangement, use active learning to increase opportunities for student participation, use self-monitoring strategies, have small, frequent tasks, decrease distractions and reduce assignment length.

When a psychomotor handicap student experiences difficulty with motor skills/mobility/posture maintenance/manipulation of materials:

Use concrete examples, use models, Position materials for individual use, allow different postures, allow alternatives to writing, be aware of the impacts of room arrangement, use peer tutors and use physical cues.

Adaptations need to be individualized for students, based upon their needs and their personal learning styles and interests. An adaptation is a change that helps a student overcome or work around the difficulty. If teachers recognize and understand the needs of SLD students, they can begin to accommodate these needs with resources at hand and it may be useful to achieve the key to success in the classroom.

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Principles of English Teaching

The purpose of this study is to provide teachers with the necessary input about historical setting of learning difficulties due to the fact that children with specific learning difficulties need a special help in several areas. Early intervention and support can really make a difference in giving this population the best chance for success. (Gina, Jeanne, and Deborah 2011).If the teacher knows about that from the beginning, English teaching strategies process will be taken in an appropriate way. Teachers take control of this situation and they will assume active roles such as, differentiation of tasks, materials, resources, activities, strategies, using specific approaches and methods to teach a foreign language. Teachers must choose or combine the positive qualities of each method and approach to implement in their classes. Celce-Murcia (2001) suggests that "it is not difficult to conceive an integrated approach which would include attention to rule formation, affect, comprehension and communication and which would view the learner as someone who thinks, feels, understands and has something to say. In fact many teachers would find such an approach, if well conceived and integrated, to be very attractive".

The teacher must be willing to spend more dedication and time to help children with learning difficulties in comparison with students in normal conditions to learn a foreign language. The teacher must have the ability to help them to improve and develop their abilities, competencies and their own learning strategies to achieve a major level of English, thus, they will learn English in a pedagogical, comfortable and enjoyable way.

Before identifying appropriate teaching techniques that would help children with specific learning difficulties, certain teaching principles or strategies that enable teacher to create suitable conditions for students to learn a foreign language easily, must be mentioned. Cognitive,

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affective and linguistic principles in English teaching strategies which offer a certain way of

teaching English to children with learning difficulties.

Cognitive Principles

Promoting Meaningful Learning to Create New Knowledge

Meaningful learning will lead toward better long-term retention than rote learning.

(Brown, 2000).In fact, meaningful learning subsumes new information into existing structures

and memory systems and the resulting associative links create stronger retention. Retention is the

ability to remember material at some later time in much the same way it was presented during

instruction. Transfer is the ability to use what was learned to solve new problems, answer new

questions, or facilitate learning new subject matter (Mayer &Witt rock, 1996).In fact, many

English teachers teach through rote learning which is defined as a learning technique which

focuses on memorization. The major practice involved in rote learning is learning by repetition.

For instance, in many cases the teachers' classes are very boring and they do not offer

experiences to discovering new knowledge. Usually, teachers say to students: "please open the

book and read the following page and answers the questions, or translate the following sentences

to English and repeat after me". Students must repeat everything that the teachers say without

producing new knowledge.

Moreover, teachers do not apply suitable methods and approaches according to learners

needs because each one of them learns in different ways. Teachers teach new information or

topic which is stored arbitrarily without interactions with prior knowledge and for this reason

students memorize the information .This affects negatively in their learning process because

children do not feel motivation to learn a foreign language and they can learn as a short term and it may cause students feel bored and extremely limited.

Meaningful learning is essential on teaching English because meaningful learning is consistent with the view of learning as knowledge construction in which learners seek to make sense of their experiences. In constructivist learning, learners engage in active cognitive processing, such as paying attention to relevant incoming information, mentally organizing incoming information into a coherent representation, and mentally integrating incoming information with existing knowledge (Mayer, 1999). In contrast, a focus on rote learning is consistent with the view of learning as knowledge acquisition in which students seek to add new information to their memories (Mayer, 1999).

Teachers must know children are concrete learners. Piaget (1996), claimed that children in the early years construct their own meaning. He believed that children learn efficiently when they are able to take new knowledge and integrate it into their previous knowledge and experiences construct a new each day.

To ensure meaningful teaching, it is necessary to avoid rote memorizing of facts. Pupils need to manipulate ideas actively to facilitate the acquisition of meaning, long term retention and transfer learning (Ausubel, 1983).Meaningful Learning offers significant benefits to children with specific learning difficulties because it provides opportunities to observe, explore, and build knowledge and it helps to teachers in the sense they can promote positives experiences to encourage the development of the whole child: cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and psychomotor.

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Rewarding students constantly

Brown (2000) affirms that "it refers to that the human beings are universally driven to act or behave by the anticipation of some sort reward short term or long term that will ensue as a result of the behavior". The implications are evident because it helps English teachers in a positive way encouraging and motivating child with specific learning difficulties because through it teachers can perceive the importance of immediate administration of such rewards as praise for correct responses. For instance, when teachers give certain grades or scores to children with specific learning difficulties they are indicating success for them. Students will begin to set their own goals, teachers can say to them: very good, nice job, well done, excellent, it is great, congratulations. This is an effective way to provide academic benefits to them because infants can actually see the results of their actions as a reward and they will feel motivation to continue those actions. Besides it allows children feel success that leads to higher self-esteem and feelings of self-worth, which manages to strengthened motivation.

Affective Principles

Fostering and encouraging students with specific learning difficulties

This principle refers to the most powerful rewards are those that are intrinsically motivated within the learner, because the behavior stems from needs, wants, or desires within oneself. (Brown, 2000).Undoubtedly, the essential part of the language learning (acquiring) process is motivation. Motivation can be defined as a certain push that drives students to take an action to achieve something.

Tough and Joan (1984), argue that when children start learning a foreign language they are mainly motivated by being engaged in enjoyable activities and by teacher's encouragement

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such as praising and showing appreciation. These major motivators help children to master their language.

Generally, when teachers must teach children with specific learning difficulties, teachers do not involve them in the activities during their classes for their limitations and conditions to learn a foreign language. They develop their activities with students who have no difficulties to learn because they think that children with learning difficulties cannot do whatever task that they propose in class. Due to that fact, teachers leave these children do other activities such as: painting or drawing.

As a result, children without appropriate motivation will appear quiet, sullen, and bored during class (Brophy, 1997). Children with specific learning difficulties can feel ignored, frustrated and dumb because they do not feel part of the learning process because teachers do not care about how they can improve and encourage their learning a foreign language.

This problem is easy to correct by using strategies to promote motivation, emotion, expectative, confidence, which create a pleasant and relaxed atmosphere in classroom developing good relationship among them increasing self-confidence and promoting autonomous learning. In this way children feel enthusiasm and encouragement while they develop their activities. Moreover teachers should choose strategic activities that generate interest and motivation to enhance children; they must adjust the activities according to the learners needs. Since the activity is generating the motivation, it is mostly self-sustaining for as long as the children want to continue the activity.

Zoltan Dornyei and Kato Csizer (1998:215) offered a set of "ten commandments" for motivation learners, based on a survey of Hungarian Foreign Language teachers.

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All ten items focus on what the teacher can do to stimulate intrinsic motivation.

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior.

2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

3. Present the task properly.

4. Develop a good relationship with the learners.

5. Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence.

6. Make the language classes interesting.

7. Promote learning autonomy.

8. Personalize the learning process.

9. Increase the learner's goal-orientedness.

10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

This is an appeal for teachers to consider how many of them are implemented in their classes because each one of them promotes the enhancement to teaching and learning process creating a helpful environment.

How do your students learn?

This principle refers to successful mastery of the second language will be due to a large extent to a learner's own personal investment of time, effort and attention to the second language in the form of an individualized battery of strategies for comprehending and producing the language. (Brown, 2000).Language teachers are focusing more intently on the role of learner in learning process. The methods that learners employ to internalize and to perform in the language are as important as the teacher's methods, or so more. English teachers should realize firstly the variety of styles and strategies that learners successfully bring to the learning process.

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Language learning strategies are the often-conscious steps or behaviors used by language learners to enhance the acquisition, storage, retention, recall, and use of new information (Rigney, 1978; Oxford, 1990). Research indicates that language learners at all levels use strategies (Chamot and Kupper, 1989) but that some or most learners are not fully aware of the strategies they use or the strategies that might be most beneficial to employ.

Students learning styles have been ignored and have been considered as an insignificant component in learning process (Dunn, 1993).Teachers must recognize, deal and pay attention with the wide of variety of learning styles about learners.

Linguistic Principles

Develop Communicative Competence to improve skills to learners

According to Pulido (2004), "it is the ability of learning the language to express, interpret and negotiate cultural meaning in the interaction between two or more persons, or between a person and an oral or written text, so that the communication process is efficient and qualified by appropriate modes of action". So this principle is essential for teachers because language must be built around the notion of communicative competence.

Canale and Swain (1980), based on Hymes' (1972) work, suggest that communicative competence has four dimensions:

Grammatical Competence: It includes vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, spelling, pronunciation and semantics.

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Pragmatic Competence: This involves the social character of communication and refers to the extent to which utterances are contextual factors such as the participants´ role, the motives of interaction, the appropriacy of rules, conventions and other factors related to social interaction.

Discourse Competence: It refers to the interpretation people give to individual messages and it is also related to the skill we have combined grammatical forms and meaning to obtain a cohesive written or oral text.

Strategic Competence: It deals with the ways interlocutors use to start, keep, take turns and end communication. This strategy focuses on how people handle the strategies of verbal and nonverbal communication needed to successfully interact in a given communicative approach.

In this research, communicative competence has played an important role because language is an essential part of the human being. Teachers must take into account that learners are able to perform the communicative functions that they need not always on their own, so Teachers must promote communicative competence development through the children's interactions in meaningful activities.

Teaching Methods and Approaches

According to methodological options available there are plenty of teaching methods that can be applied in the education process, however not all of them are effective, in terms of children with specific learning difficulties, and can guarantee their success in learning English.

Furthermore, Pechancová and Smrčková and many other experts believe that these children are able to acquire foreign languages if special methods and techniques are used. (Pechancová and Smrčková 1998:5).

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In order to measure appropriate English teaching strategies that would help children with specific learning difficulties with certain teaching methods and approaches are enable teacher to create suitable conditions for students to learn a foreign language easily, should be mentioned:

Total Physical Response

Total Physical Response is a language learning method based on the coordination of speech and action and it attempts to teach language through physical motor activity. (Asher, 1965).It was developed by James Asher, a professor of psychology at San Jose state university, California. It is linked to the trace theory of memory, which holds that the more often or intensively a memory connection is traced the stronger memory will be.(Richards and Rodgers 2001:73)

Asher elaborated three principles of learning's theory: firstly, understanding the spoken language should develop before speaking the language. Secondly, understanding should evolve through the movement of the student's body and thirdly students should not be forced to speak. The student will produce sounds spontaneously.

TPR is a method based on the same principles that are applied when picking the mother tongue in the childhood. This method is based on the concept of learning a foreign language in a way similar to the assimilation the mother tongue (Zelinková, 2003) calls this approach a mother method.

The teacher plays an active and direct role in Total Physical Response. "The instructor is the director of a stage play in which the students are the actors". It is the teacher who decides what to teach, who models and presents the new materials, and who selects supporting materials for classroom use.

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The teacher is encouraged to be well prepared and well organized so that the lesson flows smoothly and predictably. Asher recommends detailed lesson plans: "It is wise to write out the exact utterances you will be using and especially the novel commands because the action is so fast-moving there is usually not time for you to create spontaneously". Classroom interaction and turn taking is teacher rather than learner directed. Even when learners interact with other learners it is usually the teacher who initiates the interaction; Teacher: "Maria, pick up the box of rice and hand it to Miguel and ask Miguel to read the price". Here are some examples of TPR activities that the teacher can act and learners repeat: wash your hands, your face, your hair; comb your hair, Maria´s hair; brush your teeth, your pants, the table; touch your teeth; show your teeth to Peter.

B.Pechancová, A.Smrčková (1998), recommend it for its amusing character and popularity with children.

Total Physical Response is mostly recommended for children with specific learning difficulties because it is fun and easy, student will enjoy getting up out of their chairs and moving around, so it is a useful tool for building vocabulary in an enjoyable environment and for this reason children can internalize and learn in long term because it is memorable.

Children with specific learning difficulties need to be in active class which offers tracing activities, such as verbal rehearsal accompanied by motor activity.

The children with specific learning difficulties remember and recall things more hard, hence teaching and learning through TPR can help them to remember words more easily because TPR can be linked to the 'trace theory' of memory in psychology, which holds that the more

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often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory

association will be and the more likely it will be recalled.

Retracing can be done verbally and/or in association with motor activity, and learners

listen attentively and respond physically to commands given by the teacher. (Richards and

Rodgers, 2001:73-74, 76).

Multi-Sensory Teaching Approach

Among methods and forms of teaching/learning a foreign language which are especially

suitable for learners with specific learning difficulties, belong above all procedures based on

multisensory approach. Multisensory approach uses 'Neuro Linguistic Programming' that

enforces a procedure called 'VAKOG'. This abbreviation is compound from the first letters of

words 'visual', 'auditory', 'kinesthetic', 'olfactory', and 'gustatory'. The substance is the

involvement of more senses at the same time. The last two senses are not possible to use in

language teaching very often, so there is also reduced conception called 'VAK', or 'VAKT'

(visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile). The success in learning often depends on the number

of senses which are used in the learning process. (Hanušová 2005:6)

The theory is that by bombarding as many senses as possible with the same information,

the almighty weight and variety of material presented is sure to be registered somehow,

somewhere. The trick is to provide an assortment of activities that use different senses, but not to

overload the working memory by giving too much at one time. Spread out your multisensory

inputs rather than deliver them all at the same time. (Raymond, 2002:76)

Zelinková adduces that a learner should have a lot of occasions to talk and repeat words

or word connections with the relation to real situations. He should listen to his pronunciation,

compare it with the teacher's and the classmates' pronunciation. It is vital to see the repeated

words written or printed with marked colored parts. If it is possible, learners illustrate the content

of words by moving their body. If more senses are engaged, more ways bring the signal into the

brain and so activation of adequate parts of brain and their mutual influence is greater. The

possibility of remembering a new piece of information increases. (Zelinková, 2003:167).

National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development have shown that for children

with difficulties learning to read, a multisensory teaching method is the most effective teaching

method. Using a multisensory teaching approach means helping a child to learn through more

than one of the senses. Most teaching in schools is done using either sight or hearing (visual or

auditory sensations). The child's sight is used in reading information, looking at diagrams or

pictures, or reading what is on the teacher's board. The sense of hearing is used in listening to

what the teacher says. A dyslexic child may experience difficulties with either or both of these

senses. The child's vision may be affected by difficulties with visual tracking, visual processing

or seeing the words become fuzzy or move around. The child's hearing may be satisfactory on a

hearing test, but auditory memory or auditory processing may be weak.

| The best teaching method is to involve the use of more of the child's senses, especially

the use of touch and movement (kinesthetic). This will give the child's brain tactile and

kinesthetic memories to hang on to, as well as the visual and auditory ones. A multisensory

method like the VAKT (Visual-Auditory-Kinesthetic-Tactile) can be used to help children

remember words. Select words needed to be learned (like the Dolch word lists). Write these

words on cards using a crayon so that the letters or words have texture. Using VAKT, the teacher

models and the student repeats for each word: (a) say the word, trace the word with two fingers

while saying each part of the word, say the word again; (b) write the word without looking at the

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word card and then compare what was written to the word card; and (c) repeat the first step until the word is written correctly three consecutive times without looking at the prompt card. Students may draw pictures to go along with the words as visual reminders. Any teaching method used must be meaningful and directed toward purposeful learning. The instruction provided must be conducive for each student's needs, ability levels, and success of progress. Therefore it is important to employ this approach because it develops all senses and the activities are easy to make because they are enjoyable and motivated for children with learning difficulties.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative Learning has been applied in different scenarios that can be found in teaching and learning. Collaborative learning is the layer that covers many ways inwhich small groups of students with various performance levels work together to achieve a common goal, affirms Smith and Macgregor, (1992).

On the other hand, Cooperative learning is an organized learning activity that depends on social structure exchange of information between learners in groups in which each learner is responsible for his or her own learning, and is motivated to increase the learning of others (Olsen and Kagan, 1992: 8).

According to Smith and McGregor (1992) the term Collaborative learning" is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or both students and teachers. Usually, students are working in groups of two or more, mutually searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product. Collaborative learning activities vary widely, but most center on students' exploration or application of the course material, not simply the teacher's presentation or explanation of it.

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According to Bruffee (1995), basically, Collaborative Learning is any approach to education in which students work together in small groups to solve problems. Within this general framework, there can be many variations in the composition of the group and the role of the instructor. Normally, the groups are relatively small.

When students or teachers hear the phrase Collaborative Learning, they automatically assume a group of context; they get back to their own unpleasant experiences with work or study groups, and dismiss the notion of collaboration as an unworkable approach that attempts to transfer the burden of teaching from teacher to student. Such anxiety is worth noting because it represents an acute misunderstanding of what has become the most viable approach to teaching and learning (Orr, 1997).

Collaborative Learning is an approach to teaching and learning in which students are organized in groups to work in order to complete a task and achieve a common goal.

With the implementation of the Collaborative Learning Approach, the students could develop their oral proficiency by interacting with their partners and with the teacher. From alternative methods of teaching foreign languages for children with specific learners difficulties collaborative learning has received increased attention in recent years due to the movement to educate students with difficulties in the least restrictive environment. Children with difficulties bring social needs, as well as academic needs, which are not easily met in the regular classroom. The use of classroom cooperative learning peer groups with cooperative goal structures in a promising alternative to better serve students with difficulties in the least restrictive environment. In addition, it may also serve as a vehicle for improving the overall social and academic climate for school. As a result, it might also be considered to be an intervention of use in promoting

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appropriate behavior of students in school, and in creating a positive behavioral climate in a school.

The effects of cooperative learning activities have been positive for increase academic achievement in recent empirical studies conducted with students with and without difficulties. In considering effects of cooperative learning on academic achievement, researchers have repeatedly examined cooperative versus individualistic instruction. Recent studies have evaluated the effects of cooperative and individualistic learning experiences by comparing achievement of academically handicapped, normal-progress, and gifted students. Results indicate that cooperative learning experiences promote higher achievement and greater retention that do individualistic learning experiences for all students (Stevens and Slavin, 1995).

Communicative approach

Hymes, D., and Halliday, M. (1972-1973), who view language first and foremost as a system for communication. It is assumed that the goal of language teaching is learner ability to communicate in target language. The content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions, not just linguistic structures. Students regularly work in groups or pairs to transfer (and, if necessary, negotiate) meaning in situations in which one person has information that the other lack. Students often engage in role play or dramatization to adjust their use of the target language to different social contexts and classroom materials and activities are often authentic to reflect real-life situations and demands. Skills are integrated from the beginning; a given activity might involve reading, speaking, listening and also writing (this assumes the learners are educated and literate).The teacher's role is primarily to facilitate communication and

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only secondarily to correct errors. The teacher should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriate.

There are some features that are suitable for these children: The aims are focused on development of communicative skills rather than, grammatical aspects, methods are focused on learning language in common communication in a daily life and the fluency of speech is preferred to correctness. (Pechancová and Smrčková, 1998).

This approach is useful for children with specific learning difficulties and more suitable for children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder because this approach has positive influences attitudes of and towards students with hyperactivity because effects on these children are evidenced by increased academic achievement and improved social attitudes and behavior. It helps students' motivation to learn it comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics; classroom activities maximize opportunities for learners to use target language in a communicative way for meaningful activities. So it recognizes that all communication has a social purpose; learner has something to say or find out, it is much more pupil-orientated, because it is dictated by pupils' needs and interests and emphasis on creative role-plays, simulations, surveys, projects, play- lets; all produce spontaneity.

Finally, it is presented a chart which provides some practical suggestions that can be used in the regular classroom with specific learning difficulties from the Child Development Institute. By looking through a given list of interventions, teachers will be able to select one or more strategies that are suited to a specific child in a specific environment.

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Table 2:

Suggested classroom accommodations

WHEN YOU SEE THIS BEHAVIOR	TRY THIS ACCOMMODATION
Difficulty sequencing and completing steps to accomplish specific tasks (e.g. writing a book report, term paper, organized paragraphs, division problem, etc.)	Break up task into workable and obtainable steps. Provide examples and specific steps to accomplish task.
Confusion from written material (difficulty finding main idea from a paragraph; attributes greater importance to minor details)	Provide student with copy of reading material with main ideas underlined or highlighted. Provide an outline of important points from reading material. Teach outlining, main-idea/details concepts. Provide student with a copy of presentation notes. Provide framed outlines of presentations (introducing visual and auditory cues to important information). Encourage use of tape recorder. Teach and emphasize key words (the following…, the most important point, etc.).
Difficulty sustaining effort and accuracy over time.	Reduce assignment length and strive for quality (rather that quantity). Increase the frequency of positive reinforcements (catch the student doing it right and let him know it.
Difficulty completing assignments.	List and/or post (and say) all steps necessary to complete each assignment. Reduce the assignment into manageable sections with specific due dates. Make frequent checks for work/assignment completion. Arrange for the student to have a "study buddy" with phone number in each subject area.
Apparent Inattention (underachievement, daydreaming, not there)	Get student's attention before giving directions (tell student how to pay attention, look at me while I talk, watch my eyes while I speak). Ask student to repeat

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	directions. Attempt to actively involve student in lesson (e.g. cooperative learning)
Low fluency or production of written material (takes hours on a 10 minute assignment)	Allow for alternative method for completing assignment (oral presentation, taped report, visual presentation, graphs, maps, pictures, etc. with reduced written requirements). Allow for alternative method of writing (e.g. computer, cursive or printing, or a scribe.
Poorly developed study skills	Teach study skills specific to the subject area – organization (e.g. assignment calendar), textbook reading, note taking (finding main idea / detail, mapping, outlining), skimming, summarizing.
Difficulty sustaining attention to tasks or other activities (easily distracted by extraneous stimuli)	Reward attention. Break up activities into small units. Reward for timely accomplishment. Use physical proximity and touch. Use earphones and/or study carrels, quiet place, or preferential seating.
Difficulty with fluency in handwriting e.g. good letter/word production but very slow and laborious.	Allow for shorter assignments (quality vs. quantity). Allow alternate method of production (computer, scribe, oral presentation, etc.).
Difficulty with test taking.	Allow extra time for testing; teach test-taking skills and strategies; and allow student to be tested orally. Use clear, readable and uncluttered test forms. Use test format that the student is most comfortable with. Allow ample space for student response. Consider having lined answer spaces for essay or short answer tests.
Difficulty following through on instructions from others.	Gain student's attention before giving directions. Use alerting cues. Accompany oral directions with written directions. Give one direction at a time. Quietly repeat directions to the student after they have been given to the rest of the class. Check for understanding by having the student repeat the directions.

(Suggested Classroom Interventions for Children with ADD & Learning Disabilities

(1999).Retrieved from: http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/teacher.shtml)

Pedagogical Recommendations and Conclusions

In present days the number of learners with specific learning difficulties has increased, at schools teachers meet children with specific difficulties more often, therefore, it is essential that teachers know how to deal with these learners and carry out correctly with these difficulties when teaching and learning. For this reason is important that the teacher has knowledge concerning these difficulties which will allow teachers the recognition of the most common learning difficulties in classroom. In this way teachers must able to applied strategies and techniques which help students learn a foreign language easily. Here are some pedagogical recommendations and conclusions which teachers must take into account to make effective and foster their classes. first, From the general law of education in Colombia many factors can be inferred because it is important to know that not enough formulate a set of policies and legal measures that legitimize the rights of people with special educational needs is also necessary to inform, updated and train members of educational communities; The ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, MEN) parents, specialists, educators and students to change their attitudes and awareness of their responsibility to the integration of these children to develop their potential in the least restrictive environment. In this process teachers must know that is transcendental taken into account that Children with LDs need special help in several areas, but with the right help and professional teaching these children can and do learn successful. Teachers must offer the best chance for them giving this population the opportunity to learn in an appropriate way and for this reason teachers should consider adaptations based upon the learners needs such as: differentiation of tasks, using specific approaches for learning a foreign language,

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willingness to spend more time in comparison with the others, ability to help the children to

develop their own learning strategies, and to choose suitable work in lessons which may be

useful to achieve the key to success in the classroom. Šigutová (2004) suggests some

accommodations as "Differentiation tasks, extra time, support of the development learning

strategies, self-image, suitable organization in the classroom or outside, motivational assessment,

using the modern technologies and specific methods for development skills". Regarding these

difficulties, teachers should take into account their learners' needs, their individuality and

learning style when choosing the appropriate teaching method and technique. After seeking for

an optimal method and technique for teaching and learning foreign language that could be easily

applied on every learner, experts have come to a conclusion that only one method or technique

convenient for everyone does not exist and probably cannot exist at all. In present days so called

eclectic approach that is a combination of positive components of different methods and

approaches has enforced. (Hanušová 2005:4-5).Educators should know how to apply and be

updated with classroom management using the most popular methods and approaches such as:

Total Physical Response, Multisensory Approach, Collaborative Learning and Communicative

Approach for children with specific learning difficulties extracting the best of them to achieve a

successful foreign language class. Teachers must to implement senses during their classes such

as movement, hearing, speaking, and touch, and at the same time the activities have to be

interesting, funny, easy to understand, and that the children can practice them by themselves or

together with their friends. It should be pointed out that these techniques can be also used for

teaching other learners, not only learners with specific learning difficulties.

Teachers play a very important role in this area. One of the teacher's responsibilities is to

prevent learners' failures and to provide appropriate conditions in a class during the teaching

process. According to British Dyslexic Association (2000) started that teachers have a great

responsibility to nurture the self-esteem of all learners, but particularly those learners who have a

'hidden disability'. If they are not identified and understood they have the potential for

frustration and suffering which may have devastating consequences. Severe weakness in literacy

acquisition is demoralizing, leading in some cases to withdrawal or overt behavioral difficulties.

There are great dangers in constant failure and teachers may need to develop specific plans for

the development of motivation into their teaching programs. Therefore, teachers must learn as

much as they can about the different types of specific learning difficulties. The pedagogical

recommendations mentioned before can help teachers to identify specific techniques and

strategies to support the student educationally.

In addition, English teachers have a big responsibility when they must teach English to

children with specific learning difficulties in adverse circumstances in schools of Colombia.

Unfortunately, Government do not offers training to do so and for this reason teacher must have

interest on how to deal to children with learning difficulties and how to face this situation, they

must updated by themselves searching courses, information on internet, reading books, etc. In

fact, teachers must break the paradigm of traditional English teaching challenging and

transforming the world through of their acts and thoughts about the conformist education in

Colombia. Teachers should offer new opportunities to these children with specific LDs and

provide an enjoyable environment to enhance and enrich their learning process, educators may

make an enormous difference in these students' life find out and emphasize the student's

strengths and interests and giving the student positive feedback and lots of opportunities for

practice.

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       To conclude, English teachers must assume this particular situation as an opportunity to provide solutions adapting to the conditions and necessities on teaching and learning English when they must teach English to children with specific LDs. Teachers should innovate, create and experiment new ways to implement efficient English teaching strategies, methods and approaches to change the traditional English education in Colombia. "Clifford Prator, a former professor and current colleague of Celce-Murcia, sums up the professional ESL teacher's responsibility nicely: Adapt; don't adopt". (Celce-Murcia, 1991:10).

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Teoría del Aprendizaje Significativo.

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