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The use of ASL as a tool for teaching sight words to A1 learners

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RESÚMEN

El presente estudio tiene como objetivo incorporar el lenguaje de señas americano como una técnica más de enseñanza para el aprendizaje de *sight words* o también llamadas palabras de uso frecuente en estudiantes oyentes de inglés como lengua extranjera con un nivel A1 de acuerdo con el Marco Común de Referencia Europeo. La importancia que tiene el vocabulario para el aprendizaje de un idioma es indiscutible. Diferentes métodos y técnicas han sido implementados para la enseñanza de dicha habilidad del lenguaje. Este estudio tiene la intención de demostrar que el lenguaje de señas puede ser utilizado para aprender vocabulario; en este caso, las llamadas *sight words*, que son palabras que aparecen frecuentemente en textos y que al ser aprendidas mejoran la lectura y la ortografía. Esta teoría ha sido probada exitosamente en países de habla inglesa y diversos autores relacionados a la educación lo aprueban. Las opiniones de profesores y alumnos acerca del uso de señas para el aprendizaje de un idioma fueron recolectadas mediante el uso de encuestas y entrevistas; los resultados apuntan a que ambos grupos de participantes están dispuestos a usar esta técnica respectivamente. Finalmente, después de la recolección de datos bibliográficos y aplicación de instrumentos, un folleto de actividades fue realizado. Este contiene actividades que usan el lenguaje de señas para enseñar *sight words,* proporcionando una guía para profesores sobre como poder implementar esta técnica en el aula de clases.

Palabras clave: Lenguaje de señas. Palabras de uso frecuente. Lenguaje de Señas Americano. Aprendizaje del vocabulario. Ortografía. Técnicas de enseñanza.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to incorporate American Sign Language as a technique for teaching sight words to A1 English hearing learners according to the Common European Framework of References (CEFR). This study provides bibliographical information regarding sign language and sight words and how both of them combined may help to improve language learning. First of all, vocabulary is discussed as an essential subskill in English, as well as the different methods and strategies to teach this subskill. Secondly, the study discusses about ASL, and how it has helped not only hearing impaired people, but also hearing learners to acquire the language easily. Furthermore, in the U.S. context, when learners are just starting to develop the reading skill, teachers use sight words, which help learners to become fluent readers. There have been diverse studies that successfully demonstrate the importance of incorporating sign language and sight words in English learning. Therefore, the aim of this research is to support the theory that these two elements may be used together as a powerful source in education. After the bibliographical research was done, in the findings obtained from the different applied instruments, students are willing to use ASL and sight words as techniques that might help them to improve their reading, spelling, writing, and vocabulary acquisition. Indeed, teachers consider that ASL is a useful technique that creates a meaningful context for the students. Finally, from all the data collected, a booklet of activities incorporating ASL to teach sight words was elaborated.

Keywords: Sign language. Sight words. ASL. Vocabulary learning. Spelling. Fingerspelling. Teaching techniques.

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Diego Emilio Ordóñez Abril, autor del trabajo de titulación "The use of ASL as a tool for teaching sight words to A1 learners", certifico que todas las ideas, opiniones y contenidos expuestos en la presente investigación son de exclusiva responsabilidad de su autor.

Cuenca, 09 de abril de 2019

Diego Emilio Ordóñez Abril
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Dedication

Dedicated to my beloved mother, Yoly, who has always supported and encouraged me to pursue my dreams, to my sister, Victoria, who has become an inspiration in my life, to the hearing-impaired community and every person who enjoys the pleasure of learning a new language.

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I would like to express my gratitude to my director, Verónica León. I am extremely thankful for her unconditional support, for sharing her expertise, and for her guidance and encouragement through this project.

Introduction

The following study analyzes the incorporation of American Sign Language (ASL) and sight words teaching in an EFL context as an alternative for enhancing vocabulary, reading, and spelling. In Ecuadorian context, little or none investigation has been done about sight words and its benefits for improving the language, as well as the advantages of using ASL. The purpose of this study is to present bibliographical information which helps as a back up to support the idea of vocabulary as one of the most important components when it comes to learn a language, ASL as another technique to use in class, and sight words teaching as a powerful source for improving the language. Diverse authors have supported and reinforced the idea that hearing people can benefit from learning a sign language, and that it can be used for learning sight words that consequently would be beneficial for the learners.

From all the information collected, at the end of this project, a booklet of activities including ASL and one of the methods for teaching sight words is presented. This booklet contains different activities such as fingerspelling word searchers, board games, fingerspelling famous phrases, games, worksheets, and so on. The booklet helps as a sample for teachers to have an idea of how to incorporate ASL and sight words together. In order to design this booklet, as was previously mentioned, an exhaustive bibliographical research was performed.

First of all, this research presents historical information about American Sign Language, which is a complete and natural language that uses hand gestures and finger spelling to communicate. It also discusses the advantages of using ASL with hearing learners and learners with special needs as well. Authors have proved that sign language can be used to facilitate communication and also teach students with Autism and Down syndrome. According to some authors, several signs physically represent the concept of the word which

helps to remember the meaning of it; the use of the body to communicate, as in the case of sign language, can represent an excellent alternative of learning for visual and kinesthetic learners.

ASL and sight words may be useful in an EFL context with Spanish speakers as well. Spanish is a decodable language, which means that all the words are written as they are pronounced. However, in English that is not always the case, as there are words that are not written as they are pronounced. These words are called sight words, which are high frequency words that are not written in the same manner as they are pronounced. In English speaking countries, these words are taught to children when they are learning how to read, in order to help them become fluent readers. According to different authors, these words are highly repeated on educational textbooks and books in general. Consequently, if a learner receives sight words instruction, he or she will improve his/her reading skill and will concentrate his/her efforts learning more words. Sight words are not only good for children. Adults who are learning English as a Foreign Language can also benefit from learning these words. There are diverse techniques for teaching these words in order to avoid memorization; which is not always the best option. Moreover, ASL can be considered a helpful technique because of the previously mentioned benefits. As these words are considered basic vocabulary that English speakers acquire during their first years, the level of application with Spanish speakers who learn EFL would be A1.

Finally, in order to support the bibliographical information of this study, students and teachers' opinions are collected to understand their attitudes towards the importance of enhancing vocabulary, the different methods, techniques, and strategies to learn it, what they think about the use of sign language with hearing people and the use of sight words for improving the acquisition of vocabulary. Their responses are necessary to find out if this

study might be useful in an EFL context with Spanish speakers as it has been in different

English speaking countries.

Chapter I

Description of the Study

1.1. Background and Justification

Vocabulary is an essential subskill in the process of acquiring and learning English in our context. Ferreira (2007) explained that in other words it "means that without establishing a strong vocabulary base first, comprehension and use of a language will not be achieved" (p. 11). Learners not only understand each other's ideas but also their own with a sufficient amount of vocabulary.

Wilkins (1972) stated that in the aspect of conveying ideas, without grammar it is hard to communicate, but without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed or understood. Vocabulary can help learners overcome some gaps in communication by providing a similar word in order to develop a proficient communicative competence. The more vocabulary learners know, the more comprehension they have and their ability to acquire new vocabulary would improve.

Phillips and Feng (2012) discussed the importance of reading by sight. If learners start reading each word as a whole instead of letter by letter, their reading comprehension and fluency will increase. Consequently, it is important for learners to be familiar with basic vocabulary or words that are commonly repeated or used in order to enhance the reading skill.

Cicerchia (2015) suggested that sight words "facilitates reading and listening comprehension skills in adult basic skills, ESL and EFL education" (para.12). According to Bowers (2011), sight words are basic vocabulary that are frequently found in many textbooks and children tend to memorize rather than learning because many of these words are not written in the same way they are spoken. The idea is not to memorize these words, but

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meaningfully learn them through the use of different techniques. As sight words are basic vocabulary that learners acquire in order to enhance reading, it is necessary to concentrate on the basic level of proficiency in English, which is A1. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment stated that an A1 learner "has a very basic repertoire of words and simple phrases related to personal details and particular concrete situations" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.112).

As it was previously mentioned, sight words can be helpful for EFL learners to acquire vocabulary that is written differently as it is pronounced, but most importantly, for those have problems with reading, spelling, dyslexia (Cicerchia, 2015) and so on. Indeed, the use of sight words can be considered crucial for learning vocabulary, and in order to avoid the memorization of them, the use of sign language can help to meaningfully learn these words and it also provides many other benefits.

Based on some articles that support this study, sign language, especially American Sign Language (ASL), can be considered as a useful technique to teach vocabulary to hearing learners for several reasons. Sherman (2011) explained some of the benefits of using ASL on hearing learners. First of all, many signs represent the words' concepts by making physical movements. Learners can relate the movement with the concept, and they can create a significant relation between the meaning of the word and the sign. Using sign language is interactive just by its nature. There is a lot of movement and physical activities, so learners can really engage in the process avoiding boredom. This can be useful for learners who are kinesthetic. Signing saves time, since you do not need any materials, but just the hands.

As it was mentioned before, Sherman (2011) pointed out that "this motoric involvement makes it especially appropriate for young learners" (p. 32). Learning vocabulary meaningfully can involve different variables, and for most EFL learners, it may be difficult to

find a way to create relationships between the new information and something they already know.

Finally, the idea of using ASL in classes can represent a way of support the hearing-impaired community that is part of our context. "Besides sign language improving many skills for hearing children, it also helps with communication skills for children with hearing impairments, Down syndrome, and autism" (Bowers, 2011, p.15). In our country, most of the time hearing-impaired people attend deaf-only or mixed-disability schools. Some students are integrated into the regular school system which uses little or no sign at all. Consequently, this technique can help hearing-impaired learners to get more involved in the learning process. Besides sign language improving many skills for hearing children, it also helps with communication skills for children with hearing impairments, Down syndrome, and autism.

1.2. Problem Statement

It is more than clear that vocabulary is necessary as is the basis of learning. It is essential to acquire the other subskills and skills in English. Widdowson (1989), McKeown (2002) stated that vocabulary knowledge is "the key of a language comprehension and use" (as cited in Ferreira, 2007).

In our context, sign language has been little or not used at all to teach English to hearing people, and this is highly recommended because it can be beneficial for them, and even for learners with special needs such as autism, Down syndrome, and so on (Bowers, 2011; Toth, 2009). As well as sign language, neither sight words have been taken into consideration to be learned by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners in the Ecuadorian context. However, as it was stated before sight words can be beneficial to overcome any difficulty an EFL learner may have with spelling, reading, or learners with dyslexia as well.

That is why this study is necessary, first to analyze the benefits of ASL for hearing learners in the current context, and second, to examine how ASL can help to acquire these words in a meaningful way. Of course, there are many other existing techniques for teaching vocabulary that works with different learners, so the idea is to incorporate ASL as another useful technique teachers may apply with their students. Finally, it is important to emphasize that this study is not focused on hearing-impaired people. However, it can be considered as a way of support this community by using their manner of communication in EFL classes.

1.3. Research Question

In which activities can ASL be incorporated to teach sight words to A1 learners?

1.4. Objectives

1.4.1. Main Objective

- To incorporate ASL into the existing methods for teaching sight words to A1 learners.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

- To compare and contrast the methods in the teaching of sight words.
- To establish a relation between ASL and the acquisition of sight words.
- To examine students' opinions and preferences about vocabulary techniques, the learning of sight words, and sign language.
- To analyze teachers' opinions and ideas about the use of sign language to teach vocabulary to regular learners.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

This chapter conveys relevant bibliographical information about sign language, vocabulary acquisition and its importance on EFL learning, the benefits of sight words for Reading, and the different methods that exist for teaching sight words with the purpose of including ASL in these methods.

2.1 Sign Language

Spoken language has been quite difficult for the hearing-impaired community and even more for the ones who were deaf before acquiring the ability to communicate. Daniels (2001) claimed that there were some recorded events in the past which revealed that the earliest French and Spanish teachers had to learn the natural sign language from their pupils in order to communicate with them and teach them the target language. The author also stated that these teachers did not create sign language but rather learned it.

According to Mizak (2011) "sign language is indeed language; that it is a fully-fledged, genuine, natural language of exactly the same nature as any natural spoken language" (p. 65). Hearing-impaired people have learned sign language since birth and used it to fulfill their daily needs. Each country has developed its own sign language in the same way they have developed different languages. The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) (2017) mentioned that some variations may occur within the language much like in the case of American and British Sign Language, or similarities like in the case of Austrian Sign and French Sign (Mizak, 2011).

2.1.1 A description of American Sign Language (ASL)

According to NIDCD (2017), American Sign Language (ASL) is considered to be a complete and complex language because of its native users and unique system of facial

expressions and hand gestures. As the organization states, ASL is a complete communication system used by different communities (especially by hearing-impaired users) in the United States and worldwide.

Sherman (2011) stated that "sign language is accepted as an authentic language because of the promotion and expansion of its use by the deaf culture" (p.32). It is also considered legitimate because it has native speakers who have absorbed the language from birth. The use of sign language for hearing-impaired is an essential way of communication and most of the time it is the only one. It has its own grammatical structures as well as its own sign representations such as "hand shapes for different words to communicate with the hands" and "twenty-six hand shapes for the letters of the alphabet" (Bowers, 2011, p.13).

2.1.2 Where did ASL originate?

Sign language differs from one community to another. ASL could be considered more similar to French Sign Language rather than British Sign Language. According to NIDCD (2017), ASL may have arisen 200 years ago when local sign languages made contact with French Sign Language (LSF, or Langue des Signes Française). Nowadays, this language has become an intricate and mature language. Furthermore, it is important to mention that even though LSF and ASL might have been similar languages, nowadays they are completely separate languages that can no longer be used interchangeably. Daniels (2001) explained the reason of the similarity stating that Laurent Clerc, who was a Deaf Frenchman, worked as a primary teacher at the first permanent school for hearing-impaired people in the United States. This school is now known as the American School for the Deaf. Of course, the relationship between ASL and English is notorious. "The language situation in the U.S. deaf community can best be described as a bilingual diglossic continuum between American Sign Language and English" (Grosjean & Lane, 1980, p. 105). The authors state that the relation

between ASL and English can be considered diglossic because they are used by the same community in many cases when speakers have learned ASL.

2.1.3 Advantages of using ASL

Daniels (2001) declared that signs possess an iconic nature, which means that the movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word itself as in *house,* for example, the movements of the hands simulate the shape of a house. She concluded that this mental representation "helps students understand word meanings. It is far easier for students to remember words when their meaning has been clarified" (p. 150). Consequently, this characteristic, or rather benefit of using ASL, can help learners with a visual learning style (Othman & Amiruddin, 2010).

Witter-Merithew (2012) stated that sign language is an authentic and unique language that has its own grammar and structure, and it utilizes movement and space to convey different ideas. Depending on how signers move their body, different meanings can be conveyed. For instance, the role of the eye gaze can indicate the location of something in space, or a shift in the eyes may be used to indicate a shift in the speaker if the signer is referring to a conversation between two people. Sign language can be the perfect tool since this language uses plenty of facial expressions and body movements to emphasize any message. The same mechanism should be learned by hearing people as well, especially those of a kinesthetic learning style (Othman & Amiruddin, 2010).

Sign language "helps parents understand toddlers' speech" (Taylor-Dileva, 2011, p. xi). It can be difficult for some parents and teachers to understand what their children are trying to say. For example, toddlers can express a word by its initial letter, and it can mean any word that starts with that letter. "When a toddler can use an accompanying sign along with verbal language, he or she can be easily understood" (Taylor-Dileva, 2011, p. xi).

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Zuckerbrod (2011) mentions several ways in which sign language can help children to increase vocabulary. When children are starting to recognize letters in English, they can use ASL to learn the ABCs. This is because many of the hand symbols resemble the shape of letters in the alphabet. Furthermore, as they continue to learn complete words like *house* or *mouse*, they can use their fingers as a tool to remind themselves of how to spell that word. Zuckerbrod (2011) also mentions that sign language can increase the child's capacity to control their feelings. Parents can teach, for instance, signs for *mad, sorry, happy, sad* and so on. Children at this stage have not developed their capacities to discuss things in an assertive manner yet. It would be easier for them to say sorry by using their hands rather than using words, or they can use the sign for *mad* to avoid or control their emotions (Zuckerbrod, 2011). As the last benefit or advantage of using ASL in education, ASL can be used by people with other disabilities besides hearing loss. Barbera (2017) provided an excellent reason to use sign language with people with autism. She revealed that sign language can improve the language of people with autism, as well as increment in children's ability to imitate and accept physical prompts. Like the previous author, Clibbens (2001) also provides information about the benefits of sign language on people with Down syndrome. "There is substantial, and growing, evidence for the effectiveness of signing in promoting language and communication in children and adults with Down syndrome, with suggestions of wider benefits" (p.103). Indeed, as sign language can be beneficial for people with special needs as previously mentioned, the incorporation of it in the classroom can represent a significant step to reach inclusive education.

2.2 Vocabulary Acquisition for Hearing Learners

Vocabulary can be defined in many ways. Diamond and Gutlohn, claimed on one hand, that vocabulary is "the knowledge of words and their meanings" (as cited in Ferreira, 2007, p. 11). This concept may be perceived as basic or lacking key information. Richards

(2012), on the other hand, suggested that vocabulary is one of the core building blocks of language development. This means that vocabulary is the first step in the development of language skills and it is necessary to develop a strong base of lexicon in order to establish a solid learning foundation.

The necessity of acquiring vocabulary could be expressed in several aspects. Webb and Nation (2017) have studied the importance of learning vocabulary. They mention that people have had many encounters with words since their earliest years. For instance, in books, children have pictures that help them understand the meaning of different content words. Also, the use of dictionaries in any language is essential as they increase the repertoire of lexicon. "This focus on developing vocabulary knowledge emphasizes the fact that words are viewed as key to communication" (Webb & Nation, 2017, p.14).

Folse (2004) discussed eight myths related to second language teaching. One of these (myths) is that vocabulary is the least important subskill compared to grammar and other language subskills. Folse contradicted this myth by saying that the worst breakdowns in communication are due to a lack of appropriate vocabulary. Indeed, this author stated a story about trying to buy flour in a store, but he did not know the translation for *flour* in Japanese. He tried to convey the idea by using many different grammatical forms, but none of them was successful. This example shows that sometimes there is a necessity to use the exact word in order to be fully understood. Therefore, Ferreira (2007) stated that vocabulary learning also helps with language production. This is why vocabulary is an essential key for communication.

"In the foreign language classroom due to the heavy concept load involved in reading a second language it is unlikely that students will acquire the essential vocabulary needed to comprehend the content and information they encounter in many texts" (Moeller, Ketsman, &

Masmaliyeva, 2009, p. 1). As the authors mentioned, in the case of EFL learners, it is difficult to understand the meaning of different words because of this *heavy concept load* involved in a second language reading. Consequently, reading is not enough to develop the vocabulary skill and that is why learners need a specific technique to help them in this process (Moeller et al., 2009).

The National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) stated that vocabulary is an essential component in learning to read, and at the same time, reading is critical for developing the vocabulary subskill. The NRP (2000) also mentioned that if a child does not comprehend a word that he/she tries to decode, he/she gains no benefit from reading, and the main goal of reading is comprehension. As this research program explains, vocabulary is strongly related with reading, so the development of vocabulary can enhance not only reading, but also the other English skills as well. Therefore, it is important to acquire a wide amount of vocabulary, in order to comprehend the target language; consequently, sight words or also called high frequency words could be meaningful to achieve this goal. Indeed, sight words, which are common words that learners find in every reading book (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004), may actually be acquired by using sign language in any stage of the learning process. Later on in this chapter, more information about sight words will be included.

According to data collected by Michael Baldwin, from a test that the researcher posted on the website, TestYourVocab.com, native English-speaking adults understand an average from 20,000 to 30,000 vocabulary words. Contrarily, foreign test-takers only know an average from 10,000 to 20,000 words (as cited in Little, 2018). According to these findings, foreign learners need to work twice as hard to learn the target vocabulary as it is suggested by the author.

2.2.1 How is vocabulary acquired?

Stuart Webb and Paul Nation (2017) discuss four strands for a well-balanced vocabulary learning program. The first one is the *Meaning-Focused Input*, which means learning through receptive skills like listening and reading. The second strand is the *Meaning-Focused Output*, in which productive learning by developing speaking and writing skills, is involved. Strand number three goes for *Language-Focused Learning*, which is deliberate attention paid to different features of the language. Referring to this strand, The National Reading Panel (2000) indicates that in the results of the implications for reading instruction "there is a need for direct instruction of vocabulary items required for a specific text", and also that "vocabulary can be acquired through incidental learning" (p. 4-4). More information about deliberate and incidental learning will be provided later. Additionally, Nation mentions that both, deliberate and incidental learning, are necessary to strengthen item knowledge. Lastly, he mentions that the fourth strand deals with *Fluency Development*, which considers how easy it is getting familiarized with the material and how quickly the material is acquired.

2.2.2 Vocabulary-learning methods and strategies

Not many years ago, some of the strategies educators used to teach learners consisted of repeating several times the concept of words or writing many different sentences on pieces of paper. Some studies presented in the NRP (2000) have demonstrated that the amount of exposition and frequency learners are encountered to learn words will influence on the significance and its effectiveness. The following list contains different vocabulary-learning methods and strategies mentioned or examined by different authors.

2.2.2.1 Repetition. According to Rasti Behbahani (2015), a student must be exposed to a word seven times so he/she can learn it meaningfully. This strategy is very common among learners as they tend to learn or study things by repeating to themselves several times.

Repetition is related to the law of frequency proposed by Aristotle. When repetition is used strategically, it may be a powerful tool of learning. However, it could also cause some struggle, especially on learning new languages (Weiler, 2017).

2.2.2.2 Vocabulary Flash Cards. Bellani (2011) stated that flashcards "consist of cards made of thick cardboard or cardstock wherein pictures, numbers, symbols, or words are printed on one or both sides" (para. 1). During the first stage of learning, flashcards can be really useful for everyone, especially for those who have a well-developed visual learning. In many different areas of education, this association between picture and meaning is used.

2.2.2.3 Guessing from the Context. Rhalmi (2013) pointed out that "no matter what level our students are in, they will often come across difficult words in texts they are exposed to. Inferring and guessing meanings of unfamiliar words is a strategy which is worth developing" (para. 2). In this strategy, the learner infers the meaning of the word based on clues according to the context. This can increase their cultural awareness as well as their reading speed.

2.2.2.4 Word Parts. Rasti Behbahani (2015) claimed that "learning word parts like affixes, prefixes, infixes, circumfixes, and roots of the words is an important strategy that learners can use to guess the meaning of the words fast" (Rasti Behbahani, 2015, p.5). Learners can break the word in order to establish the meaning of each part and form a complete concept of it. In English, word formation is very common, so learners will find tons of words that they can break into different parts for their analysis. "Students' knowledge of morphemes helps them to identify the meaning of words and build their vocabulary" (Zorfass, 2014, para. 1). It seems that this strategy works better with more advanced groups because of the necessity of understanding morphology terms, according to some researchers (Stowe, n.d.).

2.2.2.5 Keyword Method. This method helps the learner to retain the information as well as to make the process easier. "In this method, learners must find a part of the word which is similar for them in the sound, shape, or meaning to something in their minds or languages, and use it as a keyword" (Rasti Behbahani, 2015, p.3). The purpose of this method is creating a mental image by associating the word being taught with another word which is similar in sound and shares some features in common. In fact, in this method, images and objects are easier to recall. The amount of times learners are exposed to a word can help them to retain the word more effectively as well as the associations they can create to retain or recall information.

2.3 Types of words

Darasz and Yagid (2017) mentioned that there are two types of words. The words, a person can decode because they are phonetically regular, and the ones "that can be recognized at a glance or recognized 'on sight' without having to break the component parts down and blend them back together" (para. 7). The latter ones are called sight words.

2.3.1 Decodable words. When talking about the term *decoding*, it is important to understand that this "is the process of knowing and realizing that written letters have relationships to sounds and are learned through phonics instruction" (Blackwell & Laman, 2013, para. 9). At an early age, children sound out words or decode them in order to understand and read them such as *pet* or *get*. They separate the word letter by letter. This skill follows some phonic rules as stated by The Understood Team (2014), "it involves taking apart the sounds in a word (segmenting) and blending the sounds together." (para. 5).

Notwithstanding, as mentioned formerly, there are plenty of words that a child cannot decode because they are not spelled the way they sound, for example, *who* and *why*. In those cases, children need to learn the words by sight. "The goal is for kids to become so familiar

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with a non-decodable word that they don't even try to sound it out. They automatically recognize it at a glance" (The Understood Team, 2014, para. 16).

2.3.2 Sight words. Bowers (2011) stated that sight words are common words that help a child to read and write. This author mentioned that the purpose of knowing these words is recognizing them at a glance and no letter by letter. However, sight words are not only taught to children or young learners. According to Cicerchia (2016c), English as a Second Language (ESL) adults may also struggle with English spelling "due to the lack of 1:1 sound letter correspondence" (para. 6). For overcoming spelling problems, the author strongly recommends to learn sight words.

Thus, Cicerchia (2015) stated that sight words can be divided into two categories. The first group is called *high frequency words* because "they [sight words] account for between 50-75% of all words found in grade school reading material" (para. 1). Some examples of *high frequency words* include *after, when, ride, blue, red,* and so on. Second, the ones called *non-phonetic words* which are the ones who cannot be decoded phonetically such as *which, eight, together,* and so on. Finally, Cicerccia (2015) stated that the familiarity with sight words also "facilitates reading and listening comprehension skills in adult basic skills, ESL and EFL education" (para.12).

Phillips and Feng (2012) discussed the importance of learning to read by sight. They stated that it is important for a learner to recognize words and read them quickly without decoding the word. If a person retrieves and reads words quickly in a meaningful way, he/she will become a fluent and more proficient reader. Indeed, Hyte (2010) stated that "one effective approach to teaching reading to low-level readers is to teach sight words" (para. 1). In a reading research, Pikulski and Templeton (2004) presented some data indicating the following:

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A mere 100 words make up about 50% of most English texts; 200 words make up 90% of the running words of materials through third grade; and 500 words make up 90% of the running words in materials through ninth grade (p.3).

Thus, the need of sight word recognition is more than essential. "An individual's particular strengths in intelligences have a direct bearing upon the way in which their learning takes place" (Pritchard, 2009, p. 35). Children learn in many different ways according to Gardner's (1983) theories regarding the diverse types of multiple intelligences and the different methods used to teach sight words. Cicerchia (2016a) recommended to teach sight words to ELLs because it "will help them conserve cognitive resources for decoding the harder, less frequent words they are bound to encounter" (para. 8).

2.3.2.1 Dolch and Fry high frequency word lists. Farrel, Osenga and Hunter (2013) compared the Dolch and Fry high frequency word lists and claimed that these two, "are virtually synonymous with the terms 'sight words' and 'high frequency words'…" (p. 1). The Dolch list, which is about 220 words, was published in 1936 by Edward Dolch. At the beginning, the list did not include any noun. However, Dolch created a list of 95 common nouns later on. Nowadays, Dolch sight words are classified by the level of frequency. According to Farrel et al. (2013), the Fry list of words was created by Edward Fry in 1952, but in 1980 the list was updated based on their frequency. This list includes around 1000 words broken down into groups of 100, thus for example, the first 100 words would be the most frequent ones in English. It is remarkable to mention that these lists include all parts of speech. As a conclusion, the authors stated that both lists are useful for teaching and learning processes as long as they are included in phonics instruction as well.

According to different authors memorization is necessary to learn sight words. Bowers (2011) suggested that sight words must be memorized and students have to recognize

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them by sight. Similarly, Hyte (2010) recommended that learners should "memorize a few sight words at a time" (para. 2). It is well-known that memorization can be problematic for learners because of the amount of time they need to apply on it; however, many authors agree with the use of memorization to learn basic formulas or vocabulary items and to recall information. That is why different methods and strategies have been used to make the learning process easier, and ASL can be one of these strategies.

2.3.2.2 Sight words teaching methods and strategies. The idea of teaching and learning sight words is essential for different reasons, mentioned above, and especially for enhancing the reading skill (Hyte, 2010; Phillips & Feng, 2012). Diverse methods and strategies have been proposed by different authors such as Blackwell and Laman (2013), Cox (2014), Phillips and Feng (2012), among others. In this section, some methods and strategies that facilitate the learning of sight words will be reviewed and explained as the actual study pretends to incorporate American Sign Language in at least one of the following methods and strategies for teaching sight words in order to facilitate the learning of these, also called *high frequency words*.

2.3.2.2.1 The use of flashcards. According to Blackwell & Laman (2013) "Traditional flash card methods of teaching have been widely accepted over the years and are supported throughout the teaching community as an effective technique that facilitates student learning" (p. 40). Primm, House, Edwards, and Retnasaba (n.d) recommended the *see & say technique* during the learner's first encounter with a sight word. In this technique, a flashcard with a sight word written on it is shown, and the learner needs to repeat the word several times while underlining it with the finger. Contrary to the idea of using flashcards, Phillips and Feng (2012), based on data analysis from their research, concluded that "participants learned significantly more Dolch sight words in the multisensory approach than in the flashcard method" (p. 30).

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2.3.2.2.2 The use of pictures or drawings. Kibby (1989) stated that there was some controversy about the best method for teaching sight words. However, based on association and tradition, "sight words should be taught in the context of a meaningful sentence, in conjunction with associated pictures" (Kibby, 1989, p. 262). Contrary to this idea, Blackwell & Laman (2013) provided some information about studies demonstrating that pictures can block the learning of Dolch sight words. The participants identified the pictures and named them, but they were unable to recognize and read the words later. The reason behind this problem could be that participants were too focused on the pictures themselves and not on the printed sight words.

Nevertheless, Kibby (1989) supported the idea of using pictures for teaching sight words claiming that "such pictorial, contextual, and meaning emphasis methods are thought to make the word to be learned more meaningful and thus easier to remember and easier to associate with its graphic representation" (p. 262). Indeed, Wise (2017) suggested that learners should draw a picture to go along with the word, or make a sight-word bulletin board using the words learned during the lesson; the activity of drawing could also help learners with Dyslexia. As an example, Rivera, Koorland and Fueyo (2002) conducted a study in which a child with learning disabilities had to draw his own pictorial prompts. The results suggested that "the student illustration activity itself could be sufficient to teach the meaning of each sight word" (p. 204).

2.3.2.2.3 The use of technology. According to Blackwell and Laman (2013), "technology-supported teaching methods allow the teacher to use electronics as an aid to deliver teaching curricula" (p. 43). For teaching sight words, the use of apps has been very useful and innovative. Cheeseman (2016) discussed the criteria that most apps should have. She mentioned that teenagers and adults do not have learning apps designed appropriately enough for them. Indeed, many apps for sight words learning are only designed for children,

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and in an EFL context these words can be taught to any person who is considered a beginner. The author also mentioned that a well-designed app for learning sight words should have sets of words organized by frequency, proportionate easy access for teachers and parents, have correct pronunciation of sigh words, include immediate feedback, among others.

A good example of a well-developed literacy app is the one created by Spencer (2016), called "Sight Word Games App" for learning sight words. The author explained that the app is made for kids, and one of its advantages is that the teacher/parent can personally select sight words for each learner which is useful for practicing certain words the learner may struggle with. Some other advantages are multiple player's option, different lists of sight words, and games such as memory match, word whack, bingo, and so on. Most of the sight words learning apps have been designed for little kids; the reason may be that sight words are usually taught to ELLs when they are learning how to read (Blackwell & Laman, 2013; Kibby, 1989; Sherman, 2011).

2.3.2.2.4 The use of games. According to a study performed by Charlton, Williams and McLaughlin (2005), the results indicated that "games can accelerate learning when they are combined with teacher instruction" (p.71). Many teachers use games in the classroom to help the students learn certain topic incidentally. Cox (2014) discussed different strategies to teach sight words including games. One of the games was the *Sight Word Treasure Hunt* in which sight words are hidden around the classroom and learners need to find them and pronounce them correctly. There have been several games for learning sight words, and they have been simple and easy to perform. Wise (2017) also suggested sight word games such as bingo, puzzles, crosswords, and so on.

2.3.2.2.5 The multisensory approach. According to Moustafa (1999) "a multisensory approach incorporates the learning styles for visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile learners"

(p.6). This approach is useful for any learner regardless their learning style because the four learning styles can be used correspondingly. Cicerchia (2016c) suggested the multisensory approach to improve the spelling as the learning is "adding muscle memory to the process" (para.21).

The NRP (2000) included ASL as part of the media for teaching vocabulary beyond text because it uses a *haptic medium,* which means relating to the sense of touch and perception. The main purpose would be to incorporate ASL as a tool in some methods used to teach sight words, especially the multimedia approach, due to the fact that ASL kinesthetic movements involves gestures, facial expressions, and body language (Sherman, 2011). Indeed, it can be considered iconic since many signs resemble the concept of words in English.

Brennan and Miller (2000) examined the use of ASL in sight word instruction with excellent results. The authors' "specific results recorded a 76% accuracy of sight words recognized when using the flashcard only method and a 96% accuracy of sight words recognized utilizing the ASL method." (as cited in Blackwell & Laman, 2013, p. 45).

Colorado (2007), by his own, discussed some techniques for English Language Learners (ELLs) that can be used to pre-teach vocabulary such as pantomiming, realia, drawing, using gestures, among others. The author mentioned that these techniques can help learners to identify different words and remember them in order to use them appropriately. Respectively, using gestures is an important part of sign language since children need to create different expressions with their face and body for purposes of conveying ideas.

2.4 Associationism as a Cognitive Theory

Boeree (2000) mentions that there are several authors and trends related to associationism as a cognitive theory, but Aristotle may be considered the pioneer. The author

presents Aristotle's four laws of association related to the processes of remembrance and recall.

According to Boeree (2000), the laws of association are the following:

2.4.1 The law of contiguity. This law states that things or events that occur close to each other in space or time tend to get connected together in the mind.

2.4.2 The law of frequency. It indicates that the more often two things or events are connected, the more powerful will be that association. The recall of one thing will arouse the recall of the second one.

2.4.3 The law of similarity. If two things are similar, the thought of one will tend to trigger the thought of the other.

2.4.4 The law of contrast. The experience of seeing or recalling something may also cause the recall of something totally opposite.

Many signs resemble the concept of the words, so there is a similarity between ideas. When teaching sight words, learners generally look at the word and repeat it out loud. This is known as the *See and Say Method*. If they incorporate sign language immediately after saying the word, there will be a contiguity of elements during the learning process. Consequently, these elements would be linked together. Of course, the frequency with which this process is repeated would influence on the effectiveness of the association. Darasz and Yagid (2017) stated that readers also need a considerable amount of exposure to a limited number of sight or high frequency words that must be read by sight.

According to Nugent (2013), "the associationistic theory of learning suggests that higher-order mental functions are occasioned by connections between mental items that may take varying forms - for example, stimulus and response" (para. 2). The author indicates that

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learning can occur from a connection or link among items, and this connection can be represented in different ways such as stimulus-response. This is what is known as association theory. Associations are really common in daily life situations. For instance, when a person wants to memorize a date, he or she can divide it into separate numbers and sum them, or simply relate the date to any place in time in which the student had a bad or good experience.

Postman (1955) discusses about the associationistic theory, and he mentions two aspects in this theory that differ from each other: the psychological and the physiological. The psychological aspect refers to "the conception of learning as consisting of linkages between ideas, or between stimuli and responses" (p.439). The physiological one mentions that "learning depends on lowered synaptic resistances or on the formation of cell assemblies" (p.439) and it is influenced by behavior. Regardless the manner, association could be seen as a synthesis between mental ideas and synaptic connections which acts as an instrument for learning. In addition, association is key in learning new vocabulary since words can be learned by creating relations by linking the word with certain stimuli; in this case, physical movement. Therefore, associationism supports the idea of using ASL as a link between the new word and its meaning and/or spelling.

In language learning, associations play an important role. Kuehn (2017), states that learning vocabulary is one of the most difficult things for ESL and EFL students. He considers association a must when it comes to learn new vocabulary, and he mentions an excellent example of how association works. The author gives his students the word "tasty", and immediately he tells them to start thinking of examples of food they consider as their favorite. The dialogue about food and the relation that each learner creates between the word *tasty* and his/her favorite food helps him/her to remember that *tasty* means delicious. In addition to association, learners, especially the foreign language ones, have a need for achievement (Dörnyei, 1990), which is the tendency to approach different objectives and the

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interest in excellence. Thus, they need enough motivation and innovative ways of learning in order to be more successful.

2.5 Motivation as a key element to learn vocabulary

"The word 'motivation' is typically defined as the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction, and continuation of behaviour" (Amara, 2009, para. 1). As the author states, motivation is an internal process that incentives or impulses a person to achieve something. In terms of learning, teachers assume the role of motivators to encourage the students to keep going, but also to teach them how to motivate themselves. Thus, motivation can occur because of internal and external factors.

Thompson (2017) explains the difference between two types of motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation comes from the inside and it is not influenced by external factors. In this type, "you enjoy an activity, course or skill development solely for the satisfaction of learning and having fun" (para. 1). Extrinsic motivation is influenced by external factors that influence a person to behave, or learn anything. "This type of motivation is everywhere and frequently used within society throughout your lifetime" (Thompson, 2017, para. 1). Both types are acceptable and used by society. When a learner is extrinsically motivated, external factors and rewards, such as grades, money, gifts, and so on, may influence them to push towards the target or objective. Intrinsic motivation, such as the personal gratification of acquiring a new language or the feeling when a book has been read completely, would be enough for someone to enjoy the satisfaction of accomplishment.

Cicerchia (2016b) presents some interesting information about the importance of motivation for ESL learners. She mentions that motivation could be considered as *instrumental* or *integrative*. The author states that having integrative motivation is more useful since learners are really interested not only in mastering the language skills, but also

learning about the culture and be part of it. In the case of this study, learners as well as teachers would not only be learning about signs and gestures, but also about the hearing impaired community and their way of communication; therefore, motivation is imperative and transcendental in this research. In fact, as EFL learners work "twice as hard to master both the subject of a lesson and the language used to describe it" (Cicerchia, 2016a, para. 2), they need constant motivation in their learning process (Cicerchia, 2016b). For that reason, EFL learners may use ASL as a way to motivate themselves to overcome any difficulty on learning new vocabulary and for teachers who need thought-provoking and innovative ways to keep students' attention. Cooper (2002) examined the use of ASL to teach reading to children, and she concluded that "children are more motivated to learn new words and their concomitant [a phenomenon that naturally accompanies or follows something] signs" (p. 119). Educators may also find ASL a first step to start thinking about the importance of being prepared with the appropriate knowledge to manage students with special needs.

Additionally to motivation, *frequency* is essential since according to the *Law of Frequency* by Aristotle, mentioned previously in this chapter, two ideas that are constantly relating would help the learner to remember new knowledge. Nation (2015) claimed that the more contact a learner has with a word, the more learning is likely to happen. It also depends on the learner's level of attention in a lesson. Furthermore, the quality of learning is influenced by the learners' incidental or deliberate attention to a word. Vocabulary learning "depends on the number of meetings with each word and the quality of attention at each meeting" (Nation, 2015, p. 136). *Incidental attention* occurs when a learner is more focused on a different part of language rather than the words or phrases. *Deliberate attention* happens when a learner consciously concentrates on acquiring the words. Both types of "attentions" have different levels of quality. For this study, *deliberate attention* should be applied because as Sherman (2011) stated, "ASL instruction has to occur explicitly and directly... in order for

students to learn the correct ASL signs for words" (p. 33). According to Aske (2012), sight words or high frequency words should be taught in a deliberate and explicit way. He stated that "with deliberate word study of the most commonly occurring words, the learner can concentrate in learning high-frequency words… which will result in further acquisition" (para.16). Furthermore, Nation (2005) also mentions that a teacher may sometimes want to concentrate more on a word, and the time should be spent on high frequency words that can fulfill all the language needs students may have.

Lastly, it is essential to mention that the Common European Framework of References (CEFR) measures an individual's personal level of proficiency in a foreign language. This system also provides information about the various degrees of competence (six levels) that a learner can develop, as well as the language activities which are the four basic skills. Indeed, this system establishes that the vocabulary range for an A1 level consists of "a basic vocabulary repertoire of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations" (Council of Europe, 2001, p.112). Therefore, as sight words are basic vocabulary that learners use in an early stage of learning, the appropriate English level for its application should be A1. Thus, by the incorporation of ASL at this level, learners might be able to acquire basic vocabulary (sight words) and develop their language skills at their own pace.

Consequently, teaching sight words requires a lot of memorization that is completely necessary to teach basic words and formulas. However, the incorporation of ASL can be the appropriate tool that can enhance the process of teaching sight words, and wherefore enhancing the reading skill as well. Indeed, Ministerio de Educación (2012) stated that an assessment indicator for reading, with an A1 level, is "by making use of clues such as visuals, text shape and layout, and reading one phrase at a time" (p. 11). Therefore, ASL, which is considered as a visual tool (Sherman, 2011), can be appropriate enough for achieving this goal. ASL as being considered as an active tool may help students to be aware of their

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emotions and expressions and also improve several language skills and subskills such as

reading, vocabulary, spelling proficiency, pronunciation, among others.

Chapter III

Literature Review

In this chapter, the overall goal is examining some of the most relevant studies regarding sign language and language development. The studies focus on the importance of sign language in education for hearing learners, and the understanding of the significance of sight word learning, and its benefits. Furthermore, this chapter will point out the results and different points of view from the researchers. The studies are organized from general to specific predicated on how useful they are for this project.

3.1 Use of technology as a tool for teaching sign language

Ellis and Blashki (2007) examined how multimedia can help kindergarten children to learn Australian Sign Language. The participants in this study were four and five year-old children. There was an intention to see if the children were capable of using the software or not. The purpose of this study was knowing how kids used technology to learn sign language within a formal educational setting. The language system to be learned was Auslan, a signed/ nonverbal language. The participants performed receptive and expressive activities. Sign language instruction activity that incorporated text, images, audio, and video was used in this study. According to the results, the app can actually help children to learn sign language, but it seems that some enhancements need to be done. Also, children did not achieve a good score in words that are not related to its concept. The authors established that learners "scored less well on words that were arbitrary such as *night* as the sign does not have any clues to their meaning" (Ellis & Blashki, 2007, p. 249). Also, high frequency words such as *mummy* were remembered because they were important or significant for them. The study concluded that multimedia may have what is necessary to be used as a tool in the acquisition of sign language in hearing children of that age. Even though the use of ASL as a tool for teaching

sight words is not related with technology, this study presented another example of how a tool can be incorporated in order to teach a language.

Regarding the use of technology, Weaver and Starner (2010) analyzed the use of a mobile app to help hearing parents learn ASL. Ten hearing parents were the participants of this study. The researchers used a semi-structured interview with parents of hearing-impaired children. The interview topics followed four categories: family, ASL learning, prototype reactions, and phone ownership. The participants were required to use a mobile phone app called *SMARTSign* in order to see if this app could help them to overcome difficulties. According to the interview results, the main reason of why parents wanted to learn ASL was improving the communication with their children. They also wanted to learn American Sign Language because of its cultural and linguistic benefits. Indeed, the idea of bilingualism is well-received nowadays and considered an advantage rather than a disadvantage (Weaver & Starner, 2010). Furthermore, the parents had different complications when they tried to learn ASL. They said that, for example, people stared at them when they were practicing ASL with their children. Also, parents considered that ASL is a difficult language to learn, and they did not have enough opportunities in life to master it. Notwithstanding, after the implementation of the study, the parents had a positive reaction towards the mobile app. The researchers did not want to convince the parents about learning ASL but rather to show them an innovative way that could facilitate their learning. According to the research, parents did not want to master the language, but just improving the communication with their children. Similarly, the idea of using ASL for teaching is not about mastering sign language, but motivating teachers to encourage their students in their learning processes and moreover get involved in the culture (sign language) as well. Teachers or students may never know when they would need to communicate with a hearing-impaired person; therefore, it is important to be prepared at least with basic structures and words.

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Another study about the use of technology for teaching sign language is the one conducted by Toth (2009) who is a clinical social worker specialized in psychotherapy and education. She has done different research studies to support health for hearing and hearing-impaired people. In this pilot research, she examined the teaching of sign language through a DVD program to learners with different disabilities or disorders such as Down syndrome, Autism, among others. It is important to mention that in this study, the researchers used the Bridge of Signs, which is a DVD program that teaches American and French Sign Language. In the results presented, the participants responded quite different from each other. For example, participants with autism did not respond in any way to the video or photographs. Nonetheless, there was one of them that learned to control his agitations when he saw his teacher signing to him. On the other hand, participants with Down syndrome could imitate most of the signs and speak some words as well. "Of the disabilities represented in this youngest group, it was noted that children who were affected with Down Syndrome performed best" (Toth, 2009, p.92). However, the author (2009) suggested that the participants' ability to imitate, apply, and attend was more influenced by the children's immaturity rather than their disabilities or disorders. It reinforces the idea that ASL could also be used with special learners as a manner of inclusion. A teacher never knows when and how a learner with these characteristics might appear.

Among the previous studies, it is notorious that technology can be considered an effective tool for teaching. The results in each study suggests that technology may increase learners' motivation. The information previously mentioned is relevant for this study because the purpose of including ASL as a tool for teaching sight words is catching students' attention with a different tool. Furthermore, the use of sign language could be further joined with technology and applied in order to increase learners' motivation. Lastly, another aspect to

take into account is the amount of time students are exposed to learning the language, as well as the technology used in these studies.

3.2 Native English Speakers vs. Foreign English Speakers

Little (2018) examined the lexicon of native and non-native speakers of English based on data collected by researcher, Michael Baldwin, from an independent American-Brazilian research project. This study, which started in 2011, had the purpose of determining how many English words native and non-native speakers knew based on their age, gender, and educational background. In the vocabulary test, the participants had different checklists full of words arranged by difficulty. They were required to select only the words whose meanings were well-known for them. In 2013, the researchers collected enough data to present some data results. The researchers found that "native English-speaking adults understand an average of 20,000 to 30,000 vocabulary words, and native speakers learn about one word a day from ages 16 to 50" (Little, 2018, para. 7). Contrarily, compared to non-native speakers, there was a considerable difference. The results indicated that, even though non-native speakers learn 2.5 words a day, "adults know an average 10,000-20,000 words less than their native counterparts, or a native English speakers' 8- to 14-year-old vocabulary level" (Little, 2018, para. 8).

This research provides essential information about the importance of vocabulary learning as foreign learners have always struggled to acquire a wide amount of it. "This study shows that learning a language to total fluency takes years of study and dedication, and a non-native speaker may still miss critical vocabulary" (Little, 2018, para. 9). Therefore, it is necessary to assist learners with affective and accurate learning methods and techniques, so they can acquire varied lexicon in order to communicate properly and overcome any possible (or existent) gap in communication.

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3.3 Sign language applied on different learners

Singleton, Morgan, DiGello, Wiles, and Rivers (2004) investigated the vocabulary use by low, moderate, and high ASL-proficient writers compared to hearing ESL and monolingual speakers. This study compared three groups of students with hearing-impairment (low-, moderate-, and high-ASL proficient) and two groups of hearing students (monolingual English speakers and ESL speakers) on four vocabulary measures. The four dependent variables were number of *total words* (TW), proportion of *most frequent words* (MFW), proportion of *function words* (FW), and proportion of *unique words* (UW). Students were asked to retell "The Tortoise and the Hare" story in a writing activity. The researchers (2004) mentioned that the results varied according to the different types of participants in the study. It is interesting to appreciate how English as a Second Language learners responded to this study. The ESL group had a number of 83.33 total of words written on the text, not so different from the monolingual group. The ESL group had a proportion of MFW of 70%. This list of frequent words was about 105 most frequent words used for coding writing samples. It included function and content words according to the different parts of speech. For the proportion of function and unique words, the ESL speakers obtained 56% and 52% respectively. In conclusion, the study demonstrated that English as a Second Language learners tend to use a great amount of high-frequency words and have an adequate use of function words as well. The results provided in this study is valuable to understand the importance of high frequency words acquisition, and how they can be learned through sign language.

A different study was held by using a single participant. Brackenbury, Ryan, and Messenheimer (2005) conducted an investigation to examine the ability to learn new words by following the expressive vocabulary and incidental learning of a hearing child whose parents are hearing-impaired. This was a single case study of a learner whose pseudonym was

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"Beth". The first session actually initiated when Beth was 16 months old. The second session occurred when she was 20 months old. In this study, two aspects were measured. First, Beth's expressive lexicon size in ASL and spoken English were measured by two lists of words that her parents and a neighbor assisted with. "Her parents were instructed to place a mark by each word for which they had seen Beth produce a sign" (Brackenbury et al., 2005, p.82). For the hearing side, a neighbor helped in the same manner with the other list. Second, her ability to fast map novel labels in ASL and spoken English was measured by exercises in which she had several familiar objects and one unfamiliar. The researchers requested her to show them one of the familiar objects; this process was performed twice. It was repeated a third time but with an unfamiliar object. The results in the first session of the study indicated that Beth's expressive vocabulary that was accredited in one language (either ASL or English) was approximately 63% used and 37% on both languages. On the fast-mapping task, Beth correctly identified most of the objects in each trial. She also confused a word in English that was phonologically similar to another one. Brackenbury et al. (2005) suggested that "she had used her developing knowledge of ASL to become a more proficient word learner" (p. 87). This study has not only examined word learning, but also the relation between two languages and how one of them could help the other in terms of proficiency. It also suggested that minimal exposure to the language may be enough to achieve a certain level of vocabulary. This idea of minimal exposure to language is contrary to the theory presented in the previous chapters about the Law of Frequency proposed by Aristotle (300 B.C.).

Furthermore, Marilyn Daniels (2004), a professor with many years of experience in ASL learning and teaching, investigated about the "effect of American Sign Language (ASL) instruction on typical hearing kindergarten children's literacy in four specific areas: receptive English vocabulary, expressive English vocabulary, ASL ability, and English emergent reading level" (p.86). The participants of this study were 41 kindergarten students divided in

two classrooms from a public elementary school. One group received the following treatment and the other did not. The treatment consisted of using sign language from the very first day of classes. Key ASL words were incorporated along with spoken English. During this process, more signs were incorporated each day as well as the manual alphabet and fingerspelling. The receptive and expressive English vocabulary were measured by administering a different test for each one of them. After the tests were applied, the receptive vocabulary increased and the expressive vocabulary remained almost the same as the receptive one. This is something positive since there was some concern about the influence of ASL on the learner's expressive English vocabulary (Daniels, 2009). This information is transcendental to the current project because the purpose of using ASL as a tool for teaching sight words is not about teaching a second or a foreign language, but it is about motivating teachers and learners to use ASL as an instrument to retain the new words easily. Furthermore, the rest of findings showed that learners acquired a considerable quantity of ASL during this study and significant difference between the treatment class and the control one in terms of letter recognition (Daniels, 2009). At the end, the author mentioned that the results in her study confirmed that the use of ASL represents an academic advantage for hearing students' literacy.

3.4 Sight word teaching

Researcher Pulido (2007) examined the effects of topic familiarity and passage sight vocabulary on lexical inferencing and retention through reading. All the participants were English learners of Spanish as a Second language (L2). The study had the following variables: "(a) a topic familiarity questionnaire, and (b) a passage sight vocabulary test" (p. 66). Regarding the second variable, a passage sight vocabulary is a short reading about something familiar to the readers based on routines considered by the participants. Therefore, the activity in this study consisted of guessing the meaning of certain words with rated degree

of difficulty from two narrative readings. Indeed, one narrative was considered by the participants, less familiar than the other. In the results presented, the author mentioned that there were more correct target word inferences from a topic that had a more familiar scenario compared to a less familiar one. It may seem influenced by the use of lexical inferencing strategies. Pulido (2007) states that "with efficient decoding skills and large sight vocabularies, readers can allocate attentional resources to the construction and integration of ideas from context, and the access and use of information from long-term memory" (p.70). As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the benefits of sight language learning is the enhancement of reading fluency since these words, which are considered of high frequency, are found most of the time in reading (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004). The findings indicated that passage sight vocabulary may help learners to retain more vocabulary as well. The learners were efficient in word recognition which "may have contributed to facilitating recall of the word meanings on the retention tasks" (Pulido, 2007, p.82). This study discussed the use of sight vocabulary for recalling and retention, which is related to the Laws of Association that are explained in the theoretical framework.

Furthermore, Phillips and Feng (2012) examined two methods for teaching sight words: the traditional flashcard method and the multisensory approach. The researchers' purpose was identifying which one was the most effective and if there was any difference between them. The participants were part of a classroom of twenty-one kindergarteners whose ages ranged from five to six years old. However, only fifteen participated on the study. This group included African, Hispanic, American, and Caucasian children. The participants were ranged in academic achievement from beginner, intermediate, and advanced predicated on the learners' number of Dolch sight words and consonant-vowel-consonant words and their proficiency in reading. Each participant started with a basic, in some cases non-existing, knowledge of sight words according to their reading abilities. The researchers used the Dolch

sight word list as the instrument of the research. They extracted ten unknown words (considered by the participants) from the list and divided them into five Dolch sight words for the flashcard method and five Dolch sight words for the multisensory approach. Phillips and Feng (2012) mentioned that "after the two weeks of instruction for the flash card method and the multisensory approach, there was an assessment of words taught to measure the amount of words learned or not learned" (p.16). In the assessment part, the researchers showed the participants a flashcard containing the sight word and learners had three seconds to answer, or it was considered as incorrect.

Murphy's (1997) report indicated the following:

The multisensory method, also known as VAKT (visual-auditory-kinesthetic-tactile) implies that students learn best when information is presented in different modalities as cited in (Mercer & Mercer, 1993). Kinesthetic (movement) and tactile (touch) modalities are used along with visual and auditory. Activities such as tracing, hearing, writing, and seeing represent the four modalities (p.7).

The flashcard method consists "of cards made of thick cardboard or cardstock wherein pictures, numbers, symbols, or words are printed on one or both sides" (Bellani, 2011, para. 1). During the first stage of learning, flashcards can be really useful, especially for people with developed visual skills. The results exhibited that the participants learned significantly more sight words with the multisensory approach than with the flashcard method. Later on, a survey was applied in order to obtain further data. As a result, the participants mentioned that they liked the multisensory approach because of several reasons such as using red ink pens to select the Dolch sight word, drawing, coloring, skywriting, chopping words out, among others. This study was conducted to demonstrate which method was considered to be the most effective to teach sight words.

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The use of sign language can also be applied as a tool for teaching sight words. An example that supports this idea is the study performed by Bowers (2011), in which the researcher investigated the use of ASL to help kindergarten learners identify sight words. The population for this study included eighteen kindergarten students. Ten students were non-English language learners (ELL) and the other eight were ELL students. It is necessary to mention that two students, apart from the eighteen, were non-ELL learners with special needs. The participants were divided in Group A and Group B. Both of them contained an equal number of students based on their individual characteristics. Each student received an assignment with twenty sight words. The tasks were scored at the end of a sight word instruction period of four weeks. The purpose was calculating the amount of correct answers at the beginning and at the end of this study. The sigh words list included words that belonged to different parts of speech such as prepositions, verbs, pronouns, prepositions, and conjunctions. Each group received a 20 minutes class of sight word instruction, but Group A also received ASL instruction along with the sight word instruction. The results showed that the non-ELL learners with special needs, who received ASL treatment, had a significant improvement compared to the ones who did not receive ASL instruction. This information reinforces the idea that sign language can help special learners and any learner to improve their learning capacities. The results about Group B (no ASL instruction) showed a minimal improvement on their sight word recognition. These findings were identical among non-ELL students with special needs, non-ELL students without special needs, and ELL students. However, Group A, who received ASL instruction, obtained a much higher score compared to Group B. Bowers not only analyzed the influence of ASL in sight word instruction, but also the differences between the different types of learners, considering the ones with special needs as well. The data presented in this study can suggest that "with efficient decoding skills and large sight vocabularies, readers can allocate attentional resources to the construction and

integration of ideas from context, and the access and use of information from long-term memory" (Pulido, 2007, p.70).

Finally, Sherman (2011) examined the use of ASL to learn sight vocabulary. The author used 11 first grade students as her participants on the study. She divided them into two groups. Both of them followed the same procedure and the same amount of time. However, in Group B, ASL was also included. She used the SEE-SAY-SIGN method. It consists of "having the child simultaneously SEE the word on the word card, SAY the word, and SIGN the word" (Sherman, 2011, p. 34). The goal was working with one sight word each week for five weeks. The same five sight words were used with both groups and were introduced in the same order. Starting with the first session and continuing through the fifth, these words were the following: *could, from, or, over,* and *where*. The findings from the study indicated that, Group A, without ASL instruction, obtained a 76% of accuracy rate in the number of words identified correctly while Group B, who received ASL instruction, obtained a 96% of accuracy rate. At the beginning of the study, none of the learners were able to read the words correctly, but at the end, both groups demonstrated an improvement from the pre-test to the post-test. Teachers were also glad with the results and perceived the learners' enthusiasm when coming to class.

Different studies were presented in this chapter in order to reinforce the importance of ASL in education, sight words learning, and language development. Several similarities and differences were found among the studies included in this chapter. Regarding the participants, it was noticed that most of them were children and monolingual English speakers. It seems to be because the contents were related to the vocabulary subskills that are associated with young learners (Colorin Colorado, 2007). Some articles used ESL learners, but none of them included English as a Foreign Language learners. Furthermore, the investigations on learners with disabilities have been helpful for my study, as inclusion is an essential constituent on

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education nowadays. Notwithstanding, it was not possible to find any article on this field that was performed in Latin America. In fact, most of the studies have been carried out in the U.S. even though ASL is considered an international sign language (NIDCD, 2017), which evidences a gap that must be researched deeply.

Chapter IV

Methodology

4.1. Research Approach and Design

This chapter deals with the methodology used for this research. A mixed method approach was applied in order to accomplish the proposed objectives. Malina, Norreklit, and Selto (2011) point out the advantage of using a mixed method is that it can "enable exploring more complex aspects and relations of the human and social world" (p. 61). A mixed method approach is composed by quantitative and qualitative methods which are necessary because of the nature of this study.

Furthermore, this study can be considered as an exploratory research. Indeed, one of the advantages of using an exploratory research is that it "can help raise awareness among researchers and their audiences by revealing previously unsuspected connections and causal mechanisms" (Reiter, 2017, p.148). Based on this explanation, this study is exploratory as it wants to convey that there is a relation between sign language and sight words, and each one of them can benefit EFL learning in many ways.

Research question	Instruments
In which activities can ASL be incorporated to teach sight words to A1 learners?	Bibliographical Data Research Survey Semi-structured interview

4.2 Participants

This study is not focused on a specific group, but any learner who has an A1 level. For this reason, in order to have a sample of opinions, perceptions, and knowledge about ASL

and sight words, the participants were selected from the English major at the University of Cuenca. Consequently, there are two groups, students and professors.

4.2.1 Students

Regarding the students' group, the sample was formed by 24 learners from the English Major at the Second semester. At this stage, students are supposed to have a basic level as they are beginning their careers, so they should have at least an A1 level according to the CEFR. This is the reason why this group of students were selected because *A1 learners* have a relatively basic repertoire of words (Council of Europe, 2001), and this study is focused on students with that basic level.

The students' age varied from 18 to 22 years old, and their genders varied as well. They were selected in order to have a sample of what learners think about vocabulary and the techniques they have used to learn it, their knowledge about sight words, and the use of sign language for learning.

4.2.2 Professors

Five professors from the English Language Major, who have had experience with vocabulary teaching and beginner learners, were interviewed. The participants were three women and two men and their ages were varied. It was imperative to know the professors' opinions and ideas about the importance of vocabulary in education, sight words learning, and the incorporation of sign language for teaching hearing learners in order to support the idea of this study.

The purpose of selecting professors, who have taught this group of students and ask them the same topics that were applied on the survey was to analyze if there was any relation between the professors and students' opinions and perceptions. Moreover, these professors have taught sight words implicitly in their subjects at this A1 level; therefore, the importance of carrying out the interviews.

4.3. Methods and Data Collection

As it was previously stated, this study follows a mix method approach. Therefore, different instruments were elaborated from scratch to obtain qualitative and quantitative data. First of all, extensive bibliographical documentation was collected in order to enrich the knowledge of this topic and create a booklet of activities for teaching sight words through ASL. Then, for the professors' group, a semi-structured interview was applied, which was recorded and then transcribed. Finally, a survey using a *likert scale* and *checkboxes* was administered for the students' group.

4.3.1. Qualitative Data Collection

Bibliographical Research

An extensive bibliographical documentation was examined in order to establish the importance and the benefits of using ASL and sight words for learning English as a Foreign Language. Therefore, through the documentation, the different methods for teaching sight words were analyzed in order to choose the most appropriate ones for designing a booklet to teach sight words based on the selected methods along with incorporation of ASL.

Semi-structured interview

This instrument was applied to five professors of the English major to know their opinions and perceptions regarding the importance of teaching vocabulary; the most appropriate methods or techniques to learn it; their knowledge about sight words and their thoughts about the idea of incorporating sign language for teaching hearing learners (See Appendix 3).

According to Doyle (2018), "a semi-structured interview is a meeting in which the interviewer does not strictly follow a formalized list of questions" (para. 3). The importance of applying this type of interview is that the interviewer may change the order or add more

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questions if they are appropriate to the study. Furthermore, according to Cohen and Crabtree (2006), one of the benefits of using a semi-structured interview is that the participants could express their ideas by using their own words, which gives them the opportunity to answer more freely.

This semi-structured interview consisted of eight questions related to this study. The first three questions were elaborated to obtain information about the importance of teaching vocabulary and the amount of time professors dedicate to teach this subskill. The fourth question was related to the different methods, strategies, and techniques that professors have used for teaching vocabulary. The next two questions examined their knowledge about sight words and the idea of using ASL for teaching vocabulary to hearing people, and finally, the last two questions were complementary information for the study.

4.3.2. Quantitative Data Collection

Survey

For the quantitative method, a survey was administered in order to know the students' opinions and perceptions about the relation between vocabulary and reading; the different techniques they have used to learn vocabulary; and their opinions about the use of sign language for learning sight words (See Appendix 4).

This survey was made from scratch. However, it went through two verifications by piloting it in order to be validated to accomplish the objective. Five English major students, who were apart from the actual group of participants, helped to carry out this piloting. In the first sample, the survey was too general to be understood for the learners (See Appendix 5). They did not comprehend the purpose of the study. In the second sample, there were few adjustments, but the questions were more precise and the learners were able to understand them clearly (See Appendix 6).

This survey was divided into three sections: vocabulary learning, sight words, and sign language. It is imperative to mention that information about sight words and sign language was provided in order to clarify the questions to be administered in this instrument. Indeed, it consisted of four questions.

The first question was a *checkboxes question*. This type of question is useful to ask the participants to select multiple answers (Hillmer, 2018). It included a list of techniques for learning vocabulary in which students could mark the ones they have used for their learning. The other three questions included a *likert scale*. The *likert scale question* is helpful because it gives different "degrees of opinion" (McLeod, 2008, para.10). For each question, students were able to choose from five different options according to their level of agreement.

Finally, it is relevant to mention that in two of the questions, students were able not only to mark their answer, but also justify their answers in order to obtain deeper and more detailed information which might be useful to enrich and back up this research. Therefore, these questions are going to be analyzed both in a quantitative and qualitative manner.

4.4. Data Analysis

Semi-structured interview

Curry (2015) states that qualitative data analysis is a frequentative process of individual and group level review interpretation. In order to understand how qualitative information is analyzed, the same author mentions the steps to collect qualitative information. The steps are the following: read the transcriptions without any assumption or bias, create initial codes which are words used to categorize the data, bring those codes to a group of transcriptions in order to revise them, repeat the last step with another group of transcriptions, and finally create the final code structure and apply to all. Finally, Curry (2015) points out that in order to create the final code structure, it is necessary to move back and forth

negotiating and revising the information throughout the course of data collection. This was the process followed for analyzing the semi-structured interviews.

Survey

As it was previously mentioned, this survey was divided into three sections: vocabulary learning, sight words, and sign language. The first section included two questions related to which techniques for learning vocabulary students have used and how helpful the students have considered vocabulary for reading comprehension. The two other sections included one question about the importance of sight words for learning EFL and if students considered ASL for learning these words.

First of all, the number of answers that students provided for each question was calculated in different charts created in Microsoft Excel 2013. Then, using the same program, percentages of the answers of each question were obtained and different graphics were created in order to reflect the results in a more dynamic manner. The use of "graphs are a common method to visually illustrate relationships in the data" (Slutsky, 2014, para. 1).

Slutsky (2014) also mentions that bar graphs are helpful "to compare a single variable value between several groups" (para. 5), and pie charts "shows classes or groups of data in proportion to the whole data set" (para. 7).

Based on the previous explanation, one pie chart and three bar graphs were elaborated. The pie chart was used to represent the percentages of each vocabulary technique according to the students' choices. Three bar graphs were used for the other questions in order to illustrate their answers based on the likert scale. Finally, as it was previously mentioned, the last two questions of the survey were analyzed qualitatively with the purpose of enriching the study.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

As the participants were selected from the University of Cuenca, a consent form was elaborated in order to obtain permission from the career director before the instruments were administered. The participants were informed that their participation was completely voluntary in this study (See appendices 1 and 2). As the students were adults, their parents' permission was not necessary. Furthermore, students and professors were informed about the purpose of each instrument, the topics that were included, and in the case of the professors, that it was going to be recorded. In order to avoid *social desirability*, it is suggested to keep the names of the participants anonymously in order to reduce social bias (McLeod, 2008).

4.6 Limitations

During this study, one of the limitations was that the students who took the survey were only 24. If the sample size were bigger, the results obtained would be even more precise. As the students, the professors' group was relatively small because not everyone had experience with beginners and/or vocabulary teaching, and some of them chose not to be part of the study.

Chapter V

Results and Discussion

In this chapter, results and findings are presented. The objectives of this study were to establish a relation between ASL and sight words, and analyze the different methods, techniques and strategies that exist to teach sight words in order to incorporate ASL in one of those methods for teaching sight words. After the data was collected through the use of quantitative and qualitative instruments, the following findings were obtained.

5.1 Qualitative Methods

Semi-structured interview

The purpose of using a semi-structured interview (SI) was to know the teachers' perceptions about the importance of vocabulary, the relation between vocabulary and reading, some of the methods, strategies and techniques they have heard or used for teaching vocabulary, their knowledge of sight words, and finally the use of sign language for learning English (see Appendix 7). Through the collection of data, five major themes were found with different subcategories for each one of them.

Vocabulary Importance

All of the teachers agreed on the fact that vocabulary is 'important' when it comes to learning a language and developing the other subskills and skills. They stated vocabulary as the most or one of the most important subskills for learning a language. Indeed, one teacher used the word paramount more than three times, which means "superior to all others" or "supreme" (Paramount, 2018). His response summarized this opinion:

> *I mean, some people said that, for example, pronunciation, the past*
>
> *allomorphs, or the third person is not as important anymore, but no one still*

> *dares to touch the importance of vocabulary, so I think it is paramount.* (SI,*
>
> Teacher 1)

Now, the perception that vocabulary is important may be considered obvious in some way. However, a subcategory obtained in the results was *the position of vocabulary compared to grammar.* The majority of teachers considered that vocabulary is more important than grammar in terms of communication. One of them mentioned *we focus too much on grammar when in terms of…communication vocabulary is more important than grammar* (SI, Teacher 3). More teachers shared an opinion that supports the previous idea:

> *If you know grammar very well, you know how to construct sentences... But, if you don't the meaning of words, then you're lost.* (SI, Teacher 2)
>
> *I agree with what Nation says… that without grammar you have little language, but without vocabulary you have no language. So I think is paramount.* (SI, Teacher 1)

One of the teachers was asked about the reason why teachers tend to pay more attention to grammar instead of vocabulary. The teacher stated the following:

> *It's because it is the traditional method. It's the only method that probably teachers they know… So that's why their main focus is grammar, when I think the most important part would be vocabulary.* (SI, Teacher 4)

The latter comment particularly connects to the idea that "traditional language teaching relied heavily on the assumption that language learning can be helped only by being taught grammar rules" (Gasparini, 2004, p. 210).

Another subcategory was *the amount of time dedicated only to teach vocabulary.* Different opinions about the amount of time teachers have dedicated to teach vocabulary

were stated, but all of them agreed that it is necessary to dedicate a part of the lesson to teach vocabulary. One teacher mentioned that *the first thing that we [teacher and students] start with is vocabulary* (SI, Teacher 4). Other opinions regarding this subcategory are stated as follows:

> *I like... depending on the level you dedicate more or I have dedicated more time for vocabulary than any other skill.* (SI, Teacher 5)

> *I always ask my students… do you have any vocabulary question? Or let's look in the dictionary, so yes, the first thing that I do is work with vocabulary.* (SI, Teacher 4)

It was essential to obtain information about the amount of time teachers dedicate to vocabulary because as Nation (2015) claimed vocabulary learning "depends on the number of meetings with each word and the quality of attention at each meeting" (p.136). Therefore, teachers should encourage students to repeatedly find different encounters with the target vocabulary by using meaningful techniques for them.

The last subcategory, which is actually connected with the previous one, was *the direct or indirect manner for teaching vocabulary.* All of the teachers agreed that none of them (vocabulary and grammar) is more important than the other, and it depends on the students' level to choose between an explicit or implicit method of teaching. Some of the opinions were the following:

> *I think you always complement things… that depends of the students' level… in a beginner level, or teaching children, you will need to go to the basic, and maybe, a lot of the direct way of teaching.* (SI, Teacher 2)

> *Well, it depends on the level, but usually with my students, they have an A2*
>
> *and probably B1 level, so it should be indirect… because usually what I use is*
>
> *a reading or a listening activity.* (SI, Teacher 4)

Another teacher also suggested that for teaching in a direct or indirect way, it also depends on the kind of vocabulary that is going to be taught. He discussed about *Cummins' theory* mentioning two terms; Basic Interpersonal Communication (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). The teacher concluded that for learning BICS *those indirect ways in which you can teach vocabulary are gonna be more useful or maybe more frequent* (SI, Teacher 1).

Of course this information is certain and helpful for the study. As the teacher mentioned, it depends on the kind of vocabulary, but also on the individuals too. Indeed, Clements-Stephens et al. (2012) suggested that for those with problems with fluency may benefit from learning implicitly through context, but those with decoding problems may need more direct and explicit instruction. As well as with sight vocabulary, ASL may need a direct and explicit instruction as well. According to Sherman (2011), teaching sign language is a process in which the educator is required to explicitly teach students the signs to have a basic understanding of them, and consequently master their use.

<u>Methods, Strategies, and Techniques for teaching Vocabulary</u>

Some of the teachers provided different methods, strategies and techniques for teaching vocabulary. All of them mentioned that it is important to consider the *types of words* that are meant to be learned, and, of course, the *level* of the students. One teacher pointed out the importance of poetry *because it [poetry] provides that meaningful contextualization in a relatively short amount of length of a text…* (SI, Teacher 1).

These are a couple of the comments that the teachers provided:

In a beginner level… you will need to go to the basic… like showing, or using visual aids, and pictures, or things like that will help the children. (SI, Teacher2)

I've used lots of methods or techniques… I've used sign language, repetition, correction, there are other ways, different ways that I've used in order to teach vocabulary in my classes at different levels. (SI, Teacher 5)

Teachers consider that for basic levels it is helpful to use visual aids. The signs used in ASL represent visual images through the movements of the hand, which is considered as kinesthetic. ASL can represent an alternative or another option for learners who want a more 'dynamic' technique. Indeed, Daniels (1994, 1996) suggested ASL as part of the multimedia methods for teaching vocabulary in a 'haptic medium' (as cited in NRP, 2000), which means related to the sense of touch because people use their hands to communicate.

Another subcategory is *creating a meaningful context*. Besides the methods and techniques, all of the teachers agreed that it is important to create a context. They reinforced the idea that is also significant to consider the students' experiences in order to *grasp new vocabulary if that vocabulary has somehow appeared in students' experiences...* (SI, Teacher 2)

There is one teacher who explained the importance of teaching vocabulary through *different contexts.* Indeed, he mentioned that he tried to create awareness in the students by mentioning that the language in the textbooks is somehow *artificial,* and they (students) also need to consider how language works in an *informal context*. That is why it is imperative to start teaching vocabulary first. These are some of the opinions that summarize the idea of setting words in a context:

> *I think like one of the things that has always ruled my teaching of vocabulary*
>
> *has been having a context in order for them to see how a certain word works*
>
> *and how they function together.* (SI, Teacher 5)

> *As long you [teacher] make and provide those meaningful contexts, I think*
>
> *that's the way you can teach vocabulary… you make cause a long time*
>
> *acquisition of the lexical item.* (SI, Teacher 1)

Sherman (2011) pointed out that one of the advantages of using ASL for teaching sight vocabulary is that it can be done in the classroom or outside, as only hands are needed. Hand movements create a mental picture which is helpful for remembering the meaning of words. Therefore, students could use this mental picture to help them remembering concepts and words to facilitate learning. Sight words can also be practiced using fingerspelling, which also helps them to enhance spelling; as they represent and associate each letter with a sign.

The Relation between Vocabulary and Reading

All of the teachers agree that there is a relation between vocabulary and reading comprehension. One of them said that *there is a direct relationship… between vocabulary and reading* because *if you [learner] don't know the basis, which has to do with words, then, it's much more difficult to understand any text* (SI, Teacher 2). In order to offer a different point of view, another teacher mentioned the opposite:

> *I think there is, of course, a relation, but most of it I think that with reading it's*
>
> *easier to acquire vocabulary… with reading is kind of like the most or the*
>
> *strongest source for us to apply more vocabulary.* (SI, Teacher 5)

As the National Reading Panel (2000) claimed, vocabulary and reading contribute to each other as vocabulary is an essential component when learning how to read, and at the

same time, the more a learner reads, the more amount of vocabulary he/she is going to acquire.

<u>Sight Words Learning</u>

None of the teachers have heard about the term sight words, so they gave different responses when the phrase *high frequency words* came out. They mentioned that the frequency of these words would vary according to the context and the community. An example of this lack of awareness is the following:

> *To be honest with you the term sight words I've never heard, it was you the first person that I heard. High frequency words, yes, high frequency words that's what I've heard.* (SI, Teacher 3)

However, with a subsequent explanation about them, teachers realized that they had taught these specific words as part of their vocabulary in the class without being aware of them. Teachers do consider that it is important to teach basic vocabulary or vocabulary that is highly repeated or used by the learners. One teacher stated:

> *Depending on the students' needs, what are their aims, what are they pursuing in a course, you will have to consider those [high frequency words].* (SI, Teacher 2)

The same teacher, who did not recognize the term *sight words,* remembered an example about how he had used *high frequency words* and phrases that helped English learners to enhance pronunciation and speaking. At the beginning, he noticed that students did not understand almost any word in English. He provided a list of common words and phrases and then, learners could communicate and hold a conversation in English.

> *I thought it may be a good idea to give them a list of words and phrases that*
> *are frequent, that we use every single day… I was worried about at least*
> *having a minimum amount of communication in English.* (SI, Teacher 3)

A subcategory in this section is the *memorization of vocabulary*. Different authors have argued that memorization is necessary for specific purposes; for example, learning basic formulas. Some others have claimed that it can be problematic for the amount of time that learners apply to memorize things, and for some students it can be difficult. In this interview, some of the teachers pointed out the importance of not *memorizing* a word, but instead applying the words in a context, working on pronunciation and connecting with previous knowledge.

> *I don't really like memorizing things because to try to memorize things by*
> *heart for me it's difficult and probably at the end in the long term, you'll*
> *forget the meaning of the words.* (SI, Teacher 4)

> *I cannot just teach them, for example, the meaning of a certain word and*
> *expect them to just memorize it, even though some people do that.* (SI,
> Teacher3)

Finally, another teacher suggested the following:

> *I think we should get back to analyzing and teaching vocabulary again… not*
> *memorize, but remember the words through sign language, through the*
> *different other sources.* (SI, Teacher 5)

The previous information is relevant to the study because according to Bowers (2011) "the purpose of sight words is to teach children to simply memorize the small words that are most commonly used in written English" (p. 17). However, there are many and useful techniques to teach them meaningfully, and one of them would be ASL. Cooper (2002)

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examined the use of sign language in children and concluded that with ASL "they [children] have additional decoding mechanisms available to them that can help them retrieve words that they have stored in memory" (p. 119). The same author also stated that sign language raises child's interest about the meaning of words and its context while it also potentiates child's phonetic awareness.

<u>The Use of ASL for hearing people:</u>

All of the teachers supported the idea of using ASL as a valuable technique by providing several and varied reasons. Three out of five teachers stated that using ASL could be *interesting* for acquiring vocabulary in a different manner. A teacher mentioned a story about a person who came to her class and taught some phrases in sign language. She pointed out that *students were very engaged.* These are some of the comments provided by the teachers:

> *I think it could be very interesting… You'll create a context, which will be remembered by the students… A well-learn that can actually take place will be significant for them because they will remember it.* (SI, Teacher 1)

> *We have to understand that our body is an extension of our brain and our minds… so when we do something with our body is easier for people to remember, so I think yes, it would help them.* (SI, Teacher 3)

One of the teachers has actually used sign language in class and at home with her kid to help him express his needs and emotions without having to yell.

> *I do remember using sign language to make the word stay like set in their brains in order for them to remember.* (SI, Teacher 5)

5.2 Quantitative Methods

Surveys

Students' opinions about vocabulary learning, sight words learning, and the use of sign language for hearers were analyzed by means of this survey (S) (see Appendices 8,9,10,11). Four categories were obtained through this instruments: techniques used for learning vocabulary, vocabulary on reading comprehension, sight words learning, and the use of Sign Language. The findings are the following:
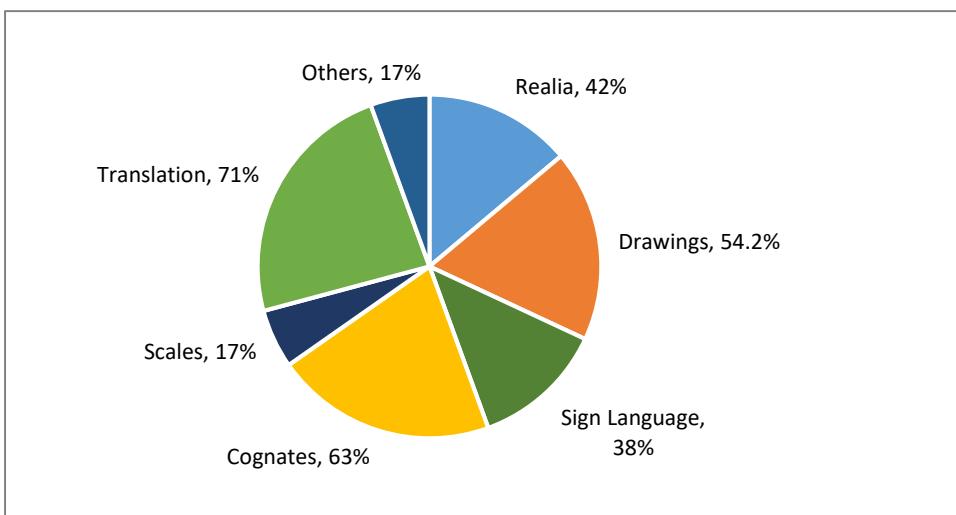
Figure 1. Techniques used for learning Vocabulary

As it can be seen in figure 1, students have chosen the techniques they have commonly used for learning vocabulary (more than one answer could have been selected). From the 24 participants, 71% have used the *translation* technique which is considered as the most selected one from these results, followed by cognates with 63%. This information indicates that students continue relying on translating the word to the first language which is not the best technique for learning a foreign language as "it [translation] forces learners to view the foreign language always through the prism of their mother tongue" (Carreres, 2006, p.5).

Sign Language has been used by the 38% of students, which indicates that some of them are familiar with it, or have utilized some signs, hand gestures, or facial expressions in their autonomous learning. However, the rest of them are unfamiliar with this technique;

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therefore, it is advisable learners should receive more instruction about sign language and its benefits.

The third technique that is the most used by the students is *drawings*. It is interesting because the use of drawings for teaching sight words is also supported by some authors (Kibby, 1989; Wise, 2017). They support the idea that drawing is contextual and helps to learn meaningfully by associating the word with its graphic representation. The same idea can be considered with sign language as well. As mentioned in the previous studies, sign language use hand movements, and those represent a mental image which helps visual learners resembling the concept of the word (Othman & Amiruddin, 2010). Indeed, ASL can help learners with different learning styles to acquire knowledge easily.

Furthermore, the fact that students have used at least more than one technique and not only translation is meaningful as they look for different ways to create significant associations through a context as one of the teachers indicated in one of the interviews. Finally, the students had the possibility to add another technique they have considered for learning vocabulary. Their answers for 'others' were related to song lyrics, movies, books, comics, and reading through context.
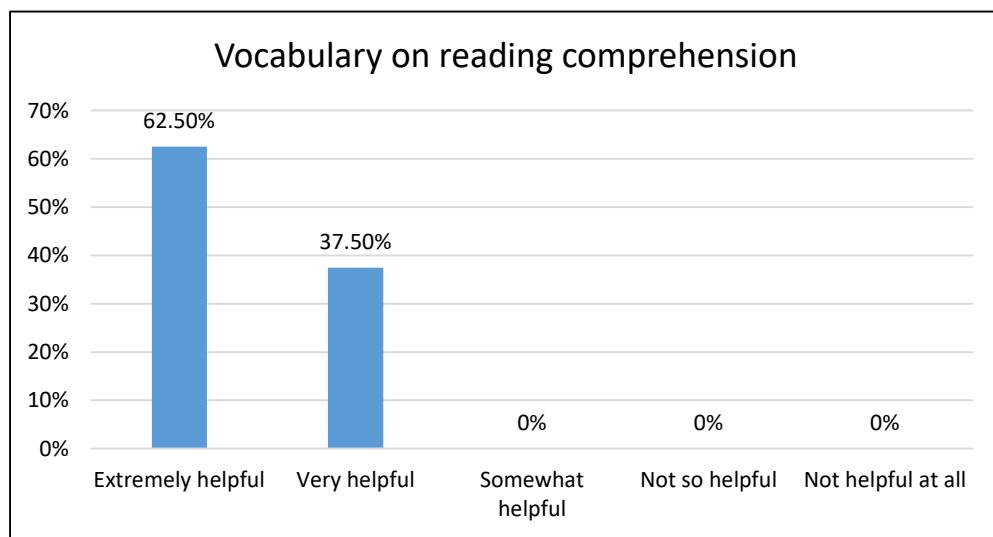
Figure 2. The importance of vocabulary on reading comprehension

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As it is indicated in figure 2, all of the students agreed somehow that vocabulary is helpful for reading comprehension. A 62.50% indicated that is "extremely helpful;" the rest of them also indicated that it is "very helpful". These results show that students consider vocabulary as important and necessary for the development of other skills and subskills. Indeed, the emphasis on teaching sight words or high frequency words can help a learner to enhance his/her reading skill as well as spelling (Bowers, 2011; Hyte, 2010; Phillips & Feng, 2012; Pikulski & Templeton, 2004; Pulido, 2007).
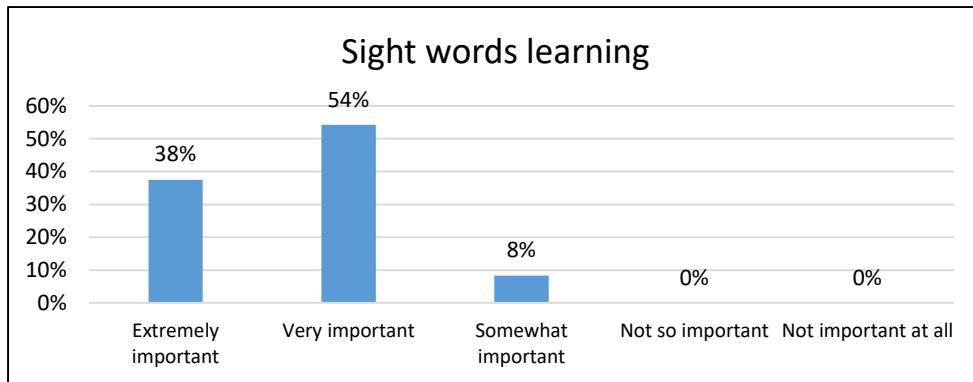
Figure 3. The importance of learning sight words for EFL learners

All of the participants considered important to learn sight words. The majority of participants agreed that the learning of sight words was "extremely important" and 38% of them "very important", which indicates that they feel that it is necessary to learn sight words because of the benefits previously mentioned.
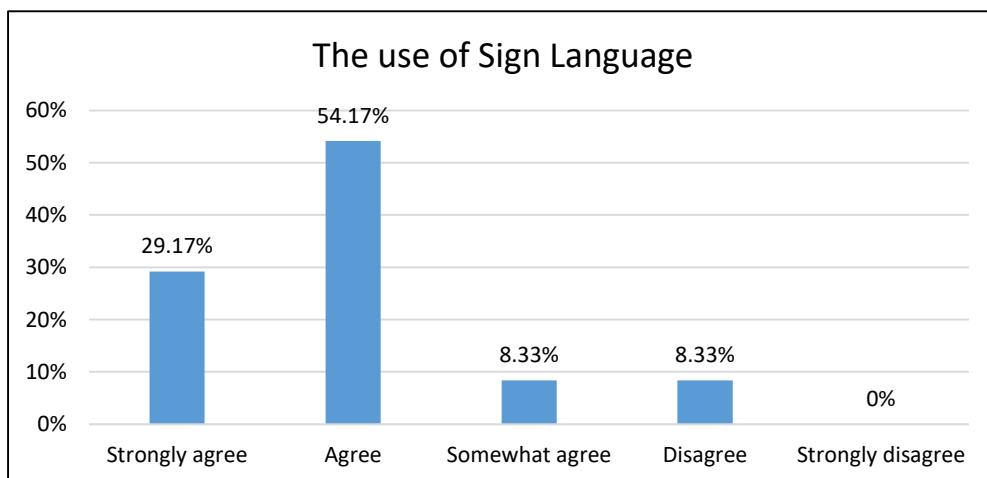
Figure 4. The use of sign language for learning sight words

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Finally, after the participants read some information about the benefits of using Sign Language by hearers presented by Sherman (2011), the majority of students "agreed", and 29.17% "strongly agreed" that ASL can be helpful for teaching sight words. This survey was helpful to support the idea of using sign language with hearing learners. The participants clearly saw the benefits of it. Of course, it is advisable to present further information about ASL to the students and possibly some activities to have a clearer understanding.

5.2.1 Qualitative analysis of the survey

The last two questions from this survey were open questions in which students were able to state their reasons in order to justify their selected answers in order to obtain deeper information. That is why it is also necessary to also analyze the last two sections qualitatively.

Sight words

As it was mentioned before, all of the students considered essential the learning of sight words in different degrees; most of them as "very important". This comment by a student summarizes their answers:

> *I think that sight words can be so useful when we are learning vocabulary because these can facilitate the comprehension, when we are reading a book and these words could be familiar for us.* (S, Student A)

As it was previously mentioned, one of the advantages of learning sight words is the enhancement of reading comprehension as these words are found in most of the textbooks (Pikulski & Templeton, 2004). However, that is not the only benefit of using these words. According to Cicerchia (2016c, 2015), sight words also help readers with dyslexia and EFL learners with difficulties in reading and spelling.

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The findings about sight words obtained from the teachers' interviews, reinforce the idea of learning these words. The majority of them considered remarkable to teach sight words (high frequency words). Even though many of them have not heard the term before, they realized that in some way, they have been using those words in their teaching without been aware of their benefits.

As well as with sight words, ASL was also considered important by the majority of students as important in different degrees. In the first section, 38% of the participants have used sign language before (see figure.1). However, after they reviewed the benefits of ASL (Sherman, 2011) presented on the survey, they were aware of the importance of ASL for hearing learners, and consequently, their answers in the last section increased. This is one of the answers mentioned by a student:

> *I agree with the sign language can be used for learning sight words because through the movements we can keep in mind easier the words, and we can associate these words with signing and will be easier to remind the meaning of the words.* (S, Student A)

The use of ASL may represent a meaningful association between the sign and the meaning of the target word (Daniels, 2001; Sherman, 2011). As it was shown in figure 1, the students are looking for meaningful techniques in order to create associations that facilitate vocabulary learning, instead of just relying on translation. ASL is simply another alternative students can have, especially if they have a visual and/or kinesthetic learning style. Indeed, a comment by another student pointed out the importance of learning vocabulary in an *implicit way*, and how certain people learn easily visually.

> *I think learning through sign language could be an excellent way to use our memory and learn vocabulary in an implicit way. Maybe it would also be*

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easier to perceive because most of us are visual learners. Images are easier to assimilate. (S. Student B)

On the other hand, two out of 24 participants "disagreed" about the idea of using ASL. These were some of the comments emitted by the students:

I disagree because the sign language is only used by deafs. (S. Student C)

Sign Language helps mainly to understand concepts and not ortography. (S. Student D)

In spite of the comment, it is necessary to mention that ASL has been used by hearing people as well and not only by hearing-impaired people (Grosjean & Lane, 1980). Moreover, in the second comment, the participant pointed out the importance of ASL for acquiring the meaning of a word but claimed that it is not helpful to enhance spelling. According to Chalnick (2015), vocabulary and spelling can be acquired through fingerspelling. This author recommends to teach students by giving them a word orally and asking them to repeat it, and fingerspell it. The answers obtained in the survey are proof that people need more instruction about ASL in order to break some myths and misunderstandings related to sign language and hearing learners. It is imperative to always remember that not every learner acquires knowledge in the same manner. The role of a teacher is to provide students with several techniques and strategies that they can make use of, and most importantly, help students to become autonomous learners who are continually looking for the best technique that fits with their necessities in learning.

In addition, there were not found contradictions in the information collected by means of different sources. Rather, the information that teachers and students provided reinforces the idea of incorporating ASL as a technique that may help learners remember words and concepts easily. This idea is supported by authors such as Barbera (2017), Brackenbury et al.

(2005), Clibbens (2001), Daniels (2009), Sherman (2011), Singleton et al. (2004), Taylor-Dileva, (2011), and Zuckerbrod (2011). These authors discuss in different ways the importance of sign language in hearing people education. Some authors emphasize how useful has been ASL for learners with Down syndrome and Autism. Some others have even applied different studies to prove that hearing people can actually learn using sign language. Moreover, the majority of students as well as all the teachers agreed that vocabulary is important, and there is a strong connection between this subskill and reading. Authors like Bowers (2011), Cicerchia (2015, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c), Phillips and Feng (2012), among others, provide several reasons why sight words learning is important for reading and spelling. Sherman (2011) has already elaborated a study linking ASL with sight words to show that each one of them is beneficial in learning, and most importantly, ASL can help to learn sight words easily. All of the students agreed that learning sight words could be beneficial to develop and improve their reading ability and spelling. Consequently, almost every student considers that ASL can be helpful to teach these lists of high frequency words.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Conclusions

Vocabulary has been one of the principal building blocks for learning a language. Despite the opinion of some authors who think that grammar is the most important component to learn a language, authors such as the NRP (2000), Richards (2012), Webb & Nation (2017), and Wilkins (1972) support vocabulary as key in learning and that without it nothing can be conveyed. Therefore, this study has been oriented to investigate about different manners of enhancing this subskill.

At the beginning of this research, the idea was to incorporate ASL in sight words teaching in an EFL context. However, during the investigation, the researcher realized that not even sight words have been taken into account to be taught at least in Ecuador. The idea of using ASL and sight words for learning English is a reality in English speaking countries. Numerous studies have been done with successful results. Both sign language and sight words have their own benefits in education. The combination of them represent a beneficial and innovative source to enhance learning as it has been showed and stated by Brackenbury et al. (2005), Clibbens (2001), Daniels (2009), Sherman (2011), among others.

American Sign Language is a complete language that incorporates physical movements to convey different ideas. Teachers, students, and different authors have agreed and supported that people can actually learn a spoken language from physical movements. It can actually improve their spelling and writing abilities in order to be more proficient in the target language. Indeed, ASL is an accurate technique for those who are kinesthetic learners.

The idea of using sign language may help not only hearing impaired people and hearing learners, but also people with different learning disabilities such as Autism and Down

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syndrome; as it has been analyzed in several studies. The use of ASL in a classroom is another way of promoting inclusive education. In this study, by means of interviews and surveys, it was found that for teachers, it is imperative to create a meaningful context for the students to learn more effectively. Students and teachers agree that sign language is an interesting and dynamic technique to incorporate in class.

Furthermore, through the investigation, it was noticed that sight words have been completely unknown in Ecuador, and through the compilation of teachers, students, and authors' opinions, it was concluded that sight words are completely necessary to be learned in our country. In fact, sight words can be beneficial for children who are starting their learning of a foreign language. It will help them to read faster as they will be able to recognize the words more quickly. Likewise, it our context it can also be beneficial for adults and teens as well. Spanish speakers have always struggled with those English words that are not written as they are spoken, as in our language we are not familiar with non-decodable words. It can actually save time. If students learn those high frequency and non-decodable words, they might use their time to learn more vocabulary and expand their lexicon. At the end, they might become proficient readers, with correct spelling and communicative abilities. Moreover, as with ASL, learners with dyslexia can also benefit from learning sight words.

Originally, the idea was for learners to memorize these words, but as memorization is not always the best technique, several strategies and methods have been developed to teach these words easily. As it was mentioned beforehand, it is important for the researcher of this study to emphasize the use of ASL as a useful technique for teachers in order to create a meaningful context for teaching sight words and learning English in general. Based on the collected information, the idea of using ASL to reach the different learning styles that are found in a classroom environment is supported meaningfully.

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Indeed, based on the gathered data, a booklet of activities using one of the methods for teaching sight words, in this case the multisensory approach, and ASL was applied. This booklet is just a sample of the several activities that can be applied for teaching a target language. Teachers should continue looking for more information and activities that might engage their students to continue learning the language and most importantly to become independent learners who are willing to look for knowledge.

6.2. Recommendations

As it was revealed, this study allowed the researcher to find out that teachers and students are not aware of what sight words are nor even their benefits in education. Therefore, it is recommended to promote further investigation about sight words and hopefully teach them in the Ecuadorian educational system.

The use of sign language for hearing learners has also proved to be beneficial. Inclusive education is a reality in Ecuador, so the different authorities in the educational institutions need to continue looking for innovative ways of supporting and incorporating students with special needs in the regular system, instead of separating them. Thus, the use of ASL has helped learners with Autism, Down syndrome, and hearing learners to acquire the target language successfully while engaging them in a dynamic and entertaining process.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. - DIRECTOR'S INFORMED CONSENT

Cuenca, 06 de junio de 2018

Magíster
Esteban Heras Urgilés
DIRECTOR DE LA CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA
Presente

De mi consideración:

Luego de expresarle un cordial saludo solicito a usted, muy comedidamente, el respectivo permiso para que el estudiante **DIEGO EMILIO ORDÓÑEZ ABRIL** con número de cédula 0105664122, alumno del noveno ciclo de la carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Cuenca, pueda aplicar su propuesta de titulación: **"The Use of ASL as a Tool for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners"**, en la carrera que acertadamente dirige.

La propuesta consiste en aplicar encuestas y entrevistas tanto a estudiantes como a docentes con el propósito de cumplir con su requisito de graduación.

Agradeciéndole por la favorable acogida que brinde al presente, suscribo,

Atentamente,

Lcda. Verónica León, Mgs.
DOCENTE DE LA CARRERA

Recibido
02 junio-2018

Aprobado

Diego Ordóñez Abril

Universidad de Cuenca

Appendix 2. - STUDENT'S INFORMED CONSENT

<div align="center">

CARRERA DE LENGUA Y LITERATURA INGLESA

CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO DE PARTICIPACIÓN

</div>

Título de la investigación: "The Use of ASL as a Tool for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners."

Investigador: Diego Ordóñez

Estimado participante:

En mi calidad de estudiante de la Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa, de la Universidad de Cuenca, previo a la obtención del título de Licenciado, como parte de los requisitos del Programa debo llevar a cabo un proyecto de investigación. El mismo trata sobre la posible incorporación de American Sign Language (ASL) en la enseñanza de sight words a aprendices con un nivel de inglés A1.

Esta investigación tiene como objetivo incorporar ASL en uno de los métodos existentes para la enseñanza de sight words.

Esta investigación ha sido previamente autorizada por el Consejo Directivo de la Facultad de Filosofía de la Universidad de Cuenca. Es importante mencionar que el proceso y la información obtenido a través de este estudio será mantenido bajo estricta confidencialidad. Su nombre no será utilizado en ningún informe cuando los resultados de la investigación sean publicados. Además, el estudio no conlleva ningún riesgo ni se verá afectado ningún tipo de evaluación a lo largo de la investigación. De igual manera está en pleno derecho de escoger ser partícipe o no de esta investigación o retirarse cuando lo considere necesario.

<div align="center">

Autorización

</div>

Yo, _____, estudiante del segundo ciclo de la Carrera de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa, he leído esta información y estoy de acuerdo con participar en la investigación. Firma:_____ (del participante) Cédula de Identidad: _____ Fecha: _____ Firma: _____ (investigador)

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Appendix 3. - TEACHER'S INTERVIEW

SEMI – STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

1. How important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other subskills and skills?

   a. Why? / Why not?

2. Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension: Explain the relationship.

3. Have you normally dedicated a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary?

   a. Why? / Why not?

   b. Strategies and Methods

   c. Activities

4. Which do you think is an appropriate method or technique for teaching vocabulary?

   a. Why?

   b. Have you applied it?

5. What do you know about sight words or also called high frequency words?

6. Do you think sign language can be useful for teaching vocabulary to hearing people?

   a. Why? / Why not?

   b. In which aspects can be beneficial for learning?

7. Do you think the educational institutions in Cuenca offer enough vocabulary teaching to the students?

   a. Why? / Why not?

8. Any other relevant information related to the study.

   a. Experiences

   b. Recommendations

   c. Others

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Appendix 4. - STUDENT'S SURVEY (SAMPLE)

Demographic Information:

Age: _____   Female: _____Male: _____

The Use of Sign Language for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners.

Vocabulary learning:

1.   From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

_____ Realia (real objects)
_____ Drawings
_____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
_____ Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
_____ Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
_____ Translation
Others: _____.

2.   How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

_____ Extremely helpful
_____ Very helpful
_____ Somewhat helpful
_____ Not so helpful
_____ Not at all helpful

Sight words:

Sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling (Bowers, 2011). Learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his/her efforts on new words (Primm et al., n.d.).

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall*, among others.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

_____ Extremely important
_____ Very important
_____ Somewhat important
_____ Not so important
_____ Not at all important

State your reason:

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Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has also been used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.

- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.

- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples:

house   date

4. Do you agree that **sign language** can be used for learning **sight words**?

_____ Strongly agree
_____ Agree
_____ Somewhat agree
_____ Disagree
_____ Strongly disagree

State your reason:

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Appendix 5. – FIRST PILOTING (SURVEY)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: 19

Female: X

Male: _____

Mark with an "X" the following:

1. Do you think vocabulary is an essential subskill for learning English?

   Yes ● ____

   No ____

2. How helpful do you think vocabulary is for enhancing or improving the reading and speaking skills?

   Extremely helpful _____
   Very helpful ● ____
   Somewhat helpful _____
   Not so helpful _____
   Not at all helpful _____

3. Do you think vocabulary should be taught as a separate section in class?

   Yes ● ____

   No ____

4. Do you think that teachers should consider daily use words in their teaching?

   Yes ● ____

   No ____

STUDENT'S SURVEY
Ranking Scale Survey

Please rank from 1 to 5 the following tools for learning vocabulary in order of interest, in which 1 is the most useful and 5 is the least useful:

   1 Flashcard (Cardboard with a picture and a word written on it)
   3 Sign Language (Gestures, Body movement, Facial expressions)
   2 Technology (Apps, Videos, etc.)
   4 Senses (Visual, Auditory, Physical Movement, Tact)
   5 Games (Electronic, Physical)

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Appendix 6. – SECOND PILOTING (SURVEY)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: _____   Female: _____   Male: _____

Vocabulary learning:

1. From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

_____ Realia (real objects)
_____ Drawings
_____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
_____ Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
_____ Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
_____ Translation
Others: _____

2. How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

Extremely helpful _____
Very helpful _____
Somewhat helpful _____
Not so helpful _____
Not at all helpful _____

[handwritten: Alinear los espacios para responder]

Sight words:

According to Bowers (2011), sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling. According to Primm et al. (n.d.), learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his /her efforts on new words.

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall,* etc.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

Extremely important _____
Very important _____
Somewhat important _____
Not so important _____
Not at all important _____

State your reason:

[handwritten: más espacio para responder]

[handwritten left margin: más sangría]

[handwritten: Alinear los espacios para responder]

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Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has been also used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.
- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.
- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples: house   date

4. Do you agree that **sign language** can be used for learning **sight words**?

Strongly agree   _____   *Aumentar un poco la sangría.*
Agree   _____
Somewhat agree   _____
Disagree   _____
Strongly disagree   _____

State your reason:

Mas espacio

Appendix 7. – TRANSCRIPTS (SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS)

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Teacher 1 (22:25 minutes)

Interviewer: OK. The first question is how important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other subskills and skills in English?

Teacher 1: All right, I agree with what Nation says. He mentioned that without grammar you have little language, but without vocabulary you have no language. So I think is paramount, OK, you need vocabulary. Now there is a tendency towards international English in which has caused a kind of neglecting, if you will, of accuracy, but still vocabulary continues to be paramount. I mean, some people said that, for example pronunciation, the past allomorphs, or the third person is not as important anymore, but no one still dares to touch the importance of vocabulary, so I think it is paramount. Am, now but it has to be balanced. You can, you have to develop them in harmony with the rest, but in my opinion, is paramount. It is still the greatest one because you need it as a basis for the development of all the other skills.

Interviewer: For example, how you can relate the vocabulary subskill with the other skills? For example, reading.

Teacher 1: You need vocabulary to understand reading. You need vocabulary to understand writing. So it is the basis of everything, and at the same time it gives you an advantage and a disadvantage. The disadvantage is that without vocabulary you can't do pretty much, you can't do anything. But, at the same time, the fact that it is connected with the other skills, allows you to work on vocabulary from many different perspectives. You can work it with a reading, with a listening, with speaking activities; you are developing vocabulary. So it's the basis of everything. Maybe that the connection is less evident in terms on grammar, but in the same way, you need vocabulary to apply the rules, to make the infinite number of performances that Chomsky talks about.

Interviewer: OK. Well, the second question was about the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. The third question would be have you normally dedicated a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary?

Teacher 1: Well, I don't teach EFL classes, so I really don't really have on it. But, what I have seen or have been able to observe is that in every lesson there is a part that is devoted to vocabulary when you have EFL classes. It doesn't matter if it is a grammar class, a reading class, there is always one element that deals with vocabulary. So, yes, in most classes, in not all of them, there is a section in which you just focus on vocabulary.

Interviewer: And you know some strategies and methods, or maybe activities for teaching vocabulary?

Teacher 1: Well, there are at least sixteen ways in which you can teach vocabulary. This is something you learned in your TEFL class. You can rest just by context. That is the most common one. You can also work with scales, groups of words, family of words for example, antonyms, synonyms, acronyms, eponyms, homonyms that you already know, so there are many ways you can relate them. Now, the basis of vocabulary acquisition is what Nation in his 2005 article mentions. He says that for a person to learn vocabulary, it is imperative to have meaningful encounters with a word. You have to find a word in different contexts, in different times, and then, they have to be meaningful. In other words, to teach vocabulary you need to involve students' personalities, backgrounds, that's the perfect

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way to do so. In my personal experience, I have taught vocabulary and, well, one of the outcomes of writing poetry has been data vocabulary, precisely, because poetry provides that meaningful contextualization in a relatively short length of a text. So, there a many ways of teaching vocabulary, personally I have worked with poetry, but the emphasis should be giving and providing those meaningful encounters with the word. That's the way we naturally acquire a word. We find them in different contexts, and the important is that they have to mean something for the student. They have to arouse the students' interests, and they have to develop it from it. So, the idea as well is there has to be complemented with the use of a word. Students need to learn, internalize, and then use it to make it their own.

Interviewer: For example, which do you think would be better? Because there are like two ways for teaching or for learning vocabulary which would be an indirect and a direct way. For example, indirect would be to, am, learn something else or for example…

Teacher 1: Yeah while learning vocabulary. I mean, it all depends on the lexical item percept. For example, if you're gonna learn verbs, I don't know, such as acquit for example, you can provide the indirect way. Right? But, for example, with transition words such as therefore, however, notwithstanding, then, am, because of matters of time that teachers have, that direct instruction can be beneficial. You can use it to avoid confusion. I had a teacher who would actually sponsored translation in those cases. For example, you can explain the meaning of therefore four times, three times, but, then, it's gonna be difficult for students to grasp it because it is a difficult word. So, sometimes he said you have to recur just directly to translation. So that direct way or indirect way will depend on the nature of the word as well, and how much background students have. If you don't have a little background, how can you explain indirectly the word? They are not gonna get it. Right? So, it will depend on each situation.

Interviewer: Question number four would be which do you think, ah talking about these methods or techniques for teaching vocabulary, would be the most appropriate one for teaching?

Teacher 1: It all depends on the context, on the level. All depends on the kind of vocabulary you wanna do. For example, taking it from Cummins' theory between BICS and CALP. BICS being Basic Interpersonal Communication. Then, those indirect ways in which you can teach vocabulary are gonna be more useful or maybe more frequent. But, if you develop the Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency, then, teaching vocabulary for those purposes is gonna be more difficult. However, in both cases, both interpersonal communication and academic purposes, if you will. I think, the provision of contexts is paramount. You need to teach words in context. Being it scale, being it the work of word families that we talked you about; you need to provide context. You cannot just start with a class and say, well, these are the words we are gonna learn today, and then, the list… you need to learn by yourself the list at the back of the book. For EFL purposes, or ESL purposes, that is not appropriate. You need to provide context. Now, ah, you need to match that with the student's personal use of the word. OK. Students, they need to use the words that the lexical items that they are learning to make them their own. Now, my personal experience says that that works when students can produce a text that they can call their own; that matters for them. OK. If you ask them to write about their weekend, or you ask them to write about, I don't know, somebody else's weekend, or about the costumes of the United States, or whatever. Something they don't really care about, they can write it, they can use the word in context, but that text won't matter to them. OK. In my experience, when you write something that is your own, something that matters to you, that would help you, actually, learn the word. Well, many, one author, that is called Scrivener or Silverstein says that when you learn vocabulary sometimes you need to be startled by the innovative use of a word. I mean, you need to be

surprised by how the word has been used, or maybe surprised about something you didn't know before. Maybe that it belongs to a part of speech that you were not aware about before, and then, that would make you remember with more strength if you will the word. That's what again, I said that creating writing, or reading, or summarizing creative texts, it's a very good way to learn vocabulary. So, as long as you make and provide those meaningful contexts, those meaningful uses of the word, I think that's the way you can teach vocabulary, pretty, pretty, with the security you may cause a long time acquisition of the lexical item. And again, you need to promote he recycle, you need to promote different uses of the word, and going recycling them, you know, building on top of them. So you don't teach them Monday and then you forget about it for the rest of the semester. You need to promote those encounters with the word that will cause students to reuse them and to find them in a different way.

Interviewer: Now, for example, talking about different types of, or different uses for vocabulary, what can you tell me about sight words or also called high frequency words?

Teacher 1: Well, it will all depend on… on the type of English are talking about, of course, and the type of, as we know, you already studied with me, the kind of, the origin of those words. You know that, the more frequent words would be the Germanic words, but students really don't care about it. They will just see that they appear often, and one way in which you can work with them is in terms of… working in pairs. How words relate to another? With what specific word that word will appear in what context more often, well, that is, they are not cognates specifically. I don't remember the specific name of it right now, but that is the idea that you have words that usually appear in pairs, and that will give them frequency. For example, you don't "make your bed", you "do your bed", and that construction "do" and "bed" creates a unit that acquires more frequency than the rest. And there are specific words, obviously, that are more frequent than others, and that will depend also in idiosyncratic and matters of purpose. OK. Going back to Basic Interpersonal Communication and the other one, the Academic, well, the frequency of words in those contexts was very, and as well, it will depend on the expectations of the academic or the speech community that you're gonna be dealing with. Each speech community has its own expectations, and the frequency of words in those speech communities will very. But, however, there are tendencies that will be maintained throughout the language.

Interviewer: OK. And how important do you think would be, for, in the case of English as Second Language learners would be for them to acquire or to learn this basic vocabulary that they tend to use every day or they find them every day in textbooks for example.

Teacher 1: How important it is for them?

Interviewer: how important…

Teacher 1: but, the… ah OK I don't understand your question, can you restate it?

Interviewer: OK. The question would be how important is for the teacher to consider these words in the lesson plan, for example, to consider the words that students use in their daily lives or for example common words that students tend to find in the textbooks.

Teacher 1: Yeah, I think it is very important for the teacher to consider that. However it will depend on the purposes of their teaching. You cannot build the class on words that are unknown for the students, otherwise, your class won't progress. But at the same time you cannot be stuck on the same words, 'cause students… even though we talked about the need of recycling, you need to build on top of that. OK. You need to use those basic words. Yes. You need to have a strong emphasis on it, but

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also build on them, not just focus on those basic words. And again, it will all depend on the purposes of your teaching, and the level of your students, and what it is that you want to acquire with them.

Interviewer: OK.

Teacher 1: Oh sorry. Accomplish.

Interviewer: Well, question number six would be: do you think sign language can be useful for teaching vocabulary to hearing people specifically?

Teacher 1: To… with hearing-impaired people?

Interviewer: Not hearing-impaired.

Teacher 1: I mean, for people without a disability.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Teacher 1: Well, I think it is… I have never used it. I am not really acquainted with it, but based on the premise on motivation, and meaningful encounters that we talked about, I think it could be very interesting. Because you will create a situation. You'll create a context, which will be remembered by the students. Students will be involved in a meaningful situation. A well-learn that can actually take place will be significant for them because they will remember it. So I think yes, even though I don't know any sign language. I have never used it. Based on the premise of those meaningful encounters with the words again, I think it can be useful. You can definitely use it. Now, you have to be very careful, and not to cause confusion or frustration in your students. Each class is different, so there may be students who simply just doesn't get sign language, and maybe he won't like sign language. So, basing your teaching of vocabulary solely on that that can be dangerous. You can… you can do that with any technique. You need to vary, to add variety, but of course, if you can put sign language forward as an alternative or as one of the options, I'm sure it can be helpful. Ahh, because of the development of those meaningful contexts in which learning can actually take place.

Interviewer: Do you think the educational institutions in Cuenca offer enough vocabulary teaching to the students?

Teacher 1: Well, I… You mean, educational like in high school?

Interviewer: Yeah, it could be high schools, schools or in the case, in our context, in the university too.

Teacher 1: Well, I think that there is not explicit direct instruction that we were talking about. That you take vocabulary learning for granted, and sometimes, especially in advanced levels, there is a tendency to just assume that students will get the word, or maybe they should've gotten the word. So, in my perspective, I just assume that at the level my students are, they have to know certain words. Sometimes I think there's a lack of attention towards those… that possibility of students not really getting, or not really knowing what I expect them to know. So, there is, somehow, an inatten… especially in higher levels, an inattention to that direct instruction of that awareness. However, that doesn't mean that student… teachers are not focused or they are not concerned about vocabulary acquisition, but they do it more in an indirect way, and sometimes without even realizing it. Now, in high school level I think, or in elementary school, especially at the first level, there is more emphasis on it. For example, ah, I don't know, all through elementary school, maybe the first four years, vocabulary just the basis, having them learn vocabulary; how to say something in English, I don't know, the colors, professions, etc. That's the basis of their learning

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Interviewer: Yes.

Teacher 1: As they progress you develop other skills, and then, vocabulary takes kind of a background position. Right, you are developing something else, but at the same time, you need to rest that on vocabulary. So there is an inattention, maybe, to the direct instruction, but that doesn't mean that it won't be as important as teachers don't think about it at least, or consider those possibilities. One of the ways you do that is in planning the potential weaknesses and strengths of their lesson plan. When you do that, you need to consider, well, maybe I want to apply this reading, or this listening, but what about if the students don't know this or this word. Right. Your careful planning will call your attention towards that. The potential drop backs that you may have in terms of vocabulary.

Interviewer: And maybe to also keep in mind that for example English, contrary as Spanish, for example, is not a complete decodable language because in Spanish we can decode each word because we write as we…

Teacher 1: Yeah, yeah, the difference or the problem when you have… in terms of spelling, can be very problematic. However, Spanish speakers, we do have an advantage that we share the same alphabet. Now, there are different approaches that you can teach that based on maybe… I've seen people do that especially in some high schools here I think in "Salesianas" or "Catalinas" they teach phonics. Right, and that give would you an idea of how to deal with those spelling and pronunciation issues. However, from my perspective, or my experience, I've seen that again, teachers take it for granted and those differ… those problematic pronunciations things, for example the difference between "cough" and "gage" or "laugh", which are, especially "gage" and "laugh", which are…in which you have the same vowel cluster, right? The "a" and the "u" which is… which we don't directly instruct on that, but we just… students will just get it subconsciously maybe, or in an indirect way. They realize like that's the way these words should be pronounced and then just memorize that without sometimes understanding a possible underlying rule.

Interviewer: Mmhmm…

Teacher 1: For example, there is this rule in phonics that says "e" before "i" with the centrum of "c", right, that you have to write even though the sound is that "long E" you have the "e" and the "i" and in most of the cases "i" will precede the "e", except when you have "c" before like in "receive" or "conceive"; in other contexts, you have that "i" precedes the "e". But I've never been taught on that, I simply learned. OK. In "receive" I have to put the "e" first, but I don't understand that there is a rule behind it. OK. Maybe if you approach that in terms of the rule and decoding, that can be helpful, but the way we do that, at least in our context, is just by exposing students to words, and hoping that they we'll get it. I see the same vowels, I see "a" and "u" in "laugh", and this is "sheep A", and then I see the same vowels in gage which is an "a" of airplane, a "long A", right? I don't instruct. I don't teach what's the rule behind it. Maybe in most of the cases in English as well there's no rule behind it. Right. That brings… that causes it again an emphasis and importance of the teacher's modally. Teachers, they have to provide a good model in order for students to grasp those spelling and pronunciation contradictions if you will. If you don't have the teacher that provides a good model, then students are doomed. You're not directly teaching the rule behind spelling but… and you are providing a bad model, so they are not gonna be able to get it that easily. But, at the same time, you have to consider that now students have more access to real-life English than they did before, so there are possibilities in which they can learn or they can acquire the correct pronunciation and the correct writing just by themselves. Now there are more possibilities, but now there's always the danger the students provide terrible modelling for them, and that can actually diminish their possibilities of real acquisition. So there is, in terms of spelling… I think we just give the model and hope for the best.

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Interviewer: OK teacher. Any other comments or information that you want to share with us?

Teacher 1: OK. In terms of vocabulary acquisition is a very a… if you will versatile… area of English teaching. However, I do think that in any way you can approach that, creating those repeated meaningful encounters with the lexical items; it's… it's crucial. You can't teach vocabulary like we are used to. OK? "Window" means "ventana", "puerta" "door", and there's no context there. OK, and students they don't use it, or if they use it they use it as something it won't matter to them. Not meaningful for them… There is not meaning for it, and they will forget eventually. Creating those meaningful encounters will promote long-term acquisition and, and retention.

Interviewer: Thank you teacher

Teacher 2 (15:53 minutes)

Interviewer: Well, the first question is how important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other subskills and skills in English? Why do you think is important?

Teacher 2: Well, I can say that vocabulary is one of the most important subskills I would say because you know, if you know grammar very well, you know how to construct sentences, you know how to make sentences. But, if you don't the meaning of words, then you're lost. If you know how master or how expert you might be at grammar but if you don't know a random wide range of vocabulary, then it's sort of useless. So from that point of view I would say that vocabulary. Even, if you don't know how to construct sentences… I'm not saying that grammar is bad, OK. I'm just trying to show up the importance. Even, if you don't know how to construct a sentence, by using one word or a few words, you might make yourself understood. So, for purposes of communication I think vocabulary is very, very important. Yes.

Interviewer: For example, do you consider that there is a relation between vocabulary and reading comprehension? For example.

Teacher 2: Oh, absolutely, yeah. First thing, yeah, well, especially to get the main idea is to… to get to know the main words I would say, or the key words. 'Cause if you don't know them, it would be much more difficult to get the main idea. Although, you can infer many of them, but if you don't know the basis, which has to do with words, then, it's much more difficult to understand any text.

Interviewer: So, can you tell me if you have normally dedicated a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary as a separate topic?

Teacher 2: Well, that depends of the class you teach. You know, I teach writing, so… but yeah we do have… in writing also you do have to teach vocabulary. If you start thinking of topics, for example, like, my favorite place. Then you'll need to dedicate some time to model that vocabulary though, maybe, another text which talks about different spaces, sites or different elements, you know of… different places. So, somehow you do teach vocabulary. I will say in a more indirectly way, than, when you do teach reading or writing. I'm just relating to my experience of teaching writing.

Interviewer: Yes, of course.

Teacher 2: But you do teach vocabulary in that way through context by showing other texts that would model… would be like examples for students to follow, you know, when they need to write their own texts. So, how they would grasp some of the vocabulary from the model or the example in the texts.

Interviewer: Now, you mentioned that there are, for example, you mentioned the direct way to teach vocabulary. There is also an indirect way, an implicit way of teaching, which one would you consider is the best one? If both are necessary, or not? What do you think about that?

Teacher 2: Yeah, we would have to look what researchers have said about indirect or direct way of teach, which one works best, or which one is more effective. Am, but I think you always complement things. It's difficult to set up situations like black and white, this is good, and this is bad.

Interviewer: Of course.

Teacher 2: So from that point of view, I would say that they complement very well. So, for example, and also that depends of the students' level, also, you know, ah in a beginner level, or teaching children, you will need to go to the basic, and maybe, a lot of the direct way of teaching like showing,

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or using visual aids, and pictures, or things like that will help the children. So, and it's very focused on the words you teach them, so that also has to do with levels. So, I would say that it depends of the situation, your teaching situation, but I would use both. I wouldn't define one as better as the other one.

Interviewer: It depends on…

Teacher 2: Yes, It depends on the situation.

Interviewer: Now, also, you were mentioning some of the methods, strategies, or techniques for teaching vocabulary. Which one would you consider the most appropriate, or which one do you like the best to use in classes?

Teacher 2: I like to start with the students' experiences. So, I try to think what students know in their own language. What experiences they have gone through, and from that experiences it's easier to grasp new vocabulary if that vocabulary have somehow appeared in students' experiences. So, they can relate first to their own experiences, and then relate to the second or foreign language. Because sometimes we as teachers can make mistakes like showing these… ah wonderful… I'm not saying that they are not good, but I'm saying these wonderful strange experiences from other countries that students had no idea. So, when you're trying to teach through very different situations than students' experiences, I think, even though you're trying to show something, to teach some content… am different contents, somehow indirectly you're making it more difficult because there's no connection with students' experiences. So, when there is no connection, it's difficult to make that click, that association. So, I would suggest that the first to think is in students' experiences; start from their experiences, and relate to that experiences, somehow adapting the situation you're teaching. But, I would say that's a start, and then, you know, vocabulary requires a lot practice as anything in any language, but especially vocabulary, if you use the words you teach all the time, somehow you provide students opportunities to use them all the time, they eventually will be learned. Because sometimes that also happens to teachers, it has happened to me. You teach a unit, and you forget all about that unit, and then you start doing something else, ─I'm perhaps exaggerating─ by the end of the semester maybe the students don't remember the vocabulary you taught in unit one because you have not provide opportunities to use those words again and again, over and over, or at least look at them somehow through readings or something. So, it's easier to say, it's difficult to apply, but that's something we as teachers must… should consider I think.

Interviewer: You also consider that it's important to create, for example, associations between… like to use a tool in order for students to enhance their learning of this target word, for example, in order to have a meaningful learning.

Teacher 2: Yes, yes.

Interviewer: And talking about also these tools for learning. Have you ever considered or do you think sign language can be useful for teaching vocabulary to hearing people particularly?

Teacher 2: Yeah, well, one time… I have not used silent language or I mean, you know for people who have difficulties of hearing, that's what you meant… ah sign language, sign language. But one time, I remember one of those… one person who could not hear got into my classroom, and ask for permission; and taught a few signs like I lo… how to say "I love you", how to say "good morning" , basic greetings, things like that. Students were very engaged, he took like five or ten minutes to teach few phrases, I don't remember very well. From that little experience I thought, I may need to start learning this somehow because students get engaged and it's a different way, another way to teach

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vocabulary, so you might use it. But to be honest, that's the only time I have thought about that. It's there, am… waiting to be discovered I would say (laughs) in my case.

Interviewer: That's interesting because also sign language, it also uses or incorporates body language, and the facial expressions, also signs, and I think many students or people in general we use our body to communicate…

Teacher 2: Oh no, absolutely oh yes, yes… absolutely.

Interviewer: Now, our next question would be, what do know about the use of sight words? Have you heard about them? They're also called high frequency words.

Teacher 2: High frequency words?

Interviewer: Yes that we use in our daily life.

Teacher 2: Yeah, I have heard about them, and I know there is a… I have read it somewhere, like the expression "I know" or "you know" is one of the most used expressions in the world, I mean, thinking of English. So I have heard of high frequency words. I cannot tell you which ones they are, but, yes, I have heard of them. People usually used them all the time.

Interviewer: And do you consider that teachers should pay more attention to these words that students, of course, they may have encounters with these words, for example, in textbooks?

Teacher 2: Yeah, that depends on the text… of the discourse you're using. You know. In verbal communication, you might have different high frequency expressions or words, but in text, in an academic text you might have other frequency… other frequent words with a high frequency appearance. So, the same, depending on the students' needs, what are their aims, what are they pursuing in a course? You will have to consider those. Could be as I said, the ones that appear most of the time in verbal communication or written one, and in different areas. Yes.

Interviewer: For example, in the different sight words that we have, well, we have two groups of words, the decodable words which are words that, for example, the same as in Spanish, they are written as they are spoken, but in the case of these sight words, they are words that cannot be decoded because they are not written in the same way as they are spoken.

Teacher 2: Oh, OK.

Interviewer: So that's why we… teachers, for example in the U.S., they consider these as a separate topic in order to teach students these words by heart.

Teacher 2: By heart…

Interviewer: Yes.

Teacher 2: How do you call them again?

Interviewer: Sight words, because you learn them by sight. Now, do you think that educational institutions, I mean universities, high schools, schools in Cuenca offer enough vocabulary teaching to students?

Teacher 2: Well, that's a difficult question to answer. It's a… I wouldn't like to dare to say that they do or they don't. You will have to go through a lot of researching in order to answer with certainty something like that. I would say I'm sure there's always a way to improve… ah the thing are not perfect, so therefore, you know, I'm sure things can be done much better.

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Interviewer: For example, from your experience as a teacher, do you consider in your case, in the case of your colleagues, have they consider vocabulary?

Teacher 2: Perhaps, you know, we concentrate on our classes like, if it's a reading class, a grammar class, a writing class, if it's phonetics, if it's this and that… And sometimes we may take for granted that students know students know the vocabulary when they don't. So, perhaps from that point of view… It's just an opinion I mean that doesn't mean it's true, as I said we have to research on that, but perhaps sometimes we take for granted that students know a lot of vocabulary when they don't so… perhaps we should also deal with that a little bit, and think about teaching vocabulary, or focusing on vocabulary more often. Especially at the school here in our major. You know.

Interviewer: Of course. Is there any comment, or idea you wanna share with us?

Teacher 2: Well… I don't know… maybe, sometimes thinking of vocabulary, and since that requires a lot of memory, students can think of different learning strategies like matching, or using flashcards, using flashcards and on the other side there's the word, little games like tearing up words, and pictures, some sort of games like that might help them remember words also. It would help them focus on specific vocabulary that they are dealing with, perhaps. So, just thinking of ways of memorizing words, because one thing is that you teach a word and another thing is that students memorize the word, and another thing is that the students actually produce the word. So I will say that these three stages… I may say as a teacher, OK they already taught this vocabulary since you know, but there's these process of memorizing first the words, and then producing the words. So, perhaps teaching students some learning strategies like the few ones I mentioned or others. There are many many… Rebecca Oxford is an expert on that… of teaching learning strategies… we'll give students a tool to becoming independent a little bit and learn vocabulary, or practice vocabulary in a more conscious way… I would say that… and good luck with your research.

Interviewer: Thank you teacher. That's it.

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Teacher 3 (22:49 minutes)

Interviewer: The first question is how important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other subskills and skills in English?

Teacher 3: I think vocabulary is very, very, very important. When we talk about vocabulary we don't only talk about obviously isolated words but phrases, and sometimes called chunks, and actually it is advisable to learn phrases, chunks of the language, so I think yeah. Some scholars, researchers they think that vocabulary is even more important than grammar, and as you know grammar has been the major element, the major focus of English or any language teaching so I think it's very, very important. We teachers don't realize how important it is, that's what I think, we focus too much on grammar when in terms of, obviously it depends on what the goals and the objectives are, right? I'm talking about communication, in terms of communication vocabulary is more important than grammar, I agree with that and we can see examples of that everywhere. If we go to the beach for example, or other tourist places, we can see that people who never took English courses or lessons they have learned to communicate with native speakers, their grammar is bad but they communicate because they've learned vocabulary by listening and by talking to them, so I think it's very, very important.

Interviewer: And now talking about the different skills in English, do you think for example there is a relationship, is there any relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension, the reading skill? Is there any relationship between these two, this subskill and this skill?

Teacher 3: Yes, there is because in order for you to comprehend what you read you gotta be able to know some words, some basic words, is that what you're asking?

Interviewer: Yes.

Teacher 3: If in order to understand what I'm reading vocabulary is necessary.

Interviewer: Of course, yeah. My question was how vocabulary can, if it can improve or enhance reading for example?

Teacher 3: In many ways, in many ways and it goes back to my previous idea. It applies to reading too because when you know basic vocabulary you can learn other subskills like for example guessing, a word in context, and trying to guess what a word means according to the context. The more you know, the more you… obviously have to be able to read, the more you know the more you can comprehend what you read so, yeah, the two vocabulary and reading comprehension, go hand in hand, you cannot separate the two, that's what I think.

Interviewer: OK, and have you normally dedicated in your classes a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary?

Teacher 3: Yes, I have in a different way though. Lately, in the last I would say two or three years, one of my main focus of teaching has been an area of linguistics that's called pragmatics and sociolinguistics which, of course, has to do with communication with real language, so what I do is I try to, at the beginning I try to raise awareness that in students of the fact that in many textbooks they have a type of language that is so called artificial, it's not real as some people say it's not real, I wouldn't say it's not real, it is real but only in the context of teaching student, what we don't have in textbooks is other possibilities, other examples of how people use language in informal context for example. So what I do is, first, I try to raise awareness and hopefully that makes students more curious because some students say "well, I know English I know my grammar, I know my

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vocabulary, I can communicate with my teacher perfectly and he's a native speaker so I don't have any problem", and then they try to talk about something else, something that is not related to their studies and then they don't succeed, so, first, I try to raise awareness, and then I try to focus my teaching on language function, in pragmatics that's called speech acts, OK language function, right? So first I give them a function, for example how to invite someone, in terms of inviting for example how would you invite someone, and then right away I realized that their pragmatic ability is not very well developed, meaning that what they know is not enough for all the possibilities of the different contexts where they may, which they may have.

Interviewer: So you try to create a context for the students to learn how to use English in daily life situations for example.

Teacher 3: Exactly, exactly. So for example I ask them, this is the situation you have to invite someone, you have to ask someone out, I use that a lot and I notice that in most cases the kind of language that they would use would not be appropriate and I actually gave the same situation to native speakers and I showed them the answers and they realized, they said oh wow I was being too abroad, or I was being too direct, or I was beating too much around the bush, and things like that. So what I try to do is I give them a set of possibilities if you will and then I test them on which type of possibilities would be more appropriate for specific context, so I don't really, well obviously I do test in the meaning of some words, right? That's what I obviously do, but besides that I don't have students memorize like the whole phrase, the whole answer because in pragmatics this is kind of difficult to do, because we have many, many, many, many, I would say thousands of possibilities and it's impossible for us to teach and for students to learn all the possibilities, but what we do is we try to give them more or less the standard possibility that they would have to use for a certain situation. Going back to inviting for example, I try to give them the standard, the things that they could use for inviting in informal situations, I don't know if I made myself clear.

Interviewer: Yes, of course. And for example besides these ways that you use for teaching vocabulary is there any other method or technique that you consider the most appropriate one for teaching vocabulary?

Teacher 3: Mmm… what I do is…

Interviewer: Not only if you have applied but also if you have heard of this method or technique that is really useful for teaching.

Teacher 3: Yeah, there are many techniques. One for memorizing words is definitely to create situations whether real or similar to reality but they have to kind of use the words in context, I cannot just teach them for example the meaning of a certain word and expect them to just memorize it, even though some people do that. A good idea is to present the word, work on pronunciation, obviously work on their previous knowledge, hopefully if some students do know the meaning of that word they could also do some collaborative work, talk to each other and try to explain, so students can have an idea, and then I give them an explanation, and then they would have to create some type of story based on that so they can memorize it better. Besides that, there are many other techniques of course, like a said at the beginning present the words and then show them how it's used in a movie for example or in a song, like in real situations, or I could also… what I like to do a lot is have native speakers record their conversations when they're talking to other natives speakers. Actually, I did that a year ago, and it's interesting to see how many things that are used in real life are missing from textbooks and from our teaching. One that I can tell you right now is this conversation was between two girls and the fact that even though one of them was an English teacher they used they filler word

"like" a lot, and even though some people don't like it, some people think is a mistake we have to face that it's a reality, and I actually ask this friend of mine to transcribe the audio and she did that for me and I could noticed that they used ¨like¨ a lot, a lot, they were talking about their boyfriends and they were saying ¨like, like, like, like, like¨, and things like that I think is important to teach to students.

Interviewer: Now, what do you know, what do you can tell me about sight words or also called high frequency words? Have you heard about this term?

Teacher 3: To be honest with you the term sight words I've never heard; it was you the first person that I heard. High frequency words, yes, high frequency words that's what I've heard.

Interviewer: Sight words will be another word to call or to mention high frequency words.

Teacher 3: Yeah, you explain that to me, you explain it to me, I remembered that.

Interviewer: And for example do you consider that teachers should pay attention to these words that are commonly used in daily life situations for example? Because many of these words are found in different textbooks, they are many, many times they are found in textbooks so that's why some teachers consider that it is important to teach them. Do you consider it is important to teach words that are frequently used or for example words that are not so frequent or that are less frequently used?

Teacher 3: I think it's important to teach high frequency words, but then again it goes back to where and how, in which context so I think that teachers and whoever wants to do research into high frequency first would have to consider high frequency where for example, because if we could do a study of the high frequency words used in university context and the high frequency words in concerts, or at a bar, or at a bank, we're going to find some coincidences yes, but we are gonna find other frequency words because they all or well not all of them but most of them, or a great number of them, depend on the context. I don't know if I'm right but I think that the context would be something to consider, so I think or well maybe one suggestion for you is high frequency where? In general?

Interviewer: But for example there are already lists of words by different authors, for example Dolch and Fry are two authors who have created, they did a research before, and they created a list of words that they consider are the most frequent ones used by English speakers.

Teacher 3: I'm guessing in general, right?

Interviewer: In general, and it includes different words according to the part of speech is just a whole bunch of words included in a list.

Teacher 3: Yeah, yeah, especially with beginners.

Interviewer: Yes, those are for beginners.

Teacher 3: Now I remember I have done something like that. For example, I remember I had a class in 2009 almost ten years ago, I was the new teacher and then I started talking to them in English and they didn't understand almost anything from me, and they said, one of them actually stood up and he said: "Teacher, teacher can you please talk in Spanish cause we don't understand you, the previous teacher used to talk to us in Spanish", and after that I thought it may be a good idea to give them a list of words and phrases that are frequent, that we use every single day like hi and everything, and then I noticed they didn't even know that, especially in terms of pronunciation, I was worried about at least having a minimum amount of communication in English so I gave them a list, I think it was three sheets of paper, and they thanked me for that, I'd translated it for them and they thanked me for that and I told them please, read them, memorize them because we're gonna be using those words and

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phrases a lot, and after a couple of… after like a month, we started talking more and more in English, they started noticing that they used the phrases that I gave them and then I corrected some pronunciation mistakes but that was a good starting point and then we didn't have much time because we had to cover other things but what I thought was, and that was the third semester of English, so after that they didn't have to take any more English, so I felt like I had to do, I wanted to do more but I didn't have more time, so yeah it's important, especially I would say with beginners.

Interviewer: Yeah, it worked for that class for example.

Teacher 3: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Interviewer: Now let's move on to another topic that would be the use of sign language for example, do you think sign language can be useful for teaching vocabulary to people who can actually hear, people without a disability? Do you think sign language can be useful for them?

Teacher 3: I think so, I think it may be interesting for students to learn other ways of acquiring vocabulary, it might be interesting. I haven't thought about it but yeah, because it might help them memorize the words because if they only repeat, repeat, they see, I think it goes back also to the theory of multiple intelligences, I think this would be kinesthetic intelligence, you know body movement, body movement so if they say for example, this is a silly example but just to illustrate what I'm trying to say if they say that this means ¨I love you¨ for example, it might help them remember the words, the meaning of the words.

Interviewer: There are for example some signs that are similar to the concept of the word, for example the word house will go like this, so you're making the shape of the house actually so in those cases I think for example it would be helpful because you're using your body, you're using your visuals to create maybe like a connection.

Teacher 3: Yes, yes, yes. Now that I think about it, it may help them because like you said when you use your body we have to understand that our body is an extension of our brain and our minds, some people say our body is our unconscious mind, subconscious mind so when we do something with our body is easier for people to remember so I think yes, it would help them.

Interviewer: Finally, do you think educational institutions and high schools, schools or here at the university in the city of Cuenca do they offer enough vocabulary teaching to the students?

Teacher 3: I don't think they do, they focus too much on grammar. I was part of a research and we had the opportunity and I think it was a great opportunity to see how English teacher worked you know in their context, and I'm not blaming them I guess is the system because we try to teach our future teachers the fact that they shouldn't focus too much on grammar, they should focus more on communication which of course goes hand in hand with vocabulary but the government and authorities they say that you have to cover these grammar points by the end of the semester or by the end of the school year so what I see they try to cover the program first, and then if they have extra time they could do some communicative activities in real life, extra vocabulary but I think they should focus more on vocabulary teaching because I would say and I would agree that it's more important than grammar, so they don't teach enough vocabulary and they should teach more, but it should be a discussion of not just the teacher but teachers, authorities, universities, and you know government, policies, all the what's it called? What's that word? All the stockholders it's called, so all the people in the institution that are involved in decision making in terms of education.

Interviewer: OK, any other relevant information to the study you wanna share with us? To the topics I mean?

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Teacher 3: For the study, well to me it sounds very interesting I've read studies in many different areas and this is the first one that I actually hear about using sign language to actually teach English to people who can hear and talk, and also you want to focus on vocabulary so I think you're gonna make a contribution here, what you should be careful with and this is something that I always warn students you should first of all understand that this is just the beginning of your research career if you will, and you're not gonna change the world. Sometimes we want to change the world, you say "Oh, I have a great idea that I'm sure is gonna change something, I'm sure they gonna like it, I'm sure…" and you're going to find many people that probably are gonna say "No, I don't think that it's a good idea, we can't use this or that" so don't get discourage if you have your clear idea this could be your line of research for future research, for when you do your masters and PhD, and don't forget that all teachers , even if they don't like research they should do research, if they like teaching they should do research at the same time so I guess my final words will be yeah keep working hard and if you really, really like this and also if you have read others studies in which they view your idea with good results that gives you like more chances, more possibilities, more background for you to prove that it's actually a good idea and it has, it's a, I guess it's an area that hasn't been researched to a great extent at least here in Ecuador, so yeah, that's it, good luck,

Interviewer: Thank you so much.

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Teacher 4 (07:49 minutes)

Interviewer: The first question is how important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other subskills and skills in English?

Teacher 4: OK Emilio. I can say that vocabulary is the most important section that we have when learning a language. Even when we talk about our own language, because if you don't have enough vocabulary, it's difficult to understand a listening, a reading, a speaking, or probably even to produce something as an speaking or writing activity so for that reason I think it's the main part, and the first thing we try to learn even when we read something, because we are talking about input, so when we receive this input, we're receiving most of the time vocabulary. So I think it's the most important parameter and the most important think that we should first learn if we want to develop the four skills, the four language skills in any language.

Interviewer: OK. And talking about the four skills, do you consider that there is a relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension?

Teacher 4: Yes, there is a direct relationship I think between vocabulary and reading. Because even when you are missing some grammar structures. If you don't have the grammar structure, still you're able to have probably a general idea if you have enough vocabulary. So I think the most important section of course would be vocabulary.

Interviewer: And have you normally dedicated a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary?

Teacher 4: Yes, usually at the beginning even if I have… well. In the career it's difficult to do it, but if you have like a regular English class, the first thing that we start with is vocabulary. Even if you have a listening or a reading activity, the main focus would be vocabulary, because the first thing that you need to get is enough words, probably to understand the paragraph, and then even if you want to learn an article. So, yes, all the time, the first thing that I do is vocabulary, and I always while I'm reading, or probably listening because those two will help you to get the input , I always ask my students like do you have any vocabulary question? Or let's look in the dictionary, so yes, the first thing that I do is work with vocabulary.

Interviewer: And do you teach vocabulary in a direct way.

Teacher 4: Yes it is… What do you mean by a direct way like…?

Interviewer: For example, it could be indirect through a reading or writing you teach them new words, or you explicitly teach them these are the new words…

Teacher 4: No. Well, it depends on the level, but usually with my students they have an A2 and probably B1 level, so it should be indirect. And indirect way because usually what I use is a reading or a listening activity or even a writing activity, and they need to look, try to guess the words, and probably work with the context, so it will be indirect, so it's not like really teaching them this is the word and probably match with the opposite if you're trying to look for the definition through an activity, or for example; usually reading or listening.

Interviewer: What do know about sigh words, or also called high frequency words?

Teacher 4: High frequency words? The words that are all the time used? That's what you mean? Probably… I'm not really sure about that terms, but I think with high frequency you use them in most of your conversations, or they are highly used by people?

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Interviewer: Exactly, sight words are words that cannot be decodable because they are not written as they are spoken and vice versa. So these words students tend to learn by heart, they tend to memorize these words since they cannot be decodable, so teachers… there are lists of these words, and teachers tend to use these lists in order to teach them these words, to memorize these words

Teacher 4: To memorize them? So what do I think about that? Well, I don't really like memorizing things, because to try to memorize things by heart for me it's difficult and probably at the end in the long term you'll forget the meaning of the words. So, for me, it's better instead of memorizing, to try to associate them with something, or to try to relate them, or try to work with them in a context, but not really to memorize them.

Interviewer: And of course, there are some methods and strategies to teach sight words instead of using memorization, for example. Now, do you think sign language can be useful for teaching vocabulary to hearing people, to enhance the vocabulary subskill?

Teacher 4: Yes. I think it's possible to use sign language and even probably even when we do not realize we are using sign language during our classes because sometimes when the student is not able to convey a message, he or she will, of course, use the sign language… like I was giving you this example. If I don't know the word happy probably I will use my facial expression or probably a way to convey with any movement in the body, and, of course, I think with sign language, it would be interesting, even interesting to use it in class. Yes, of course it can help, and it would be really helpful to motivate the students, and to help them to learn new vocabulary.

Interviewer: Now do you think that the educational institutions, I mean universities, high schools, schools in the city offer enough vocabulary teaching to students?

Teacher 4: Well, I think it's really up to the level. If you go to the schools, maybe, most of them of course they will focus about vocabulary, but I think in most high school and universities, the main focus is grammar. So I think that's the problem. But while you are learning, not talking like a career, probably in our career is completely different, but if you go somewhere and try to learn the language because it's part of the requirement in your career I think the main focus is grammar. I think we have a lack of teachers trying to teach and help students to learn vocabulary.

Interviewer: Why do you think teachers tend to pay more attention to grammar instead of vocabulary?

Teacher 4: I think because most of them, well maybe this is changing, but in my experience when I was teaching in a high school, it's because it is the traditional method. It's the only method that probably teachers they know or they were taught in the same way. So that's why their main focus is grammar, when I think the most important part would be vocabulary, because you can probably mention some words, and if you don't have the correct… even in Spanish, you don't have the correct structure or the correct way to conjugate the verb, still you're going to convey your message. So I think it's because the way they were taught, probably they use the traditional method. But I don't know, probably something is changing, I'm not teaching anymore in the high school and school , but back probably five or six years ago, they usually used to teach grammar instead of vocabulary, the main focus was grammar.

Interviewer: Any other relevant information related to this research?

Teacher 4: Well, to your research? Well, something that I can tell you is that once I made even in my own thesis it was the main focus vocabulary, and most of my students they were like 30 students, they were able to improve their English level through vocabulary, and even this one was I was teaching

them with TPR, and they were teenagers, but he main focus was vocabulary and commands, and most of them I would say from 30 students probably 20-22 they improved their language, even when they were from a public school and high school, they were able to improve probably to read faster and to have a better reading comprehension through vocabulary. So I think the main focus and it's really important to learn first vocabulary. Later… well it depends what you want to do with the language, but if you have enough vocabulary, you will be able to convey the message even when you don't have the correct structure.

Interviewer: Of course. Thank you teacher

Teacher 4: OK Emilio. Thank you.

Teacher 5 (07:49 minutes)

Interviewer: Okay, the first question is how important do you think vocabulary is compared to the other sub skills and skills in English?

Teacher 5: Well, I think vocabulary is as important as any other skill because if you don't have the words in order to communicate it's impossible that you can do it so if we don't apply the vocabulary with or along the other skills it's going to be useless, the learning of a language is going to be useless, as we are not going to be able to have words to communicate with and what things to say.

Interviewer: And do you consider there is a relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension?

Teacher 5: I think there is of course a relation, but most of it I think that with reading it's easier to acquire vocabulary, of course with the other skills it's also possible to acquire vocabulary as we are going to hear them, we may write them, we may see them, but with reading is kind of like the most or the strongest source for us to apply more vocabulary, to see how they work, see how they work together, if they have the same meaning, if they are apart, if they are together, and so on. Of course with reading and vocabulary there's a strong connection as its easier for the student and for the teacher to see how the words work in a certain context and how they work in another context, and how they work orally and spoken.

Interviewer: Okay, have you normally dedicated a part of the lesson only to teach vocabulary?

Teacher 5: Well, I think this happens mainly in... not a university level but in high school and primary school. I started working with early aged students, very young students and one of the things that you teach them the most is vocabulary and you need to find different strategies to go for this because that's the first thing they learn, even if it's a pre reading activity what they are really doing is identifying we can start from the letters to small words and then like longer phrases but yes, I like... depending on the level you dedicate more or I have dedicated more time for vocabulary than any other skill.

Interviewer: And have you taught this vocabulary in a direct or indirect way?

Teacher 5: I have taught, I think like the time where I can go to when teaching vocabulary was when I started working in a primary school, I remember teaching vocabulary like the most, most of the time in that age it was kind of like what I held my class about, so…

Interviewer: and, did you teach this vocabulary in a direct or indirect way? For example, did you teach this vocabulary through reading, writing or you explicitly only…

Teacher 5: ...like the word.

Interviewer: Exactly, like these are the words for example.

Teacher 5: I think it depends on the age of the student, and if we start thinking about the sources and the ways we are going to teach vocabulary it will depend on the level of the students, most of the times through songs it's easier to teach vocabulary, I also remember using tongue twisters and rhymes and they would kind of like caught their attention but for example everything was within a context, if we're talking about young students or beginner students one of the things they do is that they start learning vocabulary from the things they see, objects, family members, things like that, but everything

came out of the context in order to be used independently with each one of them. I think like one of the things that has always ruled my teaching of vocabulary has been having a context in order for them to see how a certain word works and how they function together.

Interviewer: Now, which do you consider is an appropriate method or technique for teaching vocabulary?

Teacher 5: As I said, I've used lots of methods or techniques, even with my own kid I've used sign language, repetition, correction, there are other ways, different ways that I've used in order to teach vocabulary in my classes at different levels. Most of the time one of the things we do in higher levels is that, as they are able to read, words come out and of course we are ready with any word that they may not understand, but with the younger learners sometimes it's good, like I've used different games or word games in order for them to see how its written, to see how they are spelled, like how they can be used and what are the ways we can use it and so on. I think I've used songs, games, miming, sign language, I think give used kind of like a lot of different methods depending on the level, on the age.

Interviewer: And now talking about sign language, can you explain how did you use sign language, with your child for example, to teach him?

Teacher 5: Well, I remember when I was in the states watching these videos about how to use sign language because this author created this way of communication between the kid and her nephew and the only way they could communicate, she was hearing impaired, and the only way they could communicate was through sign language, and I remember that in order for mi kid not to scream, I would teach him symbols or signs in order to tell me and my husband what does he need instead of just yelling. So I would make the sign of the apple, or I would like present song to him, or I would just make the sign in order for him to remember and I had very good results because instead of him yelling all the time, one of the things that we'd get out of the signs I made in order for him to ask me something. That's one of the things I used with my kids, another thing that I used to do and maybe I didn't teach my students with this but in order for them to remember, kind of like for them to set the word in the reigns plus that I started using the sign language with them, so for example I would teach them any kind of word and I would use the symbol or sign in order for them to remember and even if they don't remember how something is written if they remember the sign I did or the sign I made they were able to easily remember the word that it was, maybe not to teach necessarily vocabulary because what I have had during these years are all adult students, higher level students and teaching them only with sign language would be completely different, but I do remember using sign language to make the word stay like set in their brains in order for them to remember.

Interviewer: For example, in English we have two types of words that can be decoded because they are written as they are spoken and vice versa but we have other groups of words that cannot be decodable because they don't work in the other way, so these words are called sight words, have you heard about them? They're also called high frequency words, do you consider… if you have heard of course… do you consider these words are important in vocabulary teaching?

Teacher 5: Right now according to the context high frequency words can be like what type of word?

Interviewer: Words that students find in textbooks very frequently, for example in most of the texts they were gonna find these words repeated, they could be function words or nouns that cannot be decoded, for example the word house or the verb see, they are not pronounce in the same way as they are written and they tend to appear frequently in a text book, so do you think teachers should consider these words as part of the vocabulary teaching?

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Teacher 5: Well, I think that more than decoding or not certain word I think it's important that every vocabulary that we teach is done through a context, if we start thinking about if this is a high frequency word or a sight word as you mentioned it I think its going to kind of like limit teachers to be thinking okay so this is, you see this word is not pronounce the same way as its written, this one it is but kind of like it would be confusing or maybe sometimes limiting for the teacher and also for the student, cause when we are aware about this things we tend to analyze them too much, we tend to explain them and we can create more confusion that we want, so I haven't considered these words, they are common and the fact that they are so common it just becomes part of their vocabulary, of their lexicon. So I think that's something we should not emphasize too much, like okay this is a high frequency word because otherwise it would be like hearing a bell every time they find a word, but for a teacher it's important that we know what words are going to be found in the text and how many times they may see it. For example if you think about Dr. Seuss words one of the things he does when he writes his books is that he repeats a word no more, he has like a certain number of words and it gets repeated all along the book in order for the learner to understand what they mean, what do they refer to and how they are going to be applied, and one of his books ¨The cat in a hat¨ it's one of like the greatest books in order to teach kids how to read, so it's kind of like because of this high frequency, maybe they are not high frequency words but they are used in that way in order for the learner to… ¨Okay, so this is very common¨ and kind of like internalize it.

Interviewer: Do you think that educational institutions, I mean high schools, schools, or at the university, do you think they offer enough vocabulary teaching to the students?

Teacher 5: I think what we have come through with vocabulary, I think we have fell into a hole where we ask our students to learn the words, if we give them the words is for them to memorize them, if we don't teach them is kind of like their obligation to learn them, but at the end we are not giving enough effort for them to understand how a word works or not, and when we see in our students, for example, things like they are using a verb instead of an adjective or if it's, I don't know, swimming, is swimming used as a verb, use as a noun, as a sport, and they start getting confused about that because they look in the dictionary but at the end instead of them looking in the dictionary we are the ones who need to be explaining how these words are. Okay so swimming, we are going to talk about sports and here's where you present the context, and here you can go with sign language or in another case miming for example, so swimming I'm going swimming and you make the mime and you make the sign they may understand it and they now how you're using it as a sport, which is a noun, or as a verb, so those are the things I think we have left this vocabulary learning to our students and teachers are kind of like you should be taught in context and we are forgetting about it, so I think we should get back to analyzing and teaching vocabulary again, not only translation but other ways like trying to make them remember de word not memorize but remember the words through sign language, through the different other sources.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you teacher.

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Appendix 8. – SURVEY (STUDENT A)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: __12__   Female: __x__   Male: _____

The Use of Sign Language for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners.

Vocabulary learning:

1. From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

____ Realia (real objects)
____ Drawings
____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
__x__ Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
____ Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
__x__ Translation
Others: _____.

2. How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

__x__ Extremely helpful
____ Very helpful
____ Somewhat helpful
____ Not so helpful
____ Not at all helpful

Sight words:

Sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling (Bowers, 2011). Learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his/her efforts on new words (Primm et al., n.d.).

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall,* etc.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

____ Extremely important
__x__ Very important
____ Somewhat important
____ Not so important
____ Not at all important

State your reason: I think that sight words can be so useful when we are learning vocabulary because this can facilite the comprehension, when we are reading a book and this words could be familiars for us.

Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has been also used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.
- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.
- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples:　　　house　　　　　date

4. Do you agree that **sign language** can be used for learning **sight words**?

____ Strongly agree
_✓_ Agree
____ Somewhat agree
____ Disagree
____ Strongly disagree

State your reason: I agree with the sign language can be used for learning sight words because though the movements we can keep in mind easer the words and we can associate thus words with signing and will be easer remid the meaning of the words.

Appendix 9. – SURVEY (STUDENT B)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: 19   Female: X   Male: _____

The Use of Sign Language for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners.

Vocabulary learning:

1. From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

____ Realia (real objects)
/ Drawings
____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
X Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
X Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
∧ Translation
Others: books, movies, comics .

2. How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

X Extremely helpful
____ Very helpful
____ Somewhat helpful
____ Not so helpful
____ Not at all helpful

Sight words:

Sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling (Bowers, 2011). Learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his/her efforts on new words (Primm et al., n.d.).

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall,* etc.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

____ Extremely important
____ Very important
X Somewhat important
____ Not so important
____ Not at all important

State your reason: Sight words could be a good way to learn vocabulary and pronunciation but it's also important to learn spelling and orthography in order to improve our writing skills.

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Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has been also used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.
- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.
- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples: house   date

4. Do you agree that sign language can be used for learning **sight words**?

____ Strongly agree
_X_ Agree
____ Somewhat agree
____ Disagree
____ Strongly disagree

State your reason: I think learning through ~~langu~~ sign language could be an excellent way to use our memory and learn vocabulary in a implicit way. Maybe it would also be easier to perceive because most of us are visual learners. Images are easier to assimilate.

Appendix 10. – SURVEY (STUDENT C)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: 19   Female: _____   Male: X

The Use of Sign Language for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners.

Vocabulary learning:

1. From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

   ____ Realia (real objects)
   ____ Drawings
   ____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
   X Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
   ____ Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
   X Translation
   Others: _____

2. How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

   X Extremely helpful
   ____ Very helpful
   ____ Somewhat helpful
   ____ Not so helpful
   ____ Not at all helpful

Sight words:

Sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling (Bowers, 2011). Learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his/her efforts on new words (Primm et al., n.d.).

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall,* etc.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

   X Extremely important
   ____ Very important
   ____ Somewhat important
   ____ Not so important
   ____ Not at all important

   State your reason: It's extremaly import bacause help to learn vocabulary bacause it help to improve the writing.

Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has been also used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.
- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.
- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples: house   date

4. Do you agree that **sign language** can be used for learning **sight words**?

_____ Strongly agree

_____ Agree

_____ Somewhat agree

__X__ Disagree

_____ Strongly disagree

State your reason: I dagree because the singn language is olny used by deafs.

Appendix 11. – SURVEY (STUDENT D)

STUDENT'S SURVEY

Demographic Information:

Age: 19   Female: X   Male: _____

The Use of Sign Language for Teaching Sight Words to A1 Learners.

Vocabulary learning:

1. From the following list of techniques, mark with an X the ones you have used for learning vocabulary.

   ____ Realia (real objects)
   ____ Drawings
   ____ Sign Language (Body, facial expressions, gestures)
   ____ Cognates: e.g. radio- radio
   ____ Scales: e.g. Adverbs of frequency: Always (100%) – Sometimes (50%) - Never (0%)
   _X_ Translation
   Others: _____

2. How helpful do you consider vocabulary is for reading comprehension? Mark with an X.

   ____ Extremely helpful
   _X_ Very helpful
   ____ Somewhat helpful
   ____ Not so helpful
   ____ Not at all helpful

Sight words:

Sight words or high frequency words help a person to read, write, and enhance his/her spelling (Bowers, 2011). Learning these words as a whole instead of letter by letter makes reading much easier and fluid because the learner already recognizes most of the words and can concentrate his/her efforts on new words (Primm et al., n.d.).

Examples: *together, would, it, eight, why, which, laugh, shall*, etc.

3. How important do you consider the acquisition of **sight words** for learning English as a Foreign Language? Mark with an x and state your reason.

   _X_ Extremely important
   ____ Very important
   ____ Somewhat important
   ____ Not so important
   ____ Not at all important

   State your reason: Because people that are not native english speakers often get confused on how to write and pronounce simple words like "know".

Sign Language:

Sign Language is the language used by deaf or also called hearing-impaired people. Nowadays, sign language has been also used by **people who can hear** for learning vocabulary because of the following benefits:

- Sign language uses facial expressions and body movements to emphasize the message.
- There is no need of extra materials other than your hands, so signing can be done in any place.
- The movements of the hands tend to represent the concept or the word, so it is easier to remember the meaning of a word (Sherman, 2011, pp.32-33).

Examples: house   date

4. Do you agree that **sign language** can be used for learning **sight words**?

____ Strongly agree
____ Agree
____ Somewhat agree
__X_ Disagree
____ Strongly disagree

State your reason: Because Sign language helps mainly to understand concepts and not ortography.

Appendix 12. – BOOKLET

Table of Contents

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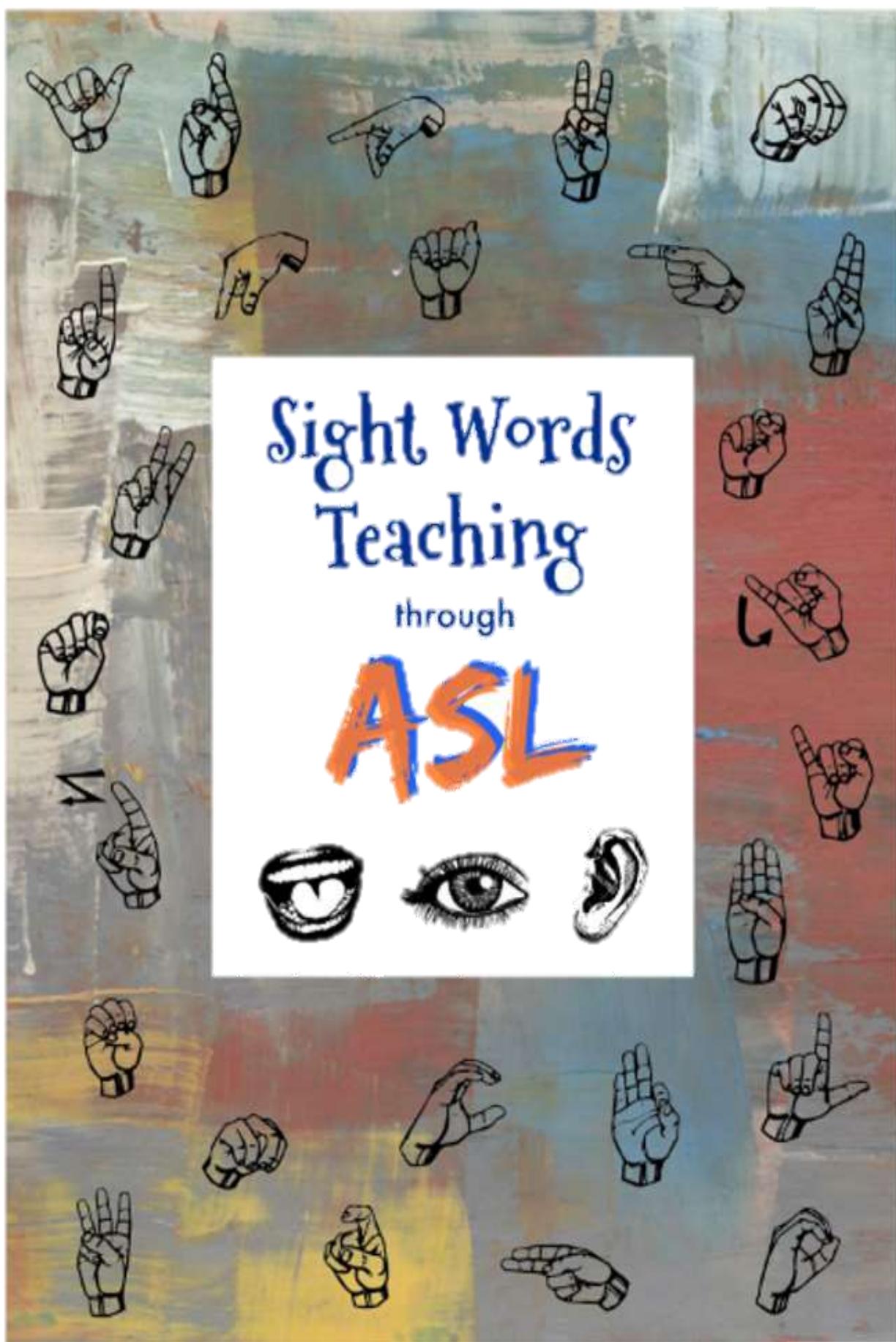
American Sign Language (ASL)
Alphabet

A B C D E F

G H I J K L

M N O P Q R

S T U V

W X Y Z

Fingerspelling Word Search

Instructions:

1. Search for the respective words.

2. Circle the words you find.

Note:

Words can be found in 3 different ways: Horizontal, vertical, and

diagonal, but never backwards.

Fingerspelling Word Search 1 – Adjectives
"Colors"
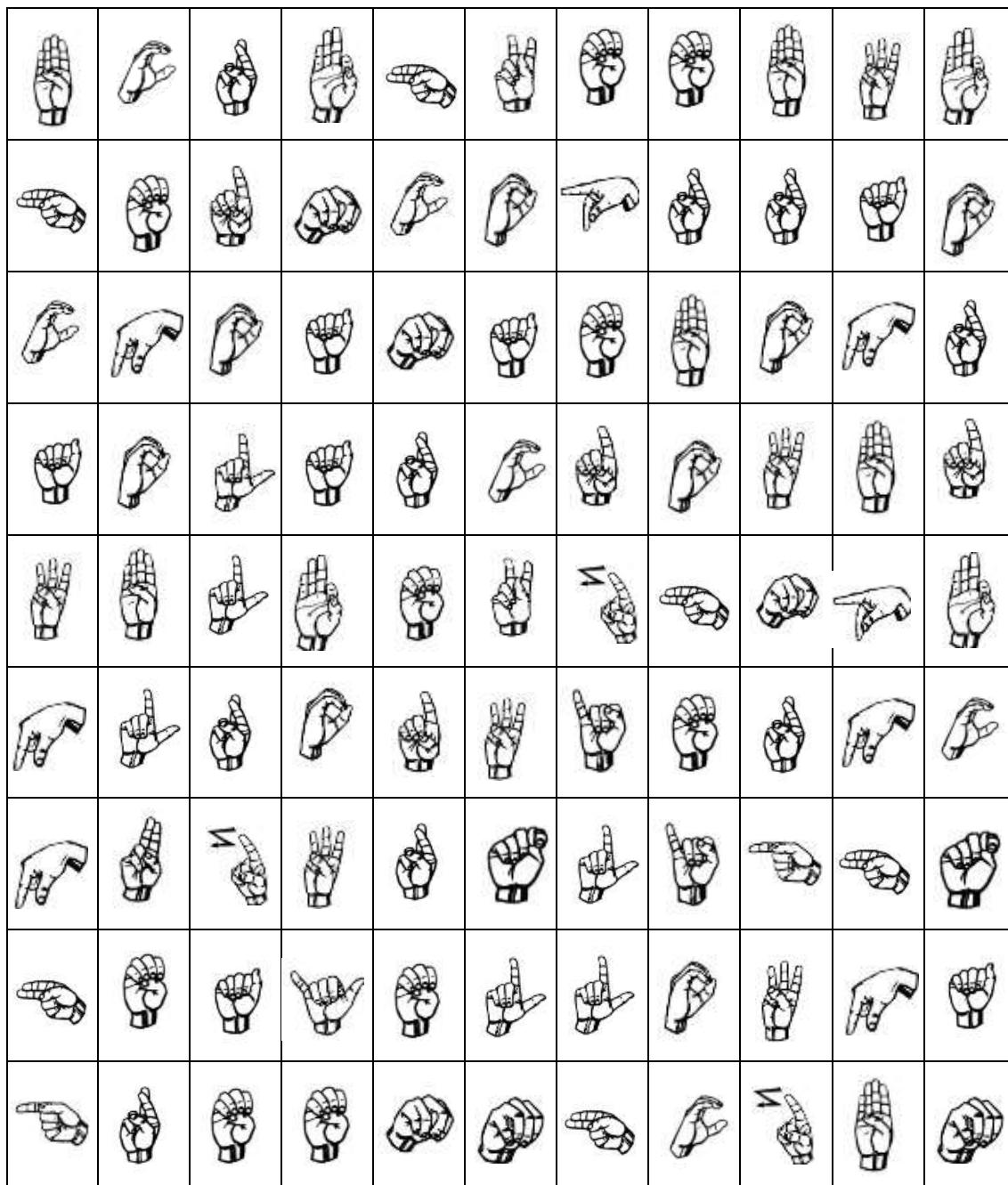
Words:

Black – red – yellow – green – brown – blue – white – dark – light

Fingerspelling Word Search 2 – Adjectives
"Numbers"
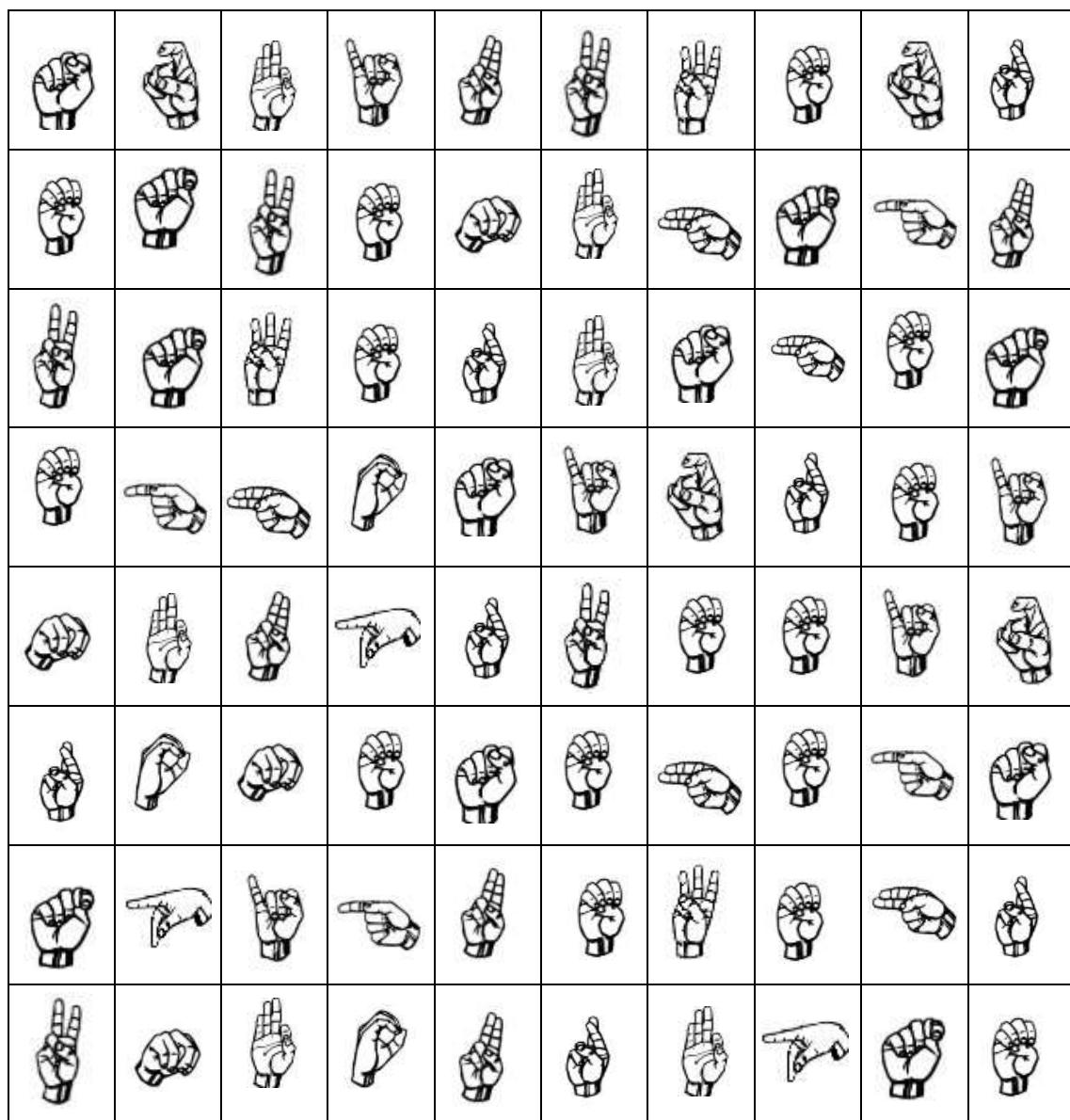
Words:

One – two – three – four – five – six – seven - eight

Fingerspelling Word Search 3 – Adjectives
"Synonyms & Antonyms"
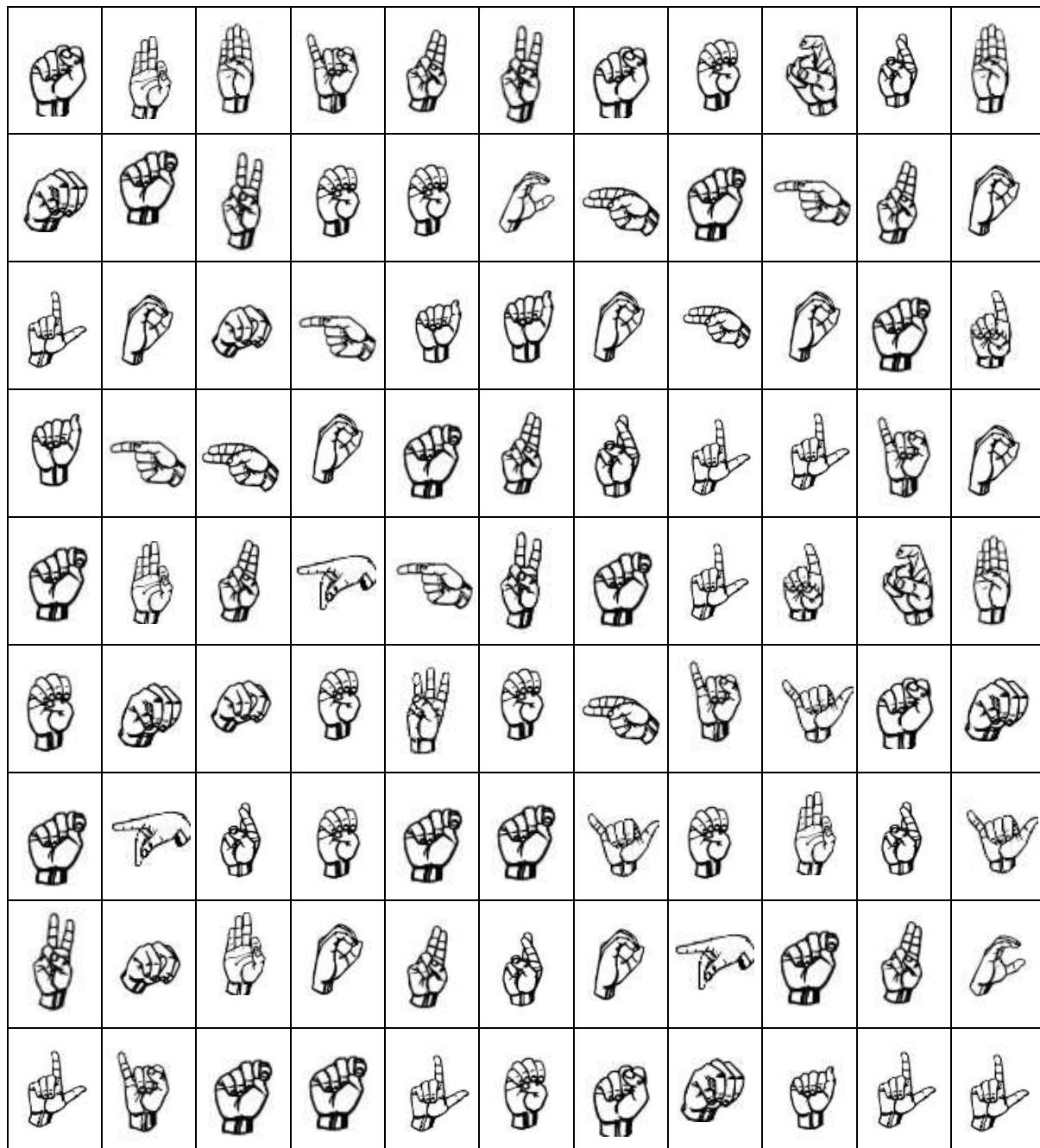
Synonyms:	Antonyms:
pretty-beautiful	*new-old*
little-small	*long-short*
	late-early
	cold-hot

Fingerspelling Word Search 4 – Adverbs
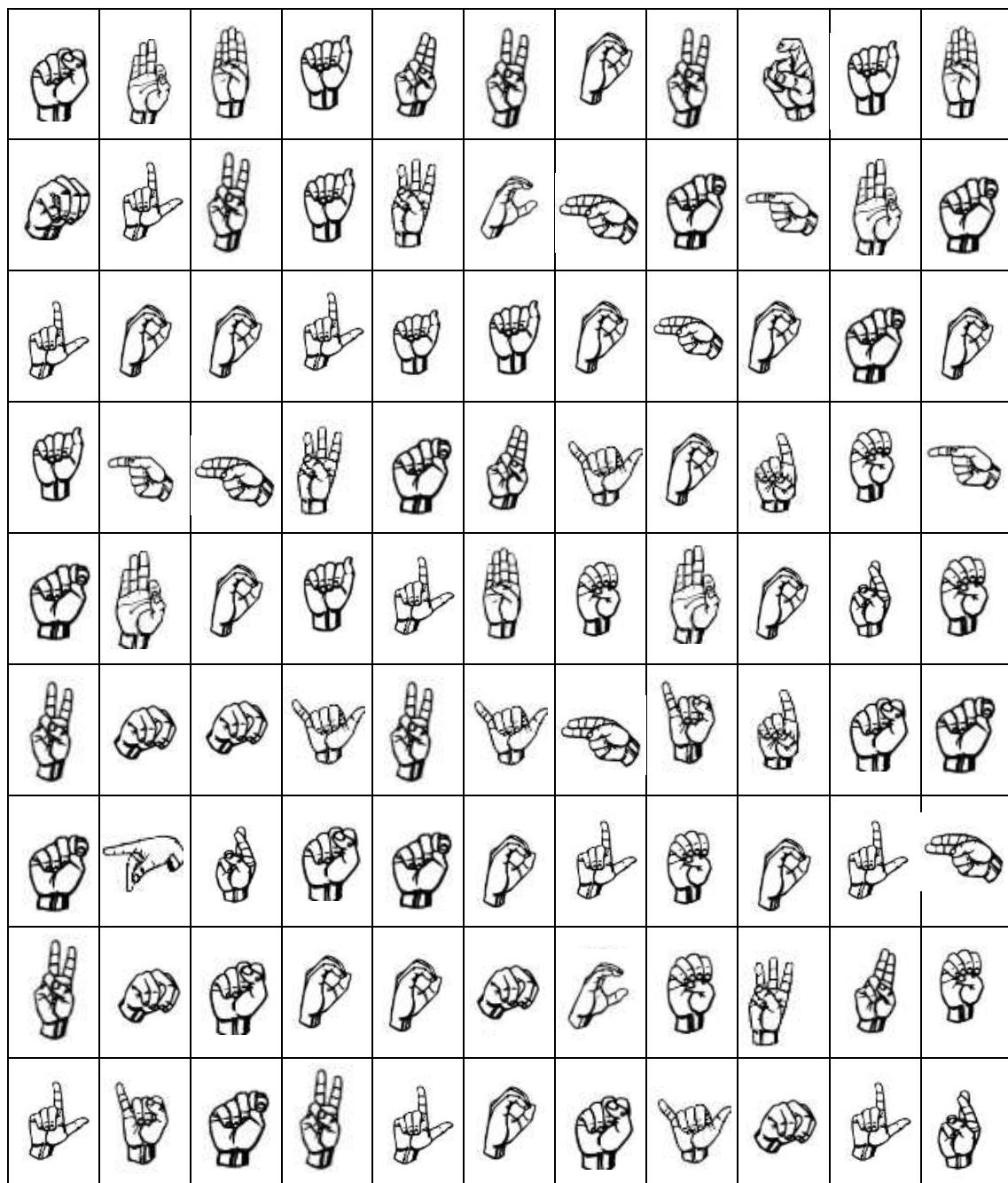
Words:

slowly – always – away – before – after – down – now – once – soon - together

Fingerspelling Famous Quotes

Instructions:

This famous quote is finger spelled. Translate each sign into its respective letter, and decode the whole phrase.

Fingerspelling Famous Quotes #1

___ ___ ___   ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___

___ ___ ___   ___ ___ ___ ___

___ ___ ___ ___ ___

-Stephen King

Fingerspelling Famous Quotes #2

__ __ __ __   __ __

__   __ __ __ __ __ __ __

__ __ __ __ __ __

__ __ __ __ __ __ __
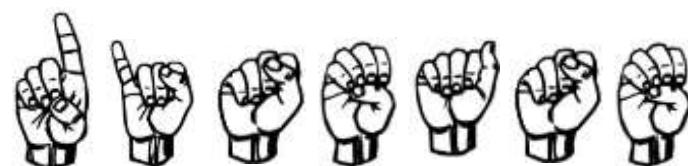
-Plato

Worksheet #1: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

Instructions:

1. The teacher will read the story replacing some verbs with its respective sign.

2. Choose a sight word from the box.

3. Write the word next to the sign to complete the whole story.
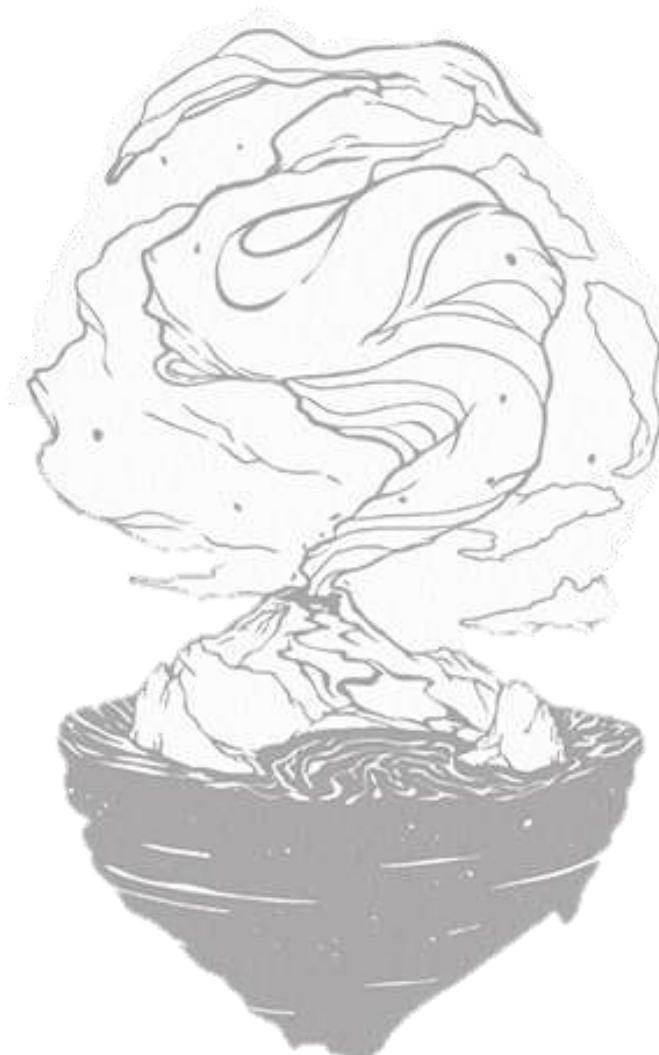
Worksheet #1: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

tells	likes	helps	walks	buy	lives	works	starts	say	ride

Bob's Job
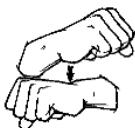
Bob _____1 at a restaurant. He is the manager. He

_____2 to work every day at 8:00 am. He finishes to

work every day at 6:00 pm. He _____3 very close to the restaurant. He
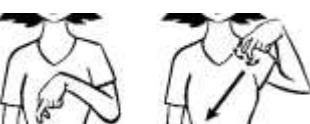
_____4 to work every day. His brother and sister also

work at the restaurant. But, they do not live close to the restaurant. They

_____5 a bike to work. They start work at 9:00 am. In the restaurant, Bob is the

boss. He _____6 all the workers and _____7

them what to do. He likes his job. He is also very good at his job. Many customers

appreciate Bob, and they _____8 hello to him when they

come to the bank. Bob likes to _____9 coffee for the customers and

make them feel happy. Bob really _____10 his job.

Worksheet #2: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

Instructions:

1. Match the sign with its correct sight word.

2. Write 5 sentences using any sight word.

Worksheet #2: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

Have [a]

Want [b]

Know [c]

Look [d]

Show [e]

Think [f]

Read [g]

Hurt [h]

Sentences:

1. _____.

2. _____.

3. _____.

4. _____.

5. _____.

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Worksheet #3: Verbs: Present Tense

Instructions:

1. Unscramble the signs and discover the word.

Worksheet #3: Verbs: Present Tense

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ 4

_____ 5

_____ 6

_____ 7

_____ 8

_____ 9

_____ 10

_____ 11

_____ 12
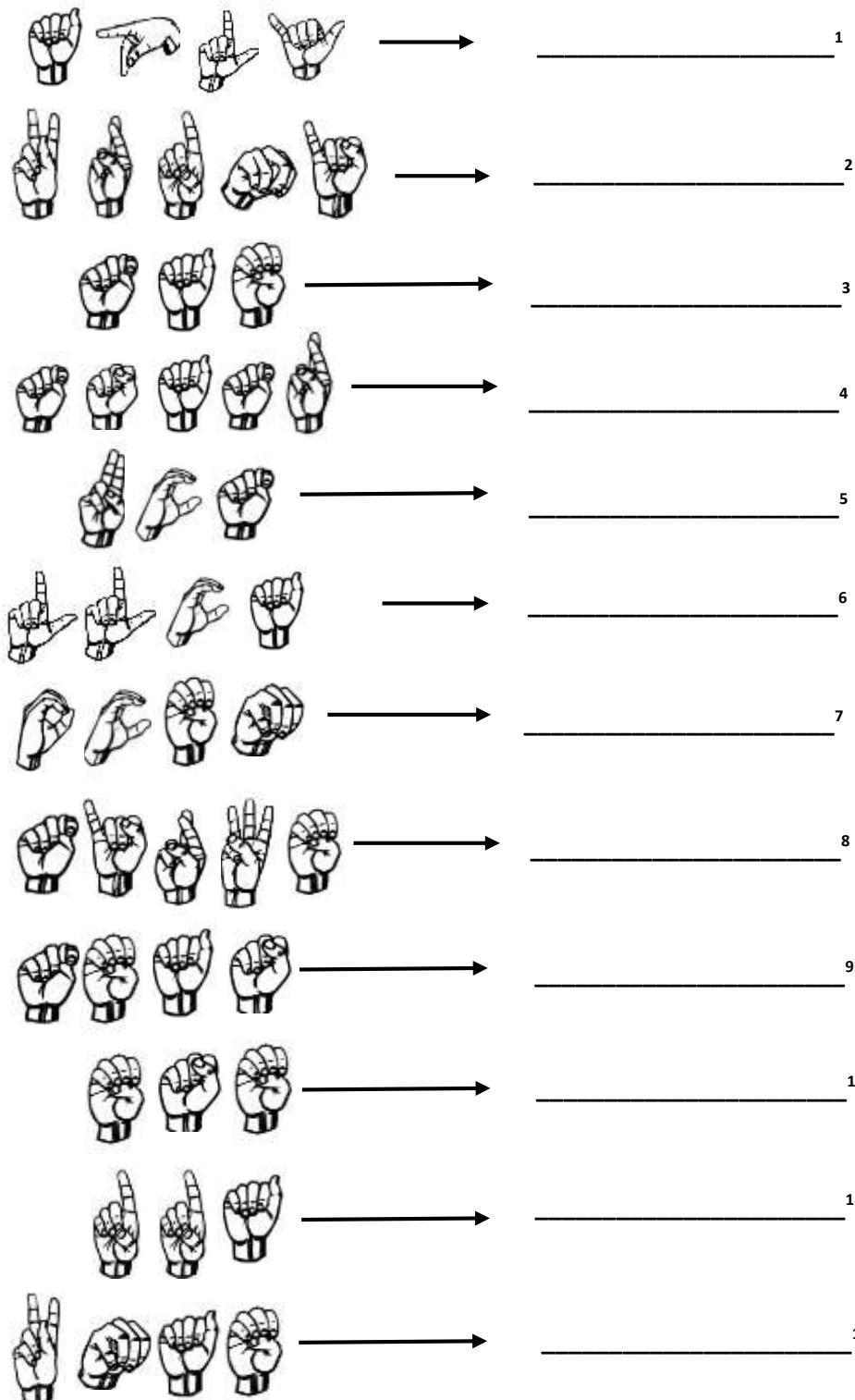
Worksheet #4: Animals

Instructions:

The whole acronym is constructed by animals

1. Translate each sign into its respective letter to form the animal

   word.

2. At the end, discover the extinct animal by translating the first

   sign of each animal.

Worksheet #4: Animals

Uncommon Wild Animals Acronym

_____ 1

_____ 2

_____ 3

_____ 4

_____ 5

_____ 6

_____ 7

_____ 8

_____ 9
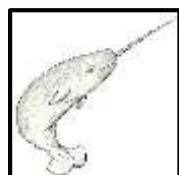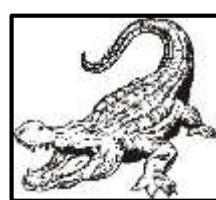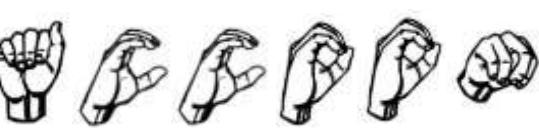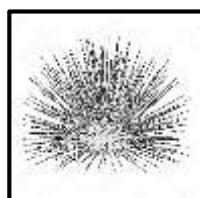
Game #1:
Verbs: Present Tense
Let's play Bingo!

Instructions:

1. Students will select 6 sight words from the list provided below.

2. The teacher will do the sign for every sight word and the student

will cross the sight word if it is written on his/her chart.

3. The first students to complete the chart wins!

Game #1:

Verbs: Present Tense

Let's play Bingo!

Bingo Board

List of Words:

- Play
- Drink
- Eat
- Study
- Cut
- Call
- Come
- Write
- Seat
- See
- Add
- Make

Game #2:

Verbs: Present Tense

Visual Words!

Instructions:

1. Divide the class into 2 groups.

2. One student from each group will come to the front and receive a card with a sight word.

3. The student from each group need to sign the sight word and the group will guess the word.

4. The person from the group who guess it will come to the front and write the answer on the board.

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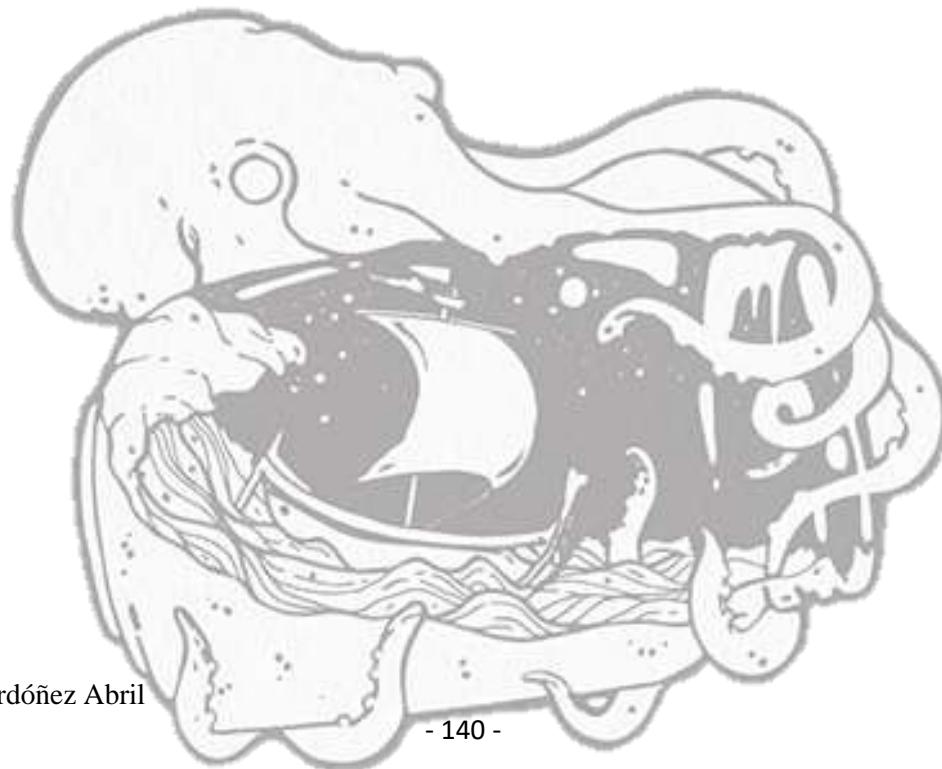
Game #2:

Verbs: Present Tense

Visual Words!

Here is a list of cards you can use:

Give	Answer
Follow	Find
Get	Mean
Ask	Go
Use	Do
Sleep	Grow

Game #3:

Fingerspelling Board Game

Instructions:

1. Throw the dice to move across the block until you finish

Note:

In each block, you need to finger spell and spell the word.

If you can't answer correctly, go back one space.

| Finger spell any noun | → You can choose your own. |

| USE THE LADDER | → Use this block to cut across the board game. |

In any picture, you fingerspell and spell the word that bests describes the picture

Game #3:

Fingerspelling Board Game

Finger spell any noun					Finger spell any noun	

| Finger spell any noun | | | | | | |

| USE THE LADDER | | | USE THE LADDER | USE THE LADDER | | Finger spell any noun |

| | | | | | | |

| | | Finger spell any noun | | | USE THE LADDER | |

| USE THE LADDER | | | | | | |

| Finger spell any noun | | | Finger spell any noun | | FINISH | |

| **START** | | | | | | |

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Game #4:

Creating a story

Materials:

- Flashcards with different words represented by its sign
- Paper
- Markers

Instructions:

1. Divide the class in two groups.

2. Each group will receive three cards with a word represented by its sign.

3. Both groups will to come up with a story that includes the three words they receive.

4. Each group will present their story to the class.
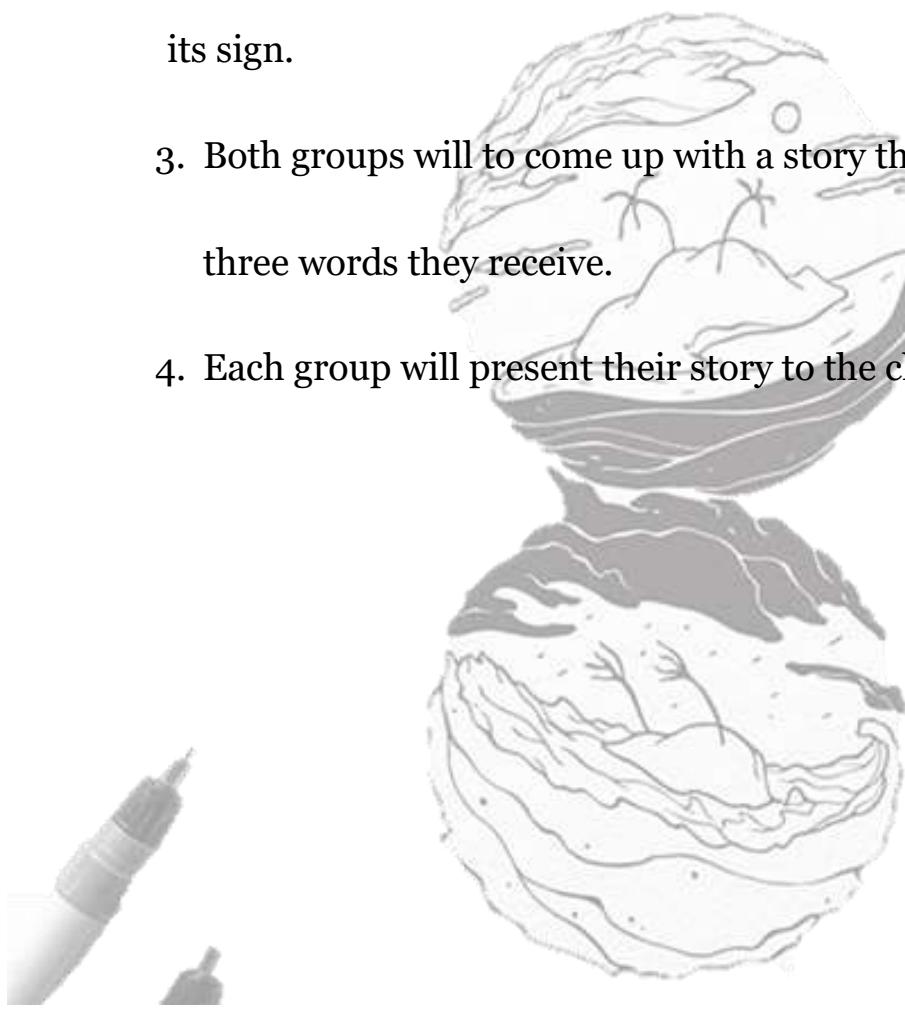
Game #5:

Chalkboard Acronym

Instructions:

1. The teacher will write a word vertically on the board.

2. One at a time, students will write a word starting with each letter of the vertical word.

3. Students will finger spell each word and create a sentence with each one of them.

Game #6:

Guess What I Am!

Instructions:

1. The teacher thinks of a word and start using as many signs,

   charades and spoken words as possible to describe the word.

2. Students guess the word by asking different questions
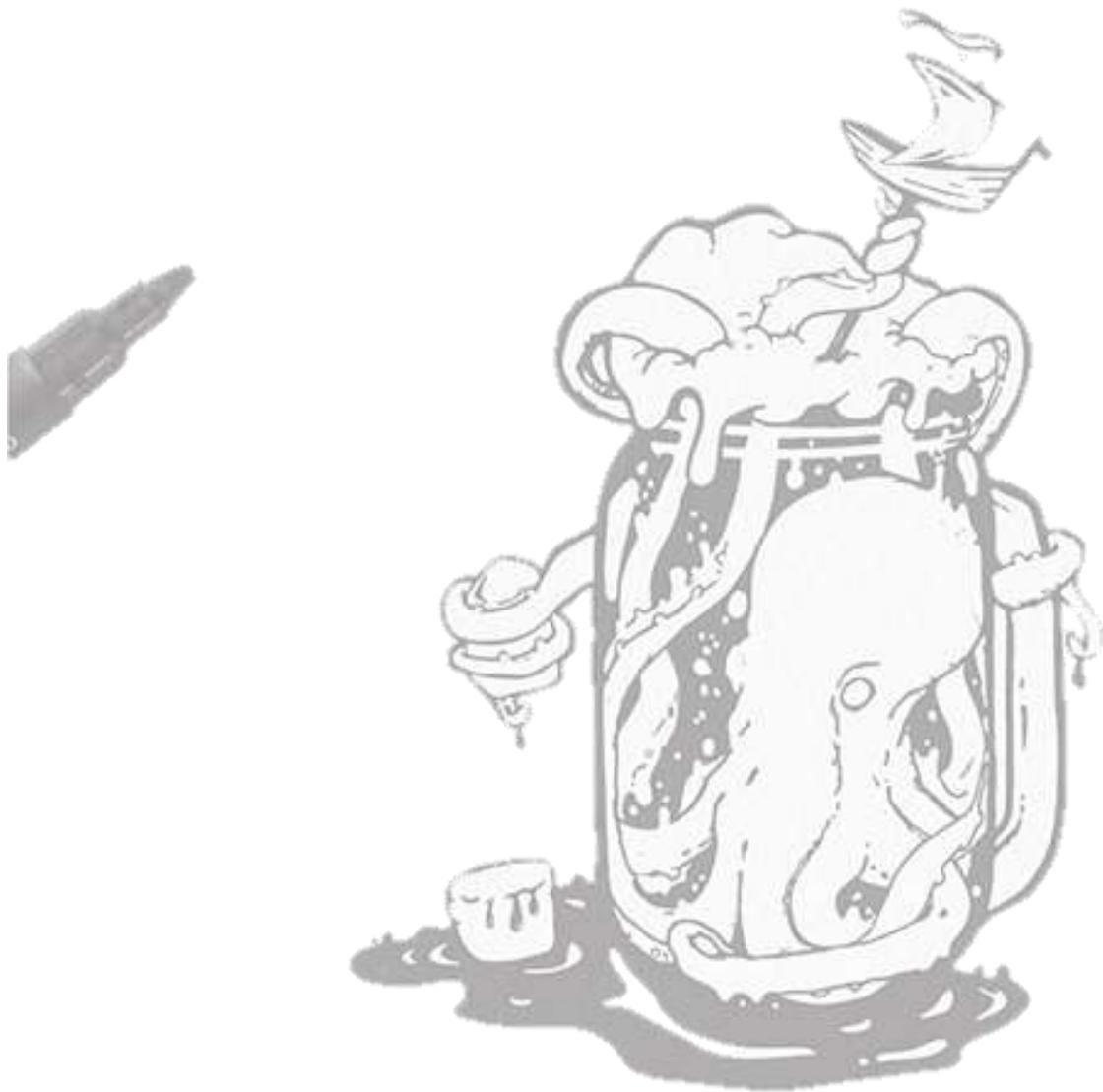
Game #7:

Scavenger Hunt. It's time to hunt!

Materials:

- Flashcards with pictures or words of a certain category (food, animals, places, colors, etc.)

Instructions:

1. Divide the class in two groups.

2. The flashcards would be hidden around the class. Each group needs to find as many flashcards as possible.

3. Once they have obtained all of them, students can sign the word or learn how to sign it.

Game #8:

Memory Game: How many objects can you remember?

Instructions:

1. Different objects will be arranged on a table.

2. Students can take a look at them and repeat the name of each

   one aloud.

3. The teacher will cover the objects with a sheet after one minute

   and send everyone back to their seats.

4. Students should write as many items as they remember.

5. The teacher writes the words on the chalkboard and the

   students can self-correct.

6. Students will repeat out loud and sign each word.

Game #9
Matching Game: Find the Pair
Instructions:

1. Students can play the game in pairs

2. Set all the cards facing down

3. Taking turns, students will take two cards.

4. Students get one point for each match.

Game #9

Matching Game: Find the Pair
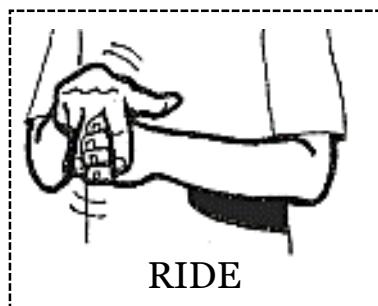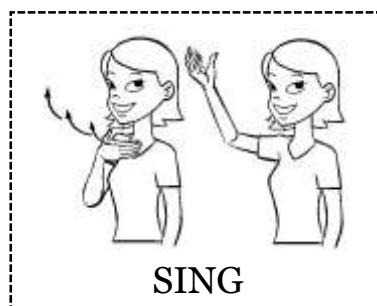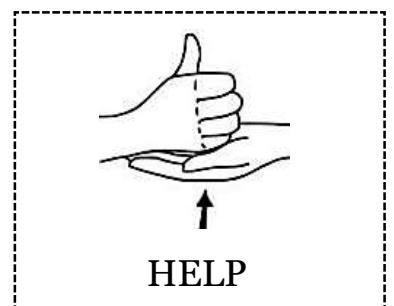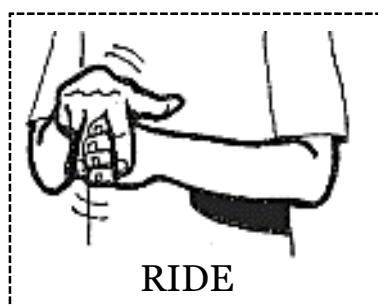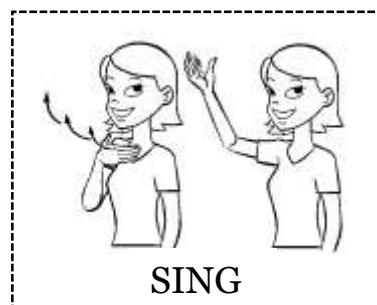
RIDE	SING	HELP
RIDE	SING	HELP
HURT	SAY	READ
HURT	SAY	READ
	WORK	WORK
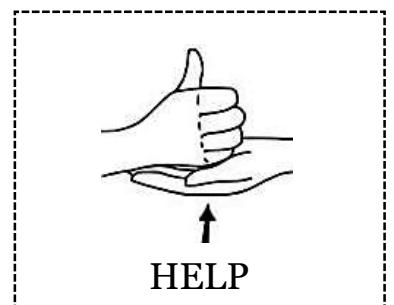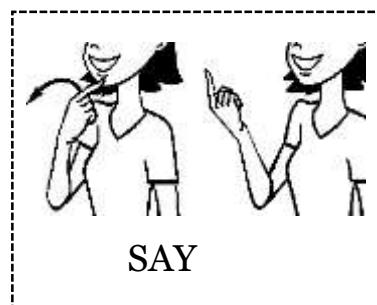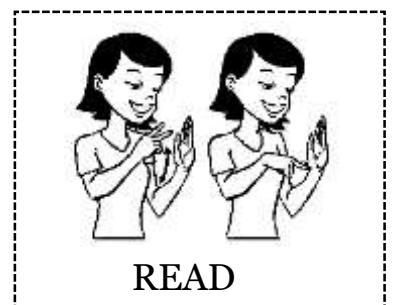
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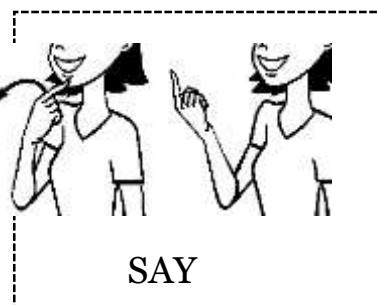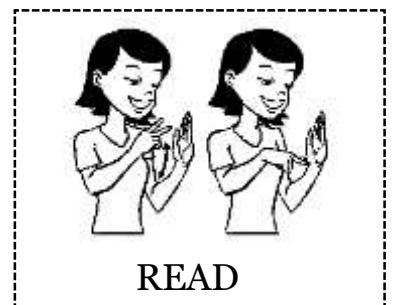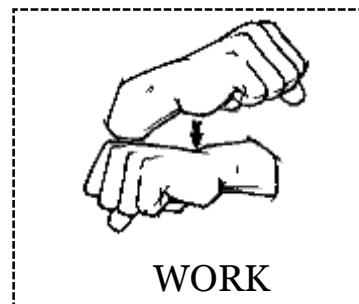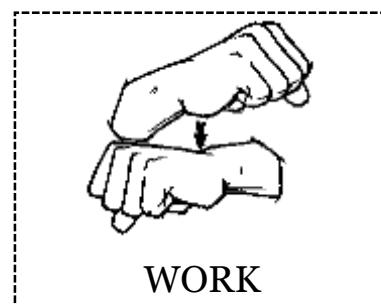
Answersheet Section

Word Search 1
Adjectives
"Colors"

Word Search 2
Adjectives
"Numbers"
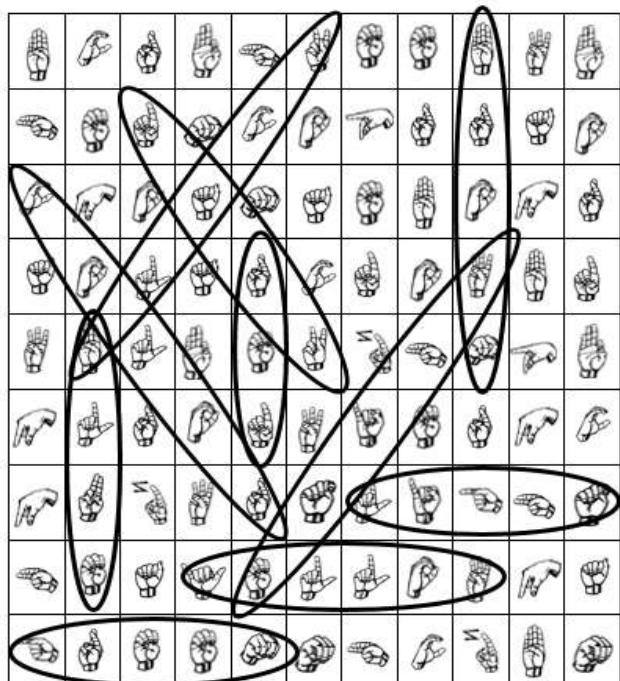
Words:

Black – red – yellow – green – brown – blue – white – dark – light
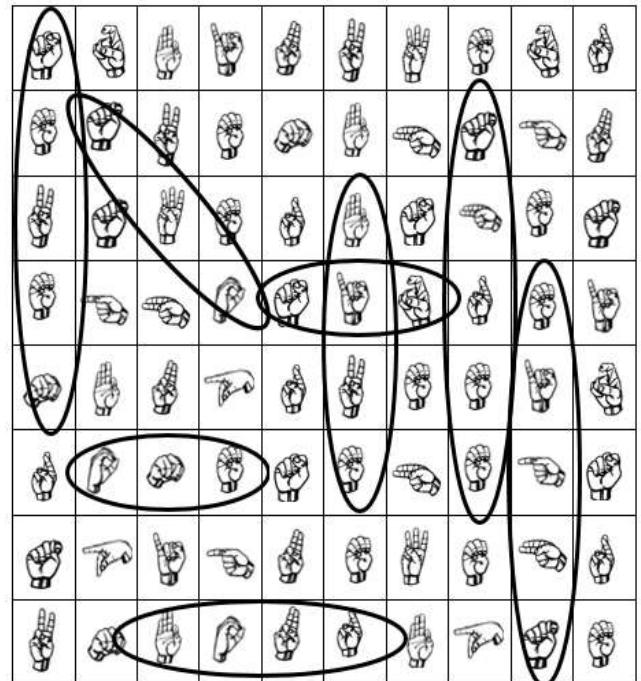
Words:

One – two – three – four – five – six – seven - eight

Word Search 3
Adjectives
"Synonyms & Antonyms"

Word Search 4
### Adverbs
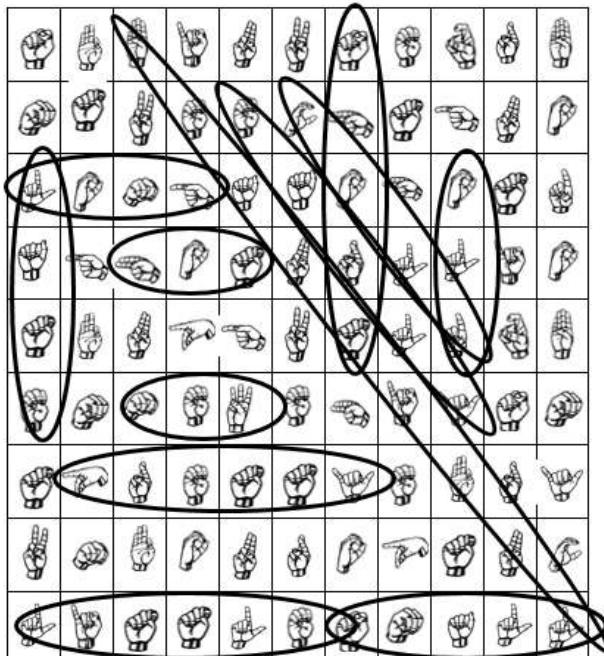
Synonyms:

pretty-beautiful

little-small

Antonyms:

new-old

long-short

late-early

cold-hot

Words:
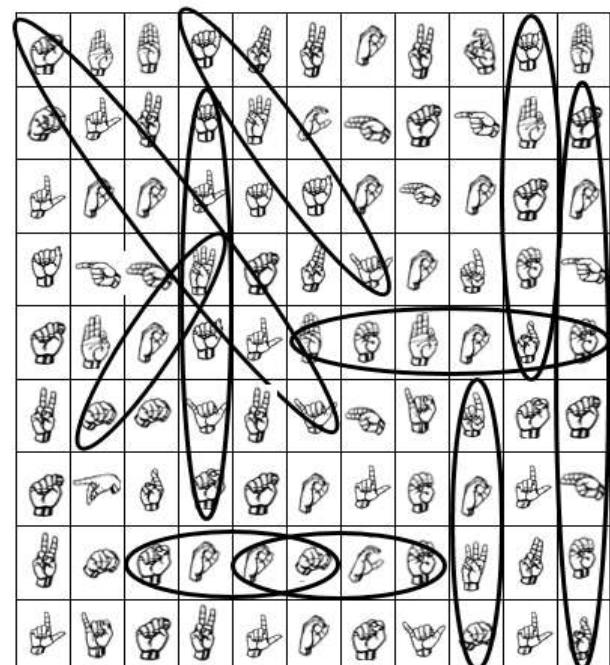
slowly – always – away – before – after – down – now – once – soon - together

Fingerspelling Famous Quotes #1

Answer:

"Get busy living or get busy dying."

-Stephen King

Fingerspelling Famous Quotes #2

Answer:

"Love is a serious mental disease."

-Plato

Worksheet #1: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

Answers:

1. work	6. helps
2. starts	7. tell
3. lives	8. say
4. walks	9. buy
5. ride	10. likes

Worksheet #2: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

1. d	5. h
2. a	6. c
3. f	7. b
4. g	8. e

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Worksheet #3: Verbs: Present Simple Tense

1. Play
2. Drink
3. Eat
4. Start

5. Cut
6. Call
7. Come
8. Write

9. Seat
10. See
11. Add
12. Make

Worksheet #4: Nouns: Animals

1. Deer
2. Iguana
3. Narwhal
4. Octopus
5. Scorpion
6. Alligator
7. Urchin
1. Raccon

Acronym: 9. DINOSAUR