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Visible Learning to Enhance Learner's Participation: an intervention for undergraduate students

Abstract

The objective of this action research focuses on exploring the experience of 22 students from the *Universidad del Valle de México Campus Guadalajara Sur*, in the State of Jalisco, Mexico who experienced three specific Visible Learning (VL) strategies as a learning intervention to promote participation in class using English as a foreign language (L2). Throughout the action research based on this intervention and the VL strategies used and by using different instruments within the methodological framework to collect data, the experience of the participants was proven to be mostly positive. The level of participation in class increased and the three strategies selected and used for this specific context were acknowledged as an aid for a paradigm shift from previous learning experiences at lower educational levels. During the early days of the implementation, difficulties arose due to preconceived ideas, therefore, represented an initial resistance. The results reveal that the adaptation process requires effort, perseverance, and discipline in order to decrease anxiety levels when performance and intervention in class take place. However, once participants develop the required competencies and confidence when experiencing the strategies; motivation increases. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the role that VL might represent in the improvement process of learning English as a foreign language. Additionally, certain conditions and areas of opportunity present during its utilization are described. According to the above-mentioned data, the present research contributes considerably as an aid for an effective implementation of VL in the teaching learning process of a foreign language.

Keywords: *visible learning, intervention, action research.*

Abstrakt

Działanie przewodnie niniejszego badania skupia się na penetracji doświadczenia 22 studentów, *Uniwersytetu del Valle de México Campus Guadalajara Sur*, w Meksyku − w Stanie Jalisco, w zakresie trzech specyficznych strategii uczenia przez wizualizację (VL), traktowanego jako nauczanie interwencyjne, celem wzmocnienia czynnego uczestnictwa w zajęciach przy wykorzystaniu angielskiego jako języka obcego (L2). Dzięki dynamice badania opartego na nauczaniu interwencyjnym z wykorzystaniem strategii wizualizacyjnych (VL) jak również przy wykorzystaniu różnorodnych instrumentów metodologicznych celem zebrania danych, doznania uczestników okazały się ze wszech miar pozytywne. Poziom uczestnictwa w zajęciach podniósł się zaś trzy wybrane i wykorzystane do celów badań strategie sprawdziły się jako pomoc dydaktyczna służąca do dokonania zmian w rutynie wyniesionej z wcześniejszego procesu dydaktycznego na niższych poziomach nauczania. Na wcześniejszym etapie badań pojawiły się trudności wynikające z zakorzenionych poglądów, co tworzyło pewien czynnik oporu. Wyniki pokazują, że proces adaptacyjny wymaga wysiłku, wytrwałości i zdyscyplinowania, celem obniżenia poziomu napięcia kiedy zajęcia dydaktyczne są w toku. Niemniej jednak, jak tylko uczestnicy rozwiną oczekiwane kompetencje i pewność siebie za sprawą stosowanych strategii, motywacja wzrasta. Obserwacje te przyczyniają się do lepszego zrozumienia roli, jaką nauczanie wizualizacyjne (VL) mogłoby odegrać w usprawnieniu nauczania angielskiego jako języka obcego. Ponadto, opisane są pewne uwarunkowania i możliwości występujące w trakcie badań. Stosownie do wspomnianych powyżej danych, niniejsze badania wnoszą znaczny wkład w postaci ukazania narzędzia pozwalającego na efektywne wprowadzenie nauczania wizualizującego (VL) do procesu uczenia się i nauczania angielskiego jako języka obcego.

Słowa kluczowe: *nauczanie wizualizacyjne, interwencja, badanie dynamiczne.*

Introduction

It is important to note that nowadays and in this globalized world, democratization of information overcomes the limits of time and borders (Fullan, Stiegelbauer, 2009). That is why that we cannot deny to consider that at these times it is a must to be competent in a foreign language besides developing some skills and abilities in different areas of specialization, to be interconnected and interdependent, because communication is an indispensable tool (Pérez-Morales, Álvarez-Valdivia, Pérez-Cabaní, Guerra-Rubio, 2008).

The pedagogic and didactic strategies currently used in the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language are based on the Communicative Approach. Nevertheless, it is pretended that students will find linguistic meanings to be expressive in a foreign language, and one of the most important problems is the incapacity of verbal communication in an efficient way. For example, *Sato* (2003) describes that in Japan, the lack of communicative competence in English as a foreign language is due to the fact that many students are still using the grammar-translation method. Large groups and motivation are also important factors to contribute to the incapacity which is referred above. Mexico is not far away from that reality we find in Japan. In India, even though it is preferred some kind of communicative approach, a lot of language teachers center their practice on the audio-lingual method, which affects the development of communicative skills in students (Peyyala, 2013).

According to *Gang* (2012), the ability to communicate is the knowledge or competence and the capacity to implement that knowledge in a proper context. Roger, A. Ferrández, S. Ferrández, and Peral y López-Moreno (2006) mentioned that a person, to be competent in a foreign language, must be able to operate a discursive and conversational analysis, which allows for the person to operate in countless communicative situations. This is precisely one of the major problems in countries where English as a foreign language is learned – Mexico included. A student simply does not achieve ane fficient output, no matter if he or she understands grammar rules and basic vocabulary. In other words, students have not developed yet an automation of the process to communicate something meaningfully, in the right context and with a specific objective (Arnaiz-Castro, Peñate-Cabrera, 2004).

Background

In Mexico, even though English is taught as a mandatory school subject in secondary and high school education, students who get into an undergraduate program display little understanding and knowledge of the language.

According to a study made at different universities in Mexico, a large number of students in the first year of a university program, and despite the fact they passed English as a subject in high school education, presented little competence in the 4 language skills, including speaking (Lemus, Duran, Martínez, 2008). Another example of the difficulties regarding English as a foreign language in Mexico, is the study made by Villa, Casarín, Segura, Ochoa, and Rodríguez y Marín (2013), in which students in their first term of their undergraduate program in psychology, at *Universidad Veracruzana*,

despite the fact they had taken many English courses in high school, obtained poor results in the diagnostic test when getting into the undergraduate program. Two groups were analyzed, and the instrument of evaluation tested the 4 language skills, including speaking. In one of the groups, just 54% of students passed the oral evaluation, and in the other group, only 29.3%.

As a result of weak work in the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language over the last years, developing linguistic competences during and at the end of the undergraduate program turns out to be more and more complex, and it means that students do not have basic communicative skills to operate in a social, academic or professional environment. Another issue teachers must deal with, is the fact that students do not practice the language outside the classroom. Sadly, appropriate didactic activities which enable listening and speaking in and out of the language classroom are limited (Lemus et al., 2008).

At the present time, experiments with different strategies to improve the teaching-learning process are being performed. That is why new trends and studies come in handy to develop different skills and abilities in the classroom, like Visible Learning (VL).

According to John Hattie (2008), Visible Learning is a result of an analysis of the top influences that prevent learning in thousands of students in specific countries where this kind of research is carried out. Unfortunately, there are no qualitative studies that give us information from the learners' point of view, using VL strategies as part of their learning process. That is why, this action research comes up from the interest of taking VL to the English classroom and the necessity to listen to the students' voice regarding three specific strategies based on VL in order to make them participate more in class activities, and as a consequence, to improve their speaking skills.

This action research, arises from the questions: What are students' views regarding the impact of VL strategies? What effects do these VL specific strategies have on students' participation, and as a consequence the use of L2 in class? We have to consider that this action research was performed in Level 1 of basic students[1] in the undergraduate program in Universidad dl Valle de México, campus Guadalajara Sur. The objective of this action Research Project is to present a perspective of the use of VL as an intervention to increase learners' participation in class, in learners' real context. Another direct consequence of doing this action research is to propose Visible Learning as an alternative to improve communication and speaking

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[1]Level A1-A2 according to the CEFR.

ability of English as a foreign language in Mexico. In addition to the main aim, several subsidiary objectives were set which delimited the path of this action research:

– Identify the learner's perception, feelings and actions when Visible Learning strategies were performed by the teacher.
– Identify difficulties when using Visible Learning strategies.
– Identify the adaption process when using Visible Learning strategies.

Through different tools to collect precise data, a qualitative methodological process and a deep analysis of it, as well as information will be presented to recognize the teaching-learning process when using Visible Learning. Besides, it is a crucial matter to present some evidence to different educative institutions to consider Visible Learning as an alternative within their teaching English model as a foreign language.

Azimi y Ghanbari (2013) made some research to identify the effect of learning intervention on the production of English as a foreign language with Iranian students representing the intermediate level. They proved that after the intervention, the group increased, on average, the level of production in comparison with another group in the study. Nekoueizadeh (2013) delivered research to identify the effect of using specific strategies as a learning intervention in the teaching-learning process of conditional sentences with Iranian students on the intermediate level. He did not properly use Visible Learning as a main strategy, but some techniques only to promote participation and communication in the classroom. He used a control group and an experimental one with 30 students each. A previous evaluation was made and another one at the end of the study. According to the results, the experimental group improved meaningfully in comparison to the control group. The author concluded that the intervening participation in class promotes communication, stimulates positive effects in the use of conditionals in oral production, and improves the quantity of interaction with L2 (target language). Shiota (2012) tried to identify the effectiveness of learning intervention on students' motivation while learning English as a foreign language. The author performed a type of qualitative research. The participants were undergraduate students taking basic level as a subject in their curriculum. The author intervened her teaching process by using conversational shadowing as a strategy to promote participation in class. To collect some data, she interviewed every single student in her class. Positive and negative comments were collected, but she identified that the most of the negative comments came from students who felt insecure with their level of English. The author proposed a correlation with the proficiency level of the fore-

ign language and some anxiety in class. The results obtained showed that intrinsic motivation increased, and as a consequence, the level of anxiety decreased. Watkins (2012) made a qualitative research to identify the relationship between confidence and fluency in oral production. The research was not focused on the use of Visible Learning in the classroom, but some kind of strategies to promote participation in class as an intervention were presented, like questioning – as a strategy to promote confidence on students' participation. The author varied the way he questioned students. Only one subject participated in the experiment. The results showed that after 12 weeks of improving the teacher-student interaction, anxiety decreased, fluency was improved as well as sentences complexity. In this case, intervention strategies helped the student to improve his oral production, eliminating emotional factors and grammar problems. Tamai (2005) conducted a study in which he compared oral strategies and dictation as a way to improve listening. The action research was conducted with forty-five undergraduate students in a 3-month period. He divided the participants in three groups: basic, intermediate and advanced. The results showed an improvement with the techniques used over dictation. According to the author, this is possible due to the fact that there is a significant interaction with the language and the decrease of anxiety in the learning process.

As a conclusion, intervening a class, making it more dynamic, creating fun, and motivating students through the use of different techniques – all these considered as a means of intervention in the language classroom will not only affect the teaching-learning process, but also can improve oral participation in class. Moreover, all these activities and techniques become a determinant factor which has a strong impact upon the cultural aspects of language development, listening skills, and intrinsic motivation. Despite all these benefits, it is important to know the whole process, its difficulties and the learners' perception of the intervention.

Through this present study, it is intended to present a deeper perspective of an action research study, as an intervention in the language classroom, using some visible learning techniques, which make their implementation possible into the English language program in the undergraduate context.

Methodology

Learning intervention was elected as the methodology to conduct this action research. According to Mesec (1998), an action research is the analy-

sis of a problem in which it is needed to identify variables, structure, forms, interaction between participants in a specific context. Cresswell (2008) defines it as a deep exploration of a delimited system, though not only a data collection, but also a system which makes participants part of the research. That is why, this type of methodology applies to this research, because it is intended to find out the use of Visible Learning in an English class with level 1 students in the undergraduate program, and with the objective to gather data, and to know the experience, feelings, and perception, as well as difficulties to apply the visible learning strategies in class. Besides that, through this process it is possible to promote a reflection to analyze the benefits and weaknesses when intervening the teaching-learning process.

Visible Learning is based on evidence from John Hattie's research (2008). He said the 'visible' aspect refers to making student learning visible to teachers so they can know whether they are having an impact on the learning. Further, it also refers to making teaching visible to the student as well, so that students learn to become their own teachers and an important component of becoming lifelong learners. The 'learning' part is the need to think of teaching with learning in the forefront and with the idea that teaching should be considered primarily in terms of its impact on student learning.

According to Hattie (2008), when teaching and learning are "visible" or, when it is clear what teachers are teaching and what students are learning, student achievement increases. His 15-year research project focused on what impacts directly on learning. Hattie mentioned that in the top influences, the teaching practice is one of the most powerful elements that can promote or block learning. He also referred to the role of the teacher, who instead of calling himself a facilitator, should be an activator of the learning (Hattie, 2008). According to him, sharing learning intentions, questioning and obtaining feedback from all (the teacher and the student) are the elements of an impactful intervention which are mainly related to the teaching practice. That is why in the course of this action research, the teacher-researcher decided to intervene in these three areas of his teaching practice, in order to promote the learners' participation, and as a consequence, to improve oral production in L2.

Sample

The sample group was made up of 22 students, 18 men and 4 women of an age range of 18-25 years old. They were placed at level 1 of the English

undergraduate program at Universidaddel Valle de Mexico (UVM). All these students come from different majors such Business, Arts, Architecture and Design, Engineering and Social Sciences. At UVM, the English undergraduate program consists of 5 levels – 75 hours of practice each. Each level should take 5 hours a week for a total of 60, plus more than 15 hours of on-line workbook study, using a learning management system.

Level 1 is mostly composed of students who opted not to take the placement test, because they consider they need more practice in the language, and also – of students who were placed in this level according to the test. That is why this group was a multilevel group, as there are students with basic knowledge and some who had had little or no previous contact with the target language.

Level 1 was chosen for this action research because this very level represents a significant sample, similar to studies carried out by Gonzalez, Lima and Morales (2004), Lemuset al. (2008), and Villa et al. (2013). Considering the above, the participants in this study had a few linguistic elements to develop and manifest their oral production of English as a foreign language. On the other hand, due to the fact that the students are new to the language program at the University, it would be easier to express their perceptions and feelings toward the strategies implemented, without taking into account their prejudice or conceptions with regard to the previous levels.

Instruments

According to the objectives of this article, and to collect information, these instruments were used:

- Interview – pre-intervention: 6 structured questions regarding previous experiences before joining UVM.
- Students´ Journals: which learners had to write weekly and post on the LMS, in order to record their experiences, feelings and perceptions toward VL, and the strategies used.
- Teacher's Journal: where he recorded his perceptions and experience using the strategies in class, and students' perception as well.
- Class Observation Format: observation was performed by another teacher in the language department, focused on the VL strategies and students´ participation and motivation in class.
- Interview – post-intervention: 6 structured questions regarding the students' perception regarding the intervention and participation in class after using the VL strategies.

Procedure

The whole process described below was carried out between the months of September and November 2017, during the autumn term according to the academic program at UVM. As it was stated before, three main strategies were chosen to use in class: sharing learning intentions, questioning techniques, and getting and obtaining feedback from all.

The first one, sharing learning intentions, was applied every week, usually on Mondays, to share with learners the intentions (outcomes) of the unit. Level 1 consisted of 12 units, one unit per week, so the program considered to start a new unit every week. Once the intentions were shared, the students and the teacher discussed and provided feedback about the intentions. The objective was to give the learner a clear idea what, how and why the content will be delivered, and to make them part of the process as well (Hattie, 2008), allowing them, at the same time, to take decisions with regard to the objectives, intentions and outcome of the class.

The second strategy: questioning techniques, intended mainly to randomize the way the teacher called students to participate and answer questions in class. The teacher used popsicle sticks with students' names on them, allowing to call different students randomly, and as a consequence, the majority of the students participated in classes. This technique promotes balanced participation, motivation and expectation for learners' participation in classes (Hattie, 2008). Another features of the questioning strategies used were as follows: allowing the students to formulate their own questions, giving thinking time and changing the type if questions: e.g. instead of saying: "do you understand?" the teacher should ask: "how confident do you feel about ...?".

Finally, regarding feedback from all, the teacher instructed students to use the thumbs up-down technique. When the teacher asked: "show me how confident you feel about ...", students must show their thumbs up if they feel confident, down if they feel no confidence. Then, the teacher can continue or go back to a certain topic, content, or activity. Another technique implemented in this area, was the traffic light. The teacher used color cards in a shape and size that could be seen from all seats in the classroom. The colors in the cards were: red, green and yellow. The teachers used the traffic light cards in a variety of ways. Instead of using thumbs up-down, when the teacher asked "how confident do you feel ...?", students used the cards, red if they feel no confidence, green if they feel confident, and yellow if they are hesitant with regard to that topic, content or activity. The teacher used the same card for true or false statements, yes or no questions, and to ma-

ke the cards more useful, the teacher drew letters A, B and C in each of the cards, so the students can vote for a wide range of control exercises that demand instant feedback, so the teacher can move on or go back, being an activator of learning (Hattie, 2008).

According to Visible Learning by performing these kinds of techniques, the teacher and students will obtain crucial feedback to take decisions about the course of action to follow in class, and the most important of all is that it makes the learner part of the process, allowing the teacher "to be an activator of the knowledge rather than a facilitator", which turns students into their own teachers.

Pre-Intervention

A structured interview was conducted as a diagnostic stage concerning the learners' previous experience in an English language class. According to Canales y Peinado (1994), the interview is a technique of common use between the social researchers, so-called, qualitative, which provides an atmosphere of trust and security for the participants. For this reason, and because the participants of the group were newly recruited students at UVM, it was considered appropriate to use this technique. It should be noted that all of the instruments used to gather information were requested to be in Spanish because the students' language competence at a basic level might cause them to have difficulties to express themselves in L2 in a written way, and affect the interpretation of data collected.

With the information obtained from the interview, the methodology of the research was tailored and the VL strategies chosen (sharing learning intentions, questioning and obtaining feedback from all) with regard to the context and needs of the students. Within the methodology, the three objectives of this research were determined: perception and feelings of the participants, the difficulties they face and their process of adaptation to the use of Visible Learning in the EFL classroom.

Intervention

According to the data collected in the pre-intervention stage, three main strategies from Visible Learning were adopted. Due to the time of the program and the contents to be covered during the autumn term, the VL strategies would be used in class, as a support to the teacher to promote participation.

In the first week of the intervention, the teacher explained students the essence of the action research project, and told them that they will experience some techniques that might seem different from those they had learned before. Besides, the students were told that the only purpose is to motivate them to participate actively in class, using L2. They all agreed to participate in the project.

In the second week, the strategies were explained and modeled. The students were told that during the process of data collection they would experience working with journals prepared by the teacher and students. Finally, the students were assigned to write in a weekly format class their feelings, ideas, perceptions and limitations of the class, and especially, their perceptions concerning the use of L2 in class.

Once it was considered that these strategies had been assimilated, and the level of confidence in the techniques increased, both the teachers and the students wrote their journal weekly. They all had to continue writing about their feelings and perceptions, the difficulties they faced and the process of adaptation of VL. These strategies were aligned with the program content in the English language program. Additionally, the class was observed three times during the term. The observer was another teacher from the language department, who with a specific rubric and observation format, focused her observations in accordance with the strategies of Visible Learning and tried to determine how they promoted participation in L2.

Post-Intervention

After 8 weeks, a second interview was conducted, as a focus group. This post-intervention interview followed the model of 7 stages proposed by Canales and Peinado (1994): initial stage, polarization, initial provocation, revocations, silence, individual talking from certain participants. The interviewer directs the conversation with the whole group, then the group is closed and finally, the interpretation comes out. The session was recorded throughout the process, and e researcher proceeded to take notes for later analysis.

Data Collection

The information data was collected during the months of September to December 2017. The information from the interviewer's notes were transcribed for the analysis. The learner's journal and the researcher's notes were

taken to analyze the obtained information that could contribute to the analysis of the objectives set at the beginning of the investigation. The class observation from the colleagues was interpreted too and used for the analysis purpose to support the research. Finally, all the information was reduced to specific thematic issues to help the drafting of this research article.

Data Analysis

The qualitative research proposed by Rodríguez (1996) was used in this paper, in which the relevant information was extracted, reduced and presented. For the analytical stage which is the purpose of this article, Rodriguez proposes three moments: the reduction of data, the provision and processing of data, and the acquisition and development of verification of conclusions.

For the stage of data reduction, identification and classification of elements, common within all the instruments, was done. The reduction will identify feelings, perceptions, and difficulties of the learners participating in class and using L2. Expressions, sentences and words that are framed in a comprehensive way related to the students' experience, and the researcher could give a qualitative treatment. Regarding the transformation of the data, the representation of information ideas, quotes and key words were necessary to obtain relevant information. For the verification and presentation of the results and conclusions in this article, we opted for the inclusion of quotes with some narrative fragments, as well as the interpretations from the researcher, who according to this model, presents an important qualitative storyline.

Results

According to what is stated in the initial stage, for all participants Visible Learning was something new, and "they were enthusiastic with the idea to work with alternative strategies inside the classroom which will help them to improve the oral production" through participation and using the target language. In the initial stage of explaining, positive reactions were observed. In the first weeks of performing the strategies, most students felt uncomfortable participating in class, especially when they were making and answering questions in English. An additional difficulty for them was to speak English in front of the class. This demonstrates that speaking in a foreign language was unpleasant, especially in a formal university context.

When performing the techniques, at the beginning, it was difficult to make students feel part of the learning process, due to the fact that it is

a cultural notion that the teacher has to lecture on or explain, making, simultaneously, the learner a passive participant of the class. However, at the end of week 3, it was noted that 90% of the participants were now able not only to participate actively in class, but to offer feedback process when the teacher asked how confident they felt with regard to the topic, content or activity presented. Subsequently all the students except one, tried to speak English most of the time. The remaining student manifested some problems such as "feeling shy and insecure in producing L2, and also about the fact his partners might laugh due his difficulties in pronunciation." Two other students commented that they felt some of the techniques a little bit childish and repetitive. The word most repeated in the initial interview was "embarrassed," referring to speaking English in a formal context, as they mentioned, due the fact that previous learning experiences "were more a lecture style, rather than promoting active participation and oral production in class". As a corrective action in class, the teacher proceeded to discuss the importance of the learners' participation while using the strategies, to achieve successfully the objective of the investigation. After this clarification, 21 of the 22 students performed all the strategies properly and showed some excitement about being now part of the learning process but not a lectured part. The student mentioned above was manifesting problems when the strategy was used, so it is interesting to quote what he said in the initial interview: "I didn't have any previous learning experience with the language; in the school I come from, there was no English teacher, so during all the 3 years of high school instruction I had no English classes at all." That is why some resistance to active partition and the strategies in use were present all the time despite the intervention.

After the third week, the VL strategies were totally embedded in the classroom dynamic, then the students could actively participate in almost every class. Since the intentions were clear at the beginning of each unit, the questioning was randomizing and they were providing feedback to the teacher during the whole process. The familiarization with the strategies were also covered in their journals, which they had to share with the teacher and fellow students, using the LMS system provided by the university as an online workbook. Going through their journal, more confidence in the use of the strategies and class participation was noted. The classroom observation format and notes from the teacher were expressed in the following way: "there was a clear feeling of motivation, rapport between the students and the teacher, as well as a defined sense of where the class was going to, but most of all, there was a lack of resistance when the students

were called out to participate in front of the groups, using L2 all the time, both the teacher and the students worked in harmony".

Around week 4, the participants expressed in their journals that they feel more confident in class now than before. The qualitative comments focused on three main axes:

– the class was more enjoyable and different;
– teacher (by using Visible Learning) provided much more confidence to speak English in class;
– teacher motivated students to participate more without any judgment from all.

Around fifth and sixth weeks, the teacher-researcher wrote in his journal that students were now making positive comments about the class in general; they showed a truly sense of helping weak students to make them become more proficient in the language. As Hattie (2008) said, students become their own teachers. While, in the first week of class, they felt nervous and reluctant to speak English, around the fifth week, students knew exactly what to expect from the class, since learning intentions were not only shared but designed for both teachers and students. The learners expressed in their journal that "it was not necessary now to be called out using the popsicle sticks, since they all want to participate in class", because they were aware that those 5 hours of class every week were the only opportunities they had to practice L2, and the only way of doing it, was by being more participative in class".

In the last week of intervention, the dynamic of class changed drastically, since the teacher and students created an excellent rapport, and as the teacher mentioned: "I now feel more confident about the way I question my students, and I really enjoy teaching this class, the students are participating more actively". The students' comments about the class in the post intervention interview mentioned that they expected the class to be similar to what they previously experienced, finding the class to be boring, much as a routine, and not challenging at all. All the learners mentioned that the class "was really enjoyable and fun". However, one reluctant student wrote: "there is no human power which will make me speak English in front of everybody, I don't simply want to, I'm not going to do it, I like the class, but I don't like to feel embarrassed". As it was mentioned before, it can be concluded that this specific student felt some aversion toward oral production itself, and that VL strategies did not cause the expected impact on him.

It should be noted that at the end of the 6th week, it was detailed in the researcher's journal: "students have increased their oral participation in class, so much that it is now difficult to ask them not to participate; when

I had to call someone randomly to participate in any exercise of oral production, now I have to discontinue this technique, because literally all my students want to participate in class; ... participation in class is now a game for them ...". In the post intervention interview, the conclusive data was obtained: most of the students stated that their feelings toward the VL and the English class overall were positive, they really liked it, and that this was something new for them, regarding their previous experiences in learning the language. Only one student stated that he was "ashamed" to speak English in and outside the class, and this attitude was manifested for the whole term. The majority of the students expressed their difficulty to change their perception toward an English class which, in the past, tended to be more grammatical than communicative, due to the fact that "speaking Spanish was present all the time" because the teacher did not promote communication. According to 21 out of the 22 students, the adaptation of the strategies "made the class become more dynamic, interesting, and we feel motivated to participate".

In the case of VL contribution to oral production, it has to be stressed that more than one half of the group pointed to the advantages of using the strategies in terms of production, saying that at the previous stage of their learning experience, speaking English in class was "a difficult task", and they even mentioned that English was a "very difficult language", not only when they were speaking to native speakers but also when they were "translating everything at the moment of speaking with someone". The whole group remarked the fact that class participation was strongly increased, because they now "feel more confident" to participate.

Regarding the conclusions recorded in the researcher-teacher journal: "Visible Learning was useful for me as a teacher, but also for learners, first of all, because they helped us to deal with some paradigms towards oral production in English classes, since most of students come from grammar translation classes they encountered in their previous learning experiences, and therefore, they did not want to speak English in class due their lack of confidence; they simply did not like or they were not used to such a form of teaching. VL was very useful as an initial approach to the oral production of beginner students. Although VL is based on very basic ideas about teaching, it was helpful in changing this initial perception of me as a teacher and made students speak more English in class. Besides, VL allows students to express themselves with their own ideas, making them feel free to do it".

Conclusion

The experience of basing Visible Learning on three main strategies to improve oral production in English as a foreign language in A1-A2 undergraduate students at the *Universidad del Valle de México*, was mostly positive, especially when they completed the stage of adaptation to them. The confidence level for the participation in class was increased, the teachers and the learners felt safe when performing the strategies. Another important aspect of this intervention is that Visible Learning could be a support to the teaching-learning process. At the end of the intervention, the learners felt confident and positive about the strategies – sharing learning intentions, questioning and obtaining feedback from all. They were able to make decisions towards the learning content and the way it should be delivered. They also participated more actively in class, the way of teacher questioning was improved, and they also were able to provide meaningful feedback during the whole process, in which they turned into the main actors of their own learning. The vast majority of them perceived the strategies as support tools to change paradigms of their previous learning experiences.

The difficulties presented during the intervention were precisely based on the pre-conceived ideas attributed to students who were critical about being judged while speaking English in class; this was an initial resistance element preventing them from active participation. Also, it is worth saying that, in the initial weeks, the process of adaptation required effort, perseverance and discipline to carry out the Visible Learning strategies appropriately.

As noted by Shiota (2012) in his study, there is a correlation between the level of mastery of a foreign language and the level of anxiety. As noted in this research, the anxiety refers to the use of the language itself and to the possible criticism or judgment concerning oral production. The results obtained in this research showed that the motivation and the level of confidence of the participants increased with the use and adaptation to Visible Learning, and consequently, the anxiety to communicate verbally decreased.

Limitations

A limitation in this case was the absence of individual interviews face to face. According to Kvale (2011), through individual interviews, more knowledge is generated through the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Although the journal provides an advantage in the stage of data collection and data reduction, the individual interview could have pro-

vided more detailed information. These individual face to face interviews were omitted due the fact that the syllabus content had to be delivered, simultaneously with the course of the action research. All this is time consuming.

Future Research

According to the intervention carried out and based on the results obtained, it is pertinent to perform qualitative research on the perception and the difficulties from the teaching process point of view. In this way, information from another perspective could be provided, which will contribute to an effective implementation of Visible Learning in teaching and learning English as a foreign language at the university context in Mexico.

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