

**INSTRUCTOR'S AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF THE SIGN LANGUAGE  
COURSE IN A STATE UNIVERSITY**

Dolly Ramos Gallego

Stefania Olaya Castañeda

A paper submitted to the Language Teaching Program in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Licenciado en bilingüismo.

UNIVERSIDAD TECNOLÓGICA DE PEREIRA  
FACULTAD DE BELLAS ARTES Y HUMANIDADES  
LICENCIATURA EN BILINGÜISMO CON ENFASIS EN INGLES  
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Directora de proyecto

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El presente proyecto de investigación tuvo como objetivo investigar las estrategias empleadas para enseñar lenguaje de señas a personas oyentes, al igual que indagar en las perspectivas de los estudiantes acerca del componente de enseñanza empleado durante las clases.

Como resultados se muestran dos aspectos los cuales son; la importancia de diseñar con anterioridad los planeadores de clase y los objetivos a alcanzar en cada lección, y el segundo aspecto es las sugerencias dadas por los estudiantes tales como: la practica en diferentes contextos y la variedad en las actividades y métodos empleados para enseñar vocabulario.

Se destacan como conclusiones que los métodos usados para enseñar lenguaje de señas a personas no oyentes no se pueden adoptar para enseñar el mismo idioma a los estudiantes oyentes. Ya que el lenguaje de señas es una segunda lengua para las personas oyentes y por tal motivo se deben emplear métodos que les ayuden en el proceso de adquirir este segundo idioma.

The current study has as an objective to investigate the methodologies used to teach sign language (SLG) to hearing people, in a SLG program for hearings, and also to look into the students' perspectives about the methodologies used in the SLG classes.

The results show two aspects, these are: the importance to design the lesson plan and the lesson aims prior to the class; and the second aspect was the students' suggestions, such as the practice in different contexts, and the variety in the activities as same as in the methods used to teach vocabulary.

The conclusion obtained at the end of this research was that the methods used to teach SLG to deaf students cannot be adopted to teach the same language to hearing students; as a result of the fact that the hearing students are learning SLG as their second language, and for that reason it is important to apply methods that help them to acquire the SLG as a second language.

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## INTRODUCTION

Currently, there are more people around the world interested in learning not only the economical and global languages, but also more people engaged in learning the minority language as sign language. Instructors and investigators are concerned with the importance of teaching the SLG as a possible factor to improve the cognitive development in hearing learners (O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra, 2014). In addition, other instructors as Mengesha (2010) describes that learning this language will help the students to increase the non-linguistic, visual-spatial, and memory abilities.

According to the previous authors' concern, the reasons why this research was conducted was to provide an analysis that will serve as a baseline and diagnostic study for future proposals in relation to methodologies and also to expose deaf instructors and hearing learners' perceptions who were enrolled in the sign language classes in Local State University of Pereira.

This study is a call for future research to create and adapt material to teach sign language (SLG) to hearing learners, as there is a society who are willing to communicate with the deaf community, and this is an opportunity to make our world more inclusive.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is an increasing interest in learning foreign languages as a way to communicate with different people around the world. Consequently, the amount of bilingual people has been increasing. The UNESCO (2005) estimates that approximately half of the world population is bilingual and fairly does not exist any country in which the bilingualism is not evidenced. On the other hand, people who are bilingual possess higher malleability and flexibility than the monolingual people (UNESCO, 2005).

Macnamara (1967) states that any person who possesses minimal competences in one or more languages, such as (listening, speaking, reading and writing) different to his/her mother tongue is defined as a bilingual person; therefore, bilingualism is the domain and the conscious use of two or more languages within different contexts. On the other hand, there is a language that is not essential produced through the oral mode and is named Sign language (SLG). According to Grosjean (2011) people who learn this kind of language are considered bimodal bilingualism (refers to a bilingual person who is competent in one oral language and one sign language) in the case of the hard of hearing their native language is SLG and their second is the language of the hearing majority; on the other hand, if a hearing person is learning sign language is also considered bilingual, because he/she speaks her/his native language and the second is the sign language (Grosjean, 2011).

Nowadays, a growing number of deaf students are enrolled in higher education programs, the increased presence of deaf students within a university context is a situation that occurs based on two factors: first the recognition of the status of sign language as an official language, and second the historical moment in which public inclusion policies have been gradually increasing the access of people with special needs to different social contexts and their active participation in the same (Lang 2002).

Colombia initiated the process of the deaf community inclusion in 1984, but its language was officially recognized by the Colombian government in 1996, since the Colombian law 324, article 2 states that the Colombian Government recognizes the SLG as their own from the deaf community in the country. Due to the need of communication within the deaf community in Colombia, the hearing-impaired society has developed its own sign language, which is recognized and accepted as the official language of the deaf community in Colombia. Likewise, the Colombia National Ministry of Education argues that each institution must carry out the PEI (Institutional Education Project) in which the deaf community have to be immersed, and the hearing impaired students must be integrated in the hearing scholar context.

In that sense, Colombia is betting on an inclusive education where hard of hearing is part of a hearing society. On the other hand, people need to consider that deaf people acquire Spanish to communicate with the hearing community; however, in many cases, hearing people are not able to communicate with the deaf population as they do not know

the sign language. Consequently, a study conducted by Mehrabian (1972) suggests that some hearing people consider important the learning of sign language inasmuch as they wish to be involved in the deaf culture and because it allows a better communication, as well as general learning experience.

At the Local State University of Pereira (Colombia), where this study was conducted, there is a sign language program which integrates deaf people in a hearing community. This program helps administrative staff, professors, and students to be involved in sign language contexts; in this way, they will be able to communicate and transfer knowledge to the deaf population belonging to the university. The sign language program aim is to achieve in hearing students a good communicative competence in sign language, for that reason some members of the hearing community attend the sign language classes.

Approximately, there are 100 students enrolled in SLG classes at the above-mentioned university; however, the drop-out rate is very high, evidence of this is that just around the 6% of enrolled students complete all the process in the SLG learning. In view of the high drop-out rate, the present study intends to describe the state of the art of the SLG teaching at the Local State University of Pereira. In that sense, the current study provided an analysis that helped to distinguish the different situations that occur in the SLG courses, and this study served as a baseline and diagnostic study for future proposals in the field of sign language teaching. The researchers were immersed in the SLG

lessons, with the purpose of identifying the kind of techniques the teacher used. In that order of ideas, the researchers tried to find if the underlying reasons as to why people drop-out might be due to the unawareness of motivating techniques used in the classroom.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### Main question

- What are deaf instructor's perceptions in relation to design a lesson for hearing learners?
- How do hearing learners perceive the sign language lesson?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Teaching sign language requires the implementation of different lexical strategies to either hearing or hearing impaired students. A great deal of studies about sign language teaching proposes different lexical strategies for teaching this natural language. Different researches suggest varied strategies to develop the lexical competence mostly to deaf people. Nonetheless, there are hearing people that want to learn the sign language for academic or communicative purposes and there is little research that suggests lexical strategies for this population. In order to understand the perspective of teaching sign language not only to deaf, but hearing learners, there is a need to describe what sign language is, how its lexical component is taught and what methods are often applied in teaching vocabulary to hearing learners.

### **1. Sign Language**

#### 1.1 Acquisition of a language

Hearing people are looking for a manner to communicate with hearing impaired people; for this reason, some researchers had been studying and developing different methods to fulfill the necessity to communicate between hearing and deaf people, one of the most useful method designed is sign language created by (Juan Pablo Bonet, 1620) this friar build the bases for a future language what is currently called sign language which is the formal language system for deaf people, this structure involves the employment of values with letters of the alphabet by the use of hands to represent them;

in addition, body language is the way in which a deaf speaker transmits messages through the nonverbal communication by the use of gestures, postures, movement and emotional states that are shown in the speaker's body.

Therefore, in deaf people the first language is the sign language and the second language that they will acquire is the language of the hearing majority in this case Spanish. On top of that, the same case occurs with hearing people that speak their native language and the second language such as sign language.

Accordingly, learning sign language made the learner a bilingual person, due to the fact that their first language is sign language and the second is the language of the hearing majority and vice versa. According to this, Macnamara (1967) states that all people who possess minimal competences in one or more languages, such as (listening, speaking, reading and writing) different to his/her mother tongue is defined as a bilingual person.

A discussion of bilingualism and second language learning distinguishes three types of bilingualism namely compound, coordinate, and subordinate bilingual. Yuko G. Butler & Hakuta (2004, 2006) state those three types of bilingualism, such as:

- Compound bilingual: is a person who learns two languages in the same environment, so that she/he acquires one notion with two verbal expressions.

A compound bilingual has one semantic system, but two linguistic codes.

Usually refers to someone whose two languages are learnt at the same time, in the same context.

- Coordinate bilingual: is a person who acquires two languages in different contexts (home and school). A coordinate bilingual has two semantic systems and two linguistic codes. Usually refers to someone whose two languages are learnt in distinctive separate contexts.
- subordinated bilingual: refers to the person who has a major domain in his/her first language than the foreign language; although, this person possesses two linguistic codes; in other words, the people who possess a higher level of proficiency in the first language than the foreign language, they are assumed to use the first language to infer what is being said or to convey a message in the second language.

However, Grosjean (2011) argues that people who SLG are considered bimodal bilingualism (refers to a bilingual person who is competent in one oral language and one sign language) in the case of the hard of hearing they are considered bimodal bilingualism as well as the hearing people that are competent in SLG, because they speak their native language and the second language is the SLG (Grosjean, 2011).

Basically, these types of bilingualism help teachers take into account the bilingual type that learners will have. As a consequence, this will support teachers to develop methods in second language acquisition such as SLG to improve the learning process in hearing people that are learning that language.

## 1.2 Training to teach Sign Language

Many people in the 21st century want to become bilingual, some people determine to learn a recognized language; however, others prefer to learn a minority language. Unfortunately, many schools lack a teacher who can teach it. This is where a certified teacher can make a huge difference in the culture of a school, and in the lives of students who need them.

Teachers College & Columbia University argue that there is a huge problem in several areas of teaching sign language; given the fact that, firstly some teachers are not certified to teach American Sign Language (ASL). Secondly, lack of theory and research focus on an effective ASL teaching, and finally ignorance or lack of knowledge about the studies related to the teaching practices for American Sign Language teachers. To a certain extent; the same issue is taking place in Colombia, in some cases SLG teachers do not have enough strategies in the teaching of sign language.

A research taken place in Teachers College & Columbia University mentions some important aspects in what teachers need in order to teach sign language:

*“Teachers College & Columbia University proposed some important aspect in which teachers need to be trained “Resources in deafness, American sign language, and linguistics are drawn from the Program in the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Anthropological approaches to communication and culture come from the Program in Anthropology”*

This means that sign language teachers need to know about the techniques and how those techniques help to increase the linguistic competence in students, and also teachers need to be aware about the cultural variations among teaching to hearing students and deaf students.

The resources on deafness as the FENASCOL book “Lenguaje de señas Colombianas” used in Colombia to teach SLG to hearings and deaf learners will guide teachers teach SLG; however, they need methods to teach vocabulary; as a result of the fact that, this is the main focus on the sign language classes addressed to hearing people. As reported by Far (2006) and Chapelle (1994) argue that the lexical competence is a successful method implemented for teaching any language; due the fact that it provides contextualization of the target language. The lexical competence is the basis to develop a fluency communication, and often regarded as the greatest source of problems by language learners (Segler, 2002).

## **2. Lexical Competence**

Far (2006) and Chapelle (1994) argue that the lexical competence is more than knowing a thousand words. According to the authors, the lexical competence takes into consideration the meaning of words, and how those words take place in an appropriate context; what's more this competence is concerned with comprehension and the relation between words.

Furthermore, these authors propose three important components to describe the vocabulary ability: first, context of vocabulary, how the vocabulary is used based on the context and how words can have different meanings according to the environment in which it is used. Second, vocabulary knowledge makes reference about the previous knowledge that the speaker is regarded with the words, and finally metacognitive strategies are the speaker's ability to adapt their use of verbal and nonverbal language to convey a message. These three important components help to develop in students the vocabulary competence.

In addition, the Oxford's classification (1990) proposed that the lexical competence involves two subcategories which are closely connected; the first one are the tools used by students to facilitate the learning process; and the second one, are the elements and techniques used by the teacher to encourage the learners to participate actively in class. Moreover, these two subcategories help the sign language teachers to develop strategies to facilitate the learning process in students that are learning sign

language, these two subcategories are the vocabulary learning strategies and vocabulary teaching strategies.

### 2.1 Vocabulary learning Strategies

Cameron (2001) defines vocabulary learning strategies as a stepping stone to learning and using grammar. She emphasizes that vocabulary learning is based on words, but that learning does not focus on the words memorization. On the contrary, she mentions that learning words is a cyclical process in which step by step the lexical knowledge is extended by meeting those words again and again through the practice and through the communicative act.

According to the author, vocabulary learning strategies involve knowing a word, its form, its meaning, and its use. She points out that to achieve the lexical knowledge, it is important to use the vocabulary learning strategies as having sources to encounter new words, to have a clear image about the words learnt, learn the meaning of those words, make a strong memory connection between the words and the context, and use the words learnt as much as possible.

## **3. Teaching Vocabulary**

Harmer (2011) states that teachers are artists because they have to implement different ways to teach; in spite of the fact that learners acquire the vocabulary when they can see or hear that vocabulary in context. He also proposes a coherent sequence that

involves two steps for teaching vocabulary; first, introducing vocabulary, the elicitation is so important to contextualize and activate prior knowledge in learners; and second, practicing vocabulary is based on boost the learners to use the vocabulary that they know. This sequence presented by Harmer also involves teaching vocabulary methods.

### 3.1 Teaching vocabulary methods

During the process of teaching and learning vocabulary an important problem occurs: How does memory work? Researchers into the working of memory distinguish between the following systems (Thornbury, 2002)

- Short term store: is the brain capacity to hold a limited number of items of information for periods of time up to a few seconds. But successful vocabulary learning involves more than holding words for a few seconds. To integrate the words into long term memory they need to be subjected to different kinds of operations.
- Working memory: focusing on word long enough to retain that word. To perform this system the teacher will utilize external sources.
- Long term memory: this kind of memory has an enormous capacity and its contents are durable over time. In addition, to promote new materials into

permanent long-term memory, Thornbury (2002) describes some principles, these are: repetition, retrieval spacing, imaging, mnemonics, attention, and motivation.

According to the methods presented every word and phrase must be correctly identified multiple times to obtain the highest score, while the variety of exercises and activities already presented prevents the repetition from being boring. Those teaching vocabulary methods help teachers to improve the language learning process in their students.

In agreement to Barcroft (2008) the foreign language words and phrases should be reinforced along the way with pictures and practice, but elements that could distract from vocabulary learning such as sentence building should be avoided at the beginning stages of language learning.

### 3.2 Teaching vocabulary in a second language

As reported by Barcroft (2008) who argues that learners successfully make the association between a second language word and its meaning, that meaning must be conveyed in a comprehensible manner. In line with the author one method for making foreign terms comprehensible and thus promoting vocabulary learning is to present each word in a variety of ways, which is the use of a number of techniques to make foreign language vocabulary memorable for language learners.

For instance, every foreign language term is presented not only as text, but also as audio, so that language learners can hear the correct pronunciation as many times as they need to fix it in their mind. Many of the foreign language terms are also presented along with pictures that convey the meaning in yet another form. This additional input reinforces the word's meaning and assists the learner in remembering it (Barcroft, 2008).

Nation (2001) emphasizes that learning vocabulary is a cumulative process and that it must be deliberately taught, learned, and recycled. This is critical for several reasons: first, learners need to encounter the words in a variety of rich contexts, second students remember words when they have manipulated them in different ways, so variety is essential for vocabulary teaching, and finally they forget words within the first twenty-four hours after class, so it is important to follow up a vocabulary lesson with homework that recycles the words.

Vocabulary is a necessary ingredient for communication, for that reason one of the main tasks in teachers is to help students develop a rich and useful vocabulary inventory.

#### 3.4 Teaching vocabulary to hearing people that are learning sign language

Sign language and spoken language instruction are similar in some aspects; however, there are also differences between the two, for instance: modality differences involving visual rather than auditory perception and processing, no commonly used

writing system in sign language, and the socio-cultural history of deaf-hearing relations. SLG structure is heavily influenced by the ability to display meaningful streams of information simultaneously as manual (the hands) and non-manual (mouth/lip movements). Such simultaneity differs from the structure represented in the spoken language, and this may have an effect on how adult hearing learners are able to process visual input (Quinto, 2011).

For that reason, the author argues that one of the challenges that lies ahead for curriculum developers is to investigate the best ways to teach SLG as a second language to students who are accustomed to the spoken languages. As the teaching of SLG focused mostly on the learning of vocabulary. This was likely due, in part, to the lack of resources for representing the complexities of a visual-spatial language, through other factors that may contribute to the practice. That is why teaching vocabulary is the main focus in most of the SLG teachers, and this may lead SLG hearing students to believe that the learning of SLG has only learned the signs and adjust them in the Spanish grammar. However, there is any study about the impact that pedagogies in SLG as a second language have on learning for that reason it is difficult to define a method used by the SLG teachers to teach SLG to hearing learners.

#### **4. The importance of lesson plan for class development**

Mishra (2009) argues that the importance of design lesson plan is because it provides a clear idea about what the teacher expects from students to achieve at the end

of the class, and this will guide the teacher during the development of the class. However, there are teachers that do not use lesson plans; accordingly the author's those teachers will face the following problems in their class, as:

- Aimless wondering: this concept makes reference about the students' negative feelings such frustration given the fact that they will feel that their learning process is very slow or that they are not achieving the skills they supposed to acquire.
- Failure to achieve objectives: this makes reference about the students incapability to acquire the lesson aims, and this lead to a mayor consequence as there is not a clear aim for the class, it is very hard to achieve the course objectives by the learners.
- Poor connection with proceeding or subsequence lessons: this last concept proposed by Mishra (2009) is based on the lack of relation among the topic given in class and the previous lessons.

On the other hand, Harmer (2011) also considers important the design of the lesson plan and he highlights three important aspects that all lesson plans must take into account, the aims must be realistic and achievable, the topic has to be specific, and the activities or task must be meaningful. If the teacher takes into account these aspects the

lesson is going to be a success as it covers the teacher's idea, follow the syllabus requirements, and fill the learners' needs and interest.

To conclude, humans as part of society need to be communicative active, but to achieve this ability first people need to know words that help them to express their needs (Vygotsky, 1962). What to learn? And how to use it? Those are the questions that a language teachers need to take into account in order to accomplish their objective which is to help learners to be communicatively competent in order to express their thoughts. Therefore, the objective of a sign language teacher is that hearing people can acquire the sign language as a functional language, and this is a challenge for sign language professors. The promotion of the lexical competence in teaching sign language in hearing people will be very useful for sign language professors, on the grounds that this promotion involves three methods such as the lexical competence, the use of sign language as a second language in hearing people, and some important methods for teaching vocabulary in sign language classes.

On the other hand, the lexical competence which involves vocabulary acquisition plays an important role in the methodologies that sign languages teachers will implement in classes for hearing people; given the fact that it shows the educators the way in which the learners acquire the vocabulary, and it provides them with useful sources to teach the language; nevertheless, teaching vocabulary needs to be taught involving the learners in context, for instance, teach animals by using flashcards or realia, showing them the

animal in context. In addition, vocabulary teaching strategies help sign language professors to achieve in hearing students vocabulary learning strategies. Finally, lexical is not just to know several words, it is to apply those words in an adequate context taking into account the meaning of the words in what is being said.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Article to incorporate into lit review: Teaching sign language to hearing children as  
a possible factor in cognitive enhancement**

**O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra (2014)**

Learning sign language does not only allow to relate to a deaf community, also learning this language will help the students to increase the nonlinguistic, visual-spatial, and memory abilities. The hypothesis underlying this study is that the learning a visual gestural language may increment in students, their attention, visual and spatial memory (O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra, 2014).

O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra (2014) examined a hypothesis in their study of teaching sign language to hearing children compared to a group of children attending to an English class. The hypothesis stated that the experience of learning a visual-gestural language may improve children's attention, visual discrimination and spatial memory abilities. According to this, the aim of this study is to evaluate the effects of sign language instruction to hearing children.

O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra (2014) explored the hypothesis by studying 14 first and second graders between 6 and 7 years old, this group attend a course in Italian sign language (LIS group). The other group was formed by 14 first and

second graders attending to English classes, but this group was not exposed to sign language. The children exposed to this research are from monolingual Italian families and they have no experience with sign language nor the deaf culture. The study least two years, and during that time the two groups were exposed to the Raven PM 47 test, this test evaluates the visual spatial cognition and level of mental development, and the objective is to apply this test in order to investigate the performance of children who were exposed to sign language and the children who do not.

The LIS group attended their classes at afternoon, one hour a week and the classes were taught by a deaf teacher whose first language was sign language and also a hearing teacher that know about sign language go with the group. O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra (2014) reported on the results that sign language programs help to improve in students the cognitive development. The second study group was formed by a group of 14 children who attended an English course as a second language. The main aim to study the second student group was to determine whether the acquisition of LIS or a second language raise visual discrimination and recognition of spatial relations with students; also the researchers wanted to explore if sign language increase in students the process and memorize visual stimuli through space.

O. Capirci, A. Cattani, P. Rossini & V. Volterra (2014) suggest that hearing children that learn sign language improve more rapidly the visual spatial cognition and spatial memory; however, the students that do not attend a sign language course will

increase their spatial abilities but just with time. Those findings are supported by previous studies which argues that the experience with sign language increment the nonverbal cognitive skills (Emmorey, Kosslyn & Bellugi, 1993). In addition the focus of this article “Teaching sign language to hearing children as a possible factor in cognitive enhancement” was on cognitive improvement as a consequence of sign language teaching, this also show an alternative to communicate with others; therefore, the findings suggest that the implementation of sign language as a second language will be very useful to improve the linguistic and cognitive skills in hearing students.

**Article to incorporate into lit review: The Effect of Integrated Language Teaching on Students' Vocabulary Retention as Compared to Non-Integrated One: The Case of Grade Ten Students of Jimma University Community School.**

**Yohannes Tefera Mengesha (2010)**

Several studies reported that vocabulary plays an important role in the learning of a second language. Rodriguez & Sadoski (2002) argue that the basis that allow to build a foreign language is the lexical competence of that language. The frequently problems that a foreign language learner has is that the communication breaks down because the student does not know the correct word or maybe does not use the right words (Allen, 1983).

Mengesha (2010) analyzed two theories in the study “The Effect of Integrated Language Teaching on Students' Vocabulary Retention”. The first hypothesis examine how the vocabulary will be integrated in the four different skills, and if this will be helpful to increase the second language learner process. The second hypothesis explore how the vocabulary will promote the communication and retention in students. In accordance with the author, the aim that highlight this study is to assess whether or not the vocabulary lesson will improve in foreign language learners the vocabulary retention abilities.

In order to conduct the study, two grade ten sections of Jimma University Community School (JUCS) were involved in the study, and also 10 English teachers of the school participated in the study so that they were in charge of the group A and B. Group A were offered vocabulary lessons designed by the researcher. On the other hand, group B attends the usual vocabulary lessons that appear in the students' textbook. The data were collected from interviews, classroom observation and vocabulary retention test, the test was applied after each unit was covered, the objective to apply this test was to investigate which of the groups performed better in the vocabulary retention test. However the English lessons for both groups were taught by the teacher and the researcher was an observer.

The vocabulary lessons designed by the researcher were implemented in the group A. The lessons implemented has a main characteristic and is that the all vocabulary lessons integrates the four skills (listening, reading, writing, and speaking). The vocabulary taught was related to the units three and four of the grade 10 English textbook. The study revealed that vocabulary lessons which integrated the language learning teaching; Oxford (2001) states that language learning teaching approach involve the integration of the four skills during the instruction, and this technique helps to score good results in the vocabulary retention test.

The comparison group B took the usual vocabulary lessons proposed by the textbook (English For Ethiopia Student Text For Grade Ten), after the observation of the

lessons and the test results, the researcher could find that the activities and lessons proposed by the textbook were not enough to fulfil the students' needs, given the fact that it does not engage the students to use the vocabulary learnt in order to express their thoughts, opinions and feelings.

Mengesha (2010) reported on the results that the students who took the English lessons which were designed by the researcher show better results in the vocabulary retention test than the students who just developed the vocabulary activities given in the textbook. Therefore, the activities designed in the textbook were not enough for students in order to develop their lexical competence and at the same time their communicative competence. The results obtained during the observation revealed that the vocabulary activities in group B were just thought to develop in students the receptive skills (reading and listening). Nevertheless, teachers know that to develop in students enough vocabulary they need to be communicatively competent they need to involve the four skills; moreover, teachers also confirm that the vocabulary activities usually demand students to write the meaning of the vocabulary so that students will understand what word they can use according to the context.

To sum up, effective vocabulary activities are very useful for students, so that they can practice the language; therefore, the structure of the exercises needs to be well designed in order to engage the students in activities that requires them to use the vocabulary that they have learned, so that they can use the words to exchange thoughts,

opinions, feelings, etc... In this way learners will practice the vocabulary in real context, not just guessing the meaning of the words, filling the gap or matching some clauses.

Consequently, the findings show that teaching vocabulary in an integrated approach improve in students the word retention abilities, also the results suggest that teachers need to expend their time in design relevant vocabulary lessons that promote communication in students.

## METHODOLOGY

This section of the research project contains different components which were relevant for the designing of the paper, and contributed to the successful realization of the project. Initially, this research was conducted as a case study under the parameters of two types of study, which were qualitative and descriptive research. The following information illustrates the type of research, the context, the participants, the data collection and analysis procedures, and finally the researcher's role and the ethical considerations.

### **Type of research**

The present study was framed into the qualitative research as Frankel & Wallen (2009) state that qualitative studies help understand phenomena and rely on linguistic rather than numerical data. This qualitative research studies help to gain an insight into a specific situation and obtain an in-depth look a particular aspect. Consequently, this project was related to qualitative research, as a result of the fact that the study took into consideration data collection methods that were particular to this research, which was carried out in a naturalistic context. The researchers observed a social phenomenon in a particular context which occurred at a Local Stated University of Pereira, specifically in the sign language courses.

Therefore, to follow the parameters of the qualitative research, this study brought into action data collection methods such as flexible and semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. In this order of ideas, this type of research allowed the researchers to have a direct interaction with the participants. For this reason, this research was qualitative as it sought to explore phenomena that occurs in the sign language course.

### **Type of study**

Regarding the research design, this project was classified into the qualitative approaches seeing that most part of this study was structured as an interpretive-descriptive research (IDR) case study, which has become a mainstream in the field of education whose methods rely on linguistic rather than numerical data (Elliot, 1999).

When describing the type of study developed, it is necessary to mention that it was conducted as a case study as it refers to an intensive description and analysis of a single phenomenon experience with a specific population; as claimed by Merriam (1988) who states that case studies, especially qualitative ones, are commonly implemented in the field of education as they provide real-life encounters with the phenomenon under study. As mentioned above, another characteristic of the design of this study was its qualitative nature.

The research study was also developed as a descriptive study, it provided information about behavior, attitudes and other characteristics of a particular group.

Descriptive research involves collecting data that describe events and then “organizes, tabulates, depicts, and describes the data collection”. Descriptive studies have an important role in educational research given the fact that they describe natural educational phenomena which may be interesting for policy makers and educators (Nelson & McLellan, 2001). In this instance, this descriptive study involved high interaction with the participants, which in turn also demands interviews to collect the necessary information, and according to the information collected from the interviews a diagnosis was made.

To conclude, this investigation focused its attention on the data gathered from the participants throughout the research process. This case study was highly descriptive and its path relied on different data sources that was triangulated in order to verify that the data analysis was coherent.

### **Context**

This current project was carried out at the Local State University of Pereira (Colombia), which is located in the suburbs of the city. The university reports that around 19.613 students registered in programs such as industrial, chemistry, electricity, informatics and mechanical engineering and technology; and others, such as healthcare, teaching, arts and humanities, among others. The university also helps in the consolidation of communication systems, so that those systems could fill the students' needs. According to this, the university created the “Vicerrectoría de Responsabilidad

Social y Bienestar Universitario” which is in charge of the social, intercultural and accompaniment of all the students, including students with disabilities in their university process. Hence, “Vicerrectoría de Responsabilidad Social y Bienestar Universitario” offers the sign language course for administrative staff, professors, students, and parents. In this sense, hearing and non-hearing people can communicate among them in order to share knowledge, opinions, and experiences, at the same time this interaction is useful for social transformation.

The sign language program responds to the necessity to achieve the goals of communication in two different languages, Spanish and Sign Language, and the integration of two populations, the hearing, and the non-hearing community. The sign language (SLG) program offers four levels, each one with a length of four hours per week, for a total of 176 hours of sign language instruction. The SLG program has one teacher, who is hearing-impaired and seven interpreters; also, the program has deaf mentors who help the hearing students practice the sign language. The Local State University of Pereira subsidizes the sign language courses for all university community, and students are free to decide to take the courses within the years they are enrolled in their programs. According to university policies, every course should have a minimum of 8 students and a maximum of 30. In addition, every student must demonstrate at the end of each course the acquisition of the sign language competences through a final assessment. The task involves three skills; speaking through signing, listening (two

people are signing a conversation and the student must understand their conversation), writing (the teacher sign a sentence and the student have to write it).

### **Participants**

Some of the participants in this present study belonged to different programs at the Local State University, whose ages ranged between 21 and 44 years old by 2015. Besides, there were participants who did not belong to the university; they were people who are interested in learning sign language. In this sense, this study carried out classroom observations in the sign language courses with hearing students. The participants of the research project were the students who were taking the SLG courses, which include the four levels. The interviews were accomplished using a sampling population of twenty participants, who belonged to different sign language levels. One of them was the sign language teacher who is not able to hear and the others were the hearing students, who voluntarily accepted to be part of this study.

### **Data analysis and data collection procedures**

The analysis of data was carried out according to the Grounded theory since it is a method for data analysis mostly used for qualitative research. In this case, grounded theory helps to analyze and bring theory from the data collected. After gathered all the data from the collection methods (Interviews and observations), the researchers transcribed the data collected in order to facilitate its analysis. The transcriptions of the interviews, audios and videos were helpful to start codifying the information with

numbers and colors in order to facilitate the analysis of the transcribed material. Finally, we intended to triangulate specific aspects of the results in the data collected through the interviews and the observations. Therefore, for this research, the triangulation analysis helped to provide data.

The instruments for the collection of data were piloted with some interpreters and sign language hearing students, and an expert guided this pilot process. For this reason, the data collection methods in the present research proposal were as follows:

**Interviews:** It is a face-to-face conversation and has a specific purpose, which is to obtain meaningful data from the interviewee; the information is collected, analyzed and validated by the researchers (Dale T, 2012). In this manner, the interviews were semi-structured, considering that the questions were predetermined, but the interviewer was free to ask for clarification and even add follow up questions.

There were two different interviews. The first interviews for this project had about eight questions (app A), the purposed of the interview was to ask 20 hearing students of the SLG course about what were their perceptions regarding the SLG teaching component, and what strategies they used to improve their vocabulary retention. This attempted to gather some initial information from the students' point of view, which was valuable for the research project. The second interview was carried out with the SLG teacher, his interview had 12 questions, the purposed of the interview was to considerate

the teacher's perception in the SLG course the methodologies that she uses to teach SLG to hearings and her pedagogical background. The used of tape-recording in the interviews helped the researchers to check the wording of any statement which may be needed to quote, in order to keep eye contact with the interviewee, and to be sure that what was written was accurate.

**Observations:** According to Dale (2012), the research's observation must be systematic, intentional, and theoretical. So that the observation was not occasional and the researchers had a clear aim for the observation, and the observer needed a previous theoretical knowledge about what the researchers were observing. In that order of ideas, for gathering data, six period classes were observed, with a length of 3 hours per class. The focus of the observations included the hearing students, one sign language teacher, the interpreter, and the monitors who were deaf. The lessons were observed and video-recorded while field notes were collected (app B). Finally, after the class was over, further field notes were completed, so that relevant aspects which took place during the observation was addressed.

### **Researchers' role**

The researchers in this study assumed the role of observers as a non - participant. By the means of this method, the researchers had access to the group selected and a great deal of relevant data for the research. During the study, the researchers limited their roles only to the observation and the interviews.

## ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the aim of considering the ethical components in the development of this research, some aspects were taken into consideration. First, the participants were asked about their willingness to be part of the research project. In this sense, they were informed about the nature of the project and their role in the research. Second, in order to protect the integrity of the participants involved in the study, pseudonyms and codes were used in order to reserve the real identity during the data collection stage and for the information analysis. The third aspect, regarding the procedure in which the researchers had the role as observers, there was a point during the project in which the researchers provided assistance in the execution phase by clarifying the emerging doubts of the participants. Finally, once the researchers had the results, the participants were informed as part of the project.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout this section, the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of findings will be presented and illustrated as objectively as possible, by showing evidence from the different instruments and perspectives included in this study.

### **The students' perception about the sign language classes**

The learners' perceptions are one of the most influential characteristic for the enrichment of a class. Their suggestions are very important as these will improve the teaching methods, and the activities developed in class. Thus, these suggestions may guide the teacher to know what students need to know and to select the most appropriate method to fill their needs.

During the observation of the SLG classes and students' interviews, it was perceived that the students' have a different perspective of what the class should be and thus they provide suggestions for the lessons such as; more practice in different and real scenarios, more variety in the activities proposed in the class, and to enrich the pedagogical vocabulary techniques.

The following excerpt, taken from an interview, confirms what is being described in this finding. The student was asked about his/her opinion of what kind of aspects could improve in the SLG classes.

*Entrevistadora ¿Que aspectos consideras que se deben mejorar en la clase de lenguaje de señas?*

*Q8I#14:*

*“...mucho vocabulario, en cada clase vemos más o menos de 50 a 100 palabras, el vocabulario nuevo que nos van dando, entonces son 100 palabras en cada clase para aprendernos, obviamente las aplicamos, las practicamos, pero es mucho vocabulario para tan poquito tiempo.... es muy complicado aprenderse de memoria tanto vocabulario.”*

Based on the students' perception the amount of vocabulary given in one lesson is very high and most of the time they are learning new words. According to the student's perception, the time to practice the vocabulary is very limited. As expressed by the participant, the amount of words learned in the lessons is very wide, and the time spent in class is not enough to practice all those words. Consequently, there seems to be a lack of distribution between the time to teach the signs and the time for students to practice them, in order to allow students to assimilate the information provided.

Likewise, the higher amount of words given in one lesson difficult the students' assimilation, and it is not for the student incapability to learn those words, this occurs as there is not a balance between the knowledge given to the students and the time to analyze, internalize, and practice that information. Perhaps the learning of those words

will improve through the use of pedagogical strategies which help the students to learn better the vocabulary.

It can be interpreted from this expert, taken from a classroom observation and a student interview that the repeated pedagogical process and the lack of practice in the previous classes cause students to forget the vocabulary.

*O#1L2*

*“The learning of the vocabulary signs is a recurrent process for students because the class follows the same pattern in all the lessons, for instance in this particular case, the teacher wrote the vocabulary related to professions and showed the sign, then the students signed the vocabulary presented by imitating the teacher, then they video recorded the teacher signing the vocabulary again, and finally, the learners developed an activities that was not related to the vocabulary taught. (interpreting a song).*

*Q3I#16*

*“Se vuelve un poquito monotonica la clase, a que se copian las palabras en el tablero, luego se dicen como se hace la seña y eso pasa todas las clases y normalmente son muchas palabras.”*

As evidence in the data the teacher seemed to have developed a pattern as part of her teaching style in which she feels comfortable; In this particular case this teacher

presents the vocabulary, signs the vocabulary, students sign the vocabulary, they video record the teacher signing and finally students carry out unrelated activities. We can say the students can always expect the same events to take place in the class which can reduce their interest to attend and to encourage them to participate. This is clearly evident in the attendance lists at the beginning of level 1 there is always a large amount of students from 50 to 100 students taking the course. Nonetheless, at the middle of this same level this number reduces to 20 students. Likewise, students also express the need for a different methodology due to the fact that the classes are monotonous as the activities and events are repetitive.

It is possible to propose the use of communicative activities which help to keep class more interesting. One of the perennial favorite pastimes of the human race is chatting; most people love to talk about themselves, their activities, other people, world events, and just about everything else, and there is no reason not to take advantage of this interest in the classroom. While the students communicate between them, the teacher will incorporate the new vocabulary assign for the lesson, in that sense the class dynamic change in some degree. Harmer and Thornbury (2013) argue that the way people use language have to be reflected in the classrooms scenarios as this helps the students to solve problems that they will face in their lives; accordingly the authors suggest that the classes must revolve around the functional language, in that sense the teacher is in charge to create contexts in which students can communicate.

The following excerpt, taken from a participant interview, supports what is being discussed about the lack of practice and the high amount of words teaching per class. The participant was asked about his/her concept regarding the material used in class.

*Entrevistadora: ¿cual es su concepto del material utilizado en clase?*

*E#19*

*“pues yo creo que se puede mejorar, como que la clase se vuelve muy monótona, son palabras y aprender las palabras y se llena de palabras, pero palabras y palabras. El lenguaje de señases es como si uno aprendiera una segunda lengua, porque usted puede saber muchas palabras pero no las sabe utilizar, entonces da lo Mismo que no las supiera. Pues yo creo que uno debe aprender vocabulario, pero si no se sabe utilizar todas las palabras. Es como en ingles, usted sabe muchas palabras pero no le sabe la gramatica ¡no sabe nada! Porque al intertar comunicarse con alguien, va a quedar nula la comunicación. Es mas poner en practica lo que enseñan, como saludar, como aprender a preguntar ¿tu cuantos años tienes?, como una conversación normal que uno tiene y no solo las palabras y palabras. Palabras es lo que venimos hacer cada ocho días.”*

As it was mentioned previously, the students perceive and expressed that the classes are monotonous, that the methodology implemented in the class is based on repetition and memorizing isolated vocabulary. That is to say, a list of words that if not learned in order to produce or utter sentences they become meaningless. Thus, this situation leads the students to boredom and also they feel that their learning process is

very slow as they are limited to learn words but they do not know how to use those words in a communicative act.

On the other hand, the interviewee quoted that the SLG is a second language; accordingly, the student suggested that the pedagogical strategies to teach SLG should be the same methods applied to teach other languages such as English.

However the SLG courses only focused on developing in students the vocabulary; consequently, in each lesson the teacher teaches new words to the students, but they do not know how to use those words in real context, they do not even know how to appropriately place the words in a sign language sentence. Considering that the grammar structure in this language is different from English and Spanish. In that sense, the students are producing isolated words with no coherent utterances, for that reason, the participant argued that probably a heard of hearing person will not understand what she/he is trying to communicate as is not the same to think in SLG than to think in Spanish and translate that to SLG.

Furthermore, the participant suggests that instead of learning a lot of isolated words in each lesson, it will be better to learn sentences that help them to communicate in real scenarios. As it was suggested previously by Harmer and Thornbury, the use of communicative activities often seems more enjoyable as these are real situations and helps the students to become more interested in studying the language.

According to what the interviewee said regarding to the amount of words taught per lesson, It can be interpreted that it is hard for students to retain a large amount of words taught in one class. Some of the reasons that make students forget what they are taught is the fact that they do very little practice with it, and they do not look or recycle the vocabulary taught in other classes. On that account, Thornbury (2002) states that learners will lose 50-80% of what they learned; as a result of the fact that the brain constantly stores little bits of information and if we do not use that information or it does not come up again, the brain just dumps it.

Thornbury (2002) indicates that the long-term memory has an enormous capacity and its contents are durable over time. The condition to keep the knowledge in the long-term memory is through repetition. In addition, the author proposes some methods that help the learners keep their knowledge in the long term memory, these are: repetition, retrieval, spacing, imaging, mnemonics, attention, and motivation.

As evidenced in the program presented at the beginning of the course it displays that the aim of the SLG is to achieve the lexical competence in order for students to use a language for communicative purposes. As the data shows the number of suggestions provided by the learners, which they consider will help to improve the course; as a result of the fact that, they consider that learning around 50 to 100 signs per class is a little bit difficult and overwhelming for them. In agreement with what the students said, Thornbury (2002) proposes that every word and phrase must be correctly identified

multiple times while a variety of exercises and activities prevent the repetition from being boring.

In terms of the amount of words learners should be exposed to in every lesson, depends mainly the number of hours the learners will be in class. Harmer (2011) proposes that the amount of vocabulary given per lesson should be from 5 to 8 words. The author quotes that a full-time learner in an intensive language course could learn 25 to 40 new words in one lesson. In addition, the author states that the language courses that promote memory techniques with memory experts' students the amount of words per class is about 100 words.

According to the previous information, and on the schedule of the SLG course which is four hours and only once a week. That is to say, that the course is neither intensive nor a regular course. In that sense, we can say that this course requires students to learn or to be taught 5 to 8 new words per class or 25 to 40 new words per class. Based on the previously mentioned, we can say that due to the design of this course learners should not be expected to learn 50 to 150 per class. The amount of words taught in the SLG class should be reconsidered and the methods proposed by Thornbury (2002) should be integrated in the teacher's methodology as those are the bases to help the students to internalize the vocabulary given.

### **Focus of the sign language class**

Within teachers' responsibility in the class, it is the design of a lesson plan in which they must consider a certain aspects such as: learners' level, educational and cultural background, and learning styles; in order, to have an impact on their learning process. For many teachers the lesson plan is the map that guides the route to follow during the class. Nonetheless, the map will not be useful if it does not have a point to get to. Therefore, the lesson plan for a class needs to have a clear aim as its mission to achieve. As Harmer (2004) states "plans help teachers to identify aims and anticipated potential problems" p.308. Therefore, particular attention must be paid to the aim of the lesson plan, in as much as it is the focus of the class and it is expected to have an impact on the students' outcomes, as the objectives for a class oriented the students to achieve a certain ability at the end of the lesson. In addition, it is important to take into account that the aim enables the students to understand the purpose of the class and what they will be able to do at the end of the process. It is important to mention that for this finding the terms objective and aim will be used as synonyms for the result.

The sign language teacher confirms what it is being described previously. The teacher was asked about if the SLG classes have an aim that students must achieve at the end of the class.

*Entrevistador: ¿Cada clase de señas tiene un objetivo los cuales los estudiantes deban alcanzar al final de la clase?*

*ISLGTQ#10: “Pues lo que yo trato es de cuadrar cada tema, por ejemplo como primero pues los verbos (el, yo, tu, ellos, nosotros) después la familia, otro tema los animales, diferentes temas, para que ellos, no se les puede descargar todo, hay que irles repasando, para que ellos mismos practiquen en su casa, ese es el objetivo mas importante, que ellos practiquen. Ya cuando asistan a la próxima clase, ya son frases mas extensas... pero algunos se les olvida porque no miran los libros, pero el objetivo es que todos sean responsables, el objetivo es ese, que ellos aprendan ese día lo que se programo.”*

As the teacher mentions the most important is to divide the classes into topics in order to reduce the risk of overwhelming students with too much information that they might have a difficult time processing. The teacher seems to have several objectives for the course: first is related to reviewing previous topics, reviewing the topics learned in the previous classes has a number of benefits; as it refreshes the students' memory and reminds them about content and topics from the previous lessons. The teacher does this in order to help students to reduce the time needed to relearn the signs after an entire week of break recess. When knowledge is well rehearsed and tied to another knowledge is easier to keep the information in the long term memory as reviewing can strengthen previous learning and can lead to fluent recall (Thornbury, 2002)

Another important aspect the teacher considers relevant in her objectives is for students to practice what they have learnt during the class. To achieve this aim, the

teacher provides opportunities throughout the class for students to practice, so that they can progress in their signs. The teacher recognizes that this practice helps them to be better at signing and also allows students to reinforce their abilities in SLG. For that reason, the practice in class is very meaningful as the learners can internalize the vocabulary and use it in their interaction with others. The teacher expresses that in order to move on into the topics, she needs to confirm that students' are familiarized with the vocabulary covered as to expose them to more challenging activities in the following classes such as using the vocabulary in more complex sentences.

According to the data presented above the teacher considers that by practicing outside the class, learners can acquire what they have learnt during the class; but in order to do this, students need to be responsible for their learning process. This kind of personal value helps students to set their own goals and assess their own process as a means to contribute to their advance in the sign language. However, the teacher argues that learners do not progress due to their lack of commitment as they do not practice outside the class.

As evidenced in the data collected in the interview done to the teacher of the course, she considers that the aims or objectives are more focused on learners' commitment. Nonetheless, she does not seem to have a clear learning nor teaching aims, as in the 6 observations carried out the researchers register the following information based.

Tabla: The following table illustrates, vocabulary and topics presented in class, and also the number of words, learners were exposed to in every session

<b>CLASSROOM OBSERVATION</b>	
<b>CODE</b>	<b>SLG LESSON AIM</b>
<i>Observation #1L2</i>  <i>118 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Aprender las señas de los siguientes temas:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Área de derecho</i></li> <li>• <i>Vocabulario del área comercial y financiera</i></li> <li>• <i>Expresiones</i></li> </ul>
<i>Observation# 2 L1</i>  <i>50 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Identificar las señas que se muestran en el video y aprender las señas del siguiente tema:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Partes de la casa</i></li> </ul>
<i>Observation #3L3</i>  <i>89 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Aprender las señas de los siguientes temas:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Palabras que empiezan por P</i></li> <li>• <i>Palabras que empiezan por R</i></li> <li>• <i>Palabras que empiezan por S</i></li> <li>• <i>Palabras que empiezan por T</i></li> <li>• <i>Palabras que empiezan por V</i></li> <li>• <i>Instituciones de gobierno</i></li> </ul>
<i>O#4L4</i>  <i>105 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Aprender las señas de los siguientes temas:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expresiones</i></li> <li>• <i>Herramientas</i></li> <li>• <i>Aseo personal</i></li> </ul>
<i>O#5L2</i>  <i>50 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Aprender las señas de los siguientes temas:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Expresiones de tiempo</i></li> <li>• <i>Acciones</i></li> </ul>
<i>O#6L3</i>  <i>50 palabras presentadas</i>	<i>Aprender las señas de los siguientes temas:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Profesiones</i></li> </ul>

The chart suggests that there is no clear aim proposed for the classes and that the focus is on the lexical competence. The table illustrates that there seem to be a preference

for technical vocabulary and also vocabulary presented in alphabetical order.

Consequently, the aim of the class is vocabulary based, since students are expected to learn approximately 118 to 50 signs per class, these number of words come from the topics suggested from the FENASCOL book as a result of the fact that the teacher presents three or two different topics in one lesson. According to Cameron (2001) the main purpose of teaching vocabulary is to build up a range of words that learners are able to use in their conversations, and to achieve this it is very important that the teacher sets a clear and appropriated language goals for the lessons, in that sense students learn vocabulary words that they will find useful in many contexts.

The chart also shows that the number of words students are exposed to is too large as mentioned previously. This high range of vocabulary makes it difficult for the learner to store and use it in as much as these are not high frequency words; meaning that, learners do not use them very often in their daily interaction with others; therefore they tend to forget them easily. Another important aspect evidenced is that there seems to be a lack of connection among the topics and the vocabulary given in class which could also be the fact that learners express that it was very challenging to remember the vocabulary presented in the previous classes. This can be another factor that does not allow learners to retain the information or vocabulary they are exposed to.

Some authors such as Mishra and Harmer support the need of designing lesson plans and establishing clear aims that may guide the teacher and learners to what they are

expected to do at the end of the class, and the importance of having a logical sequence in the topics presented. Mishra (2009) states that a teacher that does not use lesson plans have to face the following problems:

First, aimless wondering: it is the first trap that a teacher will face, this concept refers to the lack of planning which is leading to the following consequences as reduced learning, frustration, a waste of time, effort, and money. The second obstacle is the failure to achieve objectives; as there is not a specific aim to achieve during the lesson, probably the students may never achieve the course objectives; given the fact that, there is not a strategy to guide and to provide the learners with the tools require to achieve the course and the lessons' goals. The last obstacle proposed by Mishra (2009) is a poor connection with proceeding or subsequence lessons, this mean that the topics taught in class may not relate to them, and it may not lead to what the teacher will teach later.

Harmer (2011) confirms what Mishra argues in that the design of an effective lesson plan, it is necessary to take into account the aim of the class which has to be achievable and realistic, the topic has to be specific, and the tasks or activities must be timed and meaningful, and the lesson must be designed according to the students profile and needs.

As evidenced in the data and analysis of this research the results illustrate that the sign language course lack these three elements as the author mentions are relevant for a

successful class in terms of linguistic outcomes expected from the learners. Another aspect which stands out in the results and as clearly expressed by the teacher there is no linguistic aim proposed for the classes as her objective is very broad; given the fact that the teacher focuses on the values and not in developing of the linguistic competence. Finally, even though there is a recycling of vocabulary in some classes. The dilemma emerges in the fact that the topics are not articulated and there is no connection or sequence among them. That is to say, in this particular finding, the SLG objectives proposed by the teacher as practice the signs in class, to review the signs, and to provide autonomous work to the students presents two problems one, the objectives proposed by the teacher are too general for one class and two, these are not implemented in the lessons. The analysis revealed that the teacher strictly follows the book and she forgets to consider what students need to learn. Finally, and as mentioned previously the topics of the lessons are not connected.

For the design of the lessons, the book provided by FENASCOL is the main resource used by the teacher to develop her classes; in that sense the teacher does not use a lesson plan format but instead she exposes students to a new unit from the book in every class. This was expressed directly by the teacher as she seems to lack of knowledge in how to manage a lesson plan format. This data is a line to what Mishra (2009) argues, a class will face these problems if the teacher does not have a guide or lesson plan to implement in the classroom. However, a well design lesson plan will help the teacher and the students to avoid frustration and unpleasant surprises, to keep the students on the right

track, and to achieve the lesson and the course objectives (Mishra, 2009). Nonetheless, students have frequently stated that they feel frustrated and overwhelmed as they forget most of the information they receive because of the large number of words.

According to Cameron (2001) to avoid the learners' feelings mentioned previously the teacher needs to consider that the base of the lexical competence is about learning words, but it is not only teaching the words and then memorize them. Learning words is a cyclical process, this means that the learners need to practice and recognize those words again and again, each time extending the knowledge of what the words mean and how they are used in real scenarios. This key factor mentioned by Cameron (2001) is a factor that is not evident in the SLG classes as the finding shows that the teacher sometimes omits recycling the words taught in the previous classes, the number of words presented is too high for learners to remember and use in the following classes, and the vocabulary taught during the lessons lack connection among them; in that sense, students find very difficult to internalize all the words taught by the teacher during the class. Therefore, if the teacher does not have a clear idea about how to teach the lexical competence, if the teacher lacks of lesson plan training and she is not able to set the goals achievable at the end of the class; it is possible to confirm that this finding is a line to what the authors quote. They suggest that lesson planning is an essential tool for all teachers, and if there is a weakness in the design of lesson plans the consequences will be displayed in the students' learning process.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

This research project has presented a number of findings, the analysis of these findings have several significant implications which are; first, the need to design clear and language aims for The SLG classes. Second, the SLG course requires lesson plan formats; given the fact that the teacher uses only a guide book as her lesson plan. Finally, the wide range of vocabulary presented in every lesson and its lack of articulation among topics makes it challenging for students to retain the vocabulary taught by the teacher.

The need to design lesson plans and establishing clear aims are important factors to consider as this guide the teacher and learners to what they are expected to do and achieve at the end of the class. Thus the lack of a well structured lesson may bring negative feelings among the learners such as frustration, and boredom, and for the teacher is may become a waste of time and resources as mentioned by Mishra. Therefore, the consequences of not using lesson plan formats predisposed student to expect the same lesson pattern, and this situation reduces the learners' interest to attend to the SLG classes.

Another relevant implication of the study derives from the findings, which indicates that the vocabulary taught during the lessons lack connection with the previous lessons; in that sense, students find it very difficult to associate and internalize all the words taught by the teacher during the class. Another aspect related to vocabulary is the

need to consider the number of words to be taught as exceeding the number recommended by authors as Harmer, Cameron and Thornbury will not benefit students learning process.

It can be concluded that, despite the teacher's commitment to teach SLG this study provides indications as this course demands for another type of methodology in which students can apply what they learnt in real scenarios, a methodology that can help them to internalize the words taught. Besides, instructors of SLG should become more knowledgeable about the theoretical underpinnings of the curricula that they utilize for teaching SLG; presumably this would help them to improve the effectiveness of their instructional approaches. In that sense, it would be considered a teacher-training to teach SLG to hearing learners as it is important to provide the SLG teachers with skills that help them to design their lesson plans and to set achievable and appropriated language goals for their lessons.

## RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

During this current study, several significant implications were identified, such as the vocabulary teaching strategies, the methodology implemented to teach SLG as a second language and also the resources for teaching SLG. It is evidence that the hard of hearing students' enrollment has increased tremendously, the number of required SLG instructors to fill the students demand has multiplied, and the number of high schools, and universities that accept SLG as a language that fulfills a second language requirement has grown steadily.

Firstly, after carrying out this investigation, the researchers suggest the development of other research projects dealing with teacher pedagogical training in terms of lesson plan design and classroom management strategies for instance the use of resources, material design and vocabulary teaching.

Secondly, we recommend the replication of this study in other scenarios in which SLG is taught as a second language to hearing people in order to provide a wider perspective about the strategies that are implemented in the country to create a deep analysis about the aspects that need to be improved relate to the methodologies and materials used to teach SLG to hearing students.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This chapter will present some of the unavoidable limitations that emerged when carrying out this project. Aspects such as, participation of other population, implementation of the methods, language limitation, limited research on SLG.

First, due to time constrains, the interviews were conducted only to the SLG students and to the teacher this reduced the richness of the data. Therefore, the interviews should have involved the SLG monitors and interpreters, too; given the fact that they are an active part in the classes as sometimes they took the teacher's role. Consequently, it is very important to take into account their opinions and their thoughts about the methodologies and activities used to teach SLG to hearings.

Second, in this current research the teacher interview had to be implemented again in order to have more complete and accurate answers due to the fact the first time the interview was carried out the information provided did not answer the questions established by the researchers. For that reason, the process of analyzing of the data was delayed; in this regards, a second interview was carried out to the SLG teacher, in this opportunity it was a success given the fact that the interpreter's translated the questions into Spanish which allowed the researchers obtain the information needed for the analysis.

Third, the researchers' basic level in SLG limited in some ways the communication among the teacher, the monitors and researchers; It required the researchers to have an interpreter at the moment to implement the interview to the teacher and also to communicate with the teacher and monitors in the class observed. This limitation reduced the interaction among the participants and the researchers and also the reliability of the data collected the first time.

Fourth, the lack of research in relation to teaching SLG as a second language was considered as a limitation, as it was not possible to find information related to the teaching of SLG to hearing learners, neither methodologies, nor materials used to teach this population.

Despite the limitation presented in the study, we can conclude that this current study produced large positive results in relation to vocabulary instruction in SLG.

## CONCLUSIONES

After carrying out this project, it can be concluded that the drop-out-rated in the SLG course is very high, as only 6% of the enrolled students completed all four SLG levels. Based on the results of this study, some of the reasons why some students expressed that they stopped taking the course was due to the different issues related to the class, such as; the methodology implemented by the instructor, and material used during the class and the long range of vocabulary taught in one session.

Based on the results obtained, the SLG teacher has been trained to teach SLG to deaf students, however the teacher has not had a training to teach SLG to hearing students and any training in the design of the lesson plans. This means that as she has not received a pedagogical training is harder for her to select the appropriate methodology and to fill the students' expectations regarding to the SLG class, as the shortage of research to guide the SLG educators currently exists.

In this regard, the researchers could notice that the implementation of the methods used to teach SLG to deaf students in hearing SLG learning are not the most suitable as a result of the fact that the hearing learners are learning SLG as a second language not as their native language, in that sense it is necessary to apply methods that help the hearing learners to acquire the SLG.

We expect that the results provided in the present research in relation to sign language teachers who are deaf consider implementing different teaching strategies when teaching a hearing population in order to help to increase the quantity and quality of SLG vocabulary instruction given the fact that it is important to take advantage of the hearing learners' skills in the learning of SLG.

## APPENDIXES

## A. Entrevista a la profesora de lenguaje de señas.

1. ¿Cuánto es el número ideal de horas por clase para adquirir el lenguaje de señas?
2. ¿Cuál es su percepción de las personas no oyentes en la universidad?
3. ¿Porque cree usted que las personas oyentes deban aprender lenguaje de señas?
4. ¿Es diferente enseñar lenguaje de señas a oyentes que a los no oyentes?
5. ¿Qué metodología usa para enseñar lenguaje de señas a personas oyentes?
6. ¿Qué tipo de herramientas usa en clase de lenguaje de señas?
7. ¿Qué opina usted del material del FENASCOL?
8. ¿Preparas la clase antes de llevarla a cabo? como lo preparas?
9. ¿Cada clase de señas tiene un objetivo los cuales los estudiantes deban alcanzar al final de la clase?
10. ¿Las clases tienen una secuencia de acuerdo a los temas enseñados?
11. ¿Cuántas señas considera necesarias enseñar en una clase?
12. ¿Les ha preguntado a los estudiantes oyentes de lenguaje de señas sus percepciones acerca de las clases?

## Entrevista a los estudiantes de lenguaje de señas.

1. ¿Por qué esta aprendiendo lenguaje de señas?
2. ¿Qué expectativas tiene respecto al curso de lenguaje de señas?
3. ¿Qué recursos didácticos a utilizado la profesora para la clase?
4. ¿Cuál es su concepto del material utilizado en la clase?

5. ¿Cuál es su opinión sobre el número de horas que ven de clase?
6. ¿Qué opina sobre las estrategias que ha utilizado la profesora?
7. ¿Qué te gustaría que tuvieran las clases más adelante?
8. Respecto a la clase ¿Qué cosas pueden mejorar o un aspecto nuevo que se pueda implementar?

#### B. Formato de observación de clase

Observation#	nivel	woman:	men:	monitors:	teacher:	interpreter:	date:	hours	
		DESCRIPTION				REACTION			INTERPRETATION
Teacher's role									
Students' role									
Lesson aim									
Lesson topic									
Type of activities									
steges	engagement								
	Study								
	activate								

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