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**“The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on English as Foreign Language Students”**

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## Resumen

El uso de apoyos visuales en el aula ha adquirido un papel sustancial en el aprendizaje del inglés. Esta investigación bibliográfica se ha centrado en veinte y dos estudios los cuales analizan la capacidad que han tenido los apoyos visuales para mejorar el desarrollo de las cuatro habilidades del idioma inglés. La mayoría de los estudios se publicaron en los últimos cinco años, ya que gracias a la tecnología ahora es más factible introducir apoyos visuales en las aulas. El criterio principal para seleccionar los estudios es que demuestren que el uso de apoyos visuales ha causado impacto en el desarrollo de las diferentes destrezas de la lengua meta. Los resultados demostraron que el uso de éstos tuvo efectos positivos en estudiantes de diferentes edades que aprendían inglés como lengua extranjera. Los apoyos visuales facilitaron a los aprendices del inglés a desarrollar sus diferentes habilidades lingüísticas, y especialmente las habilidades secundarias de vocabulario.

Palabras clave: apoyos visuales, idioma extranjero, habilidades lingüísticas.



## Abstract

The use of visual aids in the classroom has acquired an important role in English learning. This exploratory bibliographical research has focused on the ability of visual aids to improve the development of the four English language skills. Twenty-two studies were analyzed to answer the research questions. Most of the studies were published in the last five years, which are part of the technological era, and thanks to the technology nowadays, it is easier for the teachers to introduce visual aids in classrooms than in the past. The main criteria to select the studies were that these demonstrate different effects on the development of language skills through the use of visual aids. The results demonstrated that the use of visual aids in learning English as a foreign language had positive effects on learners of different ages. Visual aids helped English learners to develop their different language skills, especially vocabulary subskills.

Keywords: visual aids, foreign language, language skills.



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## Introduction

Technology has become an available worldwide tool. Since the traditional or textbook era started to change due to the impact of technology, new strategies were implemented in the educational process. These strategies were adopted according to the students' different ways of learning. Some of these strategies were visual such as videos, flashcards, mind maps, pictures, charts, and picture books. These types of aids have helped students retain their knowledge for higher periods and maintain them motivated in classes. For these reasons, Shabiralyani, Shahzad Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal define “visual aids are those devices which are used in classrooms to encourage students learning and make it easier and interesting” (2015, p. 226). Thus, this paper aims tend to answers the following questions.

- What are the effects of visual aids on foreign language learning students?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using visual aids in the EFL classroom?
- What skills can be developed through the use of visual aids?

Besides, this investigation has six chapters. The first chapter contains the background, problem statement, rationale, and three questions. In the second chapter, a compilation of concepts are presented as Theoretical Framework. Also, the literature review is conducted in the third chapter. In the fourth chapter, the methodology is explained. Then, the fifth chapter describes what was done with the data found from the studies as Analysis. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are exposed in the last chapter.



## Chapter 1

### 1.1. Research Background

Through time, different aids have been used in order to help students acquire a foreign language in a more dynamic way. A remarkable number of visual aids have been employed for learning and teaching a new language since technology development gives chances to increase visual aids use. This is because with technology, it is easy for teachers to get videos, pictures, and graphs to present in their classes (Patesan, Balagiu, & Alibec, 2018).

Visual aids had been considered essential tools since 1983 when Gardner (1989) stated that there are seven different ways human beings process information; it means each person has their way to learn. One of these ways was visual or spatial intelligence; in this type of intelligence, learners learn through pictures, mind maps, videos, images, graphs, or they organize their ideas spatially. Thus, people who are visual learners relate well the written information with images, allowing the acquisition of new vocabulary. Due to the great importance of this topic, some authors had analyzed this type of learning (Nasrollahi & Daneshfar, 2018).

Lightbown and Spada (2013) state that people cannot learn something until they have seen it. Children especially tend to be more visuals because of the ease for them to understand the relationship between a picture and its meanings; in that way, they can acquire a lot of vocabulary, which is essential in the English learning process (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

Nowadays, the majority of students learn through visual aids; that is why these have been implemented to enhance the understanding of students (Shabiralyani et al., 2015). Therefore, Mathew and Hammoud (2013) suggested the implementation of these aids in classrooms to create a different learning environment. In all the classes, especially in English classes, visual aids are used to provide extra and lively information about a certain topic. In the same



way, many studies have focused on the use of visual aids as a pedagogical strategy in English classes because these facilitate the development of dynamic classes. Also, teachers use different tools in classes like videos, graphs which are innovative tools to students, and they engage learners to the topic of the class.

## 1.2. Problem Statement

Nowadays, most of teachers use different visual aids to call students' attention. Macwan (2015) says that the best tools to make interesting and dynamic the English as a Foreign Language class are the visual aids because these give learners a clear idea about any unknown word and they can realize the main points they have studied in the class. Allen, Kate, and Marquez (2011), propose that visual aids help students to reinforce what they have learned because these allow learners to assimilate information through an additional sensory perception.

According to Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015), throughout time, the use of visual aids has acquired notable value in learning English as a foreign language, nevertheless little attention has been given to the effects of using visual aids to improve the development of the four English language skills. Park and Bae Son (2009) argue that, this is due to the lack of teachers training and knowledge. Likewise, Mathew and Hammoud Alidmat (2013) mention that to introduce some visual aids in the class, teachers need to know how to use technology but they feel unable to do it.

Besides, Rustan and Asik (2016) propose that four skills listening, reading, writing, and speaking are important for learners in learning English as Foreign Language and visual aids help to develop all of them but the problem is that most of the studies focus just on one of the skills.





For these reasons, the present research synthesis aims to analyze the positive and negative side of the use of using visual aids to improve the development of the four English language skills.

### 1.3. Rationale

Patesan et al. (2018) affirm that visual aids are crucial because they help to increase the students' interest as well as teachers' creativity. Since visual aids have been implemented in the educational process to motivate students to learn, it is necessary to analyze deeply the impact that visual aids have in classrooms. That is why, through this research synthesis, we analyzed 22 studies that investigated the use of visual aids in English schoolrooms. For this reason, this paper examines and analyzes the effects that visual aids have on learning a foreign language, the advantages and disadvantages of its use, and the skills developed through the use of these aids. Besides, this research synthesis may help teachers to know how to select the adequate visual aids according to the topic. Teachers can use different types of visual aids as a reference to prepare their classes and allow students to get actively involved in the learning process.

### 1.4. Research Questions

This investigation examines the effects of visual aids on English as foreign language students. For this reason, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- What are the effects of visual aids on foreign language learning students?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of using visual aids in the EFL classroom?
- What skills can be developed through the use of visual aids?



## Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Definition of Visual Aids

According to (Patesan et al., 2018), “visual aids are powerful tools that can be used to assist the teachers in teaching a foreign language. They can be used to display complex information clearly and introduce variety into the activities in class” (p. 356).

### 2.2. Types of Visual Aids

Nowadays, the “Information and Communication Technologies” (ICT’s) are tools that help to increase the use of visual aids in education in order to reduce the use of textbooks and change the teacher’s role in the classroom (Ezza, 2012).

#### 2.2.1. Technological Visual Aids.

According to Canning (2000), “video is the selection and sequence of messages in an audio-visual context to enhance the learning of foreign languages” (p. 1). “Videos are powerful and rich medium, especially in e-learning, because information can be presented in an attractive and appealing manner” (Fish, Mun, & A'Jontue, 2016, p. 199). Videos are also known as “audio-visual aids which are a combination of sound and vision” (Mansourzadeh, 2014, p. 49). Audio-visuals aids help learners to use foreign language properly.

Power-point presentations are one of the media that has gone through dramatic changes over time and gained importance in presenting visual information. “Power-point presentations can integrate graphics, sounds, and animations to transmit information revolutionizing the traditional chalk and blackboard and non-effective educational methods” (Tabatabaei & Bandari, 2012, p. 214).

Video lectures are available files that present discourses or speeches from a teacher. Video lectures could be on CD or web sites, and students can watch these as often as they want to clarify any doubt that they have (Brecht & Ogilby, 2008).



### 2.2.2. Physical Visual Aids.

Charts, maps, and diagrams are other common visual tools used for learning purposes (Dolati, 2010). Budd (2004) mentions that “mind map organizes information via hierarchies and categories where they flow out from a central image in a free-flowing, organized and coherent way. The main topics or details associated with the central topic are joined by branches which are labeled with a linking word o image” (p. 36). Koon (1938) mentions that charts are drawings intended to show the relationship between various items in an organized way. Likewise, “graphs are an accurate pictorial representation of certain information” (Koon, 1938, p. 28). These two kinds of visuals help students comprehend a text better and maintain involvement in the learning process.

Picture books are intended for young children who communicate information or tell stories through a series of many pictures combined with text. These are considered as a form of verbal or visual art (Nodelman, 1988).

Komachali and Khodareza (2012) define flash-card as cardboard consisting of a word, a sentence, or a simple picture on it. It should be noted that the letter on it must be visible for everyone in the classroom. Also, “flash-cards can be used to acquire new vocabulary, to remember historical dates or to bear with any subject matter” (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012, p. 137). Flash-cards can be a fun, colorful, and creative way to aid in memory and retention of vocabulary words.

According to Fang (1996), illustrations help to expand, clarify, interpret, or decorate a written text. So, the illustrations in a book help to varying degrees, essential to the enjoyment and understanding of the story. Books with illustrations hold a prominent place in children's literature because of the association of pictures and words.



Bush (2007) mentions that pictures have an important role in classrooms, and it is necessary to have a clear explanation of the meaning of the word picture. A picture is “an image or likeness of an object, person, or scene produced on a flat surface, by painting, drawing, or photography” (Bush, 2007, p. 735). This general definition is the most appropriate because different representations of topics or contexts of interest (slides, pictures, illustrations) can be useful tools in the language classroom.

According to Liu (2004), “comics are defined as a series of pictures inside boxes that tell a story” (p. 229). Comics are so popular, interesting, and communicative in the learning process because they use words with pictures to explain a topic.

### 2.3. Effects of Visual Learning Aids in Language Classrooms

Different authors have claimed that visual aids are useful tools in the learning process because students feel more fascinated, expressive, participative, and attentive in classes with their usage (Patesan et al., 2018). Besides, visual aids are implemented to improve the teaching process and decrease the textbook era in which students are considered as passive consumers of knowledge (Uyal, Binboğa Yel, & Korhan, 2017). Furthermore, visual aids allow students to construct knowledge while improving language English skills and subskills such as writing, reading, listening, speaking, vocabulary, and critical thinking (Mayer, 1994). Patesan et al. (2018) state that the use of visual aids in classrooms “maintain students actively involved in the learning process and facilitate the language learning by making it more authentic and meaningful” (p. 359). Marquez, Marquez, and Marquez (2011) state that visual aids tools have different features when they are used in second or foreign language classes. Visual aids are teaching materials that reinforce the class that students have learned because these tools catch the information through a visual representation, avoiding its easy forgetting.



Moreover, the authors indicate that the use of visual aids can motivate students to enrich their English ability (Marquez et al., 2011).



## Chapter 3: Literature Review

### 3.1. Improvement of the English Language Skills and Subskills through the Use of Visual Aids

#### 3.1.1. Writing.

Some studies (Alidoost, Tabatabaei, & Bakhtiarv, 2014; Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2013; Early, 2015) analyzed how the use of visual aids helped students to improve their writing skill. A study led by Alidoost, Tabatabaei, and Bakhtiarvand (2014) examined the effects that picture stories had on writing skills. The participants were divided into two groups. The experimental group had to write a paragraph based on a sequence of pictures, and the control group had to produce a paragraph based on vocabulary. It meant that picture stories helped learners to use several transition words to connect sentences logically. In addition, participants used noun phrases at the beginning of each paragraph, which is very common in English, then in the internal part of paragraphs, they used pronouns to avoid that listeners and readers get confused. The third result was that participants produced more coherent, organized, precise, and more realistic paragraphs than those who did not use a picture story (Alidoost et al., 2014).

Birketveit and Rimmereide (2013) wanted to find out the impact that pictures books had on sixth-grade students' writing skills. A case study was carried out in this paper to analyze the written texts that they produced before and after the reading process. This study indicated that students enhanced their writing skills when they read books with pictures because they maintained students more motivated to write. These results were found through questionnaires, interviews, and written texts.

Besides, the study directed by Early (2015) discussed how picture books without words could be used for writing development through a questionnaire. In this case, students tended



to produce better and well-structured texts because they tried to imitate the writing structure of the book that they read previously. The study showed that primary-aged ESL students produced well-organized texts; also, they felt motivated to read a picture book and confidence to speak (Early, 2015).

### 3.1.2. Reading.

Other studies (Sabbah, 2015; Alfaleh, 2015; Merc, 2013; Birketveit & Rimmereide, 2013) said that the use of visual aids in classrooms improves reading skills. For example, a study conducted by Sabbah (2015) examines the effects that computerized mind maps generated in college students on their reading comprehension skills. This study used the following instruments: reading achievement pre-posttest and questionnaire. The participants were divided into two groups. The experimental group read a passage, but it had an explanation about it in mind mappings. On the other hand, the control group read in a traditional way; it means that they read a text without visuals, and the teacher explained to them about it by paraphrasing the text. The results recommended that the experimental group had a better understanding than the control group because they could relate the different ideas easily through colors, lines, pictures, and narrows from mind mappings.

Besides, Alfaleh (2015) mentioned a study in which the main goal was to examine if technology motivated and helped to improve ESL college students' reading skills. For collecting data, the study used a reading test and a motivation-reading questionnaire. The study wanted to analyze how the use of a website could help to improve reading skills. In the end, the study indicated that there were no notable differences between ESL students' performance who were taught by using technology and those students who did not use it.

Moreover, Merc (2013) investigated how comics helped to improve reading skills. Seven hundred sixty-seven university students from Turkish participated in this study. They were



divided into three groups according to their levels; from these three groups, some learners had to read a text without any picture, and the others read the same reading but in a comic form. After that, they had to write a summary of what they read. The results suggested that the participants who read a comic demonstrated better understanding than participants who read a text.

Another study conducted by Birketveit and Rimmereide (2013), investigated the impact that pictures books had on sixth-grade students' reading skills. A case study was carried out in this paper in which students had to read as many picture books as they could in order to know how favorable it was to read this kind of book. This study revealed that students felt more motivated to read when they read books with pictures. These results were found with questionnaires, interviews, and written texts.

Besides, Mirvan (2013) discussed how films are useful to improve reading skills. The author applied a quiz and a questionnaire to eighty participants. The participants were divided into two groups, control and experimental. The experimental group had to solve a questionnaire and a quiz based on a film with captions, while the control group had to answer the questions based on a text. The results showed that the experimental group got better scores than the control group. The students who were part of the experimental group felt more motivated to read through the use of films, also kept concentrated, and focus on the film to solve the activities.

### 3.1.3. Speaking.

Some studies (Fotovatnia & Omidi, 2013; Afraz, Taghizade, & Taghinezhad, 2018) analyzed the development of the speaking skill through the use of visual aids. A study conducted by Fotovatnia and Omidi (2013), examined the effects of the visual aids on learning pronunciation and word stress in junior high school students. Four instruments were





applied in this study: grammar placement test, computerized reading text, pronunciation test, and attitude questionnaire. The participants were divided into two groups. The control group learned the pronunciation through listening to a native person, and the experimental group learned through phonetic symbols. The finding of this study suggested that the visual medium had relevant effects on learning word stress but not in learning the pronunciation of target words. Participants learned better by listening to a native person.

Another study directed by Afraz, Taghizade, and Taghinezhad (2018), had as a purpose to research the effects of pictorial aids to develop the speaking skill on intermediate EFL learners. A pretest and posttest interviews, questionnaires, and observations were applied to forty intermediate EFL learners, who were divided into two groups. The control group received the treatment in a traditional way, it means without visuals.

On the other hand, teachers explained the classes to the experimental group using pictures. During the classes, the students were asked some questions related to the topic that the teacher explained, and the control group exposed short and little ideas while the experimental group had too many complete answers. This study suggested that the use of visual aids in classrooms helped to improve the speaking proficiency because participants used the sequence of pictures to create and expose them easily (Afraz, et al., 2018).

#### 3.1.4. Listening.

Some studies (Li, 2014; Woottipong, 2014; Sarani, Zare, & Moslemi, 2014) stated that visual aids helped to develop the listening skill. Li's study investigated the effects of using an interactive advance-organizer activity in the comprehension of videos on intermediate university L2 learners (2014). The learners were divided into four groups. This study used a DVD episode, an interactive organizer-guided activity, a multiple-choice listening test, a posttest questionnaire, and a retrospective interview. The experimental groups watched the



video with captions and an advanced organizer while the control groups listened without captions and without advanced organizer. The main finding suggested that the use of advance organizers facilitated learners' listening comprehension.

Woottipong (2014), studied the importance of videos to develop listening skills with forty-one university students who participated in this study. The participants had to answer a pretest and posttest about listening comprehension. Besides, they had to answer a questionnaire about how they felt with the use of videos to improve their listening skill. The results suggested that videos motivated learners, and these videos improved the listening skill of the participants because they could relate the audio with the visual image, and it helped to understand the audio easily.

Moreover, Sarani, Zare, and Moslemi (2014) examined how videos helped to improve listening skills. Twenty pre-intermediate EFL Iranian learners participated in the study. They were divided into two groups, control and experimental. Both groups had to answer comprehension questions. The experimental group had to watch a video while the control group had to listen to audio without any image. The results proposed that images helped to understand the essential information of the videos because students could decode some messages through body language or facial expressions.

### 3.1.5. Vocabulary.

Some studies (Komachali & Khodareza, 2012; Alhamami, 2014; Nasrollahi & Daneshfar, 2018; Akbulut, 2007; Zoghi & Mirzaei, 2014) established that the use of flashcards in the classroom allowed students to acquire a higher level of vocabulary. According to Komachali and Khodareza (2012), the study's aim was to increase the learners' vocabulary through the use of flashcards. Fifty Iranian pre-university students participated in this study. A test of language proficiency, a pretest, a posttest, and a questionnaire were applied in this study.



Participants were divided into two groups. The control group was taught without visuals, while the experimental group received vocabulary flashcard treatment. It indicated that teaching vocabulary with flashcards allowed students to get a higher level of vocabulary than using the traditional method.

Likewise, a study conducted by Alhamami (2014) had as a purpose to know if ninety-nine undergraduate EFL students remembered word's meanings in their L1 more when the English words were associated with audios, images, or videos. The study used lesson treatment and a questionnaire. This study had found that the participants could remember better the foreign language words' meanings when they were related to pictures.

Besides, a study directed by Nasrollahi and Daneshfar (2018) examined the impact of visuals in vocabulary learning on pre-university students. A pretest and posttest were used as instruments. The students were divided randomly into four different groups. The first experimental group received a text with new vocabulary and some visual support. The second experimental group received the same text with new vocabulary, including a glossary of the unknown words. On the other hand, the control groups just received the new vocabulary of the text in order to deduce the meaning of the words based on their previous knowledge. The main finding indicated that visuals improved vocabulary acquisition.

Akbulut (2007) investigated the effects of multimedia interpretations on reading comprehension and incidental vocabulary learning. Sixty-nine freshmen from a Turkish university participated in this study. They were divided into three groups. One group had to read vocabulary textual definitions, the other group had the vocabulary words with associated pictures and definitions, and the third group had definitions with related short videos. The results demonstrated that learners who used videos and pictures got a higher level of



vocabulary than the group that had a textual definition. About reading comprehension, there was not a significant difference among the groups.

Besides, a comparative study conducted by Zoghi and Mirzaei (2014) investigated the effect of using textual and visual contexts to acquire vocabulary. The participants were seventy L2 intermediate students tested by a vocabulary test and different types of treatments. They were divided into two groups, where the first group received the instruction through videos, and the second group received the instruction through written texts. The main finding demonstrated that students who learned the vocabulary through visuals achieved more vocabulary words than those who learned vocabulary through written texts.

#### 3.1.6. Critical Thinking.

The use of audio-visual aids “which assist the teaching process, by which teaching and learning processes become attractive, interesting and sophisticated” helps learners to improve their cognition (Gul, Kiyani, Chuadhry, & Liaqut, 2014, p. 1140). This study was designed to examine the role that visual aid had on the cognition of secondary students. They were divided into two groups. The experimental group was taught with audio-visual aids, and the control group was taught without visuals. For collecting information, the study needed a list of audio-visual aids and achievement tests. The result of this study indicated that students who were taught with visual aids have a higher level in their language performance than students who were taught without visuals.

“Visual aids can improve the English language acquisition for a beginner ESL” (Halwani, 2017, p. 53). For collecting data, Halwani (2017) used observation sheets, pull out focus groups, checklists, and surveys. The class was divided into intervals to realize the reaction of students when the teacher used different types of visual aids in the instruction, and when she/he did not use them. The main finding demonstrated that the use of visual aids could help



students to acquire knowledge in a better way, and they helped students to interact in the class without problems of fear or shyness.

Several studies (Fish, Mun, & A'Jontue, 2016; Tabatabaei & Bandari, 2012) addressed the different effects that visual aids have in classrooms. The effectiveness of the use of visual aids in EFL classrooms helped students to feel motivated, attentive, and to enjoy the class. The study conducted by Fish et al. (2016) aimed to analyze the effectiveness of video lectures on ungraduated students using an online survey. This study analyzed the reaction of students before and after the use of visuals on videos. The main finding demonstrated that some visuals might enhance the learning, but too many visuals may negatively affect the learning process.

Tabatabaei and Bandari (2012), wanted to analyze the effects that Iranian freshmen university students had on classrooms toward the use of power-point presentations. The instruments were two questionnaires and observations. The results demonstrated that power-point presentations had a positive effect on learners, but they did not stimulate students' attendance to class and note-taking. Students felt more motivated to discuss or give opinions when power-point presentations were used in classes because they animated them to be actively participative. On the other hand, power-point presentations did not stimulate students to attend class because they had the power-point presentations on their students' blogs to review as many times as they wanted without the necessity to attend class.



## Chapter 4: Methodology

This research synthesis contained an explanatory of bibliographical research. This type of research “compares and combines findings across individual studies, to authoritatively answer particular research questions, and to identify gaps in research methodologies” (Norris & Ortega, 2006, p. 4). Through this investigation, we reviewed several published journals and books on how visual aids worked in learning a foreign language and what the effects of visual aids on EFL students were. We selected the articles via some search engines such as Research Gate, ERIC, Academic Google, British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET), Elsevier, and Springer Science + Business Media. The keywords for researching were visual aids, foreign language, ICTs, learning aids, innovative tools, and EFL classrooms. Twenty-two articles were identified which met the following criteria: all studies had positive or negative effects on the learning process through the use of visual aids; the studies focused on the English language skills and subskills. Those visual aids analyzed were either technological or physical. The articles were written in the English language, and they were about learning English as a Foreign Language. Besides, we reviewed studies that use empirical, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods. The reasons for the criteria selection were to know which of the visual aids was the most appropriate to use in the target language classes. Besides, this allowed knowing what skills and subskills were the most developed through the use of visual aids.

Moreover, due to the technology development, it was essential to know whether technological visual aids were more used than physical visual aids.

Furthermore, it was necessary to analyze how visual aids had engaged students in English language learning. The studies used different methods to get information in distinct ways, and these methods provided reliable information that was used to answer the research questions



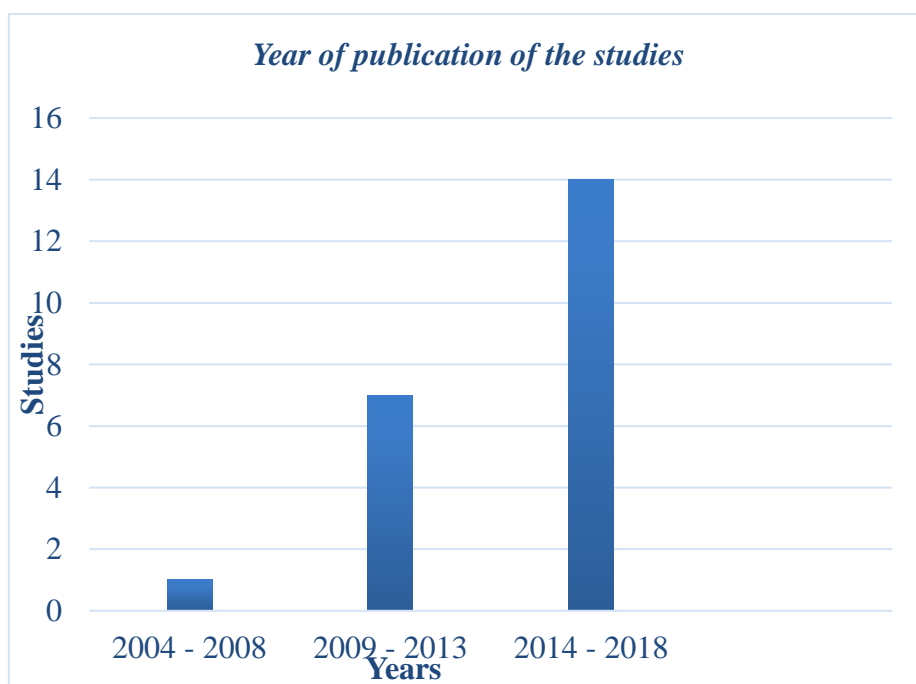
of this study. Finally, for the investigation, the results from the studies were used to know the effects that visual aids had on students.



### Chapter 5: Analysis

Some categories were considered to code the twenty-two studies. First, the studies were coded by the year of publication, since this was valuable for discovering the impact that visual aids had or have had in the last years. Then, they were categorized by the skills and subskills that were developed through the use of visual aids and their effects on students. Finally, the studies were classified by the types of visual aids to know which one is the most used in EFL classrooms.

*Table 1. Year of Publications of the Studies*



**Note. N=22**

Table 1 indicates that fourteen of the twenty-two studies of this research were published between 2014 and 2018. It demonstrates that the use of visual aids in classrooms has increased in the last five years. Nowadays, we are living in an era in which technology plays an indispensable role in the educational process; since the technological developments allow integrating many new practices and possibilities into the classrooms, the use of visual aids in





the learning process has become a must. Some authors support this statement by saying that currently, “the modern technologies offer a big range of opportunities to incorporate visual aids into the target language classrooms” (Patesan, et al., 2018, p. 356). With this implementation, the classes are removing the text-book or traditional era in which the students are only consumers of knowledge via memory (Uyal et al., 2017). Therefore, it is indispensable that teachers incorporate visual aids in their teaching process to convert the classroom into a real learning environment where students become interested, attentive, participative, and interactive. Besides, some authors confirm this fact by mentioning that the use of visual aids in the classroom facilitates the teaching process because it makes the learning experience more significant and remarkable (Gul et al., 2014).

Also, table 1 reveals that the number of studies regarding the use of visual aids has increased completely in the last years. Shabiralyani et al. (2015) affirm that visual aids provide the chance to learn visually in an effective way. In conclusion, since these tools became very efficient in the teaching process, teachers will use them more frequently in their classes to change the traditional teaching process.



*Table 2. Skills and Subskills Developed through the Use of Visual Aids and their Effects on Students*

Focus of the studies		N. Studies	Visuals	Effect (positive/negative)
Receptive skills	Listening	3	Videos	Positive
	Reading	4 <sup>1</sup>	Mind maps Website Picture books Comics	Positive Neutral <sup>2</sup> Positive Positive
Productive skills	Speaking	2	Phonetic symbols Pictures	Negative Positive
	Writing	3	Pictures Picture books Picture books	Positive Positive Positive
Subskills	Critical Thinking	4	Audio-visual aids Images; picture books Video lectures Power-point	Positive Positive Both <sup>3</sup> Both <sup>4</sup>
	Vocabulary	6	Flashcards Pictures, videos Visual support Pictures, videos Videos Videos	Positive Positive Positive Positive Positive Positive

1 One of these studies have had positive effects on reading and writing skills.

2 There were no notable differences between students' performance who were taught by using technology and those who did not use it.

3 Positive: an appropriate amount of visuals may enhance the learning process.

Negative: too many visuals may negatively affect the learning process.

4 Positive: Power-point presentations motivate students to discuss or give opinions.

Negative: Power-point presentations did not stimulate students to attend class and note-taking.



Table 2 explains the skills and subskills developed through the use of visual aids and their effects on EFL students. For doing this, we analyzed twenty-two studies which were categorized by the focus that they had. It means how visual aids influenced the development of the skills and subskills. After that, we describe the visuals that were used in each study to indicate its effects on students, either positive, negative, or neutral.

First, table 2 mentions the effects of using visual learning aids, focusing on receptive, productive skills, and subskills. The findings from this table indicate an evident difference between the number of studies regarding the development of the skills and subskills. It shows that ten studies were focused on the subskills being vocabulary the most developed across the use of different types of visual aids since seven studies were focused on receptive skills and five on productive skills. Koon (1938) mentions that to provide valuable knowledge, we need a combination of visual and auditory aids. Since the results of this table had a focus on receptive, productive skills and subskills, which are closely related to the research questions of this study, these are going to be deeply examined.

#### **a. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Listening Skill**

Table 2 shows the effects of using visual aids to develop listening skills. The findings from this table indicate that videos are the most appropriate tools to help students develop listening skills. As Gruba (1997) mentions, a reason that explains this result is that vision tends to dominate auditory location information. Mainly, listening comprehension needs a visual support to allow learners to relate the two inputs that they are exposed to when they are listening. In the development of the listening skill is mandatory the use of images because students respond first to the visual input and then to the listening input. Learners can relate the video and the audio easily, when they are together, because first they concentrate in all the video's details like facial expressions or body language and then, they connect it with the



content listened to get an idea of the plot of the video. Considering that videos were the most used tools to develop the listening skills, a relevant information about this feature will be deeply explored in the next table (*Table 3*).

#### **b. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Reading Skill**

Table 2 indicates the effects that visual aids have caused on the learners' reading skills. In this case, most of the studies have positive results. It means three are positive, and one has a neutral result. The study, which got a neutral result, used a website, which is a technological tool. A reason that explains this result is that there is not a correct use of this website because students tend to use it as entertainment spending a large amount of time surfing on internet instead of practice their reading (Alfaleh, 2015). It is essential to know which one is the appropriate tool or website, and to know how to use it to provide significant learning opportunities, not only entertaining purposes. In this case, the result was neutral, but it does not mean that it is negative (Edyburn, 2007).

On the other hand, three studies have positive effects, and they use pictorial aids. As Goldstein and Underwood (1981) say, pictures can help students interpret and understand a text because children always pay attention to the pictures. Then the importance of flashy tools. In the analyzed studies the expose of pictures and words allow students to improve their reading comprehension. Despite the technological advance gives the opportunity to implement in classes new visual aids like websites, learners prefer to develop their reading skill using the most common aids such as picture books, mind maps, and comics. These types of visual aids are more accessible and beneficial for both, students and teachers rather than using a website for reading purposes.



### **c. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Speaking Skill**

Table 2 describes the effects that visual aids had on the development of the speaking skill. This result shows that the speaking skill was less developed because, from the twenty-two studies that were analyzed, two of them belong to this category. Afraz et al. (2018) mention that speaking is considered as one of the most challenging skills to learn because students find difficult to express themselves orally in the target language. This fact occurs because the exposure to the L2 is minimum. That is why the results from these studies showed a positive and a negative effect. According to Afraz et al. (2018), the use of pictorial aids makes EFL classes interactive, therefore students feel more engaged, interest, motivated, and involved in the EFL speaking classes. Students use a sequence of pictures to create and provide more ideas easily and it is because while they are looking at the visual aids they can relate these with what they are saying.

Moreover, a study mentions a negative effect using phonetic symbols. As Fotovatnia and Omid (2013) explain, this type of visual support does not help students to improve their pronunciation because they work in a monotonous way researching only the phonetic transcription of the word on the dictionary without knowing the pronunciation of it in the target language. The author reveals that students develop speaking skills by listening to a native person rather than by using phonetic symbols.

### **d. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Writing Skill**

Otherwise, table 2 specifies the effects that visual aids had on writing skill development. Three studies, which used pictures and picture books, help to improve learners' writing skills. According to Kang (2004), for students writing skill is a big challenge to achieve when they are learning a language. Hence, he asserts, saying that the use of visual aids as pictures to



improve the writing skill, reduces the work of the brain and helps writers to organize in a better way their ideas. Besides, Birketveit and Rimmereide (2013) mention that the use of books with pictures motivates students to write more coherently and creatively.

Based on what Alidoost, Tabatabaei, and Bakhtiarvand (2014); Birketveit and Rimmereide (2013) state students use pictures stories to create a schematic structure; it means that all of their writings have beginning, middle, and ending. Also, students improve in their grammar because learners tend to use noun phrase at the beginning of each paragraph, which is very common in English language, and it avoids readers to confuse about who refers to whom in a story. In other words, pictures help students to create more coherent writings.

#### **e. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Critical Thinking Subskill**

Critical thinking is another significant factor that has been considered for this analysis. Table No. 2 demonstrates that two of the four studies have had positive effects, and the other two have had positive and negative effects on the learners' critical thinking subskills. First, it is essential to know the negative and the positive effects that these studies have. The study that used video lectures has positive effects on the development of skills, when presenting students not only an appropriate number of pictures but also relevant ones (Fish et al., 2016).

In contrast, this study also gets negative results, and this is because the video presents too many pictures, and these turn to be distractors or the participants. In the other case, about the study that used Power-Point presentations, there is a positive effect because it helped the students feel comfortable, and they wanted to express their ideas and participate during discussions. However, the negative part is that Power-Point presentations do not motivate students to attend high school, and also they avoid note-taking (Tabatabaei & Bandari, 2012). According to June, Yaacob, and Khar Kheng (2014), videos help learners to develop critical thinking, but they emphasize that learners do not only have to watch a video, but also they



have to solve an activity based on what they have watched. Videos call the attention of learners; participants feel comfortable to learn through films, so it is easy for learners to solve any task based on a video in which they keep their attention all the time. Learners have to think to remember the video to be able to answer questions about it.

#### **f. The Effects of Visual Learning Aids on Vocabulary Subskill**

Additionally, table 2 indicates that vocabulary is the most developed subskill through the use of visual aids because, from the total number of studies, six of them belong to this group, and all of them have positive effects. As Pouwels (1992) states, vocabulary plays an essential part in learning a language; thus, the use of visual aids to learn vocabulary serves to enhance students' performance in the foreign language from the very beginning of its acquisition and also, it helps students get familiar with a different way of learning new lexicon. Besides, Fish et al. (2016) suggest that the best way to improve the acquisition of English vocabulary is by offering visual support illustrating the meaning of the word. For example, the visual support that was frequently used in the studies to increase vocabulary was flashcards, pictures, and videos. Flashcards and pictures helped students have a better comprehension of the class because they gave a more dynamic explanation of the unknown words, and videos provide a better description of vocabulary words because they used a combination of both visual and verbal information.

*Table 3. The Most Common Types of Visual Aids Used in EFL Classrooms*

<b>Types of Visual Aids</b>	<b>N. studies</b>	<b>Visuals</b>	<b>N. Studies</b>
Technological	10	Videos	8
		Website	1
		Power-point	1
Physical	14	Mind maps	1
		Picture books	4
		Comics	1
		Phonetic symbols	1
		Pictures	6
		Flashcards	1

For this analysis, the main criteria are to group the studies according to the visual aids that have been used in each study to find the most used visual aid. In this case, physical visual aids are the most used to enhance L2 learning. In this group, pictures are the most used tool (6). On the other hand, from the ten studies that used technological visual aids, the most used one is videos.

Therefore, table No 3 suggests that videos are the most appropriate tools to engage students in language learning. Harmer (2007) explains this idea saying that videos provide two types of input, visual and auditory. The use of this input reduces the learner's cognitive load or facilitate the learning process because students can see an image and listen to audio at the same time so that they can relate both of them easily. It is essential to highlight that videos are dynamic because learners can listen in the videos, different voices, and not the same as the teacher. Moreover, Harmer states that nowadays, we are in the technology era, and it is easy to download a video from the internet, but teachers can find a wide variety of videos, and they have to choose the most appropriate one for the class. For example,





according to a study by Masoud and Mizaei (2014), videos help students to maintain vocabulary in their minds during an extended time because teachers present this in a contextualize way so students can relate the video with the new vocabulary that they hear.



## Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

### 6.1. Conclusion

This research synthesis had as objective to analyze the effects of visual aids in EFL classrooms. That is why, this investigation concentrated on the impact that visual aids had on each skill and the visual used the most in English learning environments. Twenty-two studies were analyzed and coded by the year of publication, and the skills and subskills developed through the use of visual aids. The results from the research about the year of publication showed that the use of visual aids increased in the last five years.

Also, visual aids helped to develop; reading, writing, listening, vocabulary, and critical thinking. The advantages were that students got engaged and motivated to participate in classes. Furthermore, the disadvantage was that visual aids did not help to improve speaking skill because students learned better by listening to a native than using phonetic symbols. Moreover, most of the effects of the use of visual aids were positive because they helped to improve the different skills.

Notwithstanding, the present research can help to the pedagogical community. Teachers can use different visual aids, which were mentioned in the analysis, in their classes to motivate students to learn English as a Foreign Language. Also, as most of the results in this paper were positive, it might motivate teachers, who do not have enough knowledge about visual aids, to read and learn about how visual aids help to develop each skill and they might use them in their classes in a proper way.

### 6.2. Recommendations

For further research is considered the following recommendations. First, more studies should be carried out on the main skills, the receptive ones, listening and reading; and the



productive ones, speaking and writing, due to there was fewer amount of studies which helped to develop the skills previously mentioned.

Thus, the second recommendation is that more studies should analyze how to choose the correct visual aid in terms of amount and features such as color or size in order to know which ones are the most appropriate to help students in the learning process according to age. Based on these recommendations, future research will contribute with information about visual aids expanding the knowledge about these tools.



## Appendix

The following studies were used for the analysis.

<b>Author/ Year</b>	<b>Name of the Study</b>
Afraz, Taghizade, and Taghinezhad, 2018	“The Usefulness of Pictorial Aids in Developing Female Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners’ Speaking Proficiency”
Akbulut, 2007	“Effects of Multimedia Annotations on Incidental Vocabulary Learning and Reading Comprehension of Advanced Learners of English as a Foreign Language”
Alfaleh, 2015	“Using Technology for Developing ESL Students' Reading Comprehension and Motivation”
Alidoost, Tabatabaei, and Bakhtiarvand, 2014	“The Effect of Picture Story in Creative Textual Coherence in Narrative Genre”
Alhamami, 2014	“Vocabulary Learning through Audios, Images, and Videos: Linking Technology with Memory”
Birketveit and Rimmereide, 2013	“Using Authentic Picture Books and Illustrated Books to Improve L2 Writing Among 11-year-olds”
Early, 2015	“Using Wordless Picture Books to Promote Second Language Learning”
Fish, Mun, and A’Jontue, 2016	“Do Visual Aids Really Matter?”
Fotovatnia and Omid, 2013	“The Effect of Exposure to the Visual Medium on Learning Pronunciation and Word Stress of L2 Learners”
Gul, Kiyani, Chuadhry, and Liaqut, 2014	“Role of A.V. Aids on the Cognition of Students at Secondary Level”
Halwani, 2017	“Visual Aids and Multimedia in Second Language Acquisition”
Komachali and Khodareza, 2012	“The effect of Using Vocabulary Flash Card on Iranian Pre-University Students' Vocabulary Knowledge”
Li, 2014	“An Alternative to Language Learner Dependence on L2 Caption-Reading Input for



	Comprehension of Sitcoms in a Multimedia Learning Environment”
Merç, 2013	“The Effect of Comic Strips on EFL Reading Comprehension”
Mirvan, 2013	“The Advantages of Using Films to Enhance Student’s Reading Skills in the EFL Classroom”
Nasrollahi and Daneshfar, 2018	“The Effect of Visual Contextual Support and Glossary of Words on Guessing Meaning of New Vocabulary Items in English by Pre-university Male EFL Students”
Sabbah, 2015	“The Effect of College Students' Self-Generated Computerized Mind Mapping on their Reading Achievement”
Sarani, Zare, and Moslemi, 2014	“The Effect of Video-Based Tasks in Listening Comprehension of Iranian Pre-intermediate EFL Learners”
Tabatabaei and Bandari, 2012	“Iranian EFL Learners’ Attitudes Towards the Use of Computer-mediated PowerPoint Presentations”
Woottipong, 2014	“Effect of Using Video Materials in the Teaching of Listening Skills for University Students”
Zoghi and Mirzaei, 2014	“A Comparative Study of Textual and Visual Contextualization on Iranian EFL Learners' Vocabulary Learning”



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