

UCUENCA

Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación

Carrera Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

“The Incidence of Pictorial Aids in the Development of EFL Productive Skills”

Trabajo de Integración Curricular previo
a la obtención del título de Licenciado en
Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés.

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Cuenca, Ecuador

15-septiembre- 2022

RESUMEN

Para obtener un nivel de inglés eficiente, los estudiantes necesitan dominar las competencias comunicativas del idioma, las mismas que están relacionadas con las habilidades productivas que permiten la producción de tareas escritas y orales. Sin embargo, la mayoría de alumnos presentan dificultades para desarrollar dichas habilidades dado que la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera se sigue enfocando en la aplicación de materiales y métodos tradicionales. Esta síntesis de investigación tiene como objetivo analizar el rol que tienen los auxiliares gráficos en el desarrollo de las habilidades productivas, identificar los efectos de la inclusión de pistas visuales en el aula de inglés y determinar las perspectivas de maestros y estudiantes acerca del uso de materiales visuales en el fortalecimiento del dominio de escritura y habla. Por lo tanto, veinte y dos estudios tomados de diferentes bases de datos han sido seleccionados y examinados con el fin de identificar la utilidad de auxiliares visuales en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados revelan que (1) las pistas visuales desempeñan un rol motivacional en el proceso de enseñanza-aprendizaje, (2) los aspectos relacionados a escritura y habla mejoran significativamente con su uso y (3) las percepciones acerca de la aplicación de auxiliares gráficos son favorables, dado que, tanto maestros como alumnos consideran que los materiales visuales sirven de impulso y apoyo en las clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: Habilidades de escritura. Habilidades de producción oral. Auxiliares gráficos. Auxiliares visuales. Materiales visuales. Enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera.

ABSTRACT

In order to achieve a proficient English language level, students are required to master communicative competences which are related to productive skills that will help them to produce longer detailed written and oral tasks. Nevertheless, most learners have difficulty developing these language abilities since English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching still focuses on applying traditional resources and methodologies. This research synthesis aims to analyze the role of pictorial aids in the development of productive skills, identify the effects of including visual cues in the EFL classroom, and determine teachers and students' viewpoints regarding the use of visual aids to enhance writing and speaking proficiency. Hence, twenty - two research studies from different databases have been selected and examined as a means to identify the usefulness of pictorial aids in foreign language teaching and learning. Findings reveal that (1) visual cues have a motivational role in the teaching - learning process, (2) their use significantly improves aspects concerning writing and speaking criteria, and (3) the perceptions of applying pictorial aids are favorable, as both language instructors and learners consider visual materials as encouraging and supportive tools for their English lessons.

Keywords: Writing skills. Speaking skills. Pictorial aids. Visual aids. Visual cues. EFL teaching.

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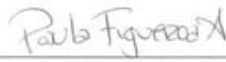
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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude first to my family for their love and never-ending support. Second, I am thankful to my friends Clarita, Liz, Fer and Dome for their sincere friendship and the many memories we have made together. I would also like to thank my thesis partner, Ali, for being in this roller coaster ride with me. Lastly, my most sincere thanks to my thesis director, Mst. Cynthia Hidalgo, whose vast knowledge and encouragement have made possible the completion of this project.

Paula Figueroa

This research project would not have been possible without the expertise, patience, guidance, and continuous support of our thesis adviser, Mst. Cynthia Hidalgo. I'd also like to express my special regards to my beloved family, especially my mom; her inner power to withstand life harnesses has inspired me to build resilience and the best version of myself. Likewise, I'm very grateful to my partners in crime, Paula EF, Doms, and Pauliño; you have always been by my side during my tough times, I love you guys! Last but not least, my dearest Cheems, thanks for the deep conversations, music, laughing, and hugs; you witnessed my mood swings, but you were always there no matter what ♡.

Alicia Flores

DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my beloved grandmothers, Esthela and María, whose fierceness, wisdom, and warm embrace have guided me through every step. To my parents,

Katty and Juan, whose love and support are everything to me. To my sister Emilia, what would I do without you? you brighten my days. To my cousin Anita, for being my soul sister.

Paula Figueroa

This is in memory of my beloved grandmother, Inés; you raised four effervescent, hardworking, and kind hearted women. To all the teachers who are eager to change the world, passionate about teaching with heart, and willing to find hidden treasures and smiles; I hope to become as devoted as you someday.

Alicia Flores

INTRODUCTION

The use of pictorial aids in the instruction of the English language is indispensable since these resources enable teachers to introduce content in a different and more interesting way that motivates students to engage in the learning process. Macwan (2015) affirms that the visual medium is potentially the best channel through which ideas can be spread and consolidated. Therefore, visual materials such as pictures, videos, posters, PowerPoint

presentations, among others, in combination with activities focused on the instruction and practice of productive skills, namely speaking and writing, allow learners to elevate their abilities of achieving effective communication in their target language.

In the same way, Chinnappan and Priya (2019) state that including pictorial aids in the EFL classroom enables teachers to assist learners' communicative hindrances since these resources facilitate their exposure to the target language, which motivates them to interact actively in the class. Furthermore, Lavalley and Briemaster (2017) claim that pictures provide a visual context that is useful for students in order to develop their ideas and think about the vocabulary that is appropriate to use regarding what they are observing. Consequently, this encourages them to actively participate in speaking activities that lead them to the improvement of their speaking skills.

Correspondingly, writing skills are also benefited by the use of visual aids. Navidinia et al. (2019) mention that the implementation of visual cues such as pictures, cartoons, and photographs give students an outline that they can follow in order to structure their writing tasks in a competent way. Thus, this research synthesis analyzes the effects that pictorial aids, also known as visual aids or tools, have in the development of students' writing and speaking skills.

Chapter I

Description of the research

1.1 Background

Learning English encompasses a series of factors that may result in a series of challenges for English as a Foreign Language learners (Akbari, 2015). As stated by Hossain (2015), the process of acquiring a new language such as English and its skills, is developmental since students follow different stages once they are immersed in English.

Golkova and Hubackova (2014) have acknowledged that English language teaching and learning focus on the development of two broad types of skills - receptive and productive skills, which are studied and practiced in EFL contexts.

Receptive skills – also known as passive skills – comprise listening and reading, according to Al-Jawi (2010). This author has referred to receptive abilities as essential to acquire, due to the fact that learners need to extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear in the foreign or target language. In fact, Husain (2015) has determined that most EFL students get acquainted with these skills at first, as they are mastering a new language by observing, analyzing, reading, and collecting information in a passive manner. In addition, as Sheth and Chauhan (2015) have stated, receptive skills do not demand students to produce anything actively, since learners acquire knowledge passively.

In contrast, once learners are ready to create their material, productive skills are the ones that take action as starring roles in the teaching – learning process (Bashrin, 2013). Productive skills – also known as active skills - include speaking and writing (Payne, 2020). Naturally, students spend more energy, time, and effort acquiring these skills, not only because they are exposed directly to the foreign language, but also because they need to produce any written or spoken outcome (Golkova and Hubackova, 2014). Jaramillo and Medina (2011) affirm that output language skills are important forms of expression, as they are used to persuade people, as well as to share ideas and feelings. As a result, it is imperative to focus on the importance of applying effective methods that facilitate the development of productive skills on EFL learners.

According to Toro et al. (2019), the main approach that contributes to the development of the productive competences is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As reported by Chang (2011), this is a method that shows the relationship between two

important factors: language and communication. Furthermore, Alvarado (2014) has stated that the aforementioned approach enables students to communicate in the foreign language providing them and the teachers with authentic activities. Since English productive skills need to go hand in hand with communication, Golkova and Hubackova (2014) have emphasized that this association requires that English language instructors focus on promoting communicative aptitudes in students by applying communicative activities through the use of pictorial aids, also known as visual aids, in EFL environments.

In the same vein, Allan Paivio established a solid basis about picture superiority effect in target language instruction known as Dual-Coding Theory (DCT) (Paivio, 1986, as cited in Erfani, 2012). According to Tan et al. (2020), Paivio's theory determines that human brains use separate systems for acquiring information simultaneously: visual and verbal processes. Wong and Samudra (2019) have indicated that the visual process refers to the use of visual codes such as images, pictures, or concrete objects. Moreover, Samburskiy (2020) has described the verbal process as the one dealing with linguistic principles like words, speech, and language. In fact, both mechanisms complement each other for recalling knowledge (Erfani, 2012). Additionally, Simin (2012) has agreed with Paivio's interpretations by establishing that pictorial representations demand interest and attention, act as powerful mediums, help to propagate ideas, and influence learners' minds. Therefore, as suggested by Gilakjani (2012), a pictorial aid plays a significant impact in English language teaching.

In order to conceptualize the utilization of visual illustrations, Simin (2012) has stated that pictorial context refers to the use of visual aids with any purpose within educational fields. Moreover, this technicality involves the presentation of one or more pictures with the purpose of illustrating texts, facilitating students' knowledge, and developing communicative

skills (Syaprizal, 2016). Currently, as stated by Wazeema and Kareema (2017), English educators have at their scope the necessary tools for enhancing productive abilities through this technique that can truly result in positive effects on students. For instance, an empirical study conducted by Liu and Chen (2015) has showed that by integrating verbal instruction with visual aids like pictures, EFL learners will get valuable literary and spoken experiences, participate more energetically in classroom discussions, develop critical thinking skills, improve oral and written abilities, and their self confidence and self-esteem will increase as well. Furthermore, an empirical study conducted by Navidinia et al. (2019) has reported that EFL students' writing performance through the use of pictures improved in terms of development of content, application of more cohesive devices, and grammar accuracy. Finally, other empirical research directed by Arguello et al. (2020) has revealed that the use of pictures to elicit young learners' oral production is an effective means that allows students to improve their overall development of speaking skills.

It is also important to note that several studies recommend considering certain constraints regarding the application of pictorial context in the teaching – learning process. For instance, although many research articles have provided detailed information about English teachers' positive opinions regarding the use of visual aids, students' perceptions towards the use of these resources have not been fully considered (Yunus et al., 2017). Furthermore, experimental analyses state that some pictures, especially the printed ones, might have weaknesses in terms of color and size; consequently, teachers must make sure to select appropriate and clear images before introducing any visual content for teaching purposes (Arifin, 2015; Rokni & Karimi, 2013; Chinnappan, 2019; Dolati & Richards, 2011). In addition, some written and oral tasks that involve the use of visuals have not resulted as planned due to time constraints (Polášková, 2015; Shabiralyani et al., 2015; Baser, 2013). As

a result, the previously mentioned issues undoubtedly constitute limitations to be considered in further research.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Alfehaid (2014) has reported that globalization has spread its influence in every single field, and languages are not the exception. Khamkhien (2010) has stated that English has become an essential medium of communication in several areas regarding education, work, technology, and even health. This language is usually associated with notions such as getting higher positions in different work fields that look for potential employees who master communicative competences regarding writing and speaking (Alfehaid, 2014). Similarly, Golkova and Hubackova (2014) have agreed and explained that if students aim to master another language, they need to become more communicatively competent. Nevertheless, Hossain (2015) affirms that even though the curriculum in most countries is nearly always designed to produce active communicative abilities in EFL, learners still find difficulties to master the skills needed to be fluent speakers of the English language.

Moreover, Putri et al. (2017) have pointed out that the lack of teachers' knowledge on alternative techniques that reflect 21st century learning innovation causes some disadvantages. Similarly, Erfani (2012) has acknowledged that "language is not learned through words alone; pictures speak louder than words" (p. 164). Congruently, Ravichandran et al. (2017) have affirmed that "even though innovative strategies like pictorial context or the use of visual tools are part of the English curriculum, most educators do not use these resources as part of their methodologies for improving areas regarding language productive skills" (p.775).

It is imperative to analyze our context and the English level of proficiency in terms of productive skills, according to Moreira and Bazurto (2017), although Ecuadorian students are

expected to write and speak English communicatively, skills are not acquired fully and appropriately due to factors related to class size, lack of proper activities in textbooks, and scarcity of time to develop productive abilities during English classes. In the same way, Ortega and Fernández (2017) have pointed out that even though the current curriculum indicates that students from public schools should reach a B1 level of English proficiency before graduating high school, it is not attained since most students are not able to perform communicative tasks efficiently. Moreover, Garcia (2019) has described four aspects that hinder Ecuadorian learners to reach adequate written and spoken skills; these aspects are: application of traditional language learning methods, focus only on grammar development and neglect of productive skills, absence of updated materials or the incorrect use of them, and limited real - life practices.

In order to cope with the problem above, the use of pictorial context emerges as an optional teaching technique whose expectations are not only to bring effects on students' performance and development of communicative skills in the English language, but also to train them to experience learning by visualizing the language.

1.3 Rationale

According to Sharma (2015), the concepts of written and spoken abilities are not unfamiliar to languages, cultures, and educational settings since they are part of the day-after-day human communication. Thus, the appropriate development of writing and speaking skills is vital in any field. Additionally, those language competences are crucial as they give students the opportunity to practice real-life tasks in the classroom.

Regarding speaking skills, Macwan (2015) has explained that they are required everywhere, from simple conversations to formal public speaking. In addition, Rao (2019) has pointed out that teaching speaking to EFL learners is essential to succeed in

communication. However, as Kara et al. (2017) have mentioned, acquiring oral production skills represents a challenge for learners from the beginning, since they are concerned about their lack of vocabulary, confidence, and fluency.

Concerning written abilities, Hossain (2015) has stated that providing instruction regarding writing skills is important because written communication is an essential life competence. Students and people take notes, fill in forms, write letters, reports, stories, among other activities in their daily lives. Additionally, it has to be remembered that writing is a good way to practice grammar structures; it helps learners to look up new vocabulary and to learn English punctuation rules, in the case of foreign language learners. Nevertheless, as claimed by Ravichandran et al. (2017), “most EFL students struggle to achieve written abilities due to three main factors; those are the following ones: organization, flow of ideas, and critical thinking” (p. 772).

Considering the mechanism of acquiring knowledge, according to Afraz et al. (2017), introducing techniques like picture strip stories, games, and photo novels in EFL classrooms will make students improve writing and speaking abilities, feel entertained during the process of instruction, gain self-confidence, and engage with feedback as an assessment performance. Likewise, Britsch (2012) has determined that visual tools encourage students to use more advanced thinking skills when they are producing information and to focus less on the structure of the language. Moreover, Arifin (2015) has mentioned that pupils develop positive attitudes towards English, and get more knowledge and motivation to study this language. Besides, Chong (2017) has explained that pictorial activities serve as stimuli for students to provide well-based descriptions.

Nonetheless, examining the process of instruction, Lavalley and Briesmaster (2017) have defined visual representations as strategies that will not only improve learners’

communicative competences, but also will enrich EFL teachers' professional development. Furthermore, the application of pictorial context will serve to identify any issue regarding the acquisition of productive skills within classroom activities, as instructors will be able to make decisions based on the weaknesses students show or the problems they encounter in the teaching - learning process, which will allow them to correct difficulties associated with written and oral skills.

Based on the information that has described specific challenges for EFL learners to develop appropriate productive skills, and the emphasis of their importance on students' academic performance, it is necessary to give consideration to the application of pictorial aids in the development of productive skills as a technique that might reveal positive outcomes during the learning and teaching processes of written and oral skills.

Hence, the available empirical evidence indicated above, and the data provided in this research synthesis become important means for further research, since both contribute the basis for inquiring into the use of visual aids, and their impact on producing language and communicative competences in EFL contexts. What is more, this research may serve as a guide for future English teachers to obtain the best possible results at the moment of instructing their students.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 General objective:

- To analyze the role of pictorial aids on the development of productive skills - writing and speaking - in EFL educational processes, based on the reported literature.

1.4.2 Specific objectives:

- a) To identify the effects that the inclusion of pictorial aids in the EFL classroom has on students' development of writing and speaking skills, based on existent research.
- b) To determine learners and educators' opinions about the use of pictorial aids for developing productive skills in EFL environments based on existent research.

1.5 Research questions:

- a) According to existing literature about the topic, which is the role of pictorial aids in the EFL students' acquisition of productive skills?
- b) Based on previous research, how does the implementation of pictorial aids into the English teaching – learning process influence students' written and spoken skills?
- c) Centered on available literature, which are the teachers and students' perceptions towards using pictorial aids in EFL classrooms?

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

As a means to establish a background about productive skills and the important role that pictorial aids represent to support their development, it is essential to include in this

chapter the definitions and key features of the following terms: productive skills, pictorial context, communicative language teaching, and dual coding theory.

2.1 Defining Productive skills

According to Davies (1976), productive skills are “the ability to communicate actively in the foreign tongue, to speak it and write it.” (p.441), This definition is supported by Golkova and Hubackova (2014), who claimed that productive skills refer to the set of abilities that a person uses in order to produce information in a written or spoken manner. In addition, these previously mentioned authors stated that productive skills are strongly attached to passive skills, which comprise listening and reading, and that both are of great importance to develop an adequate learning of a foreign language. Furthermore, Jaramillo and Medina (2011) also mentioned that productive skills are a key form of expression that is applied in order to persuade other people and to share ideas and feelings (as cited in Hossain, 2015).

2.2.1 Speaking skill

Speaking is considered as the primary skill that learners of a foreign language should acquire and develop (Afraz et al., 2017). According to Nunan (1999, as cited in García, 2019) speaking involves production, reception, and information process due to its interactional nature which is based on the different characteristics that surround speakers and their context.

Furthermore, Rao (2019) stated several advantages that speaking skills provide to EFL learners. Among these advantages are being able to have an active participation within group activities in the classroom, having effective communication with others, and getting better job opportunities around the world.

2.2.2 Writing skill

As stated by Cumming (1998), “the word writing refers not only to text in written script but also to the acts of thinking, composing, and encoding language into such text.” Furthermore, according to Wingersky (1999) writing is a thinking process through which the writer discovers, organizes, and communicates his or her thoughts to the reader (as cited in Hidayati, 2018).

Durga and Rao (2018) claimed that by learning what they call “the art of good writing”, students will be able to succeed not only at an academic level but also at a professional level. In addition, the previously mentioned authors enlisted a number of advantages that the acquisition of writing skills provides to students which are first, being able to redact complex documents such as research papers and reports, second, seeking and getting a job. Third, enhancing communicative skills and finally, being able to build on other skills such as creativity and self- understanding.

2.2 Definition and characteristics of pictorial context

According to Simin (2012) there are two important antecedents to trace back regarding pictorial context. First, a study conducted by Bransford and Johnson (1972) in which a picture was used as a cue in order to provide visual information about a reading passage. This passage included a description of the different aspects that were related to the context of the picture. After conducting this first experiment, the researchers found that pictures enhanced the outcomes concerning comprehension and recollection. Consequently, they arrived at the conclusion that it is imperative to provide a context so that new information can be assimilated. Thus, the use of pictures within a context demonstrated to be helpful regarding language learning and recollection.

Secondly, Omaggio (1979) through a study that applied different pictures in several contexts, could find results with respect to the relation between reading comprehension and visual aids. This research study drew the conclusion that the selection of visual aids is important to illustrate reading passages and most importantly that “studies relating to the effects of other types of pictorial support on other phases of the language acquisition process are also needed” (Omaggio, 1979, p. 116). Hence, the importance of continually expanding on research related to pictorial context in language learning settings.

2.2.1 Pictorial context and English language acquisition

Aschawir (2014) stated that having pictures as a resource to teach a language benefits the instruction process, since it provides an environment that allows students to focus more on the task because of the interesting and real way that the class in general is presented in (as cited in Navidinia et al., 2019). Moreover, Gutiérrez et al. (2015) established that students’ communicative skills can be improved through the use of pictures and that by including these visual aids, the deficit of input and materials in the language classrooms can be compensated (as cited in Navidinia et al., 2019).

2.2.2 Pictorial aids role in the EFL classroom

As stated by Canning-Wilson (1999), the importance of the use of pictorial aids in the EFL classroom lies in the fact that visual representations allow learners to establish a relationship between words and objects they interact with every day. Furthermore, Begoray (2001) has claimed that by viewing materials such as advertising images, drawings, and photographs learners are able to interpret and actively develop an understanding not only of what a word means but also how it works (as cited in Donaghy & Xerri, 2017).

According to Aromdee (2012), the aforementioned visual materials are defined as authentic since they have not been created specifically for instructional purposes but for real - life communication. As reported by Desai (2015), using authentic materials in the syllabus is one of the characteristics of the approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

2.3 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching emerges as an approach that aims to develop the target language in a dynamic learning environment (Toro et al., 2019). This method pursues students to become active participants within the process of communication, but this aim requires certain procedures to be adjusted. For this reason, according to Desai (2015), learners not only develop communicative competences by using the target language accurately and appropriately, but also by learning through convenient techniques and materials.

Among them, Broughton (1983) has identified that certain productive tasks that include visual stimuli either prompt or aid learners to engage in communicative output activities. Concerning speaking skills, free oral work fosters students to assume a participating role in negotiating meaning. In an effort to achieve this communicative competence, teachers make use of pictorial aids such as pictures, photographs, diagrams, maps, and similar resources. In parallel, specific writing assignments such as creative writing draw upon visual aids to facilitate students to express simple to complex thoughts (as cited in Hossain, 2015).

2.3.1 Promoting productive skills through CLT visual techniques

Visual representations pursue to aid learners with the development of written and spoken skills by providing contextual information. These tools are part of certain CLT techniques, and the most remarkable and relevant are described below.

2.3.1.1. Picture strip story

Mukmin (2021) has defined picture strip story strategy as a visual aid whose application focuses on sets of pictures and story sequences. Besides, the researcher has pointed out that this technique not only strengthens the acquisition of speaking and writing skills, but also enriches other sub skills such as vocabulary, grammar, organization, and comprehension.

2.3.1.2 Picture-Cued Technique

According to Lavalle and Briesmaster (2017), picture - cued strategy aims to promote students' oral and written language development. Furthermore, this technique provides information to consider and constitutes a model to follow as a means to prepare spoken and written descriptions without teacher guidance. Aucapiña (2021) has stated that picture - cued activities involve asking students to express their opinions and describe overall and specific material. As a result, the author has mentioned that these tasks elicit pupils to identify which vocabulary, grammar structures, and ideas to reckon with.

As said by Mayer and Anderson (1992), looking for class materials to enhance productive skills requires to be suitable. As a result, in conformity with Erfani (2012), the authors have asserted that combining visuals and words benefits favorably the acquisition of writing and speaking skills; this approach is identified as Dual Coding theory.

2.4 Dual Coding Theory

As reported by Samburskiy (2020), Dual Coding Theory (DCT) posits that the process of acquiring and understanding knowledge occurs simultaneously by verbal and non - verbal stimuli. The pioneer of this hypothesis was Allan Paivio, a professor of psychology, who attempted to find a balance between lexical and visual systems since the last - mentioned channel operated as a complement to facilitate the recognition and retention of information.

2.4.1 Processes of DCT.

According to Erfani (2012), human brains interpret and recall knowledge through verbal and visual codes. Both processes function independently, but connecting them doubles the chances to comprehend language effectively. These systems deal with different resources and tools due to their characteristics. First, verbal stimuli involve spoken content and written text. Second, visual stimuli require drawings, pictures, and diagrams.

Chapter III

Literature Review

In order to learn more about the role of pictorial aids and the development of EFL productive skills and to provide a background before the analysis, this chapter includes a systematic review of several published articles. The present chapter is divided into four sections: the use of visual tools in the development of English productive skills, effects of implementing visual aids in the acquisition of writing and speaking skills in EFL classrooms, teachers and students' perceptions towards the integration of visuals on English educational processes, and challenges faced while dealing with pictorial context in EFL classrooms.

3.1. Use of visual tools in the development of English language productive skills.

The integration of different types of visual tools in the English language teaching and learning process allows the teacher to present topics in an effective and attractive way, which aids students to learn better and remember concepts for a longer period of time (Chinnappan & Priya, 2019). Therefore, this section of the chapter will provide more information about studies that focus on the use of visual tools in the EFL classroom to enhance productive skills.

According to Dolati and Richards (2011), there are a variety of visual aids that can be integrated in the English language classroom and these can range from simple articles like flash cards to computer-based or multimedia. The aforementioned researchers found that the use of these visual materials allows students to learn and practice new words and through the teacher's intervention it can help enhance their communicative skills. In addition to that, Macwan (2015) reported that visual aids have the potential to draw students' attention in a

significant way and enable them to focus by giving them background information to perform better on productive tasks.

In the same way, Wazeema and Kareema (2017) pointed out that multimedia visual resources are also an essential and effective way to enhance the English language knowledge of the students. These resources not only increase the pupils' interest on the topics but they also increase their knowledge and proficiency in English language skills. Furthermore, Gistituati et al. (2019) stated that using visual aids during writing and speaking tasks reduces students' nervousness and allows them to be more open to participate since these materials enhance learners' description skills by providing them a background where they can start making their ideas flow.

3.2. Effects of implementing visual aids in the acquisition of writing and speaking skills in EFL classrooms.

As stated by Pateşan and Marioara (2018), the use of visual tools in the English language classroom is imperative in order to enhance students' engagement towards language learning and at the same time, to enable them to expand their vocabulary knowledge and develop their speaking and writing skills. Therefore, to identify the specific findings that the application of visual tools has in the development of the previously mentioned productive skills, it is key to divide this section of the chapter into two parts: the effects of using visual aids to develop writing skills and the effects of using visual aids to develop speaking skills. In these two parts some studies will be reviewed to cover the purposes of this research synthesis.

It is important to mention that the application of action research with the involvement of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed- methods has been the researchers' main approach to collect meaningful results regarding the use of visual aids to develop speaking skills.

3.2.1 The effects of using visual aids to enhance writing skills

The involvement of visual aids to develop EFL learners' writing skills has demonstrated to have positive effects in terms of improving writing components such as vocabulary increase, logical sequencing, use of cohesive devices,

Navidinia et al. (2019) and Susanti (2021) gathered similar results on the contribution of the use of picture sequencing to refine EFL students' writing abilities. Through the presentation of pictures as an input to develop writing tasks about general and descriptive topics, the researchers were able to find that students showed an increment in the number of words in their writings due to the fact that pictures provided a basis to develop their ideas more efficiently. Furthermore, Susanti (2021) determined that vocabulary can be reinforced through the implementation of tasks that include pictures to be described since in this researcher's study, learners were required to observe an image and write a description using prepositions of place which was a topic that learners had been previously introduced to.

In the same way, Navidinia et al. (2019), Susanti (2021), and Contreras et al. (2015) explored in their respective studies the implications of visual aids in the development of logical sequencing and the use of cohesive devices and were able to collect positive outcomes regarding these components. For instance, Susanti (2021) mentioned that the use of sequencing pictures required students to establish a logical order among what they were able to observe and then write about it in a descriptive way, which allowed them to be cognitively engaged during the writing task. In addition, Contreras et al. (2015) stated that the use of sequencing pictures elicited learners' interest in increasing their knowledge about connectors and transitional words which led them to make more logical connections at the moment of writing. Similarly, Navidinia et al. (2019) determined that pictures allowed students to

efficiently employ more cohesive devices to connect the different events of the writing tasks they were working on.

Aspects regarding writing content and coherence were studied by Khotimah et al. (2017) and Susanti (2021) respectively. In the initial stages of the research carried out by Khotimah et al. (2017), students experienced difficulties at the moment of working on writing activities due to their weak skills in this language area; however, the researchers applied picture series as a resource to improve learners' writing abilities and obtained beneficial results. Students' production and development of content in writing tasks improved mainly through the observation and written description of pictures. In a similar way, Susanti (2021) established that picture techniques allow learners to overcome writing inconveniences since this resource enables them to have a basis to develop their writing assignments.

3.2.2 The effects of using visual aids to enhance speaking skills

Research conducted by Lavallo and Briemaster (2017), as well as Karsono (2014) reported similar results regarding the use of pictures during the development of speaking activities, since they found that these visual materials allow students to feel more at ease at the moment of communicating their ideas. Moreover, Lavallo and Briemaster (2017) made special emphasis on the result that pictures provide a cue for students to start a discussion about a topic, which reduces their concern of having to improvise the words that they need to say. Likewise, Karsono (2014) supports this claim by adding that students showed more willingness to participate and were more engaged with speaking activities when visual aids were involved.

Furthermore, the study by Lavallo and Briemaster (2017) demonstrated through picture description exercises that there was an improvement in students' speaking skills components such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, which made their discourse

more intelligible. These results coincide with the findings of the research conducted by Phuong (2018) who also implemented the picture description technique and gathered positive results regarding students' coherence in speaking.

Moreover, research conducted by Afraz et al. (2017) reported findings on a group of students who received picture assisted teaching of the English language and were able to perform considerably better in activities such as conversations, discussions, stories, and role plays. According to the results of the study, the exposure to tasks that involved pictures allowed the group of students to achieve a higher development of their speaking abilities. In a similar way, the use of pictures as cues to promote speaking skills obtained a positive outcome in the research done by Nasri et al. (2019) since they found that students were able to improve not only their overall speaking abilities but also, they expanded on the results obtained on specific areas such as fluency and accuracy, which demonstrated a significant improvement after the application of pictorial input.

3.3. Teachers and students' perceptions towards the integration of pictorial aids on English educational processes.

3.3.1 Teachers' perceptions of using pictorial aids for enhancing productive skills

Considering teachers' insights on the acquisition of written and spoken skills is imperative as it determines an overall analysis of the outcomes of their teaching strategies during the learning process.

To boost writing proficiency by way of visual representations, an amount of quantitative, qualitative and mix - method research has been conducted. Authors worked with several data - collecting instruments such as open - ended interviews (Dolati & Richards, 2011; Macwan, 2015; Fata et al., 2018; Wiyati & Marlina, 2021), questionnaires (Yunus et

al., 2013; Shabiralyanil et al., 2015; Wiyati & Marlina, 2021), semi structured interviews (Yunus et al., 2013), observation techniques, and field notes (Fata et al., 2018). The backgrounds of the participants who have taken part in these studies ranged in terms of teaching experience, English proficiency level, cultural contexts, and educational workplaces (i.e., public or private institutions). It is important to emphasize that all of them were EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers.

Dolati and Richards (2011) and Yunus et al. (2013) reported similar findings concerning teachers' perceptions about the effects of pictorial aids on the acquisition of writing skills. The authors depicted visual clues as learning facilitators. For instance, Dolati and Richards (2010) stated that several types of visual aids eased and transferred the meaning of words to practice writing compositions. Likewise, Yunus et al. (2013) mentioned that learners clearly understand abstract concepts as they are complex to comprehend only through verbal instruction. To put it in another way, Macwan (2015) mentioned these visual clues lessened the teaching burden and built sustainable and attractive lessons.

Moreover, Yunus et al. (2013) and Shabiralyanil et al. (2015) examined teachers' attitudes with reference to the use of visual media on the development of writing proficiency in terms of emotional outcomes. According to the participants' responses, the majority of educators enjoyed teaching productive skills, and also, showed satisfaction as pictorial aids fostered their creative thinking skills to apply in their language instructions. Furthermore, Shabiralyanil et al. (2015) closely revealed that EFL teachers contemplate graphical aids as motivating tools for enriching written skills.

Handling classroom time management was addressed by Shabiralyanil et al. (2015), Fata et al. (2018), and Wiyati and Marlina (2021). The previous authors agreed that English language teachers found visual aids as practical resources since they did not spend a lot of

time explaining any concept or idea. Besides, educators made use of the remaining time to organize the lesson plans and to explore extra activities for increasing students' foreign language understanding. Consequently, teachers raised awareness of their time management skills (Wiyati & Marlina, 2021).

By the same token, promoting highly valuable teaching lessons and classroom atmosphere by means of visual cues were primarily explored by certain research studies. Among them, Yunus et al. (2013) examined teachers' perceptions on the implementation of visual support for developing writing skills. The analysis of the results conveyed worthwhile insights from the majority of EFL teachers as visual aids had been perceived as effective learning tools. In other words, educators believed that pictorial aids set a fun environment in the school room which elicited students' interest. In addition, Shabiralyanil et al. (2015) reaffirmed Yunus et al. (2013) findings by stating that the target population had contemplated visual aids as the strategies which stimulated students' reasoning and imagination and replaced monotonous learning atmospheres with enjoyable ones. Finally, yet importantly, Wiyati and Marlina (2021) determined that the educators found visual aids, namely pocket charts, as beneficial means since they conducted meaningful lessons, so the teaching - learning process became cooperative and student - centered.

Although the teachers showed a considerable level of skepticism during the preliminary interviews regarding the impact of visual clues on the acquisition of writing skills (Dolati & Richards, 2011), with limited disagreement (Shabiralyanil et al., 2015), the outcomes of the post interviews determined that after the course of the writing sessions, educators found visual means as useful and convenient strategies as they assisted students to build their target language self-improvement and to boost their brainpower and problem - solving skills competently (Dolati & Richards, 2011). On the other hand, some teachers still

have not changed their mindsets because they encounter conventional teaching techniques as helpful and efficient (Shabiralyanil et al., 2015).

Setting aside teachers' perceptions about the integration of pictorial aids for enhancing writing skills, and with an eye on exploring teachers' viewpoints for encouraging speaking skills through that pictorial technique, two research papers have been considered for these purposes. Moreira and Bazurto (2017) found that language instructors relied on pictorial aids and their incidence of developing students' speaking proficiency as higher levels of internal motivation had been perceived among the learners, and their own teaching practices showed an extent of improvement. This paper collected the data through a mix method approach, specifically conducting personal interviews and focus group discussions. Besides, a total of twenty Ecuadorian language teachers was the target population, and their responses were examined thoroughly.

In the same way, Ahmed and Othman (2018) reported key findings related to teachers' positions as regards to pictorial representations and their influence on students' communicative skills. The candidates of this study were twenty English language teachers at secondary level schools in Sudan. Moreover, this research obtained information related to the topic via close - ended questionnaires. The results revealed aspects which are in agreement with Moreira and Bazurto (2017). That is to say that although EFL educators still have been struggling with some lesson features of traditional language learning approaches, most of the teachers consider visual means as tools which elicit students' interest and ease the understanding of difficult ideas. Furthermore, a small number of participants indicated that visual aids reinforce lessons and make them catchy (Ahmed & Othman, 2018).

3.3.2 Students' perceptions of using visual aids for acquiring productive skills

Looking upon learners' points of view with regard to the attainment of writing and speaking proficiency is necessary as their perceptions address their learning achievements or educational deficiencies.

For the purpose of analyzing students' experiences about their writing performances by including visual clues in the teaching - learning process, this particular area of research has encompassed mixed - method approach studies. Authors gathered data by applying observation methods, semi - structured interviews, questionnaires (Wahyuningsih, 2011; Rokni & Karimi, 2013). Respondents were language learners. With respect to the last group of participants, it is essential to highlight that their contexts vary in terms of age (i.e 16 - 20 years old) (Rokni & Karimi, 2013), gender (i.e female students) (Rokni & Karimi, 2013), and English levels of proficiency (i.e B1 - intermediate) (Rokni & Karimi, 2013), and educational levels (i.e high schoolers) (Rokni & Karimi, 2013), (i.e undergraduates) (Wahyuningsih, 2011).

Wahyuningsih (2011) and Rokni and Karimi (2013) explored language learners' insights by applying a mixed method approach. Altogether, both research studies had demonstrated constructive feedback from the use of pictorial strategies (Wahyuningsih, 2011; Rokni & Karimi, 2013). Focusing attention on behavioral attitudes is as crucial as highlighting cognitive outcomes. First of all, students started getting motivated in the course of time (Wahyuningsih, 2011). Relatedly, Rokni and Karimi (2013) expressed that visual materials evoked students' interest and shared their enthusiasm for learning. Second, learners showed a great deal of comprehension as they had a visual direction that assisted them to develop a topic from the pre - writing stages (i.e brainstorming and outlining) until the edition and last revision . Additionally, pupils did not feel bewildered or overwhelmed as

they had received background pictorial information and vocabulary input (Wahyuningsih, 2011). Equally important, Rokni and Karimi (2013) concluded that students had shown a considerable level of memory retention, namely of lexicon. Thus, visual elements enabled EFL learners to make statements, and then, to produce writing compositions.

Students' perceptions towards the contribution of pictorial aids for ameliorating writing skills were explored by Shabiralyani et al., (2015) and Navidinia et al., (2019). These studies were quantitative, so the data measurement instruments were descriptive statistics (Navidinia et al., 2019), and the data collection tools were closed - ended questionnaires (Shabiralyani et al., 2015). The participants' profiles had different backgrounds. For example, their English competency levels were mainly intermediate (B1) (Navidinia et al., 2019). The students belonged to distinct educational stages of instruction: high school (Shabiralyani et al., 2015) and university (Shabiralyani et al., 2015).

According to Shabiralyani et al., (2015), language instructors were highly pleased with visual media to develop their written tasks considering that these resources were appealing. The findings of this study are in line with the takeaways of a subsequent inquiry done by Navidinia et al., (2019). The authors reported favorable learners' attitudes regarding the effectiveness of visual aids. First, students were ingenious and encouraged to start with the writing process. As a result, learners accomplished their compositions successfully and effortlessly. In addition to this, Shabiralyani et al., (2015) drawn two conclusions connected to intrinsic motivation. Primarily, students felt more confident and fascinated of being immersed in a classroom environment that upgraded their language skills. Then, learners were not subjects of criticism by their teachers since the dynamic of the lesson was different and the language instructors provided scaffolding from the beginning.

Aside from scrutinizing English language students' appreciations about visual elements as mechanisms for upgrading writing skills, it is essential to tackle EFL learners' impressions towards using these materials for enriching speaking skills.

Among the mixed - method studies that have investigated this area, the authors worked with a variety of data collection instruments such as classroom observation and field notes (Afraz et al., 2018; Arguello et al., 2020; Gistituati et al., 2019), and questionnaires and interviews (Lavalle & Briesmaster, 2017; Afraz et al., 2018; Gistituati et al., 2019). The study candidates were EFL learners with different English levels of proficiency ranging from beginners (A1) (Arguello et al., 2020), intermediates (B1) (Afraz et al., 2018), and upper - intermediates (B2) (Lavalle & Briesmaster, 2017). Besides, most of them belonged to private English language schools with the exception of Gistituati et al. (2019) whose participants were university students.

Integrating visual clues into the speaking lessons comprises positive effects not only for teachers but also for students as these resources highly support them to develop their speaking proficiency (Lavalle & Briesmaster, 2017). In the matter of improving students' affective levels, Lavalle and Briesmaster (2017), Afraz et al. (2018), Arguello et al. (2020), and Gistituati et al. (2019) reported that English language pupils experienced less speaking anxiety, significant inner motivation, great levels of confidence, and extra participation in classroom activities. To back up the aforementioned findings, Afraz et al. (2018) stated that beneficial emotional outcomes had been observed since pictorial aids demanded students to engage in guided learning and problem-solving tasks.

At long last, Lavalle and Briesmaster (2017), Afraz et al. (2018), Arguello et al. (2020), and Gistituati et al. (2019) reported two key findings. First, students considered image - based speaking tasks as supportive means since they could become acquainted with

English proficiency tests as these types of evaluations include question stems related to picture description. Second, relating to boosting soft skills (i.e communication, leadership, team work, and creativity) and building interpersonal relationships, pupils felt active as they achieved those abilities by exchanging their ideas with their class fellows. Furthermore, Arguello et al. (2020), through their study, mentioned that EFL learners recognized they had played an autonomous role in their learning process since teachers provided scaffolding in order not to limit the use of the target language in the classroom.

3.4 Challenges faced while dealing with pictorial aids in EFL classrooms.

This subdivision has compassed mixed - method studies with data collecting instruments such as surveys, semi structured interviews, and focus group discussions (Baser, 2013; Moreira & Bazurto, 2017; Afraz et al., 2018), quantitative research by using closed ended questionnaires (Shabiralyani et al., 2015), and qualitative approaches by means of in - depth interviews (Ahmed & Othman, 2018; Hidayati, 2018). In this case, participants consisted of diverse settings in terms of native countries (i.e Asian and Latin American countries), gender (i.e male and female), type of educational institutions (i.e public and private), and English skill levels (i.e elementary and intermediate). The aim of the above - mentioned research papers is to describe the challenges that occurred in the course of practicing output skills through visual aids.

One of the first challenges that educators faced when implementing visual clues was designing adequate visual materials for English language lessons (Shabiralyani et al., 2015). This argument is supported by Afraz et al. (2018) who have reported that EFL teachers should have the necessary technical knowledge and training to choose the most suitable pictorial aids during classroom sessions. In the contrary case, whether language instructors

are not fully capable of using these resources, students will find them irrelevant, and the class atmosphere will become tedious and unpleasant.

Another objection was the availability of visual aids in the market (Baser, 2013). As reported by the previous author, there were certain pictorial clues that were difficult to get access to. For that reason, some senior and junior instructors opted to maintain traditional teaching approaches. Subsequently, according to Ahmed and Othman (2018), pupils were prone to lack of engagement and interest. Similarly, Moreira and Bazurto (2017) mentioned that monotonous tasks created teacher - centered learning environments.

Finally, to discuss what factors contribute to the target language challenges, Hidayati (2018) tackled internal and external influences. For addressing the purpose of this study, certain factors were included in this section. First, language teachers did not adjust their activities with the English competence level of their students. As a result, students found difficulties to complete the task, and they could not be able to achieve their goals even though pictorial aids had been included in the lesson. Another problem was the accessibility to visual cues (Hidayati, 2018). This researcher agreed with Baser (2013) as most of the language educators used only small pieces of paper with unclear images. Because of this, the probabilities of having meaningful lessons were lower.

This paper has reviewed the literature of the incidence of visual aids on target language productive skills around four main areas: the use of visual means in the development of English productive skills, effects of implementing visual aids in the acquisition of writing and speaking skills in EFL classrooms, teachers and students' perceptions towards the integration of pictorial aids on English educational processes, and challenges faced while dealing with pictorial context in EFL classrooms. Based on empirical evidence, the findings have shown that visual aids influence favorably on the acquisition and mastery of language productive skills.

In spite of the worthwhile evidence presented throughout this chapter about the effects of pictorial means, several limitations were acknowledged by Shabiralyani et al.(2015), Moreira and Bazurto (2017), Ahmed (2018), and Afraz et al. (2018) in the section that described the drawbacks of implementing visual aids to master written and spoken skills in language educational settings. In terms of classroom management, learners were susceptible to experience lack of interest, discouragement, as well as frustration because these visual media were not integrated efficiently in the teaching - learning process. In respect of performance issues, Afraz et al. (2018) dealt with contrasting viewpoints. Some participants still had confidence in acquiring communicative skills by using mechanical drills since these practices were easier and effortless to fulfill. Moreover, Dolati (2011) and Shabiralyanil et al. (2015) revealed that both educators and students had misconceptions towards visual learning means due to teaching and learning preferences and lack of adequate training. In other words, educational actors did not attach importance to visual cues because they seemed comfortable with traditional instruction.

Chapter IV

Methodology

A research synthesis is defined as “the systematic secondary review of accumulated primary research studies” (Norris & Ortega, 2006, p.4). Therefore, in order to gather reliable primary information to analyze it in the present exploratory and documentary research synthesis, a detailed search will be carried out.

The collected data about the use of visual aids to develop productive skills comes from articles found in online databases such as Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), JSTOR, ProQuest, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Atlantis Press, Sciendo, and Taylor & Francis. Additionally, most of the articles were found in educational journals such as *Canadian Center of Science and Education*, *The Modern Language Journal*, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *I.J. Modern Education and Computer Science*, *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies (IJEELS)*, *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*, *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, *Langkawi: Journal of The Association for Arabic and English*, *Journal of Culture*, *English Language Teaching & Literature (Celt)*, *English Education Journal*, *Research Journal of English Language and Literature (RJELAL)*, *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education*, *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, *Journal of Education and*

The keywords included in the research are: (a) productive skills, (b) writing skills, (c) speaking skills, (d) pictorial aids, (e) use of visual aids, (f) EFL teaching, (g) visual cues.

In order to assure that the information presented in this research synthesis is relevant and reliable, the selected articles have to meet the following criteria:

- a. The articles must provide information related to the application of pictorial aids with EFL learners in order to enhance their productive skills, as this study analyzes the incidence of this technique on speaking and writing development.
- b. The research papers must be empirical studies in the interest of analyzing primary data that represents the effects of pictorial aids in teaching and learning scenarios.
- c. The date of publication of the papers to be analyzed must be from 2010 to 2021 for the purpose of having current information regarding the intended issue of the research synthesis.
- d. The research papers must be peer reviewed to assure that the data has been backed up with valuable feedback and good remarks for its effectiveness.
- e. The research papers must be qualitative in order to analyze information regarding students' and teachers' perceptions, quantitative as a means to analyze the effect that pictorial aids have on students' academic performance results, and mixed method with a view to gain contextualized and valid insights from the topic under study.

- f. The research papers must focus on EFL learners from different levels of instruction since it is important to gather all the possible relevant information regarding the effects of visual aids in EFL classrooms.

It is also necessary to describe the parameters that do not satisfy the requirements of this research paper.

- a. First, articles whose main focus are ESL learners are not part of this research synthesis since these learners are constantly immersed in the language and have higher levels of exposure to it. Thus, communicative skills are not a priority in their case.
- b. Second, articles whose years of publication date back to 2009 and before are not included in this research synthesis since data might not be up to date.
- c. Third, dissertations and theses are not included in this paper since even though they are closely supervised by a dissertation committee made up of scholars, they may not be relevant and current enough to be used in research.

Chapter V

Data Analysis

In order to obtain useful information from data regarding the topic of this research synthesis and to provide well-structured conclusions to the readers, this chapter encompasses the analysis of the information reviewed in twenty-two studies about certain characteristics such as year of publication, research location, type of research, role of pictorial aids in the acquisition of productive skills, effects of the use of visual aids to develop speaking and writing skills, and teachers' and students' insights concerning the use of pictorial aids.

Table 1

Year of Publication of the Studies

Year of Publication	Number of Studies	Author	Percentages
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2011 - 2014	6	Dolati & Richards (2011); Wahyuningsih (2011); Rokni & Karimi (2013); Baser (2013); Yunus et al., (2013); Karsono (2014)	27,27%
2015 - 2018	10	Shabiralyani et al., (2015); Contreras et al., (2015); Afraz et al., (2017); Khotimah et al., (2017); Lavallo & Briemaster (2017); Moreira & Bazurto (2017); Wazeema & Kareema (2017); Ahmed & Othman (2018); Hidayati, (2018); Fata et al., (2018)	45,46%
2019 - 2021	6	Gistituati et al., (2019); Nasri et al., (2019); Navidinia et al., (2019); Arguello et al., (2020); Susanti (2021); Wiyati & Marlina, (2021)	27,27%

Note. N= 22

Table 1 shows information corresponding to the year of publication of the selected studies to be analyzed in this research synthesis. Six (27,27%) of them were published between the years 2011 to 2014. Hence, it can be inferred that during this period the research regarding the use of visual tools to develop productive skills started to spark interest since they were being widely used due to their positive influence on learners' target language acquisition (Dolati & Richards, 2011; Wahyuningsih, 2011; Rokni & Karimi, 2013). In addition, ten of the examined studies (45,46%) were published in the course of four years, that is from 2015 to 2018, which shows a significant increase in the interest in the implementation of visual tools to enhance productive skills. Furthermore, six (27,27%) out of the total number of studies have been published in recent years, from 2019 to 2021, which demonstrates that this is a field that still needs to be expanded.

Table 2

Research Location

Location	Number of Studies	Author	Percentages
Asia	18	Dolati & Richards (2011); Wahyuningsih, (2011); Rokni & Karimi, (2013); Baser, (2013); Yunus et al., (2013); Karsono (2014); Shabiralyani et al., (2015); Afraz et al., (2017); Khotimah et al., (2017); Wazeema & Kareema (2017); Ahmed & Othman (2018); Hidayati, (2018); Fata et al., (2018); Gistituati et al., (2019); Nasri et al., (2019); Navidinia et al., (2019); Susanti (2021); Wiyati and Marlina, (2021)	81,82%
South America	4	Contreras et al., (2015); Lavallo & Briemaster (2017); Moreira & Bazurto (2017); Arguello et al., (2020)	18,18%

Note. N= 22

Table 2 presents the categorization of the research papers with respect to the research location. A total of twenty-three studies were classified according to the native land of the involved subjects. First, a significant majority (81,81%) of the examined academic studies were conducted in Asia. This parameter clearly indicates that the application of visual aids for developing productive skills has gained attention and relevance in this continent. Second, only four studies (18,18%) out of twenty-two were carried out in South America. In this instance, the incidence of pictorial aids for improving writing and speaking proficiency still demands in - depth analysis and exploration. For that reason, taking into consideration this aspect will be necessary and pertinent to delve into for the purpose of obtaining up - to - date points of the topic under study.

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Table 3

Type of Research

Type of research	Number of Studies	Author	Percentages
Qualitative	7	Dolati & Richards (2011); Wazeema & Kareema (2017); Ahmed & Othman (2018); Hidayati, (2018); Fata et al., (2018); Susanti (2021); Wiyati and Marlina, (2021)	31,82%
Quantitative	6	Rokni & Karimi (2013); Shabiralyani et al., (2015); Contreras et al., (2015); Khotimah et al., (2017); Nasri et al., (2019); Navidinia et al., (2019)	27,27%
Mixed methods	9	Wahyuningsih (2011); Baser (2013); Yunus et al., (2013); Karsono (2014); Afraz et al., (2017); Lavallo & Briemaster (2017); Moreira & Bazurto (2017); Gistituati et al., (2019); Arguello et al., (2020)	40,91%

Note. N= 22

Table 3 illustrates information associated with the type of research that was applied to gather the data examined in the twenty-two studies involved in this research synthesis. It indicates that nine studies (40,91%) involve a Mixed Methods research approach. It is important to mention that since Mixed Methods use a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, it contributes with a wider comprehension of the research problem (Molina-Azorin, 2016). Additionally, seven studies (31,82%) were conducted through Qualitative research, which is an approach that collects information via close interaction with the subjects of the research in their regular environment (Ma, 2015). Furthermore, six studies (27,27%) applied Quantitative research. This type of approach collects numerical data and analyzes it statistically in order to obtain generalizable outcomes (Ma, 2015). Therefore, the

majority of gathered studies and analyzed information about the use of visual tools in the EFL classroom, through observation and interaction with teachers and learners, gives a reliable view about the articles chosen.

Table 4

Role of Pictorial Aids in the Acquisition of Productive Skills

Role of Pictorial Aids	Number of Studies	Studies	Percentages
Motivation improvement	6	*Gistituati et al. (2019); *Karsono (2014); *Lavallo and Briemaster (2017); Macwan (2015); *Wazeema & Kareema (2017)*; *Dolati & Richards (2011);	30,00%
Productive skills enhancement	9	*Navidinia et al., (2019); *Susanti (2021); *Lavallo and Briemaster (2017); Afraz et al., (2017); Nasri et al., (2019); *Karsono (2014); *Dolati & Richards (2011); Khotimah et al., (2017); *Contreras et al., (2015)	45,00%
Overall language knowledge improvement	5	*Wazeema & Kareema (2017); *Dolati & Richards (2011); *Susanti (2021); *Contreras et al., (2015); *Navidinia et al., (2019)	25,00%

Note. N = 20 *Studies are counted in more than one category.

Table 4 displays information that could answer the first research question regarding the role that pictorial aids have in the EFL students' acquisition of productive skills. Therefore, the main roles of pictorial aids analyzed in this table were related to motivation improvement, productive skills enhancement, and overall language improvement.

Six studies (30,00%) reported data regarding motivation, since according to Gistituati et al. (2019), Karsono (2014), and Lavallo and Briemaster (2017) the use of visual materials in the EFL classroom reduces learners' nervousness and anxiety given that these resources

provide a context that can be used as a basis to perform communicative activities, which increases students' willingness to participate.

Moreover, nine studies (45,00%) demonstrate that productive skills are enhanced due to the application of visual tools in the EFL environment. Authors Afraz et al. (2017), Nasri et al. (2019), Dolati and Richards (2011) stated that visual input benefited students' development of speaking skills by giving them different opportunities to interact with the language in conversation and describing activities. These interactions led to an increase in fluency and accuracy as well as vocabulary expansion (Lavalle & Briemaster, 2017). Regarding writing skills, studies conducted by Navidinia (2019), Susanti (2021), and Contreras et al. (2015) described that visual aids allowed learners to outline their ideas in order to write and connect them more efficiently through their use of cohesive devices, which showed an improvement of their narrative skills (Khotimah et al. 2017).

Furthermore, five (25,00%) studies found other characteristics related to overall language knowledge that the inclusion of visual aids provides to EFL learners. As stated by Wazeema and Kareema (2017), language understanding and knowledge improves through the observation of contents. In other words, visual materials allow learners to relate what they are learning with what they are able to observe, which helps them achieve a superior comprehension. In addition, vocabulary and grammatical aspects are also increasingly developed through the interaction with visuals since these resources assist learners in the process of acquiring a wider knowledge of these language features (Susanti, 2021; Contreras et al. 2015).

Table 5

Effects of the Use of Visual Aids in the Development of Writing and Speaking Skills

Productive Skills	Effects	Number of Studies	Studies	Percentages
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Writing	Vocabulary increase	2	*Navidinia et al., (2019); *Susanti (2021)	14,29%
	Logical sequencing improvement	2	Khotimah et al., (2017); *Susanti (2021)	14,29%
	Use of cohesive devices improvement	3	*Navidinia et al., (2019); *Susanti (2021); Contreras et al., (2015)	21,42%
Speaking	Confidence increase	2	*Lavalle & Briemaster (2017); Karsono (2014)	14,29%
	Fluency and accuracy improvement	3	Afraz et al., (2017); Nasri et al., (2019); *Lavalle & Briemaster (2017)	21,42%
	Coherence improvement	2	*Lavalle & Briemaster (2017); Arguello et al., (2020)	14,29%

Note. N = 14 *Studies are counted in more than one category.

Table 5 aims to answer the second research question about the impact of visual aids on the development of productive skills. Regarding writing skills, three components such as vocabulary, organization, and coherency have received more emphasis and enrichment by applying pictorial aids. According to Contreras et al. (2015), Navidinia et al. (2019), and Susanti (2021), visual media influenced greatly on the use of cohesive devices as learners were capable of developing adequate writing compositions. For instance, students succeeded in producing longer texts with more linking words and discourse markers within a specific deadline. This explains why, as shown in Table 5, 21,42% of studies revealed that visual learning aids (i.e., photos and pictures) and pictorial techniques (i.e., picture - cued and

picture series techniques) assisted learners to practice their descriptive writing performance and to overcome their writing hindrances with reference to cohesion and coherence of ideas.

On the flip side, authors Navidinia et al. (2019), Khotimah et al. (2017), and Susanti (2021) emphasized that visual means were also beneficial for vocabulary building and logical flow. As a matter of fact, Khotimah et al. (2017) pointed out that content, which is an ever-present writing criterion, attained an overall growth as participants improved their sequencing skills by making reasonable connections among the ideas and organizing the sentences according to a logical order. As a complement of the previous claim, Susanti (2021) mentioned that implementing visual techniques in a writing lesson supports students to generate and fabricate well-structured statements along with convenient language choices. In the same line, Navidinia et al. (2019) reported that pictures prompt learners to increase their vocabulary usage as they have to provide accurate written representations. As shown in Table 5, 14,29% of studies examined parameters concerning vocabulary and transition.

Furthermore, as it is shown on the table, the three aspects regarding speaking skills that were analyzed are confidence increase, fluency and accuracy improvement, and vocabulary acquisition. Two studies (14,29%) focused on the aspect related to confidence in which researchers Lavallo and Briemaster (2017) and Karsono (2014) pointed out that students embraced the use of visual materials due to the fact that these allowed them to establish a context based on what they observed, and as a result it was easier for them to gather and communicate their ideas about different topics.

Furthermore, three studies (21,42%) collected information regarding the influence of visual aids on fluency and accuracy. Authors Afraz et al. (2017), Nasri et al. (2019), Lavallo and Briemaster (2017), agreed upon the fact that students who were exposed to activities that included pictures demonstrated positive outcomes regarding their abilities to communicate in

a fluent and accurate manner, since these activities were superior to traditional methods such as drilling exercises.

In addition, two studies (14,29%) gathered information regarding the improved coherence in students' speaking. Lavallo and Briemaster (2017) and Arguello et al. (2020), reported that, due to learners' knowledge expansion regarding pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar while working on picture -cued activities, their speech intelligibility improved significantly.

Finally, the categorized and analyzed data provides evidence that visual aids positively influence students' writing and speaking skills development by refining aspects that are key to achieve effective communication.

Table 6

Insights Regarding the Use of Pictorial Aids

Subjects involved	Skills	Perceptions	Number of studies	Studies	Percentages
	Writing	Positive	Dolati & Richards (2011); Yunus et al., (2013); Macwan (2015); *Shabiralyanil et al., (2015); Fata et al., (2018), Wiyati & Marlina (2021)	6	37,5%
		Negative	-	0	0%
Teachers					
	Speaking	Positive	*Moreira & Bazurto (2017);	2	12,5%

		*Ahmed & Othman (2018)		
		Negative	-	0 0%
Learners	Writing	Positive	Wahyuningsih (2011); Rokni & Karimi (2013); *Shabiralyani et al., (2015); Navidinia et al., (2019)	4 25%
			Negative	- 0 0%
	Speaking	Positive	*Lavalle & Briesmaster (2017); Afraz et al., (2018); Arguello et al., (2020); Gistituati et al., (2019)	4 25%
		Negative	-	0 0%

Note. N= 16 *Studies are counted in more than one category.

Table 6 presents teachers and students' perceptions regarding the use of visual aids to master writing and speaking skills. As seen above, 37,5% of language instructors acknowledged visual cues as efficient tools to introduce in an EFL classroom. In general terms, Dolati and Richards (2011) and Yunus et al. (2013) identified visual clues as meaning supporters since these resources help to understand abstract concepts that are quite challenging to grasp only via words. For that reason, Macwan (2015) claimed that pictorial aids reduce the burden of teacher workloads in a substantial way.

Moreover, Shabiralyanil et al. (2015) stated that visual aids enrich emotional aspects in terms of teaching career satisfaction, motivation, and self - encouragement since EFL educators perceive their teaching quality has accomplished positive educational outcomes for students. Additionally, visual aids help language teachers to propose time - saving activities as a way to make use of the remaining time to prepare adequate lesson plans or to discover engaging writing tasks for deepening English language learning (Shabiralyanil et al., 2015; Fata et al., 2018; Wiyati & Marlina, 2021).

Equally important, table 6 also includes information about teachers' perceptions with respect to the use of pictorial aids to improve speaking skills. As mentioned above, two studies (12,5%) showed that teachers appreciate visual means as encouraging tools for speaking activities. According to Moreira and Bazurto (2017), teaching practices improved outstandingly. In addition, Ahmed and Othman (2018) revealed that language instructors prepare their speaking lessons by including appealing materials related to pictures, charts, and photos. Therefore, Ahmed and Othman (2018) and Moreira and Bazurto (2017) were in agreement that language lessons are reinforced and strengthened for the purpose of making students enjoy their language learning.

Considering students' insights about visual aids and their incidence on their productive skills acquisition, four studies out of 16 (25%) mentioned that language learners hold constructive insights regarding the incidence of pictorial means on the development of writing proficiency. Wahyuningsih (2011) stated that students' goal - directed behavior was evident as their inner motivation increased significantly. In the same line, Rokni and Karimi (2013) perceived that participants did not feel overwhelmed as they could complete writing compositions competently as well as showing a great retention of information due to the visual feedback received from pictorial aids.

Besides, intrinsic motivation was repeatedly reinforced according to Shabiralyani et al., (2015) and Navidinia et al., (2018). The previous authors reported that this emotional drive depends on two variables. First, higher levels of self - confidence are notorious when the classroom atmosphere facilitates the process of teaching and learning. Second, teachers' guidance is not based on conventional approaches, but rather it is focused on recognizing the needs of the learners, providing meaningful feedback, prompting communication, and monitoring students' performance. Consequently, pupils do not feel as subjects of criticism whether they make a mistake at the moment of learning a target language.

Additionally, the information in Table 6 demonstrates that students' impressions towards the use of pictorial representations for enhancing their speaking proficiency is greater than those of the teachers. As mentioned before, 25% perceived visual aids positively. Among the constructive outcomes, Lavalle and Briesmaster (2017), Afraz et al. (2018), Arguello et al. (2020), and Gistituati et al. (2019) emphasized certain emotional effects such as the reduction of public speaking anxiety and the increment of class participation. Besides, the authors claimed that social skills related to teamwork, creativity, and leadership are developed intelligently when image - based speaking tasks are included.

Finally, negative insights were not reported during the carrying out of the studies. Hence, both teachers and students who were part of the target population contemplated visual cues as supportive resources to acquire and master English productive skills.

Chapter VI

Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

The focus of this research synthesis was to analyze the role and the effects that pictorial aids have in the development of productive skills on EFL students as well as the perceptions that both learners and teachers have regarding the implementation of these materials in the English classroom. Therefore, this chapter presents the conclusions of the aforementioned analysis in order to provide answers to the research questions that were previously stated.

Responding to the first research question, it was made evident that pictorial aids have roles concerning different aspects. The first aspect refers to the link between visual aids and motivation. It was reported that the use of pictures not only allows students to improve their concentration on the content and tasks that they have at hand, but also it has the effect of reducing pupils' uneasiness of performing in their target language (Macwan, 2015; Gistituati et al., (2019); Karsono, 2014). Therefore, the levels of participation in the classroom increase and students have more possibilities of achieving a significant growth regarding different

components of their speaking and writing skills (Khotimah et al. 2017; Navidinia et al. 2019; Lavalle & Briemaster, 2017). Furthermore, learners are also able to accomplish wider comprehension of the language by creating a connection between what they can observe and the topics that they are being taught (Wazeema & Kareema, 2017).

Correspondingly, in order to answer the second question of this research synthesis, it was determined in the previous chapter that pictorial aids have positive effects on EFL students' development of different aspects related to writing skills and speaking skills. As it was reported in the analysis, learners who worked on tasks that involved picture descriptions were able to organize their writing more effectively by having pictorial cues as a background to originate their ideas (Contreras et al., 2015). Visual aids demonstrated to be key in the learners' refinement of written tasks since these materials allowed them to improve their utilization of discourse markers and linking words. Therefore, they were able to produce effective connections between the different sections of their written tasks. Similarly, through the observation of pictures, students acquired more knowledge about logical sequencing which boosted their use of cohesive devices (Khotimah et al., 2017). Another positive effect linked to the use of visuals in the EFL classroom was related to the students' vocabulary, which increased as a result of their need to provide accurate terms to the elements that they observed in the pictures (Navidinia et al., 2019; Susanti, 2021).

In like manner, the development of components related to speaking skills was also affected positively by the implementation of visual aids. It was found that pictures allow students to feel more comfortable and confident at the moment of speaking since they provide a visual context in which learners can rely on when elaborating their ideas (Lavalle & Briemaster, 2017; Karsono, 2014). Moreover, it was established that visual aids accompanied by activities that elicited students' speaking skills (i.e., discussions, role plays, and stories) gathered positive outcomes regarding factors such as fluency and accuracy due to the

engaging application of said materials in the teaching and learning process of the language (Afraz et al., 2017; Nasri et al., 2019). Another factor that improved students' communicative skills is speech intelligibility, which according to the analysis was achieved through the students' participating in picture- cued tasks, since these provided learners a space in which they could practice their pronunciation and use of grammar (Lavalle & Briemaster, 2017; Arguello et al., 2020).

Concerning the third research question about EFL educators and students' viewpoints on the application of visual aids for developing productive language skills, certain outcomes were derived from sixteen examined studies. Based on the analysis of Chapter V, the exploration of teachers' perceptions regarding the current topic reported more insights about the incidence of visual cues on writing skills in preference over speaking skills. Language instructors gave visual aids credit as clarifying resources because they helped abstract thinking instruction. Subsequently, students moved - forward into the next language writing lesson (Dolati & Richards, 2011; Yunus et al., 2013). Additionally, educators not only highlighted the meaningful impact of pictorial representations on the subject knowledge, but also recognized the usefulness of these materials on human psychological aspects such as intrinsic motivation and self - fulfillment needs. As shown in the previous section, it was evident that although the majority of language teachers required more time to adjust themselves and their lessons to a non-standard visual technique, considerable levels of productive teaching performance, work satisfaction, and self - belief were the major changes in stakeholders' mindsets (Shabiralyanil et al., 2015).

Bearing speaking skills in mind, EFL educators depicted limited outlooks about the effectiveness of visual cues on the aforementioned abilities. However, it is of great importance to refer to them since these communicative competences belong to the productive skills as well. As stated in the preceding chapter, language teachers considered pictorial aids

as attractive and powerful strategies that elicit students' speech and offer learners a visual exposure to authentic target language features related to commonly used grammar structures, idioms, and vocabulary (Ahmed & Othman, 2018). In other words, once the speaking process is actively engaged with the English language, students will not only learn about the language, but also will feel immersed in it as English native speakers do. Furthermore, EFL educators perceived pictorial aids as teaching improvers because their lessons started building a bridge between two components: English language understanding (knowledge) and discourse (oral skills). Therefore, the teaching process aimed to model active, curious, and engaged learners by replacing artificial learning experiences with more participatory ones in which students had created a direct relationship with real communication and meaning (Moreira & Bazurto, 2017).

Regarding pupils' standpoints about the development of productive skills through pictorial aids, the analyzed research papers showed similar insights in both writing and speaking proficiency. First, students perceived remarkable levels of self - motivation since they had been subjected to visual stimuli as a way of encouraging them to follow the writing process throughout and to complete any writing activity successfully. As a result, neither mental fatigue nor poorly planned written tasks prevented learners from refining and achieving this language competence (Rokni & Karimi, 2013). Second, not merely personal motivation pushed students to acquire good writing, but also self - confidence drove them to accomplish it effectively, as language teachers praised and acknowledged learners' effort, provided constructive feedback, and identified positive academic traits (Navidinia et al., 2019).

Finally, in view of the speaking skills, students revealed worthwhile impressions about the use of visual means to master communicative abilities. Learning to speak English confidently is highly important for second language learners, but there are certain barriers

such as fear of making grammar mistakes and being misunderstood by an audience. For these reasons, pictorial aids helped to reduce speech anxiety and nervousness by creating an amicable classroom environment with flexible activities. Consequently, class participation was fostered notably (Afraz et al., 2018). Moreover, learners' personal attributes such as creative thinking, teamwork, and responsibility were nurtured during EFL language sessions in which visual cues were applied (Gistituati et al., 2019).

6.2 Limitations and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research synthesis, there are specific pedagogical recommendations which are worth mentioning. First, educators should have enough professional training on the application of visual techniques, be aware of the drawbacks that this teaching strategy may comprise, and meet students' new requirements regarding the acquisition of productive skills. Thus, language teachers will be able to choose appropriate resources to incorporate into their lesson plans.

Second, even though instructors may have the necessary expertise to boost students' writing and speaking skills through visual material, it would be better to prompt students to look for their own pictorial resources as they keep abreast of their interests and necessities. Because of this, pupils will not feel forced to write about or to describe orally something that they may not feel enthusiastic and informed about.

In addition, researchers should continue exploring and gathering useful insights and content in order to contribute to the English language teaching field and community. Though the studies showed positive results, further investigation about this topic in Latin America would be suitable for non - native language learners and teachers because both groups will benefit from it by experiencing trendy language methodologies and achieving self -

actualization needs. Lastly, teachers' perceptions towards the use of visual cues for developing speaking proficiency should continue to be collected since this area still needs to be studied in depth.

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Appendix 1

List of Primary Studies for Analysis

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