

TEACHING ENGLISH TO INMATES FROM “LA MODELO” PRISON

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Trabajo de grado para optar al título de Licenciado en Inglés

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to describe the social practicum done by students from “Universidad Industrial de Santander, UIS” in the “San Juan Bosco” institute at Bucaramanga’s male penitentiary “La modelo”. The social practicum is a new modality that University offers to undergraduated students as an alternative to develop their final project by solving a social need of a community or institution. As a respond to the request of English students practitioners presented by the director of the “San Juan Bosco” institute to the UIS Language School, a group of EFL program students designed and carried out an English program for “La modelo” inmates who attend high school classes. In this way the practitioners solved the institution’s need of suitable English teachers and contributed to the reintegration process of the inmates. By means of the development of the English program, students found a generalized low level of motivation and interest in the classes which was evident in the inmates’ willingness, attitudes and involvement. This phenomenon forced students to find methods and approaches that help inmates in the achievement of the English program objective.

TITULO : TEACHING ENGLISH TO INMATES FROM “LA MODELO” PRISON *

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PALABRAS CLAVES: práctica, social, cárcel, modelo, enseñanza, Inglés, internos.

Trabajo de grado en la modalidad de práctica social desarrollado en la cárcel La modelo de Bucaramanga. Debido a la ausencia de docentes calificados en el área de Inglés, el instituto San Juan Bosco que opera dentro de las instalaciones de la cárcel La modelo, a través de su directora la Lic. Maria Sonia Zambrano, solicitó a la Escuela de Idiomas de la Universidad Industrial de Santander la presencia de practicantes en esta área, con el fin de aportar sus conocimientos para el diseño y aplicación de un programa de Inglés durante el primer semestre del año 2007. El objetivo de dicha práctica social no solo consistió en suplir la ausencia de docentes en el área de Inglés, sino en contribuir de igual manera en el proceso de resocialización que se adelanta en la cárcel, a través de la aplicación de una metodología ecléctica basada en las teorías de Stephen Krashen (Natural approach), James J. Asher (Total physical response) y lingüistas de la Universidad de Michigan (Audiolingual method). Al final del proceso no solo se consiguió que los internos adquirieran conocimientos básicos de Inglés, sino que también reconocieran la importancia del aprendizaje de una segunda lengua y al mismo tiempo reflexionaran sobre su realidad y su compromiso con la sociedad.

* Trabajo de grado en la modalidad de práctica social.

** Facultad de ciencias humanas, Escuela de Idiomas, Lic. Sonia Lucia Pedraza Ramirez, Lic. Maria Sonia Zambrano.

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KEY WORDS: practicum, social, prison, modelo, learning, English, inmates.

Final project in the social practicum modality developed in Bucaramanga’s male prison “La modelo”. As a respond to the lack of qualified English teachers, the director of the “San Juan Bosco” institute, Lic. Maria Sonia Zambrano, made a formal request of English practitioners to the Language school of “Universidad Industrial de Santander”. The “San Juan Bosco” institute offers inmates the opportunity to continue their primary and high school education as part of their reintegration into society process. The work of practitioners consisted on designing and carrying out an English program during the first semester of 2007. The objective of this social practicum was not only to solve the lack of English teachers but also to make a contribution to the inmates’ reintegration into society process by providing them the opportunity to experience the second language learning in a different way. By means of the application of an eclectic methodology based on the theories of Sthephen krashen (Natural approach), James J. Asher (Total physical response) and linguistics of the Michigan University (Audiolingual method) this objective was reached. At the end of the process the inmates acquired basic English knowledge; they realized of the importance of the second language learning and at the same time they reflected on their reality and commitment with the society.

* Final project in the social practicum modality.

** Humanity sciences faculty, Language School, Lic. Sonia Pedraza, Lic. Maria Sonia Zambrano.

1. INTRODUCTION

According to the General Law of Education, Article 68", the education for the reintegration to the society contains the educational programs offered to people whose individual and social behavior demands integrative educational processes that allow them to reintegrate to the main stream society.

Within the law there is the case of the Colombian prison colonies in which one must take into account the plans and educational programs, the policies and techno-pedagogical and administrative orientations of the INPEC (Instituto Nacional Penitenciario y Carcelario). The article 71 states that there will be resources with their respective budgets, that come directly and deals with private non profit companies and with recognizable idiosyncrasy.

Being extremely important for the INPEC the reintegration of inmates into the society, there exist some programs that help them reintegrate. That is why; they decided to create an educational section in 1.959 whose objective was the development of an integral and systematic educational process.

Taking into account this new section, the government of Santander gave the functioning license to "San Juan Bosco" institute in 1997. This institute is directed

since that time by Lic. Maria Sonia Zambrano Rodriguez, who is in charge of running the different academic programs of formal, non formal and informal education.

“San Juan Bosco” institute wants to be the leader in the educational section within the correctional system in Colombia; providing the inmates with real alternatives during the reintegration process. For that reason, it is highly important for the institute to develop and carry on educational programs which main purpose is to help inmates to acquire different useful skills and positive attitudes that would be used after being released.

This project attempts to carry out a social practicum in this specific context and focuses on the educational field; particularly on the English area in the institution mentioned above. The institute has a need of qualified English teachers with the aim to cover the subject, some of the learners need this teaching practice for graduating and some others for promotion. As students of humanities in the ELT Program in a public university, we wanted to participate and support this special program that has been leaded by both the INPEC and the “San Juan Bosco” Insitute.

2. PLAN OF ACTION

STAGE 1:

- Recognition of the facilities.

To know the requirements and processes for entering to prison.

STAGE 2:

- Socio-demographic survey, placement test, interest and attitudes test application.

To get data in order to establish characteristics of the population.

To get data about population English background.

To get data about affective variables.

- Data analysis.

STAGE 3:

- Design of the English program.

Selection of the content to teach.

Selection of the approaches and methodologies.

Lesson plans design.

STAGE 4:

- English program development

English classes were divided into two parts: reflective and teaching part.

The reflective part: This was focused on reflexions about facing daily life challenges.

The teaching part: This was based on the lesson plans.

STAGE 5:

- Evaluation of the process.

Application of a final exam.

Analysis of the final exam results.

Outcomes achievement analysis.

3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to provide students the basic elements that permit them to communicate efficiently in a social context we decided to design the English classes following three methodologies: Natural approach, audiolingual and Total Physical Respond (TPR) approach.

3.1.1 Natural approach

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition consists of five main hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis, the Input hypothesis, and the Affective Filter hypothesis. It will be taken into account only two of this hypothesis which were considered relevant for this project (acquisition-learning and affective filter hypotheses).

The Acquisition-Learning distinction is the most fundamental of all the hypotheses in Krashen's theory and the most widely known among linguists and language practitioners. According to Krashen there are two independent systems of second language performance: 'the acquired system' and 'the learned system'. The 'acquired system' or 'acquisition' is the product of a subconscious process very similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first language. It

requires meaningful interaction in the target language - natural communication - in which speakers are concentrated not in the form of their utterances, but in the communicative act. The 'learned system' or 'learning' is the product of formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process which results in conscious knowledge 'about' the language, for example knowledge of grammar rules. In this particular project, learning is the system that takes place since the process was carried out in a classroom setting with inmates that had theoretical information and functional knowledge of the second language.

On the other hand, the Affective Filter hypothesis, embodies Krashen's view that a number of 'affective variables' play a facilitative, but non-causal, role in second language acquisition. These variables include: motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Due to their daily life conditions and their multiple concerns, prisoners have to confront hard emotional situations which affect their performance in class. Krashen claims that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. Low motivation, low self-esteem, and debilitating anxiety can combine to 'raise' the affective filter and form a 'mental block' that prevents comprehensible input from being used for acquisition. In other words, when the filter is 'up' it impedes language acquisition. On the other hand, positive affect is necessary, but not sufficient on its own, for acquisition to take place.

The affective side of the learner is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning. Good language learners are often those who know how to control their emotions and attitudes about learning. Additionally, teachers can exert a big influence over the emotional atmosphere of the classroom in three different ways: by changing the social structure of the classroom to give students more responsibility, in this case students at "San Juan Bosco" institute were assigned many tasks that demand a high level of responsibility. Tasks such as homework and announced quizzes were carried out successfully by students. Another way in which a teacher influenced the emotional atmosphere of the classroom is by providing increased amounts of naturalistic communication. In relation to this, it is relevant to say that in the content taught to "San Juan Bosco's" students there were activities that allowed them to have a naturalistic communication through dialogs about introducing themselves using real information.

3.1.2 Total physical response

This is a method developed by Dr. James J. Asher, a professor of psychology at San José State University, to aid learning second languages. Asher sees successful adult second language learning as a parallel process to child first language acquisition. He claims that speech directed to young children consists primarily of commands, which children respond physically before they begin to produce verbal responses. Asher feels adults should recapitulate the processes by

which children acquire their mother tongue. In the classroom the teacher and students take on roles similar to that of the parent and child respectively. Students must respond physically to the words of the teacher. The activity may be a simple game such as Simon Says or may involve more complex grammar and more detailed scenarios. So, students at “San Juan Bosco” institute were taught basic commands such as sit down, stand up, open/close your notebook, etc in their first classes. Moreover, at first teacher mimics commands since students had any level of English. Then in the later stage of command the teacher said a command and students followed it immediately. In addition, TPR was used to practice and teach various things including classroom vocabulary and some parts of the body.

3.1.3 Audiolingual method

The Audiolingual Method is a method for teaching foreign languages. Linguists at the University of Michigan invented this method in the late 1950s. In the Audiolingual method, students first hear a language. Later, they speak the language, and after that, they read and write in it. This way of language teaching is similar to the Direct Method. Like the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method doesn't use the students' native language. For example, if you are in an English class in Turkey, the teacher only speaks English, and no Turkish. However, unlike the Direct Method, the Audiolingual Method does not teach vocabulary. Rather, the teacher drills grammar. In the Audiolingual method, grammar is most important for the student. In other words, the student must repeat grammar patterns after the

teacher. The students do not learn lots of vocabulary. This method also uses psychology. Here are some of the objectives of the audio-lingual method: accurate pronunciation and grammar, ability to respond quickly and accurately in speech situations and knowledge of sufficient vocabulary to use with grammar patterns. Taking into account the poor English knowledge of the inmates, the type of activities which were carried out in the "San Juan Bosco" institute based on the audilingual method were dialogues and drills. EFL students found it as the most suitable way to introduce and practice grammar patterns.

3.1.4 Motivation

Most of the students from "San Juan Bosco" institute present a very low level of motivation to learn a foreign language which affects in a great deal their performance and achievement. For this reason it is important to identify both, the type and combination of motivation presented in their second language learning process.

The most important work done in the area of specific motivation to language acquisition has been by Robert Gardner. In his socio-educational model, Gardner identified a number of factors which are interrelated when learning a second language. Unlike other research carried out in the area, Gardner's model looks specifically at second language acquisition in a structured classroom setting rather than a natural environment. His work focuses on the foreign language classroom.

Within the model, motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements. These include effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying the language and the direction of the learner. Desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect illustrates the learner's emotional reactions with regard to language study (Gardner 1982). In the specific case of "San Juan Bosco's" students the "effort" they made was noticeable since they attended English classes two hours per week even though they could spend this time in other activities. In regard to students' "desire", most of them did not want to become proficient in the language but they wanted to get a sentence reduction. Finally, students did not participate actively in the class, did not bring their materials and showed an apathetic attitude which made evident their negative reaction towards the English learning.

Motivation has been also identified as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language (Crookes and Schmidt 1991). It is thought that students who are most successful when learning a target language are those who like the people that speak the language, admire the culture and have a desire to become familiar with or even integrate into the society in which the language is used (Falk 1978). This form of motivation is known as integrative motivation. By means of informal conversations with the inmates, practitioners found that most of their students did not have an integrative motivation since they were not interested anyway in the target language culture, on the contrary they showed contempt for it.

In contrast to integrative motivation is the form of motivation referred to as instrumental motivation. This is generally characterized by the desire to obtain something practical or concrete from the study of a second language (Hudson 2000). With instrumental motivation the purpose of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting the requirements for school or university graduation, applying for a job, etc. In the “San Juan Bosco’s” students case to get a reduction on their sentence in prison was what motivated them to attend classes. Instrumental motivation is often characteristic of second language acquisition, where little or no social integration of the learner into a community using the target language takes place, or in some instances is even desired. It has been found that generally students select instrumental reasons more frequently than integrative reasons for the study of language.

3.1.5 Generalized anxiety disorder

Although anxiety might not be the most important reason for failure or success in learning a foreign language, its influence in the process cannot be ignored. Recently, many researches indicate that anxiety affects the second language learning up to the point that lots of learners finally give up learning.

According to the doctors at The Cleveland Clinic Department of Psychiatry and Psychology, generalized anxiety disorder or GAD is characterized by

excessive, exaggerated worry about everyday life events. To have most of the time programmed and controlled, the constant need of safety, acceptance and freedom, prison life with its routines of lock-downs, counts and hearings and the desire of recovering liberty are just some of the facts that incarcerated learners at the “San Juan Bosco” institute had to confront everyday. People with symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder tend to always expect disaster and cannot stop worrying about one or several source of concern. Daily life becomes a constant state of worry, fear and dread. Eventually, the anxiety so dominates the person's thinking that it interferes with daily functioning, including work, school, social activities and relationships. The exact cause of GAD is not fully known, but a number of factors—including genetics, brain chemistry and environmental stresses—appear to contribute to its development. Trauma and stressful events, such as abuse, the death of a loved one, divorce, and dramatic changes in life, like the ones that prisoners from “San Juan Bosco” institute had to face, may lead to GAD.

3.1.6 Age

Taking into account that a big percentage of the population who attended English classes at “San Juan Bosco” institute were adults over 25 years old, practitioners from “UIS” considered age as a factor that could interfere somehow in the learning process. However, there are many misconceptions and myths about the ideal age to learn a second language. Most people assume that "the younger

the better" applies in language learning. However, many studies have shown that this is not true. Studies comparing the rate of second language acquisition in children and adults have shown that although children may have an advantage in achieving native-like fluency in the long run, adults actually learn languages more quickly than children in the early stages (Krashen, Long, and Scarcella, 1979). These studies indicate that attaining a working ability to communicate in a new language may actually be easier and more rapid for the adult than for the child.

More recent research in neurology has demonstrated that, while language learning is different in childhood and adulthood because of developmental differences in the brain, "in important respects adults have superior language learning capabilities" (Walsh and Diller, 1978). The advantage for adults is that the neural cells responsible for higher-order linguistic processes such as understanding semantic relations and grammatical sensitivity develop with age. Especially in the areas of vocabulary and language structure, adults are actually better language learners than children. Older learners have more highly developed cognitive systems, are able to make higher order associations and generalizations, and can integrate new language input with their already substantial learning experience. They also rely on long-term memory rather than the short-term memory function used by children and younger learners for rote learning.

Although it may seem to be “the younger the better,” we know for a fact that language learning occurs at different maturity levels and it is safe to say that no age stands out as optimal or critical for all aspects of second language learning (SLL). And since all age levels face SLL in similar ways, learners, whether young or old, tend to go through similar stages each with the advantages of their capacity. This is why there are age differences in the acquisition of different aspects of language learning. Phonology in this respect is a good example and children will have the advantage of speaking with a better accent. An adult will have the advantage of their analytical capabilities. It would be safe to say that children respond more readily and intuitively to language acquisition in social and communicative situations, while older learners can learn language more readily by means of cognitive and academic approaches. So each age range would seem to have pros and cons with regard to language learning. In the case of “San Juan Bosco’s” students, they have ages from 18 to 60 which would make them successful when learning vocabulary and grammar.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Bucaramanga's male penitentiary "La modelo" offers prisoners the opportunity to start or continue their primary and secondary studies in the "San Juan Bosco" institute ,that works inside the prison, to accomplish the 65 law of 1993 which establish that the "INPEC" (Instituto Nacional Penitenciario y Carcelario) has as its main objective the reintegration of the inmates into mainstream society by means of work, education and recreation programs.

The institute bases its educational programs in the General education law and PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional). However, most of the teachers of the institution are prisoners. They have been selected according to their skills, knowledge on an specific area and academic background. Since any prisoner has the minimum theoretical and pedagogical knowledge required to teach English and the penitentiary "La modelo" cannot afford for the services of a professional English teacher, there was a need of qualified English teachers.

It is important to mention that the lack of suitable English teacher is not the only problem that the institution has to face. The shortage of economical and academic resources, the internal and external factors that affect the students' performance and willingness to learn a second language, demand an additional

analysis in order to get the outcomes of the English learning. Consequently, the question of this academic environment would be: Is it possible for students at San Juan Bosco Institute to learn English in a prison context applying an eclectic methodology?

5. JUSTIFICATION

Education is an intrinsic human right and a tool that contributes to make possible other human rights. It is widely accepted that education is one of the best financial investments. However, its importance is not only practical since having an active mind full of knowledge is the key to get freedom and one of the most valuable pleasures of human existence. In addition, education builds the links required to belong to a society, it permits the transmission and re-creation of culture, an essential fact of human condition. Therefore, an individual who is denied this right is also deprived of the opportunity to belong to a society.

Unfortunately, we are currently immerse in a society in which corruption, impunity and inequity in the richness distribution create inequality in the opportunity to get the common social, economical and cultural rights. Prison is a place in which the victims of this unfair system can be found. Although incarcerated have been deprived of their freedom as a consequence of a law breaking, the circumstances around have a direct relationship with the inmate's previous life conditions. Most of the prisoners have never had educational, labor, social and health guaranties and this deficiency is even more heightened in the jail context. The main purpose of the penalty in prison is to deprive criminals of their displacement liberty but in most of the cases it becomes a deprivation and violation of human rights including the right of education.

According to the “Defensoría del pueblo” office, “the prisons in Colombia have become in storehouses of people”. Overcrowding, public services deficiency, violence, corruption and lack of opportunities for reintegration into society are some aspects that prisoners in Colombia have to deal with. Fortunately, the situation is not one hundred percent generalized; there are some prisons that are more committed with their social role and therefore, more aware of the importance of giving prisoners the tools that allow their intellectual and personal growth and therefore their reintegration into society. Bucaramanga’s male penitentiary “La modelo” is one of them. It has an educational institute that works inside the prison, offering prisoners the opportunity to begin or continue their primary and secondary education. With the help of volunteers, professionals inmates and prisoners who have finished their secondary studies, the Institute provides education for those who want to make good use of the time in jail and in turn to get a reduction of the sentence. Nevertheless and contradicting all the widespread believes, the ideological differences and criminal records are not the main obstacle when teaching in prison. Guerrilla, paramilitares and criminals can work peacefully in a classroom but the lack of resources and suitable teachers, plus the hard emotional conflicts that prisoners have to face make of the teaching-learning process a very demanding task.

The social practicum modality designed by the “Universidad Industrial de Santander” as an option for undergraduate students to develop their final projects is an excellent opportunity for students to put into practice their theoretical

knowledge and at the same time reward society by solving one of its countless needs. By means of this new modality, a group of EFL students from the “Universidad Industrial de Santander” designed and carried out an English program that not only solved the lack of suitable English teachers for the first semester of 2007 at the “Instituto San Juan Bosco” but also contribute in the reintegration process of the inmates into mainstream society by providing some elements that permit their community participation.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

6.1 GENERAL OBJECTIVES

To solve the lack of English teachers at the “San Juan Bosco” institute located in the Bucaramanga’s male penitentiary “La modelo” for students from 6th to 11th grade during the first semester of 2007.

To contribute in the reintegration into society process of the inmates that attend English classes at the “San Juan Bosco” institute by designing and carrying out an English program for beginners.

6.2 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

To apply effective methods and approaches that allow a successful learning of the English contents proposed by EFL students from Universidad Industrial de Santander.

To provide students the tools to use the English language appropriately in a social context by carrying out interactive and meaningful vocabulary activities.

To reduce anxiety levels and increase motivation among students by developing creative and dynamic classes in a comfortable atmosphere that maintain students interest.

7. DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

7.1 TARGET POPULATION

The social practicum performed by EFL students from Universidad Industrial de Santander was addressed to inmates in high school from “San Juan Bosco” institute. They are males that belong to groups from 6th to 11th grade. They come from different regions of Colombia. Their ages varies from 18 to 60 years and they have different academic backgrounds.

The socio-demographic survey showed the following results:

- 8,3 % of the population attended sixth grade of secondary school. The rest just attended until fifth grade of primary school.
- 25 % of the population is single. The rest are married or live with a permanent couple.
- 16,6 % do not have children. The rest have among 1 to 4 children.
- 25 % are from Bucaramanga. The rest come from towns around the region.
- Their ages stand from 18 to 60 years old.

7.2 CONTENT OF THE PROGRAM

The content of the program was selected based on the parameters that the Common European Framework establishes for A1 learners, which is the lowest category for ELL learners. It was adapted according to inmates' needs as follows.

1. Using Greetings and farewells.
 - Addressing people (formal/informal).
 - Making and employing commands.

2. Introducing Yourself
 - using VERB TO BE in present simple tense.
 - using WH question.
 - using short answers.
 - using numbers to talk about age.
 - Talking about countries and nationalities

3. Describing People
 - Using qualitative adjectives.
 - Identifying some body parts.
 - Identifying some clothes.
 - Identifying some colors.

- Talking about professions.

7.3. METHODOLOGY

The second stage of the action plan consisted on getting data that work as a basis in the design of the English program. Three tests were applied with this purpose (placement test, socio-demographic survey, interest and attitudes test). The placement test (appendix 1) was applied in order to know the English previous knowledge of students. The second survey (appendix 2) was done with the purpose of getting information about the socio-demographic characteristics of the population. The third one (appendix 3) was addressed to know the students' interests and expectations.

The results of the placement test showed that the inmates' English knowledge was close to nothing in one hundred percent of the population, despite of the fact that most of them had attended English classes before.

The learning strategies, interests and attitudes test showed the following result.

- 83,34 % of the population think that learning English is important for their future lives.
- 83,34 % of the population think that English knowledge would be a useful tool to help their families or friends in their academic duties.

- 100 % of the population would like to have access to books, articles and magazines in English.
- 41,67 % of the population think that English is interesting, 8,3 % thinks it is useless and 50% think it is complicated but necessary.
- 66,67 % of the population underline, take notes and make a summary of a text in order to understand the main idea, 16,66 % plan a strategy to remember it and 16,66 % relate the idea to images, sounds and key words.
- 50 % of the population would ask teacher about the meaning of unknown words in a reading, 50 % would underline them and look for the meaning in a dictionary. No one tries to infer the meaning from the context.
- 0 % of the population studies English because they like it.
- 0 % of the population studies English to get their sentence reduced.
- 0 % of the population thinks that they would forget in the future what they have learned about English.

Taking into account the results above, EFL students designed a program for an elementary level based on Natural approach, audio-lingual and TPR methods. The Natural approach was taken into account since it was designed to give beginners learners, like “San Juan Bosco” students, basic communicative skills in four broad areas; basic personal communicative skills (oral/written) and academic learning skills (oral/written). According to Krashen the essence of language is meaning and vocabulary, not grammar is the heart of language. Considering this

principle the activities performed in a Natural approach based class allows comprehensible input about things in the here and now. It permitted that students at "San Juan Bosco" institute lost themselves in activities involving meaningful communication.

In the TPR based class activities, the students enjoyed getting up out of their chairs and moving around. Since TPR is aptitude-free, it worked well with a mixed ability class, and with students having various disabilities. It was good for kinesthetic learners who needed to be active in the class. Practitioners decided to include TPR activities since class size is not consider as a problem, and it works effectively for adults.

Some objectives of the TPR approach taken into account were:

- Teaching oral proficiency at a beginning level
- Using comprehension as a means of speaking
- Using action-based drills in the imperative form

Activities where a command is given in the imperative and students obey the command were the main exercises in TPR based part of the class. The students had the role of listeners and performers in some classes. The target language was taught based on what Asher states doing the same by using different commands like "sit down", "raise your hands", etc. about first and second language learning as parallel processes. Asher maintains that at the beginning, children's ability in

listening comprehension is acquired because children are required to respond physically to spoken language in the form of parental commands and after that they develop the ability to speak. Therefore, during the classes the teacher spoke most of the time in English while students were listening; and also body language was used to explain new vocabulary. The teacher used stimulus and response activities like Symon says to teach some basic commands. E.g: the teacher said “Symon says stand up” and the students performed the action.

Furthermore activities like the one mentioned above was also workable to decrease the student’s stress in the classroom. According to Asher, adult language learning environment often causes stress and anxiety. It was noticeable that the performing of the mechanical movements of the students during the commands activity and different games produced an effect of relaxation and therefore this reduced the anxiety and stress in students.

The audio-lingual method was taken into account based on students’ needs in order to provide tools that ensure a more effective English learning. Basically, the audio-lingual method was very useful in “habit formation”. As students at “San Juan Bosco” institute were beginners, they did not have any previous habit formation in learning a second language. Good habits are formed by students giving correct responses to stimulus provided by the teacher. The use of drills in class was workable in making students to learn the pronunciation of new words and expressions. This is one example of the activities that were carried out in class:

Teacher played a tape with a dialogue about introducing yourself while students were following it on the board. Then the teacher pronounced the new expressions in the dialogue and asked students to repeat them. Certain key words or phrases may be changed in the dialogue. Key structures from the dialogue serve as the basis for pattern drills of different kinds. The students practiced substitutions in the pattern drills

Moreover, in the Audio-lingual method, the explanation of grammar rules was not given in a deductive way. On the contrary, they were learned inductively since students did not learn to write sentences by the explanation of their grammar structure. Sentences like: "I'm Juan Perez" or "My name is Juan" were presented in dialogues. Students used them in different activities like in role plays and they learned the structure of those sentences inductively.

7.4 MATERIALS

The materials used in the project were selected according to the methodology and the content of each class. In most of the cases they were taken from textbooks sources and adapted to the specific needs and context. In the TPR based part of the class, it was presented a poster having symbols that represent commands, voice, actions and gestures were enough to practice English. Handouts containing complete and incomplete dialogues, mechanical drills for

repetition and grammar games; tapes and visuals made part of the audio-lingual based materials. On the other hand, the activities based on the natural approach required materials that came from realia such as pictures, posters, maps, flashcards, movies, crosswords, classroom objects among others.

It is important to say that the “San Juan Bosco” institute put its resources at the disposal of practitioners. Thus, TV set, CD players, DVD players, markers, scissors, paper, tape, copies, etc, were available at any time practitioners required them.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Through the development of the social practicum at “San Juan Bosco” institute, EFL students from “Universidad Industrial de Santander” could find a set of variables that made of the English learning process a very demanding task. The variables found are the following:

- Limited academic skills in the learner's native language due to a breaking in their literacy process
- Lack of effective study habits.
- Students emotional instability.
- Students attendance to English classes just as a mean to decrease their sentences.
- Sporadic attendance.
- The transference of students to other prisons in different regions of the country.
- Lack of academic materials and permission to practice outside the classroom.

For the EFL practitioners this resulted in a certain level of frustration due to the general lack of interest and commitment showed at the beginning by prisoners in class. In order to make the language learning process a more motivating experience it was necessary to put a great deal of thought into developing activities which maintain students' interest and have obtainable short term goals. EFL practitioners had to create interesting lessons in which the students' attention was gained. For instance, encouraging students to become more active participants in

the lessons sometimes assisted them to see a purpose for improving their communication skills in the target language. Successful communication using the target language resulted in students feeling some sense of accomplishment.

On the other hand, to maintain a relaxed classroom environment was significant in reducing anxiety. The practitioners' individual personality as well as attitude toward both the language and the students, contributed in a great deal in the construction of a great classroom atmosphere. Specialists maintain that anxiety decreases when teachers make the class interesting and fun. Similarly, practitioners used topics and themes relevant to the students' interests which appeared to reduce anxiety and increase learner motivation. A sense of communality in the classroom seemed to contribute greatly to a relaxed atmosphere. When students felt that they were among friends, oftentimes anxious feelings were allayed and the sources of their concerns disappeared at least during the class. Although some inmates met each other every time they had classes, practitioners fostered a communal and friendly atmosphere, and also suggested that the students themselves take a proactive role in creating such an environment. Anxiety decreased within the classroom when students interacted in activities that contributed to a feeling of group identity and support outside the classroom. Students also attended target language movies, participated in group tasks, and had conversations with the practitioners about "outside situation" which helped in the construction of communality and therefore in the reduction of anxiety.

Taking into consideration the results of the placement test and the final test, a significant improvement took place in the inmates' English progress. At the end of the semester 95% of the students could provide written basic information about themselves (name, age, place of origin, profession) by constructing simple isolated phrases, 40 % of the students were able to produce the same phrases orally. In regard to listening comprehension 85 % of the students performed the commands produced by the teacher but only 28 % answered correctly when asking WH information questions. Finally, 87 % of the students were able to complete drills of written dialogues which demonstrate a good progress in their reading comprehension skills.

APPENDIX 1

I- Complete the following dialogue with the phrases in the box.

Excuse me	What's your name?	It's great to be here
How old are you?	Nice to meet you	This is

A: Hello _____?
 B: My name is Barbara.
 A: hi, I'm Andreas.
 A: _____?
 B: I'm thirteen years old.
 A: Mr Jones, _____ Ali.
 B: Hello, Ali _____
 A: How do you do, Mr Jones.
 A: Hi Welcome to San Francisco.
 B: Thanks. _____

II- Write the questions (read the answer first).

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>1 (name?) What's your name? _____</p> <p>2 (married or single?) _____</p> <p>3 (American?) _____</p> <p>4 (how old?) _____</p> <p>5 (a teacher?) _____</p> <p>6 (wife a lawyer?) _____</p> <p>7 (from?) _____</p> <p>8 (her name?) _____</p> <p>9 (how old?) _____</p> </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Paul.</p> <p>I'm married.</p> <p>No, I'm Australian.</p> <p>I'm 30.</p> <p>No, I'm a lawyer.</p> <p>No, she's a designer.</p> <p>She's Italian.</p> <p>Anna.</p> <p>She's 27.</p> </div>
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III- Write short answers.

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1- Are you married? No, I'm not. | 4- Are your hands cold? _____ |
| 2- Are you thirsty? _____ | 5- Is it dark now? _____ |
| 3- Is it cold today? _____ | 6- Are you a teacher? _____ |

IV- Put in am, is or are.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 The weather is nice today | 5 Look! There _____ Carol. |
| 2 I _____ not tired | 6 My brother and I _____ good tennis players. |
| 3 This bag _____ heavy | 7 Ann _____ at home. Her children _____ at school. |
| 4 These bags _____ heavy | 8 I _____ a taxi driver. My sister _____ a nurse. |

APPENDIX 2

CONVENIO INTERINSTITUCIONAL UIS-INPEC
PRÁCTICA SOCIAL
SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

INFORMACIÓN PERSONAL

NOMBRE: _____

EDAD: _____ LUGAR DE NACIMIENTO: _____

ESTADO CIVIL: _____ NÚMERO DE HIJOS: _____

ESTUDIOS REALIZADOS

PRIMARIOS

INSTITUCIÓN: _____ CIUDAD: _____

ULTIMO GRADO CURSADO: _____ AÑO: _____

SECUNDARIOS

INSTITUCIÓN: _____ CIUDAD: _____

ULTIMO GRADO CURSADO: _____ AÑO: _____

OTROS

CUALES ? _____

INSTITUCIÓN: _____

CIUDAD: _____ ULTIMO NIVEL CURSADO: _____

APPENDIX 3

CONVENIO INTERINSTITUCIONAL UIS-INPEC
PRÁCTICA SOCIAL
LEARNING STRATEGIES, INTEREST AND ATTITUDE TEST

NOMBRE: _____ CURSO: _____

Marque con una X la opción con la que usted se identifique mas.

1. La razón más importante por la que estudia Inglés es:
 - a. Le gusta.
 - b. Es importante para su futuro.
 - c. Para redimir pena.
 - d. Para obtener su grado de bachiller.

2. Considera que en el futuro el Inglés:
 - a. Le ayudará a conseguir trabajo.
 - b. Será una herramienta útil para ayudarle a sus hijos, familiares o amigos en sus tareas escolares.
 - c. Se le habrá olvidado.
 - d. Le permitirá comunicarse en otro país.

3. Le gustaría tener acceso a libros, artículos, revistas y textos en Inglés? Si _____ No _____
Por que? _____

4. El Inglés le parece:
 - a. Interesante.
 - b. Aburrido.
 - c. Complicado pero necesario.
 - d. Inútil.

5. Para recordar la idea principal de un texto usted:
 - a. Subraya, toma apuntes y resume el texto.
 - b. Dedicar tiempo a planear una estrategia que le facilite recordarla.
 - c. Relaciona la idea con imágenes, sonidos o palabras claves.

6. Si encuentra una palabra desconocida en una lectura usted:
 - a. Le pregunta al profesor
 - b. La subraya y luego la busca en el diccionario.
 - c. Trata de adivinar el significado de la palabra de acuerdo al texto

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