

7th grade students, EFL process

Researchers

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**A SOCIAL PRACTICUM TO FULLFIL THE REQUIREMENT TO GET THE
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN
LANGUAGE**

**Universidad Industrial de Santander
Faculty of Human Sciences
English teaching BA program
Bucaramanga
2009**

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CONTENT

	Pág.
INTRODUCCTION	1
1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM	2
2. General Objective	3
3. ACTION PLAN	4
4. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
5. METHODOLOGY	16
5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY	16
5.2 SCHOOL DESCRIPTION:	16
5.3 TEACHERS:	17
5.4 STUDENTS:	17
5.5 ACADEMIC DESCRIPTION	18
5.6 Population	19
5.7 PROCEDURE	19
6. CONCLUSIONS	27
7. APPENDIX	29

APPENDIX

	Pág.
APPENDIX 1. All about me	29
APPENDIX 2. Complete with verb to be	30
APPENDIX 3. Write sentences with full form	31
APPENDIX 4. The family	33
APPENDIX 5. Use of the indefinite article	34
APPENDIX 6. Occupations	35
APPENDIX 7. MY FAMILY	44
APPENDIX 8. Use of <i>a</i> and <i>an</i>	45
APPENDIX 9. Create a family	46
WORKS CITED	47

RESUMEN

TITULO: 7TH GRADE STUDENTS, EFL PROCESS^{*}

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**PALABRAS CLAVES: Pobreza, Menos favorecidos, Unidad Lingüística,
Estudiantes.**

Resumen

Esta investigación de acción etnográfica surgió de la necesidad de resolver el problema de cómo enseñar de mejor manera una población específica. El objetivo es aprender los aspectos necesarios para conocer los alumnos a fin de desarrollar metodologías apropiadas teniendo en cuenta las necesidades de los estudiantes y los intereses relacionados con la enseñanza de una segunda lengua basándose en su status socioeconómico y origen. Esta investigación de acción etnográfica fue pensada para ser desarrollada con los alumnos de población menos favorecida para cumplir un objetivo social. Dichos alumnos son los estudiantes del grado 7^o de la Escuela Oriente Miraflores en Morrorico, Bucaramanga (Santander, Colombia).

En primer lugar, la población fue asignada previamente. Después de eso, los profesores en servicio fueron a la escuela para saber de ellos y observar la interacción de los estudiantes. Los profesores en formación preguntaron al docente regular de Inglés sobre el comportamiento de los alumnos, el nivel de Inglés y los conocimientos previos. Entonces los profesores en servicio se reunieron con los estudiantes y les preguntaron acerca de su clase de Inglés, de sus gustos, aversiones y intereses referentes a la clase. Poco después, los profesores en servicio diseñaron una unidad lingüística para trabajar junto con los estudiantes. Después de realizar y observar una clase de introducción los profesores en servicio diseñaron una variedad de actividades y materiales teniendo en cuenta la información recogida con anterioridad del docente de inglés regular y de los estudiantes. Sin embargo, las clases se planificaron cada semana en función del progreso de los estudiantes y la respuesta a las actividades y materiales. Los profesores en formación se reunieron semanalmente con su asesor del proyecto para discutir lo que podría ser mejor para los estudiantes con el fin de tener un proceso significativo del aprendizaje de inglés.

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ABSTRACT

TITLE: 7TH GRADE STUDENTS, EFL PROCES^{S*}

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KEY WORDS: Poverty, Underprivileged, Linguistic Unit, Students

Abstract

This ethnographic action research arose from the need to solve the problem of how best to teach a specific population. The purpose is to learn the necessary aspects to know about the classroom in order to develop appropriate methodologies taking into account the students' needs and interests related to the ESL process based on their socioeconomic status and background (Holliday, 162). This ethnographic action research was intended to be developed with underprivileged students to fulfill a social objective. They are the 7th grade students at Oriente Miraflores School in Morrорico, Bucaramanga (Santander, Colombia 2009).

First of all, the population was assigned previously. After that, the pre-service teachers went to the school to know about them and observe students' interaction. The pre service teachers asked the head teacher about the students' behavior, English level and pre knowledge. Then the pre service teachers met the students and asked them about their English class, their likes, dislikes and interests. Soon afterwards, the pre services teachers designed a linguistic unit to work along with the students. After performing and observing a class of introduction the pre service teachers designed a variety of activities and materials considering the information previously collected from the head teacher and students. However, the classes were planned every week according to the students' progress and response to the activities and material. Pre-service teachers had weekly meetings with their project advisor to discuss what could be better for the students in order to have a significant English Learning Process.

*** 7TH GRADE STUDENTS, EFL PROCESS**

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INTRODUCCTION

The following work is a social practicum made to fulfill the requirement to get the degree of Bachelor of Arts in teaching English as a foreign language. The main idea is to work with students that come from an underprivileged population taking into account their needs likes, dislikes and background to design a meaningful linguistic unit using approaches, methodologies and activities appropriate to achieve the main goals.

There are cited works of different authors that proposes different ideas related to poverty, underprivileged population, teaching and learning methods among others. Taking into account these factors there are chosen different methods and approaches that fulfill the needs of this work. Methods such as TPR. Natural Approach and Community Language Teaching stated a variety of ideas and activities that can be taken into account to develop this project.

1. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

When teaching there are many factors teachers need to take into account in order to achieve a successful process. To know the students integrally it is important to know who the students are, as individual members of the their community and as essential part of the class; where they come from; the students' way of interacting with his or her family and his or her classmates, besides what the social context around him or her is like. Most of the time teachers focus their attention on planning successful classes, searching for meaningful material, and developing interesting activities in order to make students succeed. However, to carry out all of these features it is quite important to be familiar with the students' personality and daily life, their environment and background.

There are many students who live in underprivileged conditions as the case of students at Oriente Miraflores School. They face difficult situations every day not only at home but also at school due to their underprivileged social condition. Students at Oriente Miraflores School do not have enough resources to have a well qualified education. Financial, emotional, mental, spiritual and physical resources (Payne, 16) can be provided by families and teachers to help students in their learning process. In addition, teachers need to care about educating human beings and not about teaching learners.

After having stated the students' situation at Oriente Miraflores School, the main purpose of this ethnographic action research is to provide students with meaningful classes, taking into account their social situation, background, interest and needs. One of the important aims of the project is to build up a positive classroom environment as a strategy of increasing students' motivation towards their general learning process.

2. General Objective

To provide students with meaningful EFL classes to their everyday environment and their learning process.

2.1 Specific Objectives

- To observe 7th grade students at Oriente Miraflores High School in order to identify their needs and interests related to the EFL area.
- To analyze students' interaction and its effect on the learning process.
- To drive students to meaningful EFL classes promoting a good English level.
- To create meaningful activities that take into account students' needs interests and English level.
- To perform classes leading social interaction among the students while developing a linguistic unit.

3. ACTION PLAN

STAGE 1:

- Recognition of the facilities.
- To know the school and the regular English teacher of the students.
- To talk with the teacher about the students English level, background, behavior, pre knowledge and material they work at school.

STAGE 2:

- Get to know the students.
- Introduce ourselves to the students and tell them the purpose of the project.
- Ask the students about their previous English class experiences to determine what learning preferences can be put into practice in this learning process.
- Observe students' interaction in the classroom while developing activities.

STAGE 3:

- Decide the topic to cover in the program.
- Design the linguistic unit.

STAGE 4:

- Selecting the suitable approaches and methodologies

STAGE 5:

- Carry out the linguistic unit.
- Observe the students.

STAGE 6:

- Report findings

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical framework

Poverty and the Non-Financial Resources

Hess states that poverty does not make people stupid, but it makes difficult for families to supply kids with the appropriate environment to become successful at school (cited in Cohelno, 309). In her book "*A framework for understanding poverty*", Payne defines poverty as "the extent to which an individual does without resources". These resources are financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/ role models and knowledge of hidden rules. (Payne, 16) Although, the teacher is not able to provide all of them together; he can work along with the students to influence those which play an essential role in the success of an individual.

One of the non-financial resources that teachers can influence is the mental resource. Mental resources are mental abilities and acquired skills such as reading, writing, computing among others. (Payne, 17-18). Ann states in "*Breaking the cycle of poverty*", that teachers must focus on teaching a language and not skills separately. A student must learn to read, write, speak and listen (as cited in Payne, 169).

Another non-financial resource is the emotional one which is internal. Emotional resources refer to the ability to handle negative situations and also the capability to control the reactions to different situations and feelings. In order to move from poverty to a higher social status a person needs to use their emotional resources in an effective way. "Emotional resources dictate behavior and eventually determine achievement" (Payne, 85). For this particular reason, emotional resources have such an importance at school. Finally, teachers have a huge chance to influence the students as being a role model for them. In this way, they can change positively the students' lives without any cost (Payne, 39). All people follow role models. When appropriate role models are present, students can

develop attitudes towards situations and build up emotional resources. Students can perceive how a teacher responds to a specific situation and what it can be taken as a model to follow. If the teacher reacts in a positive way, it will be an appropriate model to follow and will obtain positive outcomes.

Teachers are models of linguistic and cultural behavior. They should design activities which model the instructional and noninstructional interaction. Met points out that students usually observe the differences in which people speak to one another. They also observe the nonlinguistic features such as proximity, gestures and other body language appropriate to their new language (Genesee, 1973). These features will contribute in the near future to the effectiveness of students' communication and will play an important role in their development as members of a society.

When teaching a foreign language, it is important to have in mind the different aspects, factors and issues that affect learning. Pease- Alvarez and Vasquez state that when teachers take into account students' background they can have them involved in the activities. Connecting the worlds of school and homes make the students feel involved in class and willing to develop the activities because they make sense for them. (Genesee, 1994). Therefore, it is important to find out what the learner wants, but it is also important to determine what society requires (Stern, 1983). As Trim points out when planning classes it is necessary to understand the entire learning context including social and individual motivations and needs; and the conditions under which language learning is likely to occur (cited in Stern, 1983).

For policy and practice as well as for evaluation and research it is very important to know as much as possible about learner factors. Aspects such as social and educational background, its previous language learning experience and its ethnolinguistic attitudes, motivations and expectations (Stern, 1983) can help the teacher to identify the learner group and to design appropriate classes. It is

important to take into account as future teachers different social aspects that may influence on their educational process in general. As it is known, underprivileged students have to face different hard situations in terms of economic issues. Teachers should be conscious of these situations and try hard to educate their students not only in academic issues, but also in social ones

Besides the already mentioned, there are different factors that affect second language acquisition. They are divided into internal and external factors. Some of the external factors that affect ESL acquisition are the social ones. Teachers should know, since the beginning, all the things related to their student's lives such as age, English level, gender, social background interests and needs. The age, sex, ethnic identity, and social class play an important role in the second language acquisition process. Ellis states that the social class of an individual can be measured taking into account income and level of education or occupation. In addition, the socio economic status and L2 achievement are related (Burstall cited in Ellis). Students show less development in their L2 learning process when they belong to an underprivileged population (Ellis, 205-206). However, this disadvantage showed by the students is not inevitable. Working with Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills teachers can improve the learning process. Where BICS are concerned social differences in learners have not effect (Ellis, 206).

Students' attitudes and interest are also relevant factors when teaching. Rivers proposes to find out this information from the students. She suggests some questions that teachers can ask to their students related to their social background, their likes and dislikes, general learning preferences. Thus, teachers can know better their students (Rivers,11-12). As teachers it is relevant to know that a learner comes to the classroom to learn while a student has other purposes for being in the classroom (Holliday, 14). The teacher is not just teaching a language but he or she is educating integrally human beings. Detecting the attitudes and interests of

the students, teachers can design objectives, methodology, activities and material which are appropriate for them.

The expectations and attitudes that students bring to the classroom are influenced by the social context where they live and affect the interaction in the classroom (Holliday, 9). On the other hand, the activities developed in the classroom and the interaction among the students and teachers influence social relationships. In "*Literacy development of second language teaching*" Hudelson proposes to develop a classroom with a collaborative environment where students can learn with and from each other as well as the teacher. Students should view their classroom as a workshop where they can ask questions, figure out answer and use language orally and in written form with their partners. Implementing this collaborative classroom environment the teacher will give his students the chance to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of responsibility for each other and these will increase the social relationships among the students (Genesee, 141).

When students do not have high proficiency levels, they do not feel comfortable speaking in the target language. One way of decreasing this affective filter is through pair work. Most of the time teachers care about their students using their mother tongue to interact. Johnson states in her article "*Grouping strategies for second language learners*" that teachers should not worry about students' use of their common first language as soon as they show outcomes of the activity in the target language (Genesee, 197). For example, they can speak in Spanish and write and English version. What is more, research indicates that the use of mother tongue will increase academic growth and they will benefit from the interaction with their partners.

Real-life context in the classroom can be an efficient strategy to provide a meaningful input to learners and to achieve a successful process. There is the case of students and teachers who share the same nationality, but the teachers try to implement methodologies develop in other countries for different teaching-

learning situations from their own (Holliday, 11). Many of the underprivileged students' linguistics units do not have meaning because they do not face their context and situations. Most of the vocabulary used by the teachers does not make sense to the students. When students are not involved in class they neither pay attention to the teacher nor develop activities and consequently they do not learn. To make students feel interested in the class it is necessary to apply the methodologies adjusting them to the students' context. Besides, it is necessary to implement activities according to their needs and about their likes and interests.

Methods and Approaches

It was decided to develop a linguistic unit mixing the most suitable aspects according to the students' needs in this specific setting. Meaningful activities, materials and strategies, based on different methods, methodologies and approaches were created with the aim of providing an eclectic method, suitable to the students' needs and interests.

According to the above, variety of methodologies, methods and approaches were studied to develop the eclectic unit. One of the chosen methodologies was the **Natural Approach** proposed by *Terrell and Krashen* since it helps students to develop basic communication skills and the fact that it seeks communication as the primary function of the language since it is considered as an example of a communicative one. What is more, it considers the affective filter as an important part when learning a language. When students feel comfortable with the situation in class they are more likely to learn the new language.

It is necessary to highlight the importance of using this approach, since it can result useful for foreign language learning process in general. It is related to learning hypothesis and acquisition theory. Richards and Rodgers point out that there are two ways of developing competence in a second language (Richards and Rodgers, 131). This hypothesis explains the natural way in which learning is

acquired stating that acquisition is an unconscious process that involves understanding language by using it in meaningful communication. In contrast, it is said that learning is a conscious process in which learning is totally governed by rules that allow the students' ability to verbalize their new knowledge. It is important to mention, that in this process formal teaching is necessary and correcting errors helps students develop and improve the learned rules.

Another important hypothesis to take into account in this study is proposed by Krashen. The author states that the students' emotional state is a filter that freely passes, impedes or blocks students' acquisition (Richards and Rodgers, 133). The emotional filter can determine whether a person is more or less inhibited in situations of L2 use. Where people are inhibited the affective filter is high and prevents the acquisition of knowledge while when the affective filter is low it allows in a great portion the acquisition of L2 (Towel and Hawkins, 27). According to Krashen, it is desirable to have a low affective filter, because the FL learner is not inhibited at the moment of producing structures. With this, the author identifies three attitudinal variables related to second language acquisition:

- Motivation: motivation is an important to take into account at the time to learn better.
- Self-confidence: self-confidence and good self-image drive students into successful learning.
- Anxiety: low personal and classroom anxiety are key elements to a better acquisition of the l2.

To conclude, the decision of using this Natural Approach was chosen taking into account the main characteristics that are important for this study. The terms of acquisition and learning are key elements to develop this study, and the most important one is the hypothesis of the affective filter that surely will provide students comprehensible input and a classroom environment that cues the comprehension of that input, minimizes learners' anxiety, maximizes learners' self-confidence and in that way improves the students' acquisition process.

Another important methodology that was required for this work is the **Total Physical Response (TPR)** proposed by James Asher since it is “*a method that is undemanding in terms of linguistic production and that involves gamelike movements reduces learners’ stress and creates a positive mood in the learner, which facilitates learning*” (Richards and Rodgers, 87). TPR handles a term called “trace theory” which holds that the more often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced, the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled (Richards and Rodgers, 87). When students combine verbal activities (dialogues) with movements or motor activities (role plays) that center on everyday activities, they increase the possibility of successful recall.

The **Audiolingual method** is also used as a theoretical background tool for the design of the eclectic linguistic unit. This method is useful when teaching a new language because this focus on mechanization and practicing the language and its pronunciation. The advocates state that the foundation of the language learning is a habit formation encouraged by repetition and practice. Teachers who work with an eclectic method can take different principles from The Audiolingual method to fulfill students’ needs. Audiolingual learning and teaching activities such as drills, inflection, replacement, restatement, completion, transposition, expansion, contraction, transformation, integration, rejoinder and restoration can help students acquire speaking and listening skills in a faster way. However, one central idea of The Audiolingual Method is to teach the language in a context. A language cannot be taught in isolation, in that way; it will not make sense for the students.

Another important aspect of The Audiolingual Method is the role of the teacher. This method engages the teacher as an active tool in the teaching and learning process. The teacher provides good models for imitation and controls and directs students’ linguistics behaviors. He is in charge of modeling the pronunciation and corrects the mistakes that arise during the classes. Other

principle of the audiolingual method is that language skills are learned more effectively if they are presented orally first and then in written form. The main concern is to present the language to the students in a significant way to make it vivid and real, then the written part can be presented to complete the process.

Another selected method is the **Cooperative Language Learning (CL)** proposed by Jhon Dewey. The Cooperative learning is one of the most remarkable used areas of theory, research, and practice in education. Cooperative learning refers to a method of instruction where students work in groups with the idea of reaching the same goals (Chafers, 1998). This method really benefits students since they have the opportunity to share ideas rather than work alone; this is a cooperative work where students help one another so that all of them can reach a measure of success (1998).

In second language teaching, CL is a learner centered one which promotes communicative interaction in the classroom. This approach offers advantages over teacher-fronted classroom methods. In language teaching its goals are:

- To provide opportunities for naturalistic second language acquisition through the use of interactive pair and group activities.
- To provide teachers with a methodology to enable them to achieve this goal and one that can be applied in a variety of curriculum settings.
- To enable focused attention to particular lexical items, language structures, and communicative functions through the use of interactive tasks.
- To provide opportunities for learners to develop successful learning and communication strategies.
- To enhance learner motivation and reduce learner stress and to create a positive affective classroom climate.

Cooperative Learning is thus an approach that crosses both mainstream education and second language teaching, since Cooperative Learning is an

approach designed to foster cooperation rather than competition. Critical skills and communicative competence through socially structured interactional activities can be regarded as the overall objectives of CL.

Since the use of cooperative learning pervades education it is difficult to find textbooks on instructional methods, teachers' journals, or instructional materials that do not mention and use it. The widespread use of cooperative learning is due to multiple factors. Three of the most important are that cooperative learning is clearly based on theory, validated by research, and operationalized into there clear procedures that educators can use. First, cooperative learning is based solidly on a variety of theories in anthropology (Mead, 1936), sociology (Coleman, 1961), economics (Von Mises, 1949), political science (Smith, 1759), psychology, and other social sciences.

Second, the amount, generalizability, breath, and applicability of the research on cooperative, competitive, and individualistic efforts provides considerable validation of the use of cooperative learning, perhaps more than most other instructional methods (Cohen, 1994a; Johnson, 1970; Johnson & Johnson, 1974, 1978, 1989, 1999a; Kohn, 1992; Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1977, 1991).

The third factor contributing to the widespread use of cooperative learning is the variety of cooperative learning methods available for teacher use, ranging from very concrete and prescribed to very conceptual and flexible. Cooperative learning is actually a generic term that refers to numerous methods for organizing and conducting classroom instruction. Almost any teacher can find a way to use cooperative learning that is congruent with his or her philosophies and practices. So many teachers use cooperative learning in many different ways.

In the vast majority of studies, forms of cooperative learning have been shown to be more effective than non-cooperative reward structures in raising the levels of variables that contribute to motivation, in raising achievement, and in producing positive social outcomes.

The **Communicative Language Teaching Approach** was also taken into account at the time of creating the eclectic suggested method required by this project; since one of its major features focuses on the teacher's role. This aspect is an essential and really important element in the teaching-learning process. According to Breen and Candlin it is said that a good teacher should play many remarkable roles that will allow learning in a better way. This study wants to focus on the most important ones that were used. At first, the teacher should be a facilitator of the communicative process in order to create interaction among the participants; secondly, the teacher should act as an independent member of a group. Third, the teacher should have the following characteristics: (Richards and Rodgers, 77, 78)

- To be a needs analyst who assumes the responsibility for the learner's needs.
- To be a counselor who instructs serenely and non-judgmentally; in a supportive manner in such a way promoting self-confidence among students helping them to solve their problems and doubts.
- To be a manager who assumes the responsibility of organizing the classroom to facilitate the communication process among all participants.

Another important aspect of this method is the relationship between the linguistic system and their communicative values. According to Canale and Swain there are four dimensions of communicative competence; the grammatical competence, discourse competence, strategic competence and sociolinguistic competence (cited in Richards and Rodgers, 71). This project wants to focus on the last one since it has different elements that are important for the development of this work. In this competence, the authors point out that the idea is to create a social context in which communication takes place where it is important to include students' relationships and the communicative purposes of interaction. Finally, it is essential to add that CLT has a rich, eclectic and theoretical base which focuses its features on the communicative view of language.

Communicative approaches are chosen to teach grammar, structures and patterns of language behavior more liberally taking into account the individual and the nature of his communication and communicative competence. (Holliday, 1967). However, it is necessary to use a combination of the different aspects of the approaches and methods proposed since overuse of the strategies may affect the students' interest and motivation in a negative way. For that reason, the participants of the project decided to use an eclectic method.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMMUNITY

5.2 SCHOOL DESCRIPTION:

The targeted school is the Oriente Miraflores high school located in Bucaramanga. It offers high school education for a very low-income community from the sixth to the eleventh grade. It provides agricultural emphasis of education and its mission is *“to develop ecological leaders capable of improving the culture through the potential of the human dimensions”*. The school is composed by a building with 12 classrooms distributed on the 3 floors. It has a terrace, a lab, a computer classroom, an audiovisual room and a small library. However, the students' entrance to the library, to the computer and audiovisual rooms is strictly restricted by the directive staff because of negative experiences of the students' behavior and their misuse of the school supplies. It is worth pointing out that almost all the school supplies such as tables, chairs, desks, computers, videos, CD recorders, books and DVD players are not working out because of their misuse.

The classrooms are designed for groups of 40 or 45 students. All of them are identical. There is a board to write with erasing markers and 40 or maximum 45 desks. There are not any posters or pictures on the walls. There is not any TV or

computer in the classroom. Some of the windows and doors of the classrooms are broken. The majority of the classrooms have a table and a chair for the teacher.

5.3 TEACHERS:

The School counts with two graduated teachers for the English area who work for the public education. One teacher is in charge of sixth and seventh grades and the other is in charge of eighth, ninth, tenth and eleventh grades. Almost all the teachers mainly complain about the students' deficient work in the classes and therefore their poor result in the achievement exams. The teachers frequently allude to the students' laziness and irresponsibility.

5.4 STUDENTS:

All of them ate from very low-income families. The majority of the students are pre-teenagers, about 13 years.

The students' main interests are the TV programs, electronic games and internet as the questionnaires show. Some of the students like working independently so they can have some money they need. A big part of the students go through the primary necessity problems, such as food, hygiene. Many of them don't live with their parents because of the economic and family problems. They study at the school in the groups of 40 students and they frequently treat each other very aggressively.

5.5 ACADEMIC DESCRIPTION

The target students have 6 classes of 50 minutes per day. They study in the afternoon, from 12 pm to 6 pm and they take EFL classes 3 hours per week.

The students have 30 minutes break after each 2 hours of classes. The students don't have scholar books or workbooks. The school doesn't follow any didactic material because the students don't have money to buy it. The students have no money for guides or worksheets, so every teacher deals individually with the students the way to work in the classes.

The main way of working in classes with the students is by groups. The teachers organize the students by groups and give them a worksheet or a guide. The students generally develop the guide in groups and have the group workshops in classes. The students always work in their notebooks.

The teachers generally do not use the library because it is difficult to get the key of the library in the afternoon. On the other side, the books from the library are very old, full of dust and the teachers do not have enough time to review the books and to prepare the class. The school does not require any lesson preparation from the teachers. There is not any supervision of the academic content, procedures or period planning. Every teacher is very free to organize the academic content and classes in the way he or she desires or considers the best.

The school does not offer any additional academic, transport, sport or recreation service to the students. The executive staff of the school consists of one principal and one academic coordinator who have to deal with a lot of economic and disciplinary problems of the school. The problem is that their assigned working time is not enough to solve all the students' academic and disciplinary problems.

5.6 Population

The sample subjects selected are the 7th grade students at Oriente Miraflores High School in Morrorico. They live there and in their surrounding areas. They are around 11 and 12 years old. They belong to low income families. The school set schedule is from 12:00 am to 6:00 pm. The subjects of this project take EFL classes 3 hours per week.

5.7 PROCEDURE

Since the moment it was decided to work at social practicum the main idea of the pre service teachers was to develop different activities and materials that could have a positive impact in the students they would work with. When the group was identified the teachers knew that it was necessary to develop an eclectic method according to the students' needs, interest and background. The main idea was to design a linguistic unit with different activities that involve students' interaction and make them feel comfortable in class. Making students feel they are part of the class development lowers the affective filter and increases the possibility to acquire knowledge.

Taking into account the aspects related to the students in Oriente Miraflores School it was decided that the teachers and the students will develop different roles during the teaching-learning process. The students will be listeners and performers of commands, active participants, members of a group who work collaboratively, directors of their own learning and innovators. On the other hand, the teachers will be needs analysts, counselors, leaders, monitors and group process managers.

Also, it was decided that the material work during the classes will be based on an English book called New Opportunities, but the activities will be adjusted to the students' context, level, needs and interests. The teachers will work with

flashcards, drawings, handouts and supportive materials, according to the students' needs.

There are different factors that affect English learning. Age, gender, social and economic status influence the learning and teaching process. One of the factors that influenced the process significantly is the economic factor. When students have difficulties in accessing to resources at school and it is almost impossible at home; teachers need to implement strategies and adjust available material according to the group work with. Sometimes teachers work with material designed for a different context that is when information and linguistic content do not make sense for the students because it is not relevant in their real context.

The pre-service teachers talked to the head teacher in order to know about English students' background, previous knowledge and the school program. The practitioners found out that the school program did not fit with students' level and the curriculum that should be followed by the school. After knowing the students and facts related to their learning, the practitioners designed a diagnostic with an exercise called "all about me" in order to test students' knowledge and prove their training developed skills. (Appendix 1) After this activity, it showed that students did not have the expected English knowledge needed to start working on the linguistic unit. Based on the diagnostic, the pre-service teachers started a new program based on a linguistic unit that referred to the family.

Due to the fact that students did not show the needed English level, the practitioners had to modify some of the already designed activities and be more flexible when teaching and understanding students' lack of abilities and needs. The first three classes the practitioners worked mostly on the *verb to be* using strategies from the different methods proposed (Appendix 2 and 3). During all the practicum the teachers implemented different activities that included a mixture of methods such as audio-lingual, natural approach, T.P.R, CL, CLT. It has been clarified that this project adopts different aspects and elements, such as techniques

and strategies, from various methods, methodologies and approaches. Due to this fact, it was difficult to establish the precise order of activities to follow in every lesson, because it depends on different aspects to teach in each class, such as topic, content and skills, even classroom and students' conditions. Therefore, although all the lessons did not follow the same pattern classes would be as the following:

Opening: Hello, how are you? Ask what the date is and write it down. Check the homework (do not spend too long on this). Teacher could do a brainstorming activity in order to check students' understanding and make them recall the previous topic(s).

Why? To create a speaking activity. Also to welcome the students and gently lead them into the lesson, while also allowing late comers to join the class without interrupting the core of your lesson.

Warm up: You may want to do a five-minute activity at this stage, like a game (or physical activity for children) you have done before - or you could introduce a new one- to contextualize students so they can have an idea of what they are going to study in the new lesson.

Why? To revise or retrieve language (and/or to get children moving before settling down if they seem too energetic and noisy that day).

Presentation: Introduce the language aspect that is your target for the lesson.

How?

- with pictures (can you draw?)
- commands
- texts or dialogue, written or spoken
- mime: hungry thirsty tired etc
- photographs or flashcards
- using real objects

Why? To provide a clear model in context of the target language.

Repetition: Use repetition - choral then individual - of core lines of your target language for the lesson at this stage of vocabulary and difficult sounds throughout the lesson.

Why? Repetition gives confidence and helps overcome difficulties with pronunciation. Teachers should let weaker students have an individual practice with the repetition activities before doing choral repetition so that they can have a higher exposure to language content.

Practice: Practice through exercises: spoken and written activities, listening practice, individual or group activities, using CLT, CLL and audiolingual method.

Why? Practice is the chance to use the chunk/s of language you are teaching in a context that is (hopefully) similar to how it is used in real communication outside the lesson.

Following the previous procedure, different lesson plans will be implemented during six weeks, with the same sample. It is important to make clear here, that the lesson plans will be designed according to what is observed in the classes.

Most of the activities proposed by the teachers in the classes with the students in Oriente Miraflores involve speaking exercises due to the fact that Spanish speakers tend to be very talkative in class. Culturally speaking Spanish speakers like to work in groups and they enjoy activities that involve speaking however; it is difficult to manage a group where all the students want to express their ideas in fact if the topic is related to their context and their social and economical situation. (Payne)

First, the audio-lingual method was used to teach the verb to be due to the fact that after the instruction; the teacher designed activities such as drills having students repeat the given information in order to help them to internalize the intended structure. Besides, some activities of completion were done (gap-filling

activities) where the practitioners encouraged students to participate actively on the board completing the taught structures about the *verb to be* ; it is important to add that each students was praised for his/her participation; since, this technique has become a useful tool that helps students lower their affective filter. It is also worth mentioning the important role the teacher plays in this method as he/she should be a model for imitation that can influence students' linguistics behaviors. He/she is in charge of modeling and correcting possible students' mistakes in terms of pronunciation, grammar and or spelling.

As the audio-lingual method states, for successful learning it is said that the language should be presented orally first and then in the written form. It was done when the practitioners started by showing the content to students, modeling the pronunciation first and then, taught them how to write the intended structure. Activities like the "all about you" or the completion one; provided to students meaningful and significant usage of the language as it was presented in a real vivid and interesting way.

After having students exposed to the reinforcement activity, the practitioners moved on to the second stage of the linguistic unit. The idea was to get students familiar with the vocabulary related to the family members. To do this, the natural approach was used; as it provides a way to expose students into a conscious process where learning is totally governed by rules that allow students' ability to verbalize their new knowledge. To put it into practice, a visual activity was held where the pre-service teachers worked with flash cards in order to present new vocabulary about *family members* in a natural way. (Appendix 4)

Another important methodology used to develop the activities proposed in the linguistic unit was TPR. The pre-service teachers used it, with the purpose of implementing new vocabulary about students' family professions; the practitioners considered necessary to ask students to look for vocabulary related to their family members' occupations. The main idea was to present this vocabulary to the

students in very attractive and motivating way. To do so, the practitioners used TPR methodology, since it is an undemanding method that does not require a high level of linguistic production; therefore it gives students the possibility to use gamelike movements that reduce negative feelings like stress or fear and promotes a very good mood in the students, which makes the activity easier and funnier.

Another topic worked with the students was possessive adjectives. At the beginning the teachers reviewed the subject pronouns and their meaning to have the students make the connection between the prior knowledge and the new topic. Then through a chart the teachers introduce the possessive adjectives, their meaning and use. To have the students fully understand the topic the teachers asked them to work in pairs. They were allowed to ask their partners about the topic in Spanish. After they feel comfortable with the topic the teachers ask them to talk about their families using family members' vocabulary and possessive adjectives. The teachers give examples like "My father is Samuel", "My sister is 15 years old" and so on.

The vocabulary about jobs was also taught to the students to extend their English knowledge and make possible for them to use the language in a better way. At the beginning the teachers asked students about their family members and their jobs in order to make the vocabulary significant for them. When students talk about a topic that connects their life with the school they feel enthusiastic. Students participate actively in class, and shy students feel confident to share their thoughts. Along with the students the teacher introduced new vocabulary according to their family jobs. The pre-service teacher in charge of the class explained to the learners that apart from those jobs there were others like 'doctor', 'lawyer' and so on, however when the teachers showed the flashcards to the students there were about most of their family jobs (appendix 5). The main idea of showing this kind of flashcards is to have the students involved in the class and to allow them to link the knowledge with their lives. As TPR states, the pre-service teachers pronounced and performed the students' family professions before the students in order to be a

model for them. Then practitioners asked 5 students to do the same as they did. After that, the practitioners sat down letting students do it on their own. In such a way, students were getting used to the vocabulary by combining verbal activities (pronouncing the professions) with movements (performing the family professions) that increased their possibilities of successful recall. Moreover, it is worth mentioning a term called “trace theory” which holds that the more often or the more intensively a memory connection is traced the stronger the memory association will be and the more likely it will be recalled (Richards and Rodgers, 87).

A way to introduce the topic of Wh questions is asking the students about themselves and the knowledge acquired in the previous activities. Questions like *what is your name? Where is his father from?* among others can help the students remember vocabulary and structures learnt in previous classes and they can infer the answer. At the beginning, it is not easy for the students and they seem confused because of the questions. For that reason, the teacher will ask the questions and model the answer to help the students. It is necessary to write down on the board the questions and possible answers to make them clear.

As an assessment task the teachers decided to develop a group activity to make the students feel comfortable. The teachers organized the groups according to their English level grouping advanced students with the ones that need help (Stern, 350). They were asked to imagine they were a family and filling a table (Appendix 9). Then, with the provided information, they need to develop a role play where they talk about their family members, including names, ages and jobs that way they can have a global use of the language in a lifelike situation (Stern, 199). This was done to have students learn from their partners while they reinforce knowledge (Stern, 351) and at the same time to assess students through observation due to the fact that is a useful assessment tool that can be used during small group work unobtrusively (Genesee, 223).

One of the facts that the pre services teachers needed to face was the discipline. Payne states in her book "A Framework for Understanding Poverty" that "discipline is about penance and forgiveness, not necessarily change. In other words, it has desirable or not desirable consequences, but it does not involve a change of behavior. What is more, most of the behavior that a student shows at school is a mirror of the behavior he needs to show outside school to survive. (100) "students play several roles and identities outside of the classroom" (Holliday, 14), for that reason the main idea is not to repress the student but to show the student, through role models, another set of behaviors because "the purpose of discipline should be to promote successful behaviors at school" (Payne, 113). Following Payne suggestions, when students at 6-04 grade showed not appropriate behavior towards discipline, the teachers tried to understand the reasons behind the behavior and act always using discipline as a form of instruction (Payne, 113). Asking the students about their disagreement, speaking calmly, using positive sentences, never arguing and always explaining the reasons for any decision (103), show the students that there are proper ways to express our ideas, feelings and that it is possible to have good interaction with our peers.

6. CONCLUSIONS

After having applied the contents and activities proposed in the linguistic unit; it was concluded that when teaching students a second language it is quite important not only to take into account the students' English proficiency level, but also focus on some factors which are absolutely essential in order to achieve an integral and successful process. Therefore, to know the students integrally is completely important to accomplish our teaching goals successfully. It also assures that the learning process will not be based on cramming knowledge into the students' heads, but to create strong ties among the students and teacher.

It was realized that an important factor affecting English learning process of students at Oriente Miraflores School was the economic issue; since they did not have resources enough to accomplish a well qualified English process. Moreover, there was a lack of Emotional resources that give students the ability to handle negative situations and also the capability to face and control their reactions. It is worth adding that emotional resources are absolutely important In order to move from poverty to a higher social status. The pre-service teachers should take into account the importance of their job as a great way to support students and look for ideas to help them solve their emotional problems pragmatically and at the same time to make a stand without paying attention to the "social status" boundaries. In this way, it will be given an integral learning process to them.

To improve the students' English level at Oriente Miraflores School, it was necessary to apply a set of activities which were based on some methodologies and approaches like Natural Approach, Total Physical Response, and the Audio-lingual Method, among others. They had as main goal to supply the students' needs and interests. In this way, the intention was to provide a successful

learning-teaching process that looked for not only providing knowledge but the opportunity to grow as a student as well.

Finally, it was also realized that according to Krashen one of the most important aspects to take into account at the time of teaching is the well known affective filter. That was strongly applied in this teaching practicum, having in that way excellent results with the target student. Thus, the results of the project could show evidence of the teaching success using that technique.

7. APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1. All about me

Teacher's personal information poster

“All about me”

Name: My name is *Heliana / Silvia / Miguel*.

Last Name: My last name is *Niño / Rodriguez / Ardila*.

Age: I am *23 / 25 / 27* years old.

Neighborhood: I live in *Ciudad Valencia / Bucarica / Piedecuesta*.

Color: My favorite color is *black / red / yellow*.

Song: My favorite song is *Dear Mr. President / One / Princes of the Universe*.

Food: I like *hot dogs / French fries / hamburgers*.

Sport: I like *Taekwondo / Basketball*.

Hobby: I like *listening to music / going to the movies / watching TV*.

Signe: Heliana Niño / Silvia Ordoñez / Miguel Ardila

APPENDIX 2. Complete with verb to be

Complete with the appropriate form of the verb to be.

1. It _____ Friday.
2. You _____ in the school.
3. We _____ Colombians.
4. My name _____ Robert.
5. They _____ from Bucaramanga.
6. I _____ a student.
7. She _____ and English teacher.
8. Clara and David _____ in Piedecuesta.

APPENDIX 3. Write sentences with full form

I. Write sentences with full form.

1. They / from Cali

They are from Cali.

2. We / Italian

3. You and your parents / from Medellin.

4. Gabriela and Paola / at home

5. The children / at school

II. Write negative sentences with short forms.

1. They / at home

They aren't at home.

2. We / American

3. You and your family / from Italy

4. My brother and I / from London

5. My partner / Russian

Affirmative and negative

Write pair of sentences with short forms.

1. They / from Zapatoca (x). They / from Velez

They aren't from Zapatoca. They're from Velez.

2. Mr and Mrs Londoño / from Bogota (x). They / from Tunja.

3. Juan y Francisco / at home (x). They / at school

4. My mother / at school (x). She / at home.

5. Carlos and Lorena / Brazilian (x). They / Colombian

Questions and short answers

Write the questions and true short answers.

1. Your parents / at home

Are your parents at home? Yes, they are. / No, they aren't.

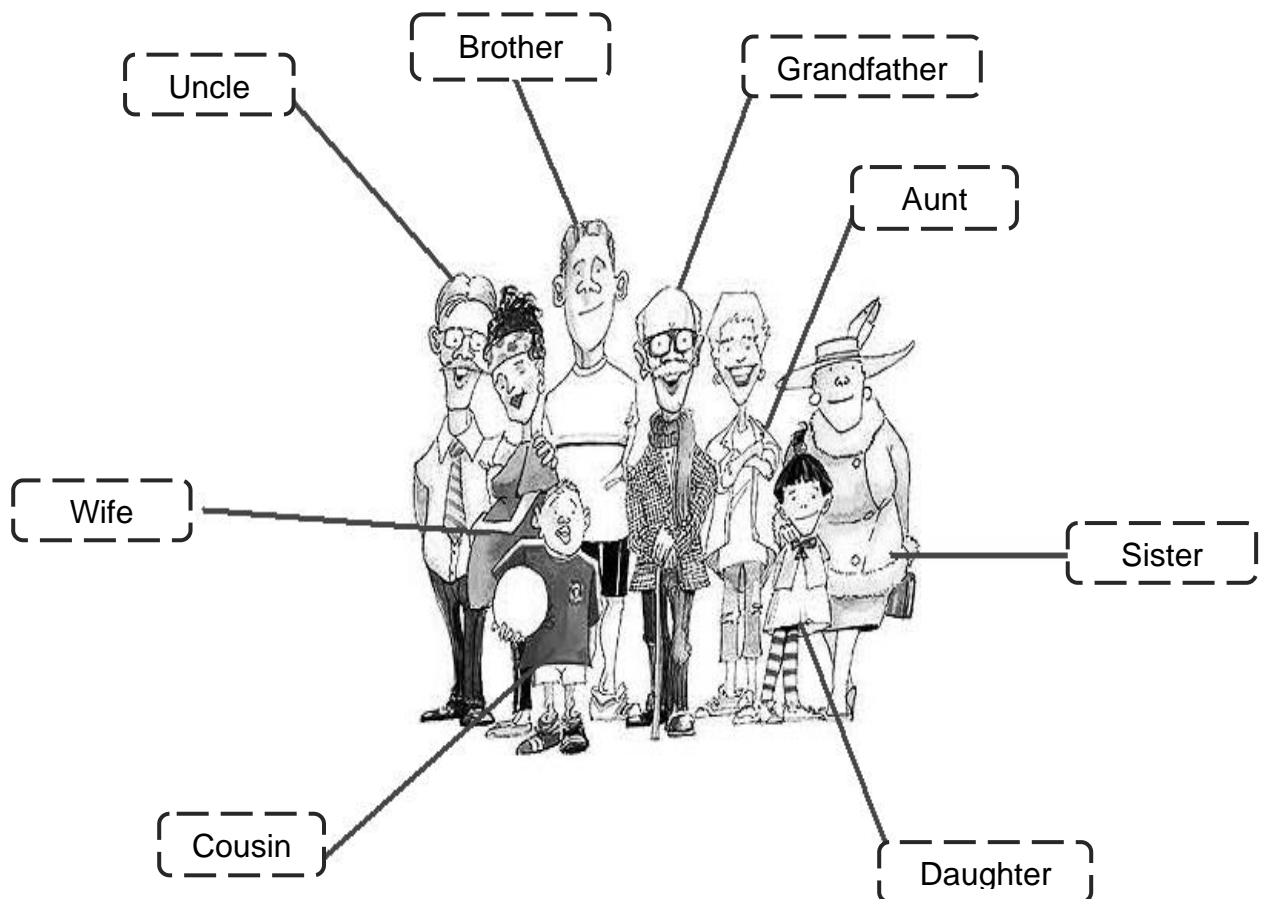
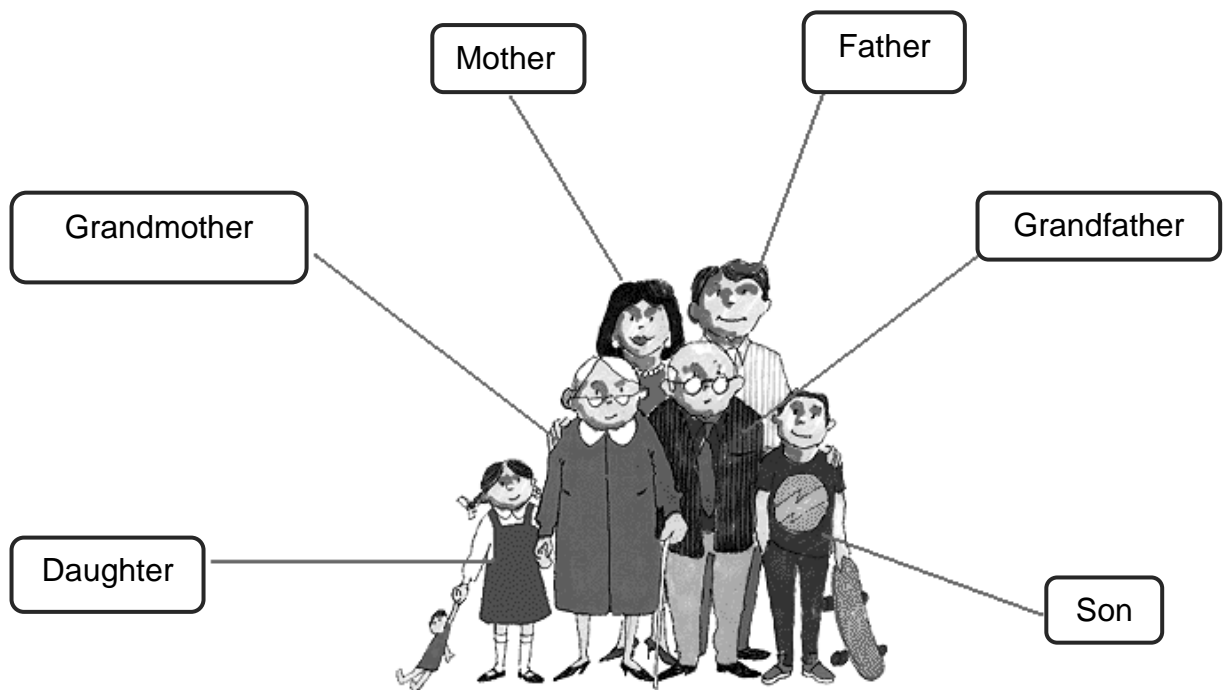
2. You and your friends / at school

3. You and your family / Greek

4. Your parents / from Cartagena

5. Your teacher / from Colombia

APPENDIX 4. The family



APPENDIX 5. Use of the indefinite article

a

an

Complete with *a* or *an*.



1. _____ book.



2. _____ English book.



3. _____ apple.



4. _____ desk.



5. _____ pencil



6. _____ orange.

APPENDIX 6. Occupations



BAKER



BUS DRIVER



BUTCHER



DRESSMAKER



CARPENTER



ELECTRICIAN



FARMER



GROCER



u28162311 fotosearch.com

HAIRDRESSER



HOUSEKEEPER



HOUSEWIFE



HOUSE PAINTER



MAILMAN



MASON



MERCHANT



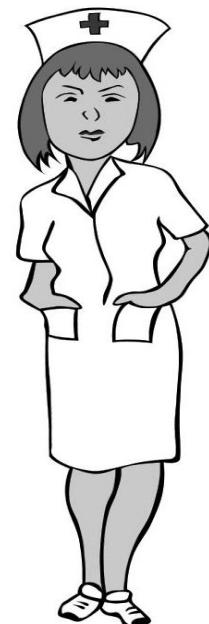
MECHANIC



MILKMAN



MUSICIAN



NEWSAGENT



nri0245 www.fotosearch.com

NURSE



PHARMACIST



POLICEMAN



PLUMBER



SALESPERSON



SECRETARY



SHOE MAKER



STUDENT

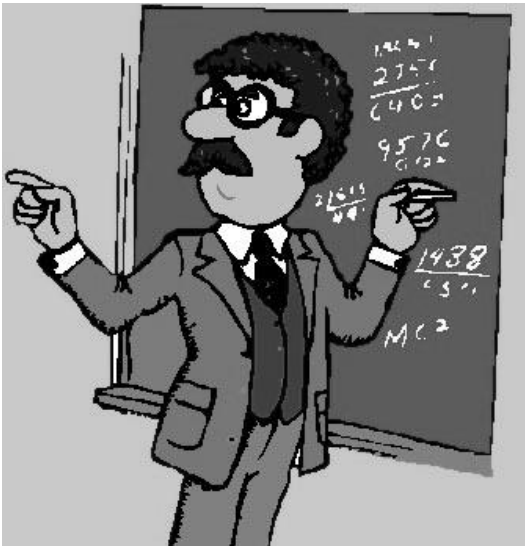


SOLDIER



TAILOR

TAXI DRIVER



TEACHER



TECHNICIAN



TELLER

WAITER



WAITRESS

WATCHMAN

APPENDIX 7. MY FAMILY

Hi. We are the Kostas. We are from England. My dad and my grandmother are from Bristol. My grandfather is from Bedford. He's a Doctor. My grandma is a lawyer.

My father's name is Arthur. He's 50 years old. He's a fireman.

My mother is a veterinarian. Her name is Sophie and she is 45 years old.

My sister's name is Loren. She is 20 years old. She's an actress.

I am David Kosta. I am 11 years old. I am a student

Answer the following question about the reading.

1. What is David's last name?

2. How old is his father?

3. Where are they from?

4. What is his mother job?

5. What is his sister's name?

APPENDIX 8. Use of *a* and *an*

Read the sentences about Jamie's family. Put in *a* / *an* where necessary.

Example: *a sports teacher*.

My dad, John is _____ sport teacher. His mom is Kate Winslett. She's _____ actress from Britain. My mum, Alice, is _____ secretary. Her brother is George Clooney. He is _____ actor from the United States. My sister, Megan, is _____ student. Her boyfriend is Steven Gerrard. He is _____ sports star.

Write sentences about David Kosta. Are the sentences true (T) or false (F)?

Example

1. Adam's family / from England

Adam's family is from England. T

2. His family's surname / Kosta.

3. His dad's name / Sam

4. His grandfather / lawyer

5. His mom / 45 years old

6. David / a teacher

APPENDIX 9. Create a family

Invent a family.

1. Complete the table about the family.

name	From	age	occupation

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