

PROMOTING EFL LEARNING PROCESS AT ORIENTE MIRAFLORES SCHOOL

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BA IN ENGLISH
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2009**

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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**

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TITLE: PROMOTING EFL LEARNING PROCESS AT ORIENTE MIRAFLORES SCHOOL

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KEY WORDS: EFL Learning Process, English Language Teaching, Thematic Unit, Environment Protection, Social Practice.

By means of this document, it is described the development of a methodological tool called thematic unit which results a very useful way to reach English language students' motivation and eventually get satisfactory results in the development of their EFL (English as a foreign language) Learning Process.

The following project comes to life in order to promote the EFL learning process by designing and implementing a thematic unit meaningful to the institution's major, which is Environmental and Ecological. The institution in mention is Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores which is located in Morrórico, an underprivileged neighbourhood in the north-east of Bucaramanga, Colombia. Given that students at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores live in a hazardous area, where erosion and water pollution make them live in permanent danger, this Social Practicum is attempted to improve students' knowledge about environment and its protection as well as promoting their process of the English language learning.

Different stages were necessary in the development of this project. In the first place, a needs analysis was applied to the participants from the research population. Soon afterwards, the topics to be taught were decided and subsequently the thematic unit was designed. During the implementation of the thematic unit several kinds of observations were carried out to hone the usefulness of the project. Finally, some activities were developed by the group in order to involve the whole population (Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores) and in this way generate some social impact.

*Graduation Project

**Languages School – English Language Teaching Program
Mikhailova

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TITULO: MEJORAMIENTO DEL PROCESO DE APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUA INGLESA EN LA INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA ORIENTE MIRAFLORES

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PALABRAS CLAVES: Proceso EFL, lengua Inglesa, Unidad temática, protección ambiental, practica social.

Por medio de este documento se describe el desarrollo metodológico de una herramienta para la enseñanza de la lengua inglesa llamada Unidad Temática, la cual resulta de gran utilidad para alcanzar altos niveles en la motivación de los estudiantes de lengua inglesa y finalmente obtener resultados satisfactorios en el proceso de aprendizaje y desarrollo del inglés como segunda lengua.

El presente proyecto nace de la idea de promover el proceso de aprendizaje del ingles como segunda lengua por medio del el diseño e implementación de una unidad temática que involucra un carácter significativo con respecto a la especialidad de la institución la cual es ambiental y ecológica. La institución en mención es la Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores que esta localizada en Morrorrico, un barrio con reducidos privilegios sociales, en el noroeste de la ciudad de Bucaramanga, Colombia. Debido a que los estudiantes de la institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores viven en un área riesgosa, donde la erosión y la contaminación de sus aguas los pone en peligro permanente esta practica social intenta mejorar los conocimientos y la conciencia de los estudiantes hacia los problemas ambientales, su prevención y solución, y a su vez promover y mejorar el desarrollo y aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa.

Diferentes etapas fueron usadas en el desarrollo de la presente práctica social. En primer lugar un análisis de necesidades fue aplicado a los participantes de la población en mención, poco después los temas a ser involucrados fueron escogidos y seguidamente la unidad temática fue diseñada y aplicada. Durante el desarrollo de la práctica social se llevaron acabo diferentes tipos de observaciones con el fin de afinar la utilidad del proyecto. Finalmente, algunas actividades fueron realizadas por el grupo objeto de la practica para involucrar a la población en general y de este modo generar un impacto social.

*Proyecto de grado

**Escuela de Idiomas – Licenciatura en inglés
Tatiana Mikhailova

Project Director:

1. INTRODUCTION

Everything people do have an impact on the world around them, from the chair people sit on and the food they eat; to the plants that are grown and the trash that is thrown away. To take the best care of the earth, and ourselves, it is important to make smart choices. The following project was brought to life to promote the EFL learning process by designing and implementing a thematic unit meaningful to the institution's major, which is Environmental and Ecological. The institution in mention is Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores which is located in Morrorrico, an underprivileged neighbourhood in the north-east of Bucaramanga, Colombia. Given that students at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores live in a hazardous area, where erosion and water pollution make them live in permanent danger, this Social Practicum is attempted to improve students' knowledge about environment and its protection as well as promoting their process of the English language learning.

First of all, a needs analysis was applied to 32 participants from the research population. Soon afterwards, the topics to be taught were decided and subsequently the thematic unit was designed. During the implementation of the thematic unit two observations were carried out to hone the usefulness of the project. Finally, some activities were developed by the group in order to involve the whole population (Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores) and in this way generate some social impact.

2. PLAN OF ACTION

STAGE 1:

- Recognition of the facilities.
- Carry out a first general observation

STAGE 2:

- Apply a Needs Analysis Survey.
- Get to know the students and their reality.

STAGE 3:

- Decide the topics to cover in the program
- Designing the Thematic unit.

STAGE 4:

- Start with the Thematic Unit Implementation.
- Carry out the second observation.

STAGE 5:

- Carry out a focused observation.
- End of the Thematic Unit Implementation.

STAGE 6:

- Bring up conclusions.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1.1 MOTIVATION

In the socio-cultural context of the students at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores there is a huge deterrent that bias their motivation to learn a foreign language. This deterrent is the students' beliefs about language learning. These beliefs, say Nunan and Lamb in *The self-directed teacher: Managing the learning process (1996)*, are closely related to the students' social milieu and they influence their attitudes towards the learning process. Moreover, Horwitz says, as quoted in "Beliefs" 6, that "learner's beliefs not only influence their approaches to language learning but also affect the way they respond to teaching". The issue of students' beliefs is closely related to motivation because students' expectations and perceptions of language are of difficulty.

Huitt defines motivation as an internal state or condition (sometimes described as a need, desire, or want) that serves to activate or energize behavior and give it direction (Huitt, 2004, 123). According to Huitt, motivation is a temporal and dynamic state that is also related to the desire and willingness to do something. A motivated person can be reaching for a long-term goal or a more short-term goal. In general, explanations regarding the source(s) of motivation can be categorized as either extrinsic (outside the person) or intrinsic (internal to the person) (Malone & Lepper, 1987, 235). Intrinsic sources and corresponding theories can be further subcategorized as either body/physical, mind/mental (i.e., cognitive, affective) or transpersonal/spiritual. In current literature, needs are now viewed as dispositions toward action (i.e., needs create a predisposed condition towards taking action or making a change and moving in a certain direction). Motivation may be accompanied by either positive or negative attitudes or a combination of both (Borg, 2006).

One important but double-edged weapon is rewarding the learner. According to Tucker-Lad (2004, 26), “When children are “offered” a reward for reading, they tend to choose the easiest and shortest books, not the most interesting, informative, or provocative.” If the child receives the reward regardless of his book choice, then he will continue to choose the least challenging option to gain the reward. When the reward is taken away, then the desired behavior becomes less likely to occur.

3.1.2 INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

Providing students with an authentic language environment to develop reading and writing skills in a meaningful context is a clear characteristic of the integrative approach. Since one of the functions of language is to fulfill social purposes, it is necessary to create an authentic environment for social interaction and collaboration among learners (Lightbown & Spada, 1999)

The topics and learners’ activities must be relevant and interesting to the learners. Contrary to the behaviorist assumption of the learner as a blank slate, the integrative approach builds a new learning upon students' prior knowledge. It treats learners as individual thinkers, capable of performing challenging tasks. This approach focuses on learning as process in which learners will be provided with ample opportunities to understand and practice concepts that are presented to them.

Unlike traditional teaching, which focuses on studying one single grammatical rule at a time the integrative approach introduces grammatical rules through meaningful learning in which learners are communicating about the focus topic, such as writing a poster to tell the others about the harmful effect of the trash.

3.1.3 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.

In the classroom management field, we focused our project mainly on the expectations we had towards the students in order to create an appropriate scope and sequence for the lessons. According to the observation that was carried out before the implementation of the thematic unit, it was noticeable that one of the main failures of the teacher was the expectations she had from the students. The teacher did not tell students any positive or encouraging phrase for them to feel motivated to participate. From the very beginning we told students that they all were going to be successful in the classes if they gave their best. According to Wong H. and Wong R. (1997, 36), you can accomplish anything with students if you set high expectations for behavior and performance. They define expectations as knowing what you can or cannot achieve. Expectations are what you believe will or will not happen. Harry Wong and Rosemary Wong say that there are two kinds of expectations: positive or high expectations and negative or low expectations. They state that *“an optimistic belief that whoever you teach or whatever you do will result in success or achievement. If you expect to be successful, you are constantly alert and aware of opportunities to help you be successful”* (First days of school, how to be an effective teacher, 1997, 35). On the other hand, they say for negative expectations that *“a pessimistic that whoever you teach or whatever you do will not work out or will fail. For that matter, why bother to do anything or teach anyone at all? If you expect to fail, you are constantly looking for justification, proof, and demonstration of why you have failed”* (First days of school, how to be an effective teacher, 1997, 35) But, expectations are a problem that concerns not only the teacher or instructor but also the students. Wong and Wong affirm that the expectations, either negative or positive, come from parents and students too. A student’s foreign language learning process is one that should be composed by the learner, the teacher and the parents. This group must have a

positive influence in the student's performance and it should also help the teacher manage the classroom.

In another chapter of their book *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher* (1997), Harry Wong and Rosemary Wong declare that the teacher has to be invitational with students. It means that they have to use certain verbal comments, behaviors and physical environments in order to make an appealing environment for students to learn. The authors also state that there are four main characteristics for a well-managed classroom. Those characteristics are the high level of student involvement in work, clear student expectations, relatively little wasted time, confusion or disruption, and work-oriented but relaxed and pleasant climate.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Most of the students of Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores do not have a good level of English. Although the institution has a professionally qualified English language teacher staff, it is not enough to guarantee success in 40-student groups. As we already mentioned, Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores is located in a hazardous area of city, which makes its students to live in permanent danger. The lack of an appropriate environmental and ecological education as well as the inadequate English Teaching process, as it was noticed in the observations, brought the idea of designing and later implementing an English thematic unit. This thematic unit would integrate both areas, English and Environmental studies and help students get to know the natural surrounding risks, become aware of their responsibility regarding that and improve their knowledge of English.

5. JUSTIFICATION

Education not only attempts to fill our minds with knowledge but also to make ourselves aware of the responsibilities that guarantee our society's future. A foreign language and environmental education are some of the subjects that we consider relevant in the development of a modern culture. Unfortunately, environmental education has generally been considered an additional or elective subject. In the particular case of Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores environmental curriculum is included within the basic science curriculum. On the other hand, English language teaching constitutes only three hours of the teaching time per week, and moreover one hour has to be integrated with Arts. Thus, there is a notorious reduction in the English teaching time as well as the environmental education. Taking into account the location of the school and its population, we consider relevant to design a thematic unit that integrates the English language and the environmental education with the aim of helping students at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores in their learning process.

6. OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

6.1. GENERAL OBJECTIVES

- To design an English language thematic unit (24-hour long) meaningful to the institution's ecological major.
- To implement the unit in the target classroom with the aim of promoting and reinforcing learners' EFL skills.

6.2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To transmit English language knowledge according to their level.
- To make students recognize and implement different solutions for the natural risks that surrounds them.

7. DESCRIPTION OF THE POPULATION

The students of the project at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores were teenagers between 14 to 16 years old. The group in total was composed of 42 students, from 8th grade, who are equally divided in male and female students. They study in the morning, from 6 am to 12 pm and usually have 3 hours of EFL classes per week. All of them come from different cultural backgrounds and some of them show prior experience in English language learning.

8. CONTENT

Once analyzed the data provided by needs analysis and conversations with the group and the head teacher, the topics to be taught were decided.

8.1.1 METHODOLOGY

All instructional materials intend to promote interaction between teacher- student and student-student. Various activities involve individual work or even pair and group work. Those activities are mainly focused on the recognition of vocabulary and functions for students to be familiarized with the contents. During this Social Practicum we aimed at providing students with the most appealing and creative activities for them to get interested and therefore, motivated to learn what was taught. For the sake of accomplishing that, we used an eclectic method taking into account the target group and the content we taught. For instance, when we had students work in groups where every member was helping each other with the task, we thought of the Cooperative Language Learning. According to Dewey as cited by Gillies “*it makes maximum use of activities involving pairs and small groups of learners in a classroom*” (2003). The use of realia in this Social Practicum was a key factor in developing the classes and the methodology used for it. The students were provided with several kinds of realia including posters, recycling material, videos, and moreover, their own experiences with the environmental issues. Regarding another method we used, it is important to talk about the Grammar Translation Method. Due to the students’ level, the overwhelming majority of the utterances produced by the teachers were translated in order to convey clear meaning. Most of the times in the lessons, the teachers tried to convey meaning through mimic and drawings making the translation the last resort.

8.1.1. 1 PROCEDURE

Once the recognition of the school's facilities was done, a general observation was carried out with the permission of the teacher in charge of the 8th grade students. Based on that observation, a thematic unit was designed taking into account the school's mission and vision. The school aims at bringing up environmental and ecological leaders for the society. Another important factor that was taken into account, for designing the thematic unit, was the geographical and social location of the school as well as the students' socio-economical status. The thematic unit was also built up from the bases of a needs analysis survey and recommendations made by the group's head teacher. Having agreed with the group's head teacher, the thematic unit was implemented by the practitioners on June the 23rd. In the very first class of the practitioners, the head teacher introduced the practitioners to the group. That day, the students were reluctant to participate in class to the extent that some of them left the classroom without any permission telling the practitioners that they neither cared about environment nor English. The student-teachers had to call students' attention several times as well as changing the classroom's organization. That first class ended with around 25 students out of the 42. From the second class, the students' attitude changed because the practitioners decided to start the lesson with an ice-breaking activity that involved all the students. After this first experience, the practitioners decided to apply a survey on students' motivation towards learning English. The results of the survey showed the practitioners that the students had a very low motivation not only for learning English but also for taking care of or showing interest in the environment.

With the passage of time, students' attitude improved. They found the topics and the materials very appealing because there were a lot of cartoons and drawing-related activities. After the thematic unit was carried out, the survey on students' motivation towards learning

English was applied. This time, the motivation levels were different from the first survey. According to the survey, the students were much more motivated to learn not only English, but also topics related to environment and recycling.

8.2. THEMATIC UNIT

Based on the results thrown by the needs analysis and the recommendations made by the group's head teacher, a thematic unit was created. The thematic unit "Let's Get Green!" is about environmental problems that mankind is facing, such as water and air pollution. This unit consists of four lessons. It was designed to be applied during the first period of the academic year from May the 5th to June the 17th. Three hours per week in which the student-teachers were teachers and observers alternatively. Its purpose was to provide sufficient personalized practice in which students will be able to write about their environmental worries and read important facts about environmental protection. The skills work included reading, listening, writing and speaking which provided the opportunity to bring together vocabulary related to nature and reinforce the prior knowledge on present simple. Students got involved in tasks that were related to science and environmental education. The integration of the science and environmental education has the purpose of contextualizing the topics to be taught.

| Lesson | Subject matter to be taught | Language to be taught | Skills |
|--|--|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Kinds of pollution | Language arts Word search puzzle about ecology. Article about pollution. Science Vocabulary about ecology. What is pollution? | Language: Simple present Patterns: Affirmative and negative sentences. Activities: Guessing content from the title. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate information according to the piece of reading. Vocabulary: Forest, wild animals, domestic animals, nature, flowers, trees, sun, sky, stars, pollution | Reading Writing Listening |
| 2. Consequences of the alteration of the environment. | Language arts Readings about the consequences of pollution. Science Pollution affecting human health. | Language: Present Simple Patterns: Interrogative sentences. Activities: Sharing experiences. Matching images with meaning. Making sentences. Vocabulary: City, garbage, river, water, ocean, aquatic animals, swimming, food, health, body care, sports, | Reading Writing Speaking |
| 3. Social conflicts derived from the environmental issues. | Language arts Article about biofuels. Science Alternative sources of energy. | Language: Past simple Patterns: Affirmative and negative sentences. Activities: Underline Vocabulary: Air, sun, energy, sky, recycling, paper, food, health | Reading Writing |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|
| <p>4. Culminating activity.</p> | <p>Arts Mural painting Science Ecology day.</p> | <p>Language: This Unit contains all the language studied during the unit and additionally includes a future tense form to talk about good intentions. Patterns: Affirmative, interrogative and negative sentences. Future form 'going to'. Activities: Making a collage or drawing. Oral report. Vocabulary: It includes all the vocabulary learned through the unit.</p> | <p>Listening Speaking</p> |
|---------------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------|

9. SOCIAL IMPACT

The Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores, placed at Morrórico neighborhood, is an entity of the state where the majority of its students live in the surroundings of it. The environmental problems that the neighborhood has also affect the school and it is very common that the students have to skip classes because of water cut off, a flooding or a heavy rain. One of the objectives of this project is to make students of the school and its community in general (e.g. teachers, administrative staff, etc.) aware of the natural risks that surround them. Taking into account this, one of the main activities of our thematic unit was to create big posters (see appendix) about the environmental issues that the students have to deal with everyday, not only at school but also at home. The posters were made by the students in groups of four and the activity was of paramount importance for the community's awareness of the environmental issues. The activity involved the other students from the school since one of its traits was that the students had to vote for the best poster by drawing a happy face on it. All the posters got happy faces galore and the students heard compliments and good comments on their posters. Furthermore, the authors of the posters had to explain the meaning of the posters and answer the questions that they were asked. Another core activity that set a touchstone point after the implementation of the thematic unit was the "*Recycling Race*" an activity in which the students, after a previous explanation, had to go around and outside the school recycling and throwing away the litter in the correct place. In this activity the students showed a great responsibility towards the important issue of the garbage. They explained the importance of recycling to the other students of the school and it created a sense of compromise with the school and the community in general.

10. CONCLUSIONS

It is not easy to get students with the particular characteristic that the students at Institución Educativa Oriente Miraflores have. Discipline, lack of material and a serious problem with motivation made the idea of teaming up two subjects, to some extent complicated. In the first lesson the student-teachers presented a rough idea of the thematic unit, its content and the kind of material that was going to be used, the above mentioned idea did not appeal to students. It gave the design of the thematic unit and whole project a new course. It was aimed to not only promote de learning process but also enhance the motivation to facilitate the former. Fortunately, with passage of time, the implementation of the thematic unit and the positive attitude of the student-teachers students' motivation notoriously increased. Once the thematic unit was designed it was introduced to students and applied satisfactorily. The integration of the two subjects was done taking into account the particular behavior of the group. Since it was noticed at the beginning that students in isolation were not active participants, so it was decided to make them work in groups, where the enthusiasm of one of them contagiously encouraged the others. The final activities were carried out with the help of the head teacher whose authority made easier their development. The thematic unit as well as the whole social practicum was applied and carried as originally stipulated and with no setbacks.

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12. APPENDIX

OBSERVATION

PLACE: INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA ORTIENTE MIRAFLOREZ

INSTRUCTOR: GLORIA INES

8TH GRADE

Wednesday, April 29th

The teacher arrived to her classroom on time (at 10:30) and sat on her desk. She remained quiet while the students arrived to the classroom. The teacher waited for the students to behave or remain quiet but the students did not do it. When the last student came into the classroom the teacher greeted and went straight to the door and closed it. The teacher started the lesson by asking the students the homework. Just a few of them, 8 students, did it. At this point the teacher had used English as the language of instruction but anyway, she had to use Spanish in order to convey clear meaning. One of the students told the teacher that she could not do the homework because she did not understand the topic so the teacher decided to explain the topic again. She wrote on the board “there is” and “there are”. Most of the students did not pay attention and started talking and messing around. The teacher told the students to behave but they just looked at her and continued talking. While the explanation, the teacher used Spanish as the language of instruction so the students could understand the topic for real. After the teacher finished the explanation, the student who had asked for it thanked the teacher for it. Having finished the forced review of the topic, the teacher decided to write 10 sentences on the board and had the students write them and complete them on their notebooks. The kids took a while doing it and at the end, the teacher decided to write another exercise (questions) about the topic. It was very curious to notice

that the majority of the male students were the ones sitting by the window and the female students were by the door. The teacher decided to finish the lesson 15 minutes before noon.

OBSERVATION 2

PLACE: INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA ORIENTE MIRAFLOREZ

INSTRUCTORS: JOSE GIOVANNI ORTIZ COVELLI – OMAR MOGOLLÓN ALAGUNA

8TH GRADE

Tuesday, May 12th

The teachers arrived on time to the classroom. They started speaking in English but they noticed that the students did not understand; so they decided to translate all the things they said. The teachers started the lesson by checking an assignment they had set the previous class. The homework consisted of a drawing about an environmental problem that the students could find in their everyday lives. Besides, they had to propose a solution for the problem (in English). Since the assignment was in groups of 4, the teachers decided to have all the teams go to the front of the class. The kids had to show the drawing and explain it. They showed the drawings and explained them but in Spanish mostly. After checking the homework, the teachers explained some vocabulary related to environment. One of the teachers drew the meaning of the words and wrote them on the board and the other one gave the instructions for a task. Students had to match the drawings to the words. Once the teacher finished drawing, the other teacher had students go to the board and do the exercise. Some students needed help from their classmates and they did help them but with rude language like: *“marica usted se parece a eso”* meaning the word “garbage”. At this point it is very interesting to highlight the attitude that the students had towards the use of drawings. They were actively interacting and paying more attention to the lessons. Another important aspect that helped the instructors was the way they spoke to the students. They used very colloquial translations of the things they said and the pupils seemed to understand by laughing or nodding. The lesson finished with this activity and at the end the teachers asked the students to organize the classroom. They did it.

THEMATIC UNIT – SAMPLE PAGES

What is ecology about?



BOTTLES
CANS
ENVIRONMENT
GLASS
FRAGILE
RAIN
FIRE

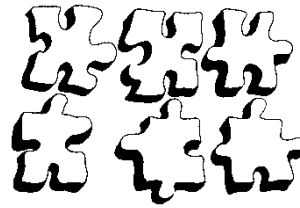
PLANET
PRESERVE
RECYCLE
TRASH
ANIMALS
BIRDS
TREES

SUN
PAPER
WATER
EARTH
MOUNTAINS
PEOPLE
BUGS



What is the environment?

It has many different parts, like a jigsaw puzzle. People, animals, buildings, the earth, the water!



1. Organize the words in the box in the columns.

Air – Animals – Birds – Bottles – Bugs – Cans – Earth – Fire – Glass – Mountains – Paper Planet – Pollution – Rain – Ravine – Recycle – Smoke – Sun – Trash – Trees – Water

| Things to protect | Things to avoid | Things to recycle |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | | |

2. Put in order the next sentences.

- good / pollution / for people or animals / isn't - need / they / pure air.

- a small river. / is / Ravine - have / they / water.

- recycle / We / cans / and paper. / bottles,

- We / our planet. / need / to protect

- Animals / very fragile. / are

3. Draw a motivating picture in which you involve as many words as you can. Also write a motivating phrase as a title (using the words above).

Designed By Jose Giovanni Ortiz Covelli and Omar Mogollón Alaguna – UIS - 2009

Water

Water is a very important part of our environment. But, **how** important is it? **How** do we use it?

| | | |
|----------|----------|---|
| A. _____ | 1. _____ | People need to drink clean water everyday . |
| | 2. _____ | People need to have a shower everyday. We need to wash the dishes , our clothes and the house. |
| | 3. _____ | We need water to cook our food everyday. |
| B. _____ | 1. _____ | Like humans, animals need to drink water to survive . |
| | 2. _____ | Plants need water too . |
| | 3. _____ | Fish live in the water, in lakes , rivers and ravines. |
| C. _____ | 1. _____ | We transport things by water. Ships travel on the seas and rivers. |
| | 2. _____ | Some countries use water to produce energy . |

What is **waste water**?