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ABSTRACT

Studies described briefly in this paper indicate that use of cameras generates enthusiasm, develops self-concept, and increases communication skills. The content of the traditional ESL (English as a Second Language) materials is inadequate for dealing with either the syntactical or conceptual needs of (1) the silent child, (2) the child who can speak English but makes frequent Spanish substitutions, or (3) the child who adequately copes with concrete school vocabulary but cannot express his feelings nor talk about emotional events important to him. The Yettem (California) School Project utilized the techniques of "Visual Literacy" and child-created materials. The children in this project, Mexican-American migrants who attend school part of each year in Mexico and part in California, are third and fourth graders, divided into control groups who receive traditional ESL instruction one hour a day, and experimental groups who record experiences with cameras and tell stories, from which oral language drills and materials will be constructed. The final product will be a movie planned, produced, and filmed by the children, utilizing all the visual-verbal skills learned during the course of the project. For a detailed presentation of the rationale underlying this "Visual Literacy" project, see P. Heffernan-Cabrera's "The Camera as the 'Eye of the mind,'" AL 002 424. (AMM)

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THE YETTEM SCHOOL VISUAL LITERACY PROJECT  
ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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## PREFACE

A long time before the realization of the Yettam Project, Patricia Heffernan-Cabrera conceived the idea that cameras and children would combine well to generate materials for teaching E.S.L. She brought her ideas together with William Tickuof and Shirley Josephs who wrote a proposal. Kodak enthusiastically accepted the proposal. Soon, cameras, books, film and paper arrived in Orosi, California.

From that point, Rosemary Gardner and Carolyn Ingram put names and faces to the idea. Rosa, Maria, Mary, Yolanda, Alma and Melva--taking pictures, sharing pictures, beginning to smile, talking, listening, asking questions, and perhaps most importantly, beginning to show a sense of humor in their new language.

Rosemary Gardner and Carolyn Ingram set a direction which guided the children into themselves and out into their worlds, exploring, expanding and expressing. Documentation rests in statistical analysis, but comes alive in slides and movies of their involvement. They now speak and read English with greater facility. They understand themselves in their bicultural world.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM

There is increasing documentation in support of the need for specialized help for Mexican American migrant children. The cry can be heard from militant Chicano protestors at Universities as well as from educators who recently initiated a moratorium in testing until there are intelligence tests in Spanish. Within the schools, evidence includes the high drop-out rate and the percentage of Mexican-American students in the Educationally Handicapped classrooms. Recognition of the need has resulted in experimental programs in Bilingual education and in teaching English as a Second Language. (ESL)

Until now, language programs have grouped Spanish speaking students together, by age and grade level rather than by competence in English. Differentiation must be made among the children who need ESL, with materials and approaches generated for specific competence levels. The children who are in English speaking schools for the first time have needs different from those of the children who have attended English speaking schools during part of their school-age years. It is to the child of the latter group that this project is directed.

### Hypothesis

Children being taught ESL through Visual Literacy will have a significantly greater command of English than will children in traditional ESL classes.

### Assumptions

- 1) The cycle of communication skills involves experience,

- concept formation, language and communication. 2) Children can compose, and through visual composition reflect concepts held.
- 3) Children can conceptualize beyond their ability to verbalize.
- 4) Photographs taken by children reflect the above statements.

### Definitions

Visual Literacy in ESL: Given that every child has experienced and ordered his world, the problem for the linguistically different child is his finding a means of expressing that order and sequence. Visual Literacy is the means by which a child can express his world and comment upon it, in nonverbal communication. Given that language development in children is tied to affective behavior, to subjectively relevant experience, Visual Literacy facilitates the transition between conceptualization and language. It is not in itself a means of teaching language; because it draws upon the child's own experience, because it calls upon him to tell stories he has visually composed, it is a means of verbalizing this experience. (John L. Debes, "Some Hows and Whys," EDUCATIONAL SCREEN AND AUDIOVISUAL GUIDE, Jan. 1969, p. 14)<sup>1</sup>

Language Experience Approach: Language development through the language experience approach is a means of developing pupil-generated materials for the expansion of already known concepts and language to more sophisticated language skills. The approach is to have the child tell a story about a picture he has drawn, with grammatical and vocabulary errors intact, and to teach him to read his own story. This approach serves to draw from and build upon his motivation, because it puts him at the center of his own learning process. His words and



pictures are used to teach him reading and writing. (Roach Van Allen and Claryce Allen, AN INTRODUCTION TO LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE IN READING, Encyclopedia Britannica Education Corporation, Chicago)<sup>2</sup>

#### BACKGROUND

**Research:** Research in Visual Literacy is relatively scarce because of the newness of the field. Some studies have been done although none specifically relate Visual Literacy to teaching ESL. One purpose of the studies that have been done was to define Visual Literacy and to determine its relevance in education. (Debes, loc. cit.)<sup>3</sup>

A general study was conducted by Patrick Culhane in which cameras were given to children to be used in conjunction with classroom activities. The conclusion was that cameras were a successful means of increasing communication in the school. (Patrick Culhane, "News Explorer", SCHOLASTIC TEACHER, Vol.23, No.3, Sept. 27, 1968, p.2)<sup>4</sup>

Of most relevance to the Yettum School Project is the study by Roger B. Fransecky. (Roger B. Fransecky, "Visual Literacy and Teaching the Disadvantaged", AUDIO VISUAL INSTRUCTION, Oct. 1969, p.28)<sup>5</sup> The study used East coast migrant children to determine the relationship between Visual Literacy and the traditional verbal language skills. The emphasis was on the development of visual skills rather than verbal. Results included a significantly higher degree of competence in oral language in the experimental group than in the control group.

Observations: No attempt has been made to isolate the relationship of Visual Literacy to teaching ESL. The above studies indicate

that use of cameras generates enthusiasm, develops self-concept, and increases communication skills.

The migrant child needs more than the traditional structured drills in ESL give. (Mary Finocchiaro, TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1958)<sup>6</sup> He needs vocabulary and syntax which will enable him to communicate about his world. He needs to develop a positive self-image in his new language, and the ability to compare the two cultures that surround him. Whether his problem is cultural or purely linguistic, the migrant child cannot verbalize as well as his non-migrant peers. At least three different problemed children can be identified among those who have attended English speaking schools: 1) the silent child; 2) the child who can speak English but makes frequent Spanish substitutions; 3) the child who adequately copes with concrete school vocabulary but cannot express his feelings nor talk about emotional events important to him. The content of the traditional ESL materials is inadequate for dealing with either the syntactical or conceptual needs of these children.

The Yettem School Project utilized the techniques of Visual Literacy and child-created materials. The books that the children made from their own photographs enhanced self-concept, encouraged cultural comparisons, increased language capacity, and developed sophistication of communication skills in the new language. From the books, the teachers structured oral language drills with transformations and substitutions. The advantages of this approach are that the content is relevant. Thus, redundancy and irrelevance are eliminated, and motivation is increased.

## DESIGN

The children used in this project are Mexican-American migrants who attend school part of each year in Mexico and part in California. They are third and fourth graders divided into experimental and control groups, matched on the basis of age and need for ESL as demonstrated by results of the Frederick Brengelman-John Manning Language Capacity Index. There are six children in each group. The control group will receive traditional ESL instruction for one hour every day. The Brengelman-Manning test will be administered as a pre and post test, as will the Silvaroli Informal Reading Inventory. Further documentation of the experimental group, which will be available, will include the childrens' books, and movies, slides and tapes of their work.

For one hour every day, the children in the experimental group will, with the use of cameras, record experiences and tell stories which will be typed and made into books for the children. From the stories, following reading exercises, the oral language drills will be constructed for the children, to correct syntax and increase vocabulary. Development will move from self to community, and to cultural comparisons. Sophistication of communication will develop from one-picture stories to multi-pictured stories. The final product will be a movie planned, produced, and filmed by the children, utilizing all the visual-to-verbal skills learned during the course of the project.

## FINDINGS

The purpose was to develop relevant, child-generated materials



to cover learning areas inadequately dealt with, whether in the regular classrooms or in the ESL classes. With the camera, the children started with what they could see. Once captured in a photograph, the words the children used to describe their pictures were recorded, errors intact. The next day (for immediate feedback) the photographs and typed stories were given to the children to glue into their books. Their world began to appear on paper. They began to ask for words they didn't know. A natural transition into reading was made. The teachers took the syntactical and vocabulary errors from the stories, and structured oral language drills.

The children's motivation could be seen from their increased interaction, both with each other and with the teachers. They asked each other for words in English, shared their photographs, read to each other and attempted to write down their own visual experiences, whereas before they could not express themselves, and would not try

As can be seen from the children's books, their ability to verbalize visual concepts increased in vocabulary and syntax. They moved from concrete description of picture content to abstract, comparative, cultural observation in their new language.

#### SUMMARY

As a result of the Yettem School Project, the children's mastery of English, the range of topics available to them, and the sophistication of their verbal observations are better than those of the control group. Classroom teachers of the children in the experimental group say that overall participation and achievement have increased.

Results of the pre and post Silvaroli Informal Reading Inventory

show that the control group children advanced at the same rate as their class. The children in the experimental group increased between three-fourths and one and one-fourth years in word recognition and comprehension skills.

On the Brengelman-Manning Language Capacity Index, the experimental group's increase in scores were greater than the control group. Significance could not be determined because of the small sample. (See table.)

The success of the Yetttem School Project suggests a variety of possible implementations with younger children and adults, in teaching ESL with cameras as a means of motivation and relevance.

TABLE

Data from Brengelman-Manning Language Capacity Index

<u>Pre-test, Experimental</u>	<u>Post-test, Experimental</u>
38	46
39	53
42	54
42	51
47	54
48	55
total: <u>256</u>	total: <u>313</u>

  

<u>Pre-test, Control</u>	<u>Post-test, Control</u>
38	44
39	45
42	46
43	49
48	51
50	55
total: <u>260</u>	total: <u>290</u>

  

<u>total difference, Experimental</u>	<u>total difference, Control</u>
57	30

  

<u>mean difference, Experimental</u>	<u>mean difference, Control</u>
9.5	5

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