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**The Teaching of English to a Learner with Visual Impairment:
A Case Study**

Chris Cruz González
ID #:1-1141-0238
Carné #: 233451-5

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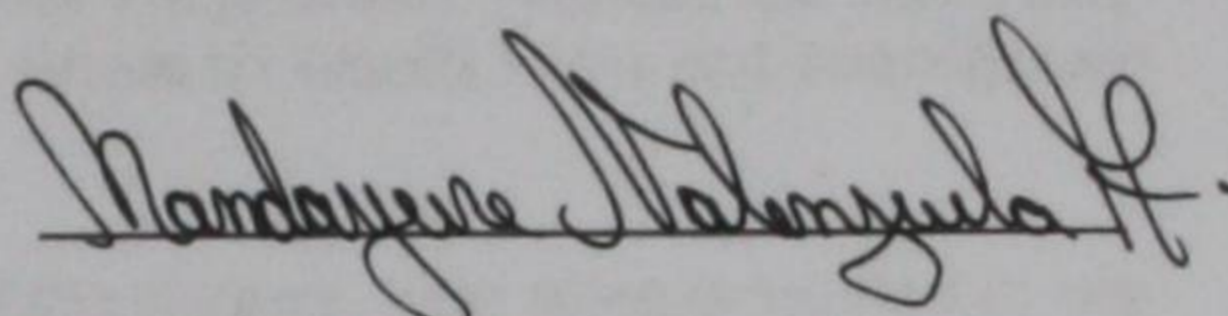Presentado por el sustentante
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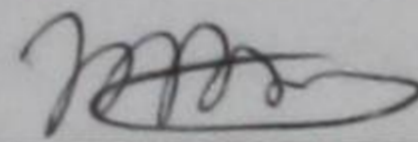
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Profesora encargada
Curso de Investigación en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas

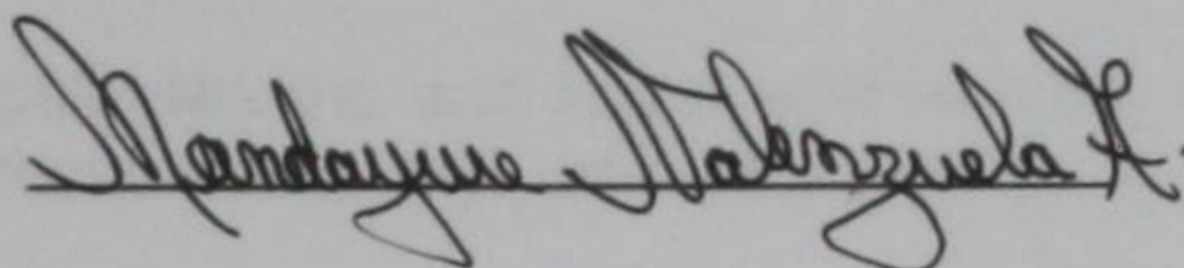M.A. Rocío Miranda Vargas
Profesora Tutora

M.A. Nandayure Valenzuela Arce
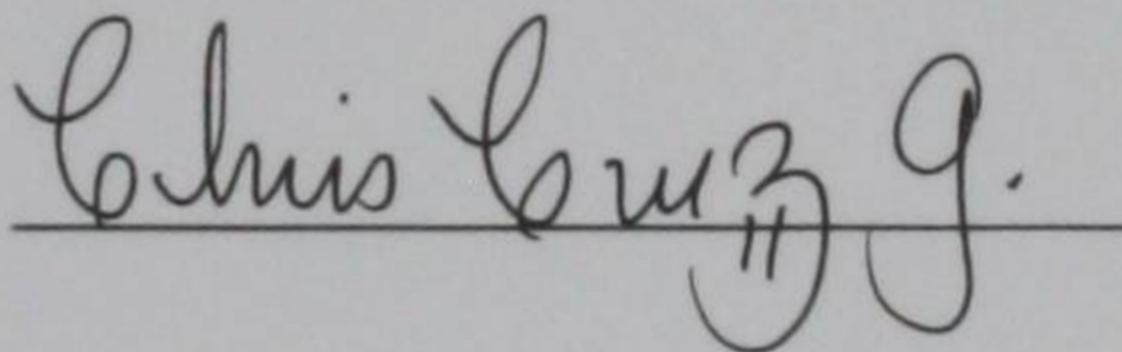Coordinadora
Maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas
con Énfasis en Inglés como Lengua
Extranjera para Alumnado Adulto

Sustentante:
Chris Cruz González

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Resumen

Esta investigación explora técnicas, estrategias y material didáctico empleado por profesores y estudiante con visión reducida para adquirir una lengua extranjera. La muestra fue constituida por una estudiante con limitaciones visuales de la Universidad Técnica Nacional, profesores y coordinadora del departamento de Inglés y psicóloga encargada de las necesidades especiales de los/las estudiantes de Universidad Técnica Nacional. El trabajo describe tácticas aplicadas por los profesores y la alumna no vidente en la enseñanza y aprendizaje de una lengua no materna. Por último provee nuevas destrezas en las cuatro habilidades básicas del inglés (hablar, escuchar, leer y escribir).

Palabras clave: Estudiante con visión reducida/ Técnicas y estrategias/ Aprendizaje de un idioma/Cuatro habilidades básicas del Inglés.

Abstract

This research examines techniques, strategies and didactic material employed by profesors and low-vision student in order to acquire a foreign language. It involved a learner with visual impairments, professors and coordinator of English major and the counselor who helps students with special needs at Universidad Técnica Nacional. It describes tactics applied by educators and pupil with reduced vision in the teaching and learning process of a non-native language. Finally, it provides the implementation of new manners in the four language skills of English (speaking, listening, reading and writing).

Key Words: Learner with Visual Impairments/ Techniques and strategies/ Language learning/ Four basic language skills.

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Introduction

Education is the key to succeed in society, and public and private education are encouraging students to increase their quality of life by learning a foreign language. The acquisition of a foreign language provides better opportunities and challenges to everyone. In addition, education is a duty and a right for every single citizen, so educational centers must supply pupils with appropriate tools to achieve mastery of a foreign language. Costa Rican education has made a great effort to foster the learning of a foreign language at schools, high-schools and universities. Nevertheless, not many disabled individuals have the same opportunity to study a foreign language as others with no learning difficulties due to several limitations in the teaching/learning process.

The teaching of a foreign language is challenging because of different reasons. One of them is that teachers need appropriate didactic materials as well as technology in order to teach the target language. For example, every educational institution should have a language laboratory. Another reason is that the instructors must take into consideration their students' multiple intelligences for teaching a foreign language. For instance, the educators should look for strategies and approaches that fit better in their foreign language lessons. Finally, educators ought to cope with curriculum variability when curricular adaptations need to be applied. In short, the language educator should take into account the above considerations in order to provide a successful foreign language teaching/learning environment.

Nonetheless, educational institutions sometimes do not realize that language teachers could face some special situations besides the lack of didactic materials, applying strategies and approaches and curricular adaptations. An example of these special conditions is having a student with special needs in the class. Some teachers must deal with visually challenged students. Therefore, this project seeks to explore the strategies, techniques and language skills that should be taken into consideration to help visual impaired learners; the good is to provide some guidelines to improve the EFL teaching/learning process of visually challenged students at Universidad Técnica Nacional (UTN) in Alajuela.

I.   The Problem and its Importance

Costa Rica's Congress passed Law 7600[1] in 1996 due to the necessity in keeping a balance in education and other areas among people with special needs and individuals with no learning difficulties. This law states that it is mandatory to offer equal opportunities to disabled people. Title II, chapter I talks about access to education. Article 17[2] refers to adaptations and support services. It states that educational centers will provide necessary adaptations as well as required support services in order to make effective the right of people to education.

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[1] Ley 7600: Igualdad de Oportunidades para las Personas con Discapacidad.
[2] Artículo 17.- **Adaptaciones y Servicios de Apoyo**: Los centros educativos efectuaran las adaptaciones necesarias y proporcionaran los servicios de apoyo requeridos para el derecho de las personas a la educación sea efectivo. Las adaptaciones y los servicios de apoyo incluyen los recursos humanos especializados, adecuaciones curriculares, evaluaciones, metodología, recursos didácticos y planta física. Estas previsiones serán definidas por el personal del centro educativo con asesoramiento técnico-especializado (p.6)

In addition, adaptations and support services include specialized human resources, curricular adaptations, evaluation, methodology, didactic materials and physical building. These considerations are defined by the educational institution personnel with specialized-technical counsel (6). Furthermore, article 18[3], which refers to educational system forms, mentions that disabled people's education must show high quality as the others who are not visual impaired; it should be taught under the same schedules; and it must be based on the norms and aspirations of the educational system (6). Therefore, the application of the law must be implemented in all institutions like Universidad Técnica Nacional.

This research study focuses on finding out if EFL professors at Universidad Técnica Nacional are aware of having a visually impaired learner at class, and what general curricular adaptations are put into practice to aid the low vision student to learn a foreign language (English); more specific what language instructions in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) are applied by EFL teachers to guarantee the acquisition of English effectively.

The researcher knew about Julie who is her case study until the beginning of the quarter of 2010 when she was her student in the pronunciation course. The researcher chose this visually impaired learner due to several motives. First, the investigator realized that she had poor instruction in teaching a foreign language (English) to visually impaired students so she decided to contribute in Julie's learning of a target language. In addition, the general curricular adaptations being applied to Julie were not contributing to her

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[3] Artículo 18.- **Formas de Sistema Educativo**: ... La educación de las personas con discapacidad deberán ser de igual calidad, impartirse durante los mismos horarios, preferentemente en el centro educativo más cercano al lugar de residencia y basarse en las normas y aspiraciones que orientan los niveles del sistema educativo.

learning of English. Finally, there are not many studies focused on the teaching and/or learning of English to visually impaired individuals. That is why this case study provides a great opportunity to find important insights regarding the teaching/learning of a foreign language to a pupil with visually impairments by making the inquiry at Universidad Técnica Nacional.

1.1 General Objective

To contribute to the improvement of the EFL teaching/learning process of visually impaired students at Universidad Técnica Nacional. The results derived from this study will serve two purposes. The first one is to describe the visually challenged student and professors' needs, and the second one is to establish what kind of teaching strategies and language skill considerations must be put into practice at EFL classrooms.

1.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the needs of a visually impaired UTN student when learning a foreign language in EFL classrooms.

2. To find out kind what supportive didactic material and learning strategies does the low vision learner use to complement her learning outside of class.

3. To describe which learning strategies and supportive didactic material are effective and efficient to support the language acquisition process of the visually impaired student and which ones are not.

4. To describe the needs of UTN professors when teaching a foreign language in EFL classrooms.

5. To explore which specific teaching strategies UTN professors put into practice in the classroom that support the visually impaired student's learning needs.

6. To propose which learning strategies can be devised to develop the four basic language skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading) in order to help the low vision student learn English.

II.   Framework of Reference

In recent years, some experts have undertaken studies on the teaching of foreign languages to visually impaired individuals. These studies have been relevant to educational research because they show how visually impaired individuals can reach their objective of learning a foreign language. Most importantly, specialists in the visually impairment area provide new insights into how visual impairment students can learn a foreign language handling their eyesight problem.

The present theoretical framework discusses the most outstanding academic accounts surrounding teaching a foreign language to visually challenged learners. There are several concerns to present in this area. The first section shows the native and second language acquisition theories. The second division provides the definition and types of visually impairments. The third part relies on the discussion of different teaching strategies to lower the visually impaired learners and instructors' affective filter. The four classification explains how tactile strategies work as a tool for acquiring or learning a foreign language. Finally, the last segment supplies diverse suggestions to teach the four language skills to visually impaired individuals. In general, the literature reviewed contextualizes the present research project.

2.1 Theories of First Language Acquisition

The acquisition of the first language has been an enigma for many researchers. However, there are some theories that attempt to decipher how individuals acquire their mother tongue. The first language acquisition theory is based on behaviorist approaches. According to Brown in *Principles of*

Language Learning and Teaching, "The behaviorist approach focused on the immediately perceptible aspects of linguistic behavior—the publicly observable responses-and the relationships or associations between those responses and events in the world surrounding them" (2000, 22). In addition, Ellis points out that the acquisition of a language can be learned by habits. "Learning took place when learners had the opportunity to practice making the correct response to a given stimulus" (1997, 31). Therefore, the reinforcement of certain responses will become habitual and effective language will emerge.

This behaviorist model is supported by some researchers. One of these first language investigators is B.F. Skinner. Skinner's theory concerns verbal behavior, and it is an extension of his approach of learning by operant conditioning. According to Brown in *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book,

> Operant conditioning refers to conditioning in which the organism (in this case, a human being) emits a response or operant (a sentence or utterance) without necessarily observable stimuli; that operant is maintained (learned) by reinforcement (for example, a positive verbal or nonverbal response from another person). (2000, 22-23)

Skinner's verbal behavior fosters the idea that when a language performance is reinforced, the behavior will be more frequent; on the other hand, when the response lacks reinforcement, the language utterance will be weakened and extinguished. In addition, Skinner states:

> The process by which a person or animal learns that a particular behavior only brings reinforcement under particular conditions. For example, a cat may learn that meowing results in the presentation of food

(positive reinforcement) but only when there is a person in the kitchen. It therefore only meows when a person is there—the behavior (meowing) is under stimulus control (a person is in the kitchen). (Sammons 1)

Another perspective in behaviorist model is the psychologists' proposal of modified theoretical positions. One of these accounts is the mediation theory. Brown, in *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book, defines it as "in which meaning was accounted for by the claim that the linguistic stimulus (a word or sentence) elicits a "mediating" response that is self-stimulating" (2000, 23). "Charles Osgood called this self-stimulation a representational mediation process, a process that is really covert and invisible, acting within the learner" (Brown 23). However, mediation theory does not solve some doubts like the nature of language, and the relationship between meaning and utterance. That is why some questions about language are left unanswered.

Finally, the last behaviorist framework account was made by Jenkins and Palermo. Both incorporated notions of generative linguistics and meditational approaches to child languages. In Brown's *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book, Jenkins and Palermo claimed that "the child may acquire frames of a linear pattern of sentence elements and learn the stimulus-response equivalences that can be substituted within each frame; imitation was an important, if not essential, aspect of establishing stimulus-response associations" (24). Nevertheless, this theory failed in its attempt to explain the abstract nature of language, the child's creativity and the interactive nature of language acquisition. In conclusion, behaviorist approaches emphasized the explanation of language acquisition by empirical observation and scientific

method, but they never touched the genetic region, so that is why the nativist approach emerged.

The study of language acquisition has gone beyond observation and scientific method; it got involved with the nativist domain. In *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book, Brown defines the concept of nativist:

> The term nativist is derived from the fundamental assertion that language acquisition is innately determined, that we are born with a genetic capacity that predisposes us to a systematic perception of language around us, resulting in the construction of an internalized system of language. (2000,24)

This innateness accounts have support of different sides. Eric Lenneberg was one of the scholars who started to work with the nativist approach. He states that "language is a "specific-species" behavior and that certain modes of perception, categorizing abilities, and other language-related mechanisms are biologically determined" (qted in Brown, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching 24). Lennerberg agrees with the idea that human beings have an innate ability to externalize language without any instruction or imitation at all. On the other hand, Chomsky believed that there were some innate properties of language that explained the child's first language acquisition. These intuitive structures are found in the language adquisition device (LAD) which is part of Chomsky's acquisition hypothesis. In *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book, "This innate knowledge, according to Chomsky, is embodied in a "little black box of sorts, a language acquisition device (LAD)" (qted in Brown24). According to the Teaching of English of British Counsel website, "The LAD is a system of principles that

children are born with that helps them learn language, and accounts for the order in which children learn structures, and the mistakes they make as they learn." In addition, McNeill explained Chomsky's language acquisition device in four language linguistic properties. First, there is a skill to identify different sounds from others in the atmosphere. Second, linguistic information can be arranged in different types that later on can be improved. Then, understanding of certain type of linguistic system is possible, but other types are not. Finally, there is an ability to get involved in continuing assessment of some linguistic aspects until building a simple linguistic construction without having available linguistic input (qted in Brown, Principles of Language Learning and teaching 24). McNeill and other Chomskyan followers provided eloquent claims in order to explain the LAD in contrast to behaviorist accounts.

Other individuals continued the study of child language acquisition focused on Universal Grammar. Chomsky argues that "language is governed by a set of highly abstract principles that provide parameters which are given particular settings in different languages" (qted in Ellis, Second Language Acquisition 65). Chomsky defines it as "the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human languages…the essence of human language"(qted in Cook and Newson 1). Brown, in *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* book, states that "Universal Grammar (UG) research is attempting to discover what it is that all children, regardless of their environmental stimuli (the language (s) they hear around them) bring to the language acquisition process" (25). As can be deduced from the above quotations, Universal Grammar is a theory based on the internal structure of the human mind and not of behavior. In summary, nativist approaches help to

explain how first language acquisition works internally in the human brain. However, functional approaches also provide further explanation of the acquisition of the first language.

Functional accounts play an important role in the explanation of first language acquisition. As Brown states, "Functions are the meaningful, interactive purposes, within a social (pragmatic) context, that we accomplish with the forms" (28). In other words, functions are necessary in order to make clear the message conveyed through words and phrases. There are two important areas in the functional approaches. The first one is the cognition and language development. Bloom pointed out that "children learn underlying structures, and not superficial word order" (qted in Brown 28). That means that a telegraphic utterance can have different meanings to the child.

Piaget also tried to explain the relationship of cognitive development to first language acquisition. "Piaget described overall development as the result of children's interaction with their environment, with a complementary interaction between their developing perceptual cognitive capacities and their linguistic experience" (Brown 28). Therefore, a child will associate the new input (semantic units) depending on his/her notion about the world. Furthermore, Piaget suggests that "intellectual development is a process that follows an organized, systematic and sequential path through four stages. It emphasizes the intellectual area without leaving apart the social, affective and moral domains in the human being" (qted in Abarca, 2001, 61).

Dan Slobin also agreed with the idea that semantic learning is based on cognitive development. According to Slobin:

There are two major pacesetters to language development, involved with poles of function and form: (1) on the functional level, development is paced by growth of conceptual and communicative capacities, operating in conjunction with innate schemas of cognition; and (2) on the formal level, development is paced by growth of perceptual and information-processing capacities, operating in conjunction with innate schemas of grammar. (qted in Brown, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching 29)

In conclusion, several scholars discussed the importance of functions and forms in mother language acquisition; nevertheless, in the functional approaches, there is one more aspect to be taken into account.

In functional approaches, social interaction and language development go beyond cognitive thought and memory structure. Holzman proposes a "reciprocal model" that explains the child's language development. According to this scholar, "A reciprocal behavioral system operates between the language-developing infant-child and the competent (adult) language user in a socializing-teaching-nurturing role" (qted in Brown, Principles of Language Learning and Teaching 29). In addition, there are other researches that focus on the function of discourse. Brown suggests that:

Since language is used for interactive communication, it is only fitting that one study the communicative functions of language: What do children know and learn about talking with others? about connected pieces of discourse (relations between sentences)? the interaction between hearer and speaker? Conversational cues? (2001, 29)

In summary, functions and forms' relationship attempt to make clear mother language acquisition.

In conclusion, theories in first language acquisition help to understand the nature of the child language acquisition. However, a consistent and unified account in first language acquisition cannot be declared yet. On the other hand, behaviorist, nativist and functional approaches provide different theoretical positions regarding how a child acquires his/her language. These theoretical accounts contribute to the emergence of second language acquisition theories.

2.2 Theories of Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition has also been a mysterious topic for many researchers. According to Brown:

Second language acquisition is a subset of general human learning, involves cognitive variations, is closely related to one's personality type, is interwoven with second culture learning, and involves interference, the creation of new linguistic systems, and the learning of discourse and communicative functions of language. (2001, 271)

In addition, Ellis points out that "L2 acquisition, then, can be defined as the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom" (3). Language learners undergo a similar process in the acquisition of a second or foreign language; however, the learning of this target language can be rote or automatic. In summary, the learning of a second language is a complex process. However, the complexity of second language acquisition is explained by several theories that are divided into different models.

The first model is the input hypothesis, formulated by Stephen Krashen (1977, 1981, 1982, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1997). His model follows an innatist

approach that involves five interrelated hypotheses. The first one is the acquisition-learning hypothesis. According to Krashen, there are two means by which adult second language learners can internalize the target language. Acquisition is of the two ways. "Language acquisition is a subconscious process; language acquirers are not usually aware of the fact that they are acquiring language, but are only aware of the fact that they are using the language for communication" (Krashen 17). This scholar tries to say that acquisition does not need exposure of formal learning but as long as learners keep contact with the target language environment, they will acquire the second language implicitly. Furthermore, Ellis states that "acquisition is the subconscious process by which linguistic competence is developed as a result of using language for real communication" (57). The most outstanding idea is that language students use the target language for producing speech among others.

The other way refers to learning which consists of a "conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them" (Krashen 17). Language learning makes individuals be conscious of the target linguistic features in order to acquire competence in a second language. In addition, Ellis points out that in learning, "metalingual knowledge of a language is developed through study" (57). In other words, the second language pupil can undergo two main processes: subconscious and conscious ways. Krashen states that "fluency in second language performance is due to what we have acquired, not what we have learned" (qted in Brown 278). Therefore, the direct exposure of the target

language without knowing the rules will aid second language learners to acquire a foreign language effectively.

The second hypothesis refers to the monitor According to Krashen, three main conditions are met in the monitor premise. For example, language learners must have enough time to think about and use conscious target rules. Another aspect involves focus on form. Performers should think about correctness and how they produce the foreign language structure (Krashen 23). Therefore, the utterances are edited when someone is producing a simple structure; nevertheless, the monitoring is restricted to simple rules. In addition, Krashen states that "monitoring is possible when learners are focused on form rather than meaning and have sufficient time to access their learned knowledge" (Ellis 356). Therefore, second language learners pay more attention to their production of the target language in terms of grammatical structures instead of content of the message. Finally, the last component is knowing the rule. This requirement is indispensable because even though students are exposed to a small piece of the target language, learners must know how the grammatical structure works in the foreign language.

The next hypothesis analyses input. Krashen points out that "we understand language that contains structure that is "a little beyond" where we are now" (28). It means that language learners use more their linguistic competence, context, and knowledge of the world to understand native speakers of the target language. According to Ellis, "Krashen emphasizes that 'acquisition' is the result of comprehensible input and not production. Input is made comprehensible because of the help provided by the context" (57). In other words, input language has to be challenged to the learner in order to

acquire the target language; however, this input cannot be so far beyond the learner's understanding because the individual would feel overwhelmed.

Finally, the affective filter hypothesis has to do with affective factors. There are three main components. First, motivation plays an important role in pupils' language learning because if they are highly motivated, their performance will be much better in the second language. Second, self-confidence and self-image will aid learners to do better in the target language. Finally, anxiety will determine the student's success in the foreing language (Krashen 38). Krashen claimed that language acquisition will occur when the learner's anxiety is absent or low (Brown 279).Therefore, language learners should create an environment where students feel comfortable and secure; thus, their affective filter will not affect them inside the class. Furthermore, Ellis states that "the affective filter controls the rate and ultimate level of success of 'acquisition'" (57). As a result, keeping a relaxing class lesson, the learners will acquire more linguistic features, and students' output will be more fluent. In summary, the individual's affective elements will control the acquisition of a target language.

In conclusion, Krashen's input hypotheses are really appealing to some individuals who needed something simple to explain in the target language acquisition. Nevertheless, Some others think that Krashen's theories are not enough; that is why cognitive models proposes other models of second language acquisition.

On the other hand, cognitive processes focus on two tentative laws. The first hypothesis is proposed by McLaughlin; that is attention-processing belief. This model avoids the idea of consciousness in the language acquisition

process, and it has processing mechanisms and categories of attention. "Learners are limited in how much information they are able to process by both the nature of the task and their own information-processing ability" (Ellis 390). Probably, when individuals do not repeat the movement many times per day, his/her memory will process the labor in the short memory. According to McLaughlin, "Controlled processes are capacity limited and temporary, and automatic processes are a relatively permanent" (qted in Brown 282). This means that when a language learner practices an activity several times, his/her learning will be stored in the long term memory, and the voluntary action will be unconscious. In addition, McLaughlin points out that "routinization helps learners to reduce the burden on their information-processing capacity. It occurs when they have the opportunity to practice controlled processes" (qted in Ellis 390). In other words, a language learner must practice the controlled actions every day, so these activities will be part of his/her daily routine, and she/he will not do a great effort to remember them.

On the other hand, implicit and explicit models explain the second language learning process. The implicit premise refers to "the facts that a person knows about the language and the ability to articulate those facts in some way" (Brown 285). Ellis also states that "it generally used to refer to knowledge that is available to the learner as a conscious representation" (355); whereas, the explicit assumption consists of "information that is automatically and spontaneously used in language tasks" (Brown 285). Ellis adds that "this knowledge is intuitive and, therefore, largely hidden; learners are not conscious of what they know. It becomes manifest only in actual performance" (356). In other words, individuals can learn phonological, semantic, syntactic and

pragmatic rules implicitly because the explanation of these rules is limited to the learner.

Another researcher who agrees with explicit and implicit models is Ellen Bialystok. She states that "as the processes of word selection and utterance construction become increasingly automatic, learners' language ability also improves" (qted in Attica Langues 11). This is important because when the language pupil practices the target language more frequent, his/her language skill will increase and his/her fluency will become more efficient. Furthermore, Bialystok points out that "implicit knowledge is developed through exposure to communicative language use and is facilitated by the strategy of functional practicing (attempts by the learner to maximize exposure to language through communication) (Ellis 356-357). Therefore, functions aid language students to develop their language abilities better, and this can be possible by interacting with others who speak the target language. On the other hand, the explicit knowledge emerges when language students pay more attention to linguistic features and it is acquired by formal studying (Ellis 357). Conscious education makes target language learner be aware of foreign language grammatical structures, and students should make an effort to process them.

Finally, from a social constructivist perspective, the main contribution is done by Long's interaction hypothesis. He proposes that "language acquisition is strongly facilitated by the use of the target language in interaction" (qted in Attica Langues 6). Therefore, the negotiation of meaning of the target language in context contributes to acquire a second language. Brown agrees that "comprehensible input is the result of modified interaction" (287). In other words,

comprehensible input helps learners to understand the target language, and the individual could produce simple structures by interaction.

2.3. Concept and Types of Visual Impairments

The human eye is like a camera because it captures images of its surroundings. Sometimes the camera lens loses focus on the picture, and the latter looks distorted; the same happens with the human eye. It starts losing sight of images, and it begins to suffer a visual disability. According to Shea and Bauer, visual impairment is "the damage that affects negatively the educational development of a child" (245). This means that the sense of sight is important in the child´s educational development because everything comes through the eyes. Also, The Free Dictionary website states that "visual impairment or low vision is reduction in vision that can't be corrected with standard glasses or contact lenses and it reduces a person's ability to function at certain or all tasks." In addition, The Area Special Education Cooperative webpage points out that ""visually impaired" means a medically verified visual impairment accompanied by limitations in sight that interfere with acquiring information or interaction with the environment to the extent that special education instruction and related services may be needed." In other words, visual disability does not permit that individuals develop their own activities by themselves. Therefore, these visually impaired people need assistance doing their daily tasks. However, there are different criteria to categorize a person under a visual disability.

There are diverse kinds of visual impairments. Everything depends on the eye damage. For example, Bohman suggests that designers of online

learning materials take into account three types of visual loss to design their instructional websites (Crow 51). The first category is total blindness. In the article "Common Types of Visual Impairments", Gabbert points out that the totally blind refers to "the lack of light perception". According to Van Dijk, there are different stages of blindness. The first one is total absence of sight; the second one is visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200; and the last one is limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse (1).

Blind people suffering from these conditions must rely on devices such as screen readers. Crow states that "a screen reader scans a computer screen for the text then audibly reads the text content to the user". (51)

Web Accessibility in Mind webpage also points out that:

Screen readers allow users to navigate through Web content in many ways. The user can simply let the screen reader read everything from top to bottom, one line at a time, or the user can use the tab key to navigate from link to link. The user can also navigate from one heading to the next (if the web content has headings), from one frame to the next (if there are frames), or by other methods. Common screen readers include JAWS (Jobs Access with Speech), Window Eyes, and Home Page Reader.

The screen reader device helps blind people to be more independent. However, the problem with this kind of technology is that "screen readers can only read text; they cannot read images such as pictures, graphics, banners, flash animations, movies, navigational buttons, and some types of portable document formats (PDF) (Crow 51). Therefore, the avoidance of images or

pictures will be ideal, so visually challenged learners will feel comfortable using a screen reader.

The second type of visual impairment is low vision. The Persons with Disabilities Act website, 1995, quoted in Van Dijk, defines it as follows:

A person with low vision means an individual with impairment of visual functioning even after treatment or standard refractive correction but who uses or is potentially capable of using vision for the planning or execution of a task with appropriate assistive device. (1)

Web Accessibility in Mind website defines low vision as "a condition in which a person's vision cannot be fully corrected by glasses, thus interfering with daily activities such as reading and driving." In other words, although the individual wears glasses, the problem continues and generates interferences with some tasks. Crow also points out that low vision people can see images, but these images are not seen clearly (52). That is why low vision people often make use of screen magnifiers: "Screen magnifiers enlarge areas of the screen in order to make text and images more readable to individuals with low vision" (Crow 52).

Finally, color blindness is the last kind of visual loss. In the department of ophthalmology and visual sciences of the University of Illinois at Chicago, scholars state that "color blindness is used in colloquial terms to refer to the difficulty in telling colors apart but a more correct term would be color vision defect." In addition, Crow points out that individuals who suffer this type of visual impairment have a hard time in perceiving certain colors or combination of them (52). Paciello affirms that "these individuals may, however, have no difficulty seeing black and white images or varying shades of gray" (qdt in Crow

52). That is why materials designers must be careful not to use just colored information.

In conclusion, the visually impaired classification discussed above helps the researcher to know in what category her visually impaired individual is, and what features characterize her subject in the research project. In addition, the categorization provides an idea about what appropriate teaching and tactile strategies to use in each division.

2.4. Teaching and Tactile Strategies

Foreign language learners look for diverse strategies to handle their affective filter when they are learning a language. The same happens when visually challenged people try to learn a foreign language. They must find out new tactics to reduce their fear of learning a foreign language. Throughout time, some researchers have sought for ways to enhance the learning of a second language. For instance, Krashen mentions that "the affective filter, which is the impact of emotions on learning, can diminish the performance or can make the learning of a foreign language comfortable" (qted in Conroy 103). Therefore, one of the ways to lower the learners' stress levels is to motivate and elevate the students´ self-esteem. According to Ellis, "motivation involves the attitudes and affective states that influence the degree of effort that learners make to learn a L2" (75). Therefore, teacher tries to motivate EFL learners in order to acquire a level of proficiency in a foreign language effectively, and lowering their anxiety as much as possible inside the EFL environment.

In addition, Cummins suggests that teachers should identify two dimensions of language just for making instruction more understandable. The

first element is context which facilitates the understanding of the situation subject matter, and the second one is cognitive demand which supports the context to become more familiar to the learner (Conroy 103). That means that previous knowledge will help learners to understand the environment involved. As a result, these studies by Krashen and Cummins highlight that there is a need to implement strategies to teach a foreign language. Therefore, Conroy proposes a set of strategies to deal with visually impaired students learning a foreign language.

In the article, "English Language Learners with Visual Impairments: Strategies to Enhance Learning", Conroy points out that there are some teaching strategies based on second-language acquisition theory to foster the learning of a foreign language in students with visual impairments (103). These teaching strategies are divided into two groups: planning strategies and direct teaching strategies. Both groups emphasize some underlying premises. For instance, Conroy expresses that teachers ought to make use of comprehensible input and contextualized language in their instructions; they must provide many chances for oral production; instructors should diminish student's anxiety by using strategies and techniques; and finally classroom activities must be offered to make students participate as much as they can (104). These recommendations are addressed to instructors because professors should design diverse activities that provide oral communication among language pupils.

The author makes clear that planning strategies are those activities that involve teachers' advanced planning and organization to structure the learning environment. In addition, "planning is a key metacognitive strategy for second

language acquisition, involved in directing the course of language reception and production" (O'Malley and Chamot 47). Depending on the type of visual impairment damage, the teachers can implement more than one strategy in their lessons. There are three main planning strategies. The first one is the use of predictable routines. Hence, set patterns and predictable routines contribute to follow the sequence of events and focus students' energy on learning a foreign language. Conroy states that "the predictability is especially important for learners who are visually impaired. They can anticipate upcoming events without extensive visual and verbal explanation and learn from repetition" (104). Therefore, it is important that professors make classroom activities like habits in order to aid the sighted impaired pupil to follow the lesson.

Use of realia becomes the second planning strategy. Realia consists of using concrete objects in order to build background knowledge and vocabulary. Visually impaired students can use their sense of touch to get a better idea of the vocabulary studied. Conroy mentions that "use of realia involves advanced planning by the teacher to identify and gather the objects to be used during the lesson" (104).

Finally, preview and review strategies aid visually challenged students to learn a foreign language. Pre-teaching stage and post-teaching stage help learners to hold the lesson content in their minds. Conroy points out that "previewing and reviewing provide the teacher time to demonstrate, model, and provide active learning activities" (105). As a result, preview and review activities provide learning opportunities to the low vision person, and they help the sighted impaired pupil to acquire linguistic features of the target language.

As can be noted, planning strategies can make the learning of foreign language easier for visually impaired individuals.

On the other hand, Conroy also proposes direct teaching strategies. These strategies stress out that their immediate application to engage in facilitating learning (105). These tactics can be modified or adapted depending on the visually impaired learner. There are seven direct teaching strategies. Total physical response is the first one. Asher´s approach suggests that body movements provide a better understanding of language, and learners are not forced to speak until they feel prepared to (Conroy 105). Body movements facilitate the visually impaired learner to develop the listening ability and to prepare the low vision to produce oral structures. According to Asher, "commands are an easy way to get learners to move out and to loosen up…Eventually students, one by one, would feel comfortable enough to venture verbal responses to questions, then ask questions themselves, and to continue the process" (qted in Brown 30). For example:

> The teacher says, "stand up" and helps the child to stand up. Once the student understands what the words mean, the teacher uses only the verbal "stand up", and the student performs the action without physical assistance and, by doing so, demonstrates that he or she understood the vocabulary. (Conroy 105)

Another technique is cooperative learning commented upon Gibbons and Johnson and Johnson. In cooperative learning strategy, every student works together in order to achieve the desired objective, so "cooperative learning is more effective than ordinary group work because by its structure, each member of the group is assigned a unique task" (Conroy 105). Larsen-

Freeman points out that "it is not the group configuration that makes cooperative learning distinctive; it is the way that students and teacher work together that is important" (164). Visual impaired students can participate by providing materials in large print and Braille as necessary. Nevertheless, the most important is that the professor discipline learners in social abilities, so low vision students can work with others together effectively.

Tomkins proposes a third technique based on learning centers. These are places in the classroom where teachers enhance hands-on activities in order to encourage learners to make use of new language skills. "Because these centers enhance learning through hands-on practice, they are especially effective for meeting the needs of the ELL (English Language Learner) who is visually impaired or other students meeting expanded verbal interaction" (Conroy 106).

The following technique concerns interactive reading aloud. According to Barrentine, "read aloud involves reading aloud, with expression, different voices for different characters, gestures, and the active participation of the listener through predicting, discussing, and checking for understanding" (qted in Conroy 106). Reading aloud is in the category of general cognitive strategies because according to Oxford this group makes individual reason, analyze and summarize (Brown 128). This strategy helps students with visual impairments because these kinds of learners can identify the characters depending on the tone of voice. This is much better than relying on pictures.

Another way that fosters foreign language learning is having writing workshops. This technique encourages visually impaired individuals to choose writing topics, and prewrite, draft, revise, edit and publish their work. "This

strategy is especially supportive of English language learners because it encourages students to discuss their ideas, work with another partner or group in revising and editing, and interact verbally with others" (Conroy 106) The teacher should be careful of using this tactic with students with visual impairments because they could need extra help of a Braille writer or a tutor who writes what the visually impaired person dictates.

Also, language experience approach can help English language learners with visual impairments to get the level of proficiency of a foreign language effectively. According to Lee and Allen, "language experience approach is an activity-based writing lesson that helps students see the connections between experiences, what is spoken, and what is written" (qted in Conroy 106). This tactic can be taken as part of social/affective strategies. According to O'Malley and Chamot, the use of "self-talk, or using mental control to assure oneself that a learning activity will be successful or to reduce anxiety about a task" (45). For example, visually impaired learners talk about a free topic, and then, the instructor takes notes about some words, and then the teacher demonstrates the connection between sounds and written letters (Conroy 106). The most important of this technique is that the low vision learner can participate in individual or group sessions, so the purpose of the tactic is not lost, and sighted impaired students could share personal stories.

Finally, guided reading provides great support for the learning of a foreign language. Fountas and Pinnell point out that "guided reading offers teachers the opportunity to give reading instruction in a small group while providing individual coaching" (qted in Conroy 106). The teacher applies this technique by reading the first paragraph, and then predicting what will happen.

Later, students start reading at their own pace, and the professor moves around helping decoding some vocabulary. In addition, it aids to develop two important reading strategies. The first one is skimming which "consists of quickly running one's eyes across a whole text for its gist" (Brown 308). The second one refers to scanning which is a "quickly searching for some particular piece or pieces of information in a text" (Brown 308). These reading techniques are essential in the reading skill, so the use of both benefit the sighted impaired learner to develop their reading ability and look up words faster. Furthermore, having the material in an appropriate letter size would help visually impaired students to get a better reading proficiency. In summary, the seven direct strategies supply teachers with activities to improve their language lessons with visually impaired individuals. On the other hand, there are other strategies that contribute to the acquisition of a foreign language in visually impaired people.

Tactile strategies facilitate the teaching of a foreign language to visually impaired learners. When learners have severe problems with their sight sense, teachers must find out alternative teaching techniques. Therefore, tactile strategies show a way of how teaching becomes effective and accessible. There are two tactile strategies designed for visually impaired learners: tactile modeling and tactile mutual attention. The former involves the opportunities of touching the parts of the body or objects or feeling the demonstrators' actions.

For instance, in the article "Using Tactile Strategies with Students Who Are Blind and Have Severe Disabilities", Downing and Chen point out that:

In cooking class, a classmate demonstrates how to make meringue by whipping egg whites. The student who is blind can feel the peer's hand holding the bowl, the other hand grasping the electric mixer. This way, the

student who is blind can "see" what his or her classmate is demonstrating. (57)

This technique is grouped into the social/affective strategies. The use of "cooperation, or working with peers to solve a problem, pool information, check notes or get feedback on a learning activity" (O'Malley and Chamot 45) make low vision learners to have better understanding of the EFL task in the classroom.

On the other hand, tactile mutual attention creates exploration of new opportunities for students who are visually impaired and their classmates. To illustrate:

During a unit of study on masks, the visually impaired student and a classmate may tactilely examine an African mask, placing their hands together as they explore the relatively smooth parts of the mask and find the leather strips, beads, and decorative feathers that border the mask. (Downing and Chen 57)

These two tactile strategies can be complemented by other teaching strategies in order to build new knowledge and vocabulary. Therefore, tactile techniques must be combined with oral production tactics.

In summary, this section demonstrates that visually impaired individuals are able to learn a foreign language without difficulty. However, foreign language teachers should take into account some aspects. First, teachers must combine strategies in order to have a successful lesson. Then, some adaptations should be made for making the teaching-learning environment more comfortable. Finally, their foreign language learning should be a process, so instructors must be patient with the visually impaired learners.
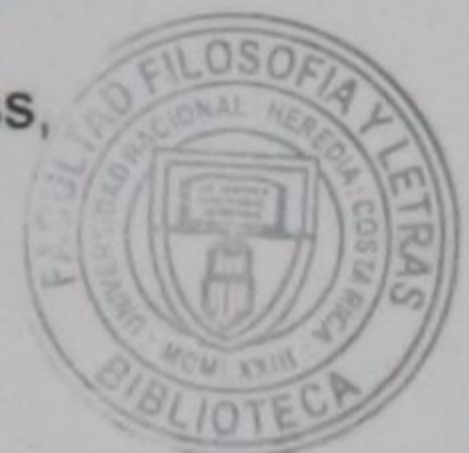
2.5. Four-language-skill Teaching Considerations

The teaching of the four languages skills to visually impaired students is an important challenge and commitment. Therefore, Orsini-Jones, in her article "Measures for Inclusion: Coping with the Challenge of Visual Impairment and Blindness in University Undergraduate Level Language Learning", discusses some issues and recommendations in the learning of the four language abilities.

For the reading skill, Orsini-Jones suggests that it should be taught with assistive software in the case of low vision students. For blind people, Braille texts are more appropriate (30). The scholar offers different and practical suggestions. For example, "partially sighted students should not be asked to read in language classes as they need extra time to work out the letters and words in a sentence" (Orsini-Jones 31). In the booklet Strategies for Accessibility[4] designed by Universidad de Costa Rica, it suggests that the written material should be recorded in tapes or computer CDs in order to be heard (Echeverria at el. 5), so that the visually impaired learners to have to make an extra effort to read the material. In addition, visually challenged people should be encouraged to use their Braille literacy in their native language as well as the foreign language. Finally, foreign language helpers, when available, are great supporters for students with visual impairments or blindness (Orsini-Jones 31).

In regards to the writing skill, apparently visual impaired individuals have problems in structuring sentences, paragraphs and ideas. According to Orsini-Jones in her case study, some visually impaired learners' written work

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[4] Estrategias para la Accesibilidad

presents similar problems to those found in the work of students with dyslexia (31). Practical suggestions are provided. For instance, time must be a priority in foreign language writing tasks. So there should be more time allotted to visually impaired students. Furthermore, instructors must provide feedback in writing issues and provide suggestions on their academic writing literacy (Orsini-Jones 31). In addition, Brown suggests that keeping a journal or diary would help to record thoughts, feelings and reactions (344). This writing activity encourages relieving low vision individuals' anxiety and stress because sighted impaired pupils will express their own ideas fluently and accurate rather than orally.

The listening and speaking skills are not challenging abilities to visually impaired students because visually challenged pupils develop more their hearing sense and their oral production. However, if the listening comprehension is handled as listening and answering some questions, and tasks are structured in oral presentations, visually impaired individuals could encounter trouble developing their listening and speaking tasks.

That is why advice is afforded here. Orsini-Jones suggests that the teacher should "have a native speaker helper to assist blind students during listening comprehensions to read out the questions in the assessed task to make sure that their Braille version is accurate" (32). Furthremore, Strategies for Accessibility suggest that the visually impaired student should have a classmate called tutor because she/he would describe pictures and sequence of images in the classroom (6). Sighted impaired pupils should not develop exercises individually; the help of the tutor is useful because the low vision pupil's assistant guides the visually impaired learner developing practices.

In addition, teachers should think of tasks that do not require visual elements and of useful tools that encourage speaking and writing on line (32). For example, Brown points out that language learners should be encouraged to use listening strategies such as looking for key words, predicting a speaker's purpose by the context of the spoken discourse, associating information, and listening for the general gist (259). These techniques can be also applied by visually impaired individuals because these types of learners need to stimulate their hearing sense. Regarding speaking strategies, Brown states that language learners should develop their own personal techniques for achieving oral communication effectively. These tactics are asking for clarification, using formulaic expressions and using paraphrases for structures one cannot produce (276). The analysis done by Orsini-Jones and Brown provides language instructors with useful insights. The suggestions supplied for each language skill make teachers reflect about their teaching of a foreign language to visually impaired students.

This theoretical framework supports strong ideas and thoughts that underline this research project. For instance, encouraging teaching and tactile strategies with visually impaired students and providing some suggestions when teachers must teach foreign language skills. The theoretical background discussed previously emphasizes the need to be informed in order to make the learning of visually impaired individuals more appropriate, effective and meaningful.

III.   Methodology

There are diverse types of research in social applied linguistics investigation. Two kinds of research are quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative focuses on the use of experimental methods and quantitative on measurements. *The Journal of Technology Education* states, "Quantitative researchers seek causal determination, prediction, and generalization of findings" (Hoepfl 48); whereas qualitative approach prefers to use the naturalistic focus because it seeks understanding of the phenomena in context-specific settings. For instance, Hoepfl states that "qualitative researchers seek illumination, understanding, and extrapolation of similar situations" (48). Although both research approaches use different inquiry methods, combining them contributes to the making of important decisions regarding the information found.

This research project is essentially qualitative because of the procedures it follows. For example, the researcher observes the subject of the study in detail, and the information collected constitutes one of the main sources to unveil the phenomenon. Hernández et al. state that qualitative research is used "to collect data in order to discover or refine research questions in the process of interpretation" (8). Another notion is that this qualitative research does not formulate a hypothesis. The phenomena appear based on the data collected during the study. Hernández et al. highlights that most of the qualitative research studies do not prove hypotheses but they are generated during the investigation, or they are the outcomes of the examination" (8). Also, qualitative research uses different data gathering instruments. For instance, non-structured observations, questionnaires and less

structured interviews are the most common tools used to collect the necessary information. Finally, this research project is qualitative because it explores the views of participants in their natural environment. Accordingly, the participants' interpretations reconstruct their own realities, so these realities are the data sources (Hernández et al. 9). In conclusion, all the qualitative considerations discussed above are taken into account in this research project.

3.1. Type of Investigation

In qualitative research there are five types of design: the biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case study. This research has been framed under the case study type. Robert Yin states that a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (qdt in Soy 1). In addition, Mackey and Gass mention that "case studies tend to provide detailed descriptions of specific learners (or sometimes classes) within their learning setting" (171). Therefore, this case study focuses on a visually challenged student who studies English as a foreign language at Universidad Técnica Nacional, and it describes the student's and professors´ needs inside the EFL teaching/learning program.

This case study provides information obtained from different sources in order to lessen researcher's bias. In addition, the investigator can triangulate the gathered data to review the research conclusions. Mackey and Gass define triangulation as "the use of multiple, independent methods of obtaining data in a single investigation in order to arrive at the same research findings" (181). The present study will make use of different data gathering instruments such as observations, questionnaires and interviews. Also, artifacts were collected in

this research study. According to Hernández et al., individual artifacts are "articles created or used by certain purposes" (615). Regarding this research project, the investigator picked up some articles made by the visually impaired learner, the photo of her magnifying glass, UTN professors' activities and others. Thus, the qualitative inquiry makes use of the four tools discussed previously in order to triangulate the information and obtain findings of this inquiry.

In conclusion, the case study research design was used in this project due to diverse reasons. First, the study focuses on an individual; this person is a visually impaired learner who studies English as a Foreign Language at Universidad Tècnica Nacional. Second, this case study describes this pupil's activities in the natural setting. In the present case study, the investigator uses three gathering data collection instruments which are non-participant observations, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Finally, case studies' contexts are distinctive, so UTN's case study research will contribute new insights about EFL learning/teaching in low vision individuals.

3.2. Research Setting and Population

The research project took place in Universidad Técnica Nacional (formely named Colegio Universitario de Alajuela-CUNA). Its main campus has three buildings where students take their classes. There is a administrative building where is located financial department, human resources department, students' services department and UTN free language courses. The campus also has a cafeteria, soccer field and green areas. The parking lot can keep 200

cars per day, and UTN possesses two security guards in the main entrance, and one in each student building. In addition, learners' classrooms have 40 students' desk, a professor's desk, a white board, and a large window. Even though the university rooms do not have ceiling fans or air conditioner, they are fresh and comfortable.

On the other hand, the required information of this study is obtained from four main sources[5]. The first informant is the low vision student. For the purpose of this research, she is named Julie. She is twenty-four years old and studies English as Foreign Language at Universidad Técnica Nacional (formely Colegio Universitario de Alajuela). Regarding her personal background, Julie lives in San Rafael, Heredia. She travels to Universidad Técnica Nacional, Alajuela, by bus every day. Julie has had vision problems since she was 12 years old. She suffers from toxoplasmosis. This is an infection caused by a single-celled parasite called Toxoplasmosis gondii. The infection is most commonly acquired from contact with cats and their feces or from eating raw or undercooked meat. Her disease is progressive, so Julie's probability of becoming a blind person is 90%. Her left eye is more damaged than her right eye. Nevertheless, she wears glasses to read texts at close distance, but her eyes do not work when focusing on far objects or people. As a result of this eye problem, Julie has to rely on her hearing sense much more than the tactile sense.

The second informant is the coordinator of the English as a Foreign Language major. Her name is Mrs. Pérez. She has been working for Universidad Técnica Nacional for 10 years. She has also been a professor in

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[5] For the sake of keeping the anonymity of the participants in this research project, their real names have been encoded.

the English as a Foreign Language major at Universidad Técnica Nacional. She is working in the opening of the EFL bachillerato at Universidad Técnica Nacional. In addition, the EFL professors will be the third informers. There are 16 language instructors working for English as Foreign Language major at Universidad Técnica Nacional. Some of them have worked with visually impaired students, and others have not taught English to low vision individuals yet.

Finally, the last person to be consulted in this research will be the Universidad Técnica Nacional curricular adaption counselor. Her name is Ms. Guillen. She works for the Student's Services Department. Like Ms. Pérez, Ms. Guillen has been working for this institution for 10 years, and she has been aiding Julie since she started the English major. Ms. Guillen has supported Julie in many aspects. For example, Ms. Guillen got a portable computer for Julie in order to ease her learning of a foreign language. For instance, the computer facilitates Julie's education by expanding the file font size into the appropriate and readable document. Also, Ms. Guillen has written a list of different curricular adaption items, and this archive is sent to Julie's professors. She will be a key piece to accomplish research outcomes.

3.3. Sampling

This research study is based on a case study. "Case studies generally aim to provide a holistic description of language learning or use within a specific population and setting" (Mckay and Gass 171). The investigation studies a visually impaired student who learns a foreign language (English) at Universidad Técnica Nacional. Her nickname is Julie and her real name will be

kept in anonymity. Julie has been enrolled in the English as Foreign Language major since 2009. She has sight problems since she was child because of a bacterium called toxoplasmosis. Julie was chosen as the subject of the study because this case study would provide new insights in the teaching/learning of a foreign language to a visually impaired learner.

The researcher interviewed two university authorities. The first person is UTN counselor. She works with the general curricular accommodations that Julie needs at class. She has been working on the area of students' services for 10 years. On the other hand, the second interviewed individual was the English coordinator. She has been in charge of English as a Foreign Language major (Inglés como Lengua Extranjera) for 10 years. Both ladies have to work together in order to aid students in their studies; however, the course objectives and content have to remain in the same way, so any modification cannot be possible at any moment.

Finally, the investigator asked for the help of UTN English language professors. A total of eleven teachers participated in this study. All of them were asked to answer a questionnaire that inspected their needs and teaching techniques with sighted impaired learners. Some of them were observed during their lessons.

3.4. Data Collection

There are four data collection instruments applied in this study. The first tool involves observations that entail field research inside the real-life context. Mackey and Gass suggest that "when collecting data using observational techniques, researchers aim to provide careful descriptions of learners'

activities without unduly influencing the events in which the learners are engaged. The data are often collected through some combination of field notes and audio or visual recordings"(175). Therefore, the investigator's intention is to describe the entire scenario where her subject of the study learns English as a Foreign Language and make every action strange in order to obtain more data. LeCompte and Preissle advise researchers that "they try to "make things strange" (Erickson, 1997) by adopting a studied naivete that allows them to view each aspect of the phenomena as if it were new and unfamiliar and, hence, potentially significant" (240). The observations support the research outcomes at the end of this investigation, so non-structured observations ground the study conclusions.

The researcher makes use of non-structured observations. Mackey and Gass say that "the researcher may rely on field notes for detailed descriptions of the phenomena being observed, or transcripts of tapes of those events" (175). This kind of field notes illustrate the needs of the low-vision learner in the environment, and the analysis of these annotations helps the researcher to theorize about the observed events and postulate EFL guidelines for the teaching/learning of English to visually impaired students at Universidad Técnica Nacional.

The second data gathering instrument is the administration of a questionnaire to English major professors at Universidad Técnica Nacional. Hernández et al. defines the questionnaire as "a group of questions regarding one or more variables to measure" (310). Questionnaires are divided into close and open types. Close questionnaires provide categories or options to answer a question (Hernández et al. 310); whereas open questionnaires do not restrict

the answer of the participants, so the alternatives to respond are not limited, on the contrary, they are infinite (Hernández et al. 314). The questionnaire relies on language teachers' needs, and the teaching strategies applied to visually impaired learners at Universidad Técnica Nacional. The information obtained by the designed instruments will be useful for validating assumptions surrounding the teaching/ learning of a foreign language to visually impaired individuals in EFL major at Universidad Técnica Nacional.

Third, the implementation of non-structured interviews was going to be applied to the EFL major coordinator, and the Universidad Técnica Nacional curricular adaptation counselor. Mackey and Gass state that "unstructured interviews are more similar to natural conversations, and the outcomes are not limited by the researcher's preconceived ideas about the area of interest" (173). This type of data collection will come up with thoughts and perceptions related to visually impaired pupils' learning of a Foreign Language and the necessities of English as a Foreign Language program.

Finally, artifacts were gathered from the subject of the study, and some UTN professors. According to LeCompte and Preissle, "The resulting artifacts constitute data indicating people's sensations, experiences, and knowledge and which connote opinions, values, and feelings"(216). The purpose of artifact collection was to reveal the UTN visually impaired learner and UTN professors' behaviors and beliefs into the research study.

The information obtained from the interviews, questionnaires, observations and artifacts were analyzed by showing the information through graphs and charts telling what the informants' opinions and ideas were in the different implemented instruments. The data collected described what the

visually impaired learners and Universidad Técnica Nacional language professors´ needs are. Finally, informants´ data are further analyzed in order to identify weaknesses and strengths in the EFL learning/teaching process, and to look for possible solutions as well as recommendations to improve the EFL program at Universidad Técnica Nacional.

3.5. Data Collection Procedures

This study gathered the data in different moments. The non-participant observation started in July. The investigator first asked for permission to the English as Foreign Language major coordinator at Universidad Técnica Nacional. She presented a letter from the master in Second Languages and Cultures at Universidad Nacional. The researcher visited Julie three days a week. She entered into the field being careful and avoiding being obstructive in the normal classroom environmental. The researcher always sat down on the left corner of the university room. She also visited three different professors who taught different subjects during the week. After that, the researcher continued the observations in September when the university started the last quarter of the year. The investigator could access to three different professors, too.

Then, the researcher distributed questionnaires to the Universidad Técnica Nacional EFL professors. Two weeks were given in order to fill out the questionnaire. This instrument was provided by internet. The investigator had the e-mail address of the EFL professors, so the questionnaires were sent via e-mail. These instructors had to fill out the instrument in Spanish or English. When the tool was complete, the professor had to send it by the same way that he/she received it.

Finally, two people were interviewed by the researcher. The interviews took place at Universidad Técnica Nacional. The first person to be interviewed was UTN counselor. Ms. Guillen (fictitious last name) is charged of curricular adaptations to those students who have a special need. This interview took place in her office, and it was done in Spanish. The researcher asked closed and open-ended questions. The interview lasted about 40 to 45 minutes. Her answers were concise and accurate. She was polite and gentile. Then, the researcher went to the English coordination office. There, Ms. Perez was waiting for me. We sat down in her office, and the investigator began to ask some questions. There were closed and open-ended questions; that is why it was a semi-structured interview. The interview lasted about 45 minutes. Mrs. Perez was really kind and helpful. Her responses contributed to the researcher's study.

3.6. Limitations

The purpose of this inquiry was to answer the research questions taking into account the theoretical framework and the data gathered during observations, applied questionnaires and interviews. Also, this research project contributed to help the Universidad Técnica Nacional visually impaired learners as well as the Universidad Técnica Nacional language instructors in the EFL learning/teaching process, so the outcomes of the study suggest a possible way to solve the phenomenon.

The researcher prepares a set of learning guidelines focused on the four language skills: listening, speaking, writing and speaking in order to aid the Universidad Técnica Nacional visually impaired learner. For instance, based on

the collected data, the researcher supplies listening, speaking, writing and reading learning strategies separately, and the low vision pupil applies them in class. In addition, this set of guidelines helps teachers to prepare their lesson planning by implementing a variety of teaching strategies in the four language skills based on the student's and instructors' necessities.

On the other hand, the researcher had to deal with three main issues. First, time is consuming in this kind of research. There is no enough time to observe the learner and the professors in their environment. Also, the investigator has to look for appointments with the university authorities in order to get a short conversation about the project. These appointments have to be done according to the university administrators' time.

Second, the lack of professors' commitment has to be taken like another constrain in the study. The investigator provided them a questionnaire via e-mail address with a great head of time; however, some of them did not receive the instrument, or they had not taken a look at the tool. As a result, the researcher had to send cellphone text messages or speak face to face with some of the instructors.

Third, avoiding bias in the observations was a great challenge to the researcher. The observations were described as clear as possible. The investigator tried not to involve feelings or ideas that destroyed the real context. She sat down at the back of the classroom in order to not interfere with the natural setting of the lesson, and the written notes were taken as detailed as possible.

Finally, accessibility of the information was not easy. The researcher could not have access to the visually impaired learner's file at UTN. Also, the

low vision person never brought her doctor's reference with respect to her eyes health condition. In addition, the researcher had difficulties in finding out the original sources of remarkable scholars who were cited by other researchers.

In conclusion, even though there were diverse difficulties in this study, the researcher could finish her investigation successfully. The investigator's effort made possible that this project could be finished on time. At the end, satisfaction and happiness were the most appreciated feelings gotten by the researcher. The most important issue is that this research would help many professors as well as visually impaired learners inside the lessons.

IV. Presentation and Analysis of Results.

Educating a sight impaired learner has been one of the most difficult challenges that a language teacher has to face in her/his career. Any language professor cannot be exempted from teaching a visually impaired student, and as a professional the language instructor must contribute to the personal growth of learners with visual impairments. This has been the example that has projected Universidad Técnica Nacional language professors teaching a sight impaired learner in English as Foreign Language major. Even though their lack of knowledge in visually impairments was inevitable, their great effort was good enough to take this responsibility.

However, Universidad Técnica Nacional EFL professors still have many concerns on how to handle a low vision student in their classrooms. Also, there is a question if the visually impaired student's needs are totally satisfied in their lessons and if their teaching techniques are taking effect on the low vision person. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to find out if the visually impaired student necessities are taken into account in EFL classrooms, determine which learning and teaching strategies are working on the this student with visually impairments, and explore EFL professors' needs regarding the teaching of English to an low vision person. The examination of this phenomenon contributes to the teaching field because it can help language teachers to get rid of their fear, and how to face learners with sight impairments.

4.1. Visually Impaired Student's Needs

Visually impaired students need help to study a foreign language, so the use of important tools can ease the process. For instance, during the

fieldwork, it was possible to observe that Julie made use of a magnifying glass. This device is used for making the letter size much bigger than it is on the paper. She uses this instrument when the paper is not in word document, or the professor provides a handout that is in font 12.

In addition, Julie is able to use a university laptop. The computer aids to see what is written on paper via electronic sheet. For instance, if the professor gives some practice made in a word document, the visually impaired student can see it in the computer because the low vision learner can expand the document in the font size that she wishes. Furthermore, sometimes the professors send some information by e-mail, so she downloads the data in a flash memory, and she brings it to class. The use of the computer reduces the employment of photocopies because Julie cannot read them very well.

Exhibit No.1

Photograph 1. The visually impaired learner using a laptop.
Taken by Chris Cruz G, 2010.

Also, as can be appreciated in the picture, Julie has to sit down near the window or a place where solar light is really enough for her to see the board, the laptop screen and her notebook notes. However, according to the Universidad Técnica Nacional counselor, the classroom lights should be on in

order to make easier the visibility of the board. She can bring a desk lamp to support her sight loss in written paper; however, she has never brought one of them. In addition, the professors have to write on the board with blue or black markers because Julie said that light colors such as red and green interfere with the visibility of the teachers' handwriting.

Regarding the human source, Julie counts on the help of a tutor. This person transcribes the professor's material in order to make easier the perceptibility of written material that is in font size 12. Julie's professor must hand in this material to Julie's tutor a week before Julie uses in her lessons because Julie needs to read previously. The tutor types the information and the data is sent back by e-mail. Therefore, Julie can see it on her computer screen, print it or storage in her flash memory.

As it can be seen, Julie's learning of a foreign language (English) relies on the use these instruments. According to the UTN counselor, Julie can make use any kind of supportive material, but these tools cannot interfere with the objectives and content of the course. That is why Julie's curricular adaptations are insignificant. It means that the course goals and content are not going to be altered, so Julie has to fulfill with them in the whole program.

4.2. Professors' Needs

4.2.1. Teachers' Training

Teaching a sight impaired student is not a simple task. Professors have to look for trainings and to design materials on the area of visually impairment. However, teachers' necessities never stop; on the contrary, they advance through the years making the needs even more serious than before. In the case

of Universidad Técnica Nacional, language professors' needs turn around their lack of training. The eleven teachers' questionnaires reveal that most of the UTN language professors have never received training on the area of sight impairment. The exhibit below shows the percentage of professors who were instructed in that special area.

Exhibit No. 2

Have you ever been trained for teaching low vision individuals?

Yes 27%

No 73%
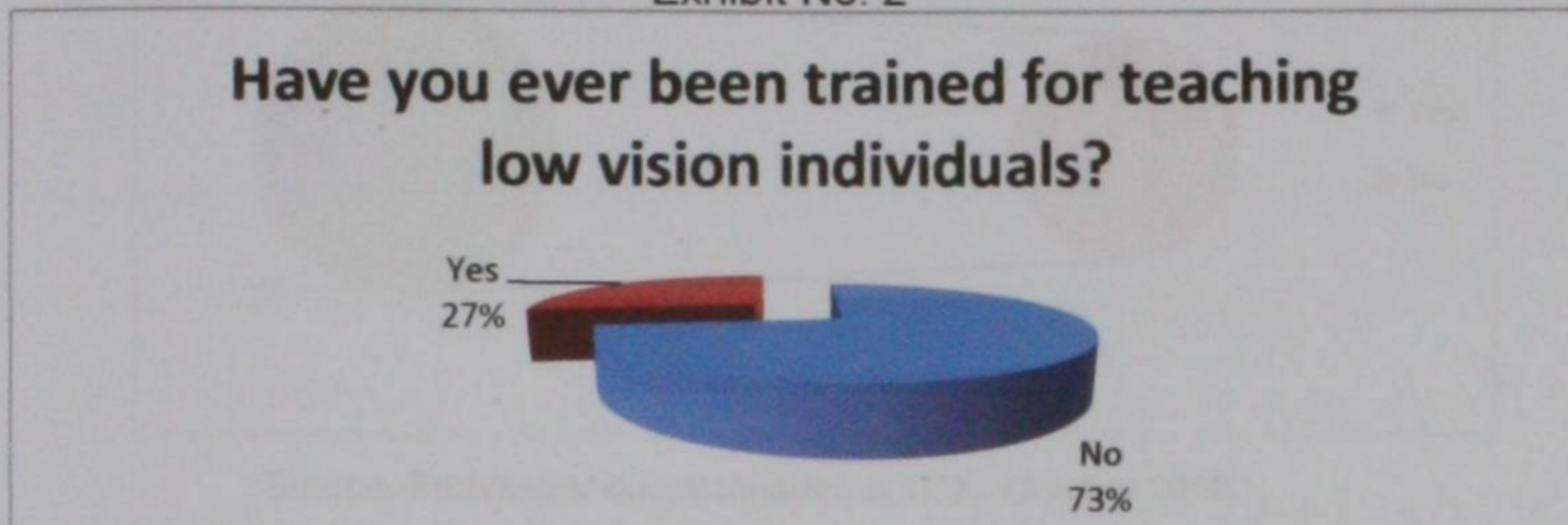
Source: professors' questionnaires at UTN, October 2010

The graph presents that 73% of the teachers has never been trained for teaching a visually impaired students; this percentage represents eight professors of eleven. On the other hand, it is evident that just four teachers have received any kind of preparation on sight impairment area. The lack of sight impaired guidance makes teachers feel worried and concerned about the process that it takes. However, UTN language professors are willing to educate themselves in EFL training on how to teach low vision learners. Most of professors expressed on the questionnaires done that visually impaired training is really important because it is indispensable to cope with sight impaired learners' needs. Also, it is a matter of responsibility to be prepared as well as how to work with them.

Undoubtedly, visually impaired instruction is required by all the UTN language professors; however, when teachers were asked if training is enough to deal with low vision students, most of them agreed that something else

should be done. The next exhibit illustrates teachers' opinion about sight impaired preparation.

Exhibit No. 3

Would training on teaching EFL instructors be enough to prepared you to deal with visual impaired learners?

18%   82%   82%

■ Yes
■ No
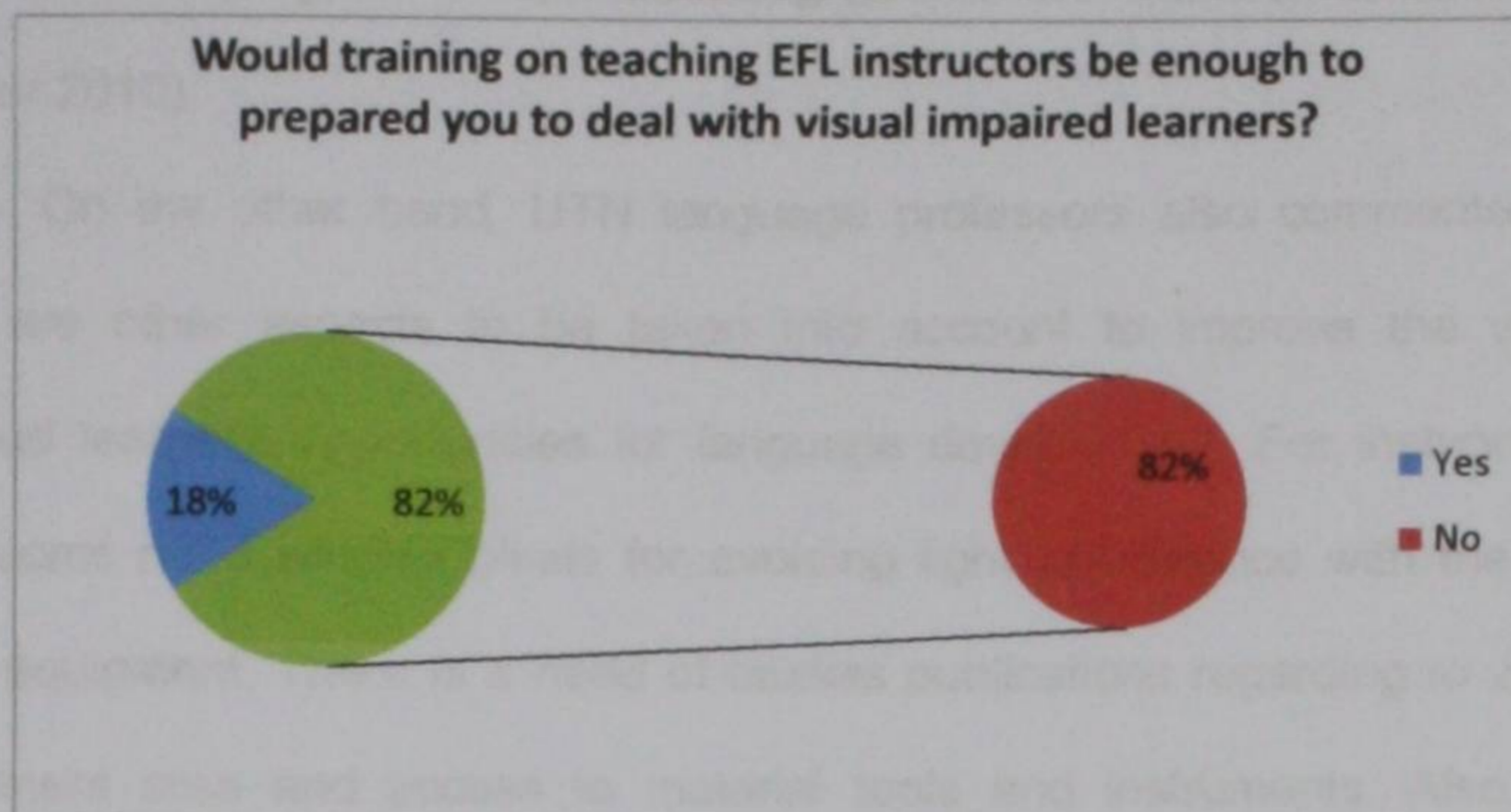
Source: Professors' questionnaires at UTN, October 2010.

The visual representation shows that nine (82%) teachers of eleven say that training is not enough, whereas 2 teachers agreed with the idea that only instruction would help. That 82% of the teachers commented that there are several issues involved in visually impaired areas. Some of them told that technology should be a complement for professors as well as for the low vision learner. Also, personal experience is involved in this process, and strategies and techniques should integrate teachers' education on visual impairments because they enhance great visual impaired learners' success in learning a foreign language.

In addition, UTN language professors have some other concerns that are still unsolved. For example, one of the teachers expressed that she wanted to know how to use the board with visually impaired learners correctly or how to teach low vision people without using the board; some others wanted to know how to integrate a sight impaired pupil with others. Nevertheless, their main

interest is focused on methodologies and techniques in the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and the use of technological devices such as JAWS program or mp3 recording (professors' questionnaires at UTN, October 2010).

On the other hand, UTN language professors also commented that there are other aspects to be taken into account to improve the visually impaired learner's opportunities for language development. For instance, the classrooms need window blinds for avoiding light interference with the video beam equipment. There is a need of studies publications regarding to visually impairment area and access to material tools and instruments. Also, UTN language educators look for affective filter reinforcement, strategic evaluation system and material development.

Certainly, UTN language professors are willing to be trained in visual impairments. According to them, this training would bring great benefits in their lives. Besides, all of them agree that a professional should improve his/her teaching techniques and be updated with new technological advances. Therefore, sight impaired guidance would fulfill their necessities.

4.3. UTN Low Vision Learner and Professors' Slips

Following curricular adjustments are professors' responsibility, especially if they have students who need special attention. UTN professors as well as the low vision student have to carry out several curricular adaptations. According to the counselor and English coordinator, both professors and the sight impaired pupil get together in a meeting in order to know the learner's necessities along the course. In the meeting held, the counselor exposed the

case of this learner with visual impairments to her professors, and she tells them what specific curricular adjustments (Interviews on October 13th, 2010).

Deriving from the non-participants observations, it was observed how some UTN teachers forget some important requirements that Julie needs inside the classroom. For instance, forgetting to print all the written documents in Arial 18 is very common on UTN professor. For example, in grammar 5, the professor brought a TV and DVD because they were going to watch some segments of two movies in order to practice the third conditional. Nevertheless, when the teacher handed in the worksheet to his students, Julie's handout was in font size 12. According to the counselor, Julie's worksheets have to be in Arial 18. The same situation happened in idiomatic expressions I course. Julie's partners had to do some presentations putting into practice the idioms learned. Nevertheless, the professor never informed to the learners that they should have brought a worksheet in Arial 18 for Julie. Therefore, she worked with the handout in Arial 12 in all the presentations.

Another professor's common mistake was not to send the material to the tutor on time. Tutor has to type Julie's material a week before because Julie has to read this material before to go to class (Non-participant Observation July 17th, 2010). This happened in idiomatic expressions I. The professor commented that Julie felt lost because he could not send the material on time to her tutor, and that was why Julie could not develop the material exercise quickly. In addition, teachers forget that Julie does not work in the same pace as the other classmates. The counselor's guidelines state that she needs extra-time to do book and material exercises. Also, Julie needs to have short rests (5

minutes rest) in order to refresh her sight and continue with the reading or exercise. She also requires extra-time to do the written tests and short quizzes.

Other instructions' omission was the use of light colored marker. In grammar 6, the professor was explaining some grammar structures on the board; however, he used a red marker. Julie asked him to change the color of the marker for a black or blue one. He apologized to Julie, and immediately he made use of a black marker.

On the other hand, the low vision student has also committed some mistakes in her process of learning a foreign language. For example, she likes to work individually even though she has a partner next to her. Almost in the whole non-participant observations, Julie worked alone and there were a few times that she worked in group or with someone. The counselor's suggestion is that Julie has to do the book or material practice with someone else because it reduces her stress, frustration and fear of learning a foreign language. Besides, Julie does not participate in class. She does it only if the teacher asks the answer of a question. Nevertheless, the professor always picks up a person's name, but teachers never call Julie to participate. In addition, she is sometimes daydreaming. She loses motion of her class, and she keeps her head down and her sight is looking at the floor. The photograph below exhibit describes what position the visually impaired learner takes in English class.

Exhibit No.4

Photograph 2. The visually impaired learner showing her frustration.
Taken by Chris Cruz G, 2010.

Furthermore, Julie does not pay attention to the professor when s/he is explaining a grammar structure or some extra-vocabulary. She just cares about copying what is written on the board, and when Julie finishes doing her notes, the professor has ended his/her explanation. As the counselor commented, "Many professors do not take into consideration that extra-time when doing a practice, short test or mid-term and final exam because they think she does not need at all." (Counselor's interview applied at Universidad Técnica Nacional, October 2010).

This section offered several mistakes that both sides have committed in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language at EFL classrooms. On one hand, although UTN language professors are aware of the sight impaired learner's curricular adaptations required in each lesson, they still forget some of these curricular adjustments making the learning of English more restrictive to the low vision learner. Nevertheless, the visually impaired student has also made some errors at EFL lessons. Both sides do not realize that they are omitting important details in the teaching and learning of a foreign language.

4.4. Learning and Teaching Techniques

4.4.1. Sight impaired Student's Learning Techniques

Every single student looks for diverse strategies to learn a foreign language. These tactics make learners more skillful in the four language abilities. Nevertheless, each pupil has to make an examination of them in order to know what techniques work better on the learning process. In this research, it was observable that the low vision individual put into practice some learning tactics that worked efficiently.

One of the techniques was her strategic seating position. She always sat down in front of the class in the first line. The majority of the times she preferred the left side because there was a close window there. If the professor annotated something of interest, Julie changed her position to the middle of the classroom, so she could see the board with the information clearly.

Another technique was using colored highlighters on the written information. Julie highlights the words or phrases that she considers the most important to her for understanding the content of the reading. This strategy helps to scan details in the written information. In addition, when Julie works in pairs or small groups, she prefers that someone reads aloud the task to process faster the information required, and she can provide ideas and opinion about the topic. However, if she works individually, she makes use of the magnifying glass. This instrument helps her to see photocopies or written documents.

Also, for developing listening exercises, Julie counted on her tutor's help. She dictated the answers to her tutor, and this person wrote down on the corresponding place. This happened when the font size of the written material is not appropriate for the visually impaired pupil. Finally, the last strategy is getting

a university laptop. When some teachers and her tutor send the written material by e-mail, she stores the document in her flash memory, and she can amplify the document into the required zoom.

On the other hand, Julie also put into practice other strategies outside EFL classrooms. For example, she tries to read next lesson material a week before. That technique makes her feel more confident, and she can participate by expressing her critical thinking. Nevertheless, sometimes her tutor ad professors do not send the information on time, and she feels lost in the classroom. Another technique is listening cable programs and audio websites. Both means of communication aid Julie to gain more knowledge on vocabulary, and Julie is able to practice some grammatical structures and improve her language skills.

Through observations, it is evident that the visually impaired student makes a great effort to learn a foreign language by putting into practice some learning tactics. Until now, these techniques work on her very well because she is able to develop all the practices and activities inside the class. Also, these strategies motivate her to continue in the pursuit of acquiring English. Nevertheless, UTN language professors contribute to Julie's acquisition of a foreign language as well.

4.4.2. UTN Professors' teaching techniques

In general language professors seek different teaching strategies to make easier foreign language learning. These educational techniques have to be creative and straight forward to the lesson goal. In some cases finding out teaching tactics are really easy, but some other times can be a mess. It

depends on the kind of learners that language instructors have. In the case of UTN language professors, their main task is to look for techniques strategies that work on visually impaired learners and sight students. The fieldwork observations show what teaching techniques are the most common used with the visually impaired person in EFL classrooms.

Some general techniques are evident through observations. For instance, some professors make use of technological devices such as T.V., DVD and CD player. This equipment is used to develop listening, speaking and writing activities. In grammar 5, the professor used the T.V and DVD in order to project movies segment and to teach the third conditional. Another strategy used was grouping. Most of the times, students were working in small groups, so a member of the group reads the task, and the others provide possible solutions or suggestions. Sometimes, the whole group is split up in pairs. For example, in oral expression II, the professor made pairs for every activity.

In addition, semi-circles or two main circles are used techniques by UTN language professors. These tactics help the sight impaired learner to socialize with others, and to put into practice some language skills such as listening and speaking abilities. UTN professors supported team work because learners are encouraged to help each other, and also it would reduce anxiety or frustration among them. This grouping technique is executed by diverse tasks techniques that the professors prepare.

Exhibit No.5

Photograph 3. This picture shows the professor's technique.
Taken by Chris Cruz G, 2010.

UTN professors provide learners and visually impaired student with diverse tasks to develop English language skills. Fieldwork shows several examples applied in different language abilities. For example, in regards to reading tasks, reading aloud is a useful activity in order to develop listening skill and fluency. In Julie's case, professors make small groups, and one member of the group read the text, and the rest should pay attention. In oral expression II, there was a short reading in the material; as usual it was in font size 12, so the professor asked a student to read the text, and Julie paid attention to the content of the paragraphs. Julie also can take notes to remember some details.

From the professors' questionnaires, some of UTN language teachers have taught a visually impaired student. These language instructors implemented other techniques in reading skill. For example, some of them used JAWS (Job Access with Speech) program, so the sight impaired pupil could listen to the written material, textbooks in PDP format and word documents.

Some others record the readings that JAWS program cannot reproduce in audio. Besides, UTN language professors choose somebody to read aloud the text, and asked a few questions to extract the gist and details of the reading.

Regarding listening activities, it was observed that UTN language professors liked practicing shadowing the speaker with the learners. Professors play the CD track with different new vocabulary, and students must repeat the word after the speaker's voice. For example, in oral expression I, students must practice reduction forms, so the instructor played the CD track, and learners must imitate the speaker's rhythm and intonation. Then, this activity is completing with a matching exercise using the words and their meaning.

In the professors' questionnaires, UTN language educators who have experience with sight impaired students commented that they used different strategies. For instance, the use of the language laboratory was primordial because the low vision person could hear the CD track with headphones clearly. Besides, professors preferred to answer post-listening activities orally, so the visually impaired did not have to write down the answers. Also, after an audio lecture, UTN language teachers make use of paraphrasing technique with stories and songs; they asked for the main idea supported by details. In addition, they practiced shadowing with book dialogues. Learners have to listen to the conversations, and then the learners repeated them.

Regarding speaking activities, debates are used in different courses. For example, in oral expression I, the professor planned some debates on diverse topics, so learners must get together in small groups and look for different arguments to debate. Debates make learners develop their fluency and critical thinking. Also, another task is performing a role-play. For instance, oral

expression II professor supplied learners with different roles; the students act out their roles in front of class, and they must use previous vocabulary combined to grammar structures. In addition, some professors make use of talk show activity; the professors assign a topic and students must develop their arguments, and they have to be prepared if the audience (their partners) have questions.

The information collected from the professors' questionnaires on page 2 shows what language tactics UTN educators supplied to the visually impaired learner. For instance, UTN language professors applied diverse grouping technique. Some of them make use of pair work, group discussion and small group work. Also, language educators employed repetition strategies, role-plays, guided conversations, oral presentations, pair dialogues and active role in group activities.

In regards to writing skill, the non-participant observations did not exhibit concrete written tasks. Most of the UTN professors use note-taking technique as writing activity; however, the learners and the sight impaired student were never asked to develop a paragraph or academic essay. Therefore, there is no observable evidence of any writing strategy. Nevertheless, in UTN professors' questionnaires, the language educators who worked with the low vision person wrote down a few techniques applied in their lessons. For instance, the visually impaired learner had to dictate to her partner or tutor her ideas in order to make a paragraph. Also, if the low vision person managed JAWS program, the program wrote down the learner's ideas through the computer microphone. Finally, tutor facilitates the writing process to the sight impaired learner.

On the other hand, those UTN professors who have never taught a visually impaired student were asked what teaching techniques they would use if they had to teach a sight impaired pupil. Five professors of eleven ticked on diverse strategies in the four language skills provided in the questionnaires. Regarding speaking techniques, five tactics were presented to the language educators; they chose according to their preferences. For instance, three UTN professors chose the think pair up and share technique; four educators preferred to use clarification strategies. Just two professors like using appropriate turn-taking techniques, and three instructors selected practicing stress and intonation. The exhibit below illustrates UTN professors' preferences in the speaking skill.

Exhibit No. 6

Speaking Strategies

Practicing stress and intonation 19%
Think 19%
Turn-taking techniques 25%
Clarification strategies 25%
Circumlocution 12%
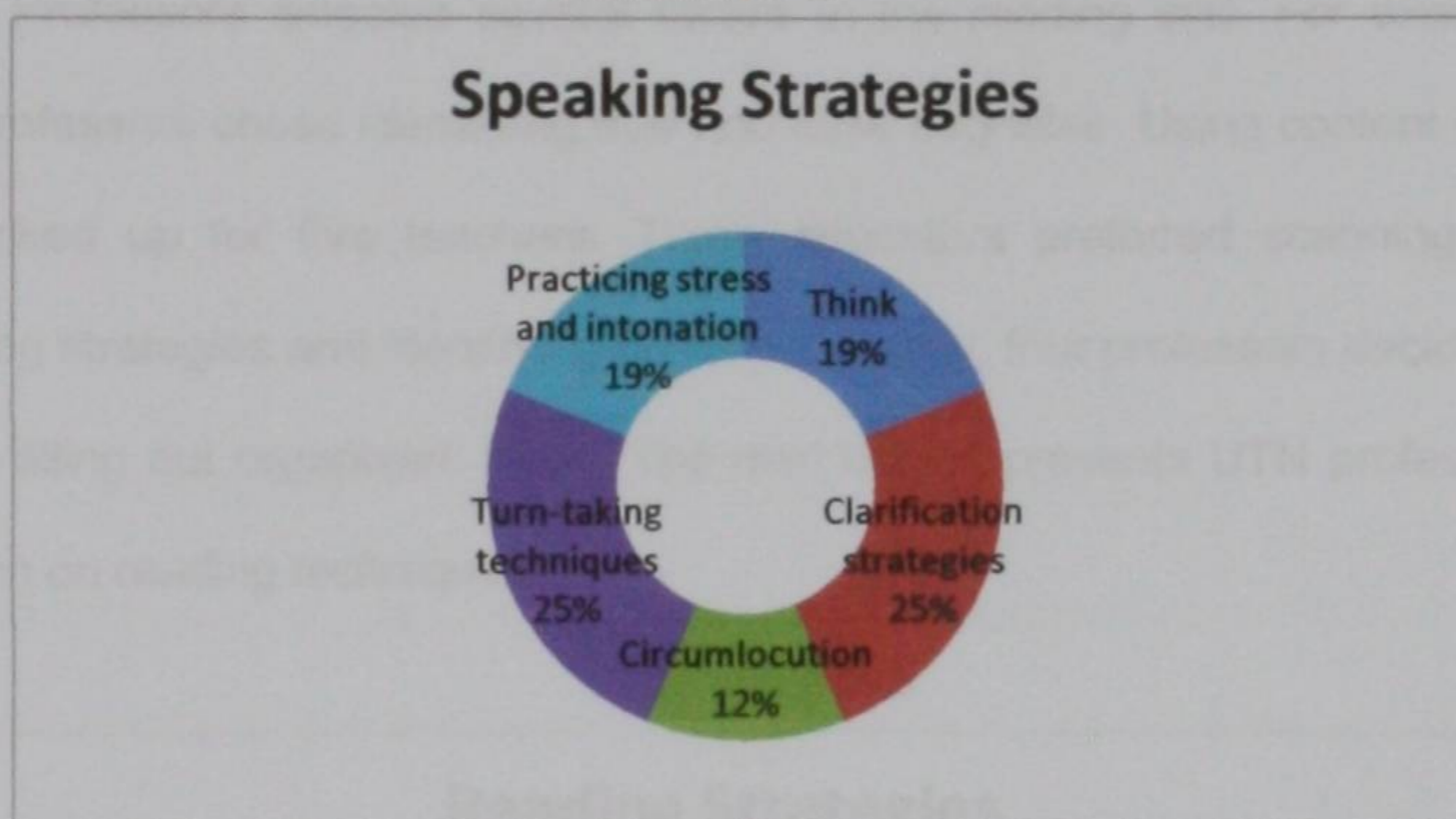
Source: Professors' questionnaires applied in UTN, October 2010

In regards to listening ability, two professors preferred the listening signposts; four teachers chose shadowing technique. The five educators ticked on the listening actively (paraphrasing) tactic. Just four professors selected making inferences, and finally review, relate and anticipate technique was

chosen by four instructors. The exhibit that follows shows the professors' choices on the listening ability.

Exhibit No. 7

Listening Strategies

Source: Professors' Questionnaires applied at UTN, October 2010.

Professors selected several tactics in the reading skill. For example, three professors chose identifying true and false cognates. Using content clues was picked up for five teachers. Three educators preferred scanning and skimming strategies and identifying cohesion. Finally, four professors decided to choose filling out organizers tactic. The next exhibit presents UTN professors' selection on reading techniques.

Exhibit No. 8

Reading Strategies
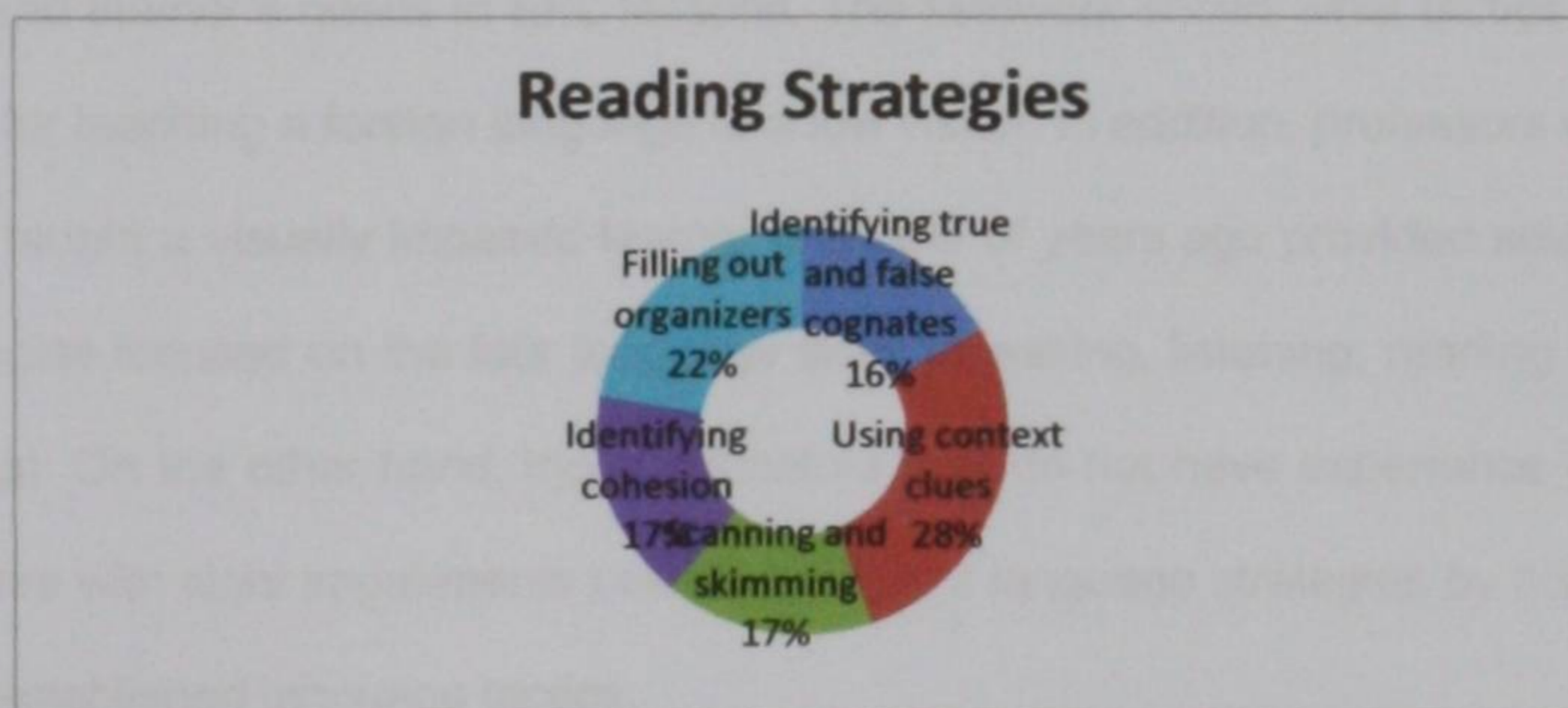
Source: Professors' Questionnaires applied at UTN, October 2010

Finally, UTN language educators checked on several writing strategies. For example, four professors showed preference for keeping a vocabulary log. Also, four teachers chose relating the new word to a word family technique, identifying new sentences patterns, and developing spelling strategies. Just three educators preferred pre-writing strategies such as clustering, free writing and looping. The following exhibit shows professors' inclinations on writing ability.

Exhibit No. 9

Writing Strategies

Pre-writing strategies 16%

Keeping vocabulary log 21%

Developing spelling strategies 21%

Relating the new word 21%

Identifying new sentence patterns 21%
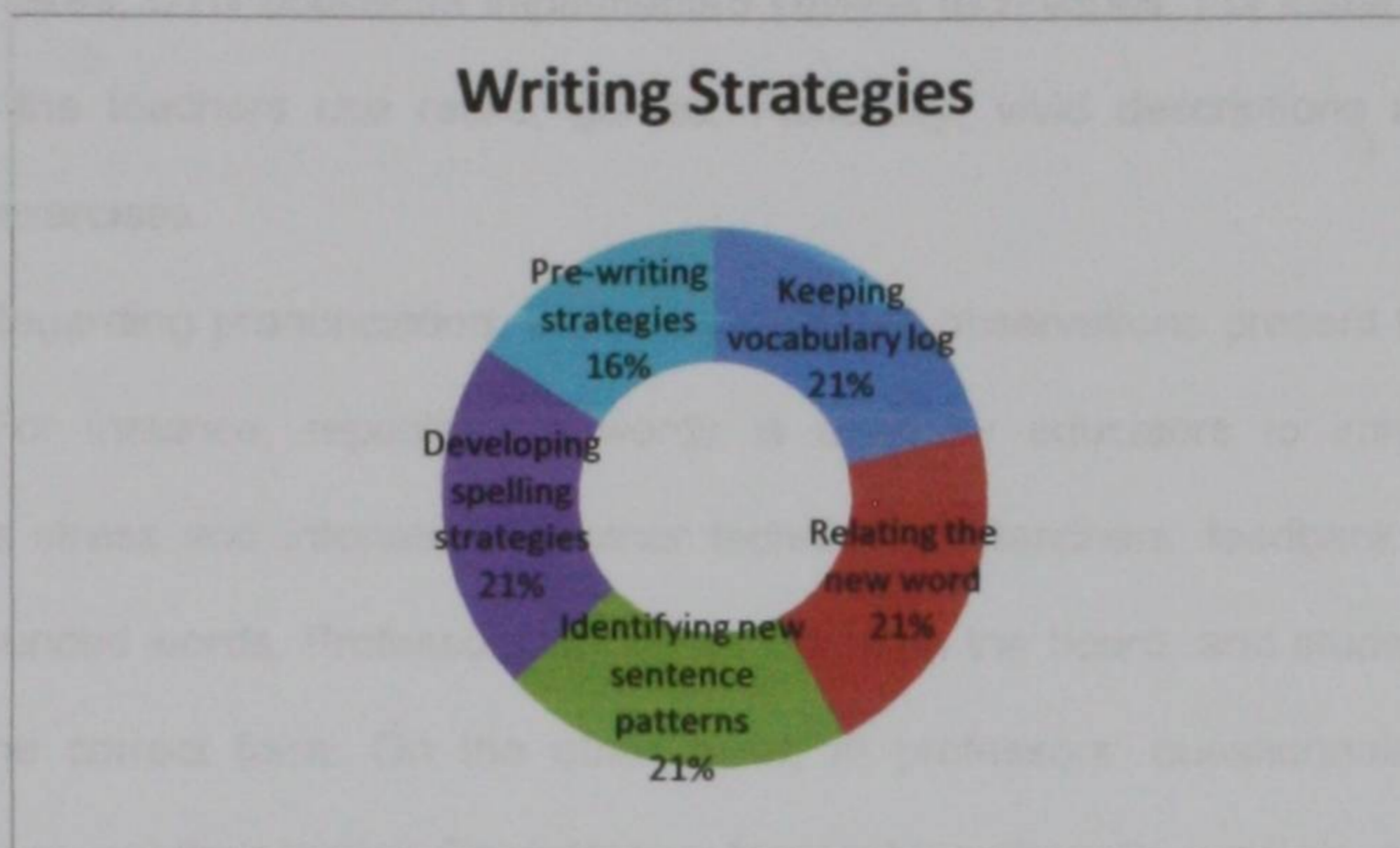
Source: Professors' Questionnaires applied at UTN, October 2010.

In this section, professors select several strategies to fulfill the sight impaired learner's needs in EFL lessons. The fieldwork shows what tactics are used for teaching a foreign language to a low vision. In addition, professors who have taught a visually impaired learner a couple of years ago provided several strategies focused on the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). On the other hand, those educators who do not have experience with learners with sight impairments selected different language strategies by ticking on reestablished language tactics.

4.5. Vocabulary, Pronunciation and Culture Teaching Techniques

Fieldwork research reveals the strategies that were used in other areas apart from the four language skills. For example, for teaching vocabulary, professors showed pictures to practice new building blocks of the foreign language. Also, puzzle and matching exercises were used for associating words and meaning. In addition, sometimes professors supplied with vocabulary lists, so they did group discussion to provide the meaning of the word. In professors' questionnaires, UTN educators implemented several techniques. For instance, some of the teachers use realia, games, Pictionary, vivid descriptions and listening exercises.

Regarding pronunciation, the non-participant observations present few tactics. For instance, repetition of words is used by educators to imitate speaker's stress and intonation. Another technique is teachers' feedback on mispronounced words. Professors write their notes on the board, and students supply the correct form. On the other hand, in professors' questionnaires, educators reveal their tactics. For instance, for teaching phonetic symbols, they design them on different materials such as beans, rice, and plaster. Also, professors make use of realia and tactile pictures. Finally, the visually impaired learner can practice pronunciation through speaking practice or guided conversations.

In regards to culture, there is no concrete evidence through non-participant observations. There were just two activities used to teach culture. In grammar 5, professor showed a couple of video segments for practicing the third conditional and expressing critical thinking about some questions. In oral expression II, the professor supplied learners with a reading about cultural

differences among people. Then, the educator planned a debate about if people with different cultural backgrounds should marry? Why or why not? On the other hand, professors' questionnaires show similar activities like described in the observations. For example, some professors use reading, oral description of people's events and listening lectures. In conclusion, UTN language educators supply the visually impaired student with different strategies. However, some of them are similar to those apply in the four language skills. The difference relies on the area that the professors want to emphasize.

4.6. Other Outstanding Matters

This section tells about some important issues that are not taken into consideration in the previous sections. The first concern is about the application of short tests. Some professors apply the quiz at the end of the class; nevertheless, some others did them before leaving to break time or after recess, and then they continue with the class. Also, some educators worried about quizzes, mid-term and final exam font size, so they brought their test on a flash memory to be developed on the laptop, or they printed a large paper with font size Arial 18. Also, sometimes the low vision learner asked for being evaluated orally, so professors asked her the questions and she answered them immediately.

The second point concerns the sight impaired learner's affective filter. It is evident that the low vision person feels frustrated when she is not able to complete her practice on time, or when she has difficulties on handling some devices such as computer scroll and connecting a mouse to the laptop. Also, doing extensive reading and impromptu speeches make her feel stressed. On

the other hand, her affective filter diminishes when she works on pairs or small groups.

The third concern involves teaching training. In the professors' questionnaires, each educator is willing to be trained on teaching a visually impaired person. Also, even though some UTN language professors have been instructed to put into practice Law 7600, nobody has been trained in a specific area like visual impairment. In addition, according to the UTN counselor and English major coordinator, there is no budget to pay somebody to receive instruction on visual impairment area. The English coordinator commented that the English major has never done any meeting regarding sight impairment because university student service unit is in charge of programming trainings in curricular adaptations (professors' questionnaires applied at UTN, October 2010). The professors who have been trained in JAWS program went to the UCR (Universidad de Costa Rica) to receive the guidance with the computer program.

Finally, the UTN counselor writes down only general curricular adaptations. She does not supply with specific language skills recommendations. Those suggestions are made by the language educators in the English major because they are the ones who are going to teach the visually impaired learner. Also, UTN language professors, counselor and English coordinator listen to the low vision person talking about her necessities in and out of class. The most important aspect is that the course content and objectives have to be taught to the sight impaired learner by implementing teaching techniques in the four language skills.

In summary, these aspects are important because they are implicit issues which must be discussed openly. These concerns help language professors to understand what it is behind the teaching of a visually impaired student. Also, university authorities should show support in training their educators in special education like visual impairment area, so budget for instructions should be taken into account during the year.

V.   Conclusions

Several considerations have been discussed in the analysis of the information gathered through different data gathering instruments. The next step is the presentation of the conclusions derived from the research project focused on a visually impaired learner at Universidad Técnica Nacional. First, it can be concluded that UTN language professors know the counselor's general curricular adaptations in written and oral form. However, when they plan their lessons, they forget about the low vision individual; then they go to class and encounter some difficulties with the learner with visual impairments. As the counselor told, professors sometimes do not take into account the suggestions because they believe that the sight impaired learner does not need it (Counselor's Interview applied at UTN, October 2010).

Second, professors do not remember to send the material to the low vision person's tutor on time, or they forget to print the sight impaired student' documents on font size Arial 18. This provokes difficulties to understand the written material, and the visually impaired pupil feels insecure because she needs to read the material a week before. Also, the UTN language educators sometimes forget to inform students about the visually impaired learner's needs, so when the sight impaired learner's partners bring an activity to class, the low vision pupil is not able to complete it, and she loses the motion of the task.

Third, the professors observed do not include the visually impaired student to supply the answer of the practice; that is because the sight impaired learner does not finish on time the exercise. Therefore, the language professor prefers to call somebody else that has done with the practice. This action damages the visually impaired learner's learning because when she has done

with the exercise, the professor has already checked the entire practice. The sight impaired student misses the professor's feedback and she has to check her practice with her partner.

Fourth, definitely, the visually impaired pupil has to work with somebody else. Grouping techniques help her to reduce anxiety, frustration and stress. Besides, her couple encourages her to work fast and efficient. Nevertheless, the low vision student works alone most of the time. When professors tell students to get together in small groups, the visually impaired learner does not move and look around the class. She prefers to work individually, or she also waits until the educator tells her who she should work with.

Fifth, the tutor's help is required in EFL lesson with low vision individuals. The tutor fosters the sight impaired student to work quickly and efficiently. Also, the tutor makes easier the practice of the four language skills. For example, the visually impaired student can dictate her/his ideas in order to write a paragraph. In addition, the tutor supplies the sight impaired learner with support and confidence.

Sixth, it is evident that UTN English educators put into practice different language skill strategies; however, some educators do not realize that the low vision person needs more time to develop the task. For instance, for listening exercises, the professor must play the CD track three times, so the visually impaired learner can focus on the listening task much better. In addition the low vision learner is a slow reader, so she needs somebody (partner or tutor) who reads her the text, or the professors have to provide extra-time to process the information.

Seventh, the sight impaired learner's participation is poor in EFL lessons. The low vision pupil participates only if the professor asked her to express her critical thinking. The visually impaired learner never engages in spontaneous conversations, round tables or guided conversations. In addition, if she takes part in a particular activity, she monitors her grammar structures and pronunciation of words making her fluency more slowly than usual.

Eighth, it is urgent to update UTN language professors on visually impairment area. Some of them have had the experience of teaching a low vision person, but some others are willing to attend to a visually impairment training session. However, the main constraint is the financial support. There is no budget to spend on special need trainings. That is why UTN language educators must research by their own about some methodologies and applications of some techniques in the four language abilities. Maybe 2011, the university would take into consideration to take some money for this purpose. The university should focus on training professors on the management of JAWS program.

Ninth, university authorities facilitate the use of equipment to the visually impaired learner. For example, the low vision student can get a laptop every time she attends to class. However, the sight impaired pupil must struggle with some minor problems such as handling the computer scroll, and flash memory. The learner with visually impairments tried to install a mouse device, but it never worked very well. That is why the visually impaired learner lasted a lot of time developing a quiz or test. In addition, some other equipment should be taken into the university budget such as buying JAWS program and zoom test.

Tenth, it is evident that the UTN language professors, counselor, English coordinator and visually impaired learner hold few meetings during the school year. Their contact has to be more frequent. Sometimes it is difficult to look for a specific date to do the encounters, but these meetings are necessary to improve and suggest new strategies for learning/teaching a foreign language.

In summary, non-participant observations, UTN professors' questionnaires and counselor and English major coordinator's interviews made possible to come up with final results of this research project. As it can be seen, these insights show that there are some deficiencies in the EFL teaching and learning process. The most important aspect is that the visually impaired learner and UTN language professors must be aware of these weaknesses, and look for possible solutions.

VI. Recommendations

The purpose of this research study was to supply with four language skill guidelines at the end of the investigation. These instructional clues contribute to the teaching and learning of a foreign language. In addition, general recommendations are given in order to complement the four language ability techniques. Therefore, implementation of all of these suggestions is the hint to success in the learning and teaching of a foreign language.

Regarding general guidance, there are several important aspects to remember in the area of visually impairments. First, the help of a tutor is indispensable in foreign language classrooms. Visually impaired learners should have a classmate as her/his tutor because this person could explain and reinforce some sight impaired learner's weaknesses. In addition, the tutor has to be a responsible learner who types the material on time. Second, UTN language professors should use realia because the low vision learner could touch the object and get a better perception of the article. Also, the professors could supply with large flashcards. In addition, they should send the material to the sight impaired learner's tutor on time and avoid the use of photocopies.

Third, the evaluation system could be changed, so a useful solution is making oral evaluations to the visually impaired pupil. Another possibility is to bring the written evaluation in a flash memory and the sight impaired student can develop it in the university laptop. Besides, it is recommended to do these written evaluations as the last activity of the whole lesson because the learner with visual impairment does not have to struggle with the amount of time given to do the test. Fourth, professors should include the low vision learner in their feedback session, or include her when they are checking an exercise.

Finally, professors must provide extra time to work on written practices, quizzes and tests. A possible solution is to design extra exercises for those students who finish first the task; this hint helps the visually impaired person to do her practice efficiently. Furthermore, professors should ask the sight impaired learner if she is doing well or if she needs help. Also, the educators have to make sure that the low vision person has finished the entire exercise before starting the feedback session.

In regards to specific learning and teaching techniques, the recommendations are going to be divided into the four language skills. First, for developing listening exercises, the professors should play the CD tracks three times because the student can get familiar with the vocabulary, details and the gist of the lecture or conversation. Also, the educators should do the pre-listening exercises to prepare the visually impaired learner about the topic. In addition, if there is a language laboratory, the professors could take advantage of it because the low vision student can make use of headphones, and listen to the dialogue clearly. On the other hand, the visually impaired learner should practice shadowing the speaker. The low vision repeats the speaker's word using the corresponding stress and intonation. Besides, note-taking technique help the sight impaired learner to perceive specific ideas of the lecture. Finally, the low vision person should record her/his lessons with a MP3 player. This device can be inserted on the computer, and the low vision pupil could listen to the listening recordings more than once.

In speaking activities, the professor should look for different grouping techniques; thus the visually impaired student will not feel frustrated or stressed. For example, guided conversation, semi-circles, small groups and pairs

contribute to reinforce the learning of a foreign language. Furthermore, professors should think on different activities such as talk shows, debates, oral presentations and role-plays to make the low vision person participate and produce the target language. In the case of the sight impaired student, the visually impaired student should participate as much as possible in order to develop fluency in the oral production.

In reading ability, professors should not make the visually impaired learner read aloud because her/his affective filter will be affected and their fluency will be slow. Therefore, it is recommended that educators make a sighted student read aloud, so the low vision person will not make effort to read the text, and s/he will scan details and the main idea in her/his mind. In addition, the educators can rely on JAWS program; this screen reader will facilitate the teaching and learning of the foreign language. The sight impaired learner should read at home the class material because it will review words, sentences patterns and vocabulary. Also, the visually impaired learner should receive training in using the JAWS program to listen to any kind of reading. Finally, highlighting words and sentences make the low vision person be focused on specific details and ideas.

Finally, the writing skill is the less developed by educators, so possible suggestions are provided. First, for working in writing tasks, it is necessary the help of somebody else (tutor or partner). The visually impaired student should work in pairs and should dictate her/his ideas to the classmates. It is recommendable that educators make the visually impaired individual develop writing strategies before starting their writing. For example, the development of brainstorming, outline, and then paragraph are essential in the learning process.

Also, professors could encourage the use of free writing techniques like journals because the visually impaired learner will pay attention in content of the paragraph. Then, the professors should make feedback sessions until the low vision person could manage the writing process. On the other hand, the visually impaired learner should not work alone in writing tasks because at some point her sight sense will feel tired, and the writing activity will incomplete. Also, as an alternative technique, the sight impaired learner could buy or download a program that she could dictate her/his ideas to the computer through a microphone; however, the use of these programs can be risky because they sometimes do not recognize the learners' words due to a mispronunciation problem.

In conclusion, these recommendations should help language educators to teach a foreign language efficiently. Also, the visually impaired learner is encouraged to apply the four language skill strategies to acquire a foreign language. However, the application of these four language ability techniques should be done because the professors will start gaining experience on this visually impairment area, and they will help novice teachers who must encounter similar situations.

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Appendixes

Universidad Nacional
Facultad De Filosofía y Letras
Maestría en Segundas Lenguas y Culturas
Non-structured observation instrument
 Researcher: Chris Cruz González
Class: Oral Expression I
Teacher's name: Andrés Bejarano
Time: 8-11:30 AM
Date: July 29th, 2010
Observation: 2
Place: Universidad Técnica Nacional

Today I came to class at 10 a.m. because the professor asked me to come after the oral presentation. Supposedly at the first part, they had different talk shows, so maybe my presence would affect their performance. However when I came to class, I found out that the teacher had spent some time of the first part in the lab doing listening activities. Then, they moved to the classroom to start with the first talk show. After the break, the learners would continue with the next talk show. I missed lab session, so I could see Julie's performance in doing listening exercises.

The talk shows started with a group of four people. The moderator should ask some questions to the public, so the moderator asked Julie a simple questions, and she answered it very clear and confident, she understood the question really well and provided a clear idea. The talk show continued, and Julie followed the role play. She never lost focus of this activity, and she paid attention all the time. This task took a hour. The professor decided to stop and provide some instructions for the next class. The missing groups had to perform the talk show next class. The class was dismissed at 11:20 a.m.

When the group and professor had left from the class, Julie commented that she worked on the lab with her tutor Samantha, and her tutor's help would make easier her performance at class.

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
MAESTRÍA EN SEGUNDAS LENGUAS Y CULTURAS
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR ENGLISH COORDINATOR
RESEARCHER: Chris Cruz Gonzalez

RESEARCH PROJECT: **The Teaching of English to Learners with Visual Impairments at Universidad Técnica Nacional**

English Coordinator: Katalina Perera Time: _____ **Interview # ___**

Date: _____ **Place: Universidad Técnica Nacional**

Coordinator's signature: _____

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this interview is to find out what the professors' needs are when teaching a low vision person, and what supportive didactic material is used to complement the visually impaired learner's learning outside the class.

Specific Objectives:
1. To find out what special needs Universidad Técnica Nacional professor have in order to teach a foreign language to low vision person.

2. To bring into light what supportive material is used to teach a foreign language to visually impaired learner.

Question to be answered:
7. What are the needs of UTN professors and the visually impaired learner when teaching and learning a foreign language in EFL classrooms?
8. What kind of supportive didactic material does the low vision learner use to complement her learning outside of class? Do they work effectively and efficiently

Needs:

Learner:

1. Has English as a Foreign Language major had a visually impaired student studying at Universidad Técnica Nacional? Tell me about the experience.
2. How many visually impaired learners does this EFL major have in this moment? What level are they? Do these low vision individuals receive special instruction? If so, what kind?

Teacher:

3. Have Universidad Técnica Nacional professor ever received training in teaching a foreign language to low vision learners? If so, when and what was the training about?
4. Have you ever considered training UTN English professors to teach a foreign language to visually impaired person? If so, what is needed to prepare Universidad Técnica Nacional Foreign language instructor?
5. Is there any university budget to invest in preparing FL teachers toward these kinds of special needs? If so, have you ever used for special purpose like having a training to teach visually impaired individuals?
6. Have you ever had a meeting with Universidad Técnica Nacional Students' services counselor about some curricular adaptations to low vision students? If so, what are her recommendations? Has this person told something about the application of special adaptations to teach visually impaired learners?
7. Have you ever held meetings with UTN EFL professors to discuss about the necessity of low vision learners at classrooms? If so, how was it? What did the teachers tell you?

Supportive Material:

8. Is there any special material to teach a foreign language to low vision person? If so, what kind of material is used for learning a foreign language to visually impaired students?
9. Do teacher share their supportive material when they face this kind of special need like having a visually impaired student? If so, have you ever seen what kind of material is?

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
MAESTRÍA EN SEGUNDAS LENGUAS Y CULTURAS
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW FOR UNIVERSIDAD TECNICA NACIONAL
STUDENTS' SERVICES COUNSELOR
RESEARCHER: Chris Cruz Gonzalez

RESEARCH PROJECT: <u>The Teaching of English to Learners with Visual</u>
<u>Impairments at Universidad Técnica Nacional</u>

Counselor's name _____ Time: _____ Interview # ___

Date: _____ Place: Universidad Técnica Nacional

Counselor's signature: _____

OBJECTIVES:

The purpose of this interview is to find out what the visually impaired student's needs are when learning a foreign language, and what supportive didactic material is used to complement the visually impaired learner's learning outside the class.

Specific Objectives:
3. To find out what special needs Universidad Técnica Nacional low vision learner have in order to learn a foreign language.

4. To bring into light what supportive material is used to teach a foreign language to visually impaired learner.

Question to be answered:
9. What are the needs of the visually impaired learner when learning a foreign language in EFL classrooms?
10. What kind of supportive didactic material does the low vision learner use to complement her learning outside of class? Do they work effectively and efficiently

Low vision Learner's needs:

1. How long do you know Julie?
2. Can you tell me what matters with her vision?
3. What special curricular adaptations should Julie apply in her English classes?
4. Have you ever suggested Julie any particular strategy or tactic to learn English accurate? Why/Why not?

Professors' needs:

5. Do you talk with her professors very often?
6. Do you inform language instructors about Julie's special conditions at classrooms? How do you provide the information? What kind of conditions do you recommend to put into practice with Julie?
7. Do you provide any specific guidelines to language instructors in regards to teach a foreign language to a visually impaired learner?
8. Have Universidad Técnica Nacional English major professors ever received training in teaching a foreign language to low vision learners? If so, when and what was the training about?
9. Is there any university budget to invest in preparing FL teachers toward these kinds of special needs?
10. Have you ever had a meeting with Universidad Técnica Nacional English as a Foreign Language major coordinator about some curricular adaptations to low vision students? If so, what has it been her response toward this concern of having a low vision person?

Supportive Material:

11. Do you suggest Julie to use any supportive material to learn English? If so, what kind of material is recommended to Julie?
12. Does Universidad Técnica Nacional have any supportive material that helps Julie in acquiring a foreign language outside classroom? If so, what kind of material is that?
13. Have you ever recommended to UTN language teachers any supportive material that helps Julie to learn English outside classrooms? Why/ Why not?

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
FACULTAD DE FILOSOFÍA Y LETRAS
MAESTRÍA EN SEGUNDAS LENGUAS Y CULTURAS
RESEARCHER: Chris Cruz Gonzalez

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

Teacher`s name: _____Date: _____
Description

The purpose of this questionnaire is finding out information to help visually impaired students and Universidad Tècnica Nacional professors to improve foreign language teaching/learning conditions. Your anonymity will be kept.

Instructions: Answer the following questions according to your beliefs as a foreign language teacher. This questionnaire can be answered in Spanish or English. Ask the researcher if you are not sure about any question.

Teachers' needs

1.Have you ever taught to a visually impaired student? If so, how was your experience?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.If not, how would you feel if you had to teach a visually impaired learner?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.Have you ever been trained for teaching low vision individuals? If the answer is yes, what did you learn about this theme? If the answer is "no", answer the following question.

_____
_____
_____
_____

4.Would you like to receive an EFL training on how to teach visually impaired students in the four language skills?

☐ Yes
☐ No

Why?

_____

5. Which specific aspects would you like the workshop to focus on? Be specific

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. Do you think that the EFL instruction would help your personal growth as foreign language professor? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Would training on teaching EFL instructors be enough to prepare you to deal efficiently with learners with visual impairment?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. Are there other aspects (besides training how to teach visually impaired learners) that you believe need to be cared for in order to improve low vision learners' opportunities for language development ? Which ones?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Teaching Techniques:

1.If you have taught English as a Foreign Language to pupils with visual impairment, specify what teaching techniques you have used to develop the following language abilities:

Speaking:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Listening:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Reading:

_____

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_____

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_____

Writing:

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_____

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_____

_____

2. If you have never taught English to visually impaired pupils, put a check next to the teaching techniques you would employ to teach the following language skills (more than one option can be chosen in each ability).

Speaking:

- ☐ Think pair up and share.
- ☐ Use clarification strategies
- ☐ Use circumlocution
- ☐ Use appropriate turn-taking techniques
- ☐ Practicing stress and intonation
- ☐ Other:

_____

Listening:

- ☐ Listening signposts
- ☐ Shadowing (drills)
- ☐ Listening actively (paraphrasing)
- ☐ Making inferences
- ☐ Review, relate and anticipate
- ☐ Other:

_____

Reading:

- ☐ Identifying true and false cognates
- ☐ Using context clues
- ☐ Scanning and Skimming
- ☐ Identify cohesion (pronouns)
- ☐ Filling out organizers
- ☐ Other:

_____

Writing:

- ☐ Keeping a vocabulary log
- ☐ Relating the new word to a word family
- ☐ Identifying new sentences patterns
- ☐ Developing spelling strategies
- ☐ Pre-writing strategies (clustering, free writing and looping)
- ☐ Other:

_____

3. What tactics would you implement to teach vocabulary to visually impaired learners at EFL classrooms?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4. What strategies would you implement to teach pronunciation to visually impaired pupils at EFL classrooms?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. What techniques would you implement to teach culture to visually impaired students at EFL classrooms?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. What would be the most appropriate ways to administer EFL tests and short oral and written quizzes to visually impaired students?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for your Cooperation!