Researching Language Teachers’ Strategies to Develop The Speaking Skills in Down Syndrome Children: A Case Study

A thesis submitted to the School of Languages for the degree of Licenciatura en Enseñanza del Inglés

by
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RESEARCHING LANGUAGE TEACHERS' STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP THE SPEAKING SKILLS IN DOWN SYNDROME CHILDREN: A CASE STUDY

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Dedication

To God who has permitted me to live and see how this research project and some others have been completed through my school time. Thanks to his mercy, I can say that I have achieved everything I set out to.

To my mom who has been an important part of my education and has given me everything I need to be who I am now. She has worked a lot to give us the best cutting back on herself in some aspects.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present case study is to examine the teacher’s strategies that are used in Spanish class to develop speaking skills in Down Syndrome learners. Besides, identify the interaction that exists between student-teacher and teacher–student with this disability, how teachers include Down Syndrome students in each class to form part of the session and explore how teachers apply their strategies with Down children. In this study will participate, two teachers, one of them is from a foundation specialized in teaching Down learners and the second one from a public school where there are more children with different capacities including Down students. On the other hand, another participant is a therapist who works at the foundation and with diverse disabilities. This research is a case study because of the necessity to know more about children with special needs in the teaching area, in this case Down Syndrome children. The instruments are a chart for each class observation and three interviews with the participants omitting Down learners. This work is expected to serve teachers working with disabled children. It will provide strategies used by teachers with kids with special needs. The research will contribute to provide information on two institutions in case of kids with disabilities focused on Down children. This research also pretends to motivate English teachers and students to work with people with special needs because as teachers and future teachers it can happen.
CHAPTER I:
Introduction

1.1 Presentation

It is known that students who suffer Down Syndrome have several problems to develop certain things; some of them have visual problems other ones have writing and speaking problems. All of these facts are reflected when they have to attend the school, especially those students who have already taken therapy in any special center and then they have to go to schools that are not private. There are not specialized schools for those who have a disability, thus parents need to look for average schools either in a public or in a private school. Gavin (2018, paragraph 7) says that ‘Down children can learn and develop new skills throughout their lives, but reach goals at a different pace’. People with Down Syndrome have varied goals for their future, individual expectations of their roles in the family, school, and community. Needless to say that Down students develop their skills in their rate.

Nowadays, the English language is useful to find more opportunities in several aspects, to find a good job, to have new friends from different countries, to travel around the world, to get a scholarship and to communicate with someone else. The last point mentioned about communication is one of the most complicated skills to develop when someone is learning a new language. Here is the issue of whether English teachers are qualified to teach and develop speaking skills in children with disabilities, in this case, Down students. Today, English is a requirement as a certificate in some schools, where the exams assess the four skills. In the case of Down children, they have joint problems
when they talk, but teachers have had little attention to teach English to those special children.

The process of learning a new language is a difficult task for both, students and teachers, each of them needs concentration and dedication to develop the four skills of language which are speaking, reading, writing and listening, that individuals need to communicate effectively to a native speaker or simply to communicate each other. According to the Naeve (2008, p.1), ‘the learning processes that occur in organizations are not completely self-planned, but directed by organizational needs or another kind of forces external to the individual.’

Nowadays, one of the most important subjects is English, and we can see it in the Secretaría de Educación Pública (2011, p. 40) that tells us the curriculum standards of each digital skill. In the new curricular proposal established in 2016, SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública) says that ‘students would be able to express their ideas in English and Spanish, English as a second language (L2) with effectiveness in different contexts’. According to the Curricular Map that SEP (2011, p. 41) establishes, in basic education, ‘students start to learn English since the last year of preschool until high school’. The curriculum was proposed to apply it to ordinary students with any disability. Basic education in Mexico based on a specific syllabus for each school subject that some teachers elaborated to achieve the aims proposed at the end of each subject.

1.2 Problem

Something that motivated me to carry out this project was the context where I have lived, where there were people with different capacities or special needs who I wanted to
investigate from the perspective of language teaching and learning. My environment has given me the curiosity to know more about people with special needs. In this case, Down children selected to investigate from the perspective of all the people that surround them and in that manner, it is possible to help them to improve the abilities they already have. To know more about this issue, some questions were set up to obtain more information.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions addressed for this investigation are as follows:

1. What are the main features of Down Syndrome children?

2. What are the challenges underlying teaching course contents to Down Syndrome children?

3. What is the teaching approach to teach course content in Spanish?

4. How to teach English speaking to children with Down Syndrome?

1.4 Participants

This researching was developed in two different institutions to make a comparison between them. The first place is a foundation where there are down children who have different activities to develop their skills. The second place where this project is developed is a public school called Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si in which there are students with different disabilities such as Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and some others. In both places, children are between the ages of nine to eleven. This issue was observed in some lessons that some Down learners have, to know how the teachers develop speaking skill and what the strategies are used by the teachers to develop it in those special children.
On the other hand, the main participants are students with Down Syndrome. In both institutions, assist students with this syndrome. The ages of these children range between 10 to 11; this is because children in that range have received more instruction than the youngest.

In response to this issue, this investigation aims to know which strategies use two teachers to teach them in specialized schools. In this study participated, an expert therapist, two expert teachers that have worked with disabled children. All of them were interviewed to gain more information to the research project, in order to know more about Down children by their experiences with those type of students.

1.5 Research Context

As it was mentioned before, this research was carried out in two institutions. In both institutions, they count with average facilities where special children can study in a good environment and develop their skills to live in real life. However, in the public school, the space that students have to get along with others is not as big as in the foundation. The students who study in the institutions have extra classes as part of their academic education.

1.6 Purpose of the study

This work has set the following aims:

- Examine the teachers’ strategies used in content classes taught in Spanish to develop the English speaking skills in Down Syndrome learners. As well as to know how Down Syndrome learners develop their skills during class time.
1.7 Justification

This study is important because of the impact that it will have on the research context. This work is expected to serve teachers working with disabled children. It will provide strategies used by the teacher with kids with special needs. The research will contribute to providing information about two different institutions with disabled learners especially students with Down syndrome.

1.8 Conclusion

This study will contribute to society, for the impact that it will have in the real context. However, before getting personal information about the participants, we have to know Down Syndrome children’s main features, in order to know how to support them. In addition, in the literature review we will find some information about other disabilities that will provide light about how other disabled children learn.
CHAPTER II:

Review of Literature

To identify the aspects of this research project, this chapter aims to have an overview of the characteristics that involve Down syndrome specifically in the education area. Education in most of the world is based on standard students; it means that teachers are concentrated on students who do not have any special need. Most English language teachers when coping with a child with special needs in the classroom, have to train themselves to assist this type of learners. This literature review focuses on the main features of Down Syndrome children. The review explores the English skills that they can hand in as well as the language teachers’ strategies to use them with these types of learners. Some of the key topics discussed in this chapter include a description and main features of some medical terms, the types of this syndrome, the mental problems, and cognition they show.

2.1 Defining Down Syndrome

To start with this review of literature, it is necessary to know more about the inborn Down Syndrome. As we know, the Down Syndrome (DS) is one of the disabilities of a significant number of children around the world. It has its origins in 1866 when Dr. John Langdon Down who coined this term, started to study people with this special illness and he wrote some articles about the characteristics of them. (Fresquet, 2006). Down syndrome is composed of two different words, ‘Down’ and ‘Syndrome’, the first one honoring Dr. Down’s name and the second word is ‘Syndrome’ that is a set of symptoms and signs that expresses an alteration in the organism (Borrel, et.al.,n.d.). According to
the Foundation John Langdon Down A.C. (n.d., paragraph 1), 'Down syndrome is a genetic disorder caused by the presence of an extra chromosome in the 21 pair', which is caused when the Meiosis appears. Khan Academy (2017, paragraph 3) describes ‘meiosis as a cell division that is generated by the feminine and masculine gametes’. In medical terms, chromosomes are structures found in the center of a cell that contains Deoxyribonucleic Acid (DNA) (US National Library of Medicine, 2016). For this irregularity of the chromosomes, these special children have some problems to do things by themselves and to attend the standard/private schools as everyone does. Each special child has to be treated on the basis of the type of syndrome that he/she shows, such types are discussed below in detail.

2.2 Types of Down Syndrome

In each disability, there are different types. Down syndrome has a classification to treat each patient to give them a better quality life. As Abrisqueta (1993) (as cited Arregi 1997) mentions that ‘98% of the patients present Trisomy Regular or non-disjunction’. This type of syndrome is caused by an error in the involved chromosomal distribution in which it happens before the fertilization or during the first cell division (meiosis) of the fertilized egg, which forms the embryo. Borrel, et. al., (n.d., p.17) mentions that ‘this problem occurs most frequently in the egg (85-90%) than in the sperm (10-15%)’. However, it also can happen if the age of the mother is not appropriated to have children for example 35 years old (Borrel, et.al.,n.d.).

Figure 2.1 shows the cell division emergence of the extra chromosome in the 21 pair.
Another type of syndrome is called Translocation. As Florez and Ruiz (2004, paragraph 4) affirm that ‘around 3.5% of the Down Syndrome cases occur because of the presence of a translocation unbalanced, generally it happens between the chromosomes 14 and 21’. In this process of the fertilization, the egg or the sperm gives a complete chromosome 21 and one more piece is added to another chromosome, this is the only type of Down Syndrome that is the consequence of a parent’s genetic condition. The difference of this type is the triplication of chromosome 21 and the additional chromosome is added to another chromosome (FJLD, n.d.).

In the next Figure 2.2, explains the process in which the Translocation is divided.
The last type of down syndrome is the most unusual but not the less important and it is called Mosaicism. Dr. Jackson (1996, paragraph 1) states that ‘it describes a condition where a person has two or more types of cells that differ in their genetic make-up. Just about, the 2 – 3 % presents this type of syndrome’. Figure 2.3 below presents the difference between the complete 46 chromosomes and the correct cell division and the cell that is missing in the Mosaicism.
All of these terms are necessary to understand each student depending on their necessities.

2.3 Main Features in Down Children

As noted above, each disabled holds special features and Down Syndrome children are not the exception. We can distinguish these special children. Nevertheless, what are the features that they present? As Madrigal (2004, p.9) says, ‘Down Syndrome children are known especially because they are short and with Asian features’, and she complements with the following list:

Down Syndrome children show:

- Flat face
- Small flat nose
➢ Small eyes
➢ Dysplastic ears
➢ Low bone development in the third part of the face

Borrel, et. al. (n.d. p. 24) in his work describes the following list with more physical characteristics:

➢ Redundant skin in the neck
➢ Shortening extremities
➢ Branchydactyly
➢ Small mouth

It is important to mention that all of these characteristics make up a special child with Down Syndrome. One of the most important features is the cognitive development. The cognitive development that was known as sensorimotor development, is the way in which children learn by experimenting the world through the senses (Borrel, et. al., n.d.). To know more about the cognitive part, it is important to recognize the term of cognition. Neisser (1976, p 1) (as cited in Brandimonte et.al 2006) affirms that ‘cognitive is the activity of knowing the acquisition, organization and the use of knowledge’. On the other hand, American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2000) (as cited Brandimonte et. al., 2006) asserts that ‘cognition is the mental process of knowing, including aspects such as awareness, perceptions, reasoning, and judgment’. It is important to know about the mental process that the student with Down Syndrome shows, this is to help him/her to develop and strengthen that ability on time.
Cognitive development is one of the essential parts in the process of learning in each student either for special children’s learning or standard students’ learning. Moreover, the following list shows the characteristics that have children with this special need, according to Borrel, et. al. (n.d., p.28)

➢ Neurological impairment
➢ Different patterns of visual preferences
➢ Differences in the amplitude of cerebral event-related potentials
➢ Difficulties to develop tasks in the solution of a problem

Another important characteristic in these special children is the development of their memory. Memory is the mental work place, in which each person can hold and manipulate information (Buckley, 1995). The memory is important to learn whatever you want and maintain new information in it for long periods.

There are three types of memory; the first one is sensory memory. According to Galán et al. (2006, p.1), ‘sensory memory is a short-lived persistence of a sensory stimulus in the nervous system, such as iconic memory in the visual system’, in other words, sensory memory is when a signal that comes to the brain through the experiences and one sense. White (2015, paragraph 6) also mentions the term iconic memory and it refers to ‘the visual stimulation that forms a picture in the mind’.

The second type is short-term memory. As it was mentioned before, short-term memory keeps information for a brief period. The last type is long-term memory. According to the Macmillan Dictionary (2019, n.p.), ‘this is the part of the memory that permits us to remind things that have happened a long time ago’. In this type of memory, there are two
classifications. The first one is implicit, it refers to the things or abilities that we do automatically when we have learned them, for example, ride a bicycle. The second one is explicit and it refers to the facts and experiences that we store (Borrel, et.al., n.d.) Each special child has different problems depending on the type of Syndrome that he or she shows. It is necessary to know what kind of things affect them in order to help them in real life because as it is known, these children suffer discrimination and sometimes exclusion in their own social circle.

2.4 Inclusion and Exclusion

Nowadays, one of the things happening in schools is that parents with special children want to include them in ordinary life; it means that they want to see their children coexisting with other children without disability. It is then necessary to differentiate between educational inclusion/exclusion and social inclusion/exclusion as well.

Educational inclusion is to integrate all students in activities inside and outside the classroom, giving the confidence to do any activity without any discrimination. Moreover, educational inclusion not only wants the concentration in those special children and put aside the standard students; it proposes schools for everybody, it means, includes all kind of students (SEP, 2016). On the other hand, it is social inclusion; it is almost the same idea that the educational inclusion but the difference is that it includes all the people in a community or society giving them the same human rights opportunities. (Subirats, 2009). In the case of Down Syndrome, the educational inclusion in some standard schools is acceptable. The integration process has promoted the development of better learning opportunities to all of these special children (Borrel, et al, n.d.).
Similarly, it is the educational exclusion and in the case, it is the opposite of inclusion because as Escudero (2005, p.1) mentions ‘it is the privation of activities in different areas’. Likewise, social exclusion that is the negation of a social group because of the social status or other factors (Jimenez et.al, 2009). Teachers have to consider all of these aspects since they have to incorporate each student in all the activities without any discrimination, likewise, teachers should give the same opportunities, for instance, participate, and express their ideas. As well as they have to create a good atmosphere in which students feel confident, in order to provide new knowledge every day. This could be achieve by doing some adjustments to the curriculum and the regulations in the schools. Even in the society, people need to include all to create a better atmosphere of coexistence.

2.5 Adapting the Curriculum to Teach Down Syndrome Children

The curriculum is one of the main points of class development. Wen (2012, p.154) says that ‘curriculum could be seen as a means of achieving specific educational goals and objectives’. Whereas that Westbrook, et. al (2013, p.12) claims that ‘curriculum is the key reference point for teachers, particularly in developing countries, where it is encoded in the official textbook and teacher guides, often the sole resource used by teachers’. It means that a curriculum is a kind of teachers’ guide to obtain their objectives in the class and achieve each of them successfully.

Teaching children with Down Syndrome is a challenge because all the aspects it entails. However, concerning the curriculum, teachers need to modify or adapt that curriculum to work also with those special children and at the same time to work with the
rest of the class; in that way, all students will have the opportunity to learn and participate during the classes. Furthermore, teachers need to think about in which manner they are going to adapt to the curriculum as the materials they could use during class time.

2.6 Adapting Materials and Activities to Down Syndrome Children

Another essential part to complement a class is the materials and activities that teachers use during the class. Most of the times, materials and activities are designed to have fun in each session, but the purpose of these things is to reinforce the knowledge already learned, in a dynamic way. Materials and activities are linked with the students’ level, the topic that they are learning and the students’ ages. In this case, it is mentioned some materials and activities that teachers use in a standard class. In previous topics, in which was explained the main features that Down Syndrome children have, it was mentioned that they have strong visual learning modalities.

According to Kaçauni (n.d., p.1) ‘the use of visual materials helps young learners easily to understand and realize the main points in the classes’. She also mentions in her study the use of flashcards, postcards, pictures, posters, word calendar, objects, graphics, pictures books, board drawings, gestures, videos and television in two different grades and the results were different from each group because they are used according to the age they are. Those materials and activities are used to teach standard students, it only requires an adjustment to be useful for learners with other capacities. Nevertheless, Grindei and Benlloch (2015, p.9) adapted some teaching materials in a chart and they divided the activities/materials according to the disability that students show. The following list was chosen to generalize the activities that teachers could apply in their lessons when children with disabilities attend regular classes.
➢ Flow charts are ideal for explaining procedures.
➢ Pictograms and graphics help to locate information.
➢ Audio materials recorded on tape, DVD, or via computer.
➢ Tactile demonstrations incorporated into instruction for understanding concepts electronic dictionaries.
➢ Use of e-books.
➢ Printed material.
➢ Provide poster presentations, Power Point presentations.

These activities can be useful in some cases of disabilities; teachers have to remind that all their lesson plans must be adapted to the circumstances in the classroom. In this issue, those activities can be adapted to teach Down learners, taking into account their characteristics. Remember that lesson plans are never going to be as they are written; they are modified throughout the class depending on the students’ necessities and according to the teacher’s teaching.

2.7 Teaching to Down Syndrome Children

Teaching to standard students is always a challenge, but to teach students with special needs is a bigger challenge, especially when teachers are not prepared to do it. There are careers that are focused on paying attention to those special children, but it does not mean that all the parents that have a special child are going to take their child in those schools; sometimes it is not possible for them, because those types of schools are expensive because of the special attention they require. Given the current situation, normally, parents decide to take their children to a standard school or public schools,
where ordinary students predominate. In this teaching process, one important point is the methodology that teachers follow, that is described as the teachers’ strategies they use to transmit the learning contents to the students. As well, teachers have to know perfectly their students characteristics even if they are special or not. All of this is to take advantage of their weaknesses and strengths and in that way exploit their potential in each class. (Ruiz, 2012).

Ruiz (2012, p.31) enlisted some points to teach to Down Syndrome children:

➢ Learning content must be presented with pictures, graphics, drawings, pictograms and diagrams when it is viable, if it is possible, using multiple paths to get information through sight, hearing, touch and even manipulating objects whenever it is possible.

➢ Explain in detail all the activities in the class.

➢ Give concrete instructions instead of large explanations.

➢ Do not compare a student with Down Syndrome with another who is not.

The points mentioned above are going to link with the activities and the curriculum that teachers design and adapt to each class, because each class is different and the students are not the same and the necessities of each one change. As well as taking into account the previous manners to teach children with different capacities adapting them to get better results with Down students. This will permit the teachers to assess these type of learners in a better way.

2.8 Assessment to Down Syndrome Children

Assessment is relevant to mention in this research. It is one of the facts that teachers have to consider carefully, especially when a special child presents to them in
their classrooms. Teachers know how to assess their students, but what happens with the assessment of those with special needs. According to Anandan (2015, p.2) ‘assessment is evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, and skill acquisition of students throughout their learning in life’. However, assessment also takes into account the students' strengths, needs, and the achievement that students have during a period. It is known that there are different types of assessment.

One of them is called formative assessment; it refers to the development and achievement of the students in their learning. It is more focused on the knowledge they are acquiring. On the other hand, it is the summative assessment. It is focused on quantitative results, in education it means that this type of assessment is worried on the grades that students have at the end of the course (Northern Illinois University, 2018).

In the case of Down Syndrome children assessment, it has to be more personal, for the skills they have, but it should be qualitative to be sure about the learning they are obtaining, and also the assessment is linked with the objectives that teachers adapt in the curriculum for those students. Teachers have to mark the strengths that the special child has to develop in her/his learning. It is important to mention that assessment is not a synonym of exam, the exam was adapted as a modality but they are not the same.

In the case of Down students, teachers need to assess daily instead of bimestrial, a six-month course and a four-month course, they need more practice instead of theory, manipulating instead of cognitive, based on observation instead of exams, using different tools for example, portfolios, class work and homework. (Ruiz, 2012.). In that way, students with special needs have the opportunity to do things knowing that they are part
of the class and they know that teachers consider them to have a feedback from their progress to make each student improve their skills every day.

2.9 Defining the Speaking Skill

To develop speaking skill besides the sub-skills, teachers have to take into account the level, the age and the learning style of their students, indeed to know the students’ needs. If the teacher does not know all the necessities, it could be a problem because the results could not be as students and teacher expected. It could be frustrating for both. When a second language is learning, students need the effectiveness of the course to achieve the objective and it is known that the development of speaking skill is the most demanded. In addition, in the development of speaking skill and sub-skills is important to recognize the different functions that imply the speaking performance in daily life (Richards, 2008). However, to develop the speaking skill, it is necessary to know about its styles.

2.9.1 Using the Speaking Styles

In a real situation students need to notice what type of speaking style they have to use, it refers to the formal or informal way; it is according to the circumstances they are involved. Teachers must give to the students, different ways to use the language in the mother tongue and when students are learning another language, they have to recognize the vocabulary they have to use.

According to Richards (2008, p.18), ‘different styles of speaking reflect the roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions and reflect the expression of politeness’. According to Brown and Levinson (1978) (as cited Richards, 2008, p.19) ‘successful management of speech styles creates a sense of politeness that is essential for
harmonious social relations’. People need to know that the purpose of the speaking is to communicate ideas, opinions and points of view, but also to be understood in a conversation when people interact. That is why the speech is important when it is performed in real situations.

2.9.2 Performing the Speech

As Richards (2008, p.19) comments that, ‘talk as interaction refers to what we normally mean by “conversation” and describes the interaction that serves a primarily social function’. Brown and Yule (1983) (as cited Richards, 2008, p.19) marked the main features of talk as interaction can be summarized as follows:

➢ Has a primarily social function
➢ Reflects role relationships
➢ Reflects speaker’s identity
➢ May be formal or casual
➢ Uses conversation register

It also refers to the situation that is happening and it is focused on what the speaker has said. This serves to give and receive information more clearly. Lastly, it refers to the interaction that exists between speaker and hearer and vice versa (Richards, 2008). Talks as interaction could not be as important as it sounds, but life is based on interactions we have as humans because it is part of our nature and the first sign to approach someone new/else is through the speech, this is because we relate each other. Talking about interaction and production, it is important to know that the production of a good speech in Down learners is not an easy task for all of them, thus we need to know how Down learners try to develop it.
2.9.3 Speech Production in People with Down Syndrome

People with Down Syndrome have some impairment to develop some tasks. One of the most common they have is the development of their speech, that sometimes it is not understandable and lead to a lack of intelligibility. It does not depend on the age; it is just a feature they show. They develop their speech slowly to communicate with others (Bray, 2008). Bray (2008, p.61) mentions that ‘there is a consensus that speech difficulties are common in individuals with Down Syndrome and that consists of a complex interweaving of phonological and motor-speech delay and deviance’. Murillo (1995) (as cited Arregi, 1997, p. 25) says:

It can be said that the linguistic development in children with Down Syndrome maintains a similar pattern than people with normal development execution. It has special characteristic as the slow progress because as behaviors occurs more complex delay increases gradually but the effect of stimulation is beneficial since remedied to some extent delay or slowing.

One important part to the development of speech and other impairments in Down Syndrome children are parents. Considering that, they are the first contact that a child has, in that way, the child starts his/her communication with others (Arregi, 1997). If parents do not support their children to develop their speech, it has been seeing that in many people with this disability when they grow up, they do not have enough vocabulary. It is more restricted and Down learners have difficulty pronouncing words (Bray and Woolnough, 1988 (as cited Buckley, 1993, p. 57)).

In some cases when families have a special child, they do not give them the special attention, but parents need to know that the best thing they could do for their children is to take care of them as much as they can, but that does not mean that parents must
overprotect them because this could be damaging. It helps Down children to have a good relationship out of their comfort area, and socialize with others. Sometimes when these special children do not have an understandable speech, they are isolated from others. It could be improved if they receive early education, knowing all the aspects this implies.

2.9.4 Educational Features in Down Children

All students have different characteristics in class development, it also happens with all of those special children when they are at school. According to All Party Parliamentary Group on Down Syndrome (2012, p.15), comments on the guideline that ‘Down Syndrome learners progress slowly in several areas of development, including motor, social, communication and cognition’. The All Party Parliamentary Group on Down Syndrome (2012, p.15) shows a list in which mentions ‘a general Down Syndrome learner profile’. It includes problems on hearing, speech and language, strong visual learning skills, short term auditory, short concentration span, and visual difficulties. All of these areas involve strengths, weaknesses and challenges that Down students have to face every day, not only in their daily life but also at their school life. However, teachers have an important role to make Down students’ skills development.

2.9.5 Teaching Speaking English to Down Syndrome Children

Teaching speaking English to Down Syndrome children is based on the way they acquire their own language when they are not English native speakers. The importance of teaching English is to develop the four skills and to have a good proficiency level in the language. One important skill to develop is speaking skill and it is a challenge to achieve for any special child. In the case of Down Syndrome children; it is a big problem when
they are learning a new language (L2: second language) or also on their own language (L1: first language), because of the joint problems they show, especially when their mother tongue is not English.

Speaking is processing information and get the point or meaning that the speaker has said (Burns & Joyce, 1997 (as cited Shaimaa, 2006). It involves the fluency, linguistics, pragmatics, discourse and competences. These elements are required to be understood and to develop in an effective way the skill. When we talk about speaking, we refer to the interaction that is going to exist between individuals to communicate ideas or it is just to socialize and it helps children to understand teachers during school years, because the school is another different environment where children develop their skills in contact with others. These situations concern teachers when they teach Down Syndrome learners because they have certain characteristics than other students do not have. In addition, teachers have some challenges to teach and at the same time to develop speaking skills on those special children because there are not enough books or researches that talk, explain and study this field in depth.

When children are learning a new language, they have errors as in their own native language. In this case, teachers need to pay attention in what they want to say and correct them when they are in a free performance. Besides, teachers have to be careful at the time they are correcting because they could generate fear to the students when they are talking. It is better if teachers take notes about the mistakes students commit and after that, teachers can mention them individually or in the general group as the most common mistakes students had as a group. At the same time, it is known that children do not have enough time to practice English outside the classroom; thereby it is essential to take
advantage of the class time to improve their English (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). All the previous information above could be adapted to teach children with disabilities, in this case, Down Syndrome students, making the relevant changes to have a good process.

Scott & Ytreberg (1990, p.41) mention some activities to present a new language orally, in this case, English to young learners. They list the following:

- **Present the language through the pupils.** It refers to interact with all the students, giving examples and their names. For example, Maria can sing, Peter can swim.

- **Present the language using a pet.** Here the teacher could use puppets; it could be an animal or someone familiar for children and a dialog. This is a good way to introduce a topic. Through these material children give opinions and try to guess what is going to be the new topic.

- **Present the language with drawings.** With simple lines but understandable, teacher could use drawings on the board to describe something. The teacher or the student can draw the drawings.

- **Present the language using silhouettes.** This activity is similar than the drawings, it is useful to describe or try to guess an animal, character, fruit, objects, and some others.

- **Present the language with a chain work.** This is used with pictures and word pictures, in this activity, students have to answer and make questions each other according to the images.
Present the language using role-play. Role-play is a good way to notice the speaking in children, teacher could give them more feedback, and it is a manner in which students enjoy the class, because they like performing.

There are more activities and suggestions to develop speaking skill in children, for example, pair work, the use of realia, mime, acting, using toy furniture, clothes, cellphones, and charts (Scott & Ytreberg, 1990). There is not enough information about how to teach English to Down Syndrome students, in this case, teachers adapt each activity to develop any skill they want to improve, and such is the case of speaking, with a variety of activities for all kind of young learners.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it is remarkable that teaching is a big challenge. As teachers, it is necessary to keep in mind all the factors that teaching involves and as it was mentioned, teachers have to include all their students to get as many results as they can from all of their pupils to receive the same opportunities and take advantage of that new knowledge.

As we see in chapter II, Down Syndrome children's main features, how to teach, assess and include them are explained in detail to have a deeper knowledge about the situation that these children have to face every day in real life. Throughout the next chapter, it is discussed each of the participants and the context where Down children are involved with.
CHAPTER III: Methodology

This chapter aims to analyze in depth the information from the participants, the context of the study and the instruments used to collect information required. This research project is a based research. According to Candy (2006, p.1) explains that a ‘based research refers to an original investigation taken in order to gain new knowledge’. In fact, this research project was focused on how special children, in this case, Down Syndrome children, develop their speaking skills. This work took place in a foundation specialized in teaching Down students and in an elementary school in which there are more children with different disabilities including Down students, coexisting together at school. It was investigated through interviews and some class observation. Interviews were used to collect the necessary data from the experts. The interviewees’ real names were changed to protect their identities. On the other hand, to know how the teachers manage the group and classes, an observation sheet was used.

3.1 The participants

It is important to mention that the participants are the most relevant part of this research project because of the impact they may create in teachers’ minds. The main participants are Down Syndrome children from 10 to 11 years old that study hard every day to have an ordinary education. These children attend two different institutions. On the other hand, are the teachers that teach these Down students in their respective classrooms and institutions. Finally, a therapist contributed to this project to complement
some aspects that identified on Down Syndrome children. All of these data is discussed in detail below.

3.2 Participants’ Main Features

The main participants to develop this project are all Down children students from two different institutions. They attend to a foundation specialized in teaching and developing their skills to have an ordinary life. On the other hand, there are students with the same syndrome attending to an elementary school receiving education as ordinary students do. The ages of those kids range between 10 and 11; this is because they have had a longer process than the youngest and that permitted to obtain more advantage to know how these children learn. Nevertheless, teachers are an essential part of students’ development.

3.3 Teachers’ Key Features

In the Fundación Down de Puebla A.C, there are teachers and therapists to help Down learners in their development. In this research, one of those teachers supported this project to have an idea about her teaching style in their classrooms with her Down children students. On the other hand, at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si there are teachers supporting children with different abilities. In this case, Dulce was the teacher who supported this research project with her knowledge and experience in teaching are as well as Fatima does it. More characteristics are explained below.

3.3.1 Teacher Fátima

Teacher Fatima is the teacher in charge of a group of students with Down Syndrome at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C]. She
studied Psychology and now she is working with some children at the foundation to develop their skills and improve each of them as well. Teacher Fatima has worked as a therapist for four years and as a teacher for two years and a half. She is studying her Master's degree in Gestalt Psychotherapy. Her current position is to teach children with Down Syndrome. She teaches different subjects as public schools do, however, she personalize students’ curricula to obtain better results and because that is obligatory at the foundation.

3.3.2 Teacher Dulce

On the other hand, another teacher teaches at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot'si [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center] that is a special school where there are students with different types of disabilities and there are students with Down Syndrome as well. This teacher studied Psychology and she has a Master's degree in Special Education. Teacher Dulce has worked with special children and as a teacher for sixteen years. She integrated students in one single class and grade as in an ordinary school does.

3.4 Therapist’s characteristics: María

As it was mentioned before, in the foundation, there are also therapists. That is the case of María, who is the children’s therapist at the age mentioned above. She helps students to have better articulation and communication. She has worked as a therapist in other areas for seven years and she has worked with Down children at the Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C] for four years. María works with learners of different ages in the foundation. As this research project is focused on the
speaking skill in Down children, the teachers and therapist cooperated with the data collection using two different instruments.

### 3.5 Instruments

The instruments used in this study were interviews and an observation sheet. The interviews were semi-structured and the issues that explored include teachers’ strategies, methods, teaching aids, assessment, speaking development, main characteristics in Down students and types of Down Syndrome. This instrument was applied just for the teachers and the therapist because Down children are not able to answer complex questions and they are young to give specialized opinions about their learning process, as well.

On the other hand, another instrument used was the observation class sheet. The observations aimed to explore how the teachers managed their classes, especially language class, the strategies they used during that class, how the teachers treated Down students and which teaching aids teachers used to work with their students. This format permitted to collect information from each class in the two different environments where Down Syndrome children were involved. The first instrument applied was the interview, recording audios from each participant to analyze the data gained.

### 3.6 Interviews

The way in which the data to answer this research project was collected was through interviews. Interviews are an appropriate instrument to know points of view from different people about a specific topic and it works to go deeper into the topic. Interviews are designed for each participant, and they were recorded to collect the information and
to know specialized information. The interviews for the teachers were the same to make a comparison between their responses. On the other hand, the interview for the therapist was different. This is because the area of study is different from the teachers and the questions were set to know more about the children’s articulation development for speaking skill.

According to Berg (2007) (as cited Alshenqeeti, 2014, p.39) stated that ‘the value of interviewing is not only because it builds a holistic snapshot, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants; but also because it enables interviewees to speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings’. Finally, interviews were designed from the general to the specific to cover all the information needed. After the interviews were applied, the classes were observed through the use of an observation format described below.

3.7 Classroom Observation Sheet

To know more about the context where the special children are developing their learning, three classes were observed in each school, using a format to collect the data and to know more about the class management, students’ behavior, and teachers’ attitude during the class time and teachers’ strategies.

According to the information required to support this research project, the observation sheet was adapted pursuant to the necessities of the project. This instrument permitted to analyze the context in which the participants are developing themselves in each environment and how it affected their knowledge. Once the instruments were ready to use, the permissions were arranged in the research contexts.
3.8 Context of the Study

As it was specified, this research project was developed in two diverse places. Even though, these two institutions are focused on teaching and develop students’ abilities, both places are different and it could affect or benefit students’ development. These two places were chosen to have different perspectives in teaching children with Down Syndrome, specially focus on the development of speaking skill. One of the places is totally focus on Down students and in their performance during their classes. On the other part, the public school selected was because it includes children with any disability, this includes Down learners. Thus, it is significant to know how this type of students get along with other students and how it benefits or affects their development in comparison to the other school. The context of this study is explained in detail below.

3.8.1 Fundación Down de Puebla A.C

The data collection was carried out in a foundation specialized in caring Down Syndrome children only. The center is public and is located in Puebla, Mexico. This foundation adapts the curriculum according to the children’s necessities, using methods, technics and special strategies in order to facilitate their learning and take advantages of their capacities. Each Down student has an individual program to advance more according to his/her needs. This foundation is based on the educational program from Cantabria, Spain. This organization gives special education taking into account the following:

- Design and adapt the curriculum map and materials for each individual with different disabilities to take advantage of each one.
Students receive extra activities such as dancing, art, therapy, music and physical education during the class time.

3.8.2 Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si

This special school offers classes to different students who have any disability. They give public education to all of those students with special needs. The basis of its program comes from ‘Plan de Estudios 2011’ taken from SEP. In this school, teachers try to include each student in a common environment as a regular student. Each teacher has to adapt the curriculum according to the necessities that exist in their classrooms, as well.

This school pretends to create an environment as regular as possible. Students wear a uniform and their schedule is the same as the regular schools that is from 8:00 to 13:00. Students have extra activities to develop some extra skills. They have therapy, psychology, cooking and computing classes. As teachers, they try to treat them as regular students, if they arrive at school late, students do not have permission to enter, this provokes that students miss classes.

Something great from each school is that they have extra activities to complement students’ education and at the same time each school tries to include the students into the society as regular ones.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data analysis contributed to have an overview about all the possible problems that Down children have to face at school and in the society. The data collected were analyzed through the audios from the interviews doing a transcription of them, and then once the recordings were in text, the conversations were analyzed identifying key extracts
relevant to the research questions to give a possible solution to the problem. As for the classroom observations, once we gather the data in the class observation sheet, it was analyzed through the way in which the teachers organized the classes. All the data collected were presented throughout the next chapter in which it is interesting to see the points of view of each participant, from their perspectives and experiences.

**Conclusion**

Along this chapter, we could see a description of the participants, the places where they develop their work and how they influence each other to their lives. Needless to say that it was discussed about the instruments that were used to collect the data. The interviews and the class observation were appropriate to carry out the data compilation because it is easy to see professionals' perspectives from their own voices. All this information is presented below.
CHAPTER IV:

Findings

The objective of this chapter is to survey the data collected. Analyzing the responses of each participant and the class observation. To respond to this research project, we need to remind the type of research it is. In this research project will be used as a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a method to explore deeper ideas, opinions, reasons, and motivation. It is used to gain more information about a specific topic and take more advantage from it. This type of research is useful when someone wants to know extra information about a familiar topic using a specific group of individuals or a case study of one single individual. In qualitative research are used different techniques or instruments as well. For example, interviews, observations, etc.

According to Hancock (2007, p.6) qualitative research is focused on how people or a group of people can have different ways of looking at reality, this also incorporates the real world context, report of the experience, people’s behavior in natural settings. This chapter is focused on the data analysis that was obtained during the observation classes and interviews to give a response to the research questions that were set at the beginning of this research project.

4.1 Class Observation Analysis

Part of the data collection was obtained through some class observations. It was observed three classes in each institution to compare the teaching strategies, activities/materials, group management and how Down Syndrome students were treated and some other facts to know how students with that syndrome acquire their native
language in order to adapt each of them to English. Thus, the researcher could determine the ways Down students learn. Below it is a discussion about each class observation comparing both institutions.

4.1.1 First Class Observation

In the first observation at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C] showed that most of the time class was wasted, provoking that students get distracted easily and the most important thing is that they did not seize the time to learn and improve more their skills. The teacher did not pay attention to all of the students because she was preparing the activities during class time but once she had them, students started to answer their activities. Students’ responses were well, but after some time they got bored. From the beginning until the end of the class, the teacher motivated them as well.

Nevertheless, the teacher started the class asking to the most advanced student to write the everyday task before to start with any topic. It was to write about the things students learned the day before, the things that were going to learn that day and the date. The teacher had some color paper to do this activity, she had the word ‘yesterday’, ‘today’ and ‘date’ to start to write the information required. After the student finished, the rest of the class had to write those sentences in their notebooks.

One important thing is that while the students were doing the activities, the teacher was repeating the words that they did not remember in that moment. Thus, the students could finish their task. In this class, the activity was to solve a ‘word search’ with diverse vocabulary and when the whole class finished, the teacher repeated the answers slowly
(E-S-C-O-B-A), in order to help students to find the words easily recognizing the sounds of each word.

On the other hand, at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center] as it was mentioned in chapter III, there are students with different disabilities attending the school as a common one. In the first observation class, it could be observed that the main teacher was not teaching to the students because another teacher that was the practitioner from an institution had to complete her professional practices that is why the main teacher let her teach them. It was uncommon that the practitioner’s performance affected the students, for that reason the main teacher needed to intervene in the class to help her with the class.

The activity at the beginning was about Mathematics, but suddenly it changed into Spanish class, this causes that the class did not have a sequence and some students were focused on Math and others with Spanish. Students got distracted when someone else entered the classroom and when they realized that the teacher was paying attention to other students as well.

In the time for Math class, the teacher used the board and flashcards with numbers. They were learning the predecessor and successor number therefore, students wrote in their notebooks the numbers on the board. Once they had them, the teacher started to call some students to pass in front of the class to solve one exercise. After that, the students had more extra exercises to solve by themselves. However, some students needed help to complete the task. During this exercise, the advance students were wasting time because they did not have any activity after they finished, this issue included
one of the Down Syndrome girls. For those students who did not know how to do the exercise, the teacher used an abacus. When the time that the teacher gave for the activities was almost over, she started to count and the whole class knew that they needed to finish everything on time.

At the end, the last ten minutes the teacher changed the class into Spanish, but there was not a sequence it was unexpected to change the class suddenly. The teacher started to ask about students’ homework, but only four students did it, it includes one of the Down Syndrome student. The teacher started with the Down learners and she asked one of them to read her homework, but it seemed that the student did not have confidence when she spoke and the teacher motivated her all the time as well as other students in the class. The other student had problems to write her homework, the teacher had to draw some lines in the student’s notebook as a guide.

4.1.2 Second Class Observation

This observation class was almost the same at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C]. Four students were absent and this could allow the teacher to have a good class, but it was not as it was expected. At the beginning of the class, the teacher was waiting for more students to start the class, it provoked other students to get bored, just one student was writing on the board some sentences that they normally do before to start each class. That student was one of the most advanced. While the teacher was waiting for more students, she was checking their homework. On the other hand, as the teacher saw that other students did not arrive to the class, she started with an activity about repetition and remind past information using flashcards. It was hard
for those students who have more problems and the teacher did not say the instructions, she only repeated the words.

When this activity was completed, the teacher gave each student individual work, but unfortunately, she did not pay attention to them. Moreover, when the advanced student finished, the teacher allowed him to play with the material they have in the classroom but this caused that other students got distracted and the teacher did not do nothing about this issue. Despite this, the teacher always motivated the students.

On the other side, in the second observation class at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot'si [Yolot'si Multiple Care Center], the practitioner was there again. Unfortunately, this did not allow seeing how the students' performance is. Another issue was presented in this class when the teacher asked about the homework and only two students did it; this fact did not permit the teacher advance with the whole group because the activity for that class was to create a story with a brainstorm according to students' homework.

Thus, the teacher only paid attention to those students who did the homework, putting aside the rest of the group. Down children did not do the homework and they did not work in this class time. This caused that Down students were distracted, but they knew that something was wrong. Half part of the class, some students went to their cooking class, leaving in the class only two students, one Down learner and another student with another disability. The practitioner was assigned to care students in cooking class and the main teacher stayed in the classroom with the rest of the group changing the activity making it more individual and focused on the Down student who had deafness problems, as well.
4.1.3 Third Class Observation

This last observation class at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C] was special because it was a sample class. This allowed parents to see the process of their children. In that class, the principal of the foundation was there and the parents of most of the students. It was outstanding that in this session, the teacher was prepared to give students- advances. In this case, two students were absent; this allowed the teacher to manage in a better way the class. However, she seemed nervous and it caused that she lost the time. It was noticed that the teacher planned this special class. She used more teaching material than she usually used during other classes. It was realized that in other classes, the teacher prepared all the material and students to present the sample class; it means that the teacher practiced the sample class with the students in order to get good comments from students’ parents and the principal.

In this occasion the teacher was motivating each student during the whole class, they felt special because they completed each task and their parents were there supporting them as well. The principal of the foundation was helping the teacher explaining the parents all the work they do to improve students’ skills. One of the activities included children’s parents, therefore the class was more dynamic and it could be seen that this type of activities where the teacher includes everyone, Down Syndrome students participated and they were focused on the topic for that class and felt motivated to continue doing each exercise.

Differently, the last observation class at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center] was the last class before to have holy vacations; it caused
that the teacher wasted time at the beginning of the class. Then, the teacher started with Spanish class asking students what they did the day before. Students were participating, giving their opinions to the teacher and the teacher wrote them as a brainstorm.

After some time, half part of the group went to the cooking class again, leaving the main teacher in charge of the rest of the group and at the same time changing the first activity that previously the practitioner was doing. The teacher wanted to dictate a short paragraph to know how the students had developed their writing skills. In this case, there were two Down students and one advanced girl with another disability. As the teacher notices that one Down student could not write in one single row, she helped her to draw some lines as a guide to maintain the order in her writing. On the other hand, the other Down learner could do it by herself, even though she had some spelling problems. In this activity, the teacher helped students to divide into squares to write a letter per square.

At the end of these class observations, it could be seen common issues into the classrooms as well as how the teachers and the students managed during class. However, it is essential to observe the materials, strategies and other facts to have data that are more valuable.

4.2 Materials, Strategies and Class Management

As far as we know, no previous researches have investigated the way in which Down students can acquire a second language. Nevertheless, here it is a discussion about the materials teachers could use to teach Down Syndrome learners in order to develop their speaking skills based on the data collection from the class observations where the research was conducted.
In both institutions, it was expected to use more materials. Below, in the following chart are the materials used by the teachers during class time:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundación Down de Puebla A.C. [Puebla Down Foundation A.C]</th>
<th>Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si. [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Posters</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Realia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Collage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Worksheets</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Notebook</td>
<td>5 Notebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Book</td>
<td>6 Book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Flashcards</td>
<td>7 Flashcards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Calendar</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Images</td>
<td>9 Images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Board</td>
<td>10 Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Abacus</td>
<td>11 Abacus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unfortunately, we can observe that at the foundation, the teacher used more material during the observing time. Even though, the teacher used more materials, she did not take advantage of it, as we observed in the class observations the teacher wasted enough time and the students were playing most of the time. Thus, having good material does not mean that the student is going to learn everything; the teacher has to execute them to make students improve during class time.

On the other hand, at the public school, the teacher did not use diverse materials; however, the students were focused on their tasks in comparison with the foundation. In this case, the teacher has to pay attention on this issue because she has more students with different necessities including Down Syndrome learners. Therefore, she needs to
research more about the way this type of students learn and adapt the materials to cover class necessities.

Finally, materials have an important role in teaching as long as the teacher knows how to apply them with the students. This must include the strategies that teachers implement to make a better students’ improvement. A challenging problem that arises in this field is the use of the teaching strategies throughout the class observations at the institutions. Teaching strategies are an essential part for any teacher. Nevertheless, some teachers do not know how to apply them in a real context. It could be observed, that the teachers in both institutions had almost the same strategies to teach their students.

Teachers normally used a different tone of voice. They needed to speak up almost the whole class because most of the students were distracted and when they heard teachers’ voice, they knew that they had to be concentrated on the assignments during the class. Something that was important was the way in which teachers repeated the things they told to their students. Speaking slowly permitted the students to focus on the words the teachers were saying.

Something relevant during each class was that the teachers lead to one student per class to write the date to orient the whole class about the day, the month and the year they are. Each student had to write the date in their notebooks because the teachers always asked if they had it, if they did not have it, they could not have a check mark in the activities for the class. Another strategy used by the teachers was to motivate students to do an activity during class time. Motivation has been a crucial part in the teaching area; however, talking about teaching Down Syndrome students, it is more important because
they are more sensitive. Lastly, it was distinguished that when the teachers gave the assignments for the class, most of the students do not understand clearly what to do in the activity. The teachers in the institutions approached to each student to explain in detail the activities. This provoked that the students felt confident to continue doing the activities and participate in class.

Talking about class management, the teachers did not organized the group in a different way to have a better view of each student in order to pay attention to their necessities. Here below, there are two figures explaining how the classrooms are organized in each institution. In the following Figure 4.1, you can see how the classroom is organized at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C]:

![Figure 4.1 Classroom Arrangement at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C.](image-url)
As it is outstanding, the classroom is organized as a common one; this is because the foundation wants that students with the syndrome feel the same as ordinary students do. Another thing that the teacher managed inside the classroom is that in most of the walls there was teaching material. For example, next to the board there was a calendar where students could use to know what the day of the week was. On the other part of the board, there was a big poster with the most difficult syllables to remember and pronounce for Down Syndrome children.

From the researcher's point of view, the classroom was small and disorganized. Most of the things were on the floor where the shelves were located, this issue permitted that students go whenever they wanted to get one toy or didactic material that was striking for them. It is important that all the employees that work at the foundation treat every Down child as all regular people are treated. This allows students to feel comfortable and in a common context. On the other hand, it is perceptible that each student in the classroom had her/his own seat, but as they are imperative, they changed their place a lot of times during the class time provoking that each student get distracted and the teacher does not pay attention to all of them.

Differently, in the case of Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center] all the classrooms are like the ordinary schools, that is why the classroom is more common than it was expected at the foundation. In this classroom, there were different children with diverse disabilities including Down Syndrome children that are a highlight in the green area. As you can see, there is more contact with others and teachers treated every student as ordinary students in public schools.
Figure 4.2 shows how the classroom is organized separately by colors to identify students with Down Syndrome, children with other disabilities and some other stuff. In the class, there were three Down Syndrome girls and five children with other disabilities. Nevertheless, one of the Down learners was not during the class observations, thus the researcher could not see how she worked during that time. There were two teachers, one of them was the titular teacher and the other one was the practitioner. A difference to the foundation, this classroom did not have didactic material on the walls. It was more like public schools than a special school.

From this perspective, it could be deduced that the teacher needed to create more material for students’ necessities. She could adapt some teaching material to put it on the walls to help students in some way.

Figure 4.2 Classroom Arrangement at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si.
4.3 Interviews

Another instrument that was used to complement this research project was the interviews applied to teachers specialized in teaching special children. The interviews were designed to see two different perspectives and experience from two different teachers in two different schools. The last interview was focused on a specialist in the development of Down children's articulation to see how these children improve in their speech and if there is any possibility to teach them another language such as English from the specialist's perspective.

4.3.1 Teachers’ Interview

For this study, the questions designed for the teachers were based on the aspects observed during class observations. Here it is the analysis of the information collected, comparing the teachers’ responses. It was decided to protect the teachers’ identity, for that reason the names were changed.

Fátima is a teacher who has worked with Down children for two years at Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C]. She did not study to be a teacher, she actually has a bachelor's degree as therapist and that permitted her to have four years of experience. At the end of all of this new knowledge about her studies and experience, she could give her points of view. On the other hand, Dulce the teacher in charge of sixth grade at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si [Yolot’si Multiple Care Center] has worked with disabled children for sixteen years. She has not studied to be a teacher, she studied psychology and she mentioned that when schools started to include people with different abilities there were not teachers able to teach those new students’ profiles, that is why
that the nearest profile appropriate to teach special children were the ones that psychologist had in that time. When Fatima was asked about how Down students learn, she said:

*Through visual aids, things that attract their attention and they must be colorful, they need materials such as puzzles or exercises that have different shapes.*

The teacher concedes that visual aids are important to get students involved in activities. It was outstanding that in their classroom, they had images on the walls, paper with syllables in different colors and behind the teacher’s desk there was a shelf where each student had their names in capital letters and written in different color paper to make it easier to recognize the place where they had to put their material. In the same shelf, there were games such as jenga, puzzles, and games to find shapes. They paid more attention when they see something that has many colors and images about the things they are learning.

On the other hand, Dulce said nothing about the way Down students learn. The teacher commented about the term “chronological age” and she referred to this term about the age we develop as humans through the time since we were born. Dulce mentioned that in the case of students with different abilities their chronological age is developed in different rhythms than others. However, it is not a clear explanation about how Down Syndrome students learn, even so, this issue helps teachers to detect students’ chronological age to adapt materials and strategies.
When teachers were asked about how learners learn new words, teacher Fátima said something similar about the use of images throughout their process of learning, she added:

They learn through repetition and the use of images at the same time.

From the teacher’s experience, repetition is a complementary strategy for Down learners. It could be determined visual aids in Down’s learners learning process are essential to improve their vocabulary and speech. However, the teacher needs to know how exactly has to use those images.

Likewise, Dulce mentioned that repetition is an effective way to make students with that syndrome to remember new words and practice the ones that they already have. She added that if teachers and parents help them to remind the words they acquire every day and at the same time they correct children when they say a word, they will improve their knowledge.

According to the speaking part, the teachers asserted some strategies they have used during their time teaching those special children and that is what teacher Fatima stated:

I show them some common images and I need to know at what time I can teach them, for example, fruits, vegetables, or any other thing they are executing.

As Fatima affirmed again, the use of images continue being important, nevertheless, teachers need to know when to work with them. It can be deduced that now for teaching new vocabulary to children with Down Syndrome, teachers have to be careful in their
times, it means, teachers need to know when and how to introduce new words/topics. It is not about teaching vocabulary/topics randomly. It is possible that if teachers do it in that way and they introduce a new topic using different vocabulary words that are not focused on the same topic, teachers could confuse the students and their learning process could be slower and frustrated.

Otherwise, teacher Dulce claimed that she teaches depending on the students’ level because if there are students that cannot speak, she has to show them new words and they learn them by repetition simulating that those students are in kinder garden. However, both teachers have the same pattern that they mentioned before that by repetition, Down Syndrome students acquire new words.

After that, the teachers were asked about the teaching methods they use during their classes with Down learners and the teacher from the foundation thinks the following:

*I show them figures and their shapes to pronounce each of them constantly. I try to repeat them and I give to them some exercises to keep all the words in each one’s head and they can talk, but it works with the language therapy they have, as well.*

The teacher from the foundation maintains that repetition works in her classes; however, she uses it in different activities to reinforce it. Repetition is another fantastic tool to improve children’s vocabulary. At the same time, it works doing it with other complements like the use of figures, images, shapes, and colors as it was mentioned before. Nevertheless, as the teacher said, their language therapy complements in any way their education and their speech, as well.
Conversely, the teacher from the public school commented that she uses the method called Troncoso. First, Dulce said that teachers send the students to the communication area, but inside the classroom, they use the method that was mentioned before. Troncoso method is focused on visual aids and children use their memory as well. This method is divided into some categories to see the children’s process. Some of them are associations, selection, classification, denomination, and generalization. Each of those areas has its own purpose to continue developing children’s skills in its appropriate manner. However, it is necessary to know more about the usage of the Troncoso method and how to implement it.

To continue with the development of the speaking skill, the interviewer asked the teachers about the most difficult part to develop speaking in Down learners. Teacher Fatima commented the following according to her experience:

*Motivation is the most difficult part because they like to be motivated when they do something correctly, it has to be at home and at school, but some parents do not have the time to motivate their children and make them try hard.*

The teacher asserted that motivation could be a factor to make students learn or not. As you can see, parents’ role is not always focused on the overcoming of their special children. Parents are a crucial part of children’s education and their improvement. On the other hand, the teacher does what is in her hands; she tries to motivate them as much as she can to make students make a big effort than before.

Nonetheless, teacher Dulce conceded that she does not develop speaking skill in Down learners. As she mentioned before, the teachers at the public school send students
to the communication area and in that area the people in charge, work with each student individually. However, the teacher commented that despite the students are sent to the communication area, she has to work more and find out the words they already know.

Materials are a vital part for teaching different level and it is more important when teaching special children. In the question related to the material the teachers use to develop speaking skills in their students, teacher Fatima asserted:

*I use images and sounds to work with them, in that way they can get the speaking skill and produce sounds.*

As Fátima highlighted before, images continue being vital part in Down students speaking development. Most of the students with Down Syndrome are visual when they are learning something new. Thus, images are essential part in teaching Down learners.

Instead, teacher Dulce mentioned that she has not a broad knowledge in the communicative area that is why she does not focus on that part with Down children and with other students. As she commented before, the school has a communication area that is in charge of the speaking development of each student. This could delay the learning process of the curriculum that teachers manage. It is adapted according to their knowledge and students’ necessities, the last point is beneficial for students because it covered what they need, however, teachers adapt the curriculum as they think it is good for students without taking into account what it implies. Lastly, Dulce said that they based their classes on the curriculum that SEP (Secretaría de Educación Pública) gave them from 2011.
According to the question related to students' inclusion, the teachers were asked about the way they include the whole class to participate and the teacher from the foundation responded:

*I teach the same topic in different levels, it depends on students skills.*

The teacher contended that she divides students according to their necessities. The advanced students had more activities in a complex way because they already recognize words and they can speak more than the others can. The students that have a low level, the teacher make them color and at the same time, they try to recognize the word that is already written. Sometimes, the teacher makes students to color and other times, students have to observe carefully to the shapes they have in each activity. Those types of activities permit students to advance according to their levels and skills and continue advancing. At the same time, they are learning something new; they could apply it in real life.

Likewise, the teacher at the public school mentioned almost the same as the teacher at the foundation. She said that first, she has to apply an evaluation and once she knows her students' level, she needs to adapt and organize her activities to each lesson plan. To apply evaluations at the beginning of each curse is common for teachers. This permits teachers to know the students' knowledge. In that way, teachers may know what to reinforce and continue advancing in issues that they perfectly know. In the case of special students, this is more difficult, especially in Dulce’s case, because she needs to teach not only Down Syndrome students, but even some other students with different disabilities. As it can be seen, adjusting the activities is important, to include each student in class. This may help the student to participate more.
Continue talking about including students during class time, the following question asked about the benefits of including special children in ordinary schools. In this concern teacher, Fátima answered:

*It depends on students and their skills. I think it is better to attend a special school because they have the attention they need. In a public or ordinary school, there are more students and sometimes when there is a Down child or any special child, teachers and other students put him aside without any attention like special school has it.*

Fátima’s words indicated that ordinary schools cannot offer the care that Down Children demand. Nowadays, people are trying to include special people, but it is taking a hard work in all the areas and in education is not the exception. Currently, Secretaría de Educación Pública is trying to include special people to study elementary school and the other levels, but it has not been completed at all. Teachers are not qualified to do the work, and this is more outstanding in a public school where most of the students are ordinary and a few of them have any disability. That is a challenge; however, if teachers plan their lessons including special people and the ordinary ones, the process would be satisfactory.

Similarly, teacher Dulce discussed that schools are not prepared to receive children with different capacities. She remarked that some students are not educated to get along with these children and sometimes, ordinary students can cause bullying. This is one important reason why special children do not attend regular schools. First, because teachers do not know how to treat this issue and overall they do not know how to deal with all the aspects that a special child will show. On the other hand, the society where we are involved has not accepted to work with people with different abilities such as those
special children. Unfortunately, our society is accustomed to discriminate different people instead of including them and help them to be better or to develop their abilities.

As it is known, parents have a big responsibility in the education area as the teachers have it. However, some parents do not take the role they have. Teachers’ opinion about the role that parents have in their children’s learning process was:

*It is quite important. It influences in the way they are pushing their children to work on something new at home, not just at school, in this way they can achieve and reinforce their new knowledge.*

Teachers’ opinion clearly highlights the significance of parents’ teaching work at home. Children need to have parents’ support and motivation to achieve certain things. One of the most important things for children is to have their parents in every part of their life and all their achievements; they feel part of their families and they feel they are doing something correct to make their parents feel proud of each of them. The teacher said that the most important part in education that children receive is at home with their parents, because the teacher is just like a guide and parents have them every single day twenty four hours/ seven days of the week. Children advance as far as they want.

On the other hand, the teacher at the public school has the same idea than the teacher at the foundation. She complemented that if parents do not do their part at home, children will develop their skills in a half part and it will not be worth it at all. This has to be a mutual work. Education at school is a complement to reach students’ goals.

Getting information about assessment, the teachers were asked about the use of rubrics or documents to assess children in their learning process and teacher Fátima affirmed:
We have a rubric. In those rubrics, we base on their learning, if they achieve it or if they do not. I know they can do it and I notice that because I am with all of them the whole week. The classes are very repetitive but at the end, I can see their progress and see if they get the knowledge.

The teacher’s words show that rubrics are key components of her teaching to test children’s learning. The teacher mentioned that she is aware when students have already advanced because she gets along with them every day and she knows their process.

On the contrary, teacher Dulce said that she has a rubric, as well. However, that rubric is based on the Plan de Estudios 2011. Dulce needs to adapt the rubric according to students’ diagnostics and chronological age. The teacher passes her students according to the process they achieve in their mental age. In agreement with that, the documents to pass each student are based on fiction papers because it is not possible that those students have the level they are enrolled, in this case, students were at elementary school, 6° grade to be exact. Students were not at that academic level, so the teacher has to implement her own rubric and then she had to pass that information into the real rubrics.

In relation to the Down Syndrome children treatment at school, the teachers specified in their response about the way they have to talk to their students so Fátima said:

*I talk to them in a normal way because there are many parents who want society to treat their children as other “normal people”. That is why here at school we try to treat special children like ordinary students.*

As Fátima stated, Down Syndrome learners must be treated as everyone. The necessity they show does not mean they have to be treated differently. The way is the same than
the ordinary people. This is with the objective to make them feel part of the society, without doing exclusion from the outside world.

Likewise, the teacher from the public school mentioned that she treats her students as normal, with love and affection. However, she establishes their limits because some students tend to be more stubborn. For that reason, it is essential to treat them as others and in that manner; the society will not discriminate them and put them aside.

On the other hand, Down Syndrome students receive other types of activities outside the classroom and when the teachers were asked if children are affected having those types of activities in which they interrupt their regular classes to participate in them teacher Fatima said:

No, those types of activities help each student to improve in their fine and gross motor skills, their knowledge, skills and this permits them to know all the potential each of them has.

According to Fátima, extra activities help students to develop some other skills. She mentioned that the students receive dance, arts and physical education between their regular classes. That is a good idea to make students more active in the school and outside the school as well. However, extra activities during class time could affect a little bit students’ performance because they interrupt the things they are learning at that moment.

Similarly, teacher Dulce stated that extra activities during school time is a good way to make students improve their abilities and later include them in real life with the qualities they have improved during their time at school. These activities do not affect their learning
improvement but it is considerable that when students have the workshops they have to interrupt the class activities they are doing but the teacher mentioned that the activities are a complement for each of them.

Looking at the point in which the project is focused on, teachers gave some hope to all the English teachers who want to work with Down Syndrome students. The teacher at the foundation said:

*It depends on the case that the student has because sometimes we do not have only students with Down Syndrome; some of them present autism or visual impairment.*

The teacher commented that it is possible for this type of students as long as the abilities they have develop. It has to be depending on the disease they show if the syndrome is advanced, they have another disability, or they have more difficulties and not only the syndrome. This does not help a lot if teachers teach to them another language because of their advanced disease. However, it is not impossible to try to develop speaking skills in their own language and introducing another such as English.

Equally, the teacher from the public school explained that this could be possible by repetition. The teacher agreed that repeating a song, words or readings the student is going to repeat and in some way, they could acquire a new language. Dulce commented that it could be possible as long as students’ parents support them and have the compromise with their children to achieve this goal. Both teachers have different perspectives from their experiences working with Down Syndrome children for many years. The results are discussed in the next chapter.
4.4 Therapist’s Interview

On the other hand, an expert was questioned about the same issue with students that show Down Syndrome. A therapist who works at the Fundación Down de Puebla A.C [Puebla Down Foundation A.C] answered some questions related to her area of study and to know more about Down Syndrome children speaking development. The first question was related about the characteristics that Down children show and she mentioned various points that were given in chapter II, nevertheless, the most important thing in this answer is that the therapist commented the vocal characteristics that these children have and she answered:

*Down children, present muscle hypotonia in all their oral motor cavities and that is why they have problems to articulate with certain difficulty because of the protrusion lingual they present. However, if they have a good strengthening in their tongue and in that way they could develop a good articulation.*

María asserted that Down children show articulation problems, however, they can improve it. The specialist mentioned two unknown terms that are related to the development of the oral cavities of Down children. The first one is called muscle hypotonia that according to Clínica Alemana [German Clinic] (2008, paragraph 1) ‘hypotonia refers to the decrease in muscle tone’. This greatly affects the speech development of students with Down Syndrome. On the other hand, it could be said that if students with the syndrome want to learn another language such as English, they can do it as long as they have a therapy to develop their articulation problem, even in their mother tongue.

Continue with the interview, the therapist was asked about the types of Down Syndrome that exist and the differences between them and the specialist mentioned:
There are three types of Down Syndrome. They are mosaicism, translocation and trisomy 21, all of them are detected by doing a karyotype when the karyotype is done, the doctors specialized in genetics; determine what type of Down Syndrome the child shows.

María commented the three types of syndrome that exist and how to detect each one. The therapist continued explaining the characteristics of these children and it is different for each child, some of them have more pronounced features and some others do not. This depends on the type of syndrome the child has. In chapter II, the explanation of all of these features was mentioned in detail. Once, the doctor knows the results of the karyotype, he determines the type of syndrome in the patient. This helps parents to start a treatment on time according to the results. Parents play a significant role when this occurs.

Talking about the abilities that Down Syndrome children have, one of the most important abilities to learn a language or just to develop their own language is the ability to speak. As it is outstanding, Down children cannot speak clearly, this depends on how is developed their type of syndrome. Subsequently, the therapist expressed the following about this issue:

*Mosaicism is the one that has the best prognosis; however, if the child does not have an appropriate therapy in the articulation development, he or she is not going to reach the proper articulation.*

From the specialist’s experience, children who show mosaicism are the ones that can develop their speech with the appropriate therapy. In this case, parents have an important role as well. Sometimes parents think that taking their children to a special school will cover all their necessities and that is going to be enough for their formation. However,
parents need to know that their children should continue learning at home. If children have both attention, their growth will be more quickly than just having the preparation at school.

Continuing with the speaking development in Down children, the therapist gave her point of view about the way these children acquire new words and she mentioned:

*The therapeutic approach is very important in Down children because it shows the articulation forms, children should correlate the meaning with the signifier that means to relate the word with an image.*

The specialist declared that children can repeat and produce the words at the moment they see it, nonetheless, if they see the image, they could not say the exact word because it is not clear for them yet. In addition, they cannot understand abstract things, so that is why therapist work with pictograms and images to make them comprehend what the word is for, when to use it and why they are going to say it.

Going on the same issue about communication skill, it is interesting to know how Down children develop that skill. For that reason, the therapist expressed her opinion according to her experience:

*Down children communicate by acquiring new words using images or pictograms. One complex thing for them is to have a correct structure when they speak. For example, the phrase “I want bread” is complicated to produce it, but living together more with Down children, they can understand each other.*

The therapist stated that images and pictograms are useful for the development of speaking skill in Down children, nonetheless, they cannot easily form complex structures. Furthermore, the specialist concluded her answer saying that with the images she wants to reach an appropriate structure in order to make children have a spontaneous
articulation. Therefore, images have an important role in the learning process of Down children especially in the development of a better articulation in their speech.

One related issue that carried this research was the acquisition of a second language, in this case, English. The acquisition of a language implies the development of the four skills and the one this project is focused on is the speaking skill. However, the development of the speaking skill in Down students is a challenge for most of the English teachers that are not native speakers. The therapist gave her answer about this situation and she contended:

*To develop another language in Down children would be complicated from my point of view and this is because they do not manage their own language either. They are in contact with the Spanish language every single day with their friends, family and so on.*

The therapist expressed that for Down Syndrome children it is difficult to learn another language. Moreover, the therapist mentioned that because of the lack of vocabulary they have in their own language that will be too complicated to introduce a new language with new ways of articulation. They would need a special therapist to get the English language and that therapist would do the same as in Spanish therapy, showing images and the articulation forms. It would be complicated because structures are complex for them. Perhaps, if they were in contact with the English language as they do in Spanish, there would not be too many problems to acquire it.

Lastly, the specialist was asked about the exercises she applies to develop Down children’s articulation and she commented:
At the foundation, there are two different language areas. I work with some “bite blocks” and with this, I strengthen their bites, cheeks and lingual movements. In the other area, the specialist works with pictograms and with modes of articulation then she sets more common words that children use in everyday life to add more vocabulary.

Once again, María stated that she works with the strengthening of children’s mouth and the other therapist works with the articulation. Furthermore, the specialist needs to see how children articulate in order to reinforce their speech. If children have problems in the new word and they mispronounced it; the therapist has to improve the phoneme that is mispronounced. It is a good way to make children improve their speaking part. However, it takes time to develop their language acquisition and articulation skill. As soon as they start with their treatment, they can develop their skills faster.

Overviewing the different points of view and answers about the acquisition of a second language (L2) in Down Syndrome children, it could be observed different ways of thinking about the issue. Comparing the three perspectives from people who work every day with Down learners, it is possible to know how to work with them and who are the ones that can acquire a second language, English, as it is the case. It will be discussed in the next chapter about the conclusion deduced from the responses of each participant and the class observations.
CHAPTER V:

Results

The purpose of this chapter is to be aware about all the outcome of this research. Throughout this chapter, findings emerging from class execution, teachers’ performance and language therapist to name a few are discussed. Having children with different necessities is a complete challenge for language teachers because sometimes they are not specialized to teach in a correct way these type of students. In addition, teachers do not know how to treat Down children to make them have better performance and develop their skills while they are learning. Therefore, here it is the compilation of all the information required to let the teachers know if it is possible to develop speaking skills in Down Syndrome children.

Reminding all the previous information, this research project is a case study based on valuable information taken from two different institutions during their daily classes and activities where Down Syndrome children are involved. On the other hand, this research project mentions some characteristics, facts and social development that students with this disability include. Qualitative research was applied to carry out the investigation. In this chapter, the results are given in chronological order according to how the instruments were implemented.

5.1 Findings of the Research Questions

Throughout this research project, we could discuss about the aspects that involved Down Syndrome learners. That is why, at the beginning of the research some questions were set to go in depth and solve the problem. Talking about the first research question
related to the characteristics of Down Syndrome children, we could see all the main features that Down children show from the general to the specific. This means that we learned physical characteristics such as:

- Flatten facial features
- Protruding tongue
- Asian eyes
- Poor muscles tone

On the other hand, it was possible to know the types of Down Syndrome exist to know how to treat each case according to their characteristics. Syndromes such as Mosaicism, Translocation and Trisomy 21 were explained in detail in chapter II. All of this compilation of characteristics could help teachers to challenge themselves having Down students in their classrooms.

Besides, it is important to know the challenges that the teachers face during their teaching towards Down Syndrome learners. That is why the second research question was focused on teachers’ challenges. It was leading that during this investigation it could be seen that teachers have an essential part in teaching in not only Spanish language but also content courses to develop children’s skills in a complete manner. Teachers who teach disable students must investigate about the disability their students show in order to know how to achieve their goals in each class and at the same time to satisfy students’ necessities. In both cases at the two research contexts, as much the teacher from the foundation as the teacher from the public school have to deal with students’ problems every day. Each of them need to teach different subjects at different levels. That is one of
the challenges teachers face during classes. Thus, they need to adapt their strategies, materials and methods to make students acquire the topics they are learning.

As it was mentioned before, this research focuses on how Down Syndrome students can develop speaking skills in another language, English, looking through their native language, Spanish. Thus, the third research question is about course content in Spanish. Teachers lecture different subjects, even at the foundation, the teacher enlighten as in publics or private schools do. We could see that at each institution, teachers organized the topics in a “standard” way, it means, they adapted each of them to make students participate and understand the topics. However, advanced students needed more complex activities than the others did. As it is pointed, teachers taught in Spanish language and they used this language to make students learn new topics from the common curricula but also to develop their speaking skills. In both places, they were focused on the development of that skill because for teachers is important to communicate with similar and the rest of the society. One of the most outstanding approaches was the repetition of words, this is because Down Syndrome students can remember vocabulary and meaning by repeating every day. This last point could be an essential part to acquire a new language.

In different circumstances, teaching another language could sound difficult, however, having students with other abilities could be more challenging for language teachers. That is why the last question was set to prove if Down learners can acquire a second language, English, as it is the case. In chapter II, it could be seen that there are not researches about the acquisition of a new language in students with any disability.
Nevertheless, the teachers can adapt materials, strategies, methods, rubrics and assessments from students’ native language into the new language acquired. In the case of Down Syndrome learners, they use:

- Repetition of words
- Colorful images
- Realia
- Motivation

This last point is crucial for this type of students because they feel they can do whatever they want in different areas of their life. All the aspects mentioned above go together with more elements, such as teachers’ performance, class execution and parents’ role.

5.2 Class Execution

Classroom management is an important task in teaching. However, not all the teachers have the correct way to do it. Here is where the first issue is provided. Down children are intelligent in all senses and with correct guidance, they can improve some skills they need. Nevertheless, each school observed, needs to improve some things.

Throughout each observation, it could be realized that teachers did not plan classes; they only improvised the class, taking into account a textbook they had. Teachers based on that textbook to give activities to each student according to their necessities. At the foundation, the teacher was poorly organized, she wasted time in many occasions and
in the last observation class, she gave her best effort just because she was going to be evaluated for the director of that foundation and parents were going to attend the class.

On the other hand, public school was a little bit more organized maybe because the teacher has more experience-teaching children with any disability. Fortunately or unfortunately, there was a practitioner doing her teaching practices in the class observed. It was outstanding that this fact affected students’ performances because the practitioner did not have the ability to manage the group with kids that show different disabilities even when she was studying to be a specialized teacher.

Classes were not dynamic, organized nor attractive to catch students’ attention at any moment, so that students get distracted easily with something that found on the floor, on their backpack or in the classroom.

5.3 Classroom Organization and Class Observations

Teaching disabled students implies to observe each aspect carefully to take advantage of everything that surround them. Nonetheless, it is a difficult challenge to achieve when in the classroom there are children with different abilities. Down children, have diverse characteristics to take into account to teach them. Talking about classroom organization there was a lack of it at the public school and at the foundation. That lack of organization can be a handicap for students’ performance in all the possible ways of teaching.

In first place is the foundation. At the foundation, the classroom was adapted as a regular one; it means that the positions of the chairs and tables were the same as in public schools with the difference that the teacher’s desk was at the back. The position of the
teacher’s desk could be beneficial if the teacher uses it in the correct way, but it was not the case. By having the desk at the back of the classroom, the teacher was most of the time sitting down there without paying attention to the students in any part of the classroom. However, on the walls, there were big and colorful images to help students to practice previous knowledge.

Secondly, at the public school, the classroom was organized as a common classroom, the position of the tables; chairs and desk were located as the traditional way. In this case, the classroom did not have any poster, brilliant colors or something on the walls to help students to remember basic things. Classroom organization was designed to be more inclusive that is why they did not modify anything from the other public schools with regular students. Nevertheless, there was not enough space to interact or move the furniture in order to do some new activities or simply to implement a teaching strategy.

Unfortunately, teachers did not do nothing to change the methods or strategies in each class. On one side, at the foundation, the teacher did not have the interest to improve her methods, strategies, relationship, and attitude. It was incredible that the teacher was “teaching” in that way when she noticed that the classroom organization and the class execution were a tremendous chaos. On the other hand, at the public school, classroom organization was more controlled by the teacher. Perhaps, this strategy related to the inclusion does not help a lot to the students’ performance because they were most of the class time sitting down. However, the teacher had more control and more attention to the students even when the practitioner was lost in her class. In charts below, we could see the aspects teachers used during class observations:
In tables 5.1 to 5.3, it is leading the results of the class observations from Fundación Down de Puebla A.C. taking the main aspects for this research project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher did not introduce the topic for Spanish class.</td>
<td>*Repetition *Motivation</td>
<td>*Review *Copy sentences on the board and then in their notebooks *Add new words</td>
<td>*Worksheet (word search) *Whiteboard *Notebooks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1 Results from the first class observation

In the first class at the foundation, it was outstanding that students could not practice speaking skill; however, they could learn new vocabulary words. On the other hand, the teacher used common worksheets to do the activity for that class and one advanced student were waiting for more work, but the teacher did not give extra work for him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher did not introduce the topic</td>
<td>*Repetition *Motivation</td>
<td>*Review *Write some sentences on the board *Diverse work</td>
<td>*Whiteboard *Notebooks *Flashcards</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 Results from the second class observation

As it is leading, the teacher did not introduce the topic for the class. Repetition and motivation are a constant during her classes and that cause that students keep going on their work. Howbeit, the first activity took too long to continue with another other one and this provoked that some students get distracted throughout the activity. The teacher gave individual work at different levels but she did not explain the next activity to her students. It was difficult to know what the subject was teaching in this class time.
The teacher explained the topic the students learn

Warm-up

Strategies

Activities

Materials

*Motivation  *Team work

* Paste fruits on the poster

* Paste the names of the plant

* Complete the puzzle with their parents

* Complete a collage

*Answer a worksheet

* Whiteboard  *Poster (plant)

* Fruits (images)

* Puzzle

* Collage

* Worksheet

Table 5.3 Results from the third class observation

In the last class observation at the foundation, it could be seen that the teacher had a better organization, more material and activities for Science. Nevertheless, the class was not well organized, the teacher did not give clear instructions for students, thus, and students did not understand what they needed to do until the principal of the school helped the teacher to give the instructions. Even though, the teacher prepared more material and activities, it was a sample class. It means that students’ parents and the principal of the school were going to be observing students’ learning process.

Below, in tables 5.4 to 5.6, it is leading the results of the class observations from Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si taking the main aspects for this research project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher did not introduce the topic</td>
<td>* Repetition  * Motivation</td>
<td>* Ask for homework</td>
<td>* Whiteboard  * Notebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.4 Results from the first class observation

This first observation was Spanish class. The teacher did not give instructions to start the class; she just asked about students’ homework and then read it. However,
nobody did the homework to begging the class. The main teacher was sitting at the back of the classroom because the practitioner was teaching the topic. Students and teachers wasted time to continue the activity. Both, teacher and practitioner did not know what to do. The time for observing the class finished and the teachers did not solve the problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher ask about the activities they did the day before</td>
<td>*Repetition</td>
<td>*Write the date</td>
<td>*Whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Motivation</td>
<td>*Dictation</td>
<td>*Notebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.5 Results from the first class observation

Subsequently, in this occasion the practitioner imitated the teacher to develop the class as she does it. However, the objectives of the class were not achieved. The practitioner asked about the activities students did the day before and some students answered the question. Then, the practitioner dictated some words, but the main teacher observed that some students could not do the activity, so that she started to draw some squares as a guide. At the end of the class, it could be observed that teachers and students wasted time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-up</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher did not introduce the topic.</td>
<td>*Repetition</td>
<td>*Write the successor and predecessor</td>
<td>*Whiteboard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Speak slowly</td>
<td>*Complete the list of numbers</td>
<td>*Notebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.6 Results from the third class observation

In the last observation at the public school, the teacher was teaching Math. Until now, the teacher did not introduce the topic to make students involve into the activities
during class. However, this time students paid more attention to the numbers perhaps because the teacher used colorful flashcards to recognize the numbers of the activity. As we could see throughout the class observations the teacher influences in the students’ performance, nevertheless, teachers did not modify their lessons even when they were observed.

5.4 Teachers’ Performance

Being a teacher is not as easy as most of the people may think. Nevertheless, it is important to be the best version while teachers teach. This is because it is significant to have a good education and also to have a good performance and see our process during class time.

Teachers that teach disable students have a big challenge to achieve that is why they have to be well prepared to include them in a group and in the activities as well. However, this project was not clear teachers’ role. On one side, at the foundation the teacher in the classroom where the classes were observed was not a certified teacher, she was a psychologist and her strategies, material, class preparation and group management were not organized in any sense. The waste of time in each class was very noteworthy and she did not care about that even when the class was observed.

On the other hand, the teacher at the public school knew more about teaching aspects, notwithstanding, she was also a psychologist. The teacher explained more about the way in which Down children learn, but when the classes were observed, the strategies were not clear, the instructions, exercises and as well as the other teacher, she wasted time in many occasions. As it was mentioned before, during the observation class, there
was a practitioner and that did not help students to develop their skills. It was incredible that a future teacher “specialized” in teaching disable children were not motivated to teach them, she never felt like she wanted to improve her teaching methods, strategies or students’ performance.

At the end of the observations, the teacher who works at the public school mentioned that there were not teachers specialized in teaching children with disabilities when she was hired, that is why she was selected to teach in a public school because her profile was the most appropriate to teach those children. Thus, they do not know how to perform as teachers even when they have taught for a long time.

5.5 Findings from Teachers’ Interviews

As we have discussed through this chapter, teachers play an essential part in students’ development. That is why the questions made to each teacher have a big significance. In the next table 5.7 below, it is a comparison between the teachers’ responses of each question:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>DS children learning</th>
<th>Strategies to Develop Speaking</th>
<th>Teaching Methods</th>
<th>Difficulties to Develop Speaking</th>
<th>Materials for Speaking</th>
<th>DS Inclusion</th>
<th>Inclusion in Regular Schools</th>
<th>Parents’ Role</th>
<th>Students’ Assessment</th>
<th>DS Treatment</th>
<th>Extra Activities and Students’ Performance</th>
<th>English as a Second Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Fatima</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Images</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Images Sounds</td>
<td>Level of Activities</td>
<td>Quite Important</td>
<td>Using a Rubric</td>
<td>Like Others</td>
<td>Yes, they have/ To develop other skills/ It does not affect</td>
<td>Depending on the syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Dario</td>
<td>Chronological Age</td>
<td>Repetition</td>
<td>Troncoso method</td>
<td>Finding out Students’ Vocabulary</td>
<td>The ones the Teacher knows</td>
<td>Talk to DS Students</td>
<td>Lack of Training</td>
<td>Essential Part</td>
<td>Using a Rubric</td>
<td>Like Others</td>
<td>Yes, they have/ To develop other skills/ It does not affect</td>
<td>Depending on the parents’ compromise/ Repetition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.7 Results from Teachers’ Interviews
As it is leading, repetition and motivation are two of the most important things that teachers need to use constantly when teaching children with Down Syndrome. In addition, the use of images, realia and colorful stuff complements the development of Down students’ skills. On the other hand, not all the important part of learning process is for teachers, parents’ role is crucial for their children performance as well. If teachers make it easier for students, parents need to complete that task with their children at home. Finally, in the question about the acquisition of a second language, English as it is the case; both teachers mentioned that it depends on the type of syndrome the student show and the parents’ compromise towards their children.

5.6 Language Therapist

In the research project, a therapist working at the foundation was interviewed in order to know more about Down Syndrome children articulation and extra valuable information that was presented before. Nevertheless, people at this time do not believe that those Down Syndrome children can achieve whatever they want to do for their life. This is the case of this peculiar therapist. The experienced therapist was interviewed after the teachers’ interviews because it was important to know more information from someone who knew more about the syndrome and its characteristics, but the result was different.

While the therapist was questioned about the information required, she was not sure how to answer the questions given. She showed a negative attitude against the improvement in Down students especially, she changed her mood after the question about learning another language in which she mentioned that it is impossible that this type of students can acquire another language if they do not manage their own.
She was constantly contradicted herself mentioning that Down children could acquire the language but sometimes she commented that they could not do it. In the end, her attitude was not the one that was expected to this research project. We could know more about some characteristics, ways of develop speaking skills, how they acquire new words and the children that can learn another language. Even though, the answers had valuable information, the therapist do not believe that Down Syndrome children could learn another language.

5.7 Limitations of the Research

In each project, there exist any drawbacks in different situations. This research project was not an exception. For example, to complete in an extraordinary way the project, it was missing some interviews with the children’s parents; however, most of them were not able to give information about this controversial syndrome. Some parents thought that getting more information and asking about their children’s ailment could be personal and offensive.

Another obstacle in the research was the lack of information on this topic. Nevertheless, there was some information about it in some journals, websites, books and guides. Despite, it was adapted some information not only from Down Syndrome but also from other disabilities. Finally, one of the most important issue during this research was that in both institution did not permit to observe the rubrics they use to assess Down students and the programs they follow as a guide according to students’ necessities.
5.8 Recommendations for Further Research

More researching is needed to understand much better this wide topic. The case of Down Syndrome has many details to describe and pay attention to. However, this topic has been explored in a medical area but not in the educational part as it was exposed throughout this research project. Talking about education, teaching children with any disability is a big challenge in any area of study. Unfortunately, most of the teachers have not focused on increase special education, maybe because it is a complicated task to achieve and teachers need to study and work harder to contribute to this issue.

Regrettably, this society does not care about people with disabilities and does little for all of them. There are a few that want to include them in a single environment where there is not barrier. Teachers can overcome all those barriers that unintentionally, they create in their minds as something impossible to achieve. If everybody involves with problems like this, people could feel part of a whole.

Regardless, never it is late to start to do something for education and for children. Everyone deserves the opportunity to have the same education than others, no matter the conditions of each person. In the end, this provides a good starting point for discussion and further research to benefit more people.

Conclusion

This study made me feel satisfied because thank to this I could observe widely how Down Syndrome students develop their skills in their daily life. It is sad to know that children with different abilities need to overcome a list of obstacles and sometimes parents do not support them. Most of the times, teachers are the ones who most care these
learners but when students are at home, they are in charge of their parents and most of them do not practice with their children because of different circumstances. Nevertheless, parents must do their work with their children to make them achieve their goals.

On the other hand, this situation inside the classroom, made me think about all the teachers that work every day with children having different necessities. However, this research influenced my professional life because it made me feel I need to be prepared for any similar situation and solve it to help more people to achieve their goals.
REFERENCES


Appendices

Appendix 1

Therapist’s Interview Guide

The purpose of the interview is to gain more information about a specific area where Down Syndrome children develop their speaking skills (articulation).

1. What are the main characteristics that down children show?
2. How many types of Down syndrome exist?
3. What are the difference between those syndromes?
4. In which type of Down syndrome the speaking skill can be developed?
5. What is the way in which students learn new words?
6. How do they develop their communicative skills?
7. Do you think down children can learn another language such as English?
8. What are the exercises that you apply to help students develop their articulation problem?
Appendix 2

Teachers’ Interview Guide

The purpose of the interview is to obtain data about teaching area to know teachers’ opinions.

1. How do they learn new words?
2. Which strategies do you use to develop their speaking skills?
3. Which teaching methods do you use?
4. What do you think is the most difficult part to develop their speaking skills?
5. Which material do you normally use to help students to develop this skill?
6. How do you manage the class to include each student to make them participate?
7. Do you think that is better not include down children to regular schools?
8. Do you think that parents influence in students’ performance and learning process?
9. How do you assess down children?
10. How do you need to talk to down children?
11. Do they have extracurricular activities during class time?
12. Are the extracurricular activities detrimental to students’ performance and during class?
13. Do you think down children can learn a new language such as English?
Appendix 3

Class Observation Format.

This format was designed according to the activities, strategies, materials, development and notes of the research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher's name</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class time</td>
<td>Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. students</td>
<td>Objective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School name</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACTIVITIES/STRATEGIES</th>
<th>MATERIALS</th>
<th>DEVELOPMENT/DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS/NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Figures
Figure 4.1 Classroom Organization at Fundación Down de Puebla
Figure 4.2 Classroom Organization at Centro de Atención Múltiple Yolot’si
¡Muy Buenos días! Hoy me encuentro con la licenciada Fátima, docente en la Fundación Down de Puebla, la licenciada tiene cuatro años de experiencia como terapeuta y dos años y medio como docente dentro de la fundación. La licenciada Fátima imparte clases a algunos de los estudiantes dentro de la fundación, esto con el fin de ayudarlos a recibir una educación en la que se pueda obtener la autonomía de cada estudiante y la inserción a la sociedad.

Cabe mencionar que esta entrevista tiene como objetivo, obtener información que se utilizará en un proyecto de investigación con fines académicos enfocado a la educación especial y a la adquisición de una segunda lengua con niños que presentan Síndrome de Down.

**Entrevistador:** ¡Muy buenos días licenciada!

**Maestra:** ¡Hola, buenos días!

**Entrevistador:** ¿Cómo se encuentra?

**Maestra:** Muy bien gracias, aquí un poco trabajando.

**Entrevistador:** Muy bien, tengo una entrevista para usted, con propósitos académicos como ya se lo había mencionado, esto con el fin de abastecer de información un proyecto de investigación. La primera pregunta es, desde su punto de vista y su experiencia, ¿cómo aprenden mejor los niños con Síndrome de Down?
Maestra: A través de cosas más visuales, llamativas como son colores muy fuertes que les llame la atención o también en lo que es la inserción, insertar algunos materiales como rompecabezas o material sobre la sombra en la que se trabaja.

Entrevistador: Y, ¿cómo aprenden nuevas palabras?

Maestra: A través de estarles diciendo que repitan la palabra y mostrándoles imágenes.

Entrevistador: ¿Qué estrategias utiliza para desarrollar su habla?

Maestra: El presentarles las imágenes comunes y saber en qué momento se les deben enseñar por ejemplo las frutas, las verduras, cualquier cosa que se esté llevando a cabo.

Entrevistador: ¿Qué métodos de enseñanza utiliza para desarrollar el habla en los niños?

Maestra: Utilizo el de estar mostrándoles la figura y estarla pronunciando, estar en cada momento tratando de que puedan repetirla e igual les pongo algunos ejercicios para que puedan retener o puedan hablar pero también sirve mucho la terapia de lenguaje en la que están teniendo ellos.

Entrevistador: ¿Qué cree que es lo más difícil de desarrollar el habla?

Maestra: Lo más difícil para que ellos desarrollen su habla es la motivación porque la mayoría habla por la motivación que se les da tanto en casa como aquí en la escuela y hay algunos papás que en casa pues a lo mejor por el tiempo de su trabajo no los llegan a motivar tanto como para hacer que se esfuercen sus hijos.
Entrevistador: ¿Qué material utiliza normalmente para ayudar a desarrollar el habla de los niños, es decir, libros de texto, imágenes, etc.?

Maestra: Imágenes y sonidos son los que llego a trabajar con ellos para que puedan tener esa habla y lleguen a emitir sonidos.

Entrevistador: ¿Cómo maneja la clase para incluir a todos y que participen en la clase?

Maestra: Ponerles el mismo tema en diferente nivel dependiendo cada uno sus habilidades, por ejemplo si vemos el tema de las plantas a lo mejor a los que están más avanzados les ponemos lo que son las palabras y ya saben un poco más distinguir y hablar y a los otros a lo mejor colorear las partes de las plantas para que distingan la planta de qué color es, cuáles son sus partes, eeehhh… A través del nombre que se les pone ellos van e insertan la palabra a donde se asemeja la palabra, la sombra.

Entrevistador: ¿Cree que el no incluir a los niños a una escuela regular es mejor?

Maestra: ¿Que no asistan a una escuela regular? Mmm... creo que depender de cada uno de ellos, de sus habilidades, si creo que es mucho mejor en una escuela especial porque tienen la atención necesaria para cada uno de ellos. Y en una escuela normal llegan a tener tantos alumnos en un grupo que a lo mejor al niño que tiene Síndrome de Down lo dejan a parte o no le ponen tanta la atención como acá se las damos.

Entrevistador: ¿Cree que también influencian mucho los padres de familia en el aprendizaje de sus hijos?

Maestra: Sí, bastante. Influye en el que estén tras de ellos, estén con ellos trabajando día a día en su casa, ya que con eso se logra que el conocimiento sea más parejo.
Entrevistador: ¿Cómo evalúa a sus estudiantes con este síndrome?

Maestra: En cuanto a que los evalúo, ¿a qué te refieres?

Entrevistador: Conforme a sus conocimientos, el proceso que han avanzado, que han logrado durante la clase.

Maestra: aaah ¿cómo su evaluación, su evolución en cada uno?

Entrevistador: Así es.

Maestra: Creo que son muy inteligentes y ellos pueden avanzar y ellos pues llegan hasta donde los papás quieren realmente, nosotros nada más estamos aquí pues para formarlos en cierta manera pero en general la chamba dura es de los papás porque es todos los días estar con ellos.

Entrevistador: Ok, entonces no existe como tal una rúbrica en la que ustedes vayan verificando si es que si va aprendiendo el estudiante o no.

Maestra: Si, si la tenemos y de ahí vamos basándonos en que si aprende o no aprende, ellos sé que lo logran y es a través de estar con ellos todos los días repasando lo mismo lo mismo y se logra el aprendizaje, ya que se ha consolidado entonces ya se pone en práctica, ahora si como algo autónomo ya no nada más como repetitivo porque a lo mejor eso es lo que se hace que de las clases muy repetitivas, repetitivas, repetitivas y al último a lo mejor es casi lo mismo pero con otras estrategias y ellos ya lo consolidaron, el aprendizaje.

Entrevistador: ¿Cómo se les debe hablar a los niños con este síndrome?
Maestra: Pues igual que a todos, con cariño, con amor y si con un poco más de limites porque a veces llegan a ser un poco más necios.

Entrevistador: Ellos reciben actividades extra durante el tiempo de clase.

Maestra: Si

Entrevistador: ¿Cómo cuáles?

Maestra: Reciben lo que es danza, música, artes, educación física…

Entrevistador: ¿Eso le perjudica en su desarrollo dentro del salón de clases?

Maestra: No, eso al contrario les ayuda a cada uno a mejorar lo que es su motricidad fina, motricidad gruesa sus conocimientos, habilidades y conocer un poco más el potencial de cada uno de ellos.

Entrevistador: Desde el enfoque como docente, ¿cree que este tipo de actividades extra le perjudican en su clase?

Maestra: No

Entrevistador: Por ultimo maestra, ¿usted cree que los niños con este síndrome pueden aprender un idioma, como por ejemplo inglés?

Maestra: Yo creo que dependiendo del caso de los niños, porque aquí no nada más tenemos con síndrome de Down a lo mejor se juntan con autismo o un débil visual, a lo mejor que tengan débil auditivo entonces dependiendo.

Entrevistador: Ok, entonces depende mucho de sí está muy avanzado.
Maestra: Si está avanzado o la motivación porque si se puede aprender.

Entrevistador: Bueno pues muchas gracias maestra por esta entrevista y por su tiempo.

Maestra: ¡Gracias!