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PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES

**VISUAL MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS**

RESEARCH PROJECT

As a prerequisite to obtain a:

**BACHELOR´S DEGREE IN PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND
FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

Author: Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés

Advisor: Diego Nieto

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Advisor's Approval

In my role as Advisor of the research paper under the title “Visual Aids for Children With Special Needs” prepared by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, undergraduate student of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages Major, at School of Educational Sciences and Languages at Universidad Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena I declare that after oriented, studied and reviewed the project, I approve in its entirety because it meets the requirements and is sufficient for its submission to evaluation of the academic tribunal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Diego Nieto H.", is written over a horizontal line.

Nieto Herrera Diego Josue, MSc.

ADVISOR

Statement of Authorship

I, Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, with ID number 2450657487 undergraduate students from Universidad Estatal Peninsula de Santa Elena, School of Education Science and Languages, as prerequisite to obtaining a bachelor's degree in Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages in our role as authors of the research project "VISUAL MATERIAL FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS" certify that this study work is our authorship, except for queue quotes, statements and reflections used in this research paper.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Adriana Inés Yagual Siavichay", written over a horizontal line.

Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés

CI: 2450657487

AUTHOR

Declaration

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Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés

CI: 2450657487

AUTHOR

Board of Examiners



Ing. Eliana León Abad, MSc.

**PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL
AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE MAJORS
DIRECTOR**




Lcdo. Jefferson Sánchez Paguay, MSc

SPECIALIST PROFESSOR



Lcdo. Diego Nieto Herrera, MSc.

ADVISOR



Lcda. Verónica Limones Borbor, MSc.

UIC ADVISOR

Dedication

I want to dedicate this work to my mother, who has been instrumental in my life, second only to God. She is my greatest source of strength, and without her unwavering support, I might not have achieved many of my goals. My gratitude to her is immense, more than words can express. It is through my actions, however, that I intend to recompense her for all she has done for me. This thesis stands as a tribute to her sacrifice, and to the many things she inspires me to achieve, because she taught me a great lesson: to believe in myself.

She was the one who instilled in me faith in Jesus, my eternal rock. She taught me about essential values and principles that guide me to be a better person. Her example inspires me to follow and work for my goals, because she has always been so hardworking, courageous, strong, honest, kind and full of God's grace. My mother and God are the true pillars of my life. For this, and so much more, I want to help her achieve her dreams she may have abandoned in her youth to raise us and help my siblings and me become the good people we are today.

Thank you forever, mom. This stage, which is about to end, opens the doors to a new phase where, with God's help, we will achieve great things. I look forward to gradually fulfilling the purpose for which I was created.

With gratitude and love

Adriana Siavichay

Abstract

The education of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) faced obstructions from traditional, text-heavy, and listening-based materials that failed to address diverse learning profiles. This deficiency generated frustration and academic barriers. This research aimed to analyze the role and application of diverse visual materials in enhancing EFL learning for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Intellectual Disability.

The study executed a qualitative phenomenological approach that utilized semi-structured interviews with primary English teachers. The researchers explored their experiences and perceptions regarding the use and effectiveness of visual support material in the classroom. The study's findings confirmed that visual aids, such as flashcards, pictograms, and technology-based videos, proved indispensable and highly effective for teaching EFL to students with SEN. These tools improved visual memory, facilitated the comprehension of abstract concepts, and significantly boosted vocabulary acquisition and communication. Furthermore, the systematic use of visual sequences helped reduce anxiety and promoted focus in students with ASD and ADHD.

The study concluded that success relied on multisensory activities and the critical individualization of materials. Nonetheless, it identified persistent challenges, primarily the insufficient specialized training for teachers and the lack of time available to adapt materials individually, as the teachers desired.

Keywords: Visual Aids, Special Education Needs, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Inclusive Education.

Resumen

La enseñanza del Idioma Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL) para niños con Necesidades Educativas Especiales (NEE) afrontó obstrucciones porque los materiales tradicionales, centrados en texto y escucha, no se adaptaron a los diversos perfiles de aprendizaje. Esta deficiencia generó frustración y barreras académicas.

Esta investigación analizó el rol y la aplicación de diferentes materiales visuales para optimizar el aprendizaje de EFL en niños con NEE, enfocándose en el Trastorno del Espectro Autista (TEA), el Trastorno por Déficit de Atención e Hiperactividad (TDAH) y la Discapacidad Intelectual. El estudio empleó un enfoque cualitativo y fenomenológico y recopiló las experiencias y opiniones de profesores de inglés de primaria mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas. Los hallazgos confirmaron que los materiales visuales, como *Flashcards*, pictogramas y videos, resultaron esenciales y altamente efectivos. Estas herramientas mejoraron la memoria visual, facilitaron la comprensión de conceptos abstractos y potenciaron la adquisición de vocabulario y la comunicación. Además, el uso sistemático de secuencias visuales ayudó a reducir la ansiedad y promovió el enfoque en estudiantes con TEA y TDAH. El estudio concluyó que el éxito residió en la actividad multisensorial y en la individualización crítica del material. No obstante, se identificaron desafíos persistentes, siendo los más recurrentes la insuficiente formación especializada de los docentes y la falta de tiempo para adaptar los materiales de manera individualizada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Ayudas visuales, Necesidades Educativas especiales, Trastorno del espectro autista, Trastorno de déficit de atención/hiperactividad, Educación inclusiva.

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Introduction

The current educational landscape is marked by the growing inclusiveness of classrooms, as change that requires a fundamental rethinking of conventional pedagogy. Traditional practices, historically designed for neurotypical development, often fail to recognize and accommodate the diverse learning profiles of students with Special Educational Needs. In this context, teaching English as a Foreign Language represents a major challenge as its materials are often focused on text and listening skills. These methods fail to address the specific complexities of memory, language processing, and attention deficits that characterize students with NEE,

For this group of students, the structured schedules, pictograms and graphic organizers become indispensable tools to facilitate their learning process. These visual resources are crucial, they help to fix the fleeting and transients nature of spoken words in a permanent and accessible memory. It contrasts with traditional methods, where the lack of systematic visual support leads to frustration and academic disconnection.

There is a significant problem: Many EFL teachers do not use specialized or adapted visual materials in their daily classes. The primary barriers identify for this lack of systematic implementation are twofold: on the other hand, a systematic lack of pre-design tools or specific curriculum resources. This situation forces teachers to use a standardized methodology, which unfortunately perpetuates inequalities in learning outcomes. The study focuses om students with Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and Intellectual Disability. The main objective is to generate in depth knowledge about how the strategic implementation of visual aids can transform the educational experience for these children and equip professionals to design and implement best practices, creating an inclusive and dynamic learning environment.

Chapter I

The Problem

Title

Visual Material for Children with Special Needs

Problem Statement

In education, a common issue regarding a child learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) who has special educational needs (SEN) is that the traditional language teaching materials rely heavily on exposition that is text-heavy and listening-based. When the learning materials are carefully designed to conform to the curriculum, tailored parents often develop the resources for neurotypical development. These resources fail to recognize the many different learning profiles of children with SEN, which could be based on memory, language processing, attentional, or understanding of abstractly based concepts. The result is that students with SEN are left to decode written texts, process rapid instructions (listening to language against written tasks), or even learn vocabulary, grammar rules, and other important constructs, without any meaningful multisensory modulations of the instructional material. The result is that children with SEN experience frustration and disengagement with a barrier to academic progress in their foreign language acquisition.

Using visual material or aids is particularly important with SEN in all educational settings, as their strongest skill is on their visual learning ability and helps to alleviate their learning difficulties. Visual supports (schedules, symbols, and graphic organizers) are vital for an inclusive EFL classroom as they transform fleeting spoken words into a lasting, visual reference. This significantly enhances comprehension, provides routine for reducing anxiety about reading and interpreting a text, and can help make abstract topics concrete. This multi-sensory approach ultimately enhances all students' memory and independence.

Despite the clear benefits, many EFL instructors do not use specialized visual materials in their classrooms for students with special needs. Primary reasons include insufficient training in adapted instruction and a scarcity of ready-made, accessible materials, which prompts teachers to devote scarce time to developing adaptive materials. A third challenge is teachers perceiving those materials take too long in the lesson.

The barriers to effectively delivering EFL instruction to children with special needs are multifaceted. The key barriers include a lack of training in special needs pedagogies and use of visual materials, to a relative systemic shortage of resources (curriculum-specific materials and technologies). In some ways, it results in partially or entirely inadequate levels of knowledge around pedagogy and the availability of resources, along with prescribing to a one-size-fits-all model of delivery, that will ultimately create inequitable learning outcomes for students with special needs. This research is important because few studies have explored how visual aids served as an effective instructional tool for EFL students with special needs. The study aims to validate the impact of visual aids; define the best practices; and establish strategies that incorporate visual aids. The findings of this research will have important implications to improving teacher training and curriculum that affect reasonable language education for EFL students with special needs.

Problem Formulation

How does the use of various types of visual materials in class activities help to enhance students' language skills (vocabulary, grammar and communication) in English Learning for children with special needs?

Research Questions

- What are the different types of visual materials applied in English Language learning for children with special needs?
- How do visual materials contribute to strengthening language skills, such as vocabulary, grammar or communication in students with special needs?
- What are the most effective activities where children with special needs can use the visual materials in English classes to promote the active learning and participation?

Objectives

General objective

To analyze the role and application of different visual material in enhancing English language learning for children with special needs.

Specific Objectives

- To identify the different types of visual materials used in English Language learning for children with special needs.
- Analyze the Cognitive and Pedagogical Impact of these visual materials, justifying their benefits to strengthen EFL learning and reduce Cognitive Load/Anxiety in children with SEN (Special Educational Needs).
- To explore the methodological and resource challenges that restrict the effective implementation of visual supports in EFL teaching.

Justification

This research is justified on multiple levels and it addresses a very important need in the realm of specialized education. As classrooms become more inclusive, the differences in learning styles and needs among students with disabilities necessitate reconsideration of a conventional focus on verbal communication (pedagogy). In this situation, visual strategies serve as a fundamental basis for facilitating their learning process and their personal and social capacity for functioning. It is an excellent stimulus to support the notion that visual materials are an important element for the intervention of this population. (Bidari & Yanti, 2021)

Even though they are still seen as valuable; tension exists in unspecified and evidence-based classroom use. The majority of teachers are using the materials on intuition or anecdotal use without consideration of which material addresses a specific need and how to seal all the pedagogical potential or built-in features. This creates a significant gap between theory and practice which limits their effectiveness and leads to frustration on the part of the teacher and the student. This underscores the need to better define the teacher's roles and strategies when teaching students with special needs (Azka, 2025)

This research is important because it attempts to fill this gap. By qualitatively analyzing different research studies on the topic, as well as utilizing teachers' personal experiences, this thesis will serve as a resource for the selection, creation, and implementation of visual materials in an educational context. The intent is to recommend the most effective strategies and connect those recommendations to conditions like autism spectrum disorder or intellectual disability (Zambrano Villa, 2024) thereby providing education professionals with materials that empower them.

This research has implications beyond the academic realm; the results will create positive educational experiences for children with special needs through utilization of a better quality of inclusion and development of cognitive and socio-emotional growth. By providing teachers with the necessary tools and knowledge, this research aims to optimize student outcomes and well-being, reaffirming the fundamental role of visual materials as a pillar of inclusive pedagogy.

Chapter II

Theoretical Framework

Background

According to The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education and Solines Alencastro (2013), Educational inclusion encourages to see every individual as a distinct and unique individual, acknowledging differences and prioritizing individual needs. The aim is to modify education access so that it applies to all students, regardless of disability, by regarding each individual as a whole. This approach is crucial in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms where teachers must adapt strategies for conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to ensure effective learning for all (Cedillo Tello & Argudo Serrano, 2024). Educational Inclusion serves as a key aim throughout the education system, designed to attain the inclusion of students with special educational needs.

Within this context, we find the definition of the group with special educational needs (SEN) is defined, where article 47 of the organic law of intercultural educated (LOEI) indicates that learning intends to have a focus for everyone, including students with:

Any type of disability (physical, intellectual or mental), Different language or ethnic group, Health condition or human mobility situation, Juvenile offenders, incidents of violence or addictions, amongst others.

Specifically targeting the first group, research highlights the need for effective strategies to teach English to children with intellectual disabilities, given the unique challenges this group presents (Zambrano Villa, 2024). This work focuses in the first

group previously mentioned which are Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder and Intellectual Disability.

A child with special needs is defined as those who have a learning problem or a disability that makes learning or other activities more challenging than it is for most children their age (The Jamaica Association for the Deaf, 2018; Nidirect Government Services, 2015). The term itself is sometimes considered an outdated way to refer to a child who has a disability and requires special education, healthcare, or other services (American Psychological Association, 2023).

A child may be identified as having special needs due to a wide range of conditions (The Jamaica Association for the Deaf, 2018). These can include developmental, learning, intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional, or behavioral disabilities (American Psychological Association, 2023). More specifically, this group of children can include those with a slower development due to a condition like Mental Retardation, or individuals with a Speech and Language Impairment that affects their ability to express themselves or understand others (The Jamaica Association for the Deaf, 2018). Other examples include those with a Physical Disability such as cerebral palsy or vision problems, as well as children with Learning Disabilities that can distort sensory information (The Jamaica Association for the Deaf, 2018). Emotional or behavioral problems, such as antisocial behaviors, can also be a factor (The Jamaica Association for the Deaf, 2018). These difficulties may show up in schoolwork, communication, or behavior, and parents can seek help and advice from teachers, specialists, and voluntary organizations (Nidirect Government Services, 2015).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Visual Strength

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurological disorder that affects the brain functions involved in social aspects and communication (Bidari and Yanti, 2021). In the field of learning, students with autism often present barriers that hinder their language learning; not surprisingly, language and communication are aspects that have a negative impact on the learning process (Meynard). In particular, these pupils often have difficulty communicating and relating to their peers and have problems grasping the social use of words (Meynard).

Continuing along the visual path as a strength, academic literature has demonstrated the effectiveness of visual materials for teaching English to students with autism (Bidari and Yanti).

Visual resources are crucial elements in stimulating the student's attention and helping the transmission of information (Meynard). Its use allows students to take and maintain interest in the content of the material, and in turn enables the teacher to keep control of the class (Meynard). Specific visual resources which have proved useful for vocabulary teaching are: Realia, Flashcards, Chest or Teaching Gestures, Body Gestures, Writing on the Blackboard, Picture Dictionaries (Meynard). It is important that the EFL material be at the level of the student with ASD, and often "image-rich" resources corresponding to those of the primary education level are used. (Meynard)

Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Research focused on ADHD focuses on teaching strategies, but does emphasize the need to use more effective and inclusive teaching mechanisms for students with ADHD in teaching English (Cedillo Tello and Argudo-Serrano, 2024). To the extent that it takes into account the characteristics of ADHD (attention deficits and hyperactivity),

visual materials play a fundamental structuring and focusing role in the teaching of English as a foreign language:

- **Structure:** Visual aids (schedules, rules, etc.) help to structure the environment, which is key for managing impulsiveness and lack of attention.
- **Focus:** As in autism, visual materials (flashcards, multimedia content, etc.) have the function of maintaining attention and reducing the distraction that often accompanies ADHD.

To conclude, the research shows that visual materials are not only a support resource but also constitute a basic didactic strategy suited to the learning styles of pupils with autism, to the requirements of enhancing the visual memory of students with intellectual disabilities; to the demands for attention and structure of students with ADHD.

Intellectual Disability and Visual Memory as an Axis of Intervention

Intellectual disability is characterized by slow, late and incomplete acquisition of cognitive skills, which has a direct impact on communication and personal autonomy.

Communication skills are based on certain cognitive processes such as memory

Empirical research has shown a high significant positive correlation between the level of communication and visual memory in schoolchildren with ID (Vega Guerra and De La Peña Álvarez).

This connotation has direct educational implications, i.e., intervention programs for the development of communication (and therefore EFL) must have as their main focus the enhancement of visual memory levels to improve the academic and social development of these students (Vega Guerra and de la Peña Álvarez).

For the teaching of English to pupils with ID, specific didactic strategies must be established as well as the elaboration of an Individualized Curricular Adaptation; and

Instructional strategies that work well for EFL in this group include the use of technology and pictograms (Zambrano Villa and Vaca-Cárdenas)

The Challenges that Children with Special Needs Face

For children with disabilities, a lack of societal infrastructure and negative attitudes can make it difficult to access a meaningful education (UNESCO, 2003). While primary education may target children with disabilities as a priority group, the necessary resources for true inclusion are often missing (UNESCO, 2003). Schools face a number of challenges, including a severe shortage of teachers who are trained to accommodate these students in a regular classroom setting. Overly large class sizes, often with more than 50 students, further complicate the issue, making it unrealistic to effectively integrate special needs students and nearly impossible for teachers to select suitable teaching methods (Kristensen, 1997; Clark & Shore, 1998).

Beyond the classroom, students with disabilities can face social and communication barriers. Through education, parents can connect with others who have similar experiences, find support groups, and access relevant services and educational materials (White & Furlong, 2020). This continuous learning helps parents stay current on the latest research and treatments, empowering them to make informed decisions and adapt to their child's changing needs over time (Clark & Wilson, 2022).

Pedagogical Basis

The educational foundations for using visual supports in order to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to children with special needs is drawn from Constructivism, and the legitimate principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) which are usually based on the visual spatial learning style. In essence, Constructivism (or social Constructivism) embodies a belief that learners actively construct knowledge by connecting new learning to existing mental models (Piaget, Vygotsky).

For numerous children with special needs (e.g. Autism Spectrum Disorder, Dyslexia, or Intellectual Disabilities), visual supports serve as an important concrete anchor to assist in linking new learning to their mental models. UDL extensively discusses providing a multiplicity of modes of representation to provide a more inclusive and accessible learning experience. These modes of representation include visual supports or visual aids, which become a critical mode representation. As you change spoken, ephemeral language into permanent, concrete artifacts, visual aids lower cognitive load, and take advantage of the brain's ability to process images faster and more efficiently than fleeting auditory input. Visual supports positively impact understanding, retention, and development of communicative skills.

Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky)

The purely auditory input common in EFL overloads the working memory of students with SEN. Therefore, visual support reduces Cognitive Load by presenting information in a segmented and permanent format. This process prevents mental overload, improving attention and processing, and facilitates the successful transfer of information to long-term memory.

The pedagogical value of visual materials is based on Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978). Vygotsky contends that learning takes place first on a social plane through interaction. As part of this process, visual supports (pictograms, organizers, schedules) are an important mediational tool that promotes communication and internalization of concepts. The educator uses these visuals to implement Scaffolding, which is a technique that provides temporary and concrete support to engage in a the cognitive load of a complex linguistic task (grammar or output) . Visual materials therefore allow students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) to operate and achieve success in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Thus, we can ensure that learning takes place in an active, social and successful process.

Information Processing Theory

The rationale for visual support is to enhance efficiency in the brain, which is explained through the Information Processing Theory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). Because EFL (English as a Foreign Language) instruction is purely auditory and ephemeral, it is causing unnecessary Extraneous Cognitive Load on the Working Memory of pupils with the (English as a Foreign Language), particularly those with SEND (Special Educational Needs), in particular ADHD and ASD (autism spectrum disorder).

Visual support counteracts this effect because visual support presents information permanently and in a partible format. This process reduces Cognitive Load, so the pupil is not forced to exert mental energy trying to recall the instruction or vocabulary, and instead can refer to the visual as needed and at their own pace. However, by preventing overload, this allows attention and processing to be optimized to memory, resulting in success in the transfer of linguistics information to long term memory.

Dual-Coding Theory by Allan Paivio (1971)

As an additional basis alongside the cognitive basis, Allan Paivio's (1971) dual-coding theory discusses the advantages of visual material in relation to vocabulary learning. Paivio states that the brain operates two channels of coding: verbal (for words) and visual (for images).

When pictograms or flashcards are used, they activate both channels simultaneously and create a dual mental representation that is much stronger and easier to retrieve from memory than one channel coded information. This concept of dual-coding is further a rationale for teachers to use visual supports to foster retention of vocabulary or to help students recall grammatical rules with diagrams.

The Inclusive Education Framework and English

The framework of Inclusive Education implies that educational systems have to be adapted to the characteristics of the pupil/er and not vice versa (NCSE, 2024). In the case of Teaching English as an External Language, methodological adaptation is a major challenge. According to various studies, the main difficulties in this respect are related to the poor training of teachers and the shortage of materials adapted to special educational needs (NEE) (Lorente Sancho, 2015). Visual aids are tools or devices to be considered in the classroom to improve the understanding of learning content in education (Bidari and Yanti, 2021; NCSE, 2024).

The English Learning in Children with Special needs

Teaching English to children with special needs requires a specialized approach. The focus is on adapting methods and materials to help students develop language, communication, social, and cognitive skills. The ultimate goal is to build English

proficiency and foster critical life skills, enabling these children to participate more fully in their communities.

However, students that are learning English and children with disabilities face considerable challenges. These students straddle the intersection of cultural, linguistic, and disability diversities, creating a complex landscape. Scholars and advocates have identified a number of problems that arise within this intersection, such as schools may favoring instructional models that have only English special education programs over dual-language models. Language barriers between the school and the families are also extremely challenging, not to mention the limited availability of teachers who are prepared to engage with the unique needs of students with this intersection (Najaro, 2024).

This situation is further complicated by a general lack of policy. A review of practices for identifying learning disabilities in EL students across the country revealed that some states have no specific policies on the matter (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). To address this, school psychologists must be prepared to accurately and appropriately assess and intervene with culturally and linguistically diverse students (Scott, Boynton Hauerwas, & Brown, 2014). This is especially critical given that the nation's growing EL population has outsized needs, with English-language proficiency scores remaining lower than pre-pandemic averages, and many immigrant ELs requiring trauma-informed instruction.

The Role of Visual Material

Visual aids are tools that help teachers clarify information and engage students, enhancing their understanding and retention of complex concepts (British Council). They can be defined as any pictures or diagrams used to assist comprehension in a

classroom, but in a broader sense, they are any materials shown to learners for this purpose (British Council).

In the classroom, visual aids can take various forms, such as pictures, videos, symbols, gestures, and facial expressions (British Council). They can also include wall boards, textbooks, or real objects used in games and role-playing, which can "stimulate the imagination and encourage fuller student participation" (Finocchiaro & Bonomo, 1973, p. 162). Using visuals can grab and maintain students' attention, motivate them, and help them retain information (Patesian et al., 2018).

Educators and specialists agree on the significant role of visuals, which can greatly improve learning for a generation accustomed to the visual interfaces of multimedia and internet technologies. By using visuals, teachers can present complex information clearly and introduce variety into class activities (Patesian et al., 2018).

The Importance of Visual Aids in children with special needs

Visual aids, often referred to as "visual supports," are crucial for children with special needs. They encompass a wide variety of tools, including objects, photos, signs, symbols, and pictures that help with understanding, expression, and social interaction (Rutherford et al., 2020). When visual supports are implemented throughout a school as a "Total Communication Approach," they create a more inclusive learning environment that benefits all students, not just those with additional needs (Rutherford et al., 2020).

Visual supports afford many benefits to children with autism by providing clear structure and routines (Thomas & Karupali, 2022). Predictability is important in limiting confusion and anxiety. Visuals often turn abstract ideas into concrete examples by simplifying complex concepts into visual cues, allowing a child to understand concepts much easier. Visuals assist children with autism in demonstrating

independence, through the use of visuals in a visual schedule or choice board they are able to monitor their schedules and make decisions on their own without adult support which also fostered growth in independence, confidence, and authority.

Additionally, visual cues like social stories or prompts can help them navigate social situations more effectively, thereby improving social participation. Ultimately, these personalized and adaptable supports reduce frustration, support communication, and make daily life clearer and more manageable (Thomas & Karupali, 2022).

Similarly, a visual approach is highly effective for children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Students with ASD frequently have off-task and disruptive behaviors, which may also result in social challenges. A visual activity schedule (VAS) is a common intervention program that can be used for teaching numerous skills, including staying on task, transitioning between activities, and practicing independent play skills and academic skills (Thomas & Karupali, 2022). Students can use their strong visual skills to benefit from the structure and clear expectations provided by visual supports. For Kids with **Intellectual Disability** The visual and tactile materials are of great importance, since they are very structured, concrete and useful aids and enable them the most direct support towards the realization of independence.

These aids and supports foster autonomy and routine by helping children understand what and when to do things through tools such as agendas, clarifying activities, routines and transitions (Head Start Program; Maribel Paniagua 2025). As regards the field of cognition, they are very important since the use of images, pictograms and diagrams is essential in order to counteract the difficulty they present in assimilating abstract concepts and helps them to clarify the content, to make the content

more concrete and to reinforce knowledge. On the other hand, for example, the use of step-by-step videos and posters that we can find in the classroom will guide the work and, through their iterative structure, generate security in the student (Head Start Program; Maribel Paniagua 2025).

The benefits of visual aids go beyond diagnosis. Research shows that primary school students, with and without additional needs, indicate that visual schedules and other visual aids make them more independent and enable the school day to be more predictable (Rutherford et al., 2020). This ability to predict increases their autonomy and may reduce their dependence on teachers for transitions (Rutherford et al., 2020). Thus, visual aids are a universal strategy that promotes learning and the autonomy of all.

The Effectiveness of Visual Aids in children with special needs

The Effectiveness of Visual Aids When Teaching English to Students with Special Needs.

Using visual aids is a foundational practice in special education, supported by research as an effective strategy for students with moderate to severe disabilities (Gilson, 2021). These tools help educators provide a visual representation of what is expected, making the learning environment more accessible for students who may struggle with auditory information (Gilson, 2021). They've been proven effective in teaching academic content and social skills, improving task engagement, and promoting independence across all age groups from preschool through high school (Gilson, 2021). Teachers can use various visual supports like picture schedules, calendars, labels, and graphic organizers to ensure students can access everything they need to do in a visual format (Gilson, 2021).

Visuals are a main tool for enhancing comprehension in English language classrooms (Gower et al., 1995; Wright, 1990). They present information to the most developed human sense and help to maintain students' concentration and interest (Gower et al., 1995). By using images, teachers can communicate messages when words might not be sufficient and help students increase their vocabulary and knowledge of the language more directly and quickly than through verbal explanations alone (Gower et al., 1995). Visuals also have a variety of uses, such as illustrating colors or demonstrating word stress (Gower et al., 1995).

The benefits of visuals extend beyond communication. They help make language more memorable by allowing students to associate meanings easily with images (Gower et al., 1995). Images can also serve as a key tool for motivating students, making them want to participate and pay attention (Wright, 1990). By bringing the world into the classroom—for example, a train in a picture—images provide a real-world context for language use (Wright, 1990). Furthermore, visuals help create a more stimulating and attractive classroom environment, which can motivate students to learn and even create their own visual materials (Gower et al., 1995). This allows students and teachers to express messages in different ways and produce new materials for a better teaching and learning process (Gower et al., 1995).

According to Wright (1990), images can also help with classroom management by providing a reference point and helping to discipline activities. He adds that visuals can be interpreted in both objective and subjective ways, giving students the opportunity to express themselves more broadly in the English language (Wright, 1990). The ability of visuals to engage, motivate, and provide a clear context makes them an invaluable tool for ensuring effective learning.

Lack Of Resources

Lack of resources represents a considerable challenge when teaching English to children with special educational needs (SEN) in primary education. While educators have access to a variety of teaching tools, from traditional resources like books and art supplies to digital ones like computers and online platforms, teachers in regular education classrooms often do not have access to all of these materials. This problem is particularly acute for students with SEN, who require specific resources and teaching strategies to learn effectively (Ángel Lorente Sancho).

This shortage of resources, combined with a lack of specific training for teachers, makes it difficult to implement the inclusive methodologies that these students need. The problem is further complicated by the fact that many textbooks lack materials that are adapted for this group of students (Ángel Lorente Sancho).

Despite these challenges, certain resources have been shown to be especially effective. Multisensory teaching materials and games, songs, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have all proven to be highly successful with students with SEN. The use of ICT, in particular, has been shown to help ensure a multilingual and inclusive education (Vilar & Sales, 2014, as cited in Ángel Lorente Sancho). Therefore, focusing on how to design and implement visual materials and other effective tools can provide much-needed support for children with special needs in their English language learning journey.

Legal Basis

Constitución de La Republica del Ecuador

Art. 47.- El Estado garantizará políticas de prevención de las discapacidades y, de manera conjunta con la sociedad y la familia, procurará la equiparación de oportunidades para las personas con discapacidad y su integración social. Se reconoce a las personas con discapacidad, los derechos a:

7. Una educación que desarrolle sus potencialidades y habilidades para su integración y participación en igualdad de condiciones. Se garantizará su educación dentro de la educación regular. Los planteles regulares incorporarán trato diferenciado y los de atención especial la educación especializada.

Art. 26.- La educación es un derecho de las personas a lo largo de su vida y un deber ineludible e inexcusable del Estado. Constituye un área prioritaria de la política pública y de la inversión estatal, garantía de la igualdad e inclusión social y condición indispensable para el buen vivir. Las personas, las familias y la sociedad tienen el derecho y la responsabilidad de participar en el proceso educativo.

Art. 27.- El artículo 27 de la Constitución de la República establece que la educación debe estar centrada en el ser humano y garantizará su desarrollo holístico, en el marco del respeto a los derechos humanos, al medio ambiente sustentable y a la democracia; será participativa, obligatoria, intercultural, democrática, incluyente y diversa, de calidad y calidez; impulsará la equidad de género, la justicia, la solidaridad y la paz; estimulará el sentido crítico, el arte y la cultura física, la iniciativa individual y comunitaria, y el desarrollo de competencias y capacidades para crear y trabajar. La educación es indispensable para el conocimiento, el ejercicio de los derechos y la

construcción de un país soberano, y constituye un eje estratégico para el desarrollo nacional.

Art. 28.- Establece que la educación responderá al interés público y no estará al servicio de intereses individuales y corporativos. Se garantizará el acceso universal, permanencia, movilidad y egreso sin discriminación alguna y la obligatoriedad en el nivel inicial, básico y bachillerato o su equivalente. Es derecho de toda persona y comunidad interactuar entre culturas y participar en una sociedad que aprende. El Estado promoverá el diálogo intercultural en sus múltiples dimensiones. El aprendizaje se desarrollará de forma escolarizada y no escolarizada. La educación pública será universal y laica en todos sus niveles, y gratuita hasta el tercer nivel de educación superior inclusive.

Chapter III

Methodological Framework

Methodology

Qualitative research is a systematic approach that focuses on dissecting complex social phenomena to provide in depth-human-centers insights (Wen, 2024). It is essential because it offers contextual depth and holistic perspectives, aiming to provide a deeper, comprehensive, and detailed description of phenomena from non-numeric-data, rather than comprehensive on quantifying or statically testing hypotheses. The qualitative method is employed by utilizing a spectrum of specific approaches-including Grounded Theory, Phenomenology, Ethnography and action research. The methodology requires establishing trustworthiness through criteria like credibility, dependability, and transferability) to ensure the rigor and relevance of the findings (Weng, 2024), Ultimately, its purpose is to effectively obtain specific information about the behaviors, values, opinions, and social context of particular populations.

The qualitative method is most suitable for this study examining teacher interviews regarding the use of visual aids for teaching English to students with various special needs (Autism, ADHD, Intellectual Disability) since the specific goal is to closely explore, human-centers, understanding pf complex issues (Weng 2024). The qualitative methodology facilitates the collections of teachers' experiences and viewpoints from interviewers, allowing a better understanding of how visual aids function in specific classroom contexts and how they are perceived to address learning challenges like abstract concepts or behavioral issues, prioritizing a detailed, local understanding.

Type of research: Phenomenological study

The Phenomenological Research Methodology is defined as a primary qualitative design that seeks to transcend measurement and causality to describe the essence of a phenomenon as it is experienced and perceived by a group of individuals who have experienced it (Creswell, 2018; Finol & Acosta, 2024).

In the field of human sciences and education, this becomes the capacity to understand educators' lived experiences related to their professional practices and challenges - to discover the invariant structure (essence) of the experience, and illuminate its meaning to educators - which is an important capacity for understanding beyond numerical data (McLeod, 2024).

The phenomenological method is the best design for this topic, because its purpose aligns perfectly with the goal of examining the lived experience and the subjective meaning of the teachers. With the interview of the educators, it is studied the teachers' perceptions, beliefs, and value judgments about the effectiveness or difficulties of visual aids with children with ADHD, autism and intellectual disability in their classrooms. This design captures, in careful detail, the teachers' narratives regarding the essence of their experience.

This method understands the meaning of how the effectiveness of visual aids became meaningful in the teacher's daily practice with children with ADHD, autism and intellectual disabilities; such a deep exploration is an equally compelling reason to choose this research method in the context of special education.

Technique

Data collection technique

Data collection was carried out using the method of individual interviews, a technique intrinsically linked to the phenomenological design for capturing lived experience. For this purpose, five (5) teachers were intentionally selection, each one from different educational institutions. The participating educators work within inclusive classrooms (or mainstream settings) where the student population comprises both individuals with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and their typically developing peers (or general educational students). The selection criterion was based on their direct experience with students diagnosed with Autism, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and Intellectual Disability.

Instrument

Semi-Structures Questionnaire

The instrument employed was a semi-structured questionnaire containing ten (10) open-ended questions, specifically designed to gather standardized information on participants' attitudes, experiences and opinions. In a qualitative research context, a questionnaire is defined by its free answer questions (open ended questions), which allow participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences in their own words (Denny and Weckesser, 2022). This format is especially beneficial in exploratory studies because the main objective is not measurement but to obtain detailed insights and a detailed understanding of original motivations and beliefs.

Type of questions

Open-ended questions

Open-ended questions (open-ended questions) are educational and research tools designed to obtain detailed, thoughtful answers that go beyond a simple "yes" or "no", or a pre-set choice. Its main function is to foster critical thinking and genuine expression by requiring the individual (student or respondent) to justify, describe or explain a concept, feeling or opinion in his or her own words. In the educational context, especially with children with special needs, they are invaluable because they enable teachers to assess in-depth understanding and obtain rich qualitative data, which facilitates individualized adaptation of teaching by directly disclosing how the student processes information or what specific difficulties he faces.

Table 1

<i>Questions</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>What?</i>	Interviews
<i>Where?</i>	At "Violeta Ordoñez de Masson", "Montessori", "Unidad Educativa Los Vergeles", "Alfa Y Omega", and "Malena Drouet Carrera"
<i>When?</i>	September 2025
<i>How?</i>	With a semi-structured questionnaire containing ten (10) open-ended questions
<i>What for?</i>	To explore the opinion, perceptions, and real-life experience of each participant regarding the use and effectiveness of visual support material in the classroom

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Population Sample

The populations of interest for this research are comprised of primary English teachers with experience in utilizing visual aids for students with Special Educational Needs (Autism, ADHD, and Intellectual Disability).

This research, will have teachers from Primary education of the following 5 schools: The first school is Unidad Educativa Montessori, located in Salinas, where there are 2 teachers; the second school is Alfa y Omega, located in La Libertad, where there are 2 teachers; the third school is Violeta Ordoñez de Masson, located in Santa Elena, where there is 1 teacher for all the 7 grades; the fourth school is Malena Drouet Carrera, also located in Santa Elena, where there is 1 teacher for students of primary education and the last school is Unidad Educativa Los Vergeles, located in Guayaquil, where there are 7 teachers, 4 working in the morning and 3 in the afternoon.

Out of the 13 total teachers, it was decided to work with 5 for this qualitative research. Therefore, one teacher from each school will answer the open-ended-questions. This small sample size is justified by the requisite need to obtain detailed and unique narratives, as each teacher was specifically selected based on their direct and varied experience implementing visual material to enhance the learning of English as a Foreign Language in children with special needs. Consequently, the group functions as a set of educators whose lived experiences were crucial for revealing the essence of the phenomenon under study.

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

Brief explanation of the findings.

This chapter presents a concise analysis of the qualitative data collected through interviews with five English teachers experienced in teaching children with special needs. The methodology used, which centered on the educators' field experience, allowed for a detailed interpretation of their practices and perceptions about the use of visual materials in the English classroom.

The collected evidence underscores those visual materials are vital for reducing anxiety and uncertainty in students, especially those with ASD and ADHD, by establishing clear and predictable routines. Additionally, teachers have identified technology (videos and the use of Artificial Intelligence for material creation) as a highly effective and engaging resource for these student profiles.

Despite the benefits, educators pointed out significant challenges that affect effective implementation, with the lack of time to create or adapt personalized materials and the need for specialized training in visuals strategies for neurodivergent profiles being the most recurrent obstacles. These result guide the conclusions and recommendations towards the urgency of providing institutional support and continuous training to enhance inclusive practice.

Interpretation of Teachers' Answers

Question 1: How many years of experience do you have teaching English to children with special needs?

Figure 1



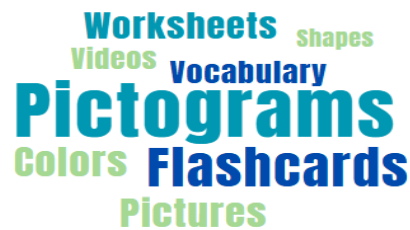
Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

The sample of five teachers for this qualitative research presents a notable diversity in teaching experience, ranging from a minimum of 2 years to a maximum of 20 years in teaching English to children with special needs. This variation is valuable because it ensures the collection of perspectives from both novice and expert professionals. Collectively the teachers contribute a total of 47 years of experience, placing the group average at 9.4 years of experience, placing the group average 9.4 years. This figure indicates that, overall, the sample possesses a considerable and mature base of knowledge of practice.

The range of experiences guarantees the depth and richness of the data collected through the open-ended questions. This stratification of experience is crucial for obtaining a nuanced and complete understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Question 2: What types of visual material do you use more frequently in your English classes with children with special needs?

Figure 2



Note. Created by **Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés**, 2025

Teachers report that flashcards and pictograms are the most frequently used visual materials in inclusive EFL. This selection focuses on teaching fundamental linguistic elements (vocabulary, action verbs, and daily routines) and serving organizational functions (classroom routines and behavior control). While digital resources (videos and animations) and basic tools (whiteboards, worksheets) are also integrated, materials chosen for their simple design, vivid colors, and clear shapes to maximize recognition and facilitate the association between image and concept for diverse learning needs.

Teachers' preference is based on concreteness and predictability, relying in these materials for their static structure and visual permanence to mitigate the "fleeting" nature of spoken language and to consolidate the student's visual knowledge and, serving as a "suitable resource" to help them "fix acquired knowledge" (Enriquez Caballero, 2023). The systematic use of pictograms for routine management is a didactic strategy but a socio-emotional regulation tool. By externalizing the expectations and sequences in class, visual support provides "basic notions of temporal orientation" and contributes to the student's "finding a sense of security" (Enriquez Caballero, 2023). This is crucial since students with ASD "show stress anxiety when we change activity in the classroom" (Enriquez Caballero, 2023); therefore, the predictability of sequences reduces anxiety and uncertainty in profiles such as ASD and ADHD.

Question 3: In what ways do visual materials help your students develop language skills such as vocabulary, grammar or communication?

Figure 3



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers feel that the use of visual materials is necessary for students with SEN to fully acquire language skills. In terms of vocabulary, this consideration is necessary because the visual materials make it possible to establish a lexical construction and create an immediate association between the word and image, something that will allow students to establish their own vocabulary retention and "fix acquired knowledge" (Enriquez Caballero, 2023).

The importance that this type of material can also have in grammar is given by the fact that they allow them to sketch complex orational structures using tables or diagrams, bringing their learning closer (Zambrano, 2024) while in Communication their importance is undeniable because they improve oral expression by inviting students to describe ideas or exemplify them using visual materials, thus favoring "communication and participation" in the classroom (NCSE, 2024).

Teachers themselves comment at the General Learning level that visual material helps to give clarity and accessibility to content (Zambrano, 2024) as it enhances visual memory and promotes "effective, efficient and inclusive" learning.

Question 4: What kinds of visual supports you use to manage routines and transitions in your students during English lessons?

Figure 4



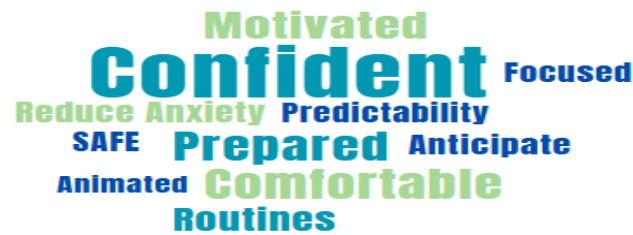
Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers prefer to use visual schedules and pictograms as resources to help control routines and transitions in English classes. They are used in practice to support children to anticipate activities and thus reduce anxiety and uncertainty about change, strong obstacles to learning the neurodivergent profiles (Enriquez Caballero, 20223; Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). The routine and illustration are presented as a clear, fixed support which can facilitate understanding of the concepts of time and the daily routine of the class, as stated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE, 2024). This form tries to show how these supports are effective in increasing the attention and participation of students (Bidari & Yanti, 2021).

Apart from the organizational order, these materials are essential for the socio-emotional regulation and development of the child's autonomy. By associating English terms with images, or concrete actions relating to the life of pupils, visual pictograms or calendars make them "know what comes next" and thus generate security and a feeling of being ready for learning (NCSE, 2024). In addition to these printed aids, music videos, or visual signals coded from the use of different colors can be a strategy used to guide transitions in learning, and facilitate attention in students with ADHD (Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024), and in this way the adaptations are visually clear and functional for all pupils (NCSE, 2024).

Question 5: How do visual aids help to reduce anxiety during English classes?

Figure 5



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers say that visual materials help reduce anxiety primarily by increasing students' sense of security and calm. The predictability is key, as tools like visual schedules and illustrated routines allow students to anticipate what will happen next, which reduces confusion, frustration and uncertainty. This sense of control over their environment promotes quiet and focused participate. They mention that these aids make instruction easier to understand for children, for example in some activities they can connect words to images, knowing what is coming next or in what moment of the day they are. By being visually appealing and easy to recognize (for example, with bright colors), teachers can keep children focused.

Teachers affirm that the use of visual material can reduce distress by providing a sense of security and tranquility to students, based on the fact that predictability is the right element (Enriquez Caballero, 2023). Some materials such as the illustrated schedules can predict what is going to happen, thus reducing the confusion and "anxiety" about the transition from one type of task to another (Enriquez Caballero, 2023; Alba Diez Martínez, 2023). This sense of control of the environment implies a more calm and concentrated participation, establishing an "emotionally safe environment" according to the visual learning style of the child (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023).

Question 6: What classroom activities do you consider most effective when integrating visual materials to foster active learning and participation?

Figure 6



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers argue that the most effective activities for active participation are those of a playful, cognitive and kinesthetic nature. The application of games with flashcards of type of couples or things guessed are fundamentally effective strategies in strengthening vocabulary and motivation in profiles with Intellectual Disability (Zambrano Villa et al., 2024). Certainly, dramatizations or role-playing are necessary for the practice of speech, relying on pictograms or strips of themes that favor the enunciation of ideas and dialogue (Bidari & Yanti, 2021). Even this last type of strategy is combined with movement, which, from repetitions or through mimicry, is of great importance in the control of attention and children's attention to language acquisition", especially in students with ADHD (Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024).

Teachers also consider effective ludic and kinesthetic games with flashcards, that are used to reinforce vocabulary through matching, memory or guessing activities. They mention dramatizations and role-playing and visual support such as pictograms or topic strips to start dialogues and the expression of the ideas.

Question7: What technology-based visual aids (such as videos, games, or educational apps do you use in your English classes?

Figure 7



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers combine various strategies or technological tools of the visual support, being the video-class where the didactic video is the most used resource to improve comprehension and vocabulary. In these cases, the didactic video is inserted into a tool that also uses the students' level of familiarization with the digital format and turns it into a resource that helps to reinforce listening and multisensory learning skills (Bidari, & Yanti, 2021) complementing its effects thanks to platforms such as Wordwall or Quizlet that allow you to work in a fun environment and customize vocabulary and grammar, which helps increase confidence as students with technology (Zambrano Villa et al., 2024).

Technology also facilitates deeper didactic adaptation, crucial for inclusive education. Language learning apps like Duolingo and Starfall are used to provide personalized practice that combines visual, auditory and tactile stimuli. In this sense, Artificial Intelligence (AI) emerges as a fundamental support, helping teachers to "quickly generate customized visual resources" that fit the interests and levels of understanding of each student, Maximizing the effectiveness of teaching within school time.

Question 8: How do you adapt visual materials to address different types of special needs (e.g., autism, intellectual disability, ADHD)?

Figure 8



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers continue to adapt materials creatively, focusing on the profile of each child in order to promote both inclusion and autonomy. In the case of ASD, the strategy is based on the use of clear and structured visuals, as well as step-by-step routines (Enriquez Caballero, 2023), such that these supports are substantially decisive for reducing anxiety while avoiding overexcitation (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023). For cases of intellectual disabilities, educators prioritize the use of large images, illustrated and colorful, minimum text in which the constant repetition of the same, for concepts and vocabulary acquisition, are a very important fact (Zambrano Villa et al., 2024).

As far as ADHD is concerned, adaptation emphasizes maintaining attention and involvement through the use of more interactive visuals, entering the game, dividing tasks into short and visual steps (Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). In general, the teachers argue that specific adaptations, far from merely facilitating access to content, also imply a safe emotional climate and respect for children's individual learning rhythms (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023).

Question 9: What challenges do you face when using visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?

Figure 9



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

The shortage of time available for individualized attention, as well as the scarcity of printed or technological resources, are the main obstacles that teachers report facing "lack of knowledge of strategies" to enable them to find or develop resources "significant and functional" according to the characteristics of the students (Zambrano Villa et al., 2024; NCSE, 2024). So much so that teachers feel the need to create and adapt most of the teaching resources they require (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023).

Another of the systemic challenges that we find is the lack of the necessary specific training in the pedagogical use of visual supports, which affects the correct implementation of it (Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024), and which may lead to the risk of poor selection, with consequent danger of distraction or overstimulation in students diagnosed with ASD, as well as putting at risk the achievement of the goal of understanding (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023). In this sense, the literature emphasizes the need for a permanent training design to be able to overcome these barriers (Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024).

Question 10: What kind of training or support would help you use visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?

Figure 10



Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Teachers point out that the type of support they find most useful (required) is oriented towards appropriate training on inclusive visualization strategies and Universal Design for Learning (UEA) (NCSE, 2024). They require specific training to adapt existing resources to neurodivergent profiles such as ASD or ADHD (Alba Diez Martínez, 2023; Cedillo Tello & Argudo-Serrano, 2024). Teachers also request to be able to implement Artificial Intelligence (AI) or other technologies for the creation and optimal management of materials made for it, since the lack of ready-to-use tools is constantly present (Zambrano Villa et al., 2024).

Network work is another of the backbone axes, since they take into account the need to work with specialists such as special education or psycho-pedagogy and consult platforms to exchange their methodological usefulness (Cedillo Tello and Argudo-Serrano, 2024). In such a way that this professional synergy is indispensable for the adaptation objectives to be relevant, effective and driven by specific professional knowledge having identified its importance for the generation of a strong inclusive practice (NCSE, 2024).

Chapter V

Conclusions And Recommendations

The main purpose of this research was to analyze the role and application of different visual materials in enhancing English language learning for children with Special Education Needs (SEN). After an extensive investigation, it was definitively resolved that visuals materials including flashcards, pictograms, and technology-present fundamental, evidence-based benefits that are essential for supporting students with profiles like ASD, ADHD, AND ID in their EFL process.

However, one should not conclude that mere existence of these tools guarantees success, as it was found that the effectiveness of their application is significantly hindered by institutional gaps, primarily the insufficient specialized training available to teachers and the systemic lack of time for necessary material individualization. Therefore, is relevant to remark that these aids must be integrates within a framework of specialized pedagogy and institutional support.

Conclusions

The research confirms that visual materials such as Flashcards, pictograms, and Technology (Videos) are essential and very effective for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL), specially to children with special needs. Teachers most frequently rely on Flashcards for teaching core linguistic elements like vocabulary, verbs and emotions. This primary resource is effectively paired with pictograms and visual schedules, which are crucial for stablishing clear classroom routines and managing transitions, facilitating time management.

Academically the main benefit lies in the direct association or connection of the word and image, which facilitates the comprehension of abstract concepts, strengthens visual memory (crucial in students with Intellectual disability), and significantly improves overall vocabulary acquisition and communication. On the socio-emotional level, the systematic use of visual sequences is vital for reducing anxiety and uncertainty in students with ASD and ADHD, helping them to remain focused and calm during their English activities.

Regarding the most efficient methodologies, teachers emphasize that success lies in multisensory activity-combining repetition, physical action, and visual support-and critically, in the individualization of the material, adapting it to each students' interests and pace. However, the findings also reveal that the success of this practice is hindered by significant challenges, the most recurrent being the insufficient specialized training that teachers receive on visual strategies and specific pedagogical adaptations for the different neurodivergent profiles, coupled with the lack of time for the individualization of materials (despite the support of tools like Artificial Intelligence in some cases), emphasizing that the success of visual aids implementation depends a lot on the individualization of materials and the critical need for specialized training and interdisciplinary collaboration among future educators to ensure effective inclusive education.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are aimed to optimizing teaching practices and institutional support for inclusive English instruction. Future English teachers are advised to adopt a Universal Design for learning approach, ensuring that all visual materials are clear, large and functionally relevant from the design state. It is essential that teaching practice includes the systematic implementation of visual routines (pictograms and schedules), as these strategies provide the framework of security and predictability that reduces anxiety and promotes focus in students with ASD and ADHD.

Similarly, technology must be integrated strategically, artificial intelligence (AI) served as a vital tool to support teachers quickly generating personalized visual resources that match each students' unique interests and comprehension level, thereby maximizing teaching effectiveness withing restricted class time.

To address the persistent challenges identified by teachers namely limited time, lack of resources, and insufficient training-institutions must prioritize and offer specialized, continuous training focused on visual strategies specifically designed for neurodivergent profiles such as ASD, ADHD AND ID.

Finally, there is an urgent need to stablish mandatory, interdisciplinary collaboration between EFL teachers and support professionals such as special education or psychopedagogy specialist. This partnership is essential to guarantee that all adaptations are both relevant and effective, ensuring inclusive practice is supported by adequate resources and dedicated time for planning.

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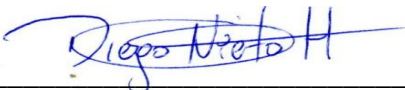
Annexes:**Annex A: Certified Anti-plagiarism System**

La Libertad, 31 de octubre del 2025

Certificado Sistema Anti-Plagio

En calidad de tutor del Trabajo de Integración Curricular denominado “VISUAL MATERIALS FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS” elaborado por la estudiante Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, de la Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros, de la Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación e Idiomas, de la Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, me permito declarar que una vez analizado en el sistema anti plagio COMPILATIO, luego de haber cumplido los requerimientos exigidos de valoración, el presente trabajo de investigación, se encuentra con 10% de la valoración permitida, por consiguiente se procede a emitir el informe.

Atentamente,



Nieto Herrera Diego Josué, MSc.

TUTOR

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10%
Textos sospechosos

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 0 % similitudes entre comillas
 0 % entre las fuentes mencionadas
2% Idiomas no reconocidos
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3	 curriculogalapagos.com Curriculogalapagos - CurrículoGalápagos https://curriculogalapagos.com/	< 1%		Palabras idénticas: < 1% (20 palabras)
4	 dialnet.unirioja.es Ángel Lorente Sancho - Dialnet https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/autor?codigo=3125274	< 1%		Palabras idénticas: < 1% (15 palabras)
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Annex B: Questionnaire

Visual Materials for Children with Special Needs

Population: 13 teachers from 5 different Primary Schools: “Violeta Ordoñez de Masson”, "Montessori", "Unidad Educativa Los Vergeles", "Alfa Y Omega", and "Malena Drouet Carrera"

Sample: 5 teachers from each school.

Questions:

- 1. How many years of experience do you have teaching English to children with special needs?**
- 2. What types of visual materials do you use more often in your English classes with children with special needs?**
- 3. In what ways do visual materials help your students develop language skills such as vocabulary, grammar, or communication?**
- 4. What kinds of visual aids (e.g, schedules, calendars with images, pictograms) do you use to manage routines and transition in your students during English lessons?**
- 5. How do visual aids help to reduce anxiety during English classes?**
- 6. What classroom activities do you consider most effective when integrating visual materials to foster active learning and participation?**
- 7. What technology-based visual aids (such as videos, games, or educational apps) do you use in your English classes?**
- 8. How do you adapt visual materials to address different types of special needs (e.g., autism, intellectual disability, ADHD)?**

9. What challenges do you face when using visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?

10. What kind of training or support would help you use visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?

Annex C: Transcribed Answers

Table 1

Question 1: How many years of experience do you have teaching English to children with special needs?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
2 years	7 years	12 years	6 years	20 years

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 2

Question 2: What types of visual material do you use more frequently in your English classes with children with special needs?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶Flashcards of vocabulary, action verb, daily routine, classroom objects, social behavior, alphabet and phonics. ▶Color and shape worksheets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶Pictograms ▶flashcards ▶whiteboard ▶videos ▶Animation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶Worksheets ▶drawings ▶Color and Shape worksheets ▶pictures easy to recognize for children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶Wordwall ▶Live worksheets ▶Flashcards ▶Hangman ▶Boxes with vocabulary, colors and puzzles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶Flashcards ▶Posters

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 3

Question 3: In what ways do visual materials help your students develop language skills such as vocabulary, grammar or communication?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build vocabulary by connecting words to images • Support grammar learning by showing sentence structures through charts and diagrams • Improve communication by encouraging students to describe what they see • Engage in dialogues • Express ideas with visual support. • Make learning clearer and more accessible. • Promote independence, focus, and smoother transitions throughout the lesson. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They enable students to better retain and express themselves by allowing them to visualize the new words from each lesson, thereby enhancing language or communication learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and strengthen knowledge by expanding vocabulary and improving oral or written expression. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By incorporating flashcards, educational games, pictograms and videos, it facilitates the understanding of abstract concepts, stimulates visual memory and promotes a direct association between words and meanings. • By Creating a more dynamic, inclusive and motivating learning environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract students' attention with eye-catching images and colors, which facilitates the development of vocabulary. • By combining repetition of words with performance of mimics, the retention and body expression associated with meaning is strengthened.

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 4

Question 4: What kinds of visual supports you use to manage routines and transitions in your students during English lessons?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual schedules: Help students anticipate activities and reduce anxiety. • Image-based calendars: Reinforce time concepts and daily structure. • Pictograms: Support understanding of instructions and changes in tasks. • Routine charts: Guide students through steps like greeting, organizing materials, or switching activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music videos, students improve communication for routines and transitions while practicing vocabulary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashcards that are purchased in bookstores • Pictograms: With colorful images. <p>A specific time is given to children with special needs, especially children with autism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual schedules with pictograms • Calendars illustrated in images with sequences of activities, and colour-coded transition signals. • These resources enable students to anticipate what is coming, reduce anxiety about change and foster autonomy. In addition, they reinforce the understanding of language through the association between words, images and concrete actions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Pictograms</u>

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 5

Question 5: How do visual aids help to reduce anxiety during English classes?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual materials help students feel more secure and calm during English lessons. • They make instructions easier to understand, allow students to anticipate what's coming next, and provide clear support for communication. • Tools like visual schedules, pictograms, and illustrated routines reduce confusion and frustration, especially for students with special needs. This creates a more comfortable and focused learning environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help keep them focused on the topic of each class. • As they become familiar with the visual materials, the children are able to remain calm and can continue learning with their peers. 	As they Feel more confident with images, they feel more motivated, animated and carry out academic activities with greater enthusiasm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The materials mentioned previously allow students to anticipate what will happen, giving them security and control over their environment. • This predictability reduces uncertainty in the face of change, which makes it easier to understand instructions and promotes quiet and focused participation. • By adapting the content to their learning styles, an emotionally safe and motivating environment is fostered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the help of brightly colored images that show and establishes routines or sequences, they know which steps to follow by explicit images of the events. • When children already know what to do next and so on within the classroom, feel less uncertainty.

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 6

Question 6: What classroom activities do you consider most effective when integrating visual materials to foster active learning and participation?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flashcard games: Reinforce vocabulary through matching, memory, or guessing. • Storytelling with images: Encourage students to describe scenes, create narratives, and practice speaking. • Role-playing with visual prompts: Use pictures or comic strips to guide dialogues and expressions. • Interactive posters or charts: Let students contribute to thematic boards (Ex.... weather, emotions, daily routines). • Digital presentations or videos: Engage students with animations and visuals that support comprehension and discussion. • These activities boost motivation, participation, and language development, especially for students with special needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To Memorize New words using Flashcards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Didactic materials • Introducing Legos of different colors with images on them. • Give indications accompanied by images to follow instructions. • The continuous repetition of each image and word is key, joining the listening with the repetition and action of hand movements, since the children are very attentive to the teacher. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive games with flashcards • The use of visual mind maps • Dramatizations supported by pictograms • Implementation of learning stations with differentiated visual resources, which allow students to explore the content autonomously and collaboratively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos created by the teachers themselves with the help of artificial intelligence.

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 7

Question 7: What technology-based visual aids (such as videos, games, or educational apps do you use in your English classes?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational videos (Cambridge videos): Support listening skills, vocabulary, and comprehension through animations and songs. • Interactive games: Reinforce grammar and vocabulary in a fun, engaging way (e.g., matching, spelling, sentence building). • Learning apps (Duolingo, Starfall, ABC mouse): Provide personalized practice with visuals, audio, and touch interaction. • Digital flashcards and presentations: Help explain concepts with images, sounds, and movement. <p>These tools make learning more dynamic, inclusive, and accessible for all students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music Videos • Educacional Videos • Power Point Presentation 	<p>The audiovisual material with songs (as well as mimicry with hand intentions). A step-by-step methodology is followed which allows the trainees to gradually master the content provided by the videos.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational Videos • Interactive animations to illustrate language concepts and promote listening comprehension. • Wordwall, kahoot and quizlet, which allow students to practice vocabulary and • Grammar in a playful and personalized way. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Videos created by the teachers on their own, but with help of the artificial intelligence.

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 8

Question 8: How do you adapt visual materials to address different types of special needs (e.g., autism, intellectual disability, ADHD)?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<p>Visual materials are adapted to meet the unique needs of each student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Autism: Use clear, structured visuals like pictograms and step-by-step routines to reduce anxiety and support communication. Avoid overstimulation with simple, predictable designs. • For Intellectual Disabilities: Use large, colorful images with minimal text to support understanding. Reinforce concepts through repetition and consistent visual cues. • For ADHD: Use engaging, interactive visuals such as games, animations, and movement-based activities to maintain attention. Break tasks into short, visual steps to support focus and transitions. <p>These adaptations make English learning more accessible, personalized, and effective for all learners.</p>	<p>Children with autism: With visual materials, students with special needs better grasp the Learning in English, keeps them active and attentive without being easily distracted.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In hyperactivity we could have cases of very aggressive pupils (for example, a third-grade girl was engaged in breaking sheets and throwing them, as well as throwing materials), so the teacher must repeat the activity and know how to focus on the subject (patience and strength) to be able to reach the teaching. <p>It is important to make the necessary adjustments according to the needs of the child and if he has a level of disability, for example, we can see that sometimes there are pupils who understand better with videos, other times with very simple images, and even with coloring pictures, because pupils have different levels of learning skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the corresponding sensitivity and creativity. • Knowing the profile of each student with special needs. • Nonverbal autism (7th): I design structured and visually clear resources, such as • Communication boards with pictograms, illustrated sequences of activities. • Visual aids that anticipate routines and changes, use colors to organize information, and employment • Visual aids that reinforce attention and understanding. • These adaptations not only facilitate access to content, but also promote inclusion, autonomy and respect for individual learning rhythms. 	<p>Each special need should have its own adaptation, not all children are equal and ways should be found to reach their interests, which are most likely to be directed towards the videos, pictograms and picture cards.</p>

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 9

Question 9: What challenges do you face when using visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<p>Teachers may face several challenges when trying to use visual materials effectively in English classes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited access to technology or printed resources • Lack of time to create or adapt personalized materials • Difficulty finding visuals suitable for different special needs • Risk of overstimulation or distraction if materials are not well chosen • Insufficient training in how to use visual aids pedagogically <p>Overcoming these challenges requires creativity, planning, and institutional support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adaptation process of each student. • To achieve autonomy, we need to practice enough. Once we have practiced enough, the student will work more independently time after time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is pointed out that the materials, specifically those required by the children, are developed by the English teachers themselves in so far as the use of these materials depends on them, that it is no other objective than to use it as much as possible to help achieve language learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To achieve a precise adaptation to the individual needs of each student. Not everyone responds in the same way to visual stimuli, so it is necessary to make constant adjustments based on their cognitive abilities, learning styles and attention levels. • Lack of technological resources and time required to design customized materials, which may be a limitation. Despite this, the effort is rewarded by observing how these visual aids facilitate understanding, reduce anxiety and promote more active participation in the classroom. • Normally he has 40 minutes per class, which must include all students, unfortunately there is not enough time available for the child with special needs one by one as he would like. 	<p>The biggest challenge is 100% child care, as children with special needs learn at their own pace.</p>

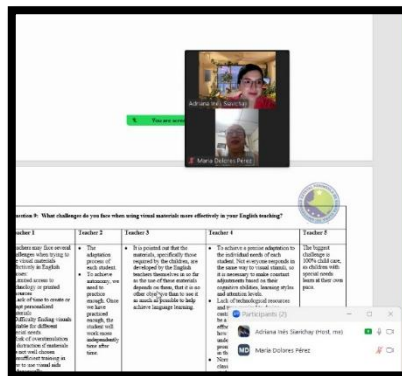
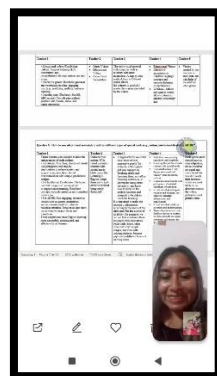
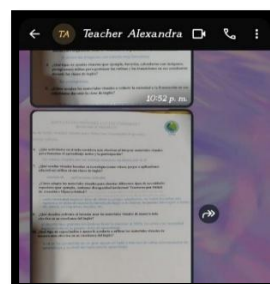
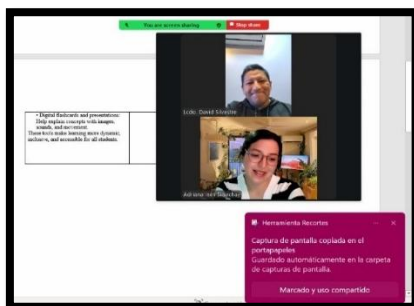
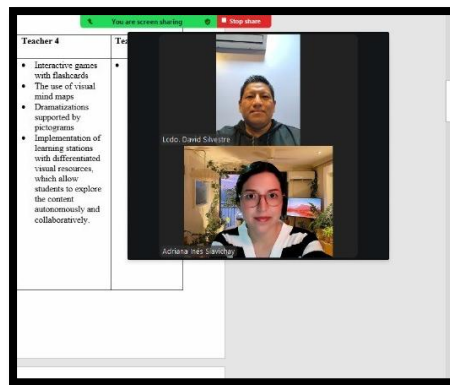
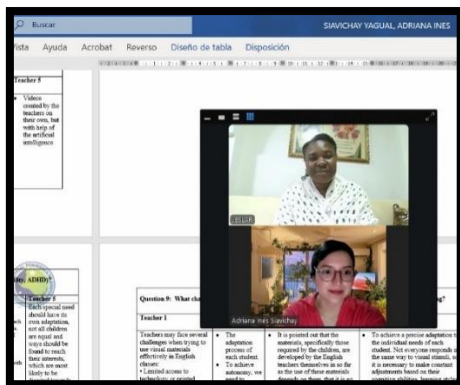
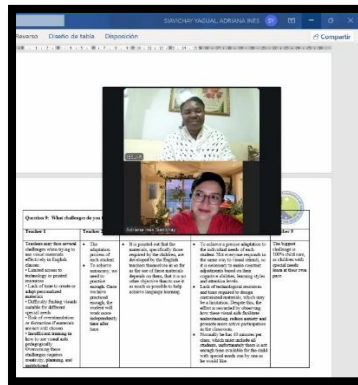
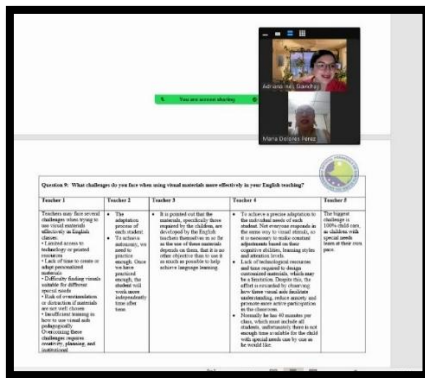
Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Table 10

Question 10: What kind of training or support would help you use visual materials more effectively in your English teaching?				
Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops on inclusive visual strategies: Focused on adapting visuals for different learning needs. • Access to ready: Made visual resources; Libraries of flashcards, posters, and digital tools. • Apps, videos, and interactive platforms. • Time and support for material creation: planning tools and templates. This kind of support helps teachers create engaging, accessible, and effective learning environments for all students. 	<p>It would be feasible to receive more training by the Ministry of Education since every year children with special needs come to private schools. This is a challenge that we have as teachers, but with dedication and love the student can learn English better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She would like to receive training on the use of inclusive technologies applied in the classroom The training and specific knowledge of each case are decisive for the choice and use of specific materials in accordance with the particular needs of each student, • it emphasizes the crucial role of parents who care and inform about their children's needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To use visual materials more effectively in teaching English, it would be helpful to receive specialized training in universal design for learning (UAP) as well as the use of inclusive technologies applied to the classroom. • Courses about adaptation of visual resources for different neurodivergent profiles such as autism, ADHD or intellectual disability would allow me to enrich my teaching practice. • In addition, the accompaniment of professionals in psycho-pedagogy and access to collaborative platforms between teachers would facilitate the exchange of successful strategies and the creation of more relevant and personalized materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Courses on how to use Artificial Intelligence for children with special learning needs. • This way you can ask questions about how they learn, fun ideas for them to learn English and the best way to treat them so they have confidence in the classroom.

Note. Created by Siavichay Yagual Adriana Inés, 2025

Annex D: Evidence



Link Audio recorder and Presentation:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAG2b6Vu0T0/t9BmGYzvUJwvoeJsmuQu0A/edit?utm_content=DAG2b6Vu0T0&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link2&utm_source=sharebutton