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The Use of Visuals to Motivate Students
and Improve Oral Proficiency

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Abstract

This classroom-based, quasi-experimental intervention examined the effectiveness of using visuals to motivate students and improve their oral proficiency. The participants were 42 Third Form Spanish students who had limited opportunities to develop their oral skills and were generally reticent. The class was divided into groups of five and was taught a unit of ten lessons using pictorial stimuli. Two observation grids were used to record class participation and extent of interest in visuals in order to assess motivation. Pre- and post-tests were also administered to determine the impact of the intervention on the students' learning. The results of the study indicated that the use of visuals had impacted significantly on most of the students' oral skills. The students understood more questions asked in the post-test, widened their vocabulary range and honed their questioning skills and command of grammar. Moreover, the students showed varied interests in the visuals and were more willing to communicate orally although their level of participation differed. Consequently, visuals are an indispensable tool for stimulating class participation and improving oral skills. Despite the constraints, the researcher strongly recommends this intervention to other foreign language teachers as developing students' oral proficiency is universally challenging.