

'And' is also a big word

Sometimes, the smallest things can mean the world to you. Even being able to spell the word 'and' can seem like a big achievement, when it is something you have worked towards for a long time.

This is not a story. Not really. It is more a feeling. A sensation. Something that is hard to describe. When you come from a country in Europe and you go to Colombia, there are many things that can surprise you, shock you and make you wonder. The climate is very different. The mountains are magnificent. Bogotá with its more than seven million inhabitants is ready to drown you and embrace you at the same time. But sometimes the big life-changing moments do not happen because of big changes. Sometimes, if you're not careful, they might almost pass you by without you noticing them - if you're not careful. Or sometimes they might fill you with an immense joy, just for a second, before everything continues as before. Well, not exactly as before, because a new knowledge, a new insight, a new spirit now drives you, leading you in a direction you might not have chosen before.

And so it was for me. I worked with children. Accompanying them in school, helping them with their homework and helping them learn to read and write. I did many different activities with many different children of all ages, but I got especially attached to a 12-year old girl who, on the one hand, was very energetic and full of life, and on the other hand was quite timid. She didn't know how to read or write anything in English, and she even struggled with the letters in Spanish. Once a week, I would sit with her at a computer where she was allowed to surf the internet, finding pictures of her favorite TV-series (at that point in time it was especially two shows called Chica Vampiro and Violetta). She would make a document with all the pictures she liked. Then, the condition was that she had to write a description for each picture. In that way, she would practice her writing. I would help her spell most of the words and it would take time. Even writing one sentence could be a struggle. She would get annoyed and tired if she couldn't find the letters on the keyboard or if I would ask her to try to spell a word herself. We would continue like this for months and not many things would change. But then one day, she had to spell the word 'and'. She looked at me and said: "That is A-N-D, right?" I can't describe the joy I felt. I was so proud and so happy to finally see that she had actually learned something; that she was progressing. It didn't matter that 'and' probably is one of the easiest words to write, because in the end, when something is hard and you finally achieve it, the feeling is the same. Then, 'and' is also a big word.