The relationship between students' vocabulary level and the speaking ability

in 8th grade courses at Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine whether there was a relationship between students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability. To do so, it was necessary to follow some steps; the application of Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test before and after a teaching plan was delivered, the design and implementation of the teaching plan based on directed vocabulary instruction and the measurement of students speaking ability, also pre and post teaching with the new methodology.

This research project was carried out through the quantitative method which also required the implementation of correlational research to determine the relationship between the two main variables mentioned above. It involved two experimental groups and one control group that correspond to three eighth grade classes of 32 students; all of them enrolled at NUSEFA, a public school located in Valledupar. The analysis of both students' speaking ability and vocabulary level was done through the ANNOVA test which revealed that there was a significant improvement on the results of the experimental groups in the vocabulary level test after applying directed vocabulary instruction. Additionally, the analysis showed an improvement in the individuals' speaking ability in the last application of the observation chart. The results obtained in the study can be considered trustworthy because it used a reliable tool for the analysis of the data and also took into account other aspects such as the context and the contingencies that appeared in the process.

Keywords: Vocabulary instruction, lack of vocabulary, speaking ability, vocabulary level

INTRODUCTION

Oral communication in a second language has always been a challenge for learners, thus this has been one of the main issues linguists, psychologists and educators have concerned about. There are several factors that affect second language learning, especially oral communication in the classroom. According to Ellis R. (1985) individual learner differences amid other aspects such as learning strategies, aptitudes, attitudes, age and motivation (McIntyre, 1995) or the affective factors (Arnold, J. & Brown, D. 1999) such as anxiety and lack of motivation affect the language learning process.

Thus, oral communication is one of the main aspects of language learning that has been undermined because of its complexity and due to the investment of time that it implies to plan lessons focused on meaning rather than on form.

What is more, another factor that is crucial in the development of the speaking ability is vocabulary. According to several scholars such as Wilkins (1972), Arnaud and Savignon (1997), Meara (1980) and Brown (1993), insufficient vocabulary knowledge has been found to be one of the major factors that hinder oral communication in the language classroom.

It is undeniable the fact that vocabulary is critical to acquire a second language since it enables learners to express their wishes or ideas with no need of grammatical structures. However, as Bern & Blachowicz (2008) say it is not only important to focus the attention on the need of vocabulary for language learning, but also for language teaching that is another complicated issue because many teachers feel unconfident and uncertain about which practices would be better for vocabulary instruction and language development. Further studies conducted by Richards (1976), Krashen (1989) and Maximo (2000) suggest many reasons for giving importance to vocabulary. Some of these reasons are the increasing use of dictionaries, mastery of language and learners expressing that lack of vocabulary is one of the main sources of problems in communication.

Oral communication in a second language has become an important issue around the world. The spread of English in the globe and many Latin American countries, including Colombia is an evidence of the necessity for a global language that can be used as a mean of communication and interaction among different nations. As Velez-Rendón (2003) contends, although English does not have the status of an official language in Colombia, its

functional use and importance has increased in a manner not experienced in the past. She adds that English has a crucial role in the social and economic development of nations along with international relationships. Evidence of this is the newest educational policies and programs that have been created by the Ministry of Education such as Colombia Bilingüe, in order to promote the inclusion of English in the national curriculum. As a consequence of this growing interest from the national government for the teaching of English in public schools.

Currently, different research on the language teaching and learning field are being done by the main universities in Colombia. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the ministry of Education for the inclusion of English as the official language of instruction, and the investment on research, these studies are insufficient because they do not explore enough emerging issues such as oral communication associated to other aspects, for example vocabulary acquisition for the development of the speaking ability.

Under these circumstances, the present study may give Colombian EFL and ESL teachers some clues or guidelines on how to deal with the students' lack of vocabulary to improve their speaking ability. More importantly, it will provide another opportunity to answer the research question of this project which aims to determine if there a relationship between 8th grade students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability.

Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima is a public school located in Valledupar in the north coast of Colombia. It is run by the national police department and it provides education only to police officer's children. Eighth grade courses were selected for this project since they have showed difficulties in oral communication and lack of vocabulary as found in the pre-study.

The research problem arises from the application of qualitative data collection tools such as pre observations, interviews to the principal and coordinator, surveys to students and the analysis of school documents such the PEI and the English curriculum to discover the problem our particular context has with oral production.

As observed in the analysis of the data collected from the survey, the main factor that were found to affect students' ability to perform oral tasks was the lack of vocabulary. Students claimed that their main constraint in the English class was insufficient vocabulary

to express their ideas when speaking and that they felt more comfortable doing other type of tasks in which they had the opportunity to look for the words in the dictionary.

Observations also showed that students used L1 almost all the time, and there was a tendency to mix both languages as a compensation strategy to cope with their lack of vocabulary. Language presented to students is decontextualized, which is to say that they are taught vocabulary and other aspects of language in isolation and there are few opportunities for peer or group interaction. What is more, the interview conducted with students showed that they do not really engage in their language learning process because it does not take into account their interests and needs due to the nature of the course.

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the results obtained from the pre-study which showed that students main difficulty was their insufficient vocabulary to express themselves orally, this research project intended to

measure students' vocabulary level through Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test to observe their performance pre and post the application of a teaching plan based on directed vocabulary instruction. This dissertation brought about a research question as follows:

Main Research Question

1.   Is there a relationship between students' vocabulary level and speaking ability in 8th grade courses at Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima?

Also a series of secondary research questions will be used in order to follow the process of this research study:

Sub-questions

1.   What specific vocabulary-related behaviors show students' inability to use the target language in oral tasks?

2.   What is students' vocabulary level before and after directed vocabulary instruction?

3.   What is the correlation between students' vocabulary level and speaking ability.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives

In order to achieve the major objective of this research project there are a series of specific actions to carry out. The first one, is measuring the specific vocabulary-related behaviors that show students' inability to use the target language in oral tasks. The second, is determining students' vocabulary level before and after directed vocabulary instruction.

The third and last thing to do is determining whether there is a relationship between students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research paper seeks to determine to what degree directed vocabulary instruction affects students' vocabulary level and performance in oral communication, taking into account the behaviors students show when they are speaking in the target language.

The theoretical framework will give a general account of the importance that English has in the global and local context. It will also explain the key concepts and the underpinnings of the theories utilized in the present study. These theories and approaches will be discussed to shed light on some aspects that hinder oral production in the language classroom.

First, this paper will contain a section to reflect on the role of English in the current world and in Colombia. Second, it will attempt to explain the importance of classroom research in order to improve teaching practices. Next, it will focus on the data collection instruments that will be applied in this study. Then, it will present a general overview of the factors that prevent oral communication, and it will treat the limitation of vocabulary and how it affects students' oral production. Finally, it will introduce some approaches for vocabulary instruction.

The importance of classroom research

According to Andrews & Lewis (2002) teachers can be regarded as researchers since they observe classroom events, and evaluate what works and what might not work properly in their everyday practice, and make changes to have a positive effect on the students' learning process. They are constantly self-monitoring, questioning the activities that are carried out in their classes, and analyzing students' behavior towards a certain matter or topic. This unceasing quest for improvement is the basis of what we call classroom research because it focuses on the observation of actions in class, the identification of main constraints and the resolution of these constraints to enhance students' learning and better teachers' professional practice.

Nevertheless, the reforms in teaching and learning theories have transformed the concept of research and the manner in which teaching methodologies and curricula are implemented in many colleges and schools. As a result of these changes, there has been an increasing interest of studying teaching practices, teachers are currently more concerned

with the analysis of their own practice to find suitable solutions to the challenges that they face every day in the classroom.

These days, but much less than before, teachers are consumers of research undertaken by scholars, they read others' work and apply those projects to their own context. However, some scholars like Felder & Henriques (1995) state that there has been significant evidence that not every project and methodology fits every educational setting because each one is different, and the students have different needs. One might say that the main cause for failures in teaching and learning new concepts is not the teachers´ work itself, but the methods and the materials which are the two main factors that affect the student's learning process.

The teacher's role then, is the role of a teacher-researcher. Research in education is about trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about and/or improving curriculum, teaching, and learning (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982).

The role of teacher-researchers in the classroom has great relevance because they are the main actors in terms of lesson planning, identifying the problem to be researched, and being fully responsible for the implementation of changes. They transform an observable problem into a research question, and also influence their context by changing the reality, making contributions not only to the teaching and learning field but to their professional career.

As Bauman (1996) argues, "teachers must be participants in educational research and development from their first education courses, through their professional development, and on to their service as mentors to new teachers…. We need research that helps the institutions and the people who work in them raise questions about their own goals and practice as part of their everyday work" (p. 29).

In conclusion, because they are course designers and play the role of observers, they should take advantage of their situation to go beyond and do research on the limitations or problems that they encounter in their reality, and should try to have a positive impact on their particular context.

The Importance of English

Through the years English has become one of the most spoken languages in the world, gaining the status of global language. Owing to changes in the economic and

political relationships among developed countries, English became the official language utilized in formal talks at conferences held by international organizations such as the United Nations and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) since it is spoken by a great number of people around the world. Moreover, due to scientific and technological innovations, there has been a need for communication in a global language. Thus, English has spread across the globe to achieve this objective.

According to Crystal (2003), a language achieves the status of global when it is recognized and has a specific role in every country where it is spoken. He also adds that a language that is widespread, but is only a mother tongue cannot be called global language because it needs to be spoken by other countries around the globe, and they must give it a special place in their communities, political and social life, even though there are native speakers or not.

Additionally, he argues that there are only two ways in which a language can become global. First of all, this occurs when a language is established as official in a community, and therefore is used in different fields such as government, law courts, media and education systems. As Crystal (2003) explains, "the role of an official language today is best illustrated by English, which has some kind of special status in over seventy countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, India, Singapore and Vanuatu" (p. 9). English has achieved a higher status than other world languages such as French, German, Spanish, Chinese or Arabic.

A foreign language obtains global status when it becomes the first option in the educational system of a country, whether or not it is the official language there. For instance, in Colombia, English is the main foreign language taught to children in most of the schools, and the first choice for adults to learn owing to a variety of purposes such as professional enrichment, business or traveling for pleasure. In short, we can say that English has gained the status of global language because it has all these characteristics.

Language Learning and Teaching

According to Brown (2000), by the 80s the field of second language acquisition was somehow manageable. There was a good number of reliable conferences, journals and studies; and fewer but respectable books on second language learning. However, in these

days this field has gone through changes that have yielded to many branches and subfields which has made it almost impossible to manage.

Although there is not a unique approach to language learning for all individuals and all settings, there is a huge coordinated database that has been enriched by researchers around the world to respond the most common questions in the field.

Learning a second language is a complex process which involves other aspects such as interacting with a different culture, and different manners of thinking and perceiving the reality. That is why there have been many theories and approaches that suggest principles to language learning that have been derived from the core learning theories through the history.

Learning theories are based on principles that define and explain how learners acquire, retain and expand their knowledge. The study of these theories help researchers and teachers to understand how learning occurs and implement tools and strategies to promote learning. It can be observed how language learning has gone from the behaviorist theory to the cognitivist and then to constructivist theory. Behaviorism whose main theorist was Skinner (1953), claimed that knowledge was influenced by external stimuli and responses. Conversely, cognitivism as defined by Piaget (1972) perceives learning as a mental processing of information that influence the learner's conduct whereas constructivism as Vygotsky (1978) perceived it, claims that knowledge is constructed by the individual's own experiences with the world.

Communicative Language Teaching

By the 60s applied linguists in England realized that current approaches to language teaching and learning were not focused on the right way. The council of Europe, Wilkins (1972) and other scholars found the need to give language a more functional use instead of focusing on grammatical structures.

This necessity to create innovative methods of language teaching was considered a major priority which leaded to the development of the Communicative Language Teaching that consists of communicating through interaction in the target language and providing learners with the opportunity to focus not only on the language but on his own learning process.

Chambers (1997) suggests that Communicative Language Teaching approach improves the learners´ speaking proficiency and this is more useful than teaching grammatical rules. It indicates that teachers must have an active part in their English lessons and try to foster an active role of students as well. Although, the teacher's role is a crucial part in the teaching process, he is not the center of the educational act.

According to Chambers (1997) the teacher's role is based on providing the suitable environment where the educational act grows and expands, due to teacher must cautiously plan interesting classes and activities using media in classroom and audiovisual aids, these technological tools are useful when developing speaking activities and allowing to lessen the teacher´s intervention as an instructor but as a guidance. Besides learners have brought up in a visual society and this situation can become in an extrinsic motivation for helping us to get our target.

Liu (2010) states that in CLT language learning is a very personal experience and individual ability, but its achievement depends on the teaching - learning strategies and how language teachers design activities to promote what students learnt into practice, it demonstrates them the language usefulness. This finding shows that CLT allows that language learning flows smoothly when behind it has specific objectives either extrinsic or intrinsic.

On the other hand language acquisition is not only a bond between teacher-student and their interactions, considering that to this process falls other factors like the pedagogical approach in the teaching event, Brown (2000) explains how in the field of second language pedagogy during decades has provoked several theories and hypotheses, at the same time it entails a cluster of reactions and counter- reactions, nevertheless CLT approach has been a striking methodology in language teaching processes because this trend explores in learners' dimensions such as written and spoken discourse and pragmatic deals for demarcating them. Other aspects that CLT takes into account are learning styles and learning rhythms, as well as, non-verbal communication that could be a valuable device to compensate the communication breakdown.

In conjunction with this process, Brown (2000) categorizes four interconnected characteristics of CLT; the first clarifies how the goal in a classroom should be encouraging the communicative competence, the second characteristic explains how suitable techniques

can engage learners to use the target language functionally; the author also states that these techniques can encourage the students´ fluency and accuracy in English classes and how this can complement their English proficiency, finally it concludes that is a drawback that students must learn a foreign language in unrehearsed contexts, but teachers could take advantage of it, if they have a positive attitude for pursuing communicative goals in the class time using technological advices to help the learning-teaching process and focusing not only on functional purposes (getting job or passing a test) but communicative purposes.

Integration of the four language skills

The global status of English and the need to develop the four basic skills in language learners has placed much attention on language teaching techniques focusing on the integration of the four skills.

According to Vygotsky (1978) foreign language learners construct their own learning through the interaction with different educational situations and their personal experiences. This is why it is important to provide learners with opportunities to interact with other people in different contexts, being able to integrate their knowledge of the four skills.

Aydoğan and Akbarov (2014) claim that for many years, language educators have used the concept of four basic skills referring to speaking, reading, and writing. These skills are often known as "macro-skills" whereas grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling are known as the "micro-skills". All these skills are related to each other in terms of communication; writing or oral and also in the form of communication; receiving or producing the message.

Listening comprehension is considered a receptive skill because it involves being able to understand the oral language, and reading is also considered as receptive because it implies not only decoding the written language, but being capable of making sense of it. Reading can help learners to build vocabulary that may be useful for listening comprehension and oral production at later stages.

Writing is a productive skill and it is often viewed as one of the most complex skills, even for native speakers because it is not merely representing graphically the speech, but depicting an individual's thoughts in a structured manner. Regarding to speaking, it is

considered the most complicated skill because it goes beyond pronouncing words; it involves mental processes to produce a message that may be comprehensible by an audience.

Theoreticians such as Carrasquillo (1993), and Farris and Kaczmarski (1988) who are in favor of whole-language teaching strongly suggest that all aspects of language are related and considering that, students should be offered with opportunities to use the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) simultaneously in functional, cooperative and meaningful situations that allow them to retrieve their background knowledge.

Teaching Oral Communication in Second Language

The ability to communicate coherently in a second language is widely recognized as a priority by learners that aim to have a professional career or want to enroll in high quality colleges or universities. They also acknowledge that communicating in a non-native language is not an easy task because it involves the integration of other aspects of the target language (Murphy, 1991).

Teachers of ESL oral communication should bear in mind two main considerations when examining and selecting L2 methods and approaches to design their curriculum and lessons. First, they need to be aware that most of the methodologies that are found in the literature have discrepancies with the way oral language works in the classroom because there are many other factors associated to oral production such as cultural background, context, anxiety, and among others. Second, they should keep in mind that although the methods found in the literature offer good strategies to teach at early stages of L2 acquisition, many of them resulted inappropriate for intermediate or advanced levels of speaking like total physical response, suggestopedia or the silent way (Murphy, 1991).

Regarding oral production, Levelt's (1989) model have been one of the most influential in second language research. It describes three processing components for oral production; the conceptualizer, the formulator and the articulator. The conceptualizer is in charge of generating and monitoring the message; the formulator gives grammatical and phonological form to the message, and the articulator retrieves chunks of internal speech and executes the message.

According to Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), the communicative language ability (CLA) involves what is called cognitive knowledge that is represented in the form of artifacts or elements that are important for learners' performance on a second language. This is the ability to solve communication difficulties and, also the knowledge required to organize and plan affective reactions in communicative situations.

Canale and Swain (1980), state that a theory of basic communication skills should emphasize at least a minimum level of oral communication skills that empower the learner to deal with the most frequent second/foreign language situations they may face throughout their learning process. They also recommend teaching a second language focusing on the meaning of the message instead of grammatical accuracy of the learner's utterances.

Studies done on applied linguistics, psychology, and sociolinguistics have brought many changes into the field of second language learning and teaching. As Brown (2000), says, "Foreign language learning started to be viewed not just as potentially predictable developmental process but also as the creation of meaning through interactive negotiation among the learners" (p. 245). As a consequence of this extensive research on second language learning and teaching, the concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) has been widely accepted, and the CLT approach has become the most effective alternative in the last decades in different L2 teaching contexts.

As Murphy (1991) affirms, the L2 literature provides lots of resources to promote students' oral communication such as completing speaking tasks, topic discussions, dialogues, filling in information-gap activities, problem solving, role playing, interactive games and among others. Nevertheless, CLT is still the most used language teaching method because it focuses on the development of language proficiency through interactions in authentic contexts. According to supporters of CLT, the main objective of the communicative approach to language teaching is the development of the communicative competence for students to be capable of understanding and using language effectively in real communicative situations and academic contexts.

Factors that hinder oral production

For years teachers, linguists, and other specialists in language learning have been interested in studying several aspects that affect second language acquisition, especially issues that hinder oral production in the classroom.

As Tanveer (2007) argues the use of new trends in communicative language teaching and the spread of the English language around the world have increased the need of having good communication skills. Nevertheless, Tanveer points out that learners experience some feelings that interfere with the desired goal.

Based on a study that was undertaken in Hong Kong with 567 students, Littlewood (2004) claims that there are six main factors that prevent students' participation and some presumed causes of students' remaining silent in the classroom. Some of these factors are lack of interest, tiredness, fear of making mistakes, insufficient knowledge in the subject, timidness and few of time to draw up and express their ideas.

According to Gaudart (1992), some teachers indicate that learners' passive role in classroom discussions is due to lack of motivation. Additionally, he argues that this low participation has to do with the learners' incapacity to function in oral communication.

In addition, Tsui (1996) found that one of the most common causes of students' reticence in the class is their lack of confidence and the fear of being criticized.

McIntyre (1995) claims that a competitive classroom atmosphere, difficulty in student-teacher interaction, and fear of embarrassment among other factors result in anxiety which has a social effect in the dynamic of the classroom. In other words, this sort of anxiety that has a prevalent effect on the language learning process is what McIntyre called "language anxiety". Oxford (1990) states that language anxiety starts as a response to a certain situation in which students do not feel comfortable performing in the target language.

Additionally, she claims that when anxiety turns into a permanent feeling, it may have negative effects on the students' performance such as low participation and avoidance, known as debilitating anxiety. Oxford talks about another type of anxiety called harmful anxiety that is related to students' negative attitudes which strongly affect their motivation and performance in the target language.

Motivation is another aspect that has a great influence on students' attitudes, behaviors and language performance in the language classroom. According to Ellis (1985) and other researchers such as Schumann (1979), the learner's behavior is influenced by their personal interests and needs. The authors claim that although motivation cannot be measured, it can be observed through the students' particular actions in the classroom. If they are not highly motivated, they will not easily engage in any language tasks, especially those involving oral participation.

The concept of motivation may vary from one approach to another. For instance, in a behaviorist view, the learner's behavior is driven by some external stimuli. Conversely, in the cognitivist perspective, motivation is related to the individual's experiences and the choices they make concerning the degree of importance they give to or effort they make on a certain matter. Different from the cognitivist approach, constructivism emphasizes a combination of both the social context and the learner's personal decisions. Therefore, considering that motivation is a complex factor that governs human behavior, students' participation in class will always be affected by their inner interests.

Although motivation is one of the most common reasons for students' low participation in oral tasks, students' cultural background is another factor that interferes with the second language acquisition process. There is evidence of the powerful influence that cultural background has on students' oral communication. For instance, Dwyer and Heller-Murphy (1996) contend that students' reticence is due to a feeling of public embarrassment and lack of confidence. Nonetheless, they point out that Turkish learners are surprisingly afraid of making mistakes when they speak to other non-native speakers, rather than speaking to native speakers of English.

However, there are other factors that have been proved to affect students' oral participation, and one of them is lack of vocabulary which limits seriously students when trying to communicate a message.

Vocabulary in Second Language Learning

Vocabulary has been recently acknowledged to be one of the main areas in second language learning. That is why researchers have place much attention on the vocabulary acquisition process and have defined it in distinct ways; for instance, Neuman and Dwyer

(2009) define it as "words we must know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary)". (p. 385)

Additionally, Hornby (1995), as well as Diamond and Gutlohn (2006) describe vocabulary as the whole number of words and the list of these words with their meanings. Whereas Ur (1998) perceives vocabulary as the words that are taught in a foreign language, talking about vocabulary instead of only "words".

From the definition above, it can be concluded that vocabulary is the knowledge of words learners need to communicate and express their ideas in the target language. This is why it is important to emphasize vocabulary instruction for learners to be able to master it for communicative purposes.

According to Webster (1992) developing the mastery skill will help L2 learners to master not only words and their definitions but also to master the language functions and to develop a successful listenership in order to express their ideas effectively. Master a second language shows that the L2 learners dominate the target language in every different component or at least they are proficient in L2, mastery also confirms that L2 learners use suitable learning strategies that suit with their necessities and make them competent speakers, in the words of Hornby (1995) mastery is a "complete knowledge or complete skill".

Language researchers as Hatch & Brown (1995) and Rivers (1989) defines vocabulary mastery as an individual achievement; it means that developing the vocabulary knowledge not only depends on extrinsic aspects as teaching methodology, materials, tasks, and among others but intrinsic factors as learners´ motivation, interest, learning and language needs. Vocabulary mastery is a language skill that measures learners' language level proficiency, because the use of language confirms the vocabulary knowledge in each the four language skills.

Cameron (2001), Linse & Nunan (2005), Harmon, Wood and Keser (2009) acknowledge that vocabulary mastery is a key skill that should be developed through the language acquisition process and this development is directly related to the L2 learner´s vocabulary level. Researchers such as Laufer and Nation (1999), Maximo (2000), Read (2000), Gu (2003), Teller (2008) and Nation (2011) and others have become aware of vocabulary mastery is a remarkable skill to create authentic spoken and written; authentic

texts entail cultural identity that at the same time play a crucial role in the society's construction.

A set of texts is defined by McCarten (2007) as a corpus. The author suggests that this collection of texts is useful for L2 learners in their language learning process, because they help L2 learners to storage and retrieve the target language in a meaningful way. This kind of texts is helpful in the teaching process, because they are a great alternative to present the L2 to learners through different ways based on the multiple features that a corpus has.

Vocabulary mastery can increase the learners´ language use and provides according to Richards (1976) strong basis to develop the four language skills, it means that developing vocabulary knowledge in L2 learners is an important issue if language teachers want to ensure a high language proficiency in ESL classrooms.

The importance of vocabulary for Oral Production

''There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say ... While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed''. (Wilkins,1972, p. 97)

The knowledge of vocabulary is a key aspect that must be developed in beginner and advanced learners, because there is a direct relation between vocabulary and oral production and as a consequence an effective communication, Nation (2001) claims that vocabulary knowledge and language use are interconnected, it means vocabulary knowledge makes able a successful use of the target language, conversely, the use of the target language improve the vocabulary knowledge. Rivers in Nunan (1991), confirm the Nation´s principle arguing that profitable vocabulary learning enables an efficient target language use, because if learners do not have enough vocabulary, they will not be able to use the second language in a comprehensible manner.

Many times, students feel uncomfortable when speaking in a foreign language because of their fear of being laughed at and their insufficient level of proficiency which also results in lack of confidence when interacting in English. This lack of confidence is

substantially related to the absence of vocabulary which prevent students from expressing their ideas coherently.

Teachers and experts on language teaching have observed that students who lack vocabulary will struggle to communicate in an effective way because vocabulary is a crucial aspect for successful communication. According to Wilkins (1972), making meaning may be hindered not only by little grammatical knowledge, but also by the lack of vocabulary. Moreover, insufficient vocabulary can impede the ability to communicate a clear message. Arnaud and Savignon (1997) argue that the same occurs with advanced learners of the second language who suffer from limited vocabulary knowledge related to idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs.

Some researchers such as Meara (1980) and Brown (1993), agree that lack of vocabulary knowledge is one of the main sources of difficulty in second language learning. Consequently, nowadays there is a tendency to believe that vocabulary is one of the key aspects determining proficiency and fluency in any language. As a result, vocabulary instruction has gained several followers, and this is why it is necessary to discuss its importance and its usefulness for the second language acquisition process.

In the following section there will be a discussion of approaches and activities that are proposed for the teaching of vocabulary.

How to teach vocabulary

As it was presented in the last section of this research paper, knowledge vocabulary is a key component in language learning issues, this is reinforced according to Krashen, as cited in Lewis (1993) who states ''When students travel, they don't carry grammar books, they carry dictionaries'' (p. 25), it is a common and real situation that shows to researchers that vocabulary is essential to master effectively the target language.

Despite the importance that vocabulary has in the second language learning, some researchers as Oxford (1990) claim that vocabulary is "by far the most sizeable and unmanageable component in the learning of any language, whether a foreign or one's mother tongue, because of tens of thousands of different meanings", supporting the previous principle Meara (1980) has established that vocabulary knowledge is a remarkable problem in L2 learners, the author also states unlike other language

components, vocabulary has no specific rules, and a vague vocabulary system can confuse the learners; which is the reason why L2 learners do not acquire and develop their vocabulary knowledge easily.

However the negative consequences of a vague vocabulary system and the vocabulary knowledges gaps that L2 learners present, they have to perform tasks and tests which involve vocabulary exercises, consequently learners look for some traditional strategies as looking for meanings in bilingual dictionaries and memorizing lists of words to cope with the tasks. Within these conditions, it is almost a fact that L2 learners have short-term vocabulary knowledge because they have used no meaningful strategies to carry out the tasks and to storage and retrieve the target vocabulary.

Based on this striking problem in ESL classrooms, researchers, linguistics and language teachers have explored about the most successful strategies to encourage the development of vocabulary knowledge and to enhance the target language use in L2 learners. As Thornbury (2002) comments that learning words is a central process in second language acquisition, because language involves words, it is absolutely necessary to learn a vocabulary because there is no communication without words.

Language teaching has been a controversial issue through the last decades, it means language teachers have to face constantly problems in their role; situations such as, preparing an adequate lesson that take into account the different students´ necessities, becoming proficient in teaching materials, drawing the learners´ attention, choosing the suitable techniques to teach, gaining good results in the designed tasks for the students, and among others. It is also controversial because language teachers should teach vocabulary in the target language which is challenging in some contexts where learners are reluctant because they have no cultural background or because their lack of vocabulary knowledge.

In order to cope with the learners' lack of vocabulary and their inability to produce language, there have been different proposals to teach vocabulary. As a consequence of these diverse points of views, Sedita (2005) comments that there has been debate between a group of researchers who argue that vocabulary should be instructed directly and some others that believe that it should be taught incidentally.

For years, vocabulary instruction had been unplanned and incidental, guided by the learners' questions and when the words appeared by chance. When learners found an

unfamiliar word, they used the dictionary, the book's glossary, or were given a simple oral definition provided by the teacher. As a consequence, this limited opportunity for retrieval of the words did not end up in any meaningful learning and communicative use of the words.

However, vocabulary instruction has been driven to a different path, which implies exposing the learner to the words and interacting with them in different ways. As Nagy (2005) claims, before a learner really understands and applies a word, he needs several exposures to the word and in different contexts. Furthermore, Richards & Rodgers (1986) suggest that vocabulary should be taught via meaningful, situation-based oral activities and through a process of selection, gradation, and presentation of linguistic structures.

Nevertheless, there have been multiple assumptions regarding how vocabulary should be taught. On one hand, there are some scholars that propose an implicit or incidental learning of vocabulary; on the other hand, there are others who argue that direct vocabulary instruction results in more meaningful learning and further retrieval of the words.

Graves (2006) claims that learning vocabulary from the context increments the possibility of storage. Therefore, when the learner has other encounters with a word in different contexts, he will have a better understanding of its meaning. Nonetheless, this perspective has been criticized for some researchers such as Richards (1976), Nation (2001) and McCarten (2007) and they have proposed a new vision of vocabulary instruction.

According to McCarten (2007), teaching strategic vocabulary implies organizing the purpose that fosters the novices to speak. Teach a vocabulary with a specific goal allows to the language teacher takes into account the other speaker and show listenership to contribute in the conversation because it encourages the learner to manage the conversation as a whole, a whole that constructs authentic communication.

Input-based Incremental Vocabulary Instruction

Input-based incremental vocabulary instruction (IBI) is an approach based on current research findings that wipe away some misconceptions about how vocabulary is most effectively taught in second language instruction.

For decades second language teaching was primarily based on grammar, translation and drillings. As claimed by Barcroft (2012) in his study, there has always been insufficient knowledge about the teaching of vocabulary and how this part of the language influences the development of communicative competence.

As a consequence of this lack of knowledge, second language has been taught based on those myths or beliefs that teachers have traditionally held. Activities that reflect these beliefs such as, writing target words in sentences, copying individual target words, and answering meaning related questions about the target words have been common in the second language classroom.

Input-based Incremental vocabulary instruction was designed to be applicable to any learning and teaching context, thus it provides guidelines to design activities and communicative tasks that can be adapted taking into account the learners' level, and the cognitive and psycholinguistic processes involved in L2 vocabulary learning. That is why this approach can be beneficial not only to researchers but to instructors, course coordinators, and developers of instructional materials.

IBI emphasizes how vocabulary should be presented in the input and how tasks should be gradually incremented as a lesson progresses. Furthermore, before exemplifying any lesson, Barcroft has the reader reflect on his/her own current vocabulary teaching practices by asking five key questions and proposing ten principles for effective vocabulary instruction as follows.

The first principle refers to the development and implementation of a vocabulary acquisition plan which has to do with the selection of level-appropriate goals, syllabus design, materials, activities and target words to be taught.

The second principle's premise is presenting new words frequently and repeatedly in the input in order to foster students' understanding and use of the words in real-life contexts.

The third principle suggests that there should be a balance between intentional and incidental vocabulary learning. On the one hand, it proposes repeating isolated words in order to make them more salient and easier to learn, so that students with a lower level of proficiency make intentional attempts to learn the target words. On the other hand, for learners at higher levels of L2 proficiency instructors may focus their lessons on more

incidental vocabulary learning, but including more direct vocabulary instruction to promote the acquisition of less common and field-specific words.

The fourth principle of the IBI approach claims that with no sufficient activation of meaning, students will not be able to relate words to their meaning. According to Krashen's (1985) theory stated in Barcroft, input is the key element for successful vocabulary instruction. Bancroft gives examples to demonstrate and reinforce the principle that provides input such as including extensive reading, listening to stories, working with familiar topics, using gestures and paraphrasing, and pronouncing individual target words.

The fifth principle refers to strategies to present new words in an enhanced manner which means focusing students' attention on specific words or features that the instructor may wish to emphasize. Some of these techniques are showing definitions of words in marginal glosses, bolding, underlining, highlighting, increasing font size, capitalizing, or putting words in different colors.

The sixth principle "limit forced output without access to meaning during the initial stages" means avoiding to provide definition of words or having students produce the words during the first stages of a lesson. Instead, this principle suggests allowing students to use target words on their own after having processed them throughout the lesson in a series of different tasks.

The seventh principle recommends limiting forced elaboration of meaning during the initial stages. This means avoiding to focus too much on semantic aspects such as sentence writing, answering questions about word meaning, and L2 word form learning. According to Laufer and Hulstijn (2001), research findings showed negative effects of semantically oriented tasks on vocabulary recall, however, there was evidence of positive effects on semantic evaluation of words in different contexts.

The eighth principle accounts for the instruction of L2-specific word meanings in order to promote long-term usage which refers having the students go further by undertaking meaning-oriented tasks that imply learning all of the lexical units or lexical phrases connected to a target word. In this manner, phrasal verbs, collocations and idiomatic expressions play a crucial role in teaching and learning vocabulary.

The ninth principle proposes increasing the level of difficulty in tasks gradually over time, incorporating other principles from the IBI approach. That is to say that students

are required to produce new words in the form of output in a fluent manner and in different contexts. So, this principle emphasizes the importance of vocabulary growth in the development of fluency.

The tenth principle consists of applying research findings with direct implications for vocabulary instruction such as including amount of talkers, voice type, speaking rate variability in spoken input and output, selecting target words grouping them into thematically based units and others.

Besides the ten principles for effective vocabulary instruction, Barcroft provides teachers, course developers and coordinators of language programs with some practical guidelines to apply when planning and implementing vocabulary lessons and samples of lesson plans with varied sources of input and based on reading as a main input. Finally, he shows some concluding thoughts to remind that the purpose of the book is not merely to provide a series of activities but to think of why it is important to present words first in the input repeatedly and frequently over time.

DESCRIPTION OF THE CONTEXT

Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima (NUSEFA) is a public school located in Valledupar, Cesar. NUSEFA is one of the 22 schools run by the Bienestar Social de la Policía Nacional in Colombia. NUSEFA's mission is focused on high quality education standards which seek to improve the individual, family, and community wellbeing; not only through academic knowledge but focusing on the teaching of values.

Furthermore, the school aims to be recognized by 2019 for having the highest quality level in its administrative organization and for being the first choice to educate children providing them with professional opportunities that allow them to contribute to their personal development and to the society. This is why police officers enroll their children at NUSEFA instead of choosing a different school, even if they have the opportunity to do so.

The institution offers four levels of teaching: kindergarten, elementary, middle and high school, distributed in two shifts. The school has 670 students from 6th grade to 11th grade in the morning shift and 230 students from both kindergarten and elementary in the afternoon. NUSEFA started with an inclusive education program in 2005, including some students with visual and hearing impairments who are provided with individual professional support.

Currently, the institution follows an eclectic approach, taking its principles from humanism and constructivism in order to foster meaningful knowledge through pedagogical projects, considering the students' target and learning needs, their context and school policies.

With regard to the teaching of English, the school intends to start a process in which students will be taught from kindergarten to eleventh grade to achieve a B1 proficiency level based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages .To attain this main objective, the school sought sponsors such as the British Council and the Organization of American States, which offer a scholarship to the first six students on the honor roll, allowing them to participate in cultural exchange program in an English-speaking country such as Canada, England or the United States.

In addition, a summer camp takes place every year in Ricaurte, Cundinamarca where 20 students from 9th to11th grade from all over the country are involved in intensive courses and training sessions in the English language.

Furthermore, one teacher from NUSEFA is trained in Bogotá with the purpose of updating his methodology by learning approaches and new trends in language teaching that can be implemented in the school.

Another strategy that NUSEFA has come up with in order to motivate students to speak English for different purposes, is the "English day", a specific day each term of the year for the students to perform songs, plays, and language contests in the assemblies with the entire school community.

One of the school's recent achievements related to students' proficiency level in English is the result obtained on the Saber test. One of the students from eleventh grade achieved a score of 92 out of 100. More than a half of the results were between 65 and 70 points, which represents a high score, taking into account the criteria set by the Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior which is a national organization that is in charge of measuring Colombia's performance in primary, secondary and university education levels.

In 2014 a ninth grade student was the best participant in the national summer camp in Ricaurte, Cundinamarca. As a result of her performance, she had the opportunity to go on a cultural exchange program for one month in Toronto, Canada where she took an English course with many students from all over the world.

All this together has had a negative effect on the language teaching, especially the fact that there are not enough English teachers in the school. At NUSEFA there are only three teachers for a student population of 900. As a consequence, the students are being taught only four hours a week. What is more, they have to work no more than their texts and Spanish-English dictionaries because there are no other resources to be utilized to make the English classes more practical and enjoyable.

English classes are usually focused on form not on meaning. Teachers are mainly delivering lessons on grammar topics and developing mechanical activities proposed in the course book. This dilemma has to do with the school's policies which oblige teachers to use

the books because they are previously chosen by the Departamento de la Policía Nacional in Bogotá.

According to the school's educational policies described in official documents such as the Proyecto Educativo Institucional (PEI) and the syllabus, the communicative approach has been embraced for teaching English in the school.

However, there is a mismatch between the ideal principles of CLT and the actual processes undertaken in the English classes at NUSEFA, because language teachers do not follow the principles of CLT in terms of promoting speaking tasks and the active participation of the students in their learning process during the language classes. Nevertheless teachers seldom intend to assist the students providing them with extracurricular activities in which they can explore different kind of tasks to foster speaking and listening comprehension since there is no emphasis on these two skills in the regular classes.

Due to the limitations and constraints mentioned before, this study is going to take place in eighth grades 801, 802, 803 because these students constantly shows low results in their academic reports. Moreover, these groups have been chosen, considering that next year they will have to take the Saber test, and their language proficiency will be also evaluated.

The eighth grades age range goes from 12 to 14 years old. These groups each one has 32 students and they have been studying at NUSEFA since the elementary grades, English classes in the elementary school are basically focused on grammar rules, isolated vocabulary and drilling among other not communicative activities. Thus they are already knew the methodology and the activities that teachers apply for language teaching. Despite there is a methodological sequence in the school, the eighth grade students' proficiency level in English is A1, it means that this methodology is unsuccessful to reach the English program's goals.

The status of English at NUSEFA

 "English is not a fashion anymore, it is almost an obligation" (Robledo & Echeverry, 1998)

Since the very beginning human beings have tried to interact with other members of their towns, cities or communities through different means like speech, writing, pictures, sounds and so forth. The communicative ability makes possible to learn new beliefs, cultures, opinions among others.

Although the majority of the global population does not have English as their native language, most people have felt the need to communicate with the international community, whether for personal or academic purposes. Crystal (1997) claims that English has reached a global status as a successful tool to enhance students´ opportunities for jobs and to improve the quality of education around the world.

In the analysis of the official documents carried out in the exploratory stage, the importance of English is a determining factor in the school´s philosophy. NUSEFA school acknowledges that the English language has a crucial role in 21st century education. Although the school does not have a very well structured English curriculum, there are various initiatives to motivate students to learn English and participate in activities carried out in the school.

Communicative language teaching is the approach to language that was chosen by NUSEFA, and the school curriculum reflects some CLT principles, but those principles are not shown in the language teaching process. It proposes working with the English language first inside the classroom, and then, outside.

Although the English program describes in detail that lessons should be communicative and interactive, and show a variety of activities in which students' production is the most important factor, these kinds of activities are not fulfilled in eighth grades classes. Some activities are carried out with the whole school community such as the English day, the spelling bee and the American song contest. They also celebrate holidays from the anglo saxon culture such as Saint Valentine's Day, Saint Patrick's and Halloween.

Additionally, the Colombian government has decided to participate more actively. In the global community and to expand the use of English in its classrooms this is why NUSEFA has become one of the pioneer schools that started local immersion camps where students use the language in real context situations and genuine tasks.

Moreover, after being through a process of selection in the local immersion camps, some students are selected to go to an exchange abroad. These students take a one-month

English course in United States or Canada, and come back to share their experience with the school community. All these projects and activities demonstrate that even though English is taught as a foreign language in at NUSEFA, it is regarded as an important aspect of students' education

METHODOLOGY

This section will account for the procedures followed in the process of data collection and also will present the analysis of the data. This part of the study is crucial because it will give the researchers the opportunity to seek responses for the research question that aims to determine the relationship between students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability.

The analysis of the data will be done using mainly the quantitative method since it allows the researchers to treat numerical information gathered from the application of a vocabulary levels test and a structured observation chart utilized to measure the students' ability to speak before and after implementing directed vocabulary instruction.

Type of Research

Quantitative Research

A research approach is a set of steps and instruments that address the investigator to determine the instruments of data collection, the analysis of the results and their interpretation. The choice of the type of research is mainly based on the research problem and its features, it is to say that the selection of the research method depends on what the researcher considers to be appropriate.

According to the research problem of this paper, the quantitative approach has been selected as the most suitable to answer the main research question. Aliaga & Gunderson (2002) describes the quantitative research as a method to collect information represented in numerical data which explains phenomena or questions, quantitative methods are based on mathematics specially in statistics.

Creswell (2012) states that quantitative research tests principles by investigating the relation between variables which are measured through specific methods. The author also claims that correlational statistic is a method that leads the researcher to establish possible relations among two or more variables. In this research project correlational design was selected to describe and measure the degree of relation between vocabulary level and oral production in the eighth grader students at NUSEFA.

The quantitative method was utilized in the main study to analyse and report the findings from an observation chart that was applied to measure students' speaking

performance when carrying out specific oral tasks pre and post implementation of directed vocabulary instruction. Additionally, it was used in this study in order to gather and analyze the data collected from a vocabulary level test that was also before and after implementing the teaching plan.

The reason why this research project has been conducted using the qualitative method in the exploratory stage and the quantitative method in the main study is because of the nature of our subject that first dealt with study population and their attitudes toward their learning process in L2, and then measured students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability.

Besides focusing the present study on the quantitative method, correlational analysis of the data has also been selected in order to contrast the students' performance in oral tasks in both methodologies to determine the relationship between students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability. To complete this study, two experimental classes were taught using the IBI approach, and one control class was taught with the traditional methodology that has been used the English classes at NUSEFA.

Correlational Research

Since 1998 there has been much discussion about what correlational research is. Some scholars (Charles, 1998; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000; Gall et al., 1996; Gay & Airasian, 2000; Martella et al., 1999) have defined it as a nonexperimental method because there is no manipulation of the variables that are being controlled by the researcher in order to observe them as naturally as possible.

Correlational research is conducted in order to determine whether, and to what extent there is a relationship between two or more quantifiable variables. Gay & Airasian (2000) state that "the purpose of a correlational study is to determine relationships between variables or to use these relationships to make predictions…". This means that in correlational studies what the researcher does is to collect quantitative or measurable data and conduct an analysis with statistical information to find relations between the independent variables or a possible relation of causality.

Correlational studies might use quantifiable variables to find the relationship among them. The variables that are observed in this study are on the one hand, the students' vocabulary level, and on the other hand students' ability to speak fluently in English.

Setting

The setting in which this study was conducted is Colegio Nuestra Señora de Fátima (NUSEFA), a public school located in Valledupar, Cesar. It is one of the schools run by the Bienestar Social de la Policía Nacional in Colombia. It deals with students of distinct ages and levels, starting from preschool to highschool; most of them come from low and medium socio-economic strata and difficult socio-affective environments.

Participants

The participants of this research project are the students from eighth grade courses 801, 802, and 803 because they are the groups in which the teacher researcher has the most number of hours a week. Another powerful reason for this selection is because these students showed poor results in their academic reports, particularly in English.

Each group has 32 students; boys and girls whose ages are between 12 and 14 years. Most of them have been in the school since elementary, and their proficiency level in English is A1 which makes difficult to achieve the school's goal which is to graduate students with level B1.'

Research Instruments

The data collection procedures that were employed in this research project were quantitative. One of the instruments was Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test (see appendix 1) that was applied to measure the students' vocabulary knowledge and the other was a structured observation chart (see appendix 2) that was used to measure the students' ability to speak before and after implementing the teaching plan.

Vocabulary Levels Test

Vocabulary is a crucial aspect for the acquisition of a language, therefore, it is important to identify students' level. Nowadays, language teachers are particularly interested in studying learners' knowledge of vocabulary with pedagogical purposes such as improving students' speaking performance in the target language, reading comprehension, and teaching methodology among others.

The Vocabulary Levels Test was first designed by Paul Nation for teachers to use as a diagnostic test. It was published for the first time in 1983, and then in 1990. Once Nation's work started to be recognized internationally, the test quickly became a standard measuring tool. Later in 1993, there were three more reviews of the test, which originated version B, C, and D. These tests have been used in a wide number of research studies focused on vocabulary knowledge (Cobb, 1997; Schmitt and Meara, 1997; Laufer and Paribakht, 1998).

The purpose of the Vocabulary Levels Test is to estimate the size of vocabulary second language learners have in general English, academic English or both. Nation's (1990) vocabulary levels tests are classified according to four different groups of words as follows:

- The first 2,000 most frequent words

- The 3,000 most frequent words

- The 5,000 most frequent words and

- The 10,000 most frequent words

This research study only applied the 2,000-word version which includes the most common words used in everyday oral communication (Schonell et al., 1956). This decision was made taking into account that students at NUSEFA have struggled to participate in oral tasks showing deficiency in vocabulary.

The test has been designed including three word classes, 3 (noun), 2 (verb), 1 (adjective). It has thirty exercises to complete with the given words. Each question contains three noun groups, two verb groups and one adjective group. The student has to select the word that matches the meaning and write the number of the word next to its meaning.

The purpose of applying this test is to establish the students' level of vocabulary and to determine how the lack of basic vocabulary affects their performance in oral tasks. (see appendix 1)

Structured Observation

Structured observation is methodological and consistent. It allows the researcher to obtain quantitative data through the use of tables and/or charts. These numerical data are very useful to look at patterns, frequencies and categories to compare contexts and situations.

The observer has a passive role; he/she just identifies situations and factors, taking notes of the aspects or evidence of specific behaviors and interactions in a certain context. According to Cohen and Manion (2007), for this type of observation to be undertaken it is necessary to take into account the distinct variables such as individuals, context, time-framework and other relevant aspects for the study.

In structured observation there are different methods or symbols to register the data in the tables: ticks, forward slashes, backward slashes and numbers, among others. For the present study, a chart was created to gather data from five individuals (students) that belong to the 2 experimental groups in which the IBI approach was implemented. The purpose of this chart is to measure the student's ability to speak in English before and after the implementation of the teaching plan. It was designed with a unique category that refers to the time in seconds a student speaks in English while performing a given oral task. It has one column that shows the pre and post observation, another column that describes what is measured and five more columns that show the performance of the five individuals that were randomly selected for the analysis.(see appendix 2).

Classroom observation chart

Group:
Place an appropriate code marking in the box each time a student participates in the lesson.

		Category	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
Pre		TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English					
Post		TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English					

Ethical considerations

This study took into account some considerations in order to protect the participants' privacy, and to make the data collection techniques and the results reliable. First, students knew the purpose of the project and the procedures to follow. Second, the information related to students' identity was always treated with number codes. Third, all the groups (two experimental and one control) had 32 students who were given the same vocabulary levels test and the same amount of time to take it. Fourth, the five individuals selected for the first application of the observation chart were the same five students selected for the last application. Finally, it is also important to highlight that even though the measurement of students' speaking ability was carried out considering two different types of oral activities, the students were under the same conditions because they were given the same amount of time to prepare it beforehand and the same time to present them in class.

Procedures

The application of the vocabulary level test, the observation, and the lesson plans based on direct vocabulary instruction were crucial to provide specific and reliable information regarding perceptions, actions, strategies, points of view and different ways of working with vocabulary in the language classroom to improve speaking ability.

Having diversity in the instruments that were implemented to collect the data and using an open research methodology gives this study consistency and reliability with respect to the kind of information obtained. Thus, it may be valuable not only for the context where the study is applied, but in other settings where language instruction is provided.

This research project has been undertaken following stages that have helped to construct a valid document through a plan for the actions to be carried out. The stages of this study are the following:

- Preparation stage
- Design stage
- Application stage

Preparation stage

The preparation stage or initial stage consisted of a series of actions that were undertaken to plan and organize this research project. Before applying the vocabulary level test (see appendix 1) some characteristics were considered to ensure that it would provide valid and reliable results. Homogeneity of the groups in terms of size, age range and grade they are in were each taken into account. Each eighth grade class has similar characteristics such as the same number students (32); the population has both genders and the students´ ages range from 12 to 14. None of the groups have been in contact with the English language in a context other than school all of which would likely indicate that they are under the same conditions.

The three classes were selected for the application of the vocabulary level test that would serve to measure the size of students' vocabulary. The control group, 803, and the experimental groups, 801 and 802, took the test at the beginning of the third term of the school year when they had not received any kind of directed vocabulary instruction, only the traditional methodology that they have always worked with. Then, at the end of the third term the three groups took the test again with the purpose of contrasting the results obtained in the first application and in the second, and also to see the main differences among them.

The results from the vocabulary levels the test were scored by counting the number of correct answers students obtained. Therefore the results are shown in numbers, 30 right answers indicate an adequate vocabulary level according to this version of Nation's test (the 2000 most frequent words). Students that scored less than 15 are at a lower level in relation with the knowledge of vocabulary; this means that students performed the test with difficulty because they got less than 50% of the total score; which reveals a low proficiency level.

The software SPSS was used for the analysis of the results from the first and last application of the vocabulary levels test. It was used to do what is called an ANOVA analysis. This analysis is known as the one-way analysis of variance, and that is used to determine whether there are significant discrepancies between the means of two or more independent groups; in this case 801, 802 and 803, and also to understand the difference in performance between the groups.

Design stage

This stage of the study had to do with design of lesson plans based on directed vocabulary instruction. This was done following the principles and lesson samples from the IBI approach that consisted of presenting the target words at the beginning and in an incremental manner, exposing students to these words as many times as possible to facilitate acquisition.

Target vocabulary was selected taking into account the contents in the English curriculum, but also making sure that these words belonged to the 2000 word basic vocabulary level according to Nation's (1990) classification.

The lesson plans for the experimental groups included two content units and each unit consisted of five weeks for a total amount of ten weeks, working with the students three hours each week during the third term. The lesson plans and activities for the control group were based on the traditional methodology used for the language teachers in NUSEFA; these lessons and activities were different to the experimental groups' activities because they consisted of developing non-communicative tasks such as presenting vocabulary in an isolated way, looking for meanings in the dictionary, filling gaps with the words and translating readings into Spanish among others. In contrast, in the experimental groups, lessons plans were designed with communicative tasks such as presenting vocabulary through readings, listening exercises, performing oral tasks and written pieces in which students can participate. Students were constantly monitored; they had the opportunity to work cooperatively with their peers in group discussions and also doing other types of activities related to reading and writing but using the target vocabulary in topics such as the environment and today's social problems.

Application stage

The application of the lesson plans was carried out in the two experimental groups where students had to perform specific oral tasks that measured using an observation chart for this purpose; it is also relevant to mention that the control group did not receive any directed vocabulary instruction. For instance, the first oral task students did was an oral presentation about eco-parks in Colombia where they could interact with the audience making questions, and their peers took notes to make comments or ask them questions too.

At the end of the presentations, there was always a discussion to share ideas about what they had learned about eco-parks and how to take care of them. This facilitated the use of target words in context and communication in the language of instruction.

Another significant speaking task that was designed and students performed was a role play in order to measure their ability to speak in relation with their vocabulary level. This role play involved one student being a reporter and their peers being the witnesses to an issue that affected the world; they all had to use the target words to talk about the problem and discuss the solution.

For both macro-speaking tasks the observation chart was applied taking into account a unique category; the time in seconds students spoke in English in order to gather specific data about students' performance in the oral tasks in relation to their vocabulary level.

RESULTS

This section is concerned with the data gathered from the instruments applied in the main study (see appendix 3 - 4). First, it will show the results obtained from the statistical

report done based on the application of the vocabulary levels test and then, it will focus on the quantitative analysis of the observation of students' performance in oral tasks.

Results of the Vocabulary Levels Test

Statistical report.

For the current report it was used the software SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) to do an ANOVA analysis with the data gathered from the first and last application of the vocabulary levels test. The ANOVA analysis is called the one-way analysis of variance that is utilized to identify significant differences between the means of two or more independent groups that might be related or not and also to understand whether the performance of these groups differed based on the test applied.

A one-way ANOVA test (see ANOVA table 1 below) was conducted to determine if the length of speaking time (TSE) after the application of the vocabulary methodology was different for the three different groups.

ANOVA Test. Table 1

Class group

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1781,396	2	890,698	60,395	,000
Within Groups	1371,562	93	14,748		
Total	3152,958	95			

Participants were classified into three groups: group 801 (n = 32), 802 (n = 32), and 803 (n = 32) (See table 2).

Descriptive Statistics. Table 2

TSE

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
801	32	17,59	3,435	,607	16,36	18,83	10	25
802	32	17,03	4,802	,849	15,30	18,76	8	27
803	32	8,19	3,063	,541	7,08	9,29	3	15
Total	96	14,27	5,761	,588	13,10	15,44	3	27

There were no outliers as assessed by boxplot (See figure 1, 2, 3); data was normally distributed for each group, as assessed by Shapiro-Wilk test (p > .05) (see table 3); and there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variances (p = .053) (see table 4).

Boxplot. Figure 1

Group 802

Figure 3
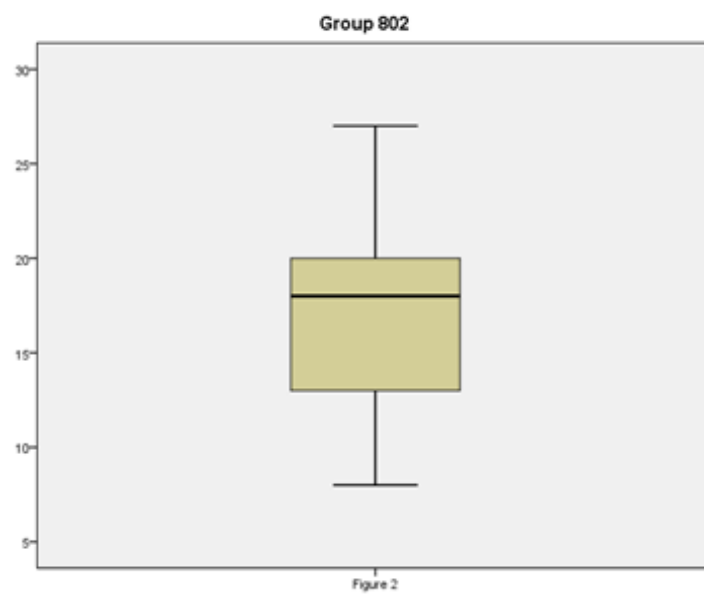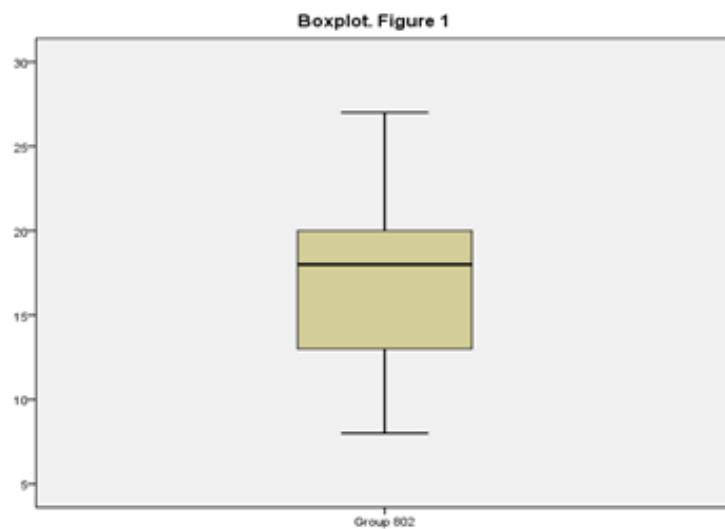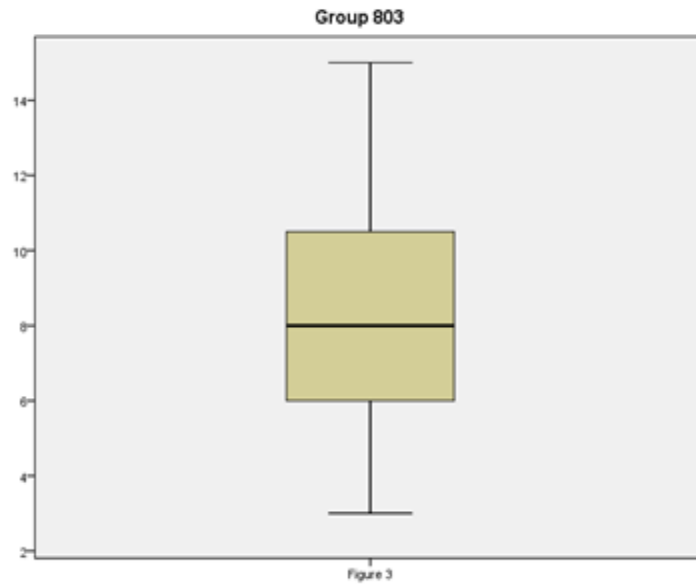
Tests of Normality. Table 3

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
801	,119	32	,200[*]	,981	32	,823
802	,112	32	,200[*]	,973	32	,581
803	,118	32	,200[*]	,967	32	,431

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances. Table 4			
Class group			
Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
3,030	2	93	,053

* CI (Confidence Interval)

The data are presented as mean ± standard deviation. The TSE score was statistically significantly different among the three groups, $F(2, 93) = 60.395$, $p < .0005$ (see table 1). TSE score increased from group 803 (8.19 ± 3.06), to 802 (17.03 ± 4.8), to 801 (17.59 ± 3.4) groups, in that order (see table 5). Tukey post hoc analysis (table 5) revealed that the increase

from group 803 to 802 (8.84, 95% CI (6.56 to 11.13)) was statistically significant (p = .0005), as well as the increase from group 803 to 801 (9.4, 95% CI (7.12 to 11.69), p = .0005), but no other group differences were statistically significant.

Post Hoc Test (Multiple Comparisons). Table 5						
Dependent Variable: Class group						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Time student speaks English	(J) Time student speaks English	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
801	802	,563	,960	,828	-1,72	2,85
	803	9,406*	,960	,000	7,12	11,69
802	801	-,563	,960	,828	-2,85	1,72
	803	8,844*	,960	,000	6,56	11,13
803	801	-9,406*	,960	,000	-11,69	-7,12
	802	-8,844*	,960	,000	-11,13	-6,56

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Results of the observation chart

The observation was applied when students were performing specific oral tasks such as presentations, role plays and discussions that were part of the lesson plans designed with the IBI approach. The observation was done in the control group (803) only at the beginning and at the end of the third term whereas in the two experimental groups were done at three different times; before, during and after the implementation of the lesson plans to determine whether the groups had made any progress. The category included to measure the speaking ability of the individuals taken from the three groups was the time in seconds they spoke in English.

Statistical report

To analyze the results from the observation chart that was used to measure students' speaking ability, a sample of size n=5 was taken from each group. A one-way ANOVA test was conducted in order to determine if the vocabulary level score would change due to the teaching of a predetermined set of words to the three different sample groups, group 801, 802, and the control group. There was a homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variances (p =. 241). See table 6 below. Data is presented as mean ± standard deviation. Vocabulary level score was statistically significantly different between different groups, F (2, 12) = 45,957, p <. 0005, ω2 = 0.885. See table 7 and 10 below. The vocabulary score for group 801 was (20,600 ± 0.9274), and for group 802 (21,200 ± 27, 11), and (7,800 ± 1, 9235) for the control group, in that order. See table 8 below. Tukey post hoc analysis revealed that the difference in group 801 and the control group (12,800, 95% CI (8, 5874 to 17, 0126)) was statistically significant (p =. 0005), as well as the difference between group 802 and the control group (13.400, 95% CI (9.1874 to 17.6176), p =. 0005), but no other group differences were statistically significant. See table 9 below.

Test of Homogeneity of Variances. Table 6			
Vocabulary Score			
Levene Statistic	**df1**	**df2**	**Sig.**
1,605	**2**	**12**	**,241**

ANOVA Test results. Table 7					
Vocabulary Score					
	Sum of Squares	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
Between Groups	572,933	2	286,467	45,957	,000
Within Groups	74,800	12	6,233		
Total	647,733	14			

Descriptive Statistics Results. Table 8

Vocabulary Score

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
G801	5	20,6000	2,07364	,92736	18,0252	23,1748	18,00	23,00
G802	5	21,2000	3,27109	1,46287	17,1384	25,2616	18,00	26,00
ControlGroup	5	7,8000	1,92354	,86023	5,4116	10,1884	6,00	11,00
Total	15	16,5333	6,80196	1,75626	12,7665	20,3001	6,00	26,00

Multiple Comparisons (post hoc). Table 9

Dependent Variable: Vocabulary Score

	(I) Group 801	(J) Group 801	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Tukey HSD	G801	G802	-,60000	1,57903	,924	-4,8126	3,6126
		ControlGroup	12,80000*	1,57903	,000	8,5874	17,0126
	G802	G801	,60000	1,57903	,924	-3,6126	4,8126
		ControlGroup	13,40000*	1,57903	,000	9,1874	17,6126
	ControlGroup	G801	-12,80000*	1,57903	,000	-17,0126	-8,5874
		G802	-13,40000*	1,57903	,000	-17,6126	-9,1874
Games-Howell	G801	G802	-,60000	1,73205	,937	-5,7438	4,5438
		ControlGroup	12,80000*	1,26491	,000	9,1813	16,4187
	G802	G801	,60000	1,73205	,937	-4,5438	5,7438
		ControlGroup	13,40000*	1,69706	,000	8,3011	18,4989
	ControlGroup	G801	-12,80000*	1,26491	,000	-16,4187	-9,1813
		G802	-13,40000*	1,69706	,000	-18,4989	-8,3011

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOCABULARY LEVEL AND SPEAKING ABILITY

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects. Table 10						
Dependent Variable: Vocabulary Score						
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	572,933[a]	2	286,467	45,957	,000	,885
Intercept	4100,267	1	4100,267	657,797	,000	,982
Group	572,933	2	286,467	45,957	,000	,885
Error	74,800	12	6,233			
Total	4748,000	15				
Corrected Total	647,733	14				
a. R Squared = ,885 (Adjusted R Squared = ,865)						

DISCUSSION

Based on the statistical report results, and specifically on the ANOVA test results, there was a significant difference in the period of time the students were able to perform (TSE) among the three groups 801, 802, and 803, the last one being the control group. This test can only tell if there is a difference among three or more groups, but it does not tell which ones are different; therefore, additional testing was needed. This test is called a post hoc test. It denotes exactly which pair of groups is different.

In this study the results showed that there was a significant difference between the group means of 801 and 803, the control group, and between 802 and 803, but there was no difference between groups 801 and 802. These results were expected due to the fact that the direct vocabulary instruction was only applied in groups 801 and 802 but not to group 803. In order to perform an ANOVA test some assumptions had to be met such as normality for every group as well as equality of variance, and absence of outliers. The first, normality, was tested and found to be not significant which means that the three groups had a normal distribution by the Shapiro-Wilk test; the p-value was greater than 0.05. The second test, Levene's homogeneity of variance, was met; the p-value was also greater than 0.05. And finally, there were some outliers as found in the boxplot graphics, but they were genuine which means they were not the product of an error and were kept in the calculations, therefore making the results of the ANOVA test very reliable.

As a follow up a new ANOVA test was done on a sample group of size n=5 from groups 801, 802, and the control group (803). It is important, to mention this ANOVA test was done based on the data gathered from the observation chart that was utilized to measure the students' speaking ability when they performed an oral task before the teaching plan and another one afterwards. The result was, once more, statistically significant, which means that the teaching of a predetermined set of words to the participants made a difference in their vocabulary level score as expected for this particular study.

These results were expected; groups 801 and 802 showed similar patterns in speaking performance and vocabulary related behaviors; this may have happened because these are the groups in which directed vocabulary instruction was applied. Group 803 had

different results and this was also expected due to the fact that it did not receive the same vocabulary instruction.

In the first observation, group 801, 802 and 803 showed difficulty carrying out the speaking task related to their lack of vocabulary and the nature of the activity. Describing an amusement park in English was a challenge for the students because they were not used to this type of activity, rather focusing on form exercises and drills. There were students that demonstrated anxiety and frustration when they did not know a word in English or when they did not remember words; therefore, they asked for the words they needed, stopped talking or used Spanish to cope with their lack of vocabulary.

In contrast, in the last observation done there were relevant differences among the three groups. Group 801 showed a great improvement in speaking time, there was little use of Spanish, students did not stop during their presentations and did not ask for words as happened in the first application. Group 802 also met the expectations in their speaking time; they were able to use the target vocabulary in context that is reflected in their performance because they did not stop many times or use Spanish.

Group 803 showed a great difference in comparison with groups 801 and 802 in the overall performance. This group had a distinct pattern of behavior because in the first observation most of the students obtained better results in their speaking time whereas in the last observation this did not increase significantly.

Another aspect worth mentioning about group 803 is that students stopped, asked for words and used Spanish more times than in the first observation. This may have happened due to the complexity of the task and the vocabulary they had to use, but especially because this group did not receive direct vocabulary instruction.

Based on the results obtained from the vocabulary levels test and the measurement of students' speaking ability, it may be said that Nation's (2001) premise makes a lot of sense when he affirms that vocabulary and language are closely related to one another. This is to say that vocabulary knowledge enables the learner to use the target language successfully, and it also works in the other direction; the use of the target language improve the vocabulary knowledge significantly.

It may be implied that direct vocabulary instruction is a useful approach for this context because it permitted students to work with target vocabulary in distinct ways and

perform oral tasks most efficiently. More importantly, the analysis of the results showed that at least for the groups in this study, there is an important relationship between students' vocabulary level and their ability to speak in English what also confirms what many researchers such as Cameron (2001), Linse & Nunan (2005), Harmon and Wood and Keser (2009) have said with respect to the relation between vocabulary and oral communication.They affirm that vocabulary mastery is a skill developed when using the target language and it is closely related to the learner´s vocabulary level.

By and large, what this research work has showed is that there is an undeniable relationship between vocabulary and the speaking ability, and it has also demonstrated that the way vocabulary is instructed also plays a crucial role in vocabulary storage and retrieval for communicative purposes. However, it is important to clarify that this may not be applicable to all the contexts and individuals because this study was conducted under specific conditions and with a small sample group.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of a teaching plan based on vocabulary instruction appears to be a good manner to work on one of the aspects of second language acquisition in which researchers such as Nation (1990), Thornbury (2002) and Barcroft (2003) have placed much attention. They have argued that the development of vocabulary benefits the use of the target language and the lack of it may result in poor communication.

To undertake this study there have been considered three steps; the application of Nation's (1990) vocabulary Levels Test, the implementation of a teaching plan based on directed vocabulary instruction and the application of an observation chart that was designed to measure students' speaking ability. All this was done with purpose of determining whether there was a relationship between students' vocabulary level and their ability to speak in English. Conducting this process has served to support Barcroft's (2012) premise that vocabulary knowledge is a crucial aspect to communicate more efficiently in the target language, so that learners can interact with their peers in real-context situations.

The findings from the analysis showed that in eighth grade courses at NUSEFA directed vocabulary instruction had a positive effect on the way students engaged in oral tasks. Moreover, results indicate that there is a close relationship between students' vocabulary level and their speaking ability because insufficient vocabulary knowledge limits the expression of one's ideas as it is argued in Wilkins' words (1972) which say that "While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed". (p. 97)

As the results of the observation chart and the ANOVA test showed eighth grade students improved their speaking ability significantly after learning the target vocabulary intentionally because there was an increase in the time students spoke in English when doing their oral tasks and less use of compensation strategies to deal with vocabulary-related problems.

The outcomes suggest making changes on the way the English course has been taught in eighth grade classes; this means going from lesson plans focused on form to lessons plans based on the principles of communicative language teaching as already stated

in the school's PEI. Furthermore, it may be beneficial to take into account the tenets of directed vocabulary instruction in order to promote word consciousness and intentional learning.

According to Brown (2000) CLT has four interconnected characteristics; the first acknowledges that the main goal in a language classroom is to encourage communicative competence, the second characteristic claims that suitable teaching techniques engage learners to use language functionally. The third emphasizes how fluency and accuracy complement communicative proficiency in English; and the fourth concludes that a foreign language should be learned in rehearsed contexts to promote authentic communication.

As Barcroft (2012) stated, directed vocabulary instruction involves exposing learners to target words as many times as possible and incrementally in the input, avoiding semantic construction in the initial stages, increasing the difficulty of tasks as students make progress and apply research findings that have implications on the teaching and learning process.

The school's curriculum may be improved taking into account CLT and directed vocabulary instruction if the lesson plans teachers design and deliver reflect the principles of these approaches. Additionally, it may be more profitable to apply the instruction that was used in this study during the entire school year rather than a short period of time.

To expand the work done in this study, it would be essential to take a larger number of students to measure the speaking ability, so a better correlation between the two main variables, speaking ability and students' vocabulary level could be done. Another way to go further in this research is applying the same teaching instruction and data collection tools in other groups to determine whether it works in different contexts and yields similar results in the groups where it is applied. Nevertheless, it is necessary to bear in mind that undertaking a research project that involves quantitative data is not a simple; it requires devoting much time and effort to get the statistics handled and figure out how all this information comes together.

This research project has placed more attention on vocabulary instruction, an aspect of language teaching that has not been studied enough and that is considered by scholars like Meara (1980) and Brown (1993), as one of the main difficulties in second language learning.

To sum up, it is important to acknowledge that there is not one best method for vocabulary instruction, thus it may be more advantageous to teach vocabulary both directly and indirectly as suggested by the National Reading Panel (2000) and Barcroft (2012) in one of the principles of the IBI approach.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
</div>

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ CLASS: **80**___

Version 2   The 2,000 word level

A.
1 admire
2 complain   _____ make wider or longer
3 fix   _____ bring in for the first
time
4 hire   _____ have a high opinion of
5 introduce   someone
6 stretch

B.
1 arrange
2 develop   _____ grow
3 lean   _____ put in order
4 owe   _____ like more than
something
5 prefer   else
6 seize

C.
1 blame
2 elect   _____ make
3 jump   _____ choose by voting
4 manufacture   _____ become like water
5 melt
6 threaten

D.
1 ancient
2 curious   _____ not easy
3 difficult   _____ very old
4 entire   _____ related to God
5 holy
6 social

E.
1 bitter
2 independent   _____ beautiful
3 lovely _____ small
4 merry   _____ liked by many people
5 popular
6 slight

F.
1 copy
2 event   _____ end or highest point
3 motor   _____ this moves a car
4 pity   _____ thing made to be like
5 profit   another
6 tip

G.
1 accident
2 debt   _____ loud deep sound
3 fortune   _____ something you must
pay
4 pride   _____having a highopinion
5 roar   of yourself
6 thread

H.
1 coffee
2 disease   _____ money for work
3 justice   _____ a piece of clothing
4 skirt   _____ using the law in the
right
5 stage   way

6 wage

I.
1 clerk
2 frame   _____ a drink
3 noise   _____ office worker
4 respect_____ unwanted sound
5 theater
6 wine

J.
1 dozen
2 empire_____ chance
3 gift   _____ twelve
4 opportunity   _____ money paid to the
5 relief   government
6 tax

APPENDIX 2

	Category	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5
Pre	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English					
Post	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English					

APPENDIX 3

VOCABULARY LEVEL TEST SCORES 801 (EXPERIMENTAL)					
Codes	Student 1 11356	Student 2 13478	Student 3 11598	Student 4 11602	Student 5 11308
Raw score	6	8	5	6	6
Final score	18	23	19	21	22

VOCABULARY LEVEL TEST SCORES 802 (EXPERIMENTAL)					
Codes	Student 1 12445	Student 2 12398	Student 3 12200	Student 4 13712	Student 5 11731
Raw score	4	6	7	10	8
Final score	18	19	23	26	20

VOCABULARY LEVEL TEST SCORES 803 (CONTROL)					
Codes	Student 1 12311	Student 2 11586	Student 3 11311	Student 4 11650	Student 5 13670
Raw score	9	6	4	6	4
Final score	7	8	7	11	6

APPENDIX 4

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHART 801 (EXPERIMENTAL)						
	Category	**Student 1** **11356**	**Student 2** **13478**	**Student 3** **11598**	**Student 4** **11602**	**Student 5** **11308**
Pre	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	66	50	17	79	59
Post	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	134	122	95	119	103

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHART 802 (EXPERIMENTAL)						
	Category	**Student 1** **12445**	**Student 2** **12398**	**Student 3** **12200**	**Student 4** **13712**	**Student 5** **11731**
Pre	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	48	56	43	61	83
Post	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	113	122	109	136	96

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION CHART 803 (CONTROL)						
	Category	**Student 1** **12311**	**Student 2** **11586**	**Student 3** **11311**	**Student 4** **11650**	**Student 5** **13670**
Pre	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	51	22	48	46	57

Post	TSE Time in seconds student speaks in English	52	18	40	32	59