


Action-research study to improve vocabulary acquisition through picture description.

(es) Investigación-acción para mejorar la adquisición de vocabulario a través de la descripción de imágenes.

(Port) Estudo de pesquisa-ação para melhorar a aquisição de vocabulário por meio da descrição de imagens.

Pamela Victoria Guevara-Torres
Universidad Técnica de Quevedo
misspamelaec@gmail.com; pqueverat@uteq.edu.ec
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7863-8678>

María Rossana Ramírez-Ávila
Universidad Casa Grande
mrramirez_a@hotmail.com; mramirez@casagrande.edu.ec
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4745-2245>

Guevara-Torres, P. & Ramírez-Ávila, M (2023). Action-research study to improve vocabulary acquisition through picture description. *YUYAY: Estrategias, Metodologías & Didácticas Educativas*, 1(2), 12-24.

Enviado: 01-03-2023 / Revisado: 23-03-2023 / Publicado: 01-04-2023



C.net magister

 **CERTIFICADO DE ANÁLISIS**
magister

**Guevara_y_Ramírez_revisioncompilatio
o_CEJLAED**

0% Similitudes

< 1% Texto entre comillas
0% similitudes entre comillas

< 1% Idioma no reconocido

Nombre del documento: Guevara_y_Ramírez_revisioncompilatio_CEJLAED.docx ID del documento: 8138a88ebe59200d78ec3a9bea5c10e7bb8badf6 Tamaño del documento original: 33,51 ko	Depositante: JLA EDICIONES Fecha de depósito: 17/3/2023 Tipo de carga: interface fecha de fin de análisis: 17/3/2023	Número de palabras: 4664 Número de caracteres: 29.976
--	---	--

Autorización:



Guayaquil, 17 de marzo de 2023

Señores
Consejo Editorial
Revista Yuyay
Ciudad

De mis consideraciones:

Por medio del presente, tengo a bien comunicar que el trabajo de titulación de la Mgtr. Pamela Victoria Guevara Torres no ha sido sometido a evaluación en ninguna otra revista, pero consta en el repositorio de la Universidad Casa Grande. Consecuentemente, la Coordinación de la Maestría autoriza el envío del documento para consideración del Consejo Editorial de Yuyay.

Abstract (en)

The incidence of vocabulary at the level of students has been one of the components of the English language with more research, however, it was considered the need to perform a context assessment to analyze the effect of the implementation of image description on vocabulary acquisition in a specific population. The participants were ten students from an English academy (n=10). For the analysis of the data obtained, a sample survey of "mixed" type was considered through quantitative and qualitative instruments applying a survey with statements on a Likert scale, diagnostic tests and subsequent tests on vocabulary knowledge and its use in context allowing to analyze the comparison of the means in a $p < .005$ whose interpretation of

data is statistically significant. The results of the instruments (vocabulary knowledge test and vocabulary test in context) show that the use of image description has a positive impact on vocabulary acquisition. Participants learned more words and after the intervention with a Cohen's magnitude $d = 0.45$ reaffirming that the confidence of "n" was better regarding the use of "known" and "new" vocabulary. The participants' perspective was positive towards vocabulary acquisition through image description. The results also represent a significant value for teachers in the area, since it recommends activities that include the description of images to contribute to a learning of vocabulary appropriate for their development and interaction.

Keywords: English; vocabulary, semantics; linguistics; perspective; meaningful learning.

Resumen

La incidencia del vocabulario en el nivel de los alumnos ha sido uno de los componentes del idioma inglés con mayor investigación, sin embargo, se consideró la necesidad de realizar una valoración de contexto con el objetivo de analizar el efecto de la implementación de la descripción de imágenes en la adquisición de vocabulario en una población específica. Los participantes fueron diez alumnos de una academia de inglés (n=10). Para el análisis de los datos obtenidos se consideró un levantamiento de muestra de tipo “mixta” a través de instrumentos cuantitativos y cualitativos aplicando una encuesta con enunciados en una escala de Likert, pruebas de diagnóstico y pruebas posteriores sobre el conocimiento de vocabulario y su uso en contexto permitiendo analizar la comparación de las medias en un $p < .005$ cuya interpretación de datos es estadísticamente significativa.

Los resultados de los instrumentos (prueba de conocimiento de vocabulario y prueba de vocabulario en contexto) evidencian que el uso de la descripción de imágenes tiene un impacto positivo en la adquisición de vocabulario. Los participantes aprendieron más palabras y después de la intervención con una magnitud Cohen 's $d = 0.45$ reafirmando que la confianza de “n” fue mejor respecto al uso de vocabulario “conocido” y “nuevo”. La perspectiva de los participantes fue positiva hacia la adquisición de vocabulario a través de la descripción de imágenes. Los resultados además representan un valor significativo para docentes del área, ya que recomienda actividades que incluyan la descripción de imágenes para contribuir a un aprendizaje de vocabulario adecuado para su desarrollo e interacción.

Palabras claves: inglés; vocabulario, semántica; lingüística; perspectiva; aprendizaje significativo.

Summary

A incidência de vocabulário ao nível dos alunos tem sido um dos componentes da língua inglesa com mais pesquisas, no entanto, considerou-se a necessidade de realizar uma avaliação de contexto de forma a analisar o efeito da implementação da descrição de imagens na aquisição de vocabulário numa população específica. Os participantes foram dez alunos de uma academia de inglês ($n=10$). Para a análise dos dados obtidos, foi considerado um inquérito amostral do tipo "misto" por meio de instrumentos quantitativos e qualitativos aplicando uma pesquisa com enunciados em escala Likert, testes diagnósticos e testes subsequentes sobre conhecimento de vocabulário e sua utilização em contexto permitindo analisar a comparação das médias em um $p < 0,005$ cuja interpretação dos dados é estatisticamente significativa.

Os resultados dos instrumentos (teste de conhecimento de vocabulário e teste de vocabulário em contexto) mostram que o uso da descrição de imagens tem um impacto positivo na aquisição de vocabulário. Os participantes aprenderam mais palavras e após a intervenção com magnitude d de Cohen = 0,45 reafirmando que a confiança de "n" foi melhor em relação ao uso de vocabulário "conhecido" e "novo". A perspectiva dos participantes foi positiva para a aquisição de vocabulário por meio da descrição das imagens. Os resultados também representam um valor significativo para os professores da área, uma vez que recomenda atividades que incluam a descrição de imagens para contribuir para uma aprendizagem de vocabulário adequada ao seu desenvolvimento e interação.

Palavras-chave: Inglês; vocabulário, semântica; linguística; panorama; aprendizagem significativa.

Introduction

Vocabulary is one crucial element in English language acquisition (Chambers et al., 2005; Dalton & Grisham, 2011; Richards, 1976; Zarfsaz & Parisa, 2021). However, learners are under restricted circumstances when they try to learn English in a non-English speaking country. On the one hand, Richards and Renandya (2002) reported that acquiring a language is a complex process. In most cases, second language learners use English only during classes (Willingham & Price, 2009). Tomlinson (2013) stated that there are limitations when English is a second language in the classroom and research indicates that Second Language Acquisition (SLA) learners have fewer opportunities of interaction.

Some authors highlight the setbacks of vocabulary acquisition on language learning. For instance, Schmitt (2000) suggested that it is too ambitious for learners to reach the vocabulary size of native speakers. Similarly, Hunt and Beglar (2005) stated that students have limited vocabulary input possibilities and acknowledged that vocabulary acquisition requires special attention. However, several decades ago, Krashen (1989) reported that vocabulary acquisition facilitates language learning. Furthermore, new vocabulary increases curiosity in students and helps learners to seek opportunities to gain experience more words (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Research points out several reasons to use adjectives as a starting point in this study. For instance, Schmitt (2008) emphasized that English language learners (ELL) need a tangible goal in language acquisition and adjectives are a feasible start (Kartal, 2017). They are the second easiest word class to learn (Ellis & Beaton, 1993). They ignite students' imagination (Zerkina, et al., 2016).

Ludvigsen (2015) stated that there is a need for an effective vocabulary instruction. Authors mention that poor vocabulary is related to poor comprehension of the language (Karakoç & Köse, 2017). Although research points to vocabulary acquisition through extensive reading, Nation (2015) conceded that using the language in productive skills, such as speaking or writing, is also a key part in learning a word. This belief is based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach that arose in the early 80's (Richards, 2003), promoting the use of the language in real-life tasks, such as role-plays, discussions (Oxford, 2002), and picture description (Ghout-Khenoune, 2012).

Ecuador included CLT and Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR) in a document for teachers and students in 2012. In the documents "the English Teacher Standards" and the "English Language Learning Standards" (Ministerio de Educación, 2012) and "The English Language Curriculum" (Ministerio de Educación, 2016), there are "can do" statements under each grade of school and high-school. These statements come from the CEFR learners' competences (abilities) of the language on four skills (listening, speaking, writing, and reading) in varied contexts. These competences are classified in three levels (A, B, C) that, in turn, are subdivided in A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2 (Little, 2005).

Despite the standards implementation, Education First (2022) ranked Ecuador in position 82 of English proficiency level out of 111 countries. The country's level is inferior to other countries in the region, such as Colombia and Argentina, which may imply that there are basic communicative skills in the country. Particularly, in the case of the present study, the students should have had an A2 level but in a preliminary proficiency test, most students obtained a pre-A1 level. This gap in Ecuadorians English knowledge gives opportunity to new research that would provide local solutions based on international research.

The present study explored the connection of vocabulary acquisition to current CLT activities. Particularly, this study focused on picture description not only as a tool to acquire vocabulary and to provide vocabulary input but also because pictures interest learners, they motivate learners to learn and increase

participation (Lavallo & Briesmaster, 2017). Furthermore, picture description gives the opportunity to perform and offers students a greater experiencing of the language (Celce-Murcia et al., 1998).

This study took place in an English Language Institute in Guayaquil, Ecuador. Participants were students from 10 to 17 years old, who took English classes in the evening as school support. The native language of the students is Spanish. The standards complied with (a) vocabulary range for Level A2 (Ministerio de Educación, 2014); (b) using familiar everyday expressions and basic phrases, according to the level A2 of University of Cambridge (2011); (c) A2 writing standard of producing simple sentences with detail (Ministerio de Educación, 2012); and, (d) the context for these sentences is for personal and social domains: vocabulary of family and friends (Council of Europe, 2011).

Literature Review

Vocabulary Acquisition

The study considered two aspects of the term vocabulary acquisition: how students acquire vocabulary and how to measure this acquisition. On the first aspect, acquisition refers to learning a word naturally (Tomlinson, 2013) which, according to Moudraia (2001) is a beneficial approach in English language learning. However, there is research that suggests inserting moments of attention on the words in the class (Schmitt, 2008). On this disjunctive, the mix of both conscious and natural learning can come together. According to Tang (2020), vocabulary can be taught in a way that the learner is focused on achieving goals other than learning “words”, through game-like activities. The author affirmed that although listening and reading are great ways of input, the increment of the word knowledge is limited unless production, or use, of the word happens. In other words, writing is suggested to be included in a vocabulary acquisition test to evidence its growth.

On the second aspect, vocabulary in this study refers to one unit of lexis, or one word, that is used in a specific moment (Moudraia, 2001). Words have dimensions, such as recognizing the words, recalling the words, and knowing the collocation of the words. This knowledge may translate to identifying the increment of acquisition (Tang, 2020). According to Gass (1999), in knowledge of a word, there should be knowledge of form (spelling) and meaning (definition). Similarly, Pigada and Schmitt (2006) used form, meaning, and function (use in context) to measure vocabulary acquisition. However, Duan (2018) used students' prior knowledge of meaning, form, and function to determine vocabulary acquisition.

In a study of vocabulary learning of university students with intermediate level of English (Duan, 2018), one of the first steps was determining the familiarity of students towards the words. This author measured if students knew the definition of the words (meaning), the spelling of the word (form) and the use of the word in context (function). The VKS test (vocabulary knowledge scale) used by Duan (2018) included four categories and was described by the mentioned author as an effective instrument to measure vocabulary learning.

Context would have to be enough to show the meaning of the word, and avoid ambiguity (Swenson, 2017). Even though writing is not a variable of the study, it was a way to measure one part of the word knowledge, which is the use in context. The written sentences gave students the opportunity to think through their answers and to put together their ideas (Marulanda et al., 2017). Similarly, the process of thinking made possible that students checked, with the classmates and the teacher, the texts they created.

Picture Description

In a study conducted several decades ago, there were not many positive findings towards the benefit of using pictures with young learners (Samuels, 1970). However, in a more recent study, Ghout-Khenoune (2012) found, in her study of 16 students from 19 to 25 years old, that students negotiated meaning and had more time for preparation in written tasks to describe pictures compared to spoken activities.

The study reflected that picture description (PD) had positive outcomes. Although Ghout-Khenoune (2012) aimed at long sentences from the students, the brief amount of communication is enough for the present study's group and their English language level. For example, students were able to provide short sentences and used specific words as reference for the objects from the pictures. The author mentioned that students did not fully use the time to describe the pictures and suggested that it might have happened because they were not able to communicate independently. Another reason may be that short phrases seemed enough to refer to the object from the picture.

Additionally, in the field of picture description, De Temple et al. (1991) reported a better performance of 150 children in both oral and written tasks using pictures. More recently, Lavallo and Briesmaster (2017) reported in their study of 28 students from 11 to 13 years old that PD had great acceptance from students. Some of the findings were that the strategy promoted interaction and communication, it helped students to have a starting point for production.

Perspectives Towards Picture Description

Studies show positive rapport towards PD as a mean of learning vocabulary in English. For example, Lavallo and Briesmaster (2017) reported that students considered PD engaging, helpful for learning vocabulary, and that it helped their imagination to thrive. Furthermore, students expressed having increased class participation and that they would recommend PD in sentence writing. Similarly, Baralaei and Najmabadi (2015) found that students felt enthusiastic and paid more attention to classes. In the same way, Ranjbar (2016) found, in a study of the impact of PD on students, that most students had positive perspectives towards PD in written activities.

In this study, students submitted an English proficiency test as a starting point on the whole lesson plan and activities. Some studies took into consideration the initial knowledge that students had or their vocabulary size (Duan, 2018). Other research points to plan the classes beforehand based on student's level and move forward from there (Childre et al., 2009). For this reason, the lessons were planned according to the proficiency of the students and the expected results (Richards, 2013).

To help students from the institute gain more vocabulary and considering the benefits of acquiring vocabulary through picture description activities, this study aimed to answer two questions:

1. To what extent does picture description help students' acquisition of new vocabulary?
2. What are students' perspective towards vocabulary acquisition?

Methodology

Design

This study is an action research study in education. According to Amin et al. (2019), this type of research aims to “improve the quality of education” (p. 31). The authors explained that action research involves making changes in teaching practice by first identifying a problem experienced in real life. Furthermore, they stated that these changes may increase teachers’ competences, and improve learning through “questioning the teacher’s personal belief” (p. 31).

Participants

The sample comprised of 10 young students from a private English language school in Guayaquil. Students attended to different private schools of the city. Now of registration, parents were informed about the study and consented to let their children participate in the study, both by text message and in writing. The parents that showed to the office signed a letter accepting their children’s participation. The students’ ages ranged from 10 to 17. Regarding the English level, 40% of students were pre-A1, another 40% were A1 and 20% were A2 according to the placement test taken at the beginning of the study.

Classroom Procedures

The study took place throughout four weeks of vocabulary classes. In total, there were 24 hours of class in one month. Class days were Tuesday through Thursday with a duration of two hours (120 minutes). The lesson plan included activities that: adhered to the standards for the level A2 of the CEFR; were built onto the final test; and aligned with communicative principles. There were also activities that involved describing pictures.

Activities varied throughout the classes but stages in each lesson remained the same. For example, each class consisted of first informing students of that day’s learning goals. Second, the teacher introduced grammar and students connected ideas to link all the content, which led to describing a picture on their own by the end of the class. Third, students were encouraged to use the new vocabulary through various picture description activities. By the end of the innovation students took the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) test again, the same that they took on the first day of classes. Students created ten sentences, under the same instructions of the first day of class that was to provide context. In other words, students took the VKS test and the vocabulary-in-context test again.

This research emphasized on picture description which implies that students looked at a picture, photo, or image and described what they saw. Notably, picture description can be performed both orally and written. Although everyday activities involved the two productive skills, this study measured the use of vocabulary in writing for obtaining and analyzing results. In this study, the vocabulary-in-context test required students to create sentences from the class glossary.

Instruments

One step of the study was collecting the pre innovation data. On the first day, the researcher took a pre-vocabulary knowledge test and a pre-vocabulary in context test. There is a wider description of these documents in the Instruments section. In addition, students took an online placement test (Education First,

2019) to plan the classes using the respective standards based on their level. The pre-vocabulary knowledge test was adapted from VKS (Duan, 2018). The vocabulary in context test asked students to create sentences that could portray the meaning of the word; these sentences were added to the class glossary. On the first day of classes, students wrote down their personal information on a demographic survey.

The first question: *To what extent does picture description help students' acquisition of new vocabulary?* required measuring students' knowledge of vocabulary. In this study, the measurement of word acquisition came from an adaptation of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) proposed by Duan (2018), which demonstrated the increase of vocabulary acquisition in writing. This current research used 71 adjectives of the Vocabulary List of the Key Exam Test, which belongs to Level A2 of the CEFR (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2012).

Students received the VKS test, that is, a document with 71 adjectives. They had to select one of the options that matched their knowledge of the word. The VKS had three levels of word knowledge; the first level was when students have not seen or learned the word; the second, when students had seen the word before but did not remember the meaning; and the third, when students knew the meaning of the word. The scores were from 0 to 3 for each word.

The VKS included a fourth measurement that involved using each word in a sentence, but when it was piloted on eight teenage students, in a private school in Guayaquil, the researcher noticed that creating a sentence was not an easy task for students. For instance, for the word *afraid*, students wrote: *She is afraid.*

Consequently, in the second week students created a glossary with sentences that showed the correct meaning of each word in context. Students received a rubric that evaluated three criteria, adapted from the VKS fourth measurement. The score was: 1 if the adjective was not used; 2 if the adjective was used but the context was not accurate; and 3 if the adjective was used with semantic appropriateness and grammatical accuracy in the sentence. The rubric helped scoring five sentences using adjectives from the word list, chosen randomly out of the 71 and the maximum score was 15.

For the second question: *What are students' perspective towards vocabulary acquisition?* Participants filled in a perspective survey on vocabulary acquisition and picture description after the implementation. It had seven Likert-scale statements and students chose one option out of five in each statement based on their opinion: 1) Totally Disagree, 2) Disagree, 3) Indifferent, 4) Agree, or 5) Totally Agree.

The survey was piloted in a school prior to the implementation. Teenage students (N = 37) of a private school completed the survey. A Cronbach Alpha of 0.73 was obtained, which means the reliability of the instrument is acceptable.

In the survey, there were six open questions, which would provide a deeper understanding of students' opinions. Due to their age, students did not express their thoughts in writing. They did not know what to write or how to explain their answers. For this reason, the researcher-teacher interviewed each student to understand and obtain a more elaborated answer. The survey was in Spanish, due to students' English level.

Data Analysis

The instruments served to collect data from students in terms of demographics, perspectives, vocabulary knowledge, and vocabulary in context skills. The researcher used the instruments before and after the implementation to compare and analyze the results. The process started by gathering the information from the demographic survey, and collecting the results from the VKS and the vocabulary-in-

context test. Subsequently, the researcher coded the information by assigning numbers to text and options. For example, in the demographic survey, man has the code number *one* and woman is code number *two*.

Finally, the process of coding helped entering and tabulating the data on the Statistics Package for the Social Studies (SPSS). The mentioned program was run to get descriptive statistics, the reliability of the instruments, and the significance of the innovation (p -values). Using a regular online calculator and entering both the media and standard deviation for the pre-test and post-test, the author obtained the Cohen's d to determine the magnitude of the intervention.

Results and Discussion

For research question 1, to what extent does picture description improve students' acquisition of new vocabulary? There were two instruments: the vocabulary-in-context test and the VKS. Students had, on average, a growth of 14.88% on vocabulary knowledge based on the scores. The post-VKS showed a higher media. This change reflects a growth of the grades. N is the number of participants, which is 10.

Table 1
Pre and post VKS results

	N	Media	Standard Dev
Pre-VKS	10	86.00	26.84
Post-VKS	10	98.80	29.71

Fuente: Guevara Torres, P. V. (2019) for Master's thesis, Universidad Casa Grande. Departamento de Posgrado.

Furthermore, there was an increase in the vocabulary-in-context test. The media was 9.90 for the test at the beginning of the study, whereas the media for the post-test was 12.10. The media had an increase of 22.22%. This change reflects a growth of the grades and in the use of vocabulary in context.

Table 2
Pre and post Vocabulary-in-context results

	N	Media	Standard Dev.
Pre-test	10	9.90	3.45
Post-test	10	12.10	2.60

Fuente: Guevara Torres, P. V. (2019) for Master's thesis, Universidad Casa Grande. Departamento de Posgrado.

In this study, there are two main quantitative results, which are the vocabulary knowledge test and vocabulary in context test. However, the effect size derived from the vocabulary-in-context test, as it gave the use of the word in all the aspects of word knowledge. The result for Cohen's d is 0.45. Therefore, the study is "considered educationally meaningful," as it had an effect size of more than 0.30 (Christensen et al., 2015). Additionally, the p value was less than 0.005 for both tests, VKS and vocabulary in context. This means that the study is statistically significant.

The four-week innovation had a positive result that may indicate that picture description increases students' odds to achieve a considerable size of vocabulary. This challenges the theory of Schmitt (2000), who considered it ambitious for English language learners to reach the vocabulary size of native speakers.

The results of the present study showed an increase in scores, both in vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary in context knowledge, confirming the findings of De Temple et al. (1991) when they reported a better performance of students. Students developed a better understanding of how sentences work and how to connect the ideas by using context.

To answer research question 2, what are students' perspective towards vocabulary acquisition? This study included a survey for students' opinion towards picture description to acquire vocabulary. There were seven statements, and the results were obtained in percentages. In the subsequent paragraphs, there is the written description of the results.

Table 3
Frequencies for each Likert type question

Statements	Answers in percentages				
	Totally Disagree	Disagree	Indifferent	Agree	Totally Agree
1. Describing pictures is very interesting for me.	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%
2. Describing pictures motivates me to write in English.	0%	0%	20%	30%	50%
3. Describing pictures helps me develop the use of the target vocabulary.	0%	0%	10%	60%	30%
4. Describing pictures helps me improve the spelling of the vocabulary.	0%	0%	30%	30%	40%
5. I have more confidence to use adjectives after I practice with pictures in class.	0%	0%	20%	40%	40%
6. Describing pictures in class motivates me to learn more vocabulary.	0%	0%	10%	60%	30%
7. It will be very helpful to describe pictures in classes in the future.	0%	10%	10%	50%	30%

Fuente: Guevara Torres, P. V. (2019) for Master's thesis, Universidad Casa Grande. Departamento de Posgrado.

Most students agreed or totally agreed with the benefits of the innovation. According to the data, one student disagreed with the statement in the last question. The best opinions were for questions 3 and 6 (90% including agree and totally agree), which might be interpreted as students being motivated to learn more vocabulary and find it helpful to describe pictures in classes in the future. For question 2, there was a 50% of students that totally agreed on being motivated to write in English.

Regarding picture description related to vocabulary, the answers from students were also counted. Most students agreed that describing pictures helped them develop the use of vocabulary and improve spelling and said that they were confident to use vocabulary after describing pictures in class. Similarly, the students answered the open-ended questions. In general, students were excited about the classes; they noticed that they did not hesitate as much when they had to say something in English.

All the students answered in Question 1 that they would rather use English with the help of pictures, because they would know where to start. For Question 2, the overall thinking was that picture description helped in using the language but also the way of teaching. For questions 3 and 4, students were confident that the activities helped them learn words and improve their participation in their schools. In numbers 5 and 6, students answered that they were indifferent about using picture description and about how significant the strategy would be to improve their English skills.

The results were positive in both aspects, on scores and student's perspectives. The researcher observed that on the pilot-VKS, students did not know what to write on the fourth level. This meant that students not only did not know the vocabulary but also could not write a whole sentence. Conversely, by the end of the study, they expressed that they felt more confident to answer the meaning and use the words in a complete coherent sentence. This confidence was reflected in their behavior when they were taking the posttest.

These results confirm that by giving students the opportunity to use the language in productive skills, students can learn more, following the statement of Nation (2015), who promoted production of the language in English learning. Consequently, this may help overcoming the findings of Hunt and Beglar (2005) when they stated that there are limited vocabulary input opportunities.

According to the results, there was an increase in participation based on the open-ended questions, confirming Lavallo and Briesmaster's (2017) report that students were motivated to use the language. These authors also found that picture description helped students with communicative competence. On this note, according to students' opinions, picture description gave them opportunities to write in English and gave students a greater experience of the language (Celce-Murcia, et al., 1998).

Students expressed positive comments towards the implementation of the study. They said that picture description was a starting point for production, and they preferred having a picture to initiate communication in English rather than with a question. The students found the activities helpful and interesting. Other elements of learning were benefitted from this study, one student said that his participation in school increased, which means that the experience may benefit other contexts of students' life. Although these variables have not been included, it is important to mention the comment as it may be further studied in future studies. Therefore, it is possible to confirm the results of Lavallo and Briesmaster (2017) who reported that picture description had great acceptance in students.

In summary, the results show that students were motivated and confident to use vocabulary. Furthermore, the students improved their scores, which is shown in the increase of the grades. Students could not fully describe how and to what extent they improved vocabulary knowledge, but with a little support from the teacher, who explained the questions and asked specific details, they were able to explain their thoughts in the perspective survey. These results translate to positive outcomes for the two research questions.

Conclusions

Given that there is a low English level in Ecuador which was evidenced in participants of this study, they were expected to have an A2 level based on their ages and grades, but their current levels were mostly A1 and pre-A1. This disparity in the English level and other concerns like time limitation, low vocabulary input possibilities, and motivation, set the path to implement the current study. The strategy of picture description was an attempt to narrow down the gap of the expected English level and existent English levels.

Students improved in learning vocabulary, and they had positive opinions that might motivate them to continue learning. They asked more questions, they inferred better, and they doubted less when working on a task. Another observation was that students were more efficient in the given amount of time to finish their tasks. For example, they produced shorter sentences with no context on the first vocabulary in context test but later they wrote longer sentences with context in the same amount of time.

One of the insights of the research is that the grade for the VKS does not show a specific growth in terms of number of words or knowledge growth on specific words. However, with a close examination of some tests, there were changes in both aspects. For example, for the word brave, most students answered a wrong meaning due to direct translation. They thought that the word meant bravo (in Spanish) which means angry in English. However, in the post-test, they answered the correct meaning. In the same way, students answered that they had never seen the word strange. On the contrary, in the post-test most of the students answered that they knew the meaning and wrote the correct meaning.

Despite the positive results, more things could have been better. It is important to consider that not all students attended classes continuously. Some students skipped classes, and this may have affected their personal participation and learning opportunity. Furthermore, it may have not benefitted the overall aspect. As there were fewer students, sometimes the class was not as interactive as it was meant to be.

There were other limitations like size and time. The study had a size limitation because the sample was 10 students, which may not provide the opportunity of using the research in a bigger sample and obtaining the same positive results. In addition, the time of implementation was short. The study took one month (four weeks) for a total of 24 hours.

Further studies could either use oral or written tests. The present study used written tests for meaning negotiation and giving enough time to students to prepare their answers. To have a greater response from students, the activities should include real-life pictures; that is, pictures of the students, pictures of current actors and just a few random pictures from real books and magazines.

Another recommendation is to counteract some complications. First, absentees should be considered, perhaps by sending them homework. Second, having a greater sample may provide a better effect size and reliability on the instruments, even if the results are different from the present study. Third, the innovation should be conducted over a longer period of time, which may help on the same variants as the latter element but also will produce a greater and long-time benefit to students.

References

- Amin, M., Rashid, R., & Teh, K. (2019). Investigating issues and challenges in employing action research for teacher training in Malaysian context. *International Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(1), 30-40. doi: 10.18488/journal.61.2019.71.30.40
- Baralaei, S. & Najmabadi, A. (2015). The effect of using images on vocabulary learning on EFL learners. *International Journal of Research on English Language Teaching Studies*, 3(2), 17-19. https://www.academia.edu/31581605/The_Effect_of_Using_Images_on_Vocabulary_Learning_On_EFL_Learners
- Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei Z. & Thurrell S. (1998). Direct approaches in L2 instruction: A turning point in communicative language teaching? *TESOL Quarterly* 31(1), 141–152. doi: 10.2307/3587979
- Chambers, B., Slavin, R. E., Madden, N. A., Cheung, A. & Gifford, R. (2005). Enhancing success for all for Hispanic students: Effects on beginning reading achievement. Success for all Foundation. Baltimore, MD. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED485350>
- Childre, A., Sands, J. R., & Pope, S. T. (2009). Backward design. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*, 41(5), 6–14. doi:10.1177/004005990904100501
- Christensen, R., Knezek, G., Alexander, C., Owens, D., Overall, T., & Mayes, G. (2015). Measuring 21st century skills in technology educators. In *Society for Information Technology & Teacher Education International Conference* (pp. 1130-1136). Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE).
- Council of Europe. (2011). The CEFR language teaching assessment. <https://rm.coe.int/16802fc1bf>
- Dalton, B., & Grisham, D. L. (2011). eVoc strategies: 10 ways to use technology to build vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 64(5), 306-317. <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1598/RT.64.5.1>
- De Temple, J., Wu, H. & Snow, J. (1991). Papa pig just left for pigtown: Children's oral and written picture descriptions under varying instructions. *Discourse Processes*, 14(4), 469-495. doi: 10.1080/01638539109544797
- Duan, S. (2018). Effects of enhancement techniques on L2 incidental vocabulary learning. *English Language Teaching*, 11(3), 88-101. doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n3p88
- Ellis, N. C. & Beaton, A. (1993). Psycholinguistic determinants of foreign language vocabulary learning. *Language Learning*, 43, 559-617. doi:10.1111/j.1467-1770.1993.tb00627.x
- Education First. (2019). EF Standard English Test. <https://www.ef.com.ec/>
- Education First. (2022). EF English Proficiency Index. <https://www.ef.com.ec/epi/>
- Gass, S. (1999). Discussion: Incidental vocabulary learning. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 21(2), 319-333.
- Ghout-Khenoune, L. (2012). The effects of task type on learners' use of communication strategies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 69(1), 770–779. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.11.472
- Hunt, A. & Beglar, D. (2005). A framework for developing EFL reading vocabulary. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 17(1), 23-59. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ689121.pdf>

- Karakoç, D. & Köse, G. D. (2017). The impact of vocabulary knowledge on reading, writing and proficiency scores of EFL learners. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(1), 352-378. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1140609.pdf>
- Kartal, G. (2017). A corpus-based analysis of the most frequent adjectives in academic texts. *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(3), 3-18. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1149420.pdf>
- Krashen, S. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 73(4), 440-464. http://www.sdkrashen.com/content/articles/1989_we_acquire_vocabulary_and_spelling_by_reading.pdf
- Lavalle, P. & Briesmaster, M. (2017). The study of the use of picture descriptions in enhancing communication skills among the 8th-grade students. *Learners of English as a Foreign Language*, 9(1), 1-16. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1171736.pdf>
- Little, D. (2005). The common European framework and the European language portfolio: involving learners and their judgements in the assessment process. *Language Testing*, 22(3), 321–336. doi: 10.1191/0265532205lt311oa
- Ludvigsen, M. B. (2015). Vocabulary learning strategies in the L2 classroom (Master Thesis, Ostfold University, Halden, Norway).
- Marulanda, A., Nora, L., & Martínez, J. M. (2017). Improving English language learners' academic writing: a multi-strategy approach to a multi-dimensional challenge. *GIST Education and Learning Research Journal*, (14), 49-67. doi: 10.26817/16925777.367
- Ministerio de Educación. (2012). English Teacher Standards and English Language Learning Standards. http://educacion.gob.ec/wpcontent/uploads/downloads/2013/03/estandares_2012_ingles.pdf
- Ministerio de Educación. (2014). National curriculum guidelines. <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2014/09/01-National-Curriculum-Guidelines-EFL-Agosto-2014.pdf>
- Ministerio de Educación. (2016). English language curriculum. <https://educacion.gob.ec/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2016/08/EFL-for-Subnivel-Superior-of-EGB-ok.pdf>
- Moudraia, O. (2001). Lexical approach to second language teaching. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED455698.pdf>
- Nation, P. (2015). Principles guiding vocabulary learning through extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 27(1), 136-145. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1059712.pdf>
- Oxford, R. (2002). Language learning strategies in a nutshell: Update and ESL suggestions. In J.C Richards & W. A. Renandya, *Methodology in language teaching: an anthology of current practice* (pp. 19-25). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Pigada, M., & Schmitt, N. (2006). Vocabulary acquisition from extensive reading: A case study. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 18(1), 1-28. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ759833.pdf>
- Ranjbar, T. (2016). The impact of using pictures and other graphic devices to improve EFL learners' L2 writing skill. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research*, 3(3), 321-336. <http://www.jallr.com/index.php/JALLR/article/download/325/pdf325>.
- Richards, J.C. (1976). The role of vocabulary teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, 10(1), 77-89. doi:10.2307/3585941

- Richards, J.C. (2003). 30 years of TEFL/TESL: A personal reflection. *RELC Journal*, 33(2), 1-35. doi: 10.1177/003368820203300201.
- Richards, J. C. (2013). Curriculum approaches in language teaching: forward, central, and backward design. *RELC Journal*, 44(1), 5–33. doi:10.1177/0033688212473293
- Richards, J. C., & Renandya, W. A. (2002). Teaching vocabulary. In J.C. Richards & W.A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice* (pp. 255-257). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmitt, N. (2000). *Vocabulary in language teaching*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. doi: 10.1177/1362168808089921
- Schmitt, N. (2008). Review article: Instructed second language vocabulary learning. *Language Teaching Research*, 12(3), 329-363. doi: 10.1177/1362168808089921.
- Samuels, S. J. (1970). Effects of pictures on learning to read, comprehension and attitudes. *Review of Educational Research*, 40(3), 397–407. doi:10.3102/00346543040003397
- Swenson, E. (2017). Using social interaction to elevate and enrich student expressive vocabulary in writing. https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=5279&context=hse_all
- Tang, Z. (2020). A review on studies into incidental vocabulary acquisition through different input. *English Language Teaching*, 13(6), 89-95. doi: 10.5539/elt.v13n6p89
- Tomlinson, B. (2013). Second language acquisition and materials development. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Applied linguistics and materials development* (pp. 61-74). New York: Bloomsbury.
- University of Cambridge (2011). Using the CEFR: principles of good practice. ESOL Examinations. Retrieved from: <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/126011-using-cefr-principles-of-good-practice.pdf>
- University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (2012). Vocabulary list, Key English Test (KET), Key English Test for Schools (KETfS). <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/Images/22105-ket-vocabulary-list.pdf>
- Willingham D. & Price D. (2009). Theory to practice vocabulary instruction in community college developmental education reading classes: What the research tells us. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 40(1), 91-105. doi 10.1080/10790195.2009.10850326.
- Zarfsaz, E., & Parisa, Y. (2021). The impact of different context levels on vocabulary learning and retention. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(4), 24-34. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9i4.4049>
- Zerkina, N., Kostina N., Urazayeva N., Lomakina Y., Emets T., Gallyamova M., Melnikova E., Trutnev A., Lukina O. (2016). Axiological role of English adjectives in English Language Teaching. *International Journal of Environmental & Science Education*, 11(2), 5146–5154. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115601.pdf>